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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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We're Back!

Christopher Stewart

We are thrilled to resume regular publication of *The Political Librarian* with Volume 4, Issue # 2. Our deepest gratitude to our authors and readers for your unwavering patience over the past several months. We had intended to resume publication in early spring of 2020. The disruption of Covid-19 changed our plans, as it has for everyone. We live of course in a dramatically different world since the last issue of The Political Librarian was published. While most of the articles presented in this issue were authored before the pandemic and the widespread social, cultural, and civil unrest that began in Minneapolis this spring, we believe that the work presented here provides a solid sampling of the type of content we will be providing in future issues. The lens will be further focused, however. We encourage research and commentary at the intersection of public library policy, practice, and the profound challenges currently faced by our society and our democracy.

Ilana Stonebreaker opens our current issue with a call to action for librarians to consider running for office by providing a summary of strategies she used for her successful campaign for a seat on the Tippecanoe County Council. Stonebreaker argues that the skillsets we already possess as librarians – namely, systems thinking, research, and advocacy – fill a deep toolbox of skills needed for effective public office. We agree.

Heather Elia's essay on the importance of documentation for library programs and services is particularly relevant at a time when library programming is and will continue to be reshaped in a pandemic and post-pandemic world. How are we measuring the impact of our response, and how will we use these measurements to support the library's critical work in what will undoubtedly be a challenging funding environment in the coming years?

Ndumu, Dickinson, and Jaeger outline the crucial role of the public library in ensuring public access and involvement in the 2020 US Census, with a focus on disenfranchised communities. The issues raised in this

engaging review are particularly poignant at a time when public trust in government has been so eroded by the very ones entrusted with it. Libraries, the authors argue, are uniquely "bi-partisan, factual, and judgement-free." As institutions, libraries have the opportunity and responsibility to engage the public in the enormously important national count. Libraries unite us when little else does.

Susan Rhood's use of the theoretical framework of Relationship Management Theory to explore one public library's public relations effectiveness over a ten-year period is an excellent example of scholarship that informs the practice. Rhood provides us with a useful model for reviewing and revising practices, particularly those that involve synchronous communications.

Million and Bossaller seek to address gaps in the research on political activity and lobbying of state library associations. Their findings provide a compelling if somewhat unsettling picture of challenges faced by state library associations as they seek to influence often uninformed policy makers. Million and Bossaller's argument that state associations need to move from re-active to pro-active lobbying strategies is a compelling one.

At The Political Librarian, our job is to document and, in doing so, create shared knowledge on library advocacy and policy at all levels. We hope that we have accomplished that in these pages.

Enjoy the issue.

The Down-ballot Librarian:

Experiences Running for Public Office

Ilana Stonebraker

Introduction

Government is full of non-librarians. There are lawyers, doctors, teachers, factory linemen, farmers, and accountants. Librarianship's core tenants of access, progressiveness, inclusion, and the public good make them excellent public officials. They have experience dealing with the public. They are excellent event planners. As an academic librarian, I myself have had plenty of experience speaking publicly, especially to groups of sleepy freshmen.

In 2018, more first-time candidates, women, and minorities ran for public office than ever before. This editorial shares my experience as a librarian successfully running for county council, ultimately knocking on over 2000 doors. I will chronicle why as an academic librarian I chose to run for public office, what librarians can bring to the table as politicians, and why more librarians should seek public office. With experience in public service, democratic participation, and systems thinking, librarians bring a vital set of skills to elected office as well as to the campaign trail. It is my hope that by telling my story I will encourage other librarians to run in similar representative numbers to that of other disciplines such as teachers and lawyers, as well as to challenge non-librarians to consider how these librarian skills contribute to society.

Why You Should Run

In 2017 I was sitting in a library conference program on eliminating late fees in public libraries. The research was all there: charging late fees was an unjust and oppressive practice, and most of the people in the presentation agreed. The question was whether libraries could convince their city and county councils. At the time I mused to myself, wouldn't it be simpler if librarians were in those positions in the first place? In this era of fiscal responsibility, we need to make sure county, city, and district governments are full of people who understand the value of libraries, especially at a local level.

Certainly we can communicate that value, but the constant re-education of people is labor for librarians. We need people who understand the issues our communities from the beginning. Public librarians in particular are often on the front lines of the opioid crisis. When naloxone started to become readily available, librarians were some of the first people to get trained (Correal 2018). Librarians often work with our cities' homeless populations. Children's librarians know quite a bit about early childhood development. Librarians provide research help for entrepreneurs in the community. In these initiatives and others, librarians are often at the center of their communities.

Librarians should run because we think differently due to the nature of our work. When your whole job is thinking about how to help find and use information, you develop a systems-focused mindset. I think about things in terms of inputs and outputs, processes and outcomes. Even a small policy can have a large impact upon my users, and as a librarian I take that responsibility seriously. Librarians really do believe in the public good. We believe that our profession is designed for the greater good, and librarians are already public servants. We want to do everything in our power to make the world better, and that includes getting out of our buildings and into the community. What better way to serve your community than to serve on your city council?

Librarians have research super powers that come in handy on the campaign trail as well. Candidates have to dig through meeting minutes, task force reports, newspaper articles, and best practice presentations to find polices that will purposefully help the community. On the campaign trail, I often advised other candidates how to

do advanced searches on newspaper archives, how to subscribe to Google Alerts, and how to find government reports on pesky websites.

Reference interview training also comes in handy when talking to people at their doors. There's a misconception that people don't care about local elections. People do care quite a bit, but they don't have the language for how to talk about what they need. I found that often a conversation that started about trash bins often ended in discussing best practices for sustainability. A conversation about roads leads to talking about how to make public comment on transportation commission meeting. Does that mean that I always had the answer to their question? Does a librarian ever have the answer to every question that comes across the reference desk? Of course not, but we know where you might look, how you might think about the problem. Years of working the reference desk comes in handy.

Effects of my Run

I'm a 32-year old professor and librarian located in Indiana. In 2018 I ran against a two-term 75-year old incumbent who was also a retired school principal for a district position on the county council. I ran as a Democrat against a Republican, and at the time I was running, there had not been a Democrat on the county council in 24 years. I was also running in an environment where in 2015 and 2016, women candidates had been almost consistently defeated. In the 2015 West Lafayette city council race, three women ran and all lost, leaving a West Lafayette City Council without female representation for four years.

County council deals with issues like roads, bridges, courts, Sheriff's office, etc. It's the budget approval body, and that is most of its focus. I become interested in running for office when I attended public office candidate trainings to help others. I'm a business librarian and work quite a bit with economic development and local entrepreneurs, so I understood many of the financial aspects from my work with the business community. I am also involved in critical librarianship and was feeling that I was reaching the limits of what I could do from inside of the system. Because I believe that librarianship is truly political, I believe we need to get involved in politics, where many of the decisions that can affect librarians and library partners get made.

On my college campus, I already loved mentoring students, connecting colleagues, and was looking for ways the library could provide unique value. Campaigning is very similar. There were of course some negative interactions, but the vast majority were very positive in a powerful way for me. I knocked on 2,000 doors in my district. I ran advertisements on the sides of buses. I attended neighborhood meetings, fish fries, county fairs, Halloween parties, fall picnics. It sounds scary to put it all together in a list like that, but each of these in itself was less difficult than trying to plan a summer reading program or get a group of cross-campus partners to agree on a logo.

There were many positive effects of my run. First, as a millennial, I helped show the viability of millennial candidates in my town. Second, I was a successful woman candidate who beat a male candidate that year. And lastly, and perhaps, most importantly, I think it meant something to run as a librarian. Every time I talked about running for office as a librarian to other librarians, it blew their minds. Like many, they had never considered how their skill set would fit into being a local elected official.

I also like to think, in my daily conversations and exchanges as an elected official, that I help to reform people's ideas about what librarians do. People without recent interaction with libraries envision librarians as some sort of book hoarder, and don't realize we do other things in the community. For such people I've been able to update their perceptions of the position and the role of the library in the community. When we talk about making government transparent, librarians already do that. When we talk about accountability, librarians do that. When we talk about open, thoughtful public discourse: that's where librarians need to be.

Conclusion: What if you lose?

I was lucky to win my race for county council, but I'm very aware that things could have turned out very differently in my race. About double the amount of people turned out locally in the 2018 midterm than did so in 2010. I was lucky to have the support of my family, my friends, and many allies across local government. I had many other candidates running that pushed me to work harder.

Running for office comes with risks. It involves making lots of public statements that could be misunderstood. Running for a partisan position means all your friends and neighbors are aware of your political affiliation, and might make assumptions about your beliefs. It changes the way people see you. And it is certainly not a fair process. People who have run amazing campaigns sometimes lose for reasons that have nothing to do with them. Sometimes turnout is low, or people come out to vote for the other party in a different race, and by so doing vote against you without knowing anything about you.

I thought a lot about what this experience would mean if I had lost. If I lost, I would have still started a conversation with 2000 of my neighbors. I still would have shown that millennial candidates can run serious campaigns. If I had lost, I would still have started community conversations about the opioid crisis, about fiscal stewardship, and about transparency in government. I would have still influenced people's perceptions about librarian work. I would have still contributed to the coalition of people that could respond the next time. If I had lost, I still would have shown how someone who looks like me and thinks like me can be taken seriously as a candidate. Even if I had not won, I would have made real and tangible contributions to the people and systems around me that benefit both the public and the profession

Librarians advocate in many different ways in many spaces. They write bills, they raise funds, they talk about library value and library needs. I don't think running for office is something for every librarian. It takes a lot of time and a lot of work. But I think as a profession, it offers tremendous opportunity for us to advocate for ourselves. Libraries and librarians matter. While citizens may be able to lobby elected officials in office, ultimately the real conversations happen outside the county building and in people's homes and offices, where they weigh how they will vote in the election. We need you.

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About the Author

Ilana Stonebraker is an Associate Professor of Libraries, Business Information Specialist at Purdue University. She represents District 1 as a member of the Tippecanoe County Council. She is a member of the Purdue Teaching Academy, a 2017 Library Journal Mover and Shaker, and a Greater Lafayette Commerce TippyConnect Top 10 under 40 Award Winner. She tweets @librarianilana.

Do's and Don'ts of Documentation

Heather Elia

Abstract

Whether through grant funding or taxpayers' dollars, public libraries are entrusted with money to spend on programs and services. Funders, as well as other stakeholders, will be interested in accountability, wanting to know what the library has been doing with these funds and what the stakeholders got for their money. The author argues that fully documenting programs and services – which many libraries fail to do – provides a tangible answer to these questions, as well as a record that can be used to expand or replicate successful initiatives. A series of best practices for documentation are proposed, which include the need for planning, marketing, and assessment information, as well as the collection and distribution of visual and textual material. Different levels of documentation are discussed, and the differences between what is merely acceptable and what is good, or even excellent are identified. A list of the various audience members with whom documentation might be shared is included. The author concludes that when a library needs to make a case for funding or government support, documenting a library's successful programs is a good professional and political move.[1]

Why Document?

Whether through grant funding or taxpayers' dollars, the public library has been entrusted with money to spend on programs and services. Your funders, as well as other stakeholders, will want to know, "What has the library been doing with these funds? What did we get for our money?" Documenting your programs and services provides a tangible answer to these questions, and acts as a permanent record of what happened when the program or service was offered.

Documentation helps to identify whether programs and services have been successful. When documentation is publicized, it also serves as evidence – to the community, the Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Library, potential donors, as well as members of local, regional, and perhaps even national government – that library is providing thoughtful stewardship of its resources and is accomplishing amazing things. Creating documentation makes good political sense, especially during times when public institutions are increasingly under scrutiny and questions are raised about their accountability and value.

Documentation also aids a library by allowing valuable programs and services to be repeated, either by the same library at a later date, in member libraries of the same system, or in libraries throughout the region. Without documentation, libraries may lose track of essential program details, and be unable to replicate or expand their offerings.

Do's and Don'ts

I recently searched for public library documentation of innovative library programs and services. Documentation could include, but was not limited to: grant applications, web pages, news articles, photos, marketing materials, assessment reports, and the like. I found that some libraries had quite a bit of good documentation and others… not so much. It got me thinking about some best practices, and some mistakes that librarians make when implementing library programs and services. What follows is a list of documentation do's and don'ts that I gleaned from my project.

- **Do Make a Plan** - Although some library programs can have success doing things on the fly, a program

is much more likely to succeed over the long term when there is a formal plan in place. Applying for grants usually necessitates a well-organized planning document including a budget, timeline, and expected impacts of the program. These considerations – as well as a list of action items and staff responsibilities – are still important for library programs that are not externally funded.

● **Do Write It Down** - This one may seem obvious. Even when you have not sought external funding or are doing something on the fly, you still need to document. Nobody's memory is perfect, and you never know when another staff member may have to step in and take over the implementation of a program if the main contact person is not available. Writing down the details in advance makes it more likely that crucial elements will be remembered when needed, either by the original library, a different library that would like to offer a similar service, or an intrepid grad student doing research. (For a look at a great plan for a library program, check out the Redwood City Public Library's Pitch-an-Idea Grant Application. This document could be used as a guideline in planning a non-grant-funded program or service. Not all project plans need to be this long.)

● **Do Justify It** - A library's programs and services should support the organization's mission statement. It's worth documenting this relationship in case the Board of Trustees or members of the community have questions about why a certain program or service has been implemented.

● **Do Market the Program or Service** - Yes, this is documentation. Word-of-mouth is a great way to promote library offerings, but it shouldn't be the only way. Think about the audience you're trying to reach and create materials (whether digital or physical) that will let them know you have what they're looking for. Be sure to save copies of these materials so they can be used again or modified if needed. (La Crosse Public Library uses many ways to get the word out about their popular Dark La Crosse stage show, including the local news.)

● **Don't Limit Yourself to Words** - Although you'll

want written documentation of your program or service, don't forget the adage that a picture's worth a thousand words. Take photos or videos of your programs (with permission of the participants) and use them to spread the news about what your library is doing. Post them on social media or your website. Include them in your advocacy campaigns. Visual documentation can help tell your library's story just as much as facts and figures.

● **Don't Forget to Assess Results** - Assessment is a step that a surprising number of libraries fail to take. It's not enough to just jot down how many people attended a particular library event and include it in an annual report. Rather, libraries should document the ways in which program goals have or have not been met, and what short- and long-term impacts participants have experienced as a result. (For a look at a great program assessment, check out the Fraser Valley Public Library's Library Live and on Tour Evaluation Report.)

● **Don't Hide It** - Make sure your documentation is somewhere easy to find if you need to refer to it or if someone asks about it. It doesn't need to be at your fingertips at all times, but should be in an organized physical or virtual location, preferably one that can be accessed by those most heavily involved in program or service delivery.

● **Don't Be Afraid to Share** - Whether on a web page, in a conference presentation, or just having the material ready if someone asks about it, librarians can help each other by being willing to make documentation available to their peers. An easy way to start sharing is by using Google Docs or Dropbox, where you can invite others to view (or comment on) what you've written. Of course, not every bit of documentation is for public consumption and that's okay. But allowing colleagues to access the details of what you've done helps them create their own successful programs and services, and that leads to even more communities being positively affected by their interactions with public libraries. Additionally, having documentation you can share with stakeholders like funders and politicians will put you

in a better place to advocate for library support.

Levels of Documentation

I mentioned earlier that some libraries had good documentation, but there are different levels of "good". In reality there is:

● Acceptable documentation: a rudimentary plan and an attempt to record outputs (e.g., how many people attended a program or utilized a service).

● Better documentation: a well-organized, written plan, marketing materials, and an attempt to assess program outcomes in terms of what was achieved. In addition, you know where this information is kept.

● Great documentation: materials that show the scope of the program from start to finish, including planning, marketing and assessment. Great documentation allows another library staff member (or another library) to be able to replicate the program or service at a different time or in a different setting. Great documentation also includes rich assessment information, including both quantitative and qualitative elements, that describes the impact on the community being served. Plus, it's in a format that is easily shared, which you are ready and willing to do.

Levels of documentation also pertain to the audience for whom the documentation is intended. The grant application you provide to a potential funder may contain more information than a community member is interested in. Documentation may need to be tailored depending on whom you're sharing it with:

● Your library staff – Make sure at least one other person you work with has access to **all** the documentation you possess, in all forms. Make sure all library staff are familiar with the basic information of your program or service, who its target audience is, and how successful it has been.

● Grant funders – They will require a grant proposal and should also be informed in sufficient detail about the results of the program or service they supported.

● Community members – You should be willing to

provide them with any documentation that is appropriate for public consumption; most will not be interested in a long program plan or extensive assessment documents. Instead, give them a snapshot in the form of a brochure, a section of your newsletter, or a page on your website explaining what the program involves and what the outcomes have been so far. Include visual documentation to "show" as well as to "tell".

● Board of Trustees – Depending on how involved they are, they may be happy with a brief report or may want more detailed information about proposals and comprehensive evaluation results.

● Friends of the Library – They are donors, so they'll want to see evidence that the money they've raised and provided to the library has been well-spent. Like the Board of Trustees, they may be happy with a brief written report or more extensive information.

● Members of government – They have many demands on their time, so short and to the point documentation - with the salient points highlighted – will be best.

● Colleagues at other libraries – If they're looking to replicate one of your programs at their workplace, they may want all the documentation you have… the more, the better.

Conclusion

Creating great documentation may not be the most glamorous thing that a librarian does. Yes, it can be time-consuming. No, it's probably not the most fun you'll ever have. However, the importance of documentation should not be dismissed out of hand. Documenting your library's successful programs and services can be useful both professionally, when the opportunity comes to share with other libraries, and politically, when you need to make a case for funding or government support. Remember that program funders often require documentation not only before they award funds, but after a program has been completed.

Although it's not always mandatory, creating

documentation is still a smart move because other library stakeholders will also be interested in what you planned and how it turned out. Taking the time to do it right may reap unexpected rewards. You never know when a bit of visual documentation on social media will go viral and attract new patrons and positive publicity for your library. Your assessment of a current project may influence the funders of a future project in your favor. Thoroughly documenting your library program or service is an important step towards improving your library's accountability and advocacy efforts.

About the Author

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Relationship Management as a Successful Approach to Public Relations in Public Libraries:

A Case Study

Susan Rhood

Abstract

In the wake of reacting to the global pandemic, and with the knowledge of another impending wave, the idea of libraries as a "third place" has finally fully been turned on its head. Perhaps library professionals always knew this was a bit of a stretch – libraries are not just buildings and this has surely been proven true as many scrambled to work from home while the majority of leadership fretted about proving the value of that labor to stakeholders. As many return to their buildings, what do promotion, marketing, and public relations look like?

Library professionals are pulled in so many directions, the expectation that they are brand ambassadors and marketers can feel like too much. In some libraries, the staff is restricted from engaging in marketing, and in others, they are expected to do everything on their own. Updated job descriptions should include elements of marketing and public relations and those expanded responsibilities should be compensated accordingly. It is unrealistic to assume that the staff who spend the most time interacting with patrons do not engage in some kind of public relations, so why not make it official? Library professionals need the tools to do this effectively, which is where relationship management theory is especially helpful.

By examining relationship management theory and its five major components: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment, within the context of an actual public library setting, there is persuasive evidence that this is a good model for library public relations. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship that libraries have with their publics and how they can utilize relationship management principles to run successful public relations campaigns and truly understand the needs of their community within a mutually beneficial relationship.

According to the American Library Association – the largest professional organization for librarians – public libraries are in a period of transition when it comes to how to best address the needs of their publics (American Library Association, 2017). As the Internet and open access to resources grow, public libraries are often undervalued and seen as antiquated and irrelevant to the needs of a modern society (Denning, 2015).

Because public libraries receive most of their funding from taxation, their community must understand their value and be actively involved in the library's success. While library use rose slightly between 2011 and 2013 from 58% to 63% for people aged 16 and up (Pew, 2013), voter support for public library funding has declined from 73% to 58% over past 10 years (OCLC, 2018). In a political climate where the President's budget includes elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS, 2019), what can public libraries do to increase their relevance and engage their publics?

One of the biggest hurdles to a library's ability to effectively promote itself is the reluctance to adopt business-like practices. They tend to use transactional marketing tactics rather than a long-term strategy that focuses on promoting the value of the library in the community (Parker, Kaufman-Scarborough, & Parker, 2007). Librarians are trained as information professionals, not public relations experts, and are not always well-versed in the concepts, practices, and execution of public relations campaigns or marketing

approaches (Shontz, Parker, & Parker, 2004). Making the connection between marketing library services through strategic public relations and having a good relationship with the community is a crucial step for libraries hoping to maintain their status as a valuable community resource (Sen, 2006). There is growing evidence to suggest that promotion, marketing, and public relations should be part of the strategic planning process that most libraries carry out each year (Garoufallou, Siatri, Zafeiriou, & Balampanidou, 2013). By incorporating a long-term public relations plan into the strategic plan, they establish credibility within the organization to dedicate resources for this purpose.

In recent years, public relations and marketing of library services and resources has been slowly gaining acceptance with some literature tying principles of librarianship, like problem-solving, to the utilization of business principles (Gupta and Jambhekar, 2002). Some librarians have already recognized the need to address library public relations using a business-like model and they can serve as a trusted resource for others (Caplan, 2011). Additionally, evidence of successful public relations and marketing campaigns encourages a wider acceptance of these practices in libraries (Cowart, 2011). Understanding the challenges libraries face both within their communities and within their profession can help determine best practices for their public relations efforts.

Librarianship is rooted in service and yet, when thinking about public relations and marketing, most will opt for a *transactional* approach – promoting their holdings and services – over a relationship-based model that encourages two-way communication with their patrons (Garoufallou et al., 2013). Libraries and librarians who hope to both attract new patrons and keep their current ones engaged will be more successful with a relationship management approach (Besant & Sharp, 2000). This approach encourages dialogue between an organization and its publics that results in a mutually beneficial relationship. Libraries – much like non-profit organizations (which most libraries are) – will benefit greatly from this public relations style (Wiggill, 2011) because publics are much more engaged with organizations that embrace their input (Wise, 2007).

This case study examines how effectively The Ferguson Library in Stamford, Conn utilizes principles of the relationship management theory of public relations. This library was selected because of the open nature of the administrative staff and their willingness to participate. In 2010, The Ferguson Library's funding was decreased by more than 10% by then mayor Michael Pavia. This led to shorter hours of operation, fewer library employees, and diminished materials (Kayata, 2018). The administration recognized the need for a shift in their approach to their relationship with the community and began a more intentional, two-way dialogue with their publics. The background and results of this shift will be examined through the lens of the relationship management theory and its five components: trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment (Ledingham & Brunig, 1998). The outcome of this study contributes to the growing body of research for public libraries to consult when implementing public relations strategies.

Literature Review

Relationship Management Theory

There are numerous theories related to public relations and marketing of an organization. Based on the typical relationship of a public library and its community, the most applicable for determining best practices for their public relations efforts is relationship management (Besant & Sharp, 2003). Until recently, the field of public relations was dominated by the idea that organizations needed to project an image or corporate "personality" to distinguish themselves in the marketplace (Grunig, 1993). The concept of image versus substance examined by Grunig (1993) is the basis for a major shift in public relations toward a relationship-based model. Grunig (1993) used the term "behavioral relationships" to denote the activity of fostering and maintaining meaningful relationships with an organization's stakeholders. He does not dismiss the need for images or "symbolic relationships," but rather sees them as interdependent.

The idea that organizations should be engaging in "relationship management" with their publics was

further examined by Ledingham and Bruning in their 1998 research study on organization-public perception between a telephone company and their subscribers (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). The research helped to solidify the belief that the state of an organization's relationship with its stakeholders can be measured by the dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), as these were the characteristics that participants deemed most important within the organization public relationship (OPR). By defining the relationship "measures" or "dimensions," the study gave validity to including public relations as part of a strategic plan for an organization. An effective strategic plan incorporates meaningful feedback from an organization's publics (Germano & Stretch-Stephenson, 2012), thus illustrating the need to identify public relations as a fundamental business activity.

Further studies, including one conducted by Bruning about the "relationship attitudes" of university students with regard to their institution (Bruning, 2002), continued to point toward the emerging paradigm of public relations as a relationship-based discipline. The 2002 Bruning study underscores one of the main priorities for public relations professionals – retention. This function of public relations is often overlooked, but is crucial to organizations remaining viable and not having to look for new "customers" constantly.

The notion that the organization-public relationship should be "mutually beneficial" became more popular and thus required a shift in research "from measuring communication flows to examining and understanding the variables that influence the building and managing of mutually beneficial organization–public relationships" (Bruning, 2002). In his chapter, *Public Relations Theory II*, Ledingham posits that "Organization-public relationship dimensions define the state, or quality, of an organization-public relationship, which, in turn, acts as a predictor of public behavior" (Ledingham, 2006). This definition helps organizations decide where they should focus their public relations efforts, even though there are few agreed-upon measures for the outcomes of the relationship management approach to public relations

(Wise, 2007). Though one can argue that consistent growth in an organization's customer base is a good indication.

In 2003 Ledingham published his paper putting relationship management forth as not just an area of study but a "general theory of public relations" (Ledingham, 2003). By this time there was enough scholarly research to warrant a theory that explained and outlined the relationship management approach to public relations. The theory is predicated on the five dimensions previously discussed (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), as well as the idea that these interactions must be "known" by key publics. Hence, the more an organization supports a community, the more likely that community is to view the organization favorably (Ledingham, 2003) as long as they have knowledge of the organization's attitudes and activities. Just as in an interpersonal relationship, when an organization-public relationship changes over time it is the responsibility of the organization to consistently monitor the state of relations and remedy any shortfalls (Bruning, Castle, & Schrepfer, 2004). This is entirely dependent on the organization embracing a two-way, symmetrical perspective in their communications with the public - publics must be actively part of the conversation with the respective organizations (Wise, 2007).

While there is not a large amount of literature dedicated to a relationship management approach to public relations for non-profits or public entities, those studies that exist point toward the relationship-based approach as a successful option. For non-profits, there is a clear push for public relations professionals and non-professionals to adopt a relationship management approach (Wiggill, 2011); and with good reason, since these types of organizations – much like libraries – are more involved with their publics than a manufacturer or service-provider. They are more dependent on stakeholder engagement. Libraries straddle the line between a non-profit and a government agency because their funding comes from both tax dollars and private fundraising. With public trust for government agencies and their employees always in question, libraries must address that perception through intentional relationships with their

patrons (Kim, 2005). Indeed, these kinds of organizations can only reach their goals if they work closely with their publics and encourage loyalty - by addressing the needs and desires of stakeholders, organizations can benefit from the symmetrical communication that encourages strong relationships (Wiggill, 2011).

Traditional Public Library Narratives

As outlined at the beginning of this paper, librarians may be resistant to the utilization of business practices, such as public relations, in the promotion of their library resources and services. Further, some in the profession have taken the stance that those very business practices are what has put libraries in the position of justifying their existence in the first place (Koizumi & Widdersheim, 2016). Public librarians are ingrained with the notion that they are part of the social fabric of a community and are providers of knowledge and information and, many times, feel that they should not have to engage in *promotional* activities. In his book, *Barbarians at the gates of the public library : how postmodern consumer capitalism threatens democracy, civil education and the public good,* D'Angelo (2006) paints a bleak picture of how in the "New Economy" era, librarians are nothing more than "customer service" managers and will be eventually eliminated. With that level of disdain for business-like practices being promoted within the profession, a possible explanation as to why librarians may be reluctant to adopt obvious public relations strategies emerges. Perhaps a more practical reason for many public libraries' reluctance to adopt a public relations program, however, is their lack of expertise in this area (Besant & Sharp, 2003).

Though large library systems are able to employ public relations and marketing teams, these promotional activities very often fall onto the library director at most small to medium sized libraries. While many librarians are uncomfortable with the term public relations, they very often feel that marketing is a more appropriate practice (Shontz et al., 2004). Whether they practice public relations or marketing, or both, neither largely depends on whether they have had exposure to these principles, either through their degree program, or some sort of professional development. In Shontz et al.'s

research, a survey found that many librarians actually had an appreciation for marketing and understood the need to promote their library's offerings (2004). Those who responded negatively were those who had little to no exposure to marketing practices "which suggested that negative attitudes about marketing may result from a lack of understanding about, and experience with, marketing techniques" (Shontz et al., 2004).

The way libraries and librarians think of themselves with regard to their patrons is complex. When it comes to the library's *publics*, librarians lean more toward the idea of the *public citizen* charged with understanding the vital role that libraries play in civil society versus the *citizen-consumer*, who is instrumental in determining a library's role in that society (Ingraham, 2015). There is a lot of emphasis on the *library* and less on the *public* aspect of public librarianship. That is not to say that librarians are not fully committed to their communities – indeed, they are. They are especially committed in areas where resources are scarce and their buildings are a safe haven for some patrons (Ingraham, 2015). In addition, the rhetoric surrounding librarianship has become more and more complicated in the digital era.

When you can use a search-engine at a computer station, do you still need a librarian or a library? The answer is yes, but it requires keeping the public informed about what the library can offer and why it is valuable, "Libraries are only vital if the public perceives them as vital" (Stuhlman, 2003).

How a Library's Publics View the Modern Public Library

How the public perceives the modern public library is as important, or more so, than how libraries perceive themselves. While there is no doubt that most people view the library favorably as an institution (Pors, 2008), they may not be active users and may not know what a modern library has to offer. In a survey to determine how library users perceive their local library's services, the respondents generally had a good perception of their experience (Lilley & Usherwood, 2000). However, their

perceptions were based on a number of different factors, none of which included an intentional marketing or public relations campaign. This is problematic when some of the responses included references to financial burdens in the community, e.g., if money were scarce, the library would be on the short list of institutions to defund (Lilley & Usherwood, 2000). Members of the community who do not use the library regularly are just as vital to engage with good public relations as those who do use their services (Oliphant, 2015) since they may be a deciding factor when funding issues arise.

This sentiment is echoed in a survey conducted by Alison Rothwell (1990) of 120 participants, of whom some were regular users and some were not. Those who were not, tended to have a negative image of a librarian, using words like "condescending" and "unfriendly". This harkens to the notion that libraries should be using public relations in their communities to control their image. In Green's article about barriers to public library usage (1994), it becomes clear that perceptions are reality when it comes to how an institution is perceived. By controlling their own message and engaging with their publics, libraries will be better off. "Any strategy must overcome barriers of image and perception to make libraries and librarians 'treasured assets' within an organization or community" (Green, 1994).

The public's perceptions and opinions of the library cannot be easily classified. In a 2005 report by Public Agenda, funded by the Americans for Libraries Council and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, there is much evidence that the public does value its libraries. When comparing other tax-payer funded organizations like the police department or the local public schools, public libraries received higher marks for responsible use of funds and how well their institutions were run (Public Agenda, 2005). This becomes somewhat confusing when looking at the individual case studies included in the report that show library systems in Providence, Rhode Island, Salinas, California, and rural Georgia all in jeopardy of losing some of their public funds (Public Agenda, 2015). This illustrates the need for more

relationship-based public relations for libraries to maintain and increase the public's consistent support.

Evidence of Successful Public Relations Campaigns by Public Libraries

There are various examples of cases where libraries were successful with their public relations campaigns. Very often, these successes are centered around some sort of funding issue or some other initiative that threatens the public library. In Billings, Montana, residents were faced with an interesting dilemma – an anonymous donor gave the town a substantial sum to build a new library, but taxpayers would need to approve the remainder through a bond issue (Roberts & Hoover, 2014). A similar bond had been defeated in prior years, so the librarians knew there would be resistance. Enlisting the assistance of their Foundation board – a group of well-connected community members – the libraries conducted one-hour tours of the library ending with lunch and a short presentation on library happenings (Roberts & Hoover, 2014). Friends groups are vital for libraries to engage with their community (Lowman & Bixby, 2011). These volunteers were passionate about the library and were able to introduce the library and all it has to offer to many members of their community.

In March of 2016, another funding issue for libraries made news when lawmakers in Kansas sought to remove the ability for library officials to levy taxes. When news of this fast- tracked bill reached the Kansas Library Association, they alerted Kansas public librarians who sprang into action (Braum, 2017). The librarians used social media, word of mouth, and any other means at their disposal to engage with library supporters and others in the community to voice their concern. They were successful in removing the harmful language from the bill due to the engagement of their community. In their book, *Winning Elections and Influencing Politicians for Library Funding*, Sweeney & Chrastka (2017) methodically prepare librarians to fight for their own funding. In the book, the authors coach the librarian to "start with some kind of awareness or marketing campaign to talk about why the library is important"

(Sweeney & Chrastka, 2017, p. 9) and go on to illustrate how community engagement is the key to success. While these advocacy campaigns, and others, have been successful, they also make a case for a proactive approach to library public relations. If publics are engaged with libraries in a continuing, mutually beneficial relationship, many of these advocacy issues would never become a crisis in the first place.

What has become evident is that libraries that are successful with their public relations have embraced the needs of their community. In a 2017 series by The Brookings Institution, libraries emerged as an important *third place* for many communities (Cabello & Butler, 2017). A *third place* is defined as a place other that a primary residence or workplace. The article focuses on the role of the library as a vital source of health information – especially for those communities that are vulnerable. This is also illustrated in the case of a West Virginia library director who rents bicycles to her patrons to encourage regular exercise (Miller & Chandra, 2018). The director acknowledges that libraries are "much more than books" and looks for unique ways to engage her community (Miller & Chandra, 2018).

Effective Messages and Methods of Delivery to Publics

When libraries are effectively engaging with their publics, there are numerous messages and delivery methods for those messages. Message content will vary based on community, but having a good idea of your market orientation, helps librarians form messages that resonate with their publics (Sen, 2006). The librarian can use various forms of market research to determine what kinds of messages will be effective in the community surveys, focus groups, etc. Using electronic methods of connecting with patrons is advantageous not only because of the ease of use, but many library users who prefer to use online catalogue or databases (Waller, 2008) do not visit the physical library anymore.

Librarians became avid users of Tumblr when it became a popular social media platform. The format of Tumblr appealed to librarians because it is, in essence, an unrestricted blogging tool, and because librarians are known to be avid supporters of open source information. As a means of communicating with their publics, this was a good option since the platform allows for comments and two-way communication "The social networking element of the platform is what makes Tumblr an excellent place for community building and connecting" (Anderson, 2015). Tumblr also features an ask button that can be enabled – this is helpful for librarians who are always ready to answer questions (Anderson, 2015).

Facebook is another useful tool for librarians to engage with their patrons. A library's Facebook page can be used like an ancillary website to promote everything from new holdings to library events (Aharony, 2012). A library's Facebook page provides yet another way for librarians to interface with their patrons either by conversations through the comments feature on Facebook posts or through the messaging feature for private messages. Facebook is also a place where patrons can ask questions during non-business hours, although this requires that a librarian or staff member be assigned to monitor the page (Aharony, 2012). An interesting observation by Aharony (2012, p. 366) illustrates that librarians may be underutilizing the communication aspect of Facebook: "Perhaps both academic and public librarians should take into consideration the fact that Facebook provides further channels of communication for libraries and make use of them."

Though social media is the most prevalent type of online engagement that libraries have with their publics, there are other platforms that are used, especially by large library systems. YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Pinterest can all promote a library's events and can feature influencers to grab patrons' attention (Xu, 2017). These platforms allow libraries to establish their brand across a wide audience. The nature of social media encourages patrons to get more involved with their library since there are no barriers to entry – as long as you can get online, you can interact. There are many ways to utilize this direct connection to patrons: Boston Library allows patrons to tag, comment on, and share their favorite books (Xu, 2017).

One of the other ways that libraries engage with their publics is through their website. In most cases, a library's website will have a portal to their OPAC (online public access catalog) which contains the library's holdings, both physical and digital. The newest technology links a library's catalog to keywords that are exposed in a data search (Onaifo & Rasmussen, 2013). This is an important advance for libraries to compete with the easy access to information on the Internet since this ease-of-use has contributed to the perception that a librarian's expertise is less necessary (Denning, 2015). By having a library's holdings come up in an ordinary information search, the public will be reminded of the library's inherent value to the community: providing resources to anyone who needs them free of charge and without prejudice.

Method

This case study explores how The Ferguson Library establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship with its publics. Utilizing the relationship management theory of public relations as a lens, this study examines the library's approach as a model for best practices.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review of both relationship management theory and existing research on library public relations, these questions are presented:

RQ1: What strategies and tactics does The Ferguson Library use to engage with its publics?

With numerous ways for organizations to communicate with their publics, this case study investigated the methods that The Ferguson Library utilizes to help direct the data collection.

RQ2: Does the public relations strategy for The Ferguson Library incorporate the dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment and, if so, to what extent?

Because relationship management theory incorporates these five dimensions (Ledingham & Brunig, 1998), finding evidence of them within the communication between the library and its publics will help to validate the importance of them and determine how well the public relations campaign is working.

RQ3: To what extent does The Ferguson Library's publics engage in two-way communication with the library through social media?

A foundational aspect of relationship management theory is the existence of two-way communication between an organization and its publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002). By examining a sample of The Ferguson Library's social media posts, we can illustrate the extent to which the public engages in this communication.

RQ4: How does The Ferguson Library measure outcomes of their public relations program?

An in-depth interview with the President, Director of Public Services, and Director of Development and Communication for The Ferguson Public library, revealed their measures of success and how they build on those to increase community engagement.

Case Study Method

Although case studies have limitations with regard to a definitive result or hypothesis, they can help us to understand a "real-life phenomenon in-depth" (Yin, 2009). While this case study will look at the frequency and incidence of The Ferguson Library's communications with its publics, I am more interested in how their overall strategy results in a mutually beneficial relationship with their community. The case study method provides the possibility to generalize and predict results from a single, representative case (Yin, 2009). There is a lack of existing research on the subject of public relations for public libraries and this case study seeks to provide some insight for further examination. The chief limitation of this study is the lack of direct representation from members of The Ferguson Library's publics. This was mostly due to time and logistical constraints and could be remedied by a subsequent study that incorporates a survey or focus group comprised of community members.

Data Sources

The study examined two of The Ferguson Library's social media accounts: Facebook and Twitter. These accounts have been established for over 10 years and have a heavy volume of entries per week making a sample based solely on a timeframe

prohibitive. Best practices for sampling of media content from periodicals or broadcasts have numerous studies to indicate which method yields the best results (Kim, Jang, Kim & Wan, 2018). It is problematic to sample social media with the same methods due to the lack of traditional constraints inherent in platforms like Twitter and Facebook (Kim et al., 2018). With that in mind, this study will use a purposeful sample that is representative of the majority of content on each of the sites, but also contains information rich content that will illustrate The Ferguson Library's relational approach (Emmel, 2013). I looked for trends in each of the platforms and how they relate to each other.

Next, news articles over the last 10 years that contain references to The Ferguson Library were examined. The articles came from a local publication: *The Stamford Advocate*. Themes that were also uncovered in the social media content analysis were identified along with other themes that emerged while sifting through the data.

Finally, I conducted a group interview with The Ferguson Library's President - Alice Knapp, Director of Public Services - Susan LaPerla, and Director of Development and Communication - Linda Avellar to gain their insight regarding their community relations and approach to public relations. The interview was conducted online and used a semi-structured format with open-ended questions that encouraged elaboration from the participants. The interview was recorded (with their consent) and the results were transcribed to correlate themes and findings with the other data sources.
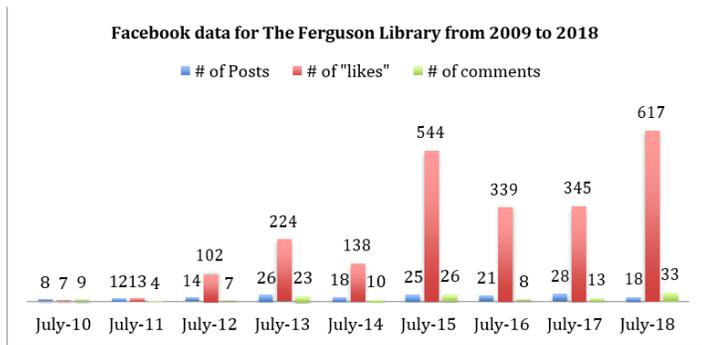
Data Analysis

By using three distinct data sources, known as triangulation, the conclusions drawn will have more credibility as they are demonstrated in more than one source (Rhodes, 2018). Key themes and patterns were identified in the social media samples to relate back to both the news article samples as well as the group interview transcript. Those findings were then related back to the relationship management theory of public relations to analyze the data. Also, findings that were unexpected or do not fit the case study's assumptions were acknowledged.

Results

When looking at the vast amount of material available for study, it was necessary to isolate a small sample of both social media data (Facebook and Twitter), as well as newspaperr articles and mentions. The sample used for examining social media data was determined based on highest interaction correlating to time of year when libraries are most used. This time period was identified as the month of July since school is out and libraries are increasing their events and programming for summer reading (Anstice, 2016). These smaller samples will be examined in-depth for content and themes, but looking at the overall volume of material available provides a measure of the resources that The Ferguson Library dedicates to communication and community outreach.

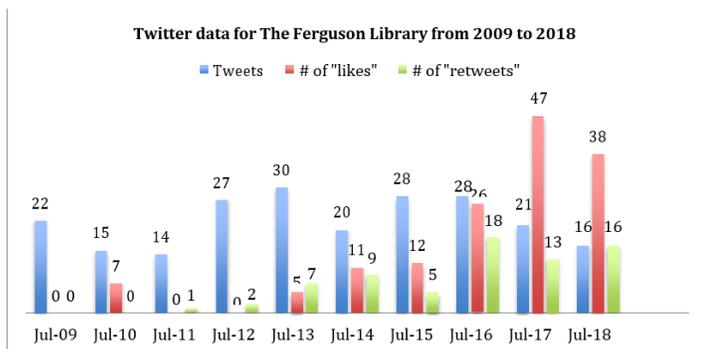Table I shows the volume of Facebook posts in the month of July from the inception of The Ferguson Library's Facebook page on May 15, 2009 to the present. It is important to keep in mind that the increased frequency of posts as well as the increase in interactions can be, at least somewhat, attributed to the increased prevalence of social media use in all public relations programs (Wang, 2015).

Table I:

Facebook data for The Ferguson Library from 2009 to 2018

■ # of Posts   ■ # of "likes"   ■ # of comments

	July-10	July-11	July-12	July-13	July-14	July-15	July-16	July-17	July-18
# of Posts	8	12	14	26	18	25	21	28	18
# of "likes"	7	13	102	224	138	544	339	345	617
# of comments	9	4	7	23	10	26	8	13	33

Similarly, an overview of The Ferguson Library's Twitter page for the month of July starting in 2009, shows an upward trend. It is interesting to note that interactions on Twitter are less robust across the board than those on Facebook. This can be due to a number of factors, but most likely can be attributed to the overall purpose of Facebook as a way to connect with others versus Twitter's focus as a trending news source (Forsey, 2019). Table II shows the Twitter data for The Ferguson Library. Because retweeting is more predominant than commenting on Twitter, that variable has been used in lieu of comments for this data set.
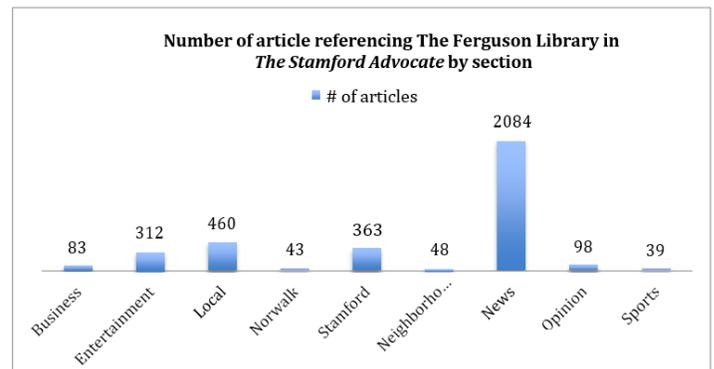
Table II:

Twitter data for The Ferguson Library from 2009 to 2018

■ Tweets   ■ # of "likes"   ■ # of "retweets"

	Jul-09	Jul-10	Jul-11	Jul-12	Jul-13	Jul-14	Jul-15	Jul-16	Jul-17	Jul-18
Tweets	22	15	14	27	30	20	28	28	21	16
# of "likes"	0	7	0	0	5	11	12	26	47	38
# of "retweets"	0	0	1	2	7	9	5	18	13	16

When selecting the data set for newspaper articles and mentions, the amount of material available was extensive. There are two local newspapers in Stamford, Connecticut, that serve the same community as The

Ferguson Library. *The Stamford Advocate* is the more prolific of the two and has been published in Stamford since 1829. The statistics in Table III are current as of April 2019 and illustrate the amount of content available for this study. While much of the content is connected to community calendars and weekly community updates, the numbers show that the library is a central institution in the Stamford community. The figures reflect the total number of records that were returned by putting in the search term "Ferguson Library." It is necessary to note that the search contains material that may not be specific to Ferguson, but all libraries that are in this geographical area. For the more in-depth analysis that follows, all material relates directly to The Ferguson Library.

Table III:

Number of article referencing The Ferguson Library in *The Stamford Advocate* by section

■ # of articles

Business	Entertainment	Local	Norwalk	Stamford	Neighborho...	News	Opinion	Sports
83	312	460	43	363	48	2084	98	39

Facebook and Twitter Content

The Ferguson Library's Facebook page was created on May 15, 2009. Although Facebook was created in 2003, 2009 is the year that the like button becomes part of the Facebook experience and the year that Facebook becomes the leading social network in the United States (AP, 2014). Although The Ferguson Library posted on their Facebook page on the day it was created, they did not post again until August 4, 2009, indicating a lack of content, resources, or knowledge about social media. From 2009 to 2019, their social media posts have increased to an average of almost one post per day with steadily increasing community engagement. As of April 2019, The Ferguson Library's Facebook page had 4,003 people who "like" their page and 4,209 people who "follow" them. Divided by the population of Stamford, Connecticut, where the library is located, the percentage

of residents who "follow" them on Facebook is 3.2%. This seems like a small number, however, when looking at the same set of numbers for the New York Public Library – which has a huge marketing and public relations department – the percentage is exactly the same.

The sample being used as indicative of The Ferguson Library's social media efforts is comprised of the posts between July 1 and July 31, 2018. As explained earlier in this section, the month of July is typically the busiest month for a public library. While the number of posts for July 2018 was slightly down from 2017 (from 28 to 18), this was largely due to an air conditioning repair that took a week to complete. Even with the missing week of Facebook posts, there were more "likes," "comments," and "shares" in 2018 versus 2017. Out of the 18 posts for the month, five were directly related to the problems with the air conditioning, seven regarding library programming (i.e. story time), and one "thank you" post to Pitney Bowes for sponsoring the library's Sunday hours. The remaining posts highlighted a staff member (Gus, the maintenance man), showed pictures of the beautiful gardens at a smaller branch, and reminded patrons of the book mobile that was stationed in the nearby park for ease of use. The post that received the most interaction that month was regarding the U.S. Citizenship course that is taught at the library. The class attendees posed for a picture with the caption, "We're proud of these future U.S. citizens who completed the U.S Citizenship Course at the library. Congrats to all!" This post received the most interaction with 109 "likes," seven "shares," and three "comments." All three "comments" were congratulatory, and were all acknowledged by The Ferguson Library with a "like."

When looking at the month of July for The Ferguson Library's Twitter account, 2016 saw the most interaction and was chosen for this reason. There were 28 "tweets" from The Ferguson Library Twitter account from July 1 to July 31, 2016. Of those, nine were informational regarding library hours or updates, six were conversational either responding to a patron or asking a question. The remaining posts were a mix of programming related information such as author

appearances and also updates on a renovation project at the main branch. There were only three total comments from patrons – of those two were asking questions about the use of an image and one was a "thank you" from a local organization that the library had promoted. In all, there was very little back and forth interaction on the page.

Newspaper Articles and Editorial Content

While there is a large amount of collateral material that contains the search term "Ferguson Library" available on *The Stamford Advocate* online, much of this content simply references the library as the location of an event or as a point of reference in the town; for example, "Yes, restaurants open and close more often than anyone would like in Stamford, but the prominent corner at the base of Landmark Square across from Ferguson Library would have been a glaring hole in the landscape," (from an editorial, *The Stamford Advocate,* 2018, July 10). Sifting through the articles, although many are peripheral references to the library, one is impressed with the regularity that the library is mentioned. This in itself, is somewhat of a testament to how much The Ferguson Library is invested in their community.

However, there are articles and editorials related specifically to library functions and their role in the community. The particular articles for this study were chosen by looking at the most recent articles in both the news and opinion sections. It was determined that most of the articles in the other sections were purely informational and did not reflect any value indicators, such as endorsement or disapproval of the library or its programming. Also, in the interest of time and efficiency, five articles from each category were selected.

In the opinion section, five articles dated from 2011 to 2017 were scanned for content. Three of the articles were written by private citizens, one by the mayor, and one by the president of the library. Of the three articles written by citizens, two were adamant about fully funding the library based on its position in the community as a source of information and necessary services. The third article was written as a plea for government fiscal responsibility

and saw the library as both a vital component of the community, but also as a potential drain on limited tax funds. This was an interesting viewpoint as it brings in the notion of whether the library acts as an arm of the government or more of a non-profit organization. In many ways, the community has little knowledge of how the library is funded and only becomes aware when the funds are in jeopardy. In essence, these three articles reinforce the idea that the library is a central part of their community, even if they are looking at the issue from differing perspectives. In the piece written by the mayor, the library is mentioned as one of the organizations that he intends to keep solvent through his tenure – ostensibly, because of the community's wishes. In her piece regarding the broadband gap for libraries and schools, the library president explains how the library is a key to providing equity of internet access to all people in the community.

The five most recent articles about The Ferguson Library in the news section present a clear theme of community. The most recent article explains an impasse between the library and the union that most of the library's workers are part of. The article does not portray the library in a favorable light, however, it does repeat the theme of how central the library is to the community. In the subsequent articles examined, the library is characterized as a safe and welcoming space for all members of the community. Two of the articles, in particular, expound on the idea that the library is an inclusive place where everyone is equal. One article explains that the library has eliminated the gender question from its library card application to remove any stigma for transgendered or gender-neutral individuals. Another article recognizes the library as a place of inclusion for hosting a black history panel and an "open mic" for the community at large.

Group Interview with Library Administrators

The final component to examine in this case study is the group interview that was conducted with the Library President, Alice Knapp; Director of Public Services, Susan LaPerla; and Director of Development and Communications, Linda Avellar. After a general overview of their tenure and duties, questions were directed to the group to elicit information about how they approach public relations with their community. Each of the participants explained their role in the process of working and communicating with their community. They were extremely knowledgeable about the community's demographics and challenges, and acknowledged their role as problem solvers and as providers of a "safe-haven" for patrons.

One of the points made by Linda and Susan was their effort to intentionally brand the library with recognizable marketing collateral. They both felt this was an important distinction from other library organizations, because a cohesive marketing look and feel gives the impression that everyone involved is speaking with one voice and one vision. It portrays a solidarity within the library organization that they hope will transfer to the community.

When asked about how the community influences their decision-making, Alice Knapp explained that their approach involves listening to community wants and needs through various means. They hold community conversations at the library throughout the year to gauge community satisfaction as well as listening to ideas and suggestions. They also partner with other local organizations to bridge gaps in awareness for their community – this can be as simple as tax services or as complex as navigating social services for the families. Another way that The Ferguson Library sets itself up for success in public relations is intentional planning. They incorporate high-level goals into their strategic plan each year and refer to them often throughout the year. Susan LaPerla was adamant about this being a key to success, adding: "We're not an organization that makes the plan and then puts it up on the shelf. We look at it every day."

Lastly, there was a long conversation about tactics for learning about the community's wants and needs. One of the ways they are doing this is by sending out surveys to current library patrons through email. They also ask some key questions when a new patron signs up for a library card so as to know what their interests and concerns are. This gives them direction for their marketing and PR

campaigns. This led to their explanation of how they have integrated story-telling into their fundraising efforts. Their annual appeal increased approximately 30% last year, so they feel that they are making the library's story more relevant to their constituents.

Discussion

The results of this case study give strong evidence that the administration of The Ferguson Library utilizes components of relationship management theory in their approach to community relations. The consistency and frequency of social media posts and responses, as well as their continued appearance in news stories and editorials from the local newspaper illustrate the library's efforts to remain connected to the community through information and dialogue. The interview that was conducted with the management of the library gave context to the social media and newspaper data making it clear that those tactics are intentional and planned carefully by the library.

The first research question asked about the strategies and tactics used by the Ferguson Library to engage with their community. The communication between the library and the community is comprised of many different avenues including social media, email and personal interactions, both in the library and at library-coordinated events off premise. The administrators project a concerted effort to engage with their community as the primary focus of their communications. They indicated that their overarching strategy is to be seen as the center of the community, as problem-solvers, and welcoming to all. In the interview conducted for this study, Susan LaPerla referred to the library's strategic plan as the roadmap for their ongoing strategy. The plan declares the mission of the library this way: "Provide free and equal access to information, ideas, books and technology to educate and enrich the Stamford community." These are the principles that guide the strategy for the library's public relations and provide insight as to why particular tactics are used. For instance, the use of social media to communicate with their community is a frequently used tactic. When looking at the data set, the use of Facebook emerges as the more popular social media platform for

engaging with the community. Most of the Facebook posts that are put out by the library are purely informational - that is, they are not specifically looking for a response or asking for input. This is an area where the library could gain more insight and collect information from their community if they desired.

The second research question looked at the five components of the relationship management theory and whether the library's communications incorporated some or all of them. In looking at their communications as a whole, the answer is yes. When reading through the strategic plan for The Ferguson Library, it is evident that they understand the benefits of involving their publics in decisions regarding library services. They conducted a community-wide survey and also put together community stakeholder interviews to help them shape the library's message. The themes that emerged through the social media and newspaper data can be tied to dimensions of involvement, commitment, and investment. There was strong evidence that the library is committed to the community, is involved in their lives, and invests time and money in programming and events that the community wants. The other two dimensions of the theory – trust and openness – are harder to identify through the existing data. While the interview conducted with the administrators included references to these components as part of their approach, they are harder to measure from a one-sided examination. Without speaking to members of the community directly, it is difficult to determine whether they find the library trustworthy – doing what it has stated it will do -– and open – sharing plans for the future with the community (Ledingham, 2003).

The third research question seeks to determine whether the library's publics engage in two-way communication through social media. In answering this question it is important to define what is meant by two-way communication. If we include all interaction on the social media platforms to include "likes" and "shares," then there is a good deal of evidence that The Ferguson Library's publics are engaged through social media. Alternatively, these interactions are very passive – it is a

low effort interaction to click a "like" button. The small number of comments leads to more questions. Is the community not truly engaged with the library or is it a matter of content? If the library used content that was more interactive, for example, if it asked the community's opinion or ran a contest of some kind, would this elicit more responses? This ties back to the idea that the library informs, rather than interacts with its publics. True relationship building requires more input and incorporation from outside the organization.

The final research question asks The Ferguson Library to identify ways that they measure the success of their public relations efforts. This was answered by the administrators in a group interview setting and was well addressed. Interestingly, even though the questions were directed towards a public relations approach, many of the responses were marketing-focused. This seems to be a common theme among libraries: the fact that they are comfortable marketing their services and programming, but are reluctant to engage in a public relations campaign that encompasses relationship building (Besant & Sharp, 1999). This confusion between marketing and public relations aside, the president of the library made it clear that part of their jobs entail the sustainability of the library and, with that, comes a strong relationship with the community. Successful fundraising was their most important measure of success. This is not surprising given that it is a verifiable result of their efforts and contributes to the ultimate goal of sustainability in the community. This is also where the idea of storytelling becomes more important. By incorporating a more personal, narrative approach to community outreach, the library has been more successful than ever in their fundraising efforts. It would be interesting to investigate the stories being told and whether they reflect specific community values and concerns.

Study Limitations and Future Research

One of the biggest limitations of this case study is the lack of direct input from the community itself. This would be a valuable perspective when measuring the success of the public relations efforts of The Ferguson Library. While a survey or focus group would be somewhat simple to conduct for the researcher, it could cause confusion and possibly problems in the community by raising issues that the library is not prepared to deal with. One of the biggest failures of a public relations campaign is to never act on the captured information of a willing group or their desires. (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). The other limitation of this study is the singular nature of looking at one public library system. President Alice Knapp mentioned that The Ferguson Library was unique among libraries of their size to have a dedicated staff for public relations and marketing. It would be interesting to look at what methods other similar sized libraries, which do not have a trained public relations professional, use. Future research should encompass a cross-section of libraries that are successful with their outreach. This research is not only useful in the realm of communications study, but for public libraries themselves.

Conclusion

This case study offers contributions to both communication researchers and librarians who want to examine the issue of public relations in a public library through the lens of relationship management theory. A public library has many facets to address in its approach to public relations and many, if not most, librarians do not have the time nor the training to implement a cohesive campaign. This study corroborates the existing literature that relates carefully planned public relations in public libraries to successful fundraising and community engagement. Many of these studies point toward relationship management as a viable approach because of the nature of a library and its community. There is no doubt that the public library is regarded as a community hub, or as Alice Knapp, President of The Ferguson Library stated, "the heart of the community." But does that guarantee a sustainable future? The evidence in this case study as well as the body of literature on relationship management suggests otherwise. To be truly engaged with patrons, libraries should consider an intentional public relations campaign that involves frequent dialogue with their community. Continuing research in this area should address how to engage patrons in more two-way communication as well as how libraries can incorporate

their community's input without disrupting library functions.

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About the Author

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A Critical Moment:

U.S. Public libraries, public trust, and the 2020 Census

Ana Ndumu, Amy Carol Dickinson, and Paul T. Jaeger

Abstract

The current U.S. political climate continues to alter society's engagement with public institutions. The upcoming 2020 census will especially require libraries to reevaluate their services and outreach. This important political event poses a host of implications for information privacy and policy, e-inclusion and e-governance, resource distribution, representation, and social justice. Marginalized communities are acutely at risk of being left out of the democratic process. This article addresses the overarching question, "What is the role of libraries in promoting civic engagement in the 2020 U.S. census?"

Introduction

Libraries are essential information access points. Both community members and government agencies rely on libraries to be trusted messengers and gateways to government information, services, and programs – collectively now known as e-government – the most recent being the 2020 census. For the first time, Census responses will be collected via print, phone, or online – thus, presenting a variety of accessibility, security, and outreach challenges for libraries. In many other ways, the 2020 census is unlike any other prior to it. While the census has in recent decades been viewed as an apolitical national event, this iteration has been fraught with controversy. Some argue that it will be the most difficult in our country's history (O'Hare & Lowenthal, 2015).

This article addresses the structural and ideological challenges involving the role of libraries in the 2020 census. Librarians have a public charge to assist with the census, a complex undertaking and the largest peacetime mobilization effort. Throughout the past several years,

the American Library Association's 2020 Census Outreach and Education Task Force (n.d) has been hard at work to ensure that libraries help to achieve a complete national count (Clark, 2018, April 4).

There is more than enumeration at risk. Given the current political landscape in which data privacy is jeopardized and public trust is fragile, the stakes are all the more exacerbated. In addition to communicating the importance of participation, libraries are now tasked with advocating for fair census practices, dispelling misinformation regarding its use, and providing secure, reliable digital access for respondents. The 2020 U.S. census necessarily raises civil rights concerns, which will be discussed in the remainder of this paper. Achieving a fair and complete count is thus a matter of social justice.

Civic engagement and disenfranchised communities

Libraries have historically influenced civic engagement; not only providing access to government information, services, and programs, but also promoting participation in local elections, acclimating new residents, and much else. Less than a decade ago, the role of libraries in helping people understand their options and sign up for insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act was a prime example of libraries helping community members interact with governments (for overviews, see Bossaller, 2016; Bertot et al., 2013; and Tanner et al., 2016).

This commitment to community engagement also includes census participation. Increasingly, libraries are looked to as facilitators and community advocates. Who is counted has extraordinary bearing on presenting an accurate portrait of the United States (U.S.) as a society and addressing democratic representation, resources, and interventions to overcome persistent inequities. Census

data underscores contemporary research and analysis on the populace, especially identifications and descriptions of systemic disparities. Hindrances to census participation or failures to ensure equitable participation constitute disenfranchisement.

As the census informs representation, it has been controversial since its creation and enshrinement in Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution. The census is important not only in determining representation, but in creating a picture of the people who actually comprise the nation, setting policy objectives, and determining funding distribution. The results of the census heavily influence policy and funding decisions over the subsequent decade. Libraries are entrusted to uphold the interests of those on the margins of society or, for the purposes of the census, frequently undercounted communities.

In the 1990s, the United States Census Bureau (hereafter referred simply as the Census Bureau) developed a Hard to Count (HTC) score and identified data-driven participation deterrents. Those at risk of exclusion, or HTC populations, can be 1) hard to locate, 2) hard to contact, 3) hard to persuade, or 4) hard to interview (Erdman, & Bates, 2017). According to census experts, these groups may not respond because they are not sure what the census does, how the data affects them, or why their participation matters. They might also be concerned about data privacy, such as having their information used by other federal agencies. Household decision-makers may not be literate or fluent English language speakers. They might also be transient or lack the resources to participate. For the 2020 census, a new "hard to survey" metric has been developed: the Low Response Score (LRS), or the predicted level of census non-response at the tract level. Values range from 0-100. So, for example, if a census tract's LRS=25, the Census Bureau estimates that 25% of households in that area will not self-respond to the census. Regions with LRS scores higher than 30 are categorized as critically hard to count. These communities typically experience inequity. Though in recent decades the census has been approached as a nonpartisan head count, it has never solely involved enumeration. The Three-Fifths Clause, or the historical tabulation of enslaved African Americans as three-fifths human, is perhaps the most poignant example of how census data can be used for political gain. Vulnerable communities have long been suspicious of the manipulation of large-scale government data to suit the interests of those in the governing class – for instance, through gerrymandering. The "usual residence rule," which "dictates the counting of incarcerated persons," (Wagner, 2012, p. 9) constitutes another contentious area. The nation's prison population, comprised of 59% Black and/or Latinx inmates, is overwhelmingly arrested in inner-city or metropolitan regions and then sent to prisons in rural communities. For example, seventeen of Florida's state and federal prisons are located in the rural Panhandle region, despite the fact that most inmates descend from the state's urban Miami-Dade, Broward and West Palm Beach counties. Incarcerated populations are tabulated in the counties in which they are imprisoned, although they leave behind communities and families that would benefit from census-adjacent resources.

Perhaps the most significant census battle entails the highly-contested citizenship question, which would have required respondents to indicate whether they were citizens or non-citizens of the U.S. For years leading up to the census, the citizenship question was debated and litigated. The statistically untested and pretextually unjustified question (Levitt, 2019) was seen by some as a form of intimidation and misinformation that directly benefits dominant groups. On June 27, 2019, the Supreme Court found in *United States Department of Commerce v. New York, No. 18-966* (2019) that the Trump administration's reasoning for including a citizenship question on the 2020 census was inadequate. Nonetheless, the citizenship debate resulted in a chilling effect in that the very proposal created a threat to immigrant communities and hard-to-count populations writ large. Most population and census experts agreed that a citizenship question would result in lower census

participation from noncitizens and communities of color. The discourse surrounding the inclusion of a citizenship question furthered fear and mistrust among not only foreign-born and diverse groups, but those already apathetic toward government-sponsored data collection or who were inclined to boycott the census altogether. An undercount of these groups could culminate in districts that are disproportionately represented. Evidence presented in a lower court case regarding the citizenship question substantiates that proponents of the citizenship question encouraged the exclusion of Hispanic non-citizens and people under voting age from counts used to develop redistricting maps (Robin Kravitz, et al., v. United States Department of Commerce. Case 8:18-cv-01041-GJH Document 175, 2019). Active attempts to exclude specific communities from political representation and visibility, to say nothing of potential attendant effects on funding for programs that might serve such communities, are unconstitutional.

Against this backdrop of social exclusion, libraries are expected to partner in the Census Bureau's mission of counting "everyone, once, and in the right place" (Jarmin, 2018, November 5). The very communities that are at risk of non-participation are cognizant that power resides not just in numbers but in visibility, in affirmations of existence. With the role of mass media and, some would argue, religious organizations being diminished in the public consciousness, census-related communication geared toward marginalized groups is left to a smaller pool of public institutions. To some, libraries are the most respected census partners. As information professionals, librarians are acutely aware of the dehumanizing aspects of big data and biased information. In light of the rise in xenophobic, nativist, and racist rhetoric, relaying the message that each individual in the U.S. not only needs to be counted but deserves to be counted resultantly becomes a Sisyphean task. Libraries, then, must remind the nation of what it means to say "United States" – of who exactly this means.

Indeed, 2020 was anticipated to be a particularly patriotic year in that it is an Olympic, census, and election year. Some anticipate positive residual effects of these events. In theory, holding a census and election nearly in tandem is expedient in the sense of dual messaging and motivation. In the face of a divisive, acrimonious political landscape, however, it is more likely that there will be an adverse effect. Those who experience social exclusion may synchronically protest or disdain the election and census as well as the Olympics. Regardless, the census, like the election, will decide the country's direction. Thus, libraries must actively work to legitimize civic engagement to skeptics and articulate precisely how it advances U.S. society. Census participation can in fact disrupt bigotry and intolerance, and this is a potentially fruitful theme to convey, however implausible it will appear to some.

Representation and resource distribution

Accurate census tabulations are necessary for resource distribution and representation throughout the next decade. At stake is the apportionment of seats in state legislatures and federal House of Representatives, the definition of congressional district boundaries, and the distribution of billions of dollars of funds to support critical social services and infrastructure. In this regard, libraries are objects and not simply agents of census participation. Public, school, and academic libraries at public institutions are beneficiaries of census-related resource allocation. Approximately $883 billion from the 55 largest census-guided spending programs- and an estimated $900 billion of funding, when all programs are totaled – is guided by census data, according to the GW Institute for Public Policy *Counting for Dollars* project (Reamer, 2019).

School or youth librarians should be involved. Children ages 0-4 were undercounted by almost one million in the last census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Inaccurate counts could have material consequences for children eligible for HeadStart, underaged patients using Medicaid, students receiving special education services or being supported through school lunch programs, and those whose parents receive Section 8 housing vouchers or reside in households receiving low-income home energy assistance (Reamer, 2019). Children who are underprivileged stand to benefit the most from community revitalization made possible through

Homeland Security development and infrastructure grants, which generate employment and community revitalization. In 2016, more than $40 billion of funding was appropriated via the Department of Transportation with data guided by the census (Reamer, 2019, p. 2). Academic librarians, too, must assist. College students who reside on campus are often dually accounted or not counted at all. In the broader educational purview, the pipeline of students into state universities is impacted by the apportionment of educational financing and leadership. census data informs the definition of state legislative and school board districts and is used in formula calculations for IDEA and Title 1 funds for public schools. In essence, the census plays a key role in our most critical and wide-reaching educational programs and, due to its use in programmatic projections, impacts higher education. This outcome, in turn, trickles down to academic libraries on some campuses.

With great irony, the 2020 census is likely to be an example of the negative consequences of federal underfunding. There are concerns of a historic undercount considering the discrepancy between the gravity of the 2020 decennial census versus the proportionately meager fiscal support invested toward it. The 2010 census cost $96 per American household, up from $70 in 2000 and $39 in 1990. The 2020 census is now expected to cost between $125-131 per person, or approximately $15.6 billion (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d. -a). However, Census Bureau operations are chronically underfunded and capped at $12 billion (Mervis, 2014, p. 608). The result has been that the Bureau has cancelled tests since 2017, slimmed down the vital 2018 end-to-end test, and delayed testing its IT systems. Regional census trials were also dramatically curtailed due to budget cuts, with the cancellation of tests in rural West Virginia, Puerto Rico (the only Spanish-speaking test census), Standing Rock tribal lands, and Colville tribal lands - leaving urban Providence, Rhode Island, as the sole end-to-end census test site (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). On-the-ground fieldworkers who verify addresses have been reduced from 150,000 to 50,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), and census tabulators have been reduced

from 600,000 to 475,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). This will directly impact response collection among hard-to-count communities. The burden therefore falls on librarians to function as de facto census workers.

Misinformation and data privacy

Structural constraints are amplified by the fact that the nation is experiencing an era in which people are distrustful of government and data. The 2020 census has been entangled with alienating rhetoric surrounding immigration rights, birthright citizenship, and belonging. News of election interference by foreign governments and recent administrative actions, such as threats of raids on immigrant families, perpetuate anxiety among specific populations. In 2019, survey and focus group research conducted by the Census Bureau revealed that 10% of respondents believed that census data "is used to locate people living in the country without documentation," (Vines & Walejko, 2019, p. 7) and 37% were unsure. Another 6% believed census data was used "to help the police and FBI keep track of people who break the law," (Vines & Walejko, 2019, p. 34) and 31% were unsure. According to the Census Bureau, these types of apprehensions make it arguable that the citizenship question may be a major barrier. These perils erode confidence in public entities and jeopardize a complete census count. Even with attempts to make the census more accessible (i.e., translation to five dozen languages), there remains tremendous misinformation and distrust surrounding it.

Legitimacy is what secures libraries as public-facing information organizations. Perhaps more than the embattled mass media and government agencies, libraries can combat confusion about the uses of the census. Libraries themselves in the course of their services represent the type of ethics, confidentiality, and anonymity that communities need to be reassured of. For this reason, they can disseminate the message of information privacy and integrity. About 78% of adults in the U.S. say that libraries help them "find information that is trustworthy and reliable" (Geiger, 2017, para.3), and when examined through the lens of race and ethnicity, higher percentages of Black and Hispanic

adults (83% and 87%, respectively) report such trust. In reality, it is extraordinarily difficult to deanonymize individual households for the more than 330 million people in the United States. Even then, those who do disclose personal information are subject to five years in prison and a $250,000 fine (Jarmin, 2018, May 7). That census data is utilized in aggregate, at the block level at a minimum, is precisely the type of message that libraries will be depended upon to relay. Libraries will need to broadcast the unlikelihood and legal ramifications of census data misuse. In doing so, they will contribute toward a fair and accurate count.

E-inequality and e-governance

Perhaps the most challenging component of the 2020 census entails the introduction of virtual participation which might alienate entire groups. The Census Bureau now prefers online responses, yet research evinces that between 15-25% of U.S. households lack hi-speed or broadband Internet access (see, for example, Anderson & Perrin, 2017). Free and reliable access is important for those that experience a digital divide (Bertot et al., 2013). The new technological component of the census means that libraries will transition from peripheral to frontline support. Digital inequities disproportionately affect those in rural areas, households with lower incomes, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. As the leading source of no-cost public access to the Internet, devices, and technology training, libraries mitigate e-inequality (Pew Research Center, 2019).

The modernization of the census count is not without its hindrances. As mentioned, budget cuts resulted in census experts missing the opportunity to test its first digital push in areas that are acutely impacted by digital inequities on account of fragile digital infrastructure. Interestingly, during the limited test address canvassing in rural West Virginia, census workers encountered numerous issues with Internet connectivity, including Internet and cell service dead spots (Powner & Goldenkoff, 2017). Adding to concerns regarding digital reception and penetration is the fact that technology will now be a factor in other aspects of the 2020 census

undertaking. census tabulators will use mobile phones to conduct work and record data, and address verification will now be left to aerial imagery and geographic information systems (GIS) (Jarmin, 2019).

Moreover, the census is the latest entity in a long line of e-government services for which public libraries function as social guarantors (Jaeger & Bertot, 2011). Increasing demands on libraries as pathways to digital equity, social services, and civic participation are unfortunately not accompanied by increased funding, staffing, training, or communication. The 2014 roll-out of the Affordable Care Act and correlative public partnerships point to some implications for libraries as it concerns the 2020 Census:

- Technology to support the census needs to function properly;

- Librarians should participate in advance training on how to complete the new online census (including how to access versions in various languages, the telephone option, and the paper option);

- Information in libraries should be highly visible to community members;

- Modes of communication between the census and libraries should be established prior to roll-out;

- Libraries should be included in all updates and info should be shared transparently and proactively by the Census Bureau; and

- Librarians should be trained on responses in politically charged contexts (Real et al., 2015).

New e-government programs such as online census participation present unique disparities and exposures (Jaeger et al., 2012). Libraries will need to minimize risks of breaches in their web security, of susceptibility to fraud and identity theft, and of the hacking or weaponization of access points by extremist groups. Library staff must work strategically to ensure safeguards

for families, neighborhoods, and communities who will rely on them to take part in the 2020 census.

Conclusion

The 2020 census is not simply about counting every person on April 1st. It concretely and ideologically represents whether everyone is acknowledged within U.S. society. The census has had difficulty meeting this ideal from the beginning. The first census was conducted in 1790 and asked only the name of the head of the family, the number of free white males over age 16, the number of free white males under age 16, the number of free white females, the number of other free people, and the number of slaves (Dupree, 1957, p. 813). So, it had both racism and misogyny baked into only six questions. The first census acknowledged only 3.9 million "Americans," all of whom lived along the Eastern seaboard. Even then, it excluded countless others. In all of the early iterations of the census, the three-fifths compromise led to slave states having more nominal representation in Congress and in the Electoral College than they otherwise would have (Amar, 2005). Not surprisingly, for 32 of the first 36 years of the Republic, the President was a slave-owning Virginian, with abolitionist John Adams being the sole exception.

Until the mid-1800s, population growth was fueled more by birth rates than immigration, but nativist fears of German and Irish immigration gave rise to the first major movement to limit immigration, with several leaders of the Census Bureau publicly holding these views (Anderson, 2015). The National Origins Act of 1924 set restrictions to immigration based on quotas allowing a certain number of immigrants from designated countries, with most of the slots going to immigrants from Northern Europe – these quotas prevented many refugees from fascism in 1930s Europe from being able to escape to America (Wyman, 1968). In 1965, the Congress passed a new law that admitted immigrants from around the world on order of application, with special consideration given to those with professional and technical skills. At the same time, Congress also ordered the Census Bureau to focus efforts on reaching undercounted immigrant populations, particularly those of Spanish-speaking

origins (Anderson, 2015). As with the beginnings of the census, efforts to prevent undercounting were highly politicized. And, as the current controversies regarding the 2020 census remind us, every census ever conducted – and who it counts – has been the source of political controversy because of what can be done with the results in terms of redistributing representation and shifting policy.

From a human rights and social justice standpoint, libraries are critical community partners. Achieving a fair and accurate census will be accomplished only if conducted alongside traditionally hard-to-count groups. While some institutions have to work to establish relationships or broaden their reach, libraries have the privilege of sustaining deep, sometimes historical, connections. There is perhaps no better time for libraries to convey their roles as bipartisan, factual, and judgment-free zones that recognize each individual's agency and humanity. In truth, libraries are among the few such remaining public spaces. For all of these reasons, libraries will play an enormous role in the 2020 census, a pressing chapter in our country's story.

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Lobbying and Political Advocacy:

A Review of the Literature and Exploratory Survey of State Library Associations

A.J. Million and Jenny Bossaller

Abstract

This article discusses lobbying and political advocacy within librarianship and present findings from an exploratory study of state library associations. Each state has a library association that works to advance the profession, the interests of its members, and library services. Articles about lobbying and political advocacy comprise only a small part of the literature on librarianship, but advocacy is crucial for maintaining and advancing library services. To fill this gap in the literature, we provide an introduction to library advocacy, describe the associated policy landscape, and evaluate literature discussing libraries and lobbying. Next, we report findings from our study. We conclude by discussing these findings and focus on how political issues might affect libraries, lobbying and advocacy in Library and Information Science education, and other issues mentioned by our study participants.

Introduction

State library associations are professional groups, and they offer members continuing education and networking opportunities, spaces to discuss problems, and a group to advocate on their behalf. In that vein, most state library associations have a legislative committee. Legislative committees keep librarians abreast of legislative actions that affect libraries and users. They often issue calls for action, such as calling/writing to representatives around the time of crucial votes, organizing advocacy days with legislators, or creating educational materials for the public and their representatives. Such legislative committees, thus, provide a crucial link between libraries, users, and decision-makers.

Articles about lobbying and political advocacy comprise only a small part of the scholarly literature in Library and Information Science (LIS), although there are many articles about library funding. There are also several advocacy toolkits that have been created by groups like the American Library Association (ALA) and state library associations to help librarians engage with public decision-makers and the public more generally. Other toolkits and publications help librarians, library users, and state library associations advocate for libraries (Sweeney and Chrastka, 2018; Sweeney, Chrastka, and Aldrich, 2017). Scholarly articles on advocacy cover topics such as coordination by library interest-groups across political boundaries (Jaeger et al., 2017), test advocacy strategies (Rollins, 2005), and classify eras in government-library relations (Jaeger et al., 2013). However, no known study documents national library advocacy practices at the state and local level.

To fill this gap in the literature, we surveyed the legislative chairs of state library associations and Chief Officers of State Library Associations (COSLA) to learn how and with whom members engage in advocacy, how they prioritize work, and how they establish priorities. Examining these practices is important because the ways librarians and their associations' advocate may influence policy and funding outcomes. Therefore, to that end and in this paper, we touch on the history of library advocacy, the policy landscape, and literature discussing libraries and lobbying. Next, we report findings from our study while drawing attention to efforts led by state library associations on behalf of libraries, librarians, and library users. Last, we conclude by discussing our findings with attention paid to the distributed nature of library advocacy that mirrors the political subdivisions of the United States (U.S.). Using these findings, we address the issue of lobbying and political advocacy in LIS education.

Background

Political advocacy is often difficult for librarians. Historically, librarians have made claims about their neutrality to win and sustain popular support (Sparanese, 2008). Neutrality here means representing "all sides" of an issue, and this is linked to a sense that libraries should not alienate the public by engaging in partisan politics (Byrne, 2003; McMenemy, 2007). Arguably, neutrality allows libraries to exist as fairly noncontroversial publicly funded agencies, seen as a positive social good (Horrigan, 2016). Librarians and their associations do advocate for issues that are political and partisan, though. For instance, funding, inherently tied to politics, is a perennial issue. Intellectual freedom issues arise periodically, and net neutrality has been a recent politically divisive issue that librarians have weighed in on. In 2018, the ALA spent $310,298 lobbying public officials (Center for Responsive Politics, 2019). The concept that libraries and education should be available for all (thus publicly funded) is ingrained in professional education. Who convinces legislators to fund libraries most effectively, though? Benefactors, the public, or librarians themselves?

Notable benefactors, from Thomas Bray at the turn of the 18th century (Harris, 1999), Andrew Carnegie in the 20th, through Bill Gates in the 21st, have been responsible for building library infrastructure while also providing an impetus for local investment. However, in the United States, public libraries truly exist by the will and the power of the people. In the mid-1800s, New Hampshire was the first state to enact a law to provide for public libraries. Massachusetts followed in 1851, and the City of Boston opened its public library as "the crowning glory of our system of City schools" (Boston Public Library, 1852, p. 21). Women's groups lobbied at the local level for education and established many public libraries, especially across the Midwest during the Progressive Era (Parker, 1997).

Librarians have also been advocates for libraries since they formed professional associations. In the late 1800s, for example, the American Library Association gave librarians a collective voice. Joeckel (1935) describes

ALA's efforts to create a federal library agency and provide aid to libraries, while he lamented a lack of national planning and coordination to create stable and equitable funding for public libraries. In 1945, ALA established a Washington, D.C. office dedicated to representing library interests (Molumby, 1996). In the mid-20th century, federal funding was granted to complete several studies including the Public Library Inquiry that prompted the expansion of national library services. The 1956 Public Library Service and Minimum Standards, the 1964 Library Services and Construction Act, and 1966 Minimum Standards were all products of lobbying by the ALA. In the 1970's, two White House Conferences on Library and Information Services were held to garner public funding and ensure that all citizens can access library services (Implications, 1981).

A 1975 *American Libraries* article, "The Persuaders," explains that librarians were "the most effective lobbying [group] in the entire education community" (p. 648), finding success by aligning their efforts with that of primary, secondary, and post-secondary educators. Their "solid and nonpartisan," "painstakingly compiled and written" reports presented a "unified front" in the face of an unsupportive administration (p. 648). Eileen Cooke, an ALA lobbyist, explained that she was careful not to put libraries in competition with educational services as this weakened the lobby altogether. Another White House Conference on Library and Information Services convened at the behest of Congress in 1991, and this conference emphasized libraries capacity to promote literacy, workforce productivity, and democracy in the face of changing technologies (Bush, 1992). During this time, Patricia Schuman is credited with launching ALA's first national media advocacy campaign (ALA, 2014).

ALA-supported standards and policies have traditionally focused on national issues, but as Jaeger et al. (2017) point out, "From the beginning, library funding programs [...] were opportunistic but lacked a clear and coherent national policy on public librarianship" (p. 352). Political disagreements about what should be delegated to state and local governments often complicated efforts to

procure national funding. Martin and Lear (2013) note that "the history of many state libraries is intertwined with the stories of state-level library associations and with county and public libraries. Historically, state governments, library associations, and county or public libraries all shared an interest in public library development, professional standards, interlibrary cooperation, and grant funding" (p. 4). These shared interests have shaped ALA's lobbying efforts, but it may be that some issues are best addressed at the state and/or local levels. To negotiate tensions like this, ALA maintains a Chapter Relations Office that facilitates communications among the states and other ALA units, often working in consultation with staff in Washington, D.C.

Jaeger et al. (2013) define four distinct phases of public library development: the local years, the wartime years, the funding years, and the intervention years. The present era is characterized by federal intervention in library affairs with- out increased funding, either from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) or other public agencies. In response to federal intervention in libraries and increasing competition for funds, the ALA and the Public Library Association (PLA), among other groups, have developed advocacy toolkits, and some have stepped up their lobbying efforts.

The ALA may be the primary national lobbying arm for librarians, but state library associations and grassroots activists are responsible for addressing state and local issues. State library associations, in particular, are active in communicating national trends to librarians while tailoring communications to their constituents. Aside from library associations are "Friends of the Library" groups and nonprofits like EveryLibrary, which is the "only national organization dedicated exclusively to political action at a local level to create, renew, and protect public funding for libraries of all types" (EveryLibrary n.d., para. 3). Reflecting on the current policy and funding landscape for libraries, Jaeger at al. (2017) argue "there has never been a better time to craft a strategy for protecting – and maybe even increasing – library funding by working in a coordinated manner across state and local governments" (Jaeger et al., 2017, p. 351).

Professional Associations and Lobbying

The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 defines lobbying activities as, "contacts and efforts in support of such contacts, including preparation and planning activities, research and other background work that is intended, at the time it is performed, for use in contacts, and coordination with the lobbying activities of others" to influence the government. Lobbying is often understood as activities carried out by paid individuals – lobbyists represent interest groups in exchange for compensation. However, the reality for libraries and their stakeholders is far more complex. Among paid lobbyists, there are in-house lobbyists employed by a single firm, group, or association who work exclusively for their employer. There are also outside lobbyists employed by lobbying and consulting firms that represent client portfolios. Finally, grassroots lobbyists are citizen-activists who lobby the government alone or under direction from an outside entity (IRS, n.d.).

In librarianship, professional associations play a key role in directing lobbying of all types, whether for funding-related issues or other matters of relevance to the public. Harvey (2004) defines a professional body or association as "a group of people in a learned occupation who are entrusted with maintaining control or oversight of the legitimate practice of the occupation" like librarianship. Professional associations act as a "safeguard of the public interest" (Harvey, Mason, and Ward, 1995), and many groups of this type are granted tax-exempt status by the U.S. government for this reason.

Take, for example, the ALA, which is a 501(C)3 nonprofit organization. 501(C)3s are a class of tax-exempt organization dedicated to religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes that further the public interest. The U.S. tax code prohibits 501(C)3s from maintaining their tax-exempt status if they dedicate a "substantial" part of their activity to influence legislation (IRS, 2018). To determine what counts as substantial, nonprofits can elect to take the 501(h)

expenditure test, which caps lobbying activities at 20% of expenditures, up to $1,000,000, with no more than a quarter dedicated to grassroots lobbying (ALA, 2008).

Complementing groups like the ALA, 501(C)4 and (C)6 organizations, among others, also lobby on behalf of libraries and in the public interest. 501(C)6s are tax-exempt organizations meant to improve industry conditions. Unlike a 501(C)3, however, 501(C)6 groups like the Idaho Library Association can engage in politics without losing their tax status (ALA, n.d.). One requirement of 501(C)6 groups is that political activities relate to commonly held business interests (e.g., lower taxes), and 501(C)4 social welfare organizations can lobby or participate in political activity so long as it does not exceed 50% of their total expenditures. Acknowledging that ALA is not equipped to lobby or advocate at the state and local level, state library associations typically act to fill this void.

Library Legislation and Funding

Libraries and their stakeholders can lobby elected officials and the public for a variety of purposes, but the most common reason is to shape legislation that pertains to funding. Reflecting the history of libraries in the U.S., library-legislation and funding sources are equally diverse. Below, we provide a snapshot of library funding sources and other notable policy issues.

From the federal level, most library funding comes from IMLS. For instance, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) authorizes IMLS to administer the Grants to States Program, which is the "largest source of federal funding support for library services in the United States. [...] Each year, over 2,500 'Grants to States' projects support the purposes and priorities outlined in the LSTA" (McCook, Bossaller, and Thomas, 2018, p. 116). These grants fund partnerships with community organizations, digitization projects, bookmobile services, outreach, and more. Funding allotments are calculated using a minimum amount specified by law (pp. 115-141) and population figures provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of money is distributed to state libraries who administer awards to local libraries.

LSTA includes two provisions that require states and localities to adequately fund libraries in order for them to remain eligible for federal aid. First, IMLS (2015, p. 1) requires that LSTA grant funding is complemented by 50% matching funds from state governments. Second, LSTA includes a "maintenance of effort" requirement which says if state and local library funding drops below the average of the past three fiscal years, then a state becomes ineligible for LSTA dollars (pp. 2-3).

Although IMLS funding supports libraries nationwide, it accounts for a small portion of total library revenue. In Federal Fiscal Year 2015, combined national spending on public libraries totaled $12.4 billion. Less than half a percent came from federal sources, while 9% came from state governments and charitable organizations. Most notably, however, about 85% of all public library revenue came from local governments (IMLS, 2018, p. 6). This suggests most efforts to advocate for funding must take place at the grassroots level.

American Libraries provides a snapshot of ballot initiatives that summarizes recent efforts to raise funding through municipal taxes in its annual Referenda Roundup. Ford notes that "American Libraries, in partnership with the Public Library Association, tracked 146 library referenda across 33 states" during the November 2018 election (para. 1). In 2018, for example, they reported nearly 80% of library referenda passed including two statewide wins: "In Maine, voters approved a $15 million bond to upgrade facilities including library services at its community colleges, while in New Mexico, voters authorized the state to sell and issue nearly $12.9 million in general obligation bonds for several types of libraries" (para. 1). In Michigan, some 30 measures were approved, and many losses were by narrow margins. For instance, "it took just 113 votes to defeat a tax rate increase that would have yielded an estimated $687,767 for Vineland (N.J.) Public Library" (para. 2).

Aside from their interest in funding, libraries and library associations are concerned with other policy issues. After 9-11, the U.S. PATRIOT Act presented "tremendous challenges for librarians" on practical and ethical grounds (Jaeger et al., 2004, p. 102). In response, the ALA Council (2003) passed a resolution that called on Congress to "provide active oversight" of the law's implementation, "hold hearings" to determine its effect on library users, and amend the law as necessary to protect citizen rights (para. 14-15). More recently, ALA mobilized to oppose the elimination of IMLS (Wright, 2015) with strong support from state library associations (e.g., Karshmer, n.d.) and applaud the nomination of Dr. Carla Hayden as Librarian of Congress (Gravatt, 2016). At the state and local level, libraries remain interested in policy issues like K-12 school districts adequately funding libraries (Sparks and Harwin, 2018), legal threats to eliminate programming (Myers, 2019), and pressure from outside groups to remove books from circulation.

Lobbying and Political Advocacy Literature

Lobbying and political advocacy are discussed in LIS literature, but there is no known study documenting library advocacy practices nationally and at the state or local level. Two recently published books by EveryLibrary's Sweeney, Chrastka, and Aldrich (2017) and Chrastka and Sweeney (2018) provide guidance to librarians, library staff, and their stakeholders about how to campaign for political funding support. A pair of peer-reviewed journal articles written by Jaeger et al. (2013; 2017) brought attention to the relationship between librarianship and political advocacy at the national level. Mentioned earlier, the first article argued that an ideal strategy for groups lobbying on behalf of library funding is to focus their efforts at the state and local level while coordinating efforts across political boundaries. The second article proposed four eras in libraries, policy, and politics with the aim being for U.S. library advocates to better assert library contributions to democracy.

Attention paid to lobbying and political advocacy is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it limited to the United States. Looking back, in 2008, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions hosted a "President's Workshop" about how to draw policy-maker attention to libraries (Schleh, 2008) demonstrating that advocacy is a global topic. Smith (2008) discussed advocacy for libraries in a variety of international contexts while touching on the issue of LIS education and accreditation standards. This volume supplemented other work published in the 2000s including a New York lobbying case study (Borges, 2005), a doctoral dissertation examining lobbying strategies used by the Alabama Digital Library (Rollins, 2005), and a management-focused article by Meraz (2002) for public library administrators.

Library advocacy literature has focused on practical guidance for librarians that can be used at the grassroots level (e.g., Abbott-Hoduski, 2003). School or public libraries dominate the literature because they operate with public funds (Halsey, 2003), and this means academic or special libraries are less discussed. As noted above, Rollins' (2005) doctoral dissertation evaluated lobbying and state legislator perceptions in Alabama, and she found that lobbying was effective in shaping funding allocations. Nevertheless, even in publications that provide guidance to librarians, library advocates, and library supporters, it does not appear attention has been paid to documenting contemporary practices. Examining these activities may help identify opportunities to strengthen librarians' collective voice, shape policy, and improve LIS education related to advocacy.

Research Methods

To fill a gap in the literature by documenting lobbying and advocacy practices nationwide, we surveyed the legislative chairs of state library associations and COSLA representatives. These individuals possess knowledge about library funding, legislative process, and lobbying, and they often collaborate with state libraries and lead association advocacy efforts. State libraries are responsible for distributing federal funding and administering grants, while state library associations bridge federal and local organizations. Associations may also coordinate and sustain lobbying and advocacy efforts separate from ALA.

Questions

This study sought to answer five interrelated research questions:

1. How do state library associations conduct and encourage lobbying and political advocacy?

2. How do associations' legislative committees set priorities?

3. When do legislative committees employ professional lobbyists and invest in advocacy?

4. Do committees avoid partisan politics (and how)?

5. Do the chairs of legislative committees believe it should be a priority for LIS programs to teach students about advocacy?

Data Collection and Analysis

We identified all study participants through COSLA and state library association websites. In February 2019, we distributed an online survey to the chairs of legislative committees or library association presidents if the association had no legislative committee, and COSLA representatives. We also sent three rounds of emails to our target audience, and then we sent the survey to other legislative committee members if our target members did not respond.

Our survey contained quantitative and qualitative questions that were organized into six areas: how advocacy is carried out, perceived differences between advocacy and political advocacy, agenda-setting, the use of lobbyists, political partisanship, and education for advocacy in LIS (see *Appendix A*). Thirty-five respondents representing thirty-one states (including Washington, D.C.) completed our survey for a 61% response rate. Of the responding associations, twenty-two were 501(C)3 organizations, eight were 501(C)6s, and three registered as both. *Table 1* shows the tax classifications of the library associations that responded to our survey, which we provide because federal law shapes how and when they can advocate. We discuss this influence in our findings.

The data we collected lent itself to hand-coding using inductive reasoning to find themes in the data (Saldaña, 2016). Additionally, we looked for themes based on tax classifications and the limits they impose on lobbying and political activities. Most of the data we analyzed was qualitative, and because twenty states did not respond to our survey, the results were not nationally generalizable. That said, our data revealed trends and provided information to guide future studies. This made it appropriate to keep all survey responses, even though respondents did not answer every question.

Findings

Our most noteworthy finding is that no single model described every state library association's lobbying and political advocacy. Some associations limited the scope of their work to focus on state issues, while others advocated at the federal and local levels as well. Some states hired lobbyists, but others did not. Advocacy training methods varied. For instance, some associations organized advocacy boot camps and others trained the public to speak out via social media on their behalf as part of media campaigns. A few associations reported clear processes to set organizational priorities. Priorities, resource availability, and the law all shaped how associations advocated.

Table 1. Tax Status Survey Respondents*

State	Tax Status	State	Tax Status	State	Tax Status	State	Tax Status
Alabama	501(C)6	Idaho	501(C)6	Missouri	501(C)3	South Carolina	501(C)3
Arizona	501(C)3	Illinois	501(C)3	Montana	501(C)3	South Dakota	501(C)3
California	501(C)3	Iowa **	501(C)3, 501(C)6	Nebraska	501(C)3	Tennessee	501(C)3
Colorado	501(C)6	Louisiana	501(C)3	New Jersey **	501(C)3, 501(C)6	Texas	501(C)3
Connecticut	501(C)6	Maine	501(C)6	New Mexico	501(C)3	Utah	501(C)3
Delaware	501(C)3	Massachusetts	501(C)3	New York	501(C)3	Vermont	501(C)3
D.C.	501(C)3	Minnesota **	501(C)3, 501(C)6	Ohio	501(C)6	Wyoming	501(C)6
Florida	501(C)3	Mississippi	501(C)3	Oklahoma	501(C)3	---	---

*Data from the GuideStar (n.d.) database of U.S. nonprofit organizations.
**Has an affiliate organization Affiliates are registered nonprofits that lobby and advocate on behalf of libraries separate from a state library association to enjoy greater flexibility.

How do state library associations conduct and encourage lobbying and political advocacy?

Our survey asked how state associations advocated for the profession, individual libraries, and library users. Most of our respondents (n=23) framed their response in terms of library services and users rather than advocating for the profession. Some examples respondents brought up included fighting proposals cutting taxes for library services and construction, the arts, and reductions in state aid. One respondent described fighting a bill requiring the election of library board members. National issues that affect libraries and library users, such as net neutrality, rural broadband, and copyright transfer were also listed as priority items. Several respondents mentioned campaigns supporting their state libraries and archives.

A lower priority for most respondents was advocating for the profession, but three prioritized salaries and continuing education. Five said that an effective method of advocacy was coordinating school and public librarians to lobby state legislators; fourteen respondents said that schools hiring qualified, credentialed K-12 librarians was a top priority. One respondent explained that in the past year their legislative committee had fought a proposal to make school librarians optional. The committee wrote letters, testified to the state legislature, and built alliances with school districts to defeat the proposal.

The causes of restrictions on association advocacy were not always clear, and this bears mentioning. For example, advocating for the profession was allowed in some states but not everywhere. One respondent said that she advocates for the profession "every day" but another said advocacy was prohibited. Most states limited advocacy to set activities, and one respondent said why: "We are not allowed... our role is to facilitate discussions between library types and library organizations." This suggests legal requirements like a prohibition on 501(C)3 organizations from engaging in partisan politics may have been a factor, although association priorities and resource limitations were also constraints. Indeed, nine respondents said they intentionally limited efforts to the state level, though fourteen said they could advocate for individual libraries or districts. Ten respondents said they engage with larger, national issues, and some reported sending groups to Washington D.C. for National Library Legislative Day. Nevertheless, it was more common for associations to lobby or advocate in state capitols because of a lack of funding and time to travel.

Several respondents who said their association does lobby or advocate for individual libraries provided examples of what they sought to accomplish. For instance, one state described providing legal support to a library that straddles the Canadian border, because it was a meeting spot for separated immigrant families. Legal support for libraries experiencing censorship problems came up three times, in response to 1) anti-LGBTQ+

legislation, 2) blocking EBSCO databases, and 3) "anti-obscenity" legislation. Respondents described asking for help from supporters, such as EveryLibrary, public library directors, state intellectual freedom committees, state librarians, and lobbyists to address these problems.

How do associations' legislative committees set priorities?

There were varying methods to set priorities, but the top priority for legislative committees was, unsurprisingly, funding. Respondents described looking to ALA, lobbyists, and their state librarians for guidance about national issues, and their members to report local problems. Some states took more proactive approaches (e.g., hosting an annual legislative forum to solicit advice from their members) than other states. One respondent said their legislative committee was responsible for creating an advocacy priority list, but the association's board made final decisions. Another said the question we asked about prioritization was "loaded" because their process is "through the committee and platform development process [but is] more accurately based on what is most achievable according to our paid lobbyist." In other words, committees set goals, but these goals were not always achievable. Reflecting this, a third respondent said their association set priorities and tried to stick with them, but they have to stay nimble – two more said lobbyist oversights created problems for libraries in their states, and yet another reported they had to shift gears to fight a bill that would raise materials delivery costs.

When do legislative committees employ professional lobbyists and invest in advocacy?

We also found that state library associations hired lobbyists and worked with a variety of professional groups (e.g., teachers), individuals, and organizations to build support networks and accomplish advocacy goals. Respondents mentioned working with library trustees, grassroots volunteers, students, business owners, and members of the public with community connections, as well as formal organizations like Friends of the Library groups, state libraries, the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, and political action committees. Such individuals and groups were able to facilitate collective action with associations through activities like visits to legislators at Library Advocacy Day, phone calls, and letter-writing campaigns. One participant said they worked with legislators to craft bill language when their legislature was in session. Nine respondents said that ALA's advocacy tools (e.g., Engage, Libraries Transform) were useful, and other technologies, such as websites, email, and social media helped library stakeholders work together. That said, in general, library associations' investment in lobbying and political advocacy appeared to be opportunistic, based on the resources at committees' disposal.

Because not all states had resources at their disposal, coordination with like-minded allies was a workaround. One state, for instance, reported being able to find legal aid from the American Civil Liberties Union. Eight other states mentioned working with EveryLibrary to pass municipal referenda, and one respondent said: "During our fight to reinstate EBSCO, we partnered with EveryLibrary who placed a paid petition on Facebook that generated thousands of emails from Utah citizens direct to the [… state education board] asking them to overturn their decision to block EBSCO." Another respondent said they were interested in partnering with other organizations, but "there is a bit of fear in doing so... to have an outside group come to the state, [... that brings] a fear that this is not the way [we] like to do things, even though it could be beneficial." Quotes like these suggest bringing in outside groups may help library associations to accomplish their goals, but the optics may be unfavorable.

Finally, the majority (n=20) of our respondents invested in lobbying and political advocacy by hiring lobbyists. While thirteen associations did not have a lobbyist, nine hired one part-time, six hired one full-time, and five employed more than one full-time lobbyist to communicate directly with legislators. These lobbyists worked at the state level, and the tax statuses of the groups we studied fit with lobbying patterns: seventeen

501(C)3s paid fewer than one lobbyist, but 501(C)6s and those with affiliate groups often (n=6) had one or more.

Do committees avoid partisan politics (*and how*)*?*

Most of our respondents said they avoided partisan politics, and this reflects a commitment in librarianship to neutrality. For example, one respondent said, "Our focus is on libraries, championed by members of both sides of the aisle." Another respondent elaborated by saying: "We try to be as neutral as possible and create messages that can be embraced by both parties." Three respondents said they were careful to avoid doing anything that could be construed as partisan, because "we do not talk about party politics in meetings or via email." A fourth person said, "We never use partisan language or call issues 'Democratic' or 'Republican.'" Eighteen of these respondents spoke on behalf of 501(C)3 associations, which are by definition, nonpartisan.

Despite good faith efforts to remain neutral, some respondents said that certain issues are inherently partisan, and this cannot be avoided. One individual said, "It is easier to find alignment with Democrats [than Republicans]" and another reiterated this point: "We try to stay neutral, but lean left." Respondents did not say why their association leaned this way, but a likely explanation is librarians held liberal views about gun control, censorship, and net neutrality. Gun control is a partisan issue, and many librarians have advocated to keep guns out of libraries. Another respondent said that a county commissioner tried to remove a library's "Ask me about LGBTQ Materials" buttons and displays, which turned into a partisan fight; the profession's resistance to censorship was at odds with the religious beliefs of the commissioner. Net neutrality and broadband expansion were also divisive issues because librarians defined them in terms of equity, a stance aligned with the Democratic Party. Funding, too, can be seen as partisan; anti-tax groups aligned with the Republican and Libertarian parties generally resist increasing funding for public institutions.

Finally, the alignment of associations that we studied should not be taken as an indication they were biased or wanted to engage in partisan politics. Aside from trying to avoid politics, most of our respondents said they try to seek out common ground with those whom they disagree. One respondent said they always "thank legislators regardless of support" and members normally keep associations from becoming ideological. Speaking about this, a second respondent said that "with a large association, there are enough checks and balances and opposing view- points to keep people from going too far into 'left' or 'right' field." This indicates most state associations leaned to the left in only relation to issues that affected libraries.

Do the chairs of legislative committees believe that it should be a priority for LIS programs to teach students about advocacy?

Respondents were generally in agreement that librarians should be taught to lobby or engage in political advocacy: twenty-five (80%) said that advocacy should "definitely" be taught in LIS programs, and six provided more tentative answers – three answered "probably yes," two "maybe," and 1 "probably not." The respondents who responded "maybe" or "probably not" said that while advocacy is important, it is best learned on the job or at the state or local level, indicating advocacy education may require tailoring to fit local needs.

Nevertheless, our respondents did say that all librarians should understand how libraries are funded, and that students must learn to speak publicly about libraries' worth, value, and relevance, because libraries will always be in competition with other causes. LIS programs train managers and leaders, and anyone in a leadership position is responsible for directing communications about what libraries accomplish and the resources they need to serve the public. Respondents also said that issues like privacy, intellectual freedom, and civil rights matter for ethical reasons, so advocacy education is about much more than the work librarians accomplish. Indeed, as one respondent put it: "Teaching new librarians that they can be neutral is ridiculous... our job is to teach our communities how to be a part of the democratic process, so we need to understand it ourselves as a core competency."

Discussion

This study was exploratory, but we can still draw four themes from our data:

1. Library advocacy is best framed in terms of users;

2. Legislators require continuous education about the issues that affect libraries;

3. Libraries depend on political support; and

4. Association advocacy strategies vary dramatically from state to state.

These generalizations are not surprising, but nevertheless, they provide a basis to discuss the high and low points of this study. There is no avoiding that librarians may benefit from political advocacy, but we also found that librarians rarely advocated for the profession itself. In response to our question, "Can you recall a time when the association advocated for the profession?" respondents typically framed advocacy in terms of issues that affected the public or library users' ability to access information. Only 3 respondents mentioned specific examples of increasing staff or pay, continuing education, and school librarians.

Respondents recognized the importance of the collective voice that associations provide in elevating issues that matter to libraries, as well as the communities they serve. Our data revealed that associations varied in how they operated. How- ever, we also found, as suggested by Jaeger et al. (2017), that joining with other groups, like teachers unions, school library associations, and others amplifies association voices, both in communicating with the public and policy-makers. This means coordination efforts among library interest groups benefits libraries and their stakeholders *everywhere*. Several respondents did say they appreciate ALA's advocacy and communication at the national level, but state-level efforts were stymied by a lack of coordination or time. ALA's Policy Corps (2019) is a recent initiative that aims to train cohorts of library advocates to, "build capacity for the library community to develop and sustain strategic advocacy efforts" (para. 1) and it may address the lack of

state resources we found. However, it remains to be seen how national capacity-building will advance state and local advocacy efforts.

Another interesting finding is that our study participants reported using re- active and proactive strategies in their lobbying and political advocacy efforts. Ide- ally, the role of legislative committees is to inform librarians, and the public, about policy issues and then elevate the importance of these issues to legislators. A few of our study participants said they do not set legislative priorities, but instead react to legislation that might harm libraries. At the other end of the spectrum, some said they work with lobbyists, legislators, and contacts in the ALA Washington Office to stay abreast of the political landscape, and then they craft and communicate priorities to legislators. Participants listed partners like state libraries, library association boards, and others who inform committee prioritization efforts.

Two topics came up that were related to library districts and resource sharing. Libraries often devise methods of resource sharing that do not fall within standard political subdivisions. For instance, small or rural libraries may collaborate with their state library to provide administrative support using IMLS funding (Million and Bossaller, 2015). These systems are not always well understood by the public, and a lack of understanding may cause problems. A few respondents said legislators understood the work municipal and county libraries do, but not the structure of their tax districts. Because legislators may not understand how libraries are funded, this potentially subjects them to fallout from larger fights about government spending (Braum, 2017). For example, in Kansas legislators needed aggressive feedback from librarians to prevent the end of "public library service as [… Kansans] now know it" (p. 19). Based on our findings, and cases like these, librarians should be prepared to defend, in simple terms, library services that are not well-understood by legislators and the public, including the funding mechanisms that sustain libraries.

Finally, another problem that arose in this study was illustrated by the emergence of divisive political issues including rural broadband expansion, net neutral- ity,

guns in libraries, and the inclusion or promotion of LGBTQ+ materials in library collections. Librarians can frame their advocacy positions as related to library users or democratic values, but individuals with different opinions about these issues can mistake disagreement for partisanship. Because disagreement in politics may be mistaken for partisanship, library advocacy can be risky.

Some libraries were given support from outside entities (e.g., EveryLibrary or the ACLU), but others said that they needed more training to advocate effectively. Skills taught in recent publications about library lobbying could be beneficial in helping librarians manage the risk associated with political advocacy (Chrastka and Sweeney, 2018; Sweeney, Chrastka, and Aldrich, 2017; Rollins 2005). Training should prepare librarians to speak to decision-makers at every level of government and give librarians ideas about how to cultivate grassroots support and build coalitions. However, these examples also demonstrate the value of an LIS education and continuing education: librarians should be able to recognize when and where advocacy is needed. Library associations, too, should consider finding ways to identify when political advocacy is necessary.

Limitations and Future Direction

Our survey response rate was lower than we expected, but our findings show there is value in studying lobbying and advocacy, and a need for future research. Given the sensitivity associated with this topic, we feel that more success could be found if another survey were conducted by a national group such as the ALA. We also have questions about the influence of state politics that might account for variation in our survey responses. For example: Is there more advocacy in states with strong labor unions? How strong is the correlation between tax status and association advocacy? We could have answered these questions but did not because our findings would have been misleading due to our study sample size.

Several participants did imply they operate under rules about for whom they can advocate. For instance, some states said they could not advocate directly for the profession, but others were able to lobby for higher salaries. Additionally, state as- sociations seemed to operate under different rules than one another; some advocated on behalf of individual libraries or library districts, while others said they could not. Likewise, some associations were vocal about national issues. This brings up an unresolved problem: Are associations constrained by tax-status, resources, and their missions, or did the politics and laws of states constrain associations' ability and willingness to engage in politics? We do not have sufficient data to answer this question, but we believe it is important for future research to examine in detail.

Another limitation to this study is some of the individuals who responded to our survey were volunteers, too busy to respond, or new to their roles. This limited the ability of respondents to answer survey questions. To overcome this limitation, we recommend creating focus groups in future studies, for each state, with multiple association members. Even members who do not serve on legislative committees would be able to fill gaps in knowledge about library advocacy.

Conclusion

State library associations and their members have diverse needs; however, based on what we found in our survey, some could use more assistance with their advocacy efforts. As one participant observed, librarians will always need to fight for funding in the presence of other worthy causes. If librarians believe that libraries and the services they provide are worthy of support, then they must remain vigilant and advocate for themselves. To that end, some of the 'best practices" we can glean from this study are:

1. Set annual priorities by tracking legislation that might affect libraries or their users. Work with state librarians and maintain an informed legislative committee that is willing to push an agenda through communication with legislators and the public.

2. Communicate priorities regularly, using different channels as needed.

3. Create and maintain close relationships with legislators who can craft and fight bills that will impact library users. Educate policy-makers about how their decisions will affect communities.

4. Make an impact by working with like-minded groups and allies. Create a unified force that provides mutual benefit to all parties involved.

5. Be prepared to shift gears when necessary, and remain nimble in the face of changing priorities.

In the U.S., public libraries are funded almost entirely by local taxes, but laws that affect libraries exist at the local, state, and federal levels. The relationships librarians cultivate with legislators and the voting public is crucial. Librarians, from reference desk staff to library directors and administrators need to remain educated about issues that affect libraries and their users so they can justify the services they provide and money they spend. Topics of education, in LIS courses and on-the-job, include everything from how libraries are funded to issues such as broadband expansion and net neutrality. Staying abreast of relevant issues like these will ensure librarians can advocate for their patrons and communities where necessary. Future research should explore how to accomplish this most effectively nationally and at the state and local level.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Association

In which state do you live?

Dropdown list.

Advocacy

Can you recall a time when the association advocated for the profession? If so, please describe it below. Discussing advocacy more generally is also fine.

Text box.

Can you recall a time when the association advocated on behalf of specific libraries and/or library districts? If so, please describe it below. Discussing advocacy more generally is also fine.

Text box.

Can you recall a time when the association advocated for library users and other stakeholders (e.g., schools, teachers)? If so, please describe it below. Discussing advocacy more generally is also fine.

Text box.

Mobilization

How does the association mobilize its members for political advocacy (e.g., lobbying actions)? Specifically, describe with whom the association works and how it coordinates advocacy efforts within the association and among its members.

Text box.

Does the association work with citizens who are not librarians as part of its political advocacy efforts? If so, please describe how.

Yes (with text box), No, Not sure.

Advocacy Details and Types

Are there differences between the association's political advocacy at the state/local level and the federal level in terms of who is involved, motivations, and tactics. If so, what are these differences?

Text box.

What are the association's legislative and/or lobbying priorities for the coming year?

Text box.

How do you prioritize your legislative and/or lobbying efforts from year to year?

Text box.

Can you describe a time when the association was forced to change its legislative and/or lobbying priorities? If so, please describe this time.

Yes (with text box), No.

Lobbying Investment

How many full-time professional lobbyists does the state library association employ or support?

None, Less than one (part-time), One, More than one.

Are there other ways that the association invests in its political advocacy efforts? If so, please list them below.

Yes (with text box), No.

More Advocacy Details

Can you recall a time when groups outside of the association (e.g., EveryLibrary, the NEA) lobbied on behalf of libraries within your state? If so, when?

Yes (with text box), No.

Do you feel that the association is non-partisan in its political advocacy efforts? Briefly explain why or why not this is the case.

Yes (with text box), Maybe (with text box), No (with text box).

Can you recall a time when politics created problems for libraries, librarians, or library users in your state? If so, please briefly describe this situation.

Yes (with text box), No.

In the past five years, has the association advocated for anything at the federal level? What about the state level? If so, please provide examples below.

Text box.

Advocacy Education

Do you think that LIS programs should teach students how to engage in political advocacy? Briefly describe why you chose your answer.

Definitely yes (with text box), Probably yes (with text box), Maybe (with text box), Probably not (with text box), Definitely not (with text box).

How does the association educate librarians, members, and library users about its advocacy efforts (especially political advocacy)?

Text box.

Volume Five: Call for Submissions

Proposal Deadline: December 1, 2020

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 and 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 editor:
Christopher Stewart - stewart@everylibraryinstitute.org