The Library Advocacy Gap:
Increasing Librarians' Political Self-Efficacy
A Mixed Methods Research Study

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ABSTRACT

Libraries need strong library advocates to raise awareness of the critical role libraries play in communities and to advocate for policies that advance the mission of libraries. However, thisstudy found a library advocacy gap among professional librarians.

Through the lens of social cognitive theory using a phenomenological design, this study compares professional librarians' involvement in library advocacy activities to their belief that these same activities are the librarian's responsibility; seeks relationships between professional librarians' political self-efficacy and advocacy participation; and explores Library and Information Science (LIS) education and professional development experience regarding advocacy and policy. The mixed method design consisted of an online survey and in-depth interviews with LIS thought leaders. The result is a descriptive portrait of librarians' advocacy engagement, political self-efficacy, and factors that influence librarians' political self-efficacy (LPSE) with recommendations to strengthen librarians' political self-efficacy, advocacy skills, and participation.

Introduction

Today's libraries are much more than books, they are highly trusted and esteemed community institutions (Lockwood & Ritter, 2016; Horrigan, 2017). They promote formal and informal learning, providing social infrastructure, equitable access to information, technology, workforce development, and community engagement while promoting the social well-being of community members (IMLS, 2021). Americans steadily continue to visit our nation's libraries and access library resources (ALA, 2019; McCarthy, 2020). American attitdes toward libraries are also favorable. A Pew Research Center survey found that Americans continue to express positive views of their local public libraries; 77% say that public libraries provide them with the necessary resources. Sixty-six percent say closing their local public library would significantly impact their community (Horrigan, 2016).

While libraries are highly trusted institutions rooted in the communities that they serve, their budgets and relevance are continually questioned in an age when information is readily available online to anyone, anywhere, with access to the internet (Aspen Institute,

2014). Financial support for libraries has been "controversial and inconsistent" (Jaeger et al., 2017). FY2021 was the fourth consecutive year the Trump administration attempted to zero out funding to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a small federal agency and the fiscal agent for most library funding (Albanese, 2020). Every Republican administration, starting with the Nixon administration, has attempted to zero out federal library funding (Jaeger et al., 2017).

While federal budgets are volatile, so are local budgets. The majority of public library funding comes from the local community. With tight municipal budgets, libraries are often viewed as a luxury when measured against public safety and other municipal priorities in what many perceive as a zero-sum game. However, libraries do play a vital and overwhelmingly positive role in its community's public safety welfare by providing shelter and warmth during cold weather, hiring social workers, helping patrons make appointments for COVID vaccines, providing referrals for library patrons to resources for mental health, housing, employment, health care, immigration, domestic violence, and more.

In addition to budget constraints, libraries also face increases in adverse legislation while simultaneously facing fluctuating voter support in recent years. According to the American Library Association (ALA), during recent legislative sessions, many state legislators introduced proposed legislation that would impair the ability of libraries to purchase and provide access to diverse materials, resources, and programming to their communities. Other legislation proposed direct censorship of diverse content. Some legislators and advocacy groups supported legislation that erodes the authority of local library boards and staff to oversee the library's collection development activities, the process by which a library adds and withdraws books. These bills are seen by many in the library community as part of a larger campaign to adopt state laws that advance social and cultural priorities largely associated with conservative values and politics (ALA, n.d. -a). In addition, voter support for libraries fluctuates. In 2008, 71% of Americans thought that "if the library were to shut down, something essential would be lost." In 2018, that number was only 55% (OCLC, 2018).

Given these challenges, librarians working in all types of libraries must be competent advocates and policy influencers. Librarians execute advocacy skills through a variety of actions, such as communicating regularly with the library's community, writing an informative letter to the editor to raise public awareness of library issues; researching policy issues and effectively communicating the policy impact on the library to stakeholders and decision-makers; and telling the story of why the library matters to a municipal board looking to cut the library's budget; or testifying before a school board to oppose censorship and defend the freedom to read. In addition, librarians need a foundational understanding of how public policy impacts libraries. This understanding empowers librarians to advocate for policy that enables libraries to realize their mission in ensuring equal access to information for all. Librarians educate policymakers and community members about the important role that libraries play in their communities.

Are librarians prepared to advocate for libraries? The American Library Association's (ALA) Core Competences of Librarianship (2009, p.2) cites "the importance of effective advocacy for libraries, librarians, other library workers, and library services" as a core competency of professional librarianship. The ALA Core Competences document was last

updated in 2009, but the ALA community has received a revised draft for feedback (ALA, 2022a). The 2022 draft calls for librarians to be able to "effectively advocate for libraries, librarians, other library workers, patrons, and services, especially in terms of marketing, fundraising, and outreach" (ALA, 2022a). Note that the revision calls for action: effectively advocating – highlighting marketing, fundraising, and outreach. However, neither policy nor legislation is listed as an area for effective advocacy. A recent study of librarians found that only 45% of information professionals rank advocacy as a core skill, even lower, at 38%, among academic librarians (Saunders, 2020).

There is concern that Library and Information Science (LIS) graduate programs do not adequately cover advocacy, public policy, and information policy in their curricula (Bertot, Sarin, & Jaeger, 2015; Chrastka, 2018; Jaeger et al., 2015; Jaeger & Sarin, 2016). In a website review of current master's level LIS programs and a review of The Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) statistical reports, only a small portion of top-ranked LIS programs offer advocacy courses (ALISE, 2022). My research shows that the majority of librarians do not feel adequately prepared to engage in library advocacy through their MLIS studies. Policy courses are offered more consistently, but these do not necessarily teach future librarians their responsibility to advocate or the skills required to advocate effectively. Professional development in the library field also provides opportunities for librarians to sharpen their advocacy skills. Organizations such as the American Library Association, state library associations, state libraries, EveryLibrary Institute, and others offer learning opportunities through webinars, workshops, pieces of training, and action guides.

Research in other fields has shown that higher political self-efficacy leads to higher advocacy engagement. Political self-efficacy is whether people believe they have the skills to influence the political system (Caprara et al., 2009). For instance, social work researchers have found that experiential advocacy courses, meaning actual engagement in advocacy, produce students who are significantly more likely to identify as politically self-efficacious and continue to engage in policy practice after graduation (Beimers, 2016; Mink & Twill, 2012; Rocha et al., 2010).

The overarching research question for this study is to understand the relationship between librarians' political self-efficacy (LPSE) and library advocacy participation in professional librarians. I hypothesized that high LPSE would have a positive correlation to advocacy participation. Further, I explored whether librarians engaged in library advocacy activities, believed advocacy is a professional responsibility, felt their LIS education and professional development opportunities prepared them to advocate, and I proposed measures to be taken to strengthen library advocacy.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods design, a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative data at some phase of the research process within a single study to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2002). The rationale for mixing is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods would be sufficient to capture the full story of library advocacy. In Phase One of this study, survey data – input from professional libraries – quantifies assumptions and seeks relationships. Interview data from Phase Two of the study reflects and elaborates on the survey data, and seeks future

policy recommendations from advocacy thought leaders in the LIS field.

An online survey, a self-developed questionnaire using Qualtrics, was sent out via numerous state library listservs, ALA Connect, and library-related social media groups from December 2020 through February 2021. The survey was open to librarians in the United States with an MLIS.

The first section of the survey asks respondents how often they engage in various everyday political activities, such as writing a letter to the editor, voting, or testifying before a legislative committee. The second section of the survey explores the respondent's attitudes toward legislative advocacy, exploring the same activities examined in section one regarding action – asking participants if they believe these actions are the responsibility of professional librarians. The third section of the survey explores participants' LIS education and professional development opportunities with advocacy and policy. The fourth section of the survey explores the librarians' political self-efficacy. This section's first set of questions uses Niemi, Craig, and Mattei's (1991) Internal Political Efficacy Scale to create library-specific questions asking the respondent to rate their competence regarding understanding library policy and effectively advocating for libraries, thus creating the Librarians' Political Self-Efficacy Scale (LPSE). This section's second set of questions is Niemi et al.'s (1991) Internal Political Efficacy Scale used to measure self-efficacy with legislative advocacy. The fifth and final section of the survey asks the respondent demographic questions, including information regarding their gender, education, current library role, and professional association affiliation

The survey was first pilot tested to determine construct validity. The LSPE scale underwent exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Appropriate changes were made to the scale based on the results. Limitations to the survey include convenience sampling – given that the survey was online and shared widely, librarians interested in library advocacy and policy are more likely to click on the link to take the survey. The MLIS requirement left out many library workers' voices as the survey explores reflections on LIS programs. See Appendix A for the full text of the survey.

Once the survey data was analyzed, in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine LIS advocacy thought leaders were conducted that explored LIS policy thought leaders' reactions to survey results. Interviewees were sought from library associations, nonprofits, LIS faculty, and state libraries. Further research questions guiding the interviews are: what are LIS thought leader perceptions of advocacy and policy education in LIS curriculum and professional development opportunities, and what recommendations can we draw to strengthen library advocacy? These questions offer a more complete picture of the data collected. The interviews included five open-ended questions. Interview participants received the interview questions and a summary of the quantitative findings before the scheduled interview. Interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom and recorded with the participant's approval. The interviews were transcribed, cleaned, and loaded to Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. Dedoose software facilitated coding and finding themes. See Appendix B for the full text of the interview questions.

Findings and Results

Survey Results

Initially, there were 1,373 survey responses. After data cleaning, n=772 with the majority dropped data due to incomplete responses. According to the US Occupational Outlook Handbook, there are 134,800 librarians employed in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018.) Responses surpassed my goal of 384 responses based on Krejcie and Morgan's work for determining sample sizes (1970). Samples following these guidelines are likely to provide a very good estimate of the population (Beaudry & Miller, 2016). I received responses from 49 states. Most respondents worked in public libraries (54%), followed by academic libraries (19%). Responses also represented school, state, federal, law, corporate, and medical libraries. Most respondents have worked in the field for over ten years: 0-2 years (0), 3-5 years (6%), 6-10 years (29%), 11-19 years (38%), 20 or more years (27%). Library positions indicated are leadership (31%), middle management (23%), librarian (44%), and library assistant (2%). Fifty-two percent of participants were ALA members, while 71% were members of their state library association. Findings include a gap in library advocacy activities between what librarians believe is their professional responsibility and what actions they have taken part in. The survey found a statistically significant relationship between LPSE and library advocacy activity. Most respondents did not feel their LIS program prepared them to be library advocates. Professional development fared slightly better in preparing librarians to advocate.

Library Advocacy Gap: The survey found a gap in library advocacy activities between what librarians believe is their professional responsibility and what advocacy activities they have completed.

Table 1

Advocacy activity	Librarians who have done this activity	Believe it is a a professional librarian's responsibility
Read a book or article on advocacy skills	87%	94.7%
Watched a library advocacy webinar	75.6%	94%
Attended a library legislative day	36.4%	85.8%
Created marketing materials (social media, flyers, images, etc.) on the value of libraries	78.8%	92.5%
Sent an email on the value of libraries out to a general audience	53%	88.6%
Sent an email on the value of libraries to a targeted, segmented audience	67.1%	92%
Used a Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	28.6%	68.9%
Spent money to promote the library, eg, Facebook ads or direct mailing	40.8%	66.8%
Dedicated time to identify library supporters	69.3%	95.6%
Dedicated time to build coalitions around a specific policy/issue	54.5%	88.2%
Dedicated time to meeting/getting to know your legislators	52.3%	87.7%
Advocated for budget increases/defended budget cuts on behalf of your library	67.7%	96%
Encouraged others to sign a petition about a library/information policy issue	58.5%	80.6%
Boycotted library products	28.5%	45.9%

Contacted your local legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	63.9%	92.2%
Contacted your state legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	68.8%	91.8%
Contacted your federal legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	65.4%	91.2%
Written a letter to the editor to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	17.5%	71.1%
Created on policy brief on a library/information policy issue	25%	76.4%
Provided testimony at a public hearing/before a government body l ibrary/information policy issue	23.4%	78%

Image 1

The Library Advocacy Gap: Big Picture. Ordered in rank from activity with the lowest participation to highest participation.
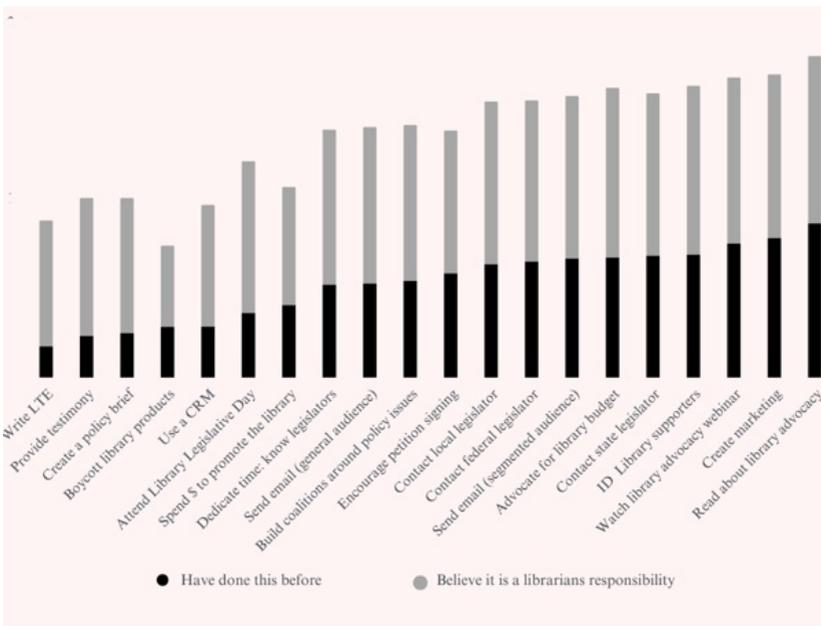
Librarians' Political Self-Efficacy (LPSE): A statistically significant relationship was found between LPSE and library advocacy activity.

To determine LPSE, I created a scalea using a 6-point Likert scale. I combined the individual factors to create a total LPSE score compared to library advocacy activities. For both individual advocacy activities and all activities combined, meaning the participant indicated yes they had partaken in at least one of the advocacy activities listed, there was a significant correlation with LPSE. Interestingly, the lowest ranking LPSE factor with a mean

score of 3.18 is " I believe I've had adequate guidance on integrating political action into my professional role." Table 2 Librarians' Political Self Efficacy Scale lists the questions used in the LPSE scale.

Table 2

Librarians' Political Self Efficacy Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree)

Question	Mean score
I understand the impact of important policy issues as related to libraries	4.80
I can describe how public policy impacts libraries	4.49
I can identify opportunities available for librarians to function as library advocates	4.40
I am able to effectively communicate the value of libraries to legislators	4.41
I am able to effectively communicate the value of libraries to my community	4.97
I believe I can influence policy regarding libraries	3.91
I believe I've had adequate guidance on integrating political action into my professional role	3.18

I computed a Pearson correlation coefficient to assess the linear relationship between librarians' political self-efficacy (LPSE) and library advocacy participation. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(768) = .604$, $p = .000$. Library advocacy participation increases as the librarians' political self-efficacy (LPSE) increases. Table 3 shows the results of the Pearson correlation, librarians with higher LPSE were more likely to participate in library advocacy activities

Table 3

Librarians with higher LPSE were more likely to participate in library advocacy activities.

		LPSE	Advocacy Activity
LPSE	Pearson Correlation	1	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	762	762
Advocacy Activity (Y/N)	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	762	772

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

I found significant positive correlations between numerous variables and LPSE. These include participation in advocacy activities, education, professional development, and association membership. In fact, of the 20 advocacy activities studied, participating in any of them showed a significant positive correlation to LPSE. Table 4 Correlations Between Variables and LPSE shows the correlation between LPSE and each of the 20 advocacy activities, education (LIS advocacy and policy courses, professional development, and Ph.D. attainment), association membership, and library role.

Table 4

Correlations Between Variables and LPSE - ranked by strongest correlation

Variables	Correlation	LPSE
Policy professional development	Pearson Correlation	.494**
Dedicated time to build coalitions around a specific policy/issue	Pearson Correlation	.470**
Attended a library legislative day	Pearson Correlation	.452**
Dedicated time to meeting/getting to know your legislators	Pearson Correlation	.451**
Sent an email on the value of libraries out to a general audience	Pearson Correlation	.398**
Advocated for budget increases/defended budget cuts on behalf of your library	Pearson Correlation	.398**
Provided testimony at a public hearing/before a government body library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.380**
Contacted your state legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.379**
Created on policy brief on a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.371**
Dedicated time to identify library supporters	Pearson Correlation	.363**
Watched a webinar on advocacy skills	Pearson Correlation	.359**
Contacted your local legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.353**
Advocacy professional development	Pearson Correlation	.351**
Sent an email on the value of libraries to a targeted, segmented audience	Pearson Correlation	.343**
Contacted your federal legislator(s) to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.338**
Library Position	Sphearman Rho	.336**
Created marketing materials (social media, flyers, images, etc.) on the value of libraries	Pearson Correlation	.326**
Encouraged others to sign a petition about a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.301**
Written a letter to the editor to voice your opinion in favor of or against a library/information policy issue	Pearson Correlation	.289**
Spent money to promote the library, eg,		

Facebook ads or direct mailing	Pearson Correlation	.268**
Used a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to send out library messaging	Pearson Correlation	.258**
Read a book or article on advocacy skills	Pearson Correlation	.239**
LIS policy course	Pearson Correlation	.231**
LIS advocacy course	Pearson Correlation	.223**
Years as a librarian	Sphearman Rho	.195**
State Association Membership	Pearson Correlation	.180**
Boycotted library products	Pearson Correlation	.171**
American Library Association Membership	Pearson Correlation	.157**
Ph.D.	Pearson Correlation	.105**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

LIS and Professional Development Feedback: Most respondents did not agree that their LIS training. When asked if their library school curriculum provided them with sufficient library advocacy training, 73% of participants responded negatively. When asked about LIS programs and policy training in the curriculum, 67% responded negatively. Survey respondents responded more favorably toward professional development; 64% believed that professional development provided sufficient training on advocacy skills, while 57% believed professional development opportunities provided a sufficient public policy foundation.

Image 2
My library school curriculum provided me with sufficient library advocacy training.
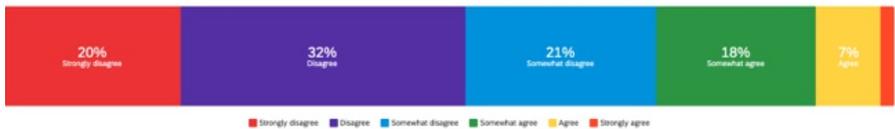
Image 3
*My library school curriculum provided me with sufficient library policy training.*
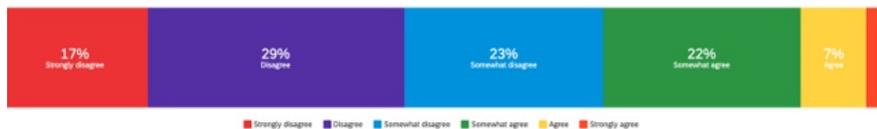
Image 4
Professional development has provided me with sufficient library advocacy training.

Image 5

Professional development provided me with sufficient library policy training.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Somewhat disagree   Somewhat agree   Agree   Strongly agree
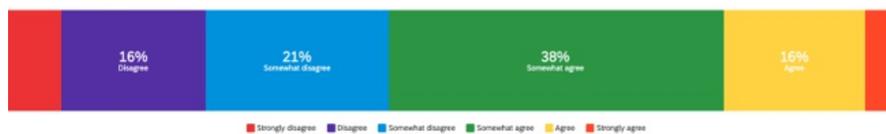
Interview Themes
Table 5

Interview Participants

Name	Job Title
Alan Inouye	Interim Associate Executive Director, American Library Association Public Policy and Advocacy Office
Chuck Sherill	Tennessee State Librarian and Archivist (since retired)
David Lankes	Full Professor and Virginia & Charles Bowden Professor of Librarianship, The University of Texas at Austin
Irene Herold	Dean of Libraries, Virginia Commonwealth University; ACRL President 2017
Jim Neal	University Librarian Emeritus, Columbia University; ALA President 2018-2019
Megan Cusick	Deputy Director of State Advocacy, American Library Association
Nancy Kranich	Faculty, Rutgers University School of Communication and Information; ALA President 2000-2001
Patrick Sweeney	Political Director, EveryLibrary
Stephen Wyber	Manager, Policy and Advocacy International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

Theme 1: Library advocacy definition

Most interviewees expressed concern that there is no consensus on what constitutes library advocacy. Interviewees felt that many librarians do not fully comprehend the difference between advocacy and lobbying, partisan and political, and advocacy and marketing. This is consistent with the reviewed literature highlighting the lack of a standard definition and clear understanding of library advocacy (Ewbank, 2011; Haycock, 2011; Herold, 2021).

Megan Cusick of The American Library Association succinctly sums up the advocacy tension between political and partisan. Advocacy is:

> …a political act. It's not a partisan act. We're not telling people what to think or who to vote for. Ever. There's often a disconnect between language, and sometimes it's a semantic issue: partisan or political. Is this advocacy, is this education? Or is this political work? A lot of what advocacy is is actually just education, helping people understand how libraries meet the needs of their communities. Then there's this tiny little bit that's legislative advocacy that includes lobbying."

Chuck Sherrill offers this insight to further elaborate on the tension between advocacy and lobbying:

> There's something in me that just makes me want to roll my eyes when I hear the word advocacy. It's like, "oh no, not again." On the other hand, I can get very excited when I talk about individual things librarians and users can do to help support their libraries. I guess it's the whole political world of lobbying and what a negative thing represents for most of us. I don't want to promote corruption. But promoting libraries is exciting and certainly worthwhile. I don't know if there's a different way to frame it for people so that they feel like speaking up for the library is something that they can and should do when it matters to them.

Some distinguish between marketing the library and advocating for the library. Marketing is more about discovering what your community and library patrons need and letting them know how the Library can fulfill that need. Library advocacy, ALA writes, "is about persuading stakeholders to act on a cause, an idea, or a policy" (2022b).

Patrick Sweeney gives the following example of where marketing is identified as advocacy:

> And so many of them believe hanging up Libraries Transform posters is advocacy. Like that counts. They think they're doing a lot of advocacy. I think they're overestimating so much of their library advocacy.

Table 6

Further selected codes and excerpts: Librarians' advocacy definition

Code	Code Description	Excerpts from data sources
Building relationships	Relationship building is one of the most important aspects of advocacy.	"Having an understanding of real advocacy is so powerful because it's really just about building relationships and getting to know people and that's that's really all it is." Patrick Sweeney
Libraries are good	The belief that library funding will always be there,	"If you tell people stories about libraries, people will love libraries. Then we'll all be

	creating the impression that effective advocacy is less important.	funded and skip merrily down the road, fully funded throwing books at children. That just is not real advocacy." Patrick Sweeney
Influence	Being able to influence stakeholders is an important advocacy skill.	"How to become a better library advocate is how to influence important people to get what you need in your library. So that's library advocacy." Alan Inouye

Theme 2: Who should be advocating?

When discussing the survey data – specifically the 'library advocacy gap,' the difference between advocacy activities professional libraries have taken part in and what librarians believe is their professional responsibility – many interviewees discussed librarians' uncertainty on who is responsible for advocating for libraries.

Should state and national library associations do the lion's share of library advocacy? Can only library leadership advocate for their library, or can all library staff do so? Laws govern how much lobbying 501(c)3's can do; most civil service employees are prohibited from engaging in some forms of political activity. Do professional librarians understand these guidelines? Is it more powerful to engage our library boards and library supporters in the community to advocate for libraries? These issues were discussed in-depth in many interviews and left many questions prime to follow up on in future research.

Megan Cusick illustrates this issue by discussing the library ecosystem:

> Speaking from personal experience, I would say that library workers often see advocacy as a separate thing that we do outside of our regular jobs rather than an integral part of our professional responsibilities. I think that there are both internal and external factors influencing that. Either way, though, the result is that advocacy is often left in the hands of a small group of people instead of a collective professional activity. And that doesn't mean everyone must attend a state or National Library Legislative Day or do single every activity. But everyone does need to find a way to be an advocate and to fit their strengths into the larger ecosystem, the larger library ecosystem, adding their own voice to the larger chorus so that we speak more powerfully.

On some issues, librarians can't advocate. For instance, Tennessee State Librarian, Chuck Sherril, shared that early in his career, working for the state, he learned how to navigate the fact that he can't openly advocate for or against legislative bills:

> I learned very quickly that as an employee of the Secretary of State who runs the state library archives, I was in the legislative branch of government. I could not criticize the state legislature or court members. That was an interesting revelation and very discomfiting at the time. We got through that by having somebody else sign the letter and the protest letter the association wanted to send. Now that I'm the State Librarian, I see that same issue greatly magnified as so many things come up, particularly these days in the legislature, that, as a librarian, I know are bad policy. But really my hands are tied, at least in terms of doing anything publicly or leading a charge. I have learned to just sort of

work behind the scenes and through other people and try to build a group of
library advocates who can do what's necessary, but that I don't have to be in
front of them or risking my job or the wrath of my boss for risking his job
by doing something that's contrary to what some groups of legislators believe.

As Cusick and Sherril highlight, there are different paths to advocacy for those in different
roles. Sometimes it means speaking up, and sometimes this means working behind the
scenes. Nancy Kranich simply states, " Every library worker is really an ambassador every day
of their lives.”

Table 7
Further selected codes and excerpts:Who should be advocating?

Code	Code Description	Excerpts from data sources
Advocacy team	Advocacy teams consist of members with different skill sets.	“Think about how the different policy skills fit together, and how you can take people with different advocacy personalities and get them to work together to form a campaign team.” Stephen Wyber
Library role	Depending on their role at the library, there are different responsibilities regarding advocacy and potentially different comfort levels.	“As a LIS student, your focus will be going to your first job. In most cases, we’re not hiring you to lobby Congress for us as well. I want you to be the children's librarian; that's your job. But in that context, there are opportunities for advocacy too.”Alan Inouye
Guidance	What guidance is given to librarians regarding library advocacy?	We need to develop our professional culture so that advocacy is expected as part of the job. To reinforce the general feeling that it's part of your job to do policy advocacy, so people are reminded that it is actually part of their job and professional responsibility. Managers need to make more room for advocacy. As opposed to, ‘Oh, we want to do that legislative day thing, but on leave time -- it's not really part of your job.’ To create that environment or that perception is important so that people are free to do it. So that getting to the management, ‘you know why you need to let your people do some of these things, because it is actually part of the profession.’ How can we bolster that kind of communication and that

		philosophy?" — Alan Inouye
Associations	What is the library association's role in library advocacy? Many feel they should do the majority of library advocacy.	"It would be interesting to see if, more broadly, they [librarians] believe that somebody in the library realm should be doing that. Maybe not them, maybe not their library, but should this be happening through the association or some sort of a larger entity." Megan Cusick

Theme 3: What are libraries advocating for?

"Advocacy has multiple dimensions, but the two big ones are librarians advocating for libraries, and librarians advocating on behalf of their community?" David Lankes began our interview by asking this question. Library advocates should define their efforts' scope, goals, and what a win is when advocating. Libraries need funding to keep the doors open for our communities. Therefore, an important role for any library leader is to secure funding. This funding has not always been steady, as we have seen with proposed cuts to federal IMLS funding or, locally at the municipal level, the source of most public library funding. In addition to library funding, it is important to recognize the big picture of our communities. James Neal elaborates:

> I think getting a handle on contextual issues is important. It's one thing to fight for more funding. But what's going on in my community that puts funding at risk? So it's not just arguing for the funding, but it's acknowledging and embracing the contextual issues which influence that funding. That's an area where I think librarians have not always been able to build that wider understanding because that's often what leads to the coalition-building that needs to take place.

Like Maslow's hierarchy, once libraries secure funding to keep the doors open and maintain library staff, they can prioritize goals focused on improving communities and helping community members meet their aspirations. This can be done by engaging community members in the civic process, providing equitable access to information, supporting specific policies that benefit communities, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, and utilizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). David Lankes stated, "In community-driven librarianship, the notion is the community should be advocating for the libraries, but more importantly, you should be helping the communities advocate for their needs and their purposes."

A further aspect of library advocacy is libraries advocating for policies that improve our communities and the outcomes of community members. Traditionally, libraries have been neutral in providing information access and advocacy efforts. However, many in the LIS field now believe that it is the responsibility of professional librarians to advocate with the end goal of improving our communities; this advocacy can't always be neutral.

Stephen Wyber commented on the SDGs as a way to align library priorities with a clear goal of improving global communities:

"Focusing on advocacy, in general, can be like information in a vacuum. It's always helpful when you're thinking about what the focus of the advocacy is. That's why when we relaunched our [IFLA] international advocacy program back in 2016, the focus was the SDGs. So that at least you can have a focus, something to actually attach activities and actions to. This has been a really useful, powerful opportunity and has increased that self-efficacy. You get the feeling that they can go out and do it now.

Given the different nuances of library advocacy, numerous interviewees mentioned the importance of library mission statements, values, strategic plans, and goals to guide library advocacy efforts.

Table 8

Further selected codes and excerpts: What are libraries advocating for?

Code	Code Description	Excerpts
Budget	Library budgets	"In some ways, we're all responsible for people understanding how a library budget benefits the community. Whatever that community is." Megan Cusick
Community	The library community can be the town or city the library serves, a school community, or a college campus.	"It comes with the belief that it is the role of every librarian, not just the directors, to do advocacy. That advocacy is more than just how I try and get a good budget for the library, but how do I empower my community to advocate on their own behalf?" David Lankes
Neutral	Traditionally, libraries have been 'neutral'. There is much debate currently in the LIS field as to whether neutrality should be a library value.	"It's to me, the fundamental contradiction in library neutrality - the idea that we collect, select, organize, and sort. Which are all decision-making processes. Yet, we also say that we do this in somehow an unbiased way. Which is impossible, right? That to me is the key lie given to library science and librarianship for the past hundred-plus years. But people have to acknowledge that and then acknowledge their responsibility in that. It's all these steps to get to the point of 'all right now you're going to fight for libraries.' But you can't necessarily get there unless you take all these little steps." David Lankes
Library mission goals	Strategic plans, library mission and goals should outline and support	"I examined over 140 different consortiums and member groups for their advocacy work plans. Very few talked beyond political advocacy or included it in a meaningful way in their strategic plan. Most of

library advocacy strategies.	them say 'we want to be advocates for libraries' in their general statement, but then they don't articulate how they're doing that much less how they're assessing whether or not what they are doing is meaningful. So I think that's where we need to go more and more." Irene Herold

Theme 4: Librarians lack a unified library voice.

A unified voice is important for effective advocacy. The library field must convey a unified pro-library voice when communicating outwards to stakeholders. Participants noted in several conversations that the field of librarianship often lacks a unified voice. As Patrick Sweeney stated, "We need a better central voice for libraries that is very focused on this kind of discussion. Because librarians don't have the skills; have never been taught the skills." Library associations and coalitions can play an important role in creating a unified library voice. Shared goals that librarians can articulate to shareholders, such as the SDGs, can also positively impact advocacy efforts.

As Alan Inouye noted, library associations play an important role in bringing librarians together; associations are both a strength and a weakness regarding library advocacy:

> One weakness [of library advocacy] is that there are a lot of library associations. So, in one sense, it is a strength for advocacy. But it's also a weakness. You want to do something and say, 'Oh well, you should consult with The Maine Library Association. That's not a negative per se, but there's also the Association of Rural and Small Libraries. We should probably loop them in.' And the New England Library Association should be consulted. And this was also a state matter, 'so we should probably loop in COSLA [The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies].' And, of course, loop in ALA. And it just keeps going, so we tend to spend a fair amount of time on coordination within the library field instead of trying to influence the decision-maker outside the library field. Then there are issues with inconsistent messaging. And also just kind of diffusion of resources. Anytime you have a new organization, it has a board of directors; it has to worry about fundraising; it wants to have its own newsletter; it wants its own conference or webinars or whatever. So you duplicate this infrastructure a lot in the library field. This inhibits library advocacy because so many resources are directed toward our internal organization.

Table 9

Further selected codes and excerpts: Librarians lack a unified library voice

Code	Code Description	Excerpts
Unified library voice	The notion that librarians must advocate with a unified library voice.	"So convincing our own takes as much political skill as convincing those in Washington. My mantra used to be `if we can get unity among the librarians, we are formidable.'" Nancy Kranich

Associations	How can professional library associations unify library voices?	"So, to me, this is why we have professional organizations. They are there to be our advocates and help us to be advocates. But also to unify our voices, bring in all of the ideas, and do the political work before we have a voice contradicting each other. I can't tell you how many times I've been advocating when there have been other librarians, on the other side, saying the opposite." Nancy Kranich
Coalitions	Forming coalitions and creating a unified voice can be powerful.	"So they were individually talking but not understanding that if you have a consortia advocacy plan, then you individually send that same unified message. You can really influence change within your consortium area. It was a very forward-thinking statewide consortium that I worked with…and they were very successful. The end result was they got a million dollars added to their budget for the first time in five years or ten years. It got results, but they had to find what resonated with the stakeholders. 'Here's how we're helping you be successful in meeting your strategic priorities and goals.'" Irene Herold

Theme 5: Where do librarians learn about policy issues and gain advocacy skills?

When should advocacy skills be learned by librarians—in an integrated manner within a library school curriculum or later in their career through professional development? Participants shared insight into where they felt professional librarians should acquire advocacy skills needed by professional librarians. Many interviewees agreed that advocacy should be both included in a LIS curriculum and as part of lifelong learning goals through professional development. As providers of professional development opportunities, library associations play a crucial role.

In addition, as you gain experience and increased leadership responsibilities, your advocacy participation will likely increase. James Neal notes:

> I think has become more visible as an important topic in librarianship. There is more of an expectation that librarians will get involved in this area out of necessity and professional responsibility. Administrators also recognize this, providing more development opportunities for their staff to grow and learn. I think there's more of a recognition, an embracing of advocacy as critically important to libraries' current and future health and impact.

Table 10

Further selected codes and excerpts: Library Advocacy and Policy Education

Code	Description of code	Excerpts
Define Advocacy	How do professional librarians define library advocacy?	"I think that leads to that big [library advocacy] gap. There's nobody teaching librarians what real advocacy is." Patrick Sweeney
LIS	Library and information science graduate programs.	"There's a lot they don't get in library school. I mean to me, the problem isn't that the library schools are not teaching it. The problem is that library schools are not effectively teaching it, given the idea that they're really dealing with a lifelong career and not something that is going to be instantly used." David Lankes
Experiential earning	To learn by doing.	"How much time can you really spend on theory? Because, in the end, a huge amount of it is learning by doing." Stephen Wyber
Professional	Professional Development opportunities that focus on library advocacy.	"I did many ALA webinars on this stuff for years, development and training in person. So this is what I think. I think that the library school piece of this is much more. The larger narrative is understanding the context in which you work and why you should do this. We want theory; we want bigger ideas in library school. The how is much more to me, professional development. That's where a lot of this work should be done." Nancy Kranich
Guidance	What guidance is given to librarians regarding library advocacy?	"Something to consider is how you talk about professional development. Consider the professional growth plans of library workers. Managers or the Library Board should be building advocacy into those professional growth plans. So it's not that an individual chooses to attend to professional development, but that being an advocate for the library is defined within the professional responsibilities of a library worker." Megan Cusick
Leadership	Advocacy can be a leadership role or something that librarians grow into as they gain experience.	"It was clear that, as people progress up through an organization getting to leadership roles, they take on more and see more importance in the advocacy. I want to point that out. It makes sense that people don't think they learned it in library school because they're not using it until ten years after library school, and they're probably forgetting that. I am not trying to excuse library schools in general." David Lankes

Recommendations

Based on the survey findings, interview themes, and integration of both data sets, numerous recommendations can be made to the LIS field to strengthen library advocacy.

Given the significant correlation between librarians' political self-efficacy (LPSE) and library advocacy, efforts should be made to increase self-efficacy. Increasing LPSE would help close the library advocacy gap, the gap between library advocacy activities undertaken by professional librarians and those activities that are believed to be the responsibility of LIS professionals.

LIS programs should strive to include advocacy and policy courses in their curriculum, whether as stand-alone courses or woven throughout core courses. There is a significant correlation between LPSE and the inclusion of advocacy and policy in the LIS curriculum. However, when asked if their library school curriculum provided them with sufficient library advocacy training, 73% of participants responded negatively. When asked about LIS programs and policy training in the curriculum, 67% responded negatively. Some interviewees found it terrifying that library students are not taught political acumen. In contrast, others argued it is more the role of professional development. It is important to note that LIS programs can not possibly train librarians on everything they will need to know throughout their careers in a two-year program. However, library schools should begin laying the groundwork for lifelong library advocates.

It takes an ecosystem to prepare library advocates. Library associations, state libraries, and other nonprofits should continue working together to increase professional development opportunities. A significant correlation was found between LPSE and professional development. Survey respondents responded more favorably toward professional development; 64% believed that professional development provided sufficient training on advocacy skills, while 57% believed professional development opportunities provided a sufficient public policy foundation. In addition to webinars and literature on advocacy, the focus should be on active learning, as items such as Library Legislative Days strongly correlate with LPSE. Librarians should become members of their professional associations as membership also correlates significantly. Associations also play an important role in creating a unified message that enables individual librarians to advocate effectively.

The majority of survey respondents did not feel they have been given adequate guidance on how to advocate. Employers should provide a work environment that encourages librarians to be advocates and clear guidelines on how and when advocacy is appropriate. Employers can fund association membership, provide a set amount of work time to advocate, encourage professional development, and include information on advocacy guidelines in employee handbooks.

The LIS field would benefit from advocacy assessment measures. The lack of clear benchmarks and measurements for effective advocacy can certainly stand as a barrier to advocacy. If libraries, already strained for resources, are going to engage in advocacy – how do libraries determine their return on investment of time, effort, and money? Key indicators should include whether a ballot initiative passed or failed and whether a relationship with a stakeholder was strengthened. The advocacy measurement problem is not unique to libraries. While other fields offer hopeful theories and models, those doing advocacy work must continue considering strategies to evaluate their advocacy work effectively. These

advocacy measurements should be explored collaboratively between LIS schools, practitioners, researchers, and associations.

More research from LIS researchers on library advocacy is needed. This research will guide decision-making to ensure librarians are prepared to advocate effectively for libraries. This study found a library advocacy gap. As seeking the gap was not one of the original research questions, this study did not collect input on barriers to library advocacy. These findings clearly beg the question, why does the library advocacy gap exist? Future research should include a follow-up survey of librarians to explore barriers to library advocacy further. The LIS field can work with data and shared stories to overcome the library advocacy gap.

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Appendix A: Questions Included in the Survey
Screener Question
Q1. Do you have a master's degree in library science from an ALA-accredited program?
Action
Q2. In regards to libraries, have you (see Table 1 for advocacy activities explored)
1 = Never, Over ten years, In the past ten years, In the past years, In the past month, 6 = In the past week

Measured Attitude Toward Library Advocacy
Q3. Please rate the following statements regarding library policy. It is the responsibility of
    professional librarians to (repeat of same activities in Q. 1) 1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 =
    Strongly Agree
Q4. Please rate the following prompts according to your personal beliefs, these are not
library-specific.
1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree
    I feel it is important to vote in all elections
    I believe that it is important that I participate in community legislative activities
    I feel it is important to participate in demonstrations or rallies about social issues that I
    personally believe in
    I feel it is important to meet with policymakers (e.g., city council, state and federal
    legislators, local elected officials) to advocate for social issues that I personally believe
    in
    I feel it is important to volunteer for political causes and candidates I believe in

Education
Q5. Thinking back to your LIS coursework, was library advocacy included in your
    curriculum?
(Yes / No / I don't remember)
Q6. My library school curriculum provided me with sufficient library advocacy training. *(1
    = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)*
Q7. Thinking back to your LIS coursework, was information policy or public policy content
    included in the curriculum?
Q8. My library school curriculum provided me with sufficient training on the topics of
    information policy or public policy as it impacts libraries.
Q8. Thinking back to your LIS coursework, were you offered classes on information policy
    or public policy as it impacts libraries?
Q9. Are you familiar with professional development opportunities that enrich librarians'
    understanding of library advocacy? Such as webinars, workshops, etc. from your state
    library, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, nonprofits such as EveryLibrary, or
    others.
Q10. Have you attended any professional development workshops (in-person, webinar, any
    format) on library advocacy?

Q11. Professional development opportunities have provided me with sufficient library advocacy training.

Q12. Are you familiar with professional development opportunities that enrich librarians' understanding of information policy or public policy as it impacts libraries? Such as webinars, workshops from your state library, ALA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, and nonprofits such as EveryLibrary.

Q13. Have you attended professional development workshops (in-person, webinar, any format) on information policy or public policy as it impacts libraries?

Q14. Professional development opportunities have provided me with sufficient background on information policy or public policy as it impacts libraries.

Political Self-efficacy

Q15. Please reply to the following in regards to libraries:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree

I understand the impact of important policy issues as related to libraries

I can describe how public policy impacts libraries

I can identify opportunities available for librarians to function as library advocates

I am able to effectively communicate the value of libraries to legislators

I am able to effectively communicate the value of libraries to my community

I believe I can influence policy regarding libraries

I believe I've had adequate guidance on integrating political action into my professional role

Q16. Please reply to the following, not specific to libraries:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree

I feel that I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.

I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics.

I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.

Demographics

Q17. What is your gender?

Q18. What was your undergraduate major?

Q19. Where did you complete your MLIS?

Q20. What year did you complete your master's degree in library science?

Q21. Do you have a Ph.D.?

Q22. Which of the following best describes your work setting? *(Public, Academic, School, Corporate, Law, Medical, State Library, State/federal agency, Currently unemployed, Retired, Other).*

Q22. Which of the following BEST describes your most recent library position? *(Leadership, e.g., director, library dean; Middle management, e.g., department head, branch manager; Librarian; Library assistant).*

Q24. How many years in total have you been working as a librarian?

Q25. Are you a member of the American Library Association?

Q26. Are you a member of your state library association?
Q27. What state do you work in?

Appendix B: Questions Included in the Interview

Introduction: The study and the goals. Overview of survey results, brief slideshow.

Q1. Let's start by talking a bit about you and your work. Please describe your library background and current role in the library field. How do you and your organization interact with library advocacy and public policy?

Q2. Overall, how would you describe advocacy in the library field? Strengths? Weaknesses?

Q3. Survey Reaction Do you find any of the survey data surprising? What do you make of the Library Advocacy Gap? Why do you think this gap exists? The majority of respondents indicated that they did not feel their LIS experience adequately prepared them to advocate and interact with policy - does this ring true to you? What do you make of the relationship between LPSEand library advocacy participation? What other factors are missing that could increase LPSE? Are there any other data points you would like to discuss further?

Q4. Recommendation: Based on your experience and/or the survey data, what opportunities do you see to create stronger library advocates?

Q5. Anything else you would like to share?

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