Living with technology is like living in a glass room. You feel sheltered from the outside, but there is transparency to everything you do. This is why I was thrilled to be able to work with The Tor Project, Library Freedom Project, Tactical Tech, and Mozilla to bring the Glass Room Experience (GRE) to North American libraries. Ranging from small local libraries, to system libraries to festivals we were able to bring this installation to thousands of people across the United States and Canada.

The Glass Room Experience is a multimedia experience that focuses the intersection between technology and our day-to-day life. The exhibit included posters highlighting what we give away when we sign the terms and condition to various apps to how facial recognition software is harvested and utilized. There were also tablets loaded with custom apps that allowed participants to quiz themselves about IoT items that may or may not already exist (though people tended to realize those items that didn’t exist may come into being quite soon). The material was full of fantastic and easy-to-digest information that was easy to engage with and even easier to walk away having learned something new.

I was fortunate enough to be able to run this installation in my own library before we started rolling out to other locations so I was able to see first hand how our users would react to the Glass Room. I was thrilled how engaged people were with the entire suite of items. The ways their faces grimace when they saw how much information they were giving away. Or the eye in the eyes when they saw how sprawling the Google empire actual is. I had hundreds of users attend over the week the installation was up and active and received nothing but positive feedback.

Another event I attended with the GRE was the Double Exposure Film Festival. The Festival is an independent investigative journalism festival that was fantastic in it's own right. Driving down to Washington D.C. I was wondering how this group of people would react to this pop up art installation in the middle of their film festival, but I couldn’t have been more impressed with both the quality of questions and level of engagement. I met people from all around the world who wanted nothing more than to know how they could help fight back against the surveillance state the GRE highlights.

All in all, the GRE was brought to over 30 locations throughout the United States and Canada. We were in municipal libraries, system libraries, branch libraries, college libraries just to name a few. We had thousands of users walk through the experience which translates to thousands of people who are now just a little better informed on how their digital life is tracked, trapped, and interpreted.

The Glass Room Experience hopes to make that glass room we live in a little more opaque.