

Journalism and Libraries: Collaborating to Build a More Equitable, Accessible, and Engaged
Information Space

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Abstract

Journalism and Libraries: Collaborating to Build a More Equitable, Accessible, and Engaged Information Space

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As Canadian journalism continues to encounter underfunding, shuttering outlets, and low public trust, now is perhaps the best time for the field to explore more collaborative channels with other institutions. This research explores collaborations between journalism and libraries and the impacts they have on labour, civic engagement, and power. The CBC/Radio-Canada's *Collab* initiative, and specifically the partnership undertaken by CBC and the Notre-Dame-De-Grâce Benny library in Montreal, *Gem of an Idea*, are used as a case study upon which the rest of this research is built. Using event observations, qualitative interviews and thematic analysis, this thesis aims to examine the ways in which collaborations can contribute to information spaces that are accessible and engaging for their community members. Further, this research uses the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is rooted in praxis and upholds the notion that all theorizing must eventually lead to action, which is best done through human interaction and reflexivity. As some critical pedagogists have pointed out, work that blends theory and practice create proactive spaces in which we might imagine new approaches to scholarship. The results of my study seek to broaden this discussion. The findings of this research paint an initial picture of the possibilities that can arise through collaboration as well as what it means for journalists, library staff, and, most importantly, the public.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Identifying A Crisis

The word crisis has come up frequently when describing Canadian journalism. Articles in major publications, like the CBC, *The Globe and Mail*, and *La Presse*, among others, have sounded the alarm on an emergency brewing in Canadian media (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], 2023; Lederman, 2024; Milliard, 2023). These accounts point out the many hurdles that Canadian journalism is up against, hurdles that are often compounded into seemingly insurmountable mountains. In the past decade, hundreds of local newsrooms across the country have closed, workforces have been slashed, and services have been cut (Lindgren & Corbett, 2025). Canadians' trust in news has weakened, with one study indicating only 39% of Canadians trusted it in 2024, down from 58% in 2018 (Brin & Charlton, 2024, p. 121). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent economic and political aftershocks, have only exacerbated the situation (Wechsler, 2021). Though the word 'crisis' might seem inflammatory, there are very good reasons to be concerned about journalism's future in the country.

Journalism plays a fundamental role in determining what we know; it has the tremendous responsibility of being able to both reveal and conceal (Canella, 2023). Journalism's function is to gather and present information which people can use to be participating members of society (p. 213). Further, journalism and democracy are symbiotic. It is impossible to imagine there being a free press without a strong democracy and vice-versa (McChesney, 2008, p. 152). The press functions as society's safeguard from tyranny, it is there to hold the powerful and wannabe powerful, in the political and corporate realm, to account (p. 118). Lastly, on the local level, community journalism is not only essential for meeting the information needs of citizens, but it also plays a substantial role in sustaining a community's identity and social capital (Crowther et al., 2016, pp. 18-19). Thus, we can see how a crisis in journalism reverberates throughout communities, deeply affecting people of all sorts.

To begin to understand the current dilemma that journalism finds itself in, it is useful to look at the economics of news media. Journalism has been largely reliant on someone other than the audience paying for news. Given that the majority of people have been unwilling to pay for

news, advertisers have stepped in and filled this role (Picard, 2016, p. 148). The ad-based news business model requires that journalism be paid for by advertisers, whose vested interest is in capturing the attention of news audiences (Zamith, 2022, p. 101). In this system, the media is responsible for producing content that attracts and holds the attention of the public, which is important for advertisers given that they must ensure that their ads are being consumed. Hence, the news might appear to be free for consumers in the monetary sense, but scholars like Dallas Smythe (2009), have pointed out that the consumer is actually working for their news through the consumption of advertising. One example of this is the evening televised news, which is broken up with multiple commercial advertising breaks; the consumer is expected to watch both the news and the commercials.

Other systems certainly exist; notably, Canada also has a public broadcaster (CBC/Radio-Canada) and multiple non-profit outlets. Nevertheless, the private sector controls the majority of media revenue in Canada. As of 2013, the top four television providers, Bell, Rogers, Corus, and Quebecor, controlled 80% of all television revenue (Crowther et al., 2016, pp. 10-11). While there may be different models for news in Canada, four private conglomerates still hold the majority of revenue. These private enterprises are funded in large part by advertising. Historically, however, media outlets paid little attention to revenue and funding models (Picard, 2016, p.147). This is not because revenue, advertising, or capital lacked importance; rather it was due to the monopoly that journalism had on advertising in the 20th century (pp.147-148). Given the news industry's tight grip on advertising, for those who were responsible for producing the news content that filled newspaper pages and broadcast schedules, revenue was simply not an issue that had to be paid much attention.

The 21st century's shift to digital caused a disruption in the advertising monopoly journalism historically possessed, resulting in a significant loss of revenue (Picard, 2016, p. 148). The digital world created a "near endless supply of advertising opportunities" that subsequently lowered the price that advertisers had to pay to reach customers (p. 148). Advertisers are no longer dependent on traditional journalism outlets (print, broadcast television, and commercial radio) to reach consumers; consequently they need not pay the hefty advertising sums they once did (pp. 148-149). Compared to print media, the online sphere offers virtually infinite advertising opportunities, which means that news outlets receive far less advertising revenue (p. 148).

Digital journalism does not offer advertisers the same audience attention that traditional print, radio, or television media once could. As journalism loses its grip on its advertising monopoly and people remain reluctant to pay for news, the field is left to find new ways to finance the goods they produce.

Despite the shift from more traditional forms of news media, like print and television, towards newer digital forms like the short video format and tweets, news is still being produced in a commercial context (Ryfe, 2021, p. 61). Whether it be print capitalism or digital capitalism, “there is no doubt about which is the more important term” (Mosco, 2009, p. 120). Therein lies part of the problem that journalism is facing. In one way, even though Canada has a public broadcaster, and nonprofit newsrooms, there is still the underlying neoliberal assumption that news media must maximize profit (McChesney, 2008, pp. 16-17). Additionally, what makes journalism’s reliance on advertising worrisome is that media must compete amongst each other for advertising dollars (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 16). This influences how journalists produce news since they have to keep in mind not only the marketability of their product, but also the interests of the advertisers (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 16; Skinner et al., 2016, p. 80).

It goes without saying that the economic crisis facing Canadian newsrooms has been devastating for media workers. In September 2023, one of the country’s largest news publishers, Metroland Media Group, filed for bankruptcy protection, leading to 650 layoffs (Egwu, 2024). In December 2023, the CBC cut 600 jobs due to budget shortfalls (Egwu, 2024). The CBC noted that they are confronting the same struggles that all media outlets are facing, namely rising costs of production, declining television advertising revenue, and aggressive competition from tech giants (Deschamps, 2023). There is often the assumption that national broadcasters provide a “public defense against universal commercialism;” however, no matter the model, all media exist within the same economic landscape, and it is one that is in turmoil (Egwu, 2024; Mosco, 2009, p.112).

This economic crisis has resulted not only in media workers losing jobs, but also in the closure of entire news outlets. The Local News Research Project, a crowd-sourced resource which tracks the changes in local news outlets across Canada, notes that between 2008 and June 2025, 571 local news outlets closed in 374 communities (Lindgren & Corbett, 2025). On top of

that, over a hundred newspapers have abolished their print editions and have moved to digital only, while other news sources have had to decrease their services. David Macdonald and Sonja Macdonald (2025) reported that as of March 2025 over 2.5 million Canadians have almost no local news, meaning that they live in a postal code with only one or no local news outlets. Their research shows that the rate of local news deprivation across Canada has been “snowballing” since 2008 (Macdonald & Macdonald, 2025).

These closures and service cuts are a definite cause for concern. The loss of local news is devastating and dangerous. Community journalism is not only essential for meeting the information needs of citizens, but it also plays a substantial role in sustaining a community’s identity and sense of connectedness (Phillips et al., 2025). A recent report by Phillips et al. (2025) pointed out that local news gives a community “the language to understand itself” by providing not only information on neighbourhood happenings but also on more intimate details of daily community life, like marriage announcements and obituaries (p.6). Furthermore, local journalism is indispensable for municipal democracy, given that national and international journalism rarely focuses on local and regional politics (Bethea, 2020). The vacuum created by a loss in local news is often filled by national news or social media, both tending to be more divisive, yet less relevant to peoples’ daily lives (Phillips et al., 2025, p.6). A Public Policy Forum (2025) survey noted that 77% of Canadians responded that having a local news source was important to them and 87% said that it was important for a well-functioning democracy (pp. 8, 14). This importance has yet to translate into any real push for a renaissance in community news.

Another important factor in the Canadian journalism crisis is the erosion of trust in the media. Canadians’ trust in news has declined in the past decade, with only 39% of Canadians trusting it, down almost 20 percentage points since 2018 (Brin & Charlton, 2024, p. 121). Interestingly, trust in local news is high, with 86% of Canadians saying they trust their local newspaper or radio station (Public Policy Forum, 2025). Trust in journalism is essential given that it is the backbone of building and maintaining authority (Robinson, 2023, p. 8). Authority in this case means having the ability to relay facts, information, and stories that the public believes are true and can be used to create and sustain a shared narrative (p. 8).

Without the public's stable and broad trust in media institutions, the essence of journalism is called into question. Traditionally, there existed an unspoken relationship between the public and the media. The public offered their support and trust in the media and in return they received accurate and timely information and were provided with an institution who were meant to keep the powerful in check (Robinson, 2023, p. 11). As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2014) mention, "the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing," this of course only works if people trust the material that is being relayed to them (p. 17). Regrettably, the public's trust has eroded due to factors including news outlets closing or decreasing their services, an uptake in the consumption of dubious information found on social media, and the general polarization of news content in which what is true for one political camp is deemed false by another (Robinson, 2023, pp. 11-12). The result of this is that "journalistic authority over information as a democratically essential institution has diminished significantly," which will undoubtedly negatively affect democracy, the quality of information, and our sense of belonging and community (pp. 12-13).

For the sake of journalism and for the public at large, trust must be aptly rebuilt. Studies have shown that people, across the ethnic and political spectrum, desire more positive news, less polarization, and want to see journalists tell stories about their communities that accurately reflect them (Coddington & Lewis, 2024). In short, people want to see journalism that cares about them, but our current business model favours profits above all else. Thus, there can be no sustainable change in journalism without first transforming how news is produced (Ryfe, 2021, p. 61).

1.2. Exploring Collaborations as a Possible Solution: Journalism and Libraries

Competition has long been ingrained in journalism's culture and practice (McLean, 2023, p. 81). As noted above, outlets must contend for advertiser dollars and audience attention. This made for a historically cutthroat environment, an environment in which getting the story first was big business (p. 81). However, as Archie McLean (2023) points out, with shrinking newsrooms and dwindling resources, the heyday of competitive Canadian journalism is behind us. This has opened the doors for new ways of thinking about how journalism could and should be done. If competition is no longer the field's driving force, we can now imagine new ways forward.

One way forward is through collaborations. Collaborations in newsrooms can take many different forms. It could mean pooling resources or producing content with other outlets, working with community groups or members to create diverse stories, or sharing physical space and tools with other existing institutions (McLean, 2023; Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023; Wirsig & Edwards, 2016). These types of collaborations have gone beyond increasing the output or quality of reporting, they have contributed to growths in audience engagement and reach and towards slowly rebuilding community trust in the media (McLean, 2023; Wenzel & Crittenden, 2023).

This thesis is interested in investigating collaborations between journalism and libraries. The library is a free, public space, offering myriad different resources, objects, and activities to community members. For example, the Montreal public library system offers French language discussion clubs, creative writing workshops, and family story time. Members of the Montreal system can also borrow, on top of books and movies, musical instruments, outdoor recreational equipment, and museum passes. There are also the quotidian tasks that library staff undertake, like helping patrons send emails or aiding them in a job search (Morrone, 2014, p. 4). Of course, the library is equally bogged down by bureaucracy and can have incredulous relationships with municipal powers (p. 3). Regardless, the library remains a space that is welcoming of “societal underdogs” and that represents a “locus of popular education” (p. 3).

The similarities between journalism and libraries are quite extensive. They are both information giants known and used by the public (Lillebuen & Shamchuk, 2023, pp. 231-32). Both are central pillars to democracy, taking on the mandate to inform the public, build civic engagement, and foster trust (p. 231). Moreover, similarly to journalism, libraries have seen their field undergo rapid changes due to digitalization and have had to transform their spaces and resources to keep up (Carlson, 2019).

Much like journalism, libraries have a code ethics. According to *The Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB) Code of Ethics* (2018) and *La déclaration des bibliothèques du Québec* (2016), both hold that the central tenants of the library are its commitment to access of information, its responsibility towards individuals and society, its designation as an area dedicated to learning, meeting, exchanging, and mediating, and that it remain an accessible and welcoming space. Thus,

there are undeniable streams of social justice and human rights in the values that libraries seek to uphold (Gregory & Higgins, 2013, p.5).

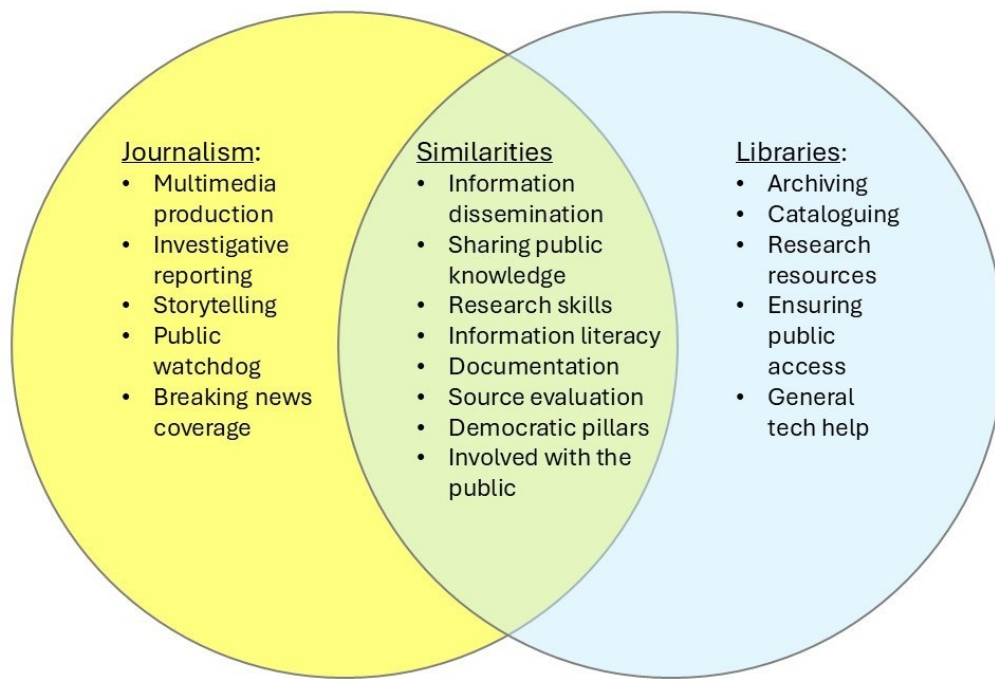


Figure 1. Roles and Skills in Journalism and Libraries.

These similarities, as shown in *Figure 1*, offer the possibility of collaboration, while their differences suggest that their relationship could be complementary. Chris LeBeau (2018) outlines how librarians can satisfy spaces that journalism neglected. Namely, they can help fill citizens in on municipal politics and policies, bring in guest commenters to provide alternative voices, and help with news literacy (LeBeau, 2018). Besides the research and curation skills that librarians possess, libraries have the public's trust (Carlson, 2019). Considering how low people's trust in journalism is, collaborating with libraries to help the public source information could be a valuable way to begin the process of rebuilding it. Further, due to changes brought about by the technological innovations of the 21st century, people do not collect information linearly, rather they use a variety of resources that build off each other (Jones, 2011, p.18). This change in information gathering suggests an opening for librarians and journalists to work together to help create a space that is intuitive for the modern information age.

1.3. Introducing the Collab Project

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/ Radio-Canada (CBC) is Canada's public broadcaster. Created by an act of parliament in 1936, the CBC is a Crown corporation owned by the federal government which provides services in both English and French. It operates as a hybrid model, relying on government funding and advertising revenue for its financing. With over 25 million unique digital views per month, the CBC tops the online views charts amongst all media in Canada (Canadian Media Ownership Index, 2022).

In September 2021, the CBC launched a project, which would later be known as *Collab*, which partners with local libraries across the country in hopes of “engag[ing] more deeply with Canadians — especially those [they] don’t typically reach” (“Collab: CBC/Radio-Canada in your public library,” 2024). The project sees CBC/Radio-Canada collaborate with libraries bringing them a diverse set of activities, performances, and workshops. According to their website, *Collab* has visited more than 130 communities Canada wide and has engaged in-person with over 36,000 people (“Collab: CBC/Radio-Canada in your public library,” 2024).

This thesis project looks at the collaboration undertaken by CBC Montreal and the Notre-Dame-De-Grâce Benny library in Montreal, called *Gem of an Idea*. This project saw CBC Montreal and the Benny library collaborate on numerous events throughout the 2023-2025 calendar year (Liu, 2023). Not all of the previous events had a journalistic angle, with some being more tilted towards cultural engagements. However, my research is geared towards looking at their *How to Tell Your Story* workshop, in which community members were invited to come and learn how to pitch and write their own stories.

This project is of specific interest given that it allows for an analysis and discussion of a collaboration done between a local journalism outlet, CBC Montreal, and a library. My research aimed to examine the potential outcomes of this collaboration, identify what each party (journalism/libraries/the public) gained, highlight any limiting factors, and note where further research is needed. Also, the *Gem of an Idea* project is an especially interesting case given that it was a project that was still ongoing, which allowed me to attend two writing workshops. Being able to attend these events and interview participants gave me an opportunity to gain experiential knowledge about collaborations, as opposed to being restricted to reading the limited documentation available on them.

1.4. Purpose of Present Study and Research Questions

This project is, to the best of my knowledge, the first of its kind to look directly at a collaboration done between a Canadian library and a media outlet. Its objective is to explore the concept of collaboration with public institutions, specifically libraries, in the field of journalism and journalism research. It is my belief that one way to address the journalism crisis is through adopting a spirit of collaboration. This thesis pushes up against the penchant inclination that journalism has for competition between outlets and journalists themselves and the belief that this produces better news. As Pierre Bourdieu (1998) points out, competition does not produce news that is more diverse or more credible. Thus, this thesis aims to explain theoretically why a collaboration between journalism and libraries is both compelling and reasonable, and to demonstrate practically what this can look like and what each party can gain.

My research is centred on the collaboration that took place between the Benny library and CBC Montreal. I use this project as a case study through which to answer the following research questions:

- Can collaboration with libraries improve (local) journalism, and contribute to a strengthening of community trust and engagement with news and information?
 - a. How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration address labour and how was the work distributed?
 - b. How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration reach local communities and in what ways did it contribute to civic engagement?
 - c. What insights into the issue of power in both journalism and library systems can be gleaned from the CBC Montreal/Benny library collaboration?

In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature relevant to this project. In addition to familiarizing the reader with the available knowledge on my subject, this review also points to areas in need of more research. In this, I explain how the political economy of journalism influences my research, the importance of engagement, trust, and reckoning in journalism, and how Critical Library Studies aids my understanding of libraries. Additionally, I explain my theoretical framework, critical pedagogy, and how I use it to guide my research. Specifically, I

write about the importance of liberatory learning, power and knowledge, praxis and partnership, and how each of these topics help frame my research and inform my own practice.

In Chapter 3, I describe in detail the methods that I used to obtain the information and data that I analyzed. This includes a discussion on reflexivity, a breakdown of my event observations, and an explanation on the qualitative interviews I conducted with different participants. This data was analyzed thematically and reflexively, according to the approach described by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2013, 2022), and its outcomes are used to answer my research questions.

In Chapter 4, through the use of a thematic map, block quotes, and my own summaries, I present my findings and their subsequent themes. My findings are explained in a way that clearly demonstrates to the reader the strongest themes of my research. Each theme is reinforced with quotes from my interviewees, observations from the events I attended, and through my own reflexive thought process.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my findings and use them to answer my research questions. Additionally, I use the information presented in my literature review (Chapter 2) to reinforce my findings and my answers. Lastly, my conclusion recaps my findings and discusses the strengths and limitations of my thesis whilst discussing avenues for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This literature review aims to introduce the reader to the realms of Journalism and Library and Information Studies (LIS). Given the broadness of both fields, I have focused my review on areas in each domain that lend themselves best to my specific research questions. When approaching journalism, I have been most influenced by scholars of the political economy of journalism and media. I have also looked into the work of scholars who have studied what engagement means to the field, as well as those who have considered how to reckon with journalism's past and future. My focus on LIS has been guided by Critical Library Studies and how researchers in this area bridge the gap between research and practice. Theoretically, I have framed this research through the lens of critical pedagogy which allows for a broad critique of both journalism and LIS that encourages putting the needs of the people at the forefront of all proposed solutions.

2.1. The Political Economy of Journalism

Political economy can be understood as “the study of control and survival in social life” (Mosco, 2009, p. 3). In this interpretation, control refers to the “political process” that influences the relationships in a community, and survival is the economic process of “production and reproduction” (p. 3). Further, Vincent Mosco (2009) describes the political economy of journalism as seeking to understand how power and wealth influence, and are influenced by, mass media systems (p. 4). This entails “understanding the connections between the political and economic,” which requires that we take the “entire social arena [as our...] field of analysis” and look at how they both interact with society (p. 29).

The importance of social totality is echoed by Robert W. McChesney (2007), who describes the political economy of communication as an assessment of “how market structures, advertising support, labor relations, profit motivation, technologies, and government policies shaped media industries, journalistic practices, occupational sociology, and the nature and content of the news and entertainment” (p. 79). Thus we must understand that our communication and media systems do not exist in a vacuum; they are governed and influenced by myriad different players and systems, and in return influence just as many. It then comes at no surprise that political economy seeks to assess if media systems “promote or undermine democratic institutions and practices” (McChesney, 2008, p. 12). Any complete understanding or

analysis of journalism must take into consideration the fact that powerful interests will always try to dominate and influence the flow of information. How journalistic institutions respond to these pressures will shape the news they produce.

Another important aspect to understand is the capitalist system that journalism is both confined by, but also actively promotes. Christian Fuchs (2024a), who quotes both McChesney and Mosco, defines the political economy of communication and the media as “a critical analysis of how communication and communication systems work and are organised in capitalist society and how they impact on and interact with society and the lives of humans in society” (p. 65). Fuchs states that this approach allows us to ask questions about “class, power structures, ethics, society, capitalism, domination and ideology” and how they relate to our media and communication systems (p. 2). Fuchs’ (2024b) work also reminds us that we function within a capitalist system, which means that the “economy plays a special role because all realms of society are conditioned, shaped, influenced, and circumscribed by the logic of accumulation and by class relations” (p. 153). This raises questions over who has control over the media, what is said, how culture is made, and how this leads to an unjust accumulation of power (p. 154).

Fuchs, McChesney, and Mosco want us to understand that journalism is categorically intertwined with our social, cultural, economic, and political lives. Given this, we need a media system that is built to sustain and address the actual information needs of the people, and not the desires and capitalistic interests of media giants. In political economy this is represented by a deep sense of morality which engrains into practitioners the need to “care [...] about the values that help to create social behavior and about those moral principles that ought to guide efforts to change it” (Mosco, 2009, p. 4). We can understand then that the political economy of journalism is especially interested in the historicity, social totality, and morality of media, information, and communication systems, as well as the society that influences and is influenced by them (Mosco, 2009).

Though this thesis is not explicitly about the political economy of journalism, I found it nonetheless important to include given that it has influenced the way I have come to view and understand the field. Issues such as the loss of advertiser revenue, the shuttering of outlets, and low public trust, must be understood as broad and interconnected. It is not only due to the digital shift that journalism’s profits began to sink, but also because the economics of the information

society are “capitalis[t] first and foremost” (Mosco, 2009, p. 75). Thus, until we truly reckon with what it means to produce news and information in and under capitalism, we cannot make any sustained progress.

Moreover, my research does not seek to provide an entrenched and lengthy discussion or critique of capitalism. Nevertheless, it is a topic that I thought necessary to briefly address given that despite the potential solutions put forth in this thesis, we must still understand that as of yet, these solutions will have to take place within the system of capitalism. Including the work of political economy scholars and allowing them to guide my understanding of the media system, is my way of reckoning with this. Equally, my desire to present collaborations as a meaningful way forward is tied to the ideas presented by these scholars. I think that bringing information giants together, in this case journalism and libraries, is a way to demonstrate an information environment that cares about people and that is able to stand up to the competitive ethos that capitalism demands of its subjects. As I will discuss throughout the rest of this chapter, we can hope to build systems that place value in the labour of workers, in the engagement of civilians, and that seeks to free knowledge and information from the grip of the elites and return it to the people.

2.2. Engagement, Trust, and Reckoning in Journalism

There are many values that Journalism Studies esteems. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on engagement, trust, and reckoning. When viewed together and holistically, they offer a way of seeing journalism that benefits both journalist and audience. Although the literature presents these values in different contexts, this review focuses on how they may be applied to collaborative journalism.

Engagement in journalism is what allows the practice to exist. The purpose of journalism content is first and foremost for the audience to engage with it. However, as Jake Batsell (2015) explains, engagement is about much more than simply hooking your audience onto your product. Batsell interviews a host of different journalists, editors, and newsroom managers, as well as community members, and uses these voices to build his argument about the importance of engagement. As he points out, it is no longer enough for audiences to merely consume content. Given the oversaturated nature of our information space, journalists must seek to build a relationship with their audience and satisfy a visible information need, thus ensuring that their

audience comes back for more (p. 5). Therefore, engagement is the way in which news organizations consider and interact with the audience (p. 7).

Batsell identifies five guiding principles for engaged journalism (pp. 10-11):

1. Convening audiences in person with face-to-face events.
2. Interacting with audiences at every step.
3. Meeting previously unmet information needs in the communities they serve.
4. Empowering audiences to satisfy their own curiosity.
5. Measuring effectiveness and capturing value.

News outlets have gone about this in myriad ways. Some have sought to encourage online engagement with news stories, prompting their audiences to post comments or share their content (p. 48). Others require that their journalists have a social media presence and that they share amply about themselves online so that their audiences can build a rapport with them (p. 51). Whilst these might work, it's important that journalism be not merely paying lip-service to engagement (p. 63). Methods that seem more convincing, are those that actually seek to build meaningful partnerships with their audiences through approaches that foster trust. Audience engagement should be used not solely as a means to increase traffic, but rather as a way to ensure that one's journalism is actually meaningful. For any attempt at engagement to work it must be authentic (p. 15).

Perhaps the most important aspect for engagement, then, is trust. The field cannot expect audiences to meaningfully engage with them without a foundation of trust. Sue Robinson (2023) specifically looks at what the relationship between trust and engagement really is in journalism. Through her research examining almost a hundred different trust-building projects and initiatives, Robinson highlights that for trust building to occur, journalism's engagement needs to be anchored in "identity-aware caring [...and through...] listening and learning" (p. 36). As opposed to Batsell, Robinson's approach pays little attention to the monetary value that can be gained for news organizations and instead puts the onus on journalists to change their approach to one that is holistic and compassionate for the betterment of the people they strive to serve (p. 36).

Moreover, Robinson challenges the existing understanding of trust building in journalism and instead encourages a reimagining of this relationship. Trust building efforts by the field must be understood as continuous and never-ending (p. 162). Journalists must listen to community members in a way that encourages them to engage openly with the field and must then amplify their voices (p. 172). This cannot be a one-off activity; rather it must be seen as a foundational aspect of the practice.

Similarly, Andrea Wenzel (2020), defines trust in journalism as a relational concept, taking into consideration how power dynamics and issues of representation impact the connection between journalists and community members (p. 7). This means strengthening trust and engagement not for journalism's sake, but rather for the communication and information health of communities (p. 159). This too, challenges previous notions established by the field, and pushes up on the boundaries that we imagine define journalism (p. 12). There exists a real need to contend with journalism's past, whether that be past actions or how the field has historically viewed itself, in order for progress to be genuinely made.

Accordingly, this brings us to the concept of reckoning in journalism. Reckoning requires asking the reflexive questions that the field has often taken for granted (Callison & Young, 2020). This means reflecting on what makes journalism 'good,' who gets to decide what gets known, and on the roles that journalists and experts get to play in society (p. 200). These questions must be answered by taking "gender, race, intersectional concerns, and settler-colonialism" into account, which undeniably leads to conversations about power and accountability (p. 200). For Callison and Young, these issues must be considered because they are just as big of a problem for journalism as any economic or technological one. Much like the political economists mentioned above, Callison and Young call for an approach that takes the social totality of these issues into account. For them, reckoning requires confronting the "particular and implicit universalizing power of whiteness and masculinity" that the field has historically possessed and weaponized, and instead aiming to recognize journalism's "limitations and its role as a means for social ordering" (p. 49).

Engagement, trust, and reckoning, when understood together, offer a way of understanding journalism and its outcomes that lends itself well to my research. Taken into consideration with political economy, these are the concepts and lenses that have most influenced

how I perceive journalism. They are what I anchor my research and methodology to. I attempt to offer a picture of the field as one that cares deeply about the communities they serve, that listens to people, that fosters trust and civic engagement, and that is always striving to be better for the sake of building an accessible and equitable information and communication environment.

2.3. Critical Library Studies

Critical Library Studies, also called Critical Librarianship, takes a reflexive approach when theorizing about the field and explores how Library and Information Studies (LIS) “consciously or unconsciously supports systems of oppression” (Garcia, 2015; Nicholson & Seale, 2017, p. 2). In this, Critical Library Studies aims to be transformative and empowering, while also challenging the powerful and privileged (Garcia, 2015). In short, it can be understood as a field of thought within LIS that seeks to question the boundaries and expectations that we have regarding libraries and to understand the field as one that exists within the larger social arena and that encompasses all of the political, economic, and social stressors of human life (Leckie & Buschman, 2010; Nicholson & Seale, 2017).

Johanna Rivano Eckerdal, Lisa Olsson Dahlquist, and Lisa Engström (2020) have argued that there is a “need for a more elaborate and sophisticated discussion of if, and then how, the public library fulfills its social role to contribute to democracy” (p. 1). To fulfill this need, they suggest the application of a more critical lens to the field, one that opposes the “taken for granted” aspects of the library, like them being safe and democratic spaces, and rejects the idea that libraries are “context-free” (p. 3). Of course, this does not mean that libraries aren’t safe or democratic spaces, but the act of shedding presumptions allows for greater, more diverse conversations to be had about libraries.

Thus, we can see how Critical Library Studies, much like the political economy of journalism and the concept of reckoning, stresses the importance of social totality. Gloria J. Leckie and John E. Buschman (2010) encourage the use of critical theory in LIS research as it helps ward off the “dangers of LIS isolationism” and allows the field to be more in-tuned with current scholarly trends in other disciplines (p. xi). Similarly to how Rivano Eckerdal et al., state that libraries are not free from context, Leckie and Buschman also take issue with the idea that LIS is innocent and protected from the debates that characterize other social sciences (p. xi). Instead, they argue that if LIS is interested in the betterment of society, as it so claims, it must

interact critically with society and put theory into practice (p. xiii). In other words, “critical-theoretical perspectives help us to understand how large-scale changes in society [...] affect what might seem to be routine and local practices” (p. xiii). Adopting a broad and critical lens to the field allows for new insights and brings about progress.

Building on this, Karen P. Nicholson and Maura Seale (2017) stress the importance of LIS adopting a “socially just, theoretically informed praxis,” thereby bridging the gap between library scholars and librarians (p.2). In this, much like Rivano Eckerdal et al., and Leckie and Buschman, Nicholson and Seale reject the idea that libraries are practical, neutral places, and instead demonstrate that they too are subject to the hegemonic prejudices of society and actively reproduce patriarchy, neoliberal ideology, and white supremacy within their walls (p. 5). Building on the idea that libraries exist in a prejudiced system, John E. Buschman and Micheal Carbone (1991) examine the power behind the role that libraries have to educate the public, and how this presents issues that must be understood with a critical lens (p. 18). Here, they point out that because knowledge is socially constructed, we must develop the habit of questioning who is constructing it and why (p. 22). Libraries do play a role in this construction given that they possess the economic and social power of information purchasing and dissemination (p. 27). Buschman and Carbone drive this home by pointing out that the “sources libraries collect are not objective; they represent and reflect the political and economic biases of the system” (p. 27). Once again, these scholars reject the idea that libraries are neutral institutions, and demonstrate, through the application of Critical Library Studies, that the field of LIS must confront its power and place in society. Failing to do so only further contributes to the hegemonic possession and distribution of knowledge and information.

To reiterate, Critical Library Studies states that libraries are linked to larger social, political, and economic interests, and urge the field to adopt a theory that both acknowledges this and seeks to critique and change these discourses (Buschman & Carbone 1991; Nicholson & Seale, 2017). These critiques are meant to disrupt the normative practices in LIS and enact change that is socially just and theoretically informed (Buschman & Carbone 1991; Leckie & Buschman, 2010; Nicholson & Seale, 2017). Moreover, by refusing to take certain assumed aspects of the field for granted, like its democratic or educational role, and instead questioning

how these assumptions came to be, Critical Library Studies encourages change and innovation (Rivano Eckerdal et al., 2020, p.3).

I use Critical Library Studies to frame my understanding of the library as a place that is in constant flux and that is deeply influenced by its surroundings. Furthermore, I utilize it because it is complementary to the journalistic theories that I also employ in my study. It is necessary to understand and to outline that both journalism and libraries possess the power to inform and are both influenced by political, economic, and social aspects of daily life. They both play an influencing role in society and are called upon to serve the public. Viewing both information institutions in this light allows for more honest critique and subsequently for a critical-theoretical informed praxis to occur.

2.4. Real World Examples of Journalism and Library Collaborations

Though there exists an abundance of sources on both journalism and LIS separately, there is a noticeable lack of sources who have written directly about collaborations between these two institutions. This is especially true in terms of Canadian research on the topic. Steve Lillebuen and Lisa Shamchuk (2023) wrote one of the only Canadian articles I could find on the topic of participation of Canadian libraries in civic journalism. The pair examined the extent that Canadian public libraries participated in civic journalism¹ during the 2019 and 2021 federal elections. Specifically, they looked at how certain public libraries stepped into a role traditionally occupied by journalism and provided their patrons with information on the election. The article concludes that there were very few libraries in Canada that did this, and thus, in their current state, libraries are not key places for election information. Lillebuen and Shamchuk highlight that they had turned up the first empirical evidence of libraries actively participating in civic journalism. Since their publication in 2023, and to the best of my knowledge, no other study on the topic has been published. This only further emphasizes the need for more research on the matter.

On the other hand, more grey literature exists on the subject of library and journalism collaborations. In recent years, collaborative projects between libraries and journalism have been

¹ Lillebuen and Shamchuk base their understanding of civic journalism on that of Jay Rosen, who posits that it is a type of journalism “focused on community-connected practice” with attention placed on getting the public to participate in civic activities and problem solving with the goal of strengthening the democratic life of citizens (pp. 226-227).

popping up in the United States and Canada. These projects encourage not only a partnership between two information giants, but also between community members, which can help improve trust in public institutions and encourage an interest in local news (Beard, 2018). These collaborative projects encourage members of the public to be willing participants in news, as opposed to their traditional role as consumer.

Unfortunately, sometimes these projects are done out of desperation or are short-term. For instance, in New Hampshire, when the small town of Weare lost its community newspaper in 2016, nearly 9,000 people were left without any local news given that regional and national news sources care little about small towns (Carlson, 2019). The town's librarian, Michael Sullivan, stepped in and started publishing a four-page paper to keep community member's up to date, doing so for two years (Beard, 2018; Carlson, 2019). It's important to note that this is not a collaboration given that Sullivan was acting alone. It does, however, show that the library is a place that residents feel comfortable turning to for information and it demonstrates the willingness of librarians to address the information needs of their patrons, even when this means stepping out of their usual comfort zone (Carlson, 2019).

Of course, more traditional collaborative projects do exist. In 2022, The Albany Public Library and the Times Union collaborated on a pilot project aimed at creating a public powered journalism (Joughin & Brandel, 2022). The project used desk research combined with surveys and listening sessions with library members and residents to identify their information needs and to discuss how to better serve them (p.4). The project highlighted issues of access (Times Union's articles are paywalled) the importance of community engagement, and the need to demystify journalism (Joughin & Brandel, 2022).

In Kansas City, the local public library has joined forces with The Kansas City Star to answer regional questions from the public. Their project, What's Your KCQ (Kansas City Question), sees librarians and journalists working together to answer citizen questions (Kansas City Public Library). Since its inception in 2018, the collaboration has answered over 180 questions, with journalists focusing on topics of the present and future and librarians taking care of historical matters.

Canadian examples exist too. For instance, in 2019 the Calgary Public Library and the local, crowdfunded outlet *The Sprawl*, launched a pop-up newsroom at the library (Klaszus,

2019). The goal was to invite residents to imagine Calgary's future together. Journalists helped citizens navigate the future and librarians offered archival resources from the city's past (Klaszus, 2019). The library setup a space with Calgary-specific artifacts, like old newspaper articles, city plans and historical postcards, to help inform patrons on the city's history and to subsequently better envision its future (Klaszus, 2019).

Each of these initiatives point to the power of collaborating. Partnerships between two institutional and powerful information players can help us shape a world that circumvents the tension between "information that wants to be free and a capitalism that wants to use it for the singular purpose of creating surplus value" (Mosco, 2009, p.76). It's clear that journalism must surrender its conception of news as a commodity and adopt the library's vision of information as a free and accessible resource for all.

2.5. Application of Theoretical Framework: Critical Pedagogy

At the heart of this thesis is the belief that community members have the right to accessible and pertinent information that they can use to make the decisions necessary for a fulfilling and meaningful life. It is my understanding that both journalism and libraries play a central role in this given that they represent large and robust information institutions that the public turn to frequently for their own individual information needs. Thus, a critical pedagogical approach is best suited for this project.

Though usually applied to the field of education, other disciplines, such as Cultural Studies, Communication Studies, and Library and Information Studies, have used this theoretical framework. As Melissa Gustafson (2017) puts it, it's a theory that highlights the individualized experiences that all learners have in regard to any given subject, and that thus advocates for a process of information gathering and dissemination that is decentralized and collaborative (p. 1). Regardless of the discipline it's being applied to, critical pedagogy "considers economic, political, and societal systems which influence the entire information life cycle from creation to consumption" (p. 1). Furthermore, it's a philosophy that questions authority and subordination and instead aims to address inequities through the creation of "critical rather than merely good citizens" (Giroux & Robbins, 2006, p. 50).

Critical pedagogy puts the relationship between power and knowledge at the forefront of its philosophy. Thinkers like Henry Giroux (2009), who is one of the foundational scholars in the

field, have advocated for the formation of knowledge that helps mobilize and instruct the oppressed to surmount their own domination (p. 46). Giroux's work in critical pedagogy encouraged change that could "offset a fundamentally reordered, mass-mediated, market-drive, and globalized world in the interests of social order that is more humane, less exclusionary--more democratic in form, content, function, and effects" (Giroux & Robbins, 2006, p. vii).

Giroux's understanding of critical pedagogy is of especial interest for this thesis because it emphasizes that critical pedagogy is less a theory and more an "outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources" (Giroux, 2011, p.4). Critical pedagogy is thus a theoretical framework that is malleable in its application, but always focused on its desire to critique and dismantle systems of domination and oppression.

Critical pedagogy is also rooted in praxis. It upholds the notion that all theorizing and question posing is "best mediated through human interaction within democratic relations of power" (Darder et al., 2009, p. 13). Praxis can be understood as having the "practical intent of transforming asymmetrical relations of power" and as encouraging all people to have on-going discussions, dialogues and reflections in the hope of enlightening oneself to a better understanding of the world (p. 13).

Deanna L. Fassett and John T. Warren (2007) write convincingly on bridging the gap between critical pedagogy research and praxis. Though they write in the context of Communication Studies, their insights lend themselves well to my subject. This is primarily due to their "pedagogy as praxis" approach, which focuses on teachers and students, but can also be applied to any relationship of knowledge-giver and knowledge-receiver, working together to "locate and name the taken-for-granted in pedagogical contexts, to decenter normative readings of a given phenomenon, experience, or idea" (p. 51). This means that a researcher or teacher must put in the actual work to collaborate with others to discuss and deconstruct a given topic and in the process shape new and evocative ways forward (p. 51).

In my own research, this takes the form of myself as a researcher entering in dialogue with journalists, library workers, and community members, through the act of interviewing and listening, and constructing a new understanding of what collaborations between journalism and libraries can mean. This construction is a way to model critical praxis, which Fassett and Warren,

inspired by the works of Paolo Freire and Patti Lather, call “showing [y]our work” (p. 111). Showing my work also takes the form of returning my findings to both members of the CBC’s *Collab* team and the library with the hope that it offers them insights that they feel they can apply to their own work.

Furthermore, Fassett and Warren describe critical communication pedagogy as “explicitly reform oriented” meaning that as researchers we aim to “change our world for the better” (p. 52). However, they caution against interpreting this as researchers acting as the world’s saviours and instead understanding that our work as researchers must both keep in mind and serve those “whose lives might profit or lose most by our collective efforts” (p. 52). This informs how I view the intended outcomes of my research, and thus how I have gone about conducting and writing it. It is my hope that this project will contribute to broadening the dialogue on collaborative projects in journalism in a way that favours outcomes that best address the information needs of community members. Or, as Mosco (2009) puts it, to push journalism to find a way forward that circumvents the tension of “information that wants to be free and a capitalism that wants to use it for the singular purpose of creating surplus value” (p. 76).

2.6. Theory and Literature Related to Research Questions

As noted in the introduction, my research is centred on the collaboration between the Benny library and CBC Montreal. I use this project as a case study through which to answer the following research questions:

- Can collaboration with libraries improve (local) journalism, and contribute to a strengthening of community trust and engagement with news and information?
 - a. How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration address labour and how was the work distributed?
 - b. How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration reach local communities and in what ways did it contribute to civic engagement?
 - c. What insights into the issue of power in both journalism and library systems can be gleaned from the CBC Montreal/Benny library collaboration?

2.6.1. Labour

Labour in both journalism and libraries has been well documented. Given that the literature available is so wide, the specific focus of this thesis is the concept of labour commodification. A commodity is a good that satisfies a human need and that is sold on the market for a monetary sum (Fuchs, 2024a, pp. 15-16). Commodification refers to when something that is not a traditional commodity is turned into one (p. 71). The commodification of labour means that “in capitalism, humans are structurally forced by the labour market to sell their labour-power to survive” (p. 71). Thus labour, which is not a traditional marketable good, is turned into a product that can be sold for the given market rate. When labour is commodified, it is “made to give up control over the means of production” (Mosco, 2009, p. 131). This means that the worker, irrespective of their area of employment, does not get to decide the price of their labour, nor do they have absolute say over their output, and thus they enter in a “struggle for control over the value generated from production and exchange” (p. 131).

Labour commodification in journalism is an especially salient topic and has been written about by the likes of Christian Fuchs (2024a), Kathryn Hayes and Michelle O’Sullivan (2024), Vincent Mosco (2009), Tai Neilson (2021), Robert G. Picard (2009), Vincent Pickard (2020), and Dallas Smythe (2009). Mosco perhaps writes the most compellingly about labour commodification in journalism. He notes that labour commodification in journalism began before digitalization, when the printing industries lost thousands of jobs to the mechanical shift to electronic systems of typesetting (p. 13). However, today’s digital systems have expanded this development. Media companies slash their staff while forcing whoever remains to take on multiple jobs. Print reporters can now also serve the role of editor or graphic designer, and broadcast journalists can film, report, and edit themselves (p. 13). This ability that the media companies and news organizations have to eliminate labour and overburden existing staff helps them further maximize their profit (p. 13). Of course, this is done at the expense of both the staff and their product, but so long as the system remains profitable little else matters.

This is echoed by Neilson (2021) who has written extensively on how digitalization in the media industry has led to workers being asked to increasingly do more work with dwindling resources. The labour of journalists is especially prone to exploitation given the fields unpredictable nature (breaking news, needing to be available to speak with sources at all times,

developing stories, etc.), the burden of deadlines, the pressure to keep up with the news and maintain a constant online presence (pp. 58-59). Often, much of this additional labour goes unpaid since it is considered to be ‘part of the job’ (p. 49). Given that “employers make a profit by paying workers less than their labor time is worth,” it is in media companies’ favour to maintain a system in which journalists have come to expect and accept that they will have to do a certain amount of unpaid labour (p. 49). Thus, the labour of journalists is commodified, and the monetary capital of media companies is multiplied.

Labour commodification can occur in the public sector, too. As Cathy Eisenhower and Dolsy Smith (2010) explain, both the library and librarians must “constantly justify their worth to university administrations, municipalities, and corporate trustees to ensure continued funding and self-preservation” (p. 314). Thus, the existence of libraries should not be taken for granted as they too have to prove to those who control the purse strings that their labour and product are worthy of continual investment.

Further complicating things is the fact that the labour of LIS workers is largely immaterial (Dyer-Witheford, 2010; Eisenhower & Smith, 2010; Rodger & Erickson, 2021). Immaterial labour refers to work that is not primarily focused on the making of physical objects, like factory work, but rather “involves the less tangible symbolic and social dimensions of commodities” (Dyer-Witheford, 2010, p. 265). Given that the labour done by library workers has a limited physical impact, the work itself is often called into question and as noted above, is made to justify itself (Eisenhower & Smith, 2010, p. 316). Ergo, library workers must justify their labour, or rather commodify it, in order to prove that it has a market value.

Immaterial labour is largely tied to communicative, cultural, information, and knowledge work (Dyer-Witheford, 2010, p. 265). This makes immaterial labour “very difficult for capital to measure and control [as] much of it depends on aptitudes and skills acquired and exercised outside the formal workplace” (p. 266). In the case of the library, librarians can be seen as information and knowledge workers given their traditional role of assessing information, cataloguing it, and transforming it into collections (Seale, 2010 p. 221).

Moreover, the work done in libraries also includes emotional labour (Rodger & Erickson, 2021). This is labour that requires the worker to “regulate their emotions in order to accomplish their job” and that deals with the challenges of expressing the right emotions as dictated by

workplace expectations (p. 2). Given that library jobs require constant levels of personal interaction, which can be both charged and challenging, and that staff are held to very high customer service standards, library work is highly tied to emotional labour (pp. 2-3).

Emotional labour is deeply related to gendered and affective labour, since historically, jobs that required emotional labour were more likely to be done by women than by men (Rodger & Erickson, 2021, p. 5). Affective labour is meant to either produce or change the emotional experiences of people, something that occurs frequently in the library as staff are expected to intervene and deescalate myriad social interactions daily (Hune-Brown, 2023; Rodger & Erickson, 2021, p. 5). Emotional and feminized labour has been traditionally undervalued. In this, we see that librarians have had to work within a “bureaucratic system of rules and principles that guided their actions because they were not seen as leaders or professionals in their own right” (p. 5).

In a similar vein, the work of Lia Frederiksen (2014) has been useful for situating how public librarians and library workers face increasing budget cuts. Frederiksen calls these cuts “gendered austerity” given that they especially target women and their labour (p. 143). Gendered austerity is a twofold issue. First, Frederiksen explains that library work is gendered given that it is rooted in care and operates on the imperative of helping people (p. 149). The care sector is largely associated with women, and thus its labour is often undermined by budget cuts that have a ripple effect on staff and patrons (Frederiksen, 2014). Second, cuts to library services affect women most deeply, especially those who are poor or working class, because they depend on public spaces and services more than other groups (p. 143).

Similarly to how the job and budget cuts in journalism require the remaining workers to do more for less, budgetary cuts to the library also undermine the labour of library staff, given that they too are asked to do more with or for less. In both cases, these cuts affect the communities that receive services from journalism and libraries. Hence, we see that both fields face challenges when it comes to getting their labour to be properly valued and ensuring that they are not being exploited. Labour plays an important role in this thesis given that I seek to explore how the adoption of a collaborative spirit could assist both institutions in their labour shortcomings and help redistribute equitably the work that needs to be done in order to meet the information needs of the people.

2.6.2. Civic Engagement

The labour of the public can be understood as a type of civic participation. In critical pedagogy, civic participation refers to the imperative that all people have to be involved in the processes of learning and democracy. Giroux (1997) highlights that “democracy is not a set of formal rules of participation” but rather “the lived experience of empowerment for the majority,” thus true democracy requires the public to engage with it directly (p. 268). For Giroux, democracy and practical learning are intrinsically linked. hooks (2003) also advocated for the importance of people’s participation in democracy, with special importance placed on conversations in which diverse ideas are explained and shared (p. 44). Hence, democracy does not exist in a vacuum, nor does it exist for a select few. It requires the active participation of all citizens in order to be truly felt.

In the realm of journalism, participation is often viewed through the lens of engagement, which can be understood as the ways in which news organizations consider and interact with their audience (Batsell, 2015, p. 7). Equally, engagement has been linked to the trust that the public has in journalism, with one unable to exist without the other (Robinson, 2023). Institutional trust is an important concept for civic engagement given that low levels of it leads to low levels of participation, which is especially true for marginalized people (Eryaman, 2010, p. 133).

In journalism, engagement is an increasingly popular topic, as newsrooms realize how important an involved audience can be for their survival (Batsell, 2015). Though, as Batsell (2015) makes clear, getting the audience to engage in a meaningful way is a particularly hard task for journalism given that it involves trust and relinquishing a certain amount of control (p. 63). However, given that journalism’s past is one besieged by racism, sexism, and colonialism, Callison and Young (2020), suggest that journalists should perhaps take a more modest and constraint approach in how they procure information and engage with the public (p. 63).

Martina Riedler and Mustafa Yunus Eryaman (2010) call on librarians to rethink their view of libraries as neutral sites and instead begin to view them as sites of “situated social action, in which library pedagogy is constituted through diverse conversations about different ideas and values that shape library formation and functioning” (p. 91). Basing themselves on the work of Paolo Freire, they argue for the implementation of a “transformative and community-based

library (TCBL)” (p. 91). The TCBL model identifies libraries as “democratic and educational” spaces whose goal is to encourage an “interactive process” between a community of learners (p. 93). This model fosters civic engagement because it views the library as a liberatory space in which community learners connect and share their knowledge with each other and library staff. This directly challenges the typical view of the library as a space in which information is handed out from the top (librarians) down (patrons), instead knowledge is brought into the library and shared across boundaries.

Elsewhere, Eryaman (2010), this time basing themselves in the work of Giroux, calls for a library system that can help foster radical democratic and civic participation. In this view, libraries become communicative spaces in which democracy occurs (p. 138). Eryaman calls specifically for the implementation of these spaces in marginalized communities, given they tend to have low levels of institutional trust, with the hopes that these spaces provide the necessary setting to foster democratic exchanges (pp. 135, 138). Moreover, the impetus of rebuilding the public’s trust in institutions must fall on the shoulders of the institutions (in this case the library, but the same goes for the media), and accordingly libraries should “promote inclusion and participation in the context of disparities in information [...]” (p. 133).

When journalism is at its best it encourages participatory democracy, empowers citizens and helps build informed communities (Batsell, 2015; Carlson, 2019; Hanitzsch, 2007; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009; Robinson, 2023; Wenzel, 2020). When libraries are at their best, they are spaces that are safe, free, democratic, and trustworthy (Buschman, 2021; Carlson, 2019; Eryaman, 2010; Wojciechowska & Topolska, 2021). In short, if there are sizable portions of the population who do not have adequate access to information or outlets for engagement, institutions that take democracy seriously, like libraries and journalism, are not doing their jobs right.

2.6.3. Power and Knowledge

Expanding on the idea of adequate and broad access to information, we are presented with the power/knowledge relation. Critical pedagogy calls for the examination of existing power structures and of the narratives they uphold. Giroux (2009) highlights that humans are the creators of all history and knowledge as well its constraints, and thus suggests that all students (though, this can be understood as anyone who does not possess the power to produce

knowledge) must face the fact that society has “incorporated them ideologically and materially into its rules and logic” (p. 47). By confronting this reality, students are able to begin the process of deconstructing the relationship that power and knowledge have and move towards leading a “self-managed existence” (p. 47).

Though journalism occupies the space of ‘power making’ and not ‘power holding,’ it is inextricable from power (Canella, 2023, p. 213). This is because the media represents a space in which power is decided, yet it does not have the ability to enact laws (p. 213). Journalism’s function is instead to consolidate knowledge which people can use to be participating members of society (p. 213). Journalism’s relationship with power is further complicated by the fact that the field also lays claim to being society’s safeguard from tyranny by holding the powerful and wannabe powerful, in the political and corporate realm, to account (McChesney, 2008, p.118). This is what Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) calls the “power distance,” which refers to the distance that a journalist has to the loci of power and the degrees to which they confront it (p. 373).

Hanitzsch (2007) has also made the case that the validity of journalism is largely reliant on its knowledge claims (p. 375). Journalism’s knowledge claims are propelled by the ongoing discussions of objectivity in the field, which still largely assumes that fact and value can be separated and then tasks journalists with uncovering the truth (p. 376). Furthermore, Callison and Young (2020) argue that journalists must “think through the systems they are operating within, and what kind of experts they are, as well as what kind of expertise they are deploying” (p. 8). They highlight how knowledge, power and discourse are deeply related, and much like critical pedagogists, call out how these all relate to structural inequalities.

Similarly, Library and Information Studies must reckon with the power that the library, as an institution, exerts. This means looking at the power that the field has, whether that be social, political, or economic, over how information is produced, circulated and consumed and how this has led to the proliferation of an unequal access of information and culture that should be available to all (Budd, 2003; Eryaman, 2010; Gustafson, 2017; Hussey, 2010).

John M. Budd (2003), using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, argues that libraries employ symbolic power but tend not to recognize it (p. 19). Power, in this case, refers not to its physical assertion through domination, but rather it is represented through an “effort at persuasion, influence, and success” (p. 19). Budd contends that since libraries create and distribute content to

the masses, they are engaged in the act of cultural production, which is a form of symbolic power (p. 22). This power lies in the fact that “libraries do not simply respond passively to communities' stated desires [...] they help to construct the desires and expectations of the communities” (p. 22). Thus, as cultural and knowledge workers (and producers) it is necessary that library workers actively confront their power and go about deconstructing it.

This is echoed by Maura Seale (2010) who calls out typical library standards that assume that “information is predominantly procedural and politically neutral” and that “legitimize the gatekeeping functions of librarians and their role as authority figures” (p. 222). Instead, Seale advocates for the incorporation of more user-generated content, such as blogs and message boards, into the field of information literacy (p. 233). This aims to push up against the institutionalized understandings of information literacy as “dichotomous, objective, and apolitical,” and instead advocate for a “critical approach to knowledge production” that aims to “enable the discussion of inequities in knowledge production” (pp. 229-30).

In the realm of critical pedagogy, the relationship between education (knowledge) and power is inextricable (Darder et al., 2009; Darder et al., 2017). If we are able to extend the idea of education beyond the classroom, then we are able to understand how both journalists and library workers can play the role of educator (Eryaman, 2010; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018; Riedler & Eryaman, 2010). As has been established by critical pedagogists, the power to inform the masses is a privilege that should be shared amongst all and not retained by any single entity (Freire et al., 2018; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2003; McLaren, 2009). These thinkers call for a radical redistribution of knowledge to see through the creation of a system in which education is participatory and liberatory. In order to achieve this, the teacher (understood as the possessor of knowledge), and the student (the knowledge seeker), must be viewed as having a relationship that is collaborative rather than one rooted in domination (Eryaman 2010; Freire et al., 2018; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994, 2003; McLaren, 2009). Thus, a collaboration between libraries and journalism must not only take power into consideration, but it must also look into its reproduction and aim to deconstruct and redistribute it.

Conclusion

To conclude, this literature review has highlighted key studies and concepts in the fields of Journalism Studies, Library and Information Studies (LIS), and critical pedagogy, and also on the

topics of labour, civic engagement and power. In this, I hoped to demonstrate the validity and necessity of journalism and libraries collaborating, and how such partnerships can help address issues in both realms. Moreover, I aimed to make clear the gaps that exist in the literature regarding collaborations, most notably the fact that very little has been written about it in the Canadian academic sphere. The remainder of my thesis will be spent explaining my own research, how it addresses these gaps, and hypothesizes ways forward.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction: Methodology and Theoretical Underpinnings

This research focuses on the collaboration done between CBC Montreal and the Notre-Dame-De-Grâce Benny library through the CBC/Radio-Canada's *Collab* program. Specifically, it seeks to introduce the project and its participants and explore the impact that this collaboration has had on local journalism. In this, this research aims to highlight strengths and weaknesses of this collaboration and suggest possible ways forward by exploring the subthemes of labour, civic engagement, and power.

The research done in this project is qualitative and employs event observation, semi-structured interviews, and reflexive thematic analysis. This approach was chosen because it allows for a flexible, albeit well-informed, interpretation of data (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 4). Qualitative research closely resembles real life, insomuch that it allows words to be used as data and does not focus necessarily on achieving objective truths but rather leans on the experiences of people and the subsequent interpretations of the researcher (p. 6). Given that my research is driven by people, their experiences, and my understanding of them, a qualitative approach is the best fit for my analysis.

This research used multiple methods in order to obtain a well-rounded understanding of the *Collab* initiative, the *Gem of an Idea* project, and the *How to Tell Your Story* event. This includes two event observations in which I detail how the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop unrolled and four qualitative semi-structured interviews with the following people: a librarian who worked on the *Gem of an Idea* project, an employee from CBC Montreal who also worked on the project, an employee from CBC (at large) who oversees the *Collab* project nationwide, and a participant of the *How to Tell Your Story* event. The data collected using these methods was analysed thematically and serves as the basis on which I answer my research questions. Linking all of these methods together are the use of reflexivity and the theoretical framing of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy shapes how I see myself as a researcher as well as my moral understanding of how research should be done. It is a framework that stresses a non-hierarchical approach to learning, meaning that as a teacher or a researcher, one must be able to not only meet students where they are at, but also be able to recognize that both parties (teacher and student) need to partake in the learning process (hooks, 2003). Additionally, critical pedagogy is

committed to applying its theories to real-life practice (Darder et al., 2009; Fassett & Warren, 2007; McLaren, 2009). In the context of higher education, when academics extend their knowledge beyond the walls of the university, the work they do “dispels the notion that academic workers are out of touch with [...the outside] world” (hooks, 2003, p. 43).

When approaching my data analysis, I based myself in the qualitative and thematic principles that Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2013, 2022) outline in their books. Namely, these include the commitment to a critical and questioning outlook, a reflexive positioning of myself as a researcher, and the understanding that there are no singular or objective answers to be found (2013, pp. 10, 20). Moreover, my use of qualitative interviews is informed by participants using “their own words” to describe their experience, and through a “co-construction” of meaning between researcher and participant (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.79). Consequently, these interviews include the point of view of not only me as a researcher, but more importantly of media workers, a librarian, and a participating member of the public.

3.2. Reflexivity

Braun and Clarke (2022) define “reflexivity” as the “practice of critical[ly] reflecti[ng] on your role as a researcher, and your research practice and process” (p. 5). Being reflexive as a researcher means that you recognise the value that subjectivity, awareness, and situatedness have on your research (p. 5). Equally, it means locating yourself in your research and ensuring that the theory you use to inform your practice are aligned with one another (p. 14). This requires that researchers develop a process of critically reflecting on how knowledge is produced and their role in producing it (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 37). They state that reflexivity is an essential part of qualitative research, and “can be seen as part of ‘quality control’” (p. 37).

Braun and Clarke (2022) identify three types of reflexivity that a researcher can use in their reflection process. They include personal, functional, and disciplinary reflexivity (p. 14). Personal reflexivity requires that we take into consideration how our values, background, and life experiences shape both our research and the knowledge it produces (p. 17). Functional reflexivity refers to “giving critical attention to the way our research tools and process may have influenced the research,” this means taking into account how our research process, for example using in-person interviews, can affect our outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 37). Disciplinary reflexivity asks us to contemplate how our academic disciplines or professional backgrounds, as

well as theoretical or philosophical aspects that we believe in, impact the research that we are producing (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pp.14, 18). In short, these are all things that reflexive researchers will take into consideration throughout their process in the hopes of enriching the knowledge produced.

In order to put reflexivity into practice, Braun and Clarke (2022) call on the researcher to reflect on some of the following questions:

- How are your positionings and/or life experiences related to your topic?
- What assumptions do you hold about your topic?
- How might your participants perceive you?
- Where and how do you occupy positions of privilege and marginality in relation to your topic and your participants?
- And are you an insider researcher (a member of the group you are studying) or outsider (not a member)? Or are you both? How might this shape your research, and your relationship with your participants? (p. 19).

In my own research process, I have reflected on how my social positions and personal history have influenced my interest in the topic, how I have conducted my research, and how I go about analyzing it. My research is undoubtedly influenced by my academic background in journalism, which includes a bachelor's degree, and this research which I am doing as part of my Master's in the discipline. My years of academic immersion in the field have in turn shaped how I view and understand journalism and the media. Moreover, my professional background working in a public library, and my genuine belief in both collaborative relationships and my interest in critical pedagogy, all contribute to how I put theory into practice in my research.

These positions of course create assumptions in my research. I am assuming that others, whether that be CBC workers, library workers, or the public, are also interested and enthused by these collaborations. I have approached my interviews in a way that allows me to have these projections and assumptions known by my interviewees and that encourages their discussion and refutation. In this, I have taken to making my positionality known to my interview participants; when I felt like I was being assumptive in our discussions, I tried to promptly address it. I've

noticed this most in how I came up with and ask my questions. Often, I asked a question because I wanted an answer to an assumption I held. Instead of just asking my question, I tried to open up the discussion by letting them know why I was asking the question and where I was coming from. For example, I asked a member of CBC Montreal what role trust played in their project, but I prefaced it by mentioning my own understanding of trust in journalism as well as my own assumptions that the project was a means to foster community trust. Thus, I have tried throughout my research to have reflexivity be a process and not a one-off action, as Braun and Clarke recommend (2022, p. 19).

Accompanying my understanding of reflexivity is the work of Denna L. Fassett and John T. Warren (2007) scholars of critical communication pedagogy, who describe the importance that reflexivity plays in their understanding of applied critical pedagogy. They explain how reflexivity allows the researcher to “imagine the role one plays within systems of power,” and to see how we are “both products and producers of communication, of strategies and tactics [...]” (p. 86). Further, they emphasize that “reflexivity is the process of exploring how we, as teachers and researchers, create the phenomena we observe, through our assumptions, values, past experiences, language choices, and so on” (p. 50).

Fassett and Warren explain that reflexivity is tied to praxis in that neither represent end destinations, but rather that both are processes (p. 51). Praxis, in the critical pedagogical sense, “calls for teachers (teacher-students) and students (student-teachers) to reflect and act together, collaboratively, in order to transform the world” (p. 51). In this relationship, teacher or researcher act with their student or research subject to create a better world for everyone, as opposed to exerting their power over their subjects with the goal of upholding the traditional hierarchical institutions of knowledge (p. 52). Thus, when approaching my research, I have aimed to be reflexive and to see the research process as one that is about working with information and with involved people to create a knowledge product that can be of use to others outside of myself.

3.3. Event Observation

Observing is a useful tool in research as it gives the researcher the opportunity to witness how a certain person, group, or institution, engage with an activity, event, or practice thereby allowing them to gain access and knowledge on beliefs, values, interests, and the everyday lives of the participants (Brennen, 2025, p.187). It is a methodological tool that requires the researcher

to come into contact with their subject and actively engage with them. Hence, some have suggested that such observations be seen “not as a specific research technique but instead as ‘a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers’” (p. 187). The researcher must take into consideration how they will gain access to their subject, determine what their role will be in the observation, learn how to take detailed field notes, mitigate the disturbance that their presence might bring to the event they are observing, and ensuring to the best of their capabilities, that their descriptions are not interpretations (Brennen, 2025, p.187; Creswell, 2007, p.135).

Observation is thus more complex than just viewing or watching your subject. This one method contains others like listening to learn, descriptive writing, and reflexivity. These methods are also influenced by the degree of participation the researcher undertakes. Bonnie Brennen (2025) describes four categories of observer, specifically the “complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer, and complete participant” (pp. 188-9). For the purpose of my study, I am interested in the ‘observer as participant’ and the ‘participant as observer’ roles. My research includes two event observations, which I conducted on two separate dates. Both events were the same iteration of the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop which took place at the Benny library. The first event occurred on February 8, 2025, and the second on April 12, 2025. I first reached out to the team at CBC Montreal in November 2024, and after establishing contact, they were open to having me attend both events.

At the first event, I assumed the role of “participant as observer,” which saw me participating in the workshop as any other member. My notes were geared on what I was experiencing as a participant and not about the general group dynamic. Though, I also tried to understand, as Brennen (2025) suggests, “the meanings of actions within the community from an insider’s position” (p.189). Only the staff from CBC Montreal knew that I was a researcher, I did not solicit any of the participants, my notes did not include any identifying details of participants, and I left immediately after the activity ended.

At the second event I took on the “observer as participant” role, in which I identified myself to the group as a researcher, but I did not participate in the activity. Instead, I sat in on the event but stayed to the side and took notes on what I observed rather than what I experienced (p. 189). This time though, after the event, I approached participants and asked if they’d be

interested in being interviewed as part of my research. To those that expressed interest, I gave them my email address and encouraged them to reach out if they wanted further information.

The decision to use event observation in my research is twofold. First, it proved very beneficial to my own reflexivity and to the assumptions that I had prior to the event. Attending allowed me to see how the workshop truly unfolded and to understand more deeply why people seemed to want to attend. I then used this knowledge to write better, more in-depth interview questions, greatly modifying the ones that I originally planned on asking. As Brennen (2025) notes, this type of on the ground research allows the researcher to “analyze their own experiences to get at a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of others and discover how those experiences relate to the larger culture” (p. 193). In my case, it allowed me to discover that people attended these types of events for myriad reasons and equally for no reason at all.

Second, it felt necessary to attend the workshop that I planned to focus my research on because there would be no other opportunity for me to truly understand how these events take place. They are not recorded or posted online, and the participants would not be easy to locate if I didn’t attend the event myself. Thus, attending gave me the opportunity to understand how the workshop runs, to see and hear the questions, concerns, and conversations that get raised, to see how dynamics play out, and to potentially speak and interview the people who attended. All of this significantly enriched my understanding of the event and subsequently my research.

3.4. *Qualitative Interviews*

Qualitative interviews were chosen for this study because it is the method best suited for capturing how participants (CBC workers, library workers, and workshop attendees) feel and understand these types of collaborative projects. As Braun and Clarke (2013) write, qualitative interviews are useful for “getting a participant to talk about *their* experiences and perspectives, and to capture *their* language and concepts, in relation to a topic that *you* have determined” (p.77, emphasis theirs). There seems to be no better way to obtain the personal thoughts and opinions of those involved than to interview them in a way that simulates as best as possible a constructive conversation (Brennen, 2025, p. 32).

Specifically, I used the semi-structured interview which involved having some prepared questions and themes that I wanted to cover with each interviewee but also remaining open to the interview changing course as the discussion progressed (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p.73). The

semi-structured interview opened up the opportunity to discuss different or unplanned topics with participants and for me to ask original follow up questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 78). The ability to conduct a conversation that is both well-organized and flexible is the advantage of this interview structure.

According to Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale (2018) the qualitative interview is useful for understanding and exploring the ways that subjects make sense of their worlds given the exclusive access they provide. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that interviews are well suited for “experience-type” and “construction-type” research questions (p. 81). My research questions are very much interested in the personal experience that people have with information and how these experiences help people construct their social realities, and thus I deemed interviews as essential for achieving their answers.

I wanted participants to feel comfortable speaking about what they gleaned from the event/project. In order to best achieve this, I focused on formulating questions that were short and simple (see Appendix 1). Braun and Clarke (2013) highlight the importance of asking questions that are “non-leading” to encourage interviewees to share their own perspectives (p. 83). I tried to pick questions that would inspire participants to reflect on aspects of collaboration, which I could then use as a means of deducing the outcome of the workshop and the potential for other collaborative projects. Moreover, these interviews provided the necessary information for discussions about improvements that can be made to future events to occur.

All in all, my questions and expectations were guided by Paolo Freire’s critical pedagogy that places discussion and reflection at the forefront of all knowledge creation (Freire et al., 2018). Additionally, I was inspired by Sue Robinson’s (2023) foundations of trust building, which is why I aimed to conduct interviews that encouraged self-reflection (for both my interviewees and myself) with the goal of fostering discussions in which people felt cared for and heard.

Given that this thesis is about the collaboration between Benny library and CBC Montreal and how the outcome of the project affected the public, it was my goal to interview at least one person from the library, the CBC, and a workshop participant. I emailed the communication department at CBC Montreal (See Appendix 2) to inquire about the *Gem of an Idea* project more broadly and to ask if there was anyone who’d be willing to be interviewed about it. I then got

into semi-regular contact with a CBC communication officer who eventually put me into contact with someone at CBC Montreal who oversaw the project (interviewed April 28, 2025), as well as someone who manages the *Collab* project more broadly (interviewed April 22, 2025). Both were interviewed virtually, on Google Meet and Zoom respectively. In both cases, the interview lasted about 35 minutes.

Next, I sent an email to the Benny library (see Appendix 3) asking if there was someone who dealt with the *Gem of an Idea* project and if they could put us in contact. Unlike the CBC, the names of employees at the Benny library and their email addresses are difficult to locate, so I send an email to their general email address. A librarian who had gotten the project off the ground reached out to me. Though they were no longer working at Benny, they were still interested in being interviewed. The interview took place in person, at the library that they now work at, and lasted almost an hour (interviewed April 17, 2025).

Lastly, at the end of the second *How to Tell Your Story* workshop, I asked three people if they'd be interested in being interviewed and I gave them my email to contact me. One person did reach out and we met at the Bibliothèque et Archives National du Quebec for an in-person interview that lasted about 30 minutes (interviewed April 24, 2025).

My virtual interviews were recorded directly from my laptop with screen recording. My in-person interviews were recorded with a dB9 Pro, a handheld digital voice recorder. Each interviewee was required to sign a consent (see Appendix 4) which outlined the intentions of the interview, how data would be stored, and asked them how they would like to be identified in the research. The interviews took place between April 17 and April 28, 2025. Interview data was transcribed using Otter AI, a transcription tool which translates speech to text. Given the possibility of errors with the transcription tool, any quotes used in this research have been double-checked for clarity and accuracy.

The personal aspect of interviews makes it that ethical issues are sure to arise. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) emphasize “knowledge produced depends on the social relationship of interviewer and interviewee, which again rests on the interviewer’s ability to create a stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events for later public use” (p.10). To best mitigate this, all participants signed a consent form outlining that they could end the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable and that their interview data could be

withdrawn up to 30 days after their interview. I also let them know that if they had any concerns over what they might have said they could contact me to revise it.

3.5. *Thematic Analysis*

The data gathered from the event observation and qualitative interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (TA). As per Braun and Clarke (2022), TA is a qualitative method used across disciplines for “exploring, interpreting and reporting relevant patterns of meaning across a dataset” through the use of codes and coding (p. 224). More specifically, I use reflexive TA, which requires the researcher to be “subjective, situated, aware and questioning” and to embrace “reflecting critically” on ones’ own research practice and procedure (p. 5).

My own thematic analysis follows the seven steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013), which are:

1. **Transcription:** TA can only begin after all data has been collected and subsequently transcribed. I waited till I was done with my event observation and interviews, then transcribed everything either by hand (in the case of the event observation) or with the help of Otter AI (interviews). (p. 204)
2. **Reading and Familiarisation:** This involves re-reading or re-listening to the data collected, essentially immersing yourself in your data and taking notes on all that you are observing (p. 204-5). I reread all of my transcriptions and took initial notes about my findings.
3. **Coding:** In my case, I used complete coding which requires identifying “*anything* and *everything* of interest or relevance” to the answering of my research questions (p. 206, emphasis theirs). My codes are “research-derived,” hence they are based on my own theoretical understandings from which I implicitly derive their meaning (p. 207).
4. **Searching for themes:** After coding, I combed through my codes and looked for themes. A theme must “tell [...] us something meaningful in relation to our research question,” and thus they were selected based off of the codes I identified in my data and the questions I was seeking answers to (p. 224).
5. **Reviewing themes (producing a thematic map):** Themes were then placed in a thematic map, which aims to find and refine connections between themes, upon which

arguments can be built (p. 232). This method is also useful for implementing an aspect of “quality control” to data analysis inasmuch that it allows you to see if your codes, themes, and research intentions align (p. 233)

6. **Defining and naming themes:** Once my themes were chosen and mapped, they were given definitions that provided a “clear focus, scope and purpose” for each theme (p.249). The act of defining each theme ensured that they were the right fit for my analysis and that they helped illustrate a coherent and solid understanding of my own data.
7. **Writing-finalising analysis:** Lastly, my analysis used my codes and themes to exemplify the importance of my data and how it relates and answers my research questions. As Braun and Clarke recommend, this is to be done by “guid[ing] the reader as to what sense they should make of the extract, and why it’s relevant and interesting” through the use of both data extracts and analytical narratives (p. 254).

Thus, the raw data that I’ve collected through my event observations and qualitative interviews was transcribed, reread, coded, themed, analysed, and transformed into the flesh that is used to justify my research and thesis. The aim of my thematic analysis is therefore to best understand my data and to be able to take this understanding and make it digestible for my reader. This relates with the theory of praxis written about by political economists, like Mosco (2009), who stress that knowing must be the “ongoing product of theory and practice” (p. 35). This refers to the idea that knowledge must be more than a “purifying conceptual thought” and must instead “grow [...] out of the mutual constitution of conception and execution” (p. 35). In short, praxis highlights that “the division between research and action is artificial and must be overturned” (p. 4).

Moreover, given that this research is guided by the theories of critical pedagogy, which stresses a democratization of the learning process, it is important that my work be both academic and accessible to the people who stand to gain the most from it. Working to present my research in a way that is hopefully accessible to most is a way to bridge theory and practice. This echoes an idea presented by bell hooks (1994) who wrote that we must actively work towards creating theory that can advance our intellectual movements and that celebrates the value that comes from being able to share our knowledge (p. 70).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate how collaborations between journalism and libraries might help strengthen local journalism. In this, it sought to also explore how labour, civic engagement, and power could be affected by such collaborations. I used the collaboration done between the Benny library and CBC Montreal as my case study. More specifically, I used their writing workshop, *How to Tell Your Story*, as an example of a collaborative project that can be undertaken.

This chapter reports the findings of my two event observations and four interviews. These findings are analysed using Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's (2013, 2022) reflective thematic analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3. It begins by briefly explaining the CBC *Collab* partnership program, the *Gem of an Idea* event series at the NDG Benny library and the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop, in order to provide the appropriate context needed to understand the data. Next, I present the four main themes of my analysis, namely (1) sharing labour and expertise, (2) access and exposure, (3) trust, and (4) meaningful connections, and I provide representative examples from my data for each. I conclude this section with a summary of my findings.

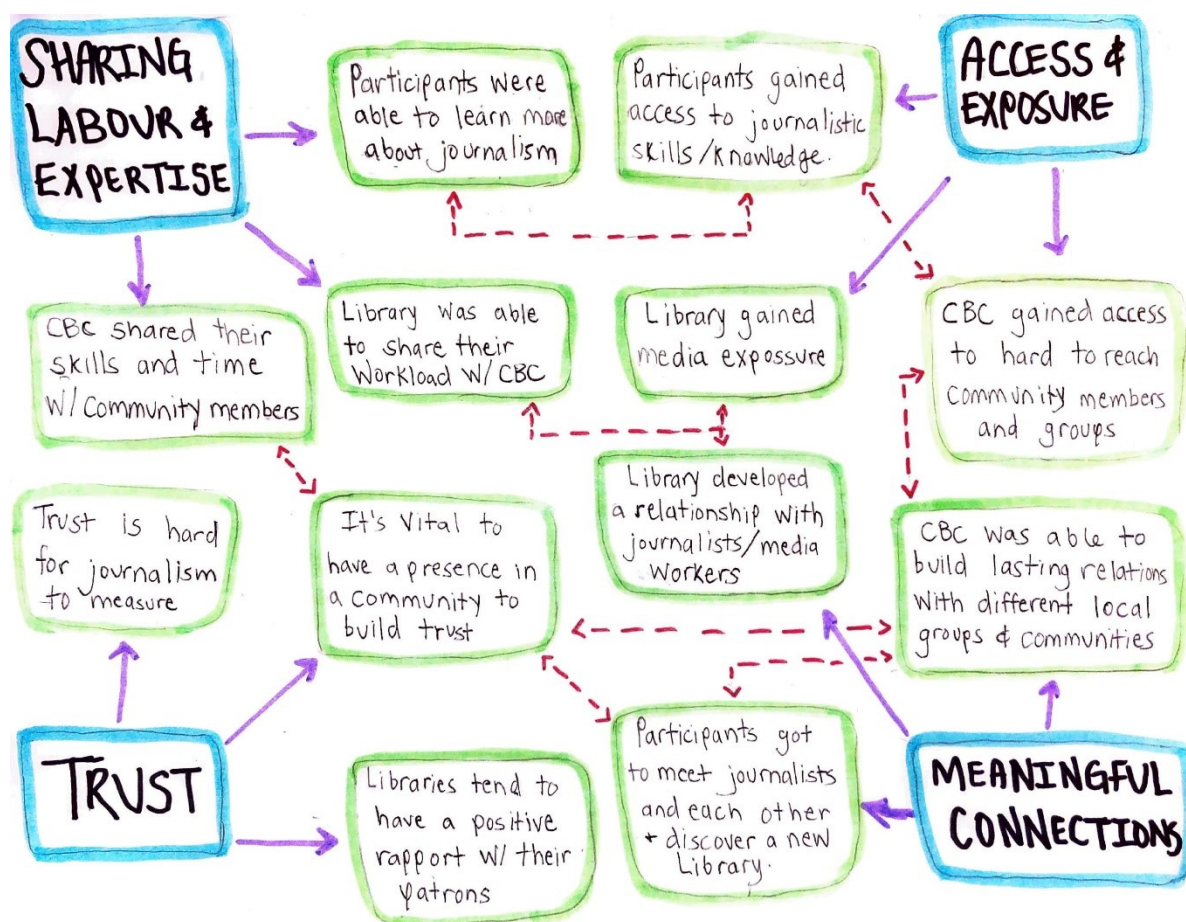


Figure 2. Thematic Map of data findings.

Table 1. Thematic Map Legend

Colour	Meaning
Blue Box	Main theme to be analyzed
Green Box	Data relating to main theme
Solid Purple Arrow	Theme directly relating to data
Dotted Red Arrow	Data that relate to each other

Table 2. Interviewee Legend

Interviewees	Interviewee codes/labels	Interview Location	Date of Interview	Length
Participant from April Event	Participant	Library	April 24, 2025	28 minutes
CBC Montreal Manager, oversees the <i>Gem of an Idea Project</i>	CBC1	Google Meetings	April 28, 2025	31 minutes
CBC (at large) Collab Manager	CBC2	Zoom	April 22, 2025	30 minutes
Librarian who worked at Benny when the project first started.	Librarian	Library	April 17, 2025	53 minutes

Table 3. Event Observation Legend

Event	Event Observation Type	Location of Event	Date of Event	Approximate Length
Event1	Participant as observer	Conference type room at the NDG Benny library	February 8, 2025	1:00- 2:50 pm, scheduled for an end time of 2:30pm, but was eclipsed by 20 minutes.
Event2	Observer as participant	Conference type room at the NDG Benny library	April 12, 2025	1:00-2:30 pm, did not go over the scheduled time slot

4.1. *The Collab Initiative, Gem of an Idea Project, and How to Tell Your Story Workshop*

To provide the necessary context for the four themes discovered in this analysis, the following sections explain the *Collab* partnership program undertaken by the CBC and Radio-Canada across Canada, the *Gem of an Idea* project that took place at the Benny library by CBC Montreal, and the specific *How to Tell Your Story* workshop, which was one of many events put on at the library by CBC Montreal. Interviewees spoke in detail about all three projects and offered insights and explanations that are necessary for understanding the subsequent data.

4.1.1. *Collab*

Collab is the name of CBC/Radio-Canada's partnerships program with Canadian public libraries. As per their website, the program was launched in September 2021 and has seen the broadcaster visit over 230 communities across the country (“Collab: CBC/Radio-Canada in your public library”). CBC2 gave additional contextual information about the program, saying that the idea for it began in 2019 when the president of CBC at that time, after speaking with different CBC/Radio-Canada teams, realized that there were already many partnerships between journalism and libraries happening. So, they decided to create a fund to go towards these collaborations and that would allow CBC/Radio-Canada to partner with libraries across the country.

CBC2 explained that libraries made sense to them given their shared similarities. “We’re both publicly funded organizations, [...and] we both want to help people gain knowledge from diverse opinions,” they said. Further, the broadcaster also wanted to engage with underserved and underrepresented communities. They understood that libraries were already doing that, and so the partnership was a great fit.

Thus, for clarity, *Collab* is the name of the cross-Canada partnership program. It is the vessel that holds all the projects, initiatives, events, workshops, etc., that happen with regional CBC/Radio-Canada teams and local libraries. Hence, *Gem of an Idea*, which will be discussed below, is the name of the partnership that CBC Montreal has with the Benny library in Montreal’s Côte-Des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce borough. *How to Tell Your Story* is the name of a specific workshop that has been given through the *Gem of an Idea* partnership. Both *Gem of an Idea* and *How to Tell Your Story* fall into the *Collab* vessel.

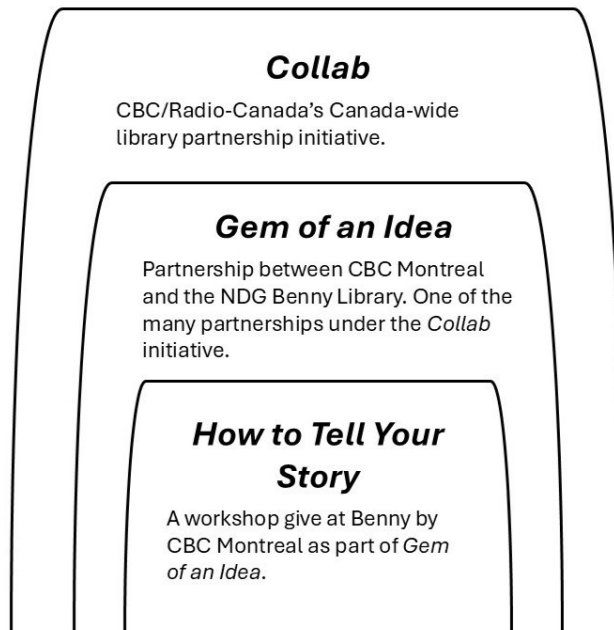


Figure 3. An illustration of how Collab encapsulates both Gem of an Idea and How to Tell Your Story.

4.1.2. Gem of an Idea

As noted above, *Gem of an Idea* is the name of the partnership between CBC Montreal and the Benny library. The choice of the Benny library, as opposed to one of the over 40 other public libraries in Montreal, highlights how bureaucracy is balanced with the desires of the partners and the needs of communities. Given that it was CBC Montreal and not Radio-Canada that had the funding for this project, they needed to ensure that they could do their activities in English, or bilingually (English and French). CBC1 explained why Benny was chosen:

“Benny was the ideal location for us because of the demographics of the neighborhood, the flexibility of the administration of the library to take a chance on a project, and also, there was a sense with the Benny library that they were willing to work with other partners that they either had, or we had.”

CBC Montreal’s goal with this partnership, according the CBC1, was to hold monthly programs at the library to let their presence in the community be known. Further, they also ran marketing promotions to let people know about *CBC Gem*, which is a free streaming service. CBC1 further explained:

“[the partnership allowed the CBC] to let people know that *Gem* was available, so that they could get content in a way that was free. So that was kind of a way in for us to say, hey, we'll screen something that's on *Gem*. We'll have a conversation with you. We get to meet you. We get to understand the community. You get to understand us, and now we've made a connection. So, we kind of used *Gem* as a bit of a container, but really it was around storytelling and community connection.”

CBC also wanted to be able to reach underserved and underrepresented groups and to hear their stories, which will be discussed further in themes two, three, and four. Since the end of 2023, *Gem of an Idea* has been offering different activities, events, movie screenings, and workshops at the Benny library, albeit no longer on a monthly basis.

4.1.3. How to Tell Your Story Workshop

How to Tell Your Story is promoted as a writing workshop. I attended two iterations of this workshop, the first on February 8, 2025 (Event1) and the second on April 12, 2025 (Event2). At each workshop, I took detailed notes about how the event unfolded, the general interactions between participants and animators, as well as my own interpretation of the events. Given that none of the workshop participants consented to directly participate in this research and were not interviewed, my observation notes do not name anyone, nor do they reveal any sort of identifying traits of individual people. My notes on interactions are generalized and were made because I find them to be helpful for both my understanding of events and because they were aligned with the themes that were illuminated in my interviews.

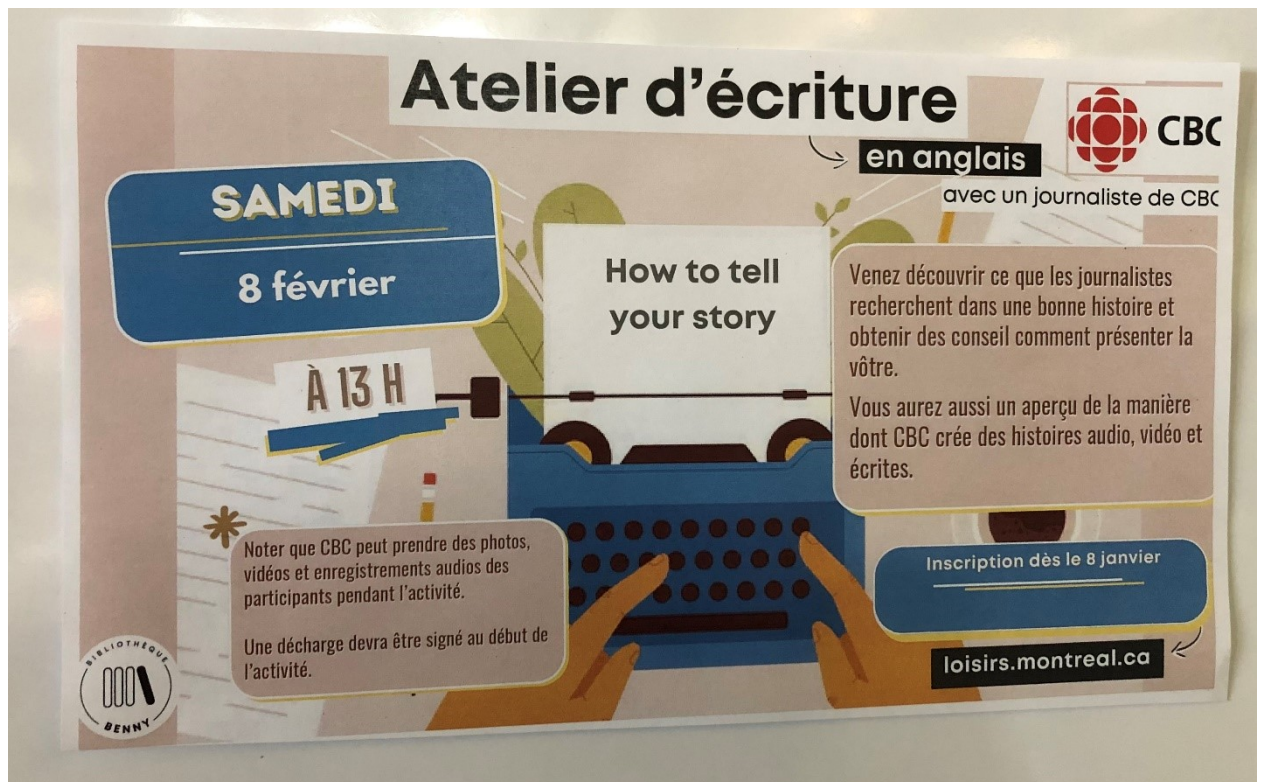


Figure 4. Poster advertising the How to Tell Your Story workshop. Taken at the Benny library on February 8, 2025.

Both workshops took similar forms. They both took place in the same conference style room located on the second floor of the Benny library. The room had great natural light, floor to ceiling windows, a large table with chairs, where participants sat, and a projector that the CBC team used to show us slides that helped guide their presentation. At Event1, there were 9 participants, excluding myself, and at Event2, there were 5 participants, excluding myself. Both events were led by the same two CBC employees, one communications worker and one journalist. The events unfolded as follows:

- It began with a brief introduction by the two members of the CBC team. They spoke about their roles at the broadcaster and how the workshop would unfold.
- Next, they moved into their presentation which was guided by a projected slideshow. They started by presenting an idea (e.g. pitching a story), then they asked participants what they thought (e.g. have they ever pitched a story). Participants proceeded to answer the questions and which furthered the discussion (e.g. they explained that they felt nervous when contacting the media).

- At both events, the CBC team ended up answering more questions than they asked. I observed that many workshop participants were interested in the behind-the-scenes aspects of journalism and were curious to learn more. Their questions reflected this curiosity, and I found the CBC team to be quite transparent at explaining the small details that tend to go into researching and producing a news story.
- In order to give participants a better idea of how a news story is created, they showed some examples of CBC content (in both cases they used the *This is Montreal* podcast and the *Let's Go!* radio show). They explained how pre-interviews are done, how guests are selected, and what they look for when selecting stories. This seemed to be done to give participants a better idea of how they can pitch their own stories to the media. For example, the CBC team explained at both events the 5 Ws and 1 H (who, what, where, when, why, and how) of journalism pitching and how to achieve this in a story.
- Once the lecture part of the workshop was complete, the CBC team presented a group activity which involved participants breaking up into groups (at Event 1 the group was split in two, and Event 2, given there were fewer participants, everyone worked together) and tasking them with coming up with a news story and then pitching it to the CBC team.
- This activity is not unlike what I was taught in my introductory journalism courses that I took for my undergraduate degree in journalism. From what I observed, this activity is supposed to allow participants to put what they just learned into practice. After each group presented their pitch, the CBC team broke down what they did right and what could be further improved on.
- This is where the workshop concluded. The CBC team shared their emails with the group and encouraged them to stay in touch.

This is a workshop that CBC Montreal has been giving for years. CBC1 explained that one way that CBC tries to give back to communities is through workshops and education. The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop is one that they often give to community groups, not-for-profits and entrepreneurs as a way for them to better understand what journalists look for in a story.

“A lot of people get very frustrated when they're like, hey, I pitched the newsroom, and they didn't take my story. And what they realize is they're not

actually pitching a story. They're not pitching a person doing something for a reason, and they actually just are not really clear on how storytelling works in the media from a broader perspective" (CBC1).

Thus, this workshop is meant to give people the appropriate tools needed to pitch their story to any mainstream newsroom. Both Event1 and Event2 presented participants with the tools necessary to be able to pitch their stories to a media outlet. Of course, there are limitations to what can be learned in 90 minutes, but overall, they managed to explain the importance of knowing who you are pitching to (e.g. if you are writing an environmental story, pitch it to an outlet that covers the environment), they went over what should be included in a pitch and its format, and emphasized the very real possibility (and reality) of rejection.

4.2. Theme 1: Sharing Labour and Expertise- A Delicate Dance

The first theme discovered in this research that was mentioned in some shape or form by all interviewees had to do with sharing. Though none of the interviewees were specifically asked about sharing, the concept came up in different ways with each of them. Each spoke about the different ways that collaborations promote and facilitate sharing among those involved. This can be a sharing of expertise, access, space, skills, or labour.

The librarian highlighted that one of the benefits of working on the *Gem of an Idea* project with CBC Montreal was that the labour that went into it was shared. They described that the CBC Montreal team was very open to the library's ideas and was willing to put in the work necessary for the project to work. When asked if the project saw them undertaking more work than their mandated load and responsibilities they said:

"I didn't find it was that much extra load. They [CBC] were really, really nice with us. Like, oh, do you want us to do the visual? [...] tell us if we need something we don't want to [...overburden you]. Like, they are aware. We had a period where I was the only one out of my three colleagues [working] and I was like, you know, struggling with the [work] load and they understood 100% and every time that they could take a load of things, they [did]. They were [...] really, really, amazing."

The librarian explained that most of the work done by the library during the collaboration occurred behind the scenes. They had meetings with the CBC Montreal team to brainstorm ideas, were engaged in email and telephone exchanges, and helped set up the library for events. There are some events that required library staff to be a bit more hands on; for example they did a miniatures activity with their 3D printer, so they had someone helping with the machine. At the *How to Tell Your Story* workshops that I attended, I only saw the librarian (not the one interviewed in this research) briefly at the beginning when they came to ensure that the CBC team had everything they needed. From there, it was the CBC who ran the entire workshop.

Furthermore, the sharing of labour and the apparent willingness of the CBC team to take on as many responsibilities as needed, was deeply appreciated by the librarian. They spoke about the never-ending work that needs to be done in a library and how this workload is not always reflected in the number of personnel working. When asked to think about suggestions for future collaborations and about what could have been done better, the main thing that they stressed was how hard it is in a library setting to actually get projects off the ground. “Taking the time to sit down and developing new things is really, really hard, and when you do, it takes so much time,” they said. “Sometimes this huge idea that we know is going to work [...] takes so long to just like be approved and have the resources [given to it].”

However, they noted that when they worked with the CBC, the projects and activities that got pitched were put into place in a matter of weeks, given that the CBC had the resources and motivation to pour into the project. “Journalism is much faster than libraries. But it’s good, we need that push,” the librarian said.

As mentioned above, CBC1 said that it was important for them to share their expertise with members of the community to better equip them with the tools necessary for approaching the media. Moreover, CBC2 explained that the CBC wanted to ensure that the *Collab* project put communities at the centre of their focus in order for the relationship to be reciprocal. “We didn’t want this to be extractive. So, we didn’t want this to be like, you know, our journalist is going to a community doing a story, extract some testimonials from people, do some interviews, and then [leave]” (CBC2).

The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop is a good example of how journalism can share its expertise with community members. I observed at Event1 how some participants learned that a

journalistic piece needs to be rooted in facts and needs to be of general interest to the public. As CBC1 noted earlier, some people get frustrated when their pitches are not picked up, however, often it is because they are not pitching something that can be told journalistically. Of course, this is not necessarily the fault of civilians given that they do not have the training and knowledge of a journalist, but workshops like this can offer a free and accessible way for them to gain these skills or at least understand the profession a bit more closely.

This was echoed by the participant who said:

“I found it interesting to know how much of the material that gets used by the CBC, for example, comes from the motivation of any regular citizen sending it in. So, it felt encouraging in a way, because it means, oh yeah, anybody could go ahead and tell their story [...] So that's kind of really cool. And also, it's interesting to learn more about precisely like the structure of what would make a story, [...] or] a news article, interesting for the journalists receiving it.”

They explained that they attended the workshop because they were curious about the field of journalism and wanted to learn more about what it was all about. They found it helpful “to learn about how to structure your thoughts in a way that would be more palatable to the media.” In this, we can see how these types of workshops offer transferable skills to interested and curious community members, in a way that is free, accessible and that doesn't require an incredible time commitment by either participants or animators (the workshop is 90 minutes long and CBC repeats them).

When asked what other collaborations they would like to see their local library engage in, the participant spoke about the possibility of other skill sharing workshops. They imagined being able to turn to the local library to learn how to change a bike's tire, learn an instrument, or learn a skill like sewing. They explained how many libraries have the physical space for these activities, and they would just need community volunteers to come and give workshops, much like CBC Montreal did.

Skill sharing workshops like the one the participant imagined would seem like a feasible activity that could be undertaken by the library. However, the librarian explained how libraries have to toe a fine line between what they can offer and what would be considered another

institution's domain. For example, they explained that when they were working at the Benny library, all movie screenings first had to be offered to their neighbouring cultural centre, Maison de la culture Notre-Dame-de-Grâce – Monkland. Only if the cultural centre passed on a screening could the library show it. Furthermore, the library sometimes steps on some toes when they host activities that are similar to the ones offered by non-governmental and local organizations. The librarian explained how this is especially hard to balance in Montreal, given that there are so many different organizations to take into consideration and to compete with.

In some way, the public and their time and attention must also be shared amongst those (libraries, NGOs, cultural centres, and other public and private organizations) vying for it. Each party is reliant on the public and their subsequent participation for their funding and continued existence. Whether you are a public or private entity, you are reliant on people showing up to your events and utilizing your services in order to continue to justify the existence of your operation. The library is not immune to this either and thus must compete in the same 'market' as everyone else. Hence, even though it would seem like the essence of the library is one of sharing and cooperation, it equally needs to contend with bureaucratic challenges and must vie with others for the attention and time of the masses.

4.3. Theme 2: Access and Exposure- Knowing and Being Known

The second theme worth exploring is that of access and exposure. Each interviewee was seeking to gain some form of access or exposure from these collaborations. Interestingly, each was seeking this from one another. As will be explored further in this section, CBC was seeking access to smaller, local communities, while the library wanted to gain media exposure from the CBC. Participants, in turn, were seeking to gain knowledge about journalism. In each case, we can observe the desire to either know someone or to be known; in some cases it was both.

At least part of the reason that the CBC was initially interested in partnering with libraries is because of their hyper-locality. The hyper-locality of the library lends itself well to the CBC's desire to be more hyperlocal themselves. Moreover, this allows for CBC to potentially gain access to small communities without having to have their own physical location, meaning that the CBC would not need to establish a physical newsroom or office in these smaller communities in order to gain access to them. They instead could share the library's already existing physical infrastructure. CBC2 explained this as follows:

“Libraries are way more local than us, right? Like, there are more than 3300 branches across the country. So, for us working together, there was a real benefit to go into places where we don't have a presence, we may have some knowledge, but not as much as the library does. So, working together was really helpful. Going with the advice of the library, who's there helping us to maybe guide, recommend, suggest things that would really speak to the community. That was the goal.”

Furthermore, CBC2 also mentioned the importance of having journalists or staff at physical events, much like the ones occurring with the *Collab* project. This allows the broadcaster to be able to make connections with community members in real time, and as will be discussed further in Theme 3, begin to slowly build trust. In this too, the relationship that *CBC* has nurtured with the library has proved to be pivotal for reaching communities, inasmuch that libraries, and the local groups that they have met through the library, are able to provide advice on how to best reach certain groups. They possess knowledge on their community and patrons that the CBC teams don't, and thus partnerships allow access to this knowhow.

“The [CBC] team would come and say, oh, we're going to do this, but the local experts were like, ‘you could, but it's not going to work for this-and-this reason. Perhaps you should, you know, change it a little bit.’ For this particular example, we know it's very difficult to engage teens, and they tend to withdraw from the activities that they've signed up for. So, one of the youth associations suggested [that we] always have an incentive at each workshop so that kids would come back” (CBC2).

In addition to access to local communities, CBC also wanted to gain access to stories. This could be local, community-based stories, or more personal pieces that the CBC might otherwise have a hard time accessing and producing themselves. CBC1 explained that with the *Gem of an Idea* project, they wanted their presence in the community to be known, and they wanted people to feel comfortable approaching them and sharing their stories.

“I would say the biggest thing we always try to gain is new stories. So, we want to connect with people, and we want them to know that we're here, we're

in your community. If there's a story to tell, if you feel like you have a question, that you're like, I don't know who I could share this with, that we're there. We're available. So that awareness is one of the biggest things. If the community has, again, stories to tell. That's because we're only as good as the stories we get to tell. We're the broadcaster, we're not the story maker. People have the stories, and we broadcast the stories" (CBC1).

Thus, we can see how the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop is a good entry point for the goal of familiarizing people with the CBC and also equipping them with the tools and confidence needed to pitch and tell their own stories. As I observed at Event1 and Event2, this workshop is very much geared towards getting people comfortable with the idea of pitching and telling their own stories. This is done through education (giving people the necessary journalistic skills) but also through giving participants access and exposure to CBC employees. These workers, at least at the events that I attended, did their best to validate and encourage people in their desire to tell stories and in their curiosity of journalism.

When asked if local journalism could do anything better, the participant said that they struggled to find local news about their neighbourhood. When reflecting further on that, they couldn't name a single news source that could help inform them on their borough. They said that if they needed to find something out, they'd try to ask their roommates, neighbours or a Facebook group. They said that "the local news has to go where people are consuming it," which made them wonder about whether libraries were best suited for this. They added that "it would be useful, I think, for journalists to be more present in the community. I don't know that library events are the prime way to do it." They explained that despite their own love and appreciation of the library, amongst people that they know in their age group, there are very few of them that actually go to the library.

This point is interesting because CBC1 mentioned that one of the demographics they were most interested in reaching with the *Gem of an Idea* series were people aged 30-49. They were trying to find a way to appeal to this age group and to get them more involved with their events.

"People are busy and getting people who are 30 to 49 to hang out in the library for an event in the evening or trying to find the right time to do that is hard.

The folks that sign up for our storytelling workshops are sometimes a little bit

older because they have more time. I see parents coming in with kids, and they're looking for programs for their kids. And then I see older people who've got more time on their hands, but that busy adult in the middle, they're not taking a lot of time out in the middle of their day to take a storytelling workshop" (CBC1).

This is one of the issues faced by both journalism and libraries, in that you can curate a perfect event for a certain demographic, but that doesn't guarantee that people show up. This is why forming meaningful connections is one of the most important outcomes and goals of collaborative projects, as will be further discussed in Theme 4.

When asked what they had hoped to gain from the collaboration with *CBC*, the librarian said that it was important for them to gain exposure for the library. They said that they've found that "people are not really aware of all the services that we offer at the library," but that they (library staff) do not have the time or resources to do extensive advertising for their services. However, being connected to the *CBC* Montreal staff gave them the opportunity to do some on-air promoting for the library. For example, when there was a teacher strike, they were able to do a radio phone interview and let people know that libraries across Montreal were open and were providing different youth programming to help parents.

This sort of exposure is valuable to libraries who do not have the means of reaching such a wide and diverse audience on their own. When asked what their local library could do better, the participant pointed out that they should have their resources, like instruments and board games, out on a visible display where people can see them. If not, they hypothesized that people, like them, forget or don't know that they exist. This is also something that I observed at Event1 in which participants were discussing amongst each other all of the things that one can borrow from the library that are not books. Some were surprised to hear that in the Montreal library network you can rent museum passes, sports equipment, and instruments. Considering that funding for libraries is largely dependent on the public using its facilities and resources, my findings suggest that the exposure that libraries can gain from partnering with journalism should be seen as enticing and important to library management.

4.4. Theme 3: Trust-Building and Maintenance

The third theme that is worth discussing is that of trust. This theme was most directly touched upon by CBC1 and CBC2, who both offered interesting insights into how the CBC approached the topic with their collaborations and how they view it more broadly. Though trust was not directly spoken about by the librarian, participant, or at the event observation, the way people view and appreciate the library says something about the perhaps unspoken trust that they have in it.

Trust, as explored in Chapter 2, is discussed in the literature as a vital component of journalism. It was thus surprising to hear from CBC1 that trust was not a goal they set for themselves with this project. Their view on trust expands beyond the library partnership, but was interesting to consider, nonetheless.

“I have a lot of philosophical thoughts on trust, because it's a really big word, and you know, you don't have trust in a single transaction, you build it, right? Let's just have a philosophical conversation, aside from the library thing, if the goal of the thing that you're doing is to have trust after it's over- that's a really hard thing to measure [...] because if you talk about trust with another human being, I believe it's a jar full of pebbles. Every time something happens, you put something else, another marble, another pebble, in the jar, but you don't have to do very much for you to dump that whole jar out in one go” (CBC1).

Ergo, it's easier and more realistic to set a project's goal, as was the case with *Gem of an Idea*, around concepts like storytelling and community connection, as opposed to the large and sticky concept of trust. That is not to say that trust is not needed in a project like this; it is and the excerpt from the interview with CBC1 above confirms its importance. However, there are many things to take into consideration that influence a person's trust in the media.

“If you are of a certain demographic, for a whole host of reasons, you may not trust media. It might have nothing to do with CBC. What's your country of origin? What's your experience with media? How do you feel that your community is represented in media? [...] Did we want awareness [...]? Yes. Did we want them to come face to face with some real journalists, where they probably hadn't had a conversation with a real journalist before? Yes, and we

want[ed] to use content that was accessible to them, to have conversations, and to be able to meet people. That was also a goal” (CBC1).

Hence, as CBC1 explains, trust, although important, was not the main goal nor was it a target that they were trying to achieve. Rather, they were focused on promoting their presence in the community and having members of the public meet journalists. Given that everyone’s relationship with the media is different, they placed their energy and resources on trying to have organic conversations with people as opposed to tackling the issue of people’s trust or distrust in the media head-on.

CBC2 was also asked about the importance of trust and for them the emphasis was really on the presence that CBC has in a community and how the aspect of being “seen” affects trust. For them, this presence is part of showing communities that CBC cares about them and is especially important in places where people may be more wary of the broadcaster.

“[Some] people just don't want to hear about us, or they're not even happy, or sometimes [it's] more difficult to establish contact with them. So we'll go, but it just takes so much time to establish the context [...] One of the big gains is to better understand these people. Why do they think like that? Why do they think that the CBC doesn't care about them? Or is bias? It's really important to hear these things. So a lot of projects, it's to just go there and listen and understand. Like, what's the reality? What's the challenges? What, what are their realities, in terms of cost of living, in terms of, like, school [...] So being there is really key to understanding, and then it's establishing the trust” (CBC2).

Similarly to what CBC1, CBC2 also emphasized the importance of establishing contact and engaging in conversations with people on the ground. In both cases, we see that while trust might always be present in the background, the goal is always first to just make themselves known in a community and to listen to what folks have to say. Trust then, can be seen as a hard concept to address outright and also as one that is equally always present and being toiled with, whether people realize it or not.

Trust was not a concept that was spoken about directly by the librarian or by any of the interviewees in regard to the library. However, I did observe at Event1 and Event2 the trust that

people put in the library. At both events, I heard people saying that they weren't really too sure what the workshop was about, but that they assumed it would be interesting because the library was holding it. I also heard at both events how people would use the library as an entry point to converse with someone new. This took the form of asking if Benny was their local library and if it wasn't, what was. Furthermore, when asked if anyone at the library had any pushback about CBC being involved with Benny, the librarian said that they hadn't heard any negative comments, even though they were expecting some. While possibly not a direct example of trust, these observations indicate that the patrons participating in these workshops tend to trust what the library offers.

4.5. Theme 4: Meaningful Connections- The True Outcome

The last theme that will be explored in this chapter is that of meaningful connections. The biggest outcome that I observed was the building of productive relationships with diverse, and often hard to reach, people and groups. When I asked each interviewee what they felt they gained from these collaborations, they each mentioned in some shape or form, the relationships that were made, especially when these relationships were maintained after the event.

The first meaningful connection that became apparent to me was between the library/librarian and the CBC staff. As was mentioned in Theme 2; by forming a connection with the CBC, the library was able to gain valuable exposure to a greater audience. Not only did they gain exposure, but as mentioned in Theme 1, they were also able to provide their patrons with activities and events, through *Gem of an Idea*, without having to overburden staff with an excess of work, given that labour was shared with CBC staff working on the collaboration. Of course, this worked in CBC's favour too, as they were able to use the library's physical space and gained a certain amount of access to their patrons.

When asked about the future of collaborative projects with journalists, the librarian spoke about the near endless possibilities that they saw in working with people, like those at the CBC, who have many resources. They spoke about the potential of working not just with journalists, but with camera operators or radio producers to be able to offer different workshops and events to their patrons. They see a way of being able to carry on with such projects that balances the quantity of labour everyone must do and that still serves and interests of library patrons.

The participants who took part in these workshops also had the chance to form connections. That could have been with each other, as I observed people introducing themselves, speaking, and exchanging contact information. Obviously, I am not sure if anything of deeper meaning came from these chance meetings at the library once the event was over, but as mentioned in Theme 3, I observed people getting to know each other through the common connector of the library, asking each other what their local library is like and saying what they enjoyed about Benny.

Moreover, the participant I interviewed mentioned that they hoped that these collaborative projects and events would happen more frequently because they were “really fun” and a “nice way to meet people because the people that were there were not all necessarily from the neighbourhood.” Also, they said that they were first encouraged to go to the event by someone at CBC Montreal. Since attending, they’ve been able to get into contact with a journalist at the broadcast who has been helping them answer questions they have about journalism. Hence, participants can not only build connections with community members, but they can also meet and speak with journalists and media workers.

When asked to speak about the positive outcomes of the *Gem of an Idea* project, CBC1 said it “was the connections we made with community organizations.” They gave the example of how they had invited a community member to lead a beading circle activity at one of their movie screenings at the library and how they were able to stay in contact with this person. The continuity of these relationships is what is valuable to the broadcaster. CBC1 explained that if people keep coming to events or if they are able to work with the same community group on multiple projects, it demonstrates a certain level of trust being built.

Moreover, CBC2 said that sometimes an event might not seem like it was successful just based on the number of attendees, but that if they were able to engage in meaningful conversations with people, then they do judge them as a success. They pointed out how engaging with local communities is also good for journalists.

“Understanding the community can be helpful for someone who's at the end of their career, just to motivate them. [...] Some people in a station, sometimes have never been to a region, so for them to go into the communities is very eye opening. Same thing with the younger journalists as well [...] If you're young

and you just graduated, to be sent into a region and to have to be resourceful, to find your stories yourself, and to make connections. These have been great as well, just in terms of the learning curve of developing their career and progress into the profession” (CBC2).

Additionally, CBC2 said that they’ve heard from some teams across the country how these projects have helped with employee retention. There have also been cases of members of the public who have followed their workshops and who have been hired by the broadcast. These are outcomes that they found surprising, given that they weren’t what the CBC was setting out to achieve when they first started with *Collab*.

4.6. Summary of Findings

All four of the main themes that were developed through this analysis are interconnected. They build off each other to paint a picture of how these specific collaborative projects not only came to be, but also how they affected those involved. The people I interviewed expressed a genuine appreciation for these partnerships and saw the potential that they had for further growth. Projects like the ones discussed in this chapter take time to establish, they require a willingness to share resources and labour, a deep understanding of the communities they take place in, a nurturing of relationships, and the energy and motivation of those involved. Whether or not collaborations can serve to strengthen local journalism remains to be seen and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. However, what this analysis does make clear is that there lies immense potential in working together towards a common goal.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

I began my thesis research with an interest in seeing what sort of improvements could be made to (local) journalism if it showed a willingness to collaborate with libraries and vice versa. In this, I wanted to further explore how labour, civic engagement, and power were addressed and confronted in these types of collaborations. As explained in Chapter 4, I used CBC/Radio-Canada's *Collab* partnership project, and more specifically CBC Montreal's *Gem of an Idea* initiative, as my case study to explore my research questions. In this chapter, I seek to use the information and insights collected through my research and literature review to begin to explore how collaborations impact local journalism, and whether these projects might be beneficial for the communities involved.

5.1. RQ1: How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration address labour and how was the work distributed?

This discussion begins with labour because all progress is made through and by the work of the people. I have focused on the labour done by those involved in the collaboration, most notably library and CBC staff. I am wary of any proposed 'innovations' that fail to consider the labour that will be required to fulfill projected solutions. Thus, in my own research, I was curious to explore how the *Gem of an Idea* project affected the labour of the staff involved and what was done to ensure that work distribution remained equitable.

As outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2, both the labour done by journalists and media workers, as well as by librarians and library workers, can be subjected to commodification, devaluation, and austerity. Thus, I began by looking at how labour was assessed in the *Gem of an Idea* project. It was made evident to me by both the librarian and CBC1 and CBC2 that a clear line of communication was formed between participating libraries and CBC teams. CBC2 explained how, for the most part, *Collab* offers a "turnkey" opportunity for libraries, inasmuch that they are not required to invest money in the project. With their project fund, CBC is able to take responsibility for setting up the event, dedicating the appropriate resources and staff, and taking care of content production.

This, of course, does not mean that the library was not required to put in any work. The librarian explained how they were engaged in numerous conversations with the broadcaster about myriad details pertaining to the project. The library, on top of providing the physical space

for events, also offers their community expertise, advocating for what events and workshops would work best for their patrons. Moreover, during the project, the librarian had to maintain their normal workload. As explored in Chapter 2, the labour done in a library is largely immaterial and emotional (Dyer-Witthford, 2010; Rodger & Erickson, 2021). This is a form of labour whose workload is hard to predict. The librarian explained how staff shortages, rapid digitization, and a general lack of resources in the public sector means that the library and its staff are continuously asked to do more with less. This mirrors the gendered austerity that Frederiksen (2014) writes about, in which labour that is generally associated with the care economy and women is often undermined by budget cuts that have a ripple effect on staff and patrons.

The *Gem of an Idea* project is a good example of how collaborations can be used to distribute labour in a way that benefits all of those involved. My research highlights how important this project was to both the library and the CBC; both were deeply invested in its success. In terms of labour, the library could not offer as much as the CBC, given their budget and staff restrictions. However, since the CBC has a fund for the *Collab* project, they could step in and fill in the necessary gaps. CBC2 explained that it was really important for them that the library be heavily involved in decision making and to ensure that they had a say in what would be offered to their community members. They didn't want them to feel like the CBC was just coming in and taking over the library's space; they wanted their projects to be something that would be of interest to the library and their patrons.

Additionally, CBC2 said that overall, the *Collab* project has garnered positive outcomes for their journalists and staff. They said that they received feedback from some CBC teams who've engaged with the *Collab* project about how it has helped with employee retention. They also mentioned that having journalists, both at the beginning and end of their careers, on the ground in communities has helped motivate these journalists by giving them insights on community connection.

Though it is impossible to say with certitude, provided that I only spoke to two CBC employees, I would speculate that these labour outcomes are perhaps influenced by the fact that these collaborations allow journalists/media workers to push up against commodification. It allows these workers to contribute to a bigger goal that lies beyond content production. As Fuchs

(2024a) explains, “[i]n the world of commodities, the ‘social relation between’ humans takes on ‘the fantastic form of a relation between things,’” hence, journalistic content presents social relationships, but we (the audience) are rarely introduced to the workers that produce these stories (p. 203). The projects and events undertaken by *Collab* allow for genuine human interaction between media workers and community members to occur. Whilst content production is still a required outcome of the project, there is a substantial emphasis on community connection that is fulfilled by discussing and listening.

Furthermore, by equipping ‘regular’ people with journalistic/media skills, the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop challenges the “taken-for-granted” nature that journalists must be the sole providers of news commodities and instead offers the opportunity for responsibilities to be shared amongst all those who are interested (Mosco, 2009, p. 134). Hence, these workshops see journalists using their labour to educate the masses, as opposed to creating a commodified good. This is deeply entwined with the philosophy of critical pedagogy which wants all theorizing and knowledge to be shared and “mediated through human interaction within democratic relations of power” (Darder et al., 2009, p. 13). When journalism is given the means, as seen through collaborations with the library, its labour output can be invested in educating communities through real, on-the-ground action, as opposed to manufacturing commodity products for mass consumption.

It is difficult to measure the success of these collaborative projects in numbers. The CBC was looking for better connections with local communities and the library wanted exposure, but these are not things that necessarily translate into usable metrics. The librarian said that statistics are one of the library’s only means of attaining financing. The library is reliant on having statistics, which can include the number of people who attend an event, the amount of library material circulated, or the number of questions answered in a day, in order to justify their day-to-day activities. This is not unlike the issues raised by Eisenhower and Smith (2010) who explain that the library is constantly asked to “justify their work” to those who control the purse strings, and as the librarian noted, these individuals rarely step foot in the library (p. 314). By using stats as a means to leverage funding, library workers are put into a position where they have to commodify both themselves and the library, which is no doubt outlandish given that the library is largely believed to be a public good.

Journalism, which is also thought to be a public good, is no stranger to commodification. CBC2 explained that part of the criteria for any *Collab* project is content production, which could be a podcast, an article, or a television segment. Despite this, the goal of both the *Collab* project more generally, and *Gem of an Idea* specifically, was to garner connections with hard-to-reach community groups. For example, CBC1 said that they were trying to reach adults aged 30-49, who tend to be busy and might not want to dedicate the time to coming to a library event. Yet, no matter how one might picture an event's outcome, it's impossible to know what the turn out for it will be. Equally, even if an event has 50 people attending, who is to say that these are the 50 people CBC was hoping to reach? What is worth more: 50 people attending an event or making five new and meaningful connections? How much, in a monetary sense, is connecting with a single person worth? These are questions that are uncomfortable to answer, but the CBC, much like the library, must provide numbers to their board. Hence, teams involved in *Collab* projects are asked, amongst other things, to tally the number of people they connect with, the number of hours spent in a community, and the amount of content produced. CBC2 spoke about the challenge of balancing numbers with anecdotes, in order to ensure that they continue to get funding for their projects. Thus, we see how both the CBC and the library are still tethered to the need to provide statistics to back up their projects, which seems counterintuitive given that these are projects whose goal is broader community connection.

I was originally interested in collaborations because I hoped that they would offer a different way for both the fields of Journalism Studies and of Library and Information Studies to view labour. As I have found throughout my research, this aspiration did partially come to fruition. Sharing is the essence of collaboration. Being able to work together and towards a common goal is made even sweeter by the ability to pool resources, skills, and labour. The projects undertaken by the CBC and libraries demonstrates how this can be done without the need for cut-throat competition. This is further exemplified in the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop in which the CBC employees (at both events) made it clear that attendees could take the knowledge gained and write and share their stories with any news outlet. Hence, while the activity was put on by the CBC, and in some way advertised the different shows and services offered by the broadcast, the skills it offered were not specific to the broadcast and could be used to write and pitch a story to any news outlet.

The collaboration done at the Benny library shows what can be done when resources and knowledge are shared. The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop was animated by the labour and expertise of CBC Montreal and took place in a space provided by the library. Further, the decision to proceed with this workshop was made mutually between the two institutions. This was a workshop that CBC had given countless times, and the library believed it to be something that their patrons would be interested in. This was not a high-risk project, but it was one that came with the potential of benefitting the library with much needed statistics and a free program, the CBC with the ability to make direct contact with locals, and community members with the opportunity to learn more about pitching and storytelling. Thus, even though these might not be the most tantalizing events or projects, they still offer worthy rewards for all those involved.

5.2. RQ2: How did the CBC Montreal/Benny public library collaboration reach local communities and in what ways did it contribute to civic engagement?

My findings made clear the importance that connection played in the *Gem of an Idea* collaboration. They showed the opportunities that can arise by getting people more involved in, or simply introducing them, to local journalism. As outlined by Batsell (2015), newsrooms must seek out audience engagement to ensure not only that audiences continue to consume their product but also to interact and create rapport with them. Needless to say, meaningful engagement cannot exist without a certain level of trust. In this, Robinson (2023) states that any and all efforts of trust building must be understood as continuous and never-ending (p. 162). Beyond journalism, libraries too need their patrons to trust and engage with them. As seen in the section above, the library is largely dependent on statistics which are generated by their patrons. Thus, the health of both libraries and journalism are reliant on the bonds they can create with the people they wish to serve.

The understanding of civic engagement put forth in this research is informed by critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy espouses the belief that all people should be given the opportunity to engage in the democratic aspects of life. Democracy is not a set of rules of participation but rather requires constant engagement from an informed public for its flourishing (Giroux, 1997, p. 268). This engagement must take the role of dynamic dialogue since “[c]onversation is the central location of pedagogy for the democratic educator” (hooks, 2003, p. 44). Hence, when researching collaborations, I was interested in the ways that community members were

encouraged to engage with each other and the material presented to them. I was looking at whether the *Gem of an Idea* project and the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop were successful sites for civic engagement.

The two workshops that I attended seemed to prioritize getting those attending involved in the learning and creation process required for storytelling. In both cases, the two CBC employees giving the event were functioning as part-educator and part-mediator. They presented tips and insights into how to pitch your story, how to structure it, and how to ensure that it stands out to an editor. They also gave behind-the-scenes details regarding how radio shows are produced and more generally about how stories go from an idea to a piece of content. The information that they were sharing with the public was not unlike that which I received when I was taking introductory level journalism courses for my bachelor's degree. They were also mediators in the sense that they helped guide the discussions that occurred with each group. People in both groups asked questions to the CBC employees and also discussed amongst themselves topics relating to journalism and storytelling. Hence, the CBC workers were there to give information and also to guide thoughtful discussion.

Given that I did not speak to all of the people who attended these workshops, I cannot say whether everyone who participated found that the workshops left them feeling more civically engaged. However, based on what I observed during the events and my conversation with one participant, these types of workshops, in which media workers share their knowledge of the field with participants, do seem rife with the potential to be sites of civic engagement. The participant told me that they thought it was cool to learn that much of journalism “comes from the motivation of any regular citizen” and that learning this “felt encouraging in a way, because it means [that] anyone can go ahead and tell their story” (Participant).

These feelings of empowerment are deeply connected to what critical pedagogists, like hooks (1994/2003) explain as the liberatory power of theory. Though hooks spoke of this in the context of higher education, I expand her notion to any field or discipline in which one party has a monopoly on the knowledge that is used to influence the lives of the masses. We can see how this applies to journalism, whose ability to tell stories and control information flow directly affects entire communities. Thus, once again borrowing from hooks (2003), when academics, professionals, or experts extend their knowledge beyond the walls of their institutions they

“dispel the notion that [...they] are out of touch with [...the outside] world” (p.43). By breaking down the barrier of journalists as storytellers and the masses as consumers and instead sharing the knowledge and ability to tell stories with all, these workshops can encourage people to become active members in their communities. As hooks (1994) puts it, “education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor,” therefore when people are given the appropriate tools to be able to tell their own stories they are able to lay claim to the knowledge required for liberatory democracy to take root (p.14).

Another important aspect of civic engagement that was clearly illuminated in my research was that of access. The CBC was looking to collaborate with libraries in part because they saw it as an opportunity to gain access to local communities that they would otherwise have difficulty reaching. CBC1 pointed out that outside of major Canadian cities, the broadcaster’s physical locations are often very small or non-existent, since they do not have newsrooms in every community. CBC2 highlighted that this is not the case with libraries given that there are over 3,300 local libraries across the country, serving a wide diversity of people. Not only does the library offer valuable physical space, but their staff are also well-versed in their community’s needs and desires. Therefore, by collaborating with various local libraries, CBC gained on-the-ground access to a wide variety of people and community groups.

Through access comes the possibility of getting community members to participate and engage with the broadcaster, which as Batsell (2015) notes, is increasingly vital for the survival of newsrooms. Further, as Batsell makes clear, getting the audience to engage in a meaningful way is a particularly hard task for journalism, and this was seen with the *Collab* initiative since you cannot force people to participate in events (p. 63). One way to promote engagement is through embracing “acts of journalism” which involves newsrooms posting and encouraging user-generated content (Batsell, 2015, p.63). The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop is essentially a precursor for this type of content, provided that it aims to teach people how to pitch and create stories. However, it must be noted that user-generated content is also sometimes seen as an “inexpensive filler” for news outlets given that unlike the labour done by professional journalists, there is no guarantee that user generator content will be compensated monetarily (Zamith, 2022, p. 133). This not only shortchanges the ‘user’ who created the content but also journalists at large

who must now compete with creators who are willing (in some cases) to do for free the work that journalists would typically be paid to do.

CBC1 explained that they were hoping that by being physically available and present in a given community, citizens would take notice. They wanted people to be aware that the CBC was present and ready to answer questions and to hear their stories. In short, they wanted to make clear that “we’re the broadcaster, we’re not the story maker” (CBC1). Hence, the CBC, operating from the mindset that “we’re only as good as the stories we get to tell,” were trying to gain access to new stories from communities that are underserved and underrepresented in news media (CBC1).

Engagement is tied to the trust that the public has in journalism; with one unable to exist without the other (Robinson, 2023). Needless then to say that trust was a theme that came up often in my discussions with my interviewees. CBC2 explained how for them, the act of being “seen” and present in a region, especially regions who are wary of the CBC, was a key step towards understanding a community and establishing trust. Of course, and as they pointed out, this takes time and a willingness to invest in this process over the long term. This is echoed in Robinson’s (2023) writing, who notes that journalism needs to be able to reimagine their relationships with community members and must be willing to understand that trust building is continuous and never-ending (p. 162).

The tenuous relationship that journalism has historically had with trust makes it a hard marker to measure success upon. CBC1 explained this more thoroughly saying that when they set out on the *Gem of an Idea* project, they were not looking to necessarily build trust. This is not because it is unimportant, but rather because it cannot be measured. They explained trust as a process, much like putting pebbles into a jar. Each pebble represents a certain effort or act; however, it only takes a singular deed for the jar to be knocked over. This raises the point that trust must not only be built, but more importantly cautiously nurtured. This is perhaps why CBC1 said that one of the best things that came from the project were the meaningful connections they were able to forge with communities. Being appreciated and welcomed by a community and its members is what allows for trust to blossom and for journalism to be authentic.

These types of collaborations allow libraries to expand their reach and interests outside of the realm of books. The librarian said that there is always a certain amount of hesitance from the library in regard to speaking or working with the media. This is due to the political nature that journalism is viewed as embodying, which makes working with them challenging for a space that is supposed to be seen as neutral. However, as seen in Nicholson and Seale (2018), we must reject the idea that libraries are practical, neutral places, and instead see that libraries are very much influenced by the systems they exist within (p.5). This is echoed in Leckie and Buschman (2010), who describe the field of LIS as rather isolationist insomuch that it suffers from a resistance to the social and political world outside of the library's walls.

The *Collab* project can thus be seen as a way for libraries to challenge these isolationist tendencies and instead to engage with the world that exists all around it. The workshops and events that were given with the *Gem of an Idea* project demonstrate that the library can work with the media in a way that refuses polarization and instead aims to foster civic engagement. Interestingly, when asked if they had received any pushback from people, both the librarian and CBC1 confirmed that they hadn't. This perhaps shows that the library need not fear stepping outside of itself and working with existing institutions to address social issues. Adopting a collaborative mindset can help push the library out of its comfort zone and encourage it to offer new programs and events to their patrons.

5.3. RQ 3: What insights into the issue of power in both journalism and library systems can be gleaned from the CBC Montreal/Benny library collaboration?

Both the library and journalism, as institutions entrusted with the ability to inform the masses and with the capacity to collect, reject, and modify narratives and information, possess an incalculable amount of power. As has been seen in my data, often the power at play, both within these institutions and in their collaborations, is subtle and ethereal. Moreover, this power is not possessed by a single unit, it is multi-pronged with numerous faces. This description is not to sound unnecessarily mysterious, but rather to illustrate that trying to identify issues of power in the collaborative projects mentioned above is rather laborious given its complexity. This section will answer my third research question by teasing out the multiple aspects of power that need to be taken into consideration in order to understand how the collaborations observed in my research function.

Critical pedagogy holds that we must question and examine the existing power structures and the narratives they support. Only when we aim to deconstruct these edifices and return their power to the people can we engage in a true liberatory civic life. Therefore, under this lens, knowledge must be redistributed amongst the people and not controlled by a few entities. Political economy too, calls for an understanding of how power and wealth influence information's flow. It asks us to consider how factors like wealth, class, and ideology, affect the way power is asserted and distributed in society.

The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop offers a way of redistributing the power to inform. as I observed on two separate occasions, it is designed to teach people the basics of journalism writing and pitching, and to give people the opportunity to ask journalists/media workers their questions. At both workshops, people seemed most interested, or at least asked the most questions about, the behind-the-scenes aspects of journalism. They were interested in knowing how to approach people for a story, how interviews work, and generally how to go from an idea to a full-fledged media piece. The participant I interviewed spoke about how they enjoyed being able to go to the library to freely learn about a field (journalism) that they were interested in. They even hypothesised about other skill-sharing events that could take place at the library, such as learning how to sew or how to fix a bicycle.

This relates to the bigger topic of power and journalism. The media represents a space in which power is decided, and its function is to consolidate the knowledge that people use to be participating members of society (Canella, 2023, p. 213). Journalism's relationship with power is complicated by the fact that the field lays claim to being society's safeguard from tyranny by holding the powerful and wannabe powerful, in the political and corporate realm, to account (McChesney, 2008, p. 118). Thus, it is nearly impossible to disentangle journalism from power, and energy is better spent on instead trying to figure out how the field can share its responsibilities with the masses.

The workshop is a good example of how professionals, in this case journalists and media workers, can share their expertise with the public. This can be seen as a form of praxis. As Fassett and Warren (2007) explain, praxis refers to when a teacher or researcher act with their student or research subject to create a better world for everyone, as opposed to exerting their power over their subjects with the goal of upholding the traditional hierarchical institutions of

knowledge (p. 52). Although it's difficult to truly learn the ins and outs of the media in a 90-minute workshop, it did offer those attending an entry into the world of journalism. Progress must begin somewhere, and a workshop like this one is a good way for journalism to start deconstructing its historic monopoly over stories and information and to slowly start to redistribute it back to people who want to tell their own stories.

However, this is not to romanticize the workshop, *Gem of an Idea*, or *Collab* projects. Ultimately, the CBC and the library are still the ones who control the selection of events and workshops and who dictate how they run. The library, as explained by the librarian, tries to take into consideration the needs and interests of their patrons, but must also consider the popularity of an event. Even if an event is perfect for the needs of patrons this does not necessarily guarantee its popularity. Thus, the library is still at the mercy of statistics to prove that an event is important and worthwhile, regardless of its impact on a community.

Equally, the CBC has its own motives for these projects. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the CBC was looking to reach underserved and underrepresented communities. CBC1 explained how the *Gem of an Idea* project was looking to reach certain demographics in the Notre-Dame-De-Grâce neighbourhood. They were hoping to build a relationship in which community members felt comfortable sharing their stories with the CBC. Workshops like *How to Tell Your Story*, facilitate this by not only teaching people how to pitch and build a story, but also by putting them in direct contact with CBC staff. CBC1 explained that they wanted people to have the opportunity to come face-to-face with a real journalist and be able to converse with them.

As mentioned earlier, the CBC was interested in partnering with libraries because they have a physical presence in thousands of communities across Canada and have a close rapport with their patrons. Provided that libraries have a local reach that the CBC doesn't have, collaborating with libraries can potentially help address the hundreds of community news deserts in Canada (Lindgren & Corbett, 2025). When asked about where they go to find local news the participant interviewed realized that they actually had nowhere to turn. They spoke about asking roommates, neighbours, or trying to go directly to the source, but couldn't name an outlet or newspaper that offered them news about their borough. Though they had their reservations about libraries being the best alternative spot for local journalism to occur, they were adamant that there was a real need to have more community journalists on the ground. Through my own event

observations, I saw people who had their own personal and community-based stories that they wanted to tell. This leads me to believe that with the right tools, these individuals could begin to slowly fill the gaps left by shuttered local news outlets.

As mentioned earlier by CBC1, these events are a means of getting people to interact with journalists. Building a rapport and familiarity with your audience through in-person events is one of the ways that journalism can seek to foster engagement (Batsell, 2015, pp. 10-11). This engagement can be seen as a means to humanize both journalists and participants. CBC2 explained that having a physical presence in a community is one of the first steps towards trying to establish trust. They explained how certain regions of the country tend to have an unfavourable view of the CBC, but that regardless it is important to go to these places, establish contact, and listen to people. This gives the journalists/media workers involved a chance to actually meet the people in these communities, which is sometimes a first for them. Likewise, it gives community members a chance to speak frankly with media workers and to air their grievances in-person. Moreover, CBC2 said that it's important to have journalists who are on the ground for a positive context, and not because they are reporting on a murder or fire. It shows communities that journalists can work with them in a way that isn't sensationalist or extractive.

These collaborative projects, and their subsequent outcomes, exemplify a way to bring both people and journalists into discussion. This relates to power to the extent that it allows those who possess power (the institutions of journalism and libraries) to enter a collaborative relationship with the disempowered masses. It dismisses notions of domination (e.g. journalists entering a community to extract stories and leaving soon after) and instead offers an olive branch to those who want to be able to take control of the narratives that represent their communities. Of course, it must be understood that the CBC ultimately possesses a certain degree of editorial power as they have the final decision on what makes it to the press. Nevertheless, by equipping people with the knowledge of how journalists go about telling and pitching stories, the playing field can slowly be evened.

5.4. Summary: Can Collaborations Improve Local Journalism?

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I was interested in seeing if local journalism could be improved, in its capacity to reach more people and to get them to be more engaged with news and information, by collaborating with libraries. My research has shown that there are

many aspects that can be enhanced through collaborating with existing institutions. Specifically, I looked at CBC/Radio-Canada's *Collab* partnership project, and CBC Montreal's *Gem of an Idea* initiative, and how it can be used to redistribute labour between library and media workers, to foster community and civic engagement, and to deconstruct the power/knowledge dichotomy.

The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop in particular can be seen as an example of a low-stakes event that has the ability to serve the needs of all of those involved. It gives the library the ability to provide a useful workshop to its patrons without having to dedicate staff members to its animation. It offers the CBC a chance to interact with community members and encourage them to tell their stories. Lastly, community members can learn the skills needed to pitch and write their own stories. Further, it allows for the creation of meaningful connections amongst all involved, as both the workshop and the *Gem of an Idea* project more generally, seek to create a space in which people can come together, in the safety of the library, and attend free events that hopefully serve them.

However, these are not perfect projects. Both the library and the CBC are dependent on people being willing to take the time out of their busy schedules to attend these events and workshops. Even though they are free and chosen with the community in mind, there is no guarantee that people will attend in great numbers, nor does it assure that the targeted demographics will participate. This is one of the risks of doing community work, and it's challenging when considering that both the CBC and the library are dependent on people participating in order to maintain their funding.

Nonetheless, the collaborations presented in this research are realistic in scale and outcome. They paint a convincing picture of what can be achieved through partnerships, but they also show the difficulties and challenges that can arise. Ultimately, this research set out to better understand the existing collaborations being done between journalism and libraries in Canada. CBC/Radio Canada's *Collab* project shows that by dedicating the appropriate funding, resources, and willingness, collaborations with libraries are not only doable but can also help journalism build lasting relationships with communities that might otherwise go unreached.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis began with a discussion on a crisis facing journalism. Canada-wide, hundreds of newsrooms have closed, public trust in the media is wanning, and news production is no longer as economically viable as it once was. However, I did not set out to write an exposé about the hurdles that face Canadian journalism; rather I was interested in exploring possible ways to mitigate this crisis. In this, I chose to dive deeper into the realm of collaborations to see if local journalism in Canada could benefit from partnering with existing institutions, specifically the public library.

Thus, the aim of my research was to explore collaborations between journalism and libraries and to assess what improvements they could bring to local journalism. To do so, I used the CBC/Radio-Canada's *Collab* initiative, and specifically the project done by CBC Montreal and the NDG Benny public library, *Gem of an Idea*, as my case study. Moreover, I also explored how collaborations affect labour, civic engagement, and power. This was done through event observations, qualitative interviews, and thematic analysis, and was tied back to the relevant literature from the fields of political economy, Journalism Studies, and Critical Library Studies, as well as to critical pedagogy, my theoretical framework.

My research showed that journalism, libraries, and the public have much to gain from these types of collaborations. They can help redistribute labour more equitably amongst media and library staff, they can be sites of knowledge and skill exchanges, they can act as the catalyst for slowly rebuilding the public's trust in media, and they offer the opportunity to build lasting community connections. Furthermore, the *Gem of an Idea* partnership and the *How to Tell Your Story* workshop demonstrated that collaborations do not need to be flashy or complicated in order to achieve success. The most important aspect of collaborations that I observed seem to be a willingness amongst journalists/media workers, library workers, and the public to work together towards something they all find meaningful.

The *How to Tell Your Story* workshop is based on a straightforward concept; provide the public with the appropriate tools and knowledge needed to be able to tell and pitch their own stories. Its execution is equally simple; use the physical space and trust of the library to assemble patrons and invite journalists to lead a 90-minute workshop. This does not downplay the many moving parts and the numerous hours of labour that are required to run such a workshop or

collaboration, but it provides an accessible blueprint for those who wish to organize similar events in the future.

Of course, no research is perfect, and improvements can always be made. The most notable shortcoming of my own research was my limited sample pool of people interviewed, and events attended. Thus, one consideration for future research would be to interview more people. This is especially true when it comes to speaking to community members who attend or don't attend these events. Given that my research was guided by critical pedagogy, which calls on liberating all knowledge and democratizing education, future research should seek to interview more members of the public, since I believe that they stand to gain the most from these collaborations. Further, as the *Collab* initiative is present in libraries across Canada, a future research project would benefit from observing how they are run in different libraries and how they differ from what I saw at Benny.

This points to the need for further research and studies to be done on collaborations between journalism and libraries in Canada. It would be interesting to see if other unreported collaborations have occurred and what their outcomes have been. The possibility of a pilot project in a library involving journalism is also fascinating and would surely produce interesting and important results. Moreover, it would be vital to hear from voices other than those of academics or journalists. Here, I am thinking of voices of 'everyday people,' what their thoughts are on collaborations, and what changes they would like to see in their own information spheres. For this to happen, I believe it paramount to make our research accessible and digestible to as many people as possible; this is something that I have tried to do in my own research. One way for me to address this is to share my research with my interviewees and with others who helped guide me throughout the research process. This is in hope that the results of this study can be read by those who probably stand to gain the most from them. Equally, in keeping with critical pedagogy, knowledge must be available and accessible to all for it to truly be liberating.

To conclude, there are thousands of local public library branches across the country. Each serves a unique set of people who have their own information needs and desires. As has been shown in this research, library workers have intimate knowledge on their patrons and their needs,

knowledge that journalism, in its current form, struggles to possess². Journalism in turn, has the skills required to acquire, assess, and disseminate information at scale. As the *Gem of an Idea* partnership demonstrated, journalists can use these skills in tandem with what the library offers, to gain better access to hard-to-reach communities and to empower citizens to become more engaged with news and stories that matter to them. All of this hopefully contributes to building a more equitable, accessible, and engaged information space.

² As seen in the introduction and the literature review, hundreds of Canadian newsrooms and outlets have shuttered in the past ten years. This means that whatever outlets and journalists are left are asked to do more work with less resources, which makes it increasingly difficult for them to get to know the plenitude of unique communities present across the country.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

General questions (for all participant types):

- Can you tell me what you just did? (Take me through your version of the event, for those who attend)
- What did you extract from this event? (i.e. what did you extract from this collaboration)
- What role did you play in this event? (i.e. what role did you play in the collaboration)
- Are these types of events/collaborations important to you?
- Are they important for the community more broadly, why or why not? Do you see the potential for more collaborations between different institutions and journalism/libraries.
- Was there anything that I should have asked but didn't? Is there anything you'd like to add?

Questions for librarian:

- How is your partnership with the CBC? What exactly does it entail?
- Why did the library agree to this collaboration with CBC?
- What was the library hoping to gain from this collab?
- How do libraries (in general) go about selecting events? Are they selected for outcomes?
- How have patrons reacted to these events? Are they popular? Have people been asking for more?
- Do they see the possibility of forming a deeper, more long-term partnership with journalism (would this be viable).
- How did this partnership affect their labour- did they feel that they were actually doing more work in order to make the partnership feasible?
- What other sorts of collaborations (with journalism or other institutions) would the library like to see/partake in?

Questions for CBC:

- Can you explain your role at CBC?
- How did Collab come to be, like the history of it?

- Why was this a project that the CBC was interested in?
- What is the CBC trying to gain from this project?
- Why were libraries chosen as sites for collaboration, as opposed to somewhere else?
- It doesn't seem like CBC produces massive amounts of content from these events, and usually when we think of journalism we think of a product, so how does CBC 'justify' investing in a program that doesn't produce much?
- What role are CBC journalists/staff supposed to play at these events?
- How are tasks divided between CBC staff and library staff?
- On average, are these events popular?
- Will they become a staple of the CBC, or is it more touch and go?
- Why did they agree/suggest a collaboration with Benny?
- More broadly, why did the CBC start their *Collab* project?
- What role does the public's trust play in this project?
- What other sorts of collaborations (beyond events) would they like to partake in?
- How did Gem of an Idea come to be, like the history of it?
- Why was this a project that CBC Montreal was interested in?
- Why was the Benny library as opposed to another library?
- How are events chosen, specifically I'm thinking of the "How To Tell Your Story Event" why has this event been repeated so many times?
- What is the CBC Montreal trying to gain from this project?
- How has the public's reaction been to these events, what kind of feedback have you received?
- What sorts of content get produced from these collaborations?
- What have been some unexpected positive outcomes from this collaboration?

Questions for participant:

- Why did you attend this event?
- What have they gained from these collaborations?

- Do they like these events?
- What would they like to see more of at the library?
- Have these events made them more active patrons?
- What role does the library play in their lives?
- What role does local journalism play in their lives?
- What could local journalism do better (in terms of serving their information needs)?
- Do they feel empowered to answer their own questions about their community as they arise (here, I am looking to know if people feel like they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to answer their own questions).

APPENDIX 2: INITIAL CBC EMAIL SCRIPT:

Sent: November 25, 2024

To: The general CBC Montreal communication's department email

mtlcomm@cbc.ca

Greetings!

My name is Katherine Vehar, and I am currently working on my Master's in Journalism at Concordia University.

I'm reaching out because I am looking for journalists to interview for my thesis project.

I am researching the possibilities of collaborations between libraries and journalism. I love the project(s) that the CBC has undertaken with their *Collab* initiative. Specifically, I am really interested in the collaboration that CBC Montreal did with the Benny library.

I am looking to speak with journalists/staff that were involved in the project. I'd like to know more about how this collaboration came to be, what the CBC was aiming for, and how the public reacted to it.

I do not yet have approval from the ethics committee, but I wanted to reach out to you first just to see if anyone over at the CBC would be interested in being interviewed. Ideally, these would start in early spring 2025.

If you know anyone who might be interested, please do let me know and I will reach out to them. Moreover, if you need any additional information, do not hesitate to ask and I will respond as soon as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider this email.

Take care,

Katherine

APPENDIX 3: INITIAL BENNY LIBRARY SCRIPT

Sent: December 16, 2024

To: The general Benny library email

bibliobenny@montreal.ca

Greetings!

My name is Katherine Vehar and I am currently working on my Master's in Journalism at Concordia University.

I'm reaching out because I am looking for members of the Benny library staff to interview for my thesis research.

I am researching the possibilities of collaborations between libraries and journalism. Through working at a library (not in the Montreal network) and studying journalism, I have become quite convinced by the collaborative potentials of these two information giants.

I love the Collab project that the Benny library and the CBC have worked together on. This project is the backbone to my thesis.

I am looking to speak with library staff that are or were involved in the project (I believe that the project is ongoing). I'd like to know more about how this collaboration came to be, what the library was aiming for, and how the public reacted to it.

I have been in contact with Rana Liu from the CBC, but I'd equally like to hear the voices of library staff, and include them in my research.

I do not yet have approval from the ethics committee (if all goes to plan, I'd have approval by late January), but I wanted to reach out to you first just to see if anyone would be interested in being interviewed. Ideally, these would start in early spring 2025.

If you know anyone who might be interested, please do let me know and I will reach out to them. Moreover, if you need any additional information, do not hesitate to ask and I will respond as soon as possible.

Enfin, je tiens à reconnaître que même si j'ai écrit mon courriel en anglais (c'est tout simplement plus facile pour moi d'expliquer ma recherche en anglais), je tiens à souligner que je n'ai aucun problème à ce que quelqu'un me réponde en français, et je n'ai pas non plus de problème pour mener des entrevues en français.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read and consider this email.

Best,

Katherine Vehar

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM



INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Journalism and Libraries: Collaborating to Build a More Equitable, Accessible, and Engaged Information Space

Researcher: Katherine Vehar

Researcher's Contact Information: email: katvehar@hotmail.com, phone number: (514) 663-9661

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Elyse Amend

Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: email: elyse.amend@concordia.ca, phone number: (514) 848-2424 ext. 2466

Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore the outcomes of a collaboration between local journalism and public libraries. Specifically, it will look at the ongoing collaboration between CBC Montreal and the NDG Benny Public Library.

The objective of this thesis project is to find out if the collaboration the CBC and Benny Library has fostered strengthened community trust and engagement with the news, if it has helped decentralize information and redistribute its labour, and if it has helped address issues of power that are present in information systems. Further, this project aims to get a better understanding of what community members can gain from such a project.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to speak about your experience with the aforementioned collaboration. You will be asked to elaborate on the specific events/workshops you participated in, collaborations between journalism and libraries more generally, your role in these events, and on topics related to labour, power and civic engagement. Lastly, you will be asked to be available for an interview. If you chose to have an **in-person** interview, this could be done at the Journalism graduate student research office at Concordia University, cafes, or the Benny Library itself. If you choose to have a **virtual** interview, this could be done via teleconferencing software like Zoom or Teams.

In total, participating in this study will take up to 60 minutes.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research.

These risks include:

- Low levels of discomfort in discussing any potentially negative emotions that you may have experienced during the event.

If throughout the course of the interview something makes you uncomfortable, please tell the researcher immediately. You are under no obligation to sit through the whole interview. At any point, you can choose to end it. You can also choose to not answer certain questions, and you can withdraw your interview information up to 30 days after the interview.

If you experience discomfort and require assistance, you will be directed to the appropriate resources offered by the University, the City of Montreal, or Santé Québec.

This research is not intended to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research:

- Your full name, if you chose to disclose it, and your role in the event (e.g. journalist, library staff, community member, etc.). This is the degree to which it will be identifiable.
- Your full answers to the questions you chose to answer.
- My supervisor and I will be the only ones with access to your answers.
- The transcripts of our interview will be kept on a password-protected laptop and password-protected external hard drive accessible only to me.
- When your data is no longer needed, it will be deleted from all devices.

By participating in this study, you agree to let the researcher have access to information about your experience with the *Collab* project, your thoughts, opinions and feelings regarding this project, journalism, and the library more largely. You will be asked about your level of involvement in this project as well as things that could be improved upon. This information will be obtained from audio recorded interviews.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

If you consent to having your name included, the information gathered will be identifiable. If you chose to withhold your name from publication, you will be identified based on the role you played at the event (e.g. “community member”).

We will protect the information by ensuring that it stays within the hands of those directly involved in conducting the research. Furthermore, you are allowed, without fear of negative repercussions, to withdraw from the interview at any time. Equally, you can have your information withdrawn from the research up to 30 days after the interview has been conducted.

We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

☐ I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.

☐ Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

We will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don’t want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher up to 30 days after the interview has been conducted.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

F. PARTICIPANT’S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca