

9-9-2015

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Recommended Citation

(2015) "Full Issue," *The Political Librarian*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/pollib/vol1/iss1/8>

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september 2015

volume 1 issue 1

THE POLITICAL LIBRARIAN

an  everylibrary publication

Mission

The Political Librarian is dedicated to expanding the discussion of, promoting research on, and helping to re-envision locally focused advocacy, policy, and funding issues for libraries.

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Correspondence

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Any correspondence specific to EveryLibrary and its work should be directed to executive director, John Chrastka. Email: john.chrastka@everylibrary.org

Notes on the First Issue

With our first issue we are establishing The Political Librarian as an open access publication under a non-commercial attribution Creative Commons license. The journal staff is working with a university who will host the journal on an open access platform where this issue will be republished. Prior to the release of issue two in Spring 2016, we will apply for an ISSN so that the journal will be more discoverable by the broader library and public policy discussion across the United States and internationally.

Thank You

The editorial team would like to thank John Chrastka for his guidance and unwavering support for The Political Librarian, as well as his dedication to ensuring that libraries and librarians everywhere have the funding that they need to continue their mission to serve their communities.

Thanks also to the EveryLibrary Board of Directors for their support and countless hours that they have spent serving the EveryLibrary mission. Thank you, Peter Bromberg, Erica Findley, Mel Gooch, Brian Hart, and Patrick “PC” Sweeney.

Finally, we would like to thank our editorial board members for their willingness to serve with us in this new venture.

The Political Librarian's Editorial Team

Rachel Korman – Associate Editor

Rachel believes in the value of libraries as safe and all-inclusive spaces. As a recent MLIS graduate from Drexel University with a BA in Geography from the University of Toronto, she is shaping her career path to become a program coordinator in a public library. She was EveryLibrary's 2014 Intern, where she helped to shape the organization's public-facing training and orientation programs. Her recent library positions also include: computer literacy volunteer at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Senior Circulation Assistant at the Thomas R. Kline School of Law at Drexel University, Library Intern and an adjunct faculty member at the Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College in Philadelphia, and a former Board Member and the Treasurer for [The Soapbox](#), an independent publishing center in West Philadelphia. She is currently based in Toronto and can be contacted at kormanrachel7@gmail.com.

Johnna Percell – Associate Editor

Johnna studied English and Teaching at Harding University before joining AmeriCorps where she served as the Education Coordinator for the Community Corrections Improvement Association. After completing her term of service, she attended the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies where she earned her MLS with a specialization in Information and Diverse Populations. During her studies she served as president of [iDiversity](#), the first LIS student group that promotes awareness of diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility within the information professions. She most recently served as the Google Policy Fellow at the American Library Association Washington Office. She can be contacted at jmpercell@gmail.com.

Lindsay Sarin – Editor

Based in Washington, DC, Lindsay is an advisor to and former board member of EveryLibrary. She is also the MLS Program Manager at the University of Maryland College Park, reviews Editor of *The Library Quarterly*, and a Research Fellow at the Information Policy and Access Center (iPAC). Her past research has focused on how politics and policy impact library funding. In 2014 she co-authored [Public Libraries, Public Policies, and Political Processes](#). Recently she has been focused on the design and implementation of a new paradigm in library and information science education. She is particularly interested in how to incorporate value demonstration and library advocacy into LIS curriculum. Lindsay earned her BS in English and history at Eastern Michigan University and her MLS at the University of Maryland, College Park. She can be contacted at lindsay.sarin@everylibrary.org.

John Chrastka

Across the country, around 90% of tax revenue for local public library operations are appropriated and collected at the local level, sometimes within one zip code and always within a legally limited service area. Even with the budget outliers, the majority of funding and policy decisions for libraries are made and expressed by a locally appointed or elected governing or advisory board, or is in the hands of a municipal or county/parish authority. Yet, most of the recent scholarship about libraries and public or tax policy focuses on national or federal issues. In the lived experience of boards and librarians, decisions that are made at the local level about levies and millages and warrant articles and parcel taxes are far removed from any national discussion about access or connectivity or appropriations for capacity building. When a toe is dipped into a particular state, it is often by way of illustration rather than critique. I am not sure if this is a purposeful exclusion of the local level, or if it is a certain kind of aphasia about where the money and power really comes from.

Through EveryLibrary’s work, I have been exposed to the limitations and potential leverage that tax and public policy discussions can have on an extremely local level. I have personally seen the negative impacts an under-informed library director or board of trustees has when their community needs to consider the tax code or funding structure. I have wondered before if this low-level of awareness stems from our collective lack of engagement in public debates about taxes and authority, or if it flows from a lack of training in the political literacy skills needed to manage in the landscape of other publicly funded institutions. As an industry, are we hesitant to look at and talk about taxes for fear that if we acknowledge where our revenue comes from we may not be truly deserving of it?

With the launch of *The Political Librarian*, EveryLibrary hopes to start moving past that question and into a new discussion. We aim to promote research and conversation that helps our industry to engage and reenvision tax policy and public policy on the extremely local level. Personally, I have several big questions about libraries that I’d like to explore over the next few editions. I’m interested in uncovering issues of race and class that permeate and often derail conversations that ask us to reconsider the way Americans tax their property, sales and income, and how that affects libraries. I’d like to start a discussion about the way that Interlibrary Loan hangs on a series of ad hoc

regional MOUs, and how it could be better funded and more effective with new models. I’m interested in seeing how lessons from business incubators and startup investors could be applied by Friends and Foundations and influence the local tax base for libraries. And I would like to explore the feasibility of using social impact bonds to fund library facilities and programs, tying our outcomes to the policy priorities of institutional and private sector investors by issuing public debt.

But, I don’t have enough wisdom or experience to ask enough of the questions that need to be asked about taxes and policy. I do know and understand that the public library today rests on the triumph of the early 20th Century Progressive movement. The notion that the government has a role in people’s lives, and in support of their livelihoods, remains as radical in some circles today as it was then. Key civic, social, and educational institutions like public schools, health departments, public safety, parks, public transportation, and libraries sprung from a vision that cooperatively funding services through progressive tax policy is good. It’s just. It changes society for the better. We are the heirs to that policy and tax stewardship. One of the most significant reasons libraries lose elections and watch their budgets erode is because of a local expression of an anti-tax philosophy which runs a counter-narrative to how we take care of our neighbors, selves, and communities. If we are trying to win elections and succeed in budget negotiations for our institutions, it is incumbent upon us to talk as strongly about our philosophy of government as those whose opinions, on Election Day, can countervail.

The Political Librarian will provide a venue for listening and learning across a wide range of experiences, and a platform for sharing insights from the forefront of services by the librarians who need funding, authority, and policy to align with, and support, the actual practices of modern librarianship. I am grateful to our Editor Lindsay Sarin, and our associate editors Rachel Korman, Johnna Percell, and Francine Fialkoff for their dedicated volunteer work in making this first issue happen.

Around our nation, there is a consistent unevenness to the way that public monies are used for the common good. The way that state and national policies are expressed locally is a fascinating story to watch unfold. The

local issues that drive each library election or budget negotiation we work on are sometimes tragicomic. It is because of this experience that we believe a new discussion should be rooted in the unique challenges faced by towns, cities, townships and counties, and expressed by departmental or district libraries. With *The Political Librarian*, we are inviting a new conversation and are committed to listening to the voices who bring their own perspec-

tives to the conversation. This journal is intended to be an enterprise-level platform for asking you to ask your questions. Please join us as we explore, question, listen, and then lobby to enact some solutions.

John Chrastka
Executive Director
EveryLibrary

It is with great excitement that we introduce the Editorial Board of *The Political Librarian*. We are grateful to each of our board members for their service and dedication to the mission of *The Political Librarian*.

Jason K. Alston, Doctoral Candidate

School of Library and Information Science, University of South Carolina.

After earning an MLS from North Carolina Central University in 2008, Alston began his career in librarianship as the first diversity resident at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Alston has also worked in public libraries and currently does reference and instruction librarianship at a South Carolina community college. Alston is a lifetime member of the Black Caucus of ALA and editor of BCALA's quarterly publication.

Trevor A. Dawes, Associate University Librarian

Washington University in St. Louis

Trevor A. Dawes is an Associate University Librarian at Washington University in St. Louis, where he is responsible for research services, as well as scholarly communications, collections and acquisitions, and preservation. He was previously the Circulation Services Director at the Princeton University Library, and prior to that held several positions at the Columbia University Libraries in NYC. He has worked with staff in developing and providing training for various public service operations; has authored, co-authored, or edited several books and articles on a variety of topics; and has either planned or presented at various local, national and international conferences. Since 2006, Dawes has been an instructor in the MSLIS program at the iSchool at Drexel University. Dawes earned his MLS from Rutgers University, and has two additional Master's Degrees from Teachers College, Columbia University. He is an active member of the American Library Association and was the 2013-2014 President of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL).

Sandra Hirsh, PhD, Professor and Director

School of Information, San José State University

Prior becoming director of the School of Information at San José State University, she worked in the Silicon Valley

for more than a decade at major technology companies: Hewlett Packard and Microsoft. As an industry user experience researcher, leader, and manager, she contributed to R&D research projects and influenced the user experience of web, mobile, and TV consumer products resulting in five US patents. She was previously an assistant professor at the University of Arizona, and has taught courses for San José State University and the University of Washington.

Her leadership roles include an appointment as 2014 president elect and 2015 president for the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T), and serving on LIS committees for ASIS&T, the American Library Association (ALA), and Palo Alto's Library Advisory Commission. Her library experience ranges from academic and public to special libraries.

Paul T. Jaeger, PhD, JD, Professor and MLS Program Director

College of Information Studies, University of Maryland College Park

In addition to his position as professor and program director, he is co-director of the Information Policy and Access Center. His research focuses on the ways in which law and public policy shape information behavior, particularly for underserved populations. He is the author of more than one hundred and twenty journal articles and book chapters, along with eight books. His research has been funded by the Institute of Museum & Library Services, the National Science Foundation, the American Library Association, the Smithsonian Institute, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others. Dr. Jaeger is editor of *Library Quarterly* and co-editor of the *Information Policy Book Series* from MIT Press.

Andrea Snyder, Outreach Services Specialist

Nassau Library System, Long Island, New York

She earned her MLS from SUNY Buffalo in 2003 and started her library career with the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, MD. At the Pratt library, she held positions that allowed her to be embedded in the community and work closely with local nonprofit organizations as well as job seekers. Her current position allows her to em-

power the staff of the public libraries of Nassau County through continuing education and support services. Andrea is a passionate advocate of libraries and their power to change the lives of individuals and their communities.

Courtney L. Young, Head Librarian (Librarian and Professor of Women's Studies)

Penn State Greater Allegheny

Courtney served as the 2014-2015 American Library Association (ALA) President. She is currently head librarian and professor of women's studies at Penn State Greater Allegheny. An active leader in ALA, she has served on

the Executive Board (2009-2012), Council (2005-present), and as president of the New Members Round Table (2009-2010). In 2011, Courtney was named a Library Journal "Mover & Shaker," recognized as a change agent for her ability to successfully make connections among a diversity of duties in her library, on campus, and in the profession. She is a graduate of the College of Wooster (OH) with a BA in English and minors in Black studies and women's studies, and Simmons College, where she received her MS in Library Science. Courtney frequently presents and publishes on issues related to advocacy, academic librarianship, diversity, virtual reference, leadership, and professional development.

Three years ago, John Chrastka, Erica Findley, and Patrick “PC” Sweeney founded EveryLibrary. It was and remains the first and only national organization dedicated to “helping public, school, and college libraries win bonding, tax, and advisory referendum, ensuring stable funding and access to libraries for generations to come.” Since then Peter Bromberg, Mel Gooch, and Brian D. Hart have joined the board. Over the past three years, the board of directors along with a team of expert [advisors](#) have:

- Participated in more than two dozen [campaigns](#);
- Helped secure more than \$55 million in stable tax revenue;
- Began publishing the [Library Politics Rodeo](#), a weekly summary of political campaigns and initiatives throughout the country;
- Founded an “[Artist-In-Residence](#)” program designed to change the way librarians talk about themselves and their work;
- [Presented](#) at dozens of library conferences, state library agencies, and conducted “vote yes” advocacy trainings;
- And helped foster [direct voter advocacy](#) including: “Outside the Lines,” “sxswLAM,” and participated in “National Voter Registration Day.”

EveryLibrary has had an enormous impact on each of the library systems with which it has worked, each person they have taught about information-only campaigning, and on the perception of libraries and, perhaps more importantly, of librarians to the broader community.

Steering the Conversation

The idea of creating a publication that is rooted in the [mission](#) of EveryLibrary and that expands the discussion of, promotes research on, and helps re-envision the concept of locally focused advocacy, policy, and funding issues for libraries was discussed in the earliest days of EveryLibrary. Because associations and other professional organizations are mainly focused on federal and state-level issues, conversations about library funding have often been in response to issues at those levels of government and decision-making. While discussions of state and national-level concerns are an essential part of the discourse, it remains that a majority of funds for libraries

come from local sources, leaving a significant gap in the conversation.

The Political Librarian seeks to be an accessible resource for library professionals, library users, and those outside the field. Despite the fact that 91% of Americans say that libraries are important to their communities and that 76% believe that they are important to their own families (Zickuhr, 2014), very few understand that their libraries are funded locally. Nor are many familiar with the sheer number of services that libraries offer (Zickuhr, Raine, Purcell, & Duggan, 2013); services that go well beyond the lending of books.

Libraries and librarians are notorious for not being proactive in demonstrating their roles and value. Many outside libraries are unaware of the so-called non-traditional services libraries provide for their communities including: the hiring of social workers to help libraries serve their neediest of patrons effectively (Bowman, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Shafer, 2014); or operating summer lunch programs for children who receive free or reduced lunches during the school year (Chamberlain, 2015); or providing software training for budding graphic designers and access to recording studios (Rowan, 2015). It is time that libraries leverage the public services they provide to demonstrate their value and worth to help ensure stable sources of funding.

With this in mind we set out to create a dedicated space where practitioners, researchers, and users could publish on frontline advocacy experiences, campaign strategy and research, and/or about tax and public policies impacting libraries on the local level. Through this journal we will foster a resource that:

- Furthers the discussion of tax policy and public policy in the local context;
- Offers practitioners and users examples of how current policy models impact library service delivery and community outcomes;
- Explores new models that address library funding initiatives; and
- Provides resources and tactics that libraries can use to educate stakeholders on the value of libraries and librarians in their local community.

In this first issue we are starting small, with two different approaches to library funding. Bill Kennedy, Development Director at the James River Valley Library System offers us a practitioner's example of how a lack of understanding from the community has impacted their library funding initiatives. A.J. Million, PhD Candidate at the University of Missouri, provides us with his own argument on the need to diversify the funding sources for public libraries. In future issues we will continue these discussions and work to steer the conversation about library advocacy towards the challenges and opportunities at the very local level.

Lindsay Sarin
Editor, The Political Librarian

Johnna Percell
Associate Editor, The Political Librarian

Rachel Korman
Associate Editor, The Political Librarian

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William E. Kennedy

In 2008 Stutsman County, North Dakota residents voted to combine the two libraries that serve the 21,000 residents of Stutsman County. The Alfred Dickey library in downtown Jamestown had been built in 1919 for a population of 6,627 and was in need of renovation and expansion to continue to serve today's 15,446 residents. The Stutsman County Library was built in 1952 as a home to the Bookmobile that would serve rural Stutsman County as well as pre-school locations and senior centers in Jamestown.

Voters approved the combination with a 70% yes vote expecting the two facilities to be combined, producing greater efficiency and cost savings while maintaining the same services.

Two boards became one board, two staffs became one staff. Combining two collection systems took a little longer but eventually all items were at the fingertips of the staff whether they were at Alfred Dickey downtown, at the Stutsman County branch or on the bookmobile. Today, the libraries remain under two roofs.

The board had many choices for where to locate a new library. An old hospital had room for a library. A vacant Elks building was close to the Arts Center. A vacant medical clinic offered the needed square feet. All these locations would keep the library downtown, a desired outcome based on the location of the middle school, elementary schools and senior housing. An architect was hired to develop alternative plans and present them to public forums. A plan was in the final stages to purchase the medical clinic and build a 25,000 square foot facility when the space was sold to a developer for senior housing.

A sigh of relief could be heard from those in the community who favored renovating the classic Alfred Dickey library and expanding to the north fulfilling the square foot needs of a current flexible and efficient library and housing the bookmobile. Options were placed on the two buildings adjacent to Alfred Dickey and new plans drawn up.

* refers to the common human experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept.

The first capital campaign letter to raise funds to renovate and expand the library in Jamestown, ND was mailed to 1,500 potential donors. It included a nicely designed tri-fold brochure, a letter explaining the urgent need for a new library and a return envelope for cash or pledges. Over the next few weeks, envelopes arrived with a few thousand dollars in cash and checks and a few pledges. The following letter also arrived.

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

I am very successful. I never went into a library. I don't see the need for the current library, let alone a new one that would cost me some of my hard earned cash. I would rather use the \$33.75 that it would cost me each year in sales tax to pay for a new library to take my family to lunch

Sincerely,

Mr. Smith (fictional name, actual letter)

I was tempted to ball the letter up and toss it in the waste basket. Instead, I smoothed it out as best I could and placed it into the manila folder marked "Letters." Mr. Smith's letter joined nine equally well written rejections of our effort to solicit funds for a renovation and expansion of Jamestown's Library system. I carefully returned it to a hanging file folder between "Johnson" and "Library Media Articles." The classic Steelcase two-drawer file cabinet closed with a solid clang.

Not everybody had a positive story to tell about the Alfred Dickey Free Public Library in Jamestown, ND. Not everybody had been in the library as an infant being read to by a mom or dad, or as a fifth grader finding books for an assignment at school. Not everybody had used the library as a young adult researching colleges, or as an adult looking for a job or health care information, and certainly not as a senior seeking information from a librarian on the latest James Patterson novel.

However, there were plenty of people who had a positive library experience. Eighteen volunteers collected 2,497 signatures to get a ¼% sales tax initiative on the November, 2014 general election ballot. Billboards went up, postcards went out to every household in Stutsman County,

all the service clubs were visited, letters to the editor were written and the local paper endorsed the library's goal. A professional pre-election survey was taken. 36% in favor, 18% against, 42% undecided. Signature gatherers called the undecided. The Mayor held a City Council meeting in Alfred Dickey and had the architect explain the subtle changes to bring the building into the e-world while keeping a treasured building alive. The mayor walked the council to the buildings to the north and the architect answered questions about the modern addition.

Election day came.

Results

NO: 4,240 (54%)

YES: 3,055 (40%)

SKIPPED: 552 (6%)

The majority of those undecided voters aligned themselves with Mr. Smith as definite no's.

What had we done wrong or failed to do?

The answers were not self-evident. There was no smoking gun that if discovered and removed ahead of the vote that would have made a difference. Over the next few months, a common sense list of answers started to appear. They came from a series of meetings in coffee shops and in my office with people anxious to express their surprise and shock at the result of the election. The key to the meetings was listening.

"I didn't know what was going to happen to the old library, so I voted no." A young mother told me when I asked how she voted. I started to explain that the old library was going to be renovated, a friend sitting next to me kicked me in the shin and whispered, "Listen."

"If I had known more, I would have voted yes," she said to the two other young mothers sitting at the table. They nodded. "We did the same." AHA.

"And, there were all those other initiatives on the page just before County Measure # 1 for the library asking for increased taxes. I voted no on all those too. Did you no-

tice that the word library was on the third line and it only appeared once. No wonder people voted no," the other young mother said. AHA.

I met with current and past school superintendents individually and asked for their advice. I learned that the 2001 high school initiative authorizing a 1% sales tax to pay for a new \$28,000,000 high school and renovated middle school, passed with 65% of the vote on a special election. One piece of paper, one yes or no.

That 1% sales tax was retired this spring. In June an activity center initiative authorizing a 1% sales tax to pay for a \$28,000,000 activity center passed with 60% of the vote on a special election. One piece of paper, one yes or no.

The library was on a General Election ballot with seventeen State, County and City individual contests. There were ten initiatives. Eight of the initiatives were for additional taxes, including the library request for a ¼% sales tax to pay for an \$8,000,000 renovation and expansion of the library. They all failed. AHA.

I decided to have meetings with as many people as possible that had worked tirelessly to pass the high school and activity center initiatives. Some were held one on one in a local coffee shop. Others were held in small groups of eight to ten. I called these meetings "The Listening Tour." The people I spoke to were a cross section of the community from educators and parents to those working in finance, insurance, retail, healthcare, local media, arts, and agriculture. Over and over I heard, "Maybe you should have a special election and be the only initiative on the ballot." AHA

When I asked them why they had come to the meetings, they said, "Because you asked." AHA

If John Watson stopped by, I can imagine him describing how his best friend Sherlock Holmes made very complicated cases seem simple by observing, listening, and asking.

All I can do is try.

A. J. Million

Three days before the 1936 election, Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) defended his New Deal against critics in a speech. He presented reasons why the federal government should maintain an active role in the economy and made a point often overlooked in United States (U.S.) politics. Rebutting the claim made by anti-Federalists that a strong federal government would weaken states and localities, Roosevelt said it would empower them. Prior to his speech, the Great Depression eviscerated municipal finances (Snell, 2009). Tax revenues declined and local governments could not run deficits. As such, Roosevelt said:

[T]he American people wanted peace. They wanted peace of mind instead of gnawing fear. [...] They wanted peace in the community, the peace that springs from the ability to meet the needs of community life: schools, playgrounds, parks, sanitation, highways – those things which are expected of solvent local government (Roosevelt, 1936, para. 8, 10).

FDR argued that a strong federal government should be able to borrow and redistribute money to ensure that everyone across America would be able to access public services, even during times of economic distress.

What does this have to do with libraries? In the U.S., public libraries rely on local funding but also provide demanded information and community services. FDR's speech explains why a local-only approach to funding libraries is not always best as the federal government can help strengthen communities. Today's economic environment is different from during the Great Depression, but libraries still rely on tax revenue from narrowly defined geographic areas. They also lack the scale and scope of the federal government, so poor localities cannot procure revenue that allows them to offer services that are comparable to wealthy ones. Moreover, unlike the federal government, neither states nor local governments can engage in deficit spending, which makes library budgets prone to cuts when tax receipts fall short.

I argue for a new approach to library funding that entails balancing state and local revenue with federal resources. To make this argument, I present two sub-points. First, according to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), public libraries are dependent upon local revenue. This constitutes an asymmetric risk¹ that im-

paired libraries during the 2007-09 Recession. Second, income and wealth disparities require that poor districts procure non-local revenue to offset economic inequality. To be clear, I do not argue that these points apply in all contexts. Instead, I claim that when viewed in toto they demonstrate why public library stakeholders should look beyond local horizons, when necessary, to procure funding and ensure perpetual, equitable access to library services. There is much to admire about the idea of locally-funded institutions, but ideas do not ensure equality, nor do they guarantee solvency during times of economic distress.

Asymmetric Risk

The first reason that a local approach to library funding is not enough relates to the asymmetric risks associated with one-sided revenue streams. This is to say that a reliance on single sources of revenue can be risky. Local revenue need not come from identical sources; they may come from sales taxes, income taxes, and property taxes, but all are similar in that citizens within a limited area pay them. Disregarding these mechanisms and their strengths and weaknesses, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) notes that in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012, combined national spending on libraries totaled \$11.5 billion dollars. Of this just 0.5% and 6.9% came from federal and state sources respectively. Likewise, 84.4% of public library revenue came from local entities. Non-tax revenue (8.4%) also supports libraries, but it tends to come from a hodgepodge of sources (Swan et al., 2014, p. 58). Local taxes are, therefore, the foundation of public library funding in the U.S.

Such a reliance on local revenue is not bad. There are benefits associated with raising revenue from local sources such as allowing taxpayers to see where their money is spent. Yet, during times of financial crisis, these benefits are beside the point. According to Tracy Gordon (2012) of the Brookings Institution, during the 2007-09 Recession, "At their low point in the second quarter of calendar year 2009, state taxes were 17 percent below their level one year earlier and personal income taxes were 27

¹Asymmetric risk constitutes, "A situation in which the potential gains and losses on an investment are uneven" (Farlex, n.d.).

percent lower” (para. 13). Municipal budgets faced nearly identical problems. Many libraries reported shortfalls with 57% experiencing cuts and/or stagnant budgets (ALA, 2012a). More importantly, the IMLS reported that funding remained flat, unemployment rose, and the demand for library services quickly increased. Librarians had to work more but spend less (ALA, 2012b).

At their worst, a relationship between local taxes and library funding can lead to catastrophe. Local approaches to funding constitute an asymmetric risk, because localities are, by definition, geographically bound, and that limitation impairs them during times of constraint. The worst example from the 2007-09 Recession was Detroit and the Detroit Public Library (DPL). Not only was the city and the state of Michigan hit hard by recession but also other economic variables helped create an \$11 million dollar library shortfall (MacDonald & Mullen, 2011). Worse yet, Detroit’s functional literacy rate of 47% meant that cuts to libraries were borne by those needing them most. Local officials understood the consequences of making cuts, but the reliance of DPL on local taxes and the absence of outside funding gave administrators no alternative.

Transfer Payments

In 2013, ALA President Barbara Stripling’s signature initiative was named Libraries Change Lives. Associated with her initiative, public libraries across the U.S. held events declaring a “Right to Libraries” (ALA, n.d., para. 1). If such a right to libraries exists, public libraries’ reliance on municipal revenue cannot guarantee it. Not all communities can afford a public library. One way to solve this problem is for state and federal governments to make transfer payments. Transfer payments take place when governments use their taxing authority to redistribute income. This approach is already used for K-12 education. Wealthy districts pay for their public schools out-of-pocket while poor ones receive aid from state and federal governments. State constitutions also typically require that legislatures provide adequate funding, usually defined by an agreed upon formula. By supplementing local library funding with state and federal tax dollars, transfer payments would mitigate asymmetric risk and better address unequal access.

Economic inequality has become a hot political topic.

According to the American Community Survey (2013), the wealthiest 100 counties in the U.S. ranked by median household income was \$84,910 while the national average was half that. Likewise, the 100 poorest American counties had an average income of \$26,200. Substantial differences in lifestyle exist between top and bottom counties, as does the need for library services, but the scale of contemporary economic disparities show that there is a gap in resource availability to support libraries and schools. Most public resources are ultimately tax-dependent.

This trend also applies to state governments. States ostensibly act as stabilizing entities that provide varying, but small, amounts of revenue to municipal library districts, but even these larger governments may lack the resources to do so effectively. As a case-in-point, in 2013 Mississippi’s median household income was \$39,031. The national average was \$53,046. Connecticut, on the other hand, was at the opposite end of the spectrum with a median income of \$69,461. It is not necessary to conduct sophisticated analyses to show that state-level disparities exist, but what is needed is to point out that even in times of plenty, some governments lack the resources to provide public services, including libraries, for their citizens. As noted earlier, the most direct way to address this problem is for larger jurisdictions to distribute funding, the federal government being the largest of these.

Some Important Conclusions

So far, I have sketched an argument for why public libraries and their stakeholders ought to diversify their revenue streams. State governments, and especially the federal government, were presented as resources, because their reliance on local tax bases subjects libraries to potential risk. Local and state governments are also unequal in terms of the resources at their disposal, which requires transfer payments if all citizens are to have access to comparable library services. I have not tried to claim that public libraries should overlook local contributors or give up their self-reliant character, but this editorial has argued it would behoove them to acknowledge weaknesses tied to their current model.

Public libraries should never abandon local funding. Relying on the federal, or even state, governments to supplement public library budgets is not politically expedi-

ent and obtaining additional revenue may not be feasible. This leaves libraries and their stakeholders with the system that currently exists. Still, acknowledging the limits of this system makes it easier to set reasonable expectations for advocacy and opens doors to alternative courses of action. A replicable model exists for public libraries to emulate in primary and secondary education. This model does not have to be adopted, nor is it the focus of this editorial, but reasons why such an approach shows promise were mentioned earlier. Perhaps outside funding should not be increased. Perhaps it would be most effective for librarians to focus their energies on increasing local funding. Regardless of the answer, it can be agreed that every public library needs support to operate, and a frank, open discussion in this inaugural issue of the *Political Librarian* offers a much-needed chance for that to happen.

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Issue Two: Call for Submissions

Proposal Deadline: JANUARY 30, 2016

We seek submissions from both researchers and practitioners, that fall into one of three submission categories:

- Opinions/First Drafts – Editorial in nature; the first draft of an idea or argument.
- White Papers – Longer form discussions that may include research.
- Peer Reviewed – Long form articles that include original research and arguments, and are submitted for review by our Editorial Board and/or external reviewers.

Submission Guidelines

Who Can Write for The Political Librarian?

We want to bring in a variety of perspectives to the journal and do not limit our contributors to just those working in the field of library and information science. We seek submissions from researchers, practitioners, community members, or others dedicated to furthering the discussion, promoting research, and helping to re-envision tax policy and public policy on the extremely local level.

Submission Categories:

- Opinions/First Draft – Editorial in nature; the first draft of an idea or argument (1000-2000 words).
- White Papers – Longer form discussions that may include research (2000-5000 words).
- Peer Reviewed – Long form articles that include original research and arguments, and are submitted for peer-review by our Editorial Board and invited reviewers. (2000-12,000 words).

Article Proposals:

If you want to propose an article for The Political Librarian, please submit the following:

- 1.Article abstract: a paragraph of no more than 250 words. Be sure to include what category of article that you're writing.
- 2.Attach resume/CV or a link to an online version.
- 3.Writing sample: this can be a fully completed article, blog post, essay, etc. Our goal is to see your style and ability not judge where the writing comes from.

Completed Works:

Completed submissions should include:

- 1.Article abstract: a paragraph of no more than 250 words. Be sure to include what category of article that you're writing.
- 2.Attach resume/CV or a link to an online version.
- 3.Full text of the submission.

Submission Format

Accepted submission formats are Word documents (doc, docx), rich text or text files (rtf, txt). Please do not send PDFs of article submissions. This hinders the editorial process, and you will have to resubmit.

Style Guide

The Political Librarian is dedicated to publishing professional and well-composed articles. Guidelines for The Political Librarian:

- Be professional: While we encourage our writers to reflect their own writing style and voice in their pieces, we also require that articles are professional in nature and tone. We are creating a new kind of journal and bringing new kinds of discussions to the forefront, and we want our articles to reflect well on that mission.
- Be Inclusive: The world is a dynamic and varied place and we at the Political Librarian believe in creating and inclusive environment for writers and readers. Your language should reflect this dedication to inclusivity.
- Be Critical: The Political Librarian wishes to foster debates and critical discussions. That said we want to foster well-reasoned and supported arguments. Your piece should stand up to critical examination by our editors and readers.
- Be Clear: Be sure your topic is relevant and well thought out. Use examples and/or evidence to support your claim along. Use clear and concise language that is professional but not so full of jargon that it is not accessible.
- Cite Your Sources: If you are citing the work of others you must cite them. All articles should include a works cited list formatted using guidelines. In-text citations need not follow APA to the letter, but they should be consistent throughout the piece, hyperlinks are encouraged. If you are using a direction quotation you must list the author's name in addition to any other relevant links or source titles that are appropriate to the piece.

Formatting/Punctuation/Grammar

- Double-spaced lines.
- 12pt standard font (Times, Times New Roman, Calibri, etc).
- Single space between sentences.
- Use the Oxford comma.
- Spell out acronyms the first time they are used.
- Submission formats: doc, docx, rtf, txt. Please do not send PDFs of article proposals/submissions.
- Use proper punctuation and grammar.
- Pay attention to subject/verb agreement and tense.

Those interested in submitting an article should contact the editors:

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