

# Sentiments on the State of Libraries After the Election

ANDREW T. SULAVIK

---

---

## ABSTRACT

The recent reelection of President Donald Trump will likely result in continued multifaceted attacks upon libraries and librarians by partisan political operatives emboldened by the election results. Libraries, librarians, and their partners must continue to repel all attempts to create an environment of censorship, whether through legal statutes or social intimidation, in order to preserve their critical role within our society as beacons of light that unite our communities with the luminescence of intellectual freedom and critical thinking.

The election of the forty-seventh president is over. For some, the election results clearly underscore one fragile part of our democracy: the election process. Within the context of American political history, there has seldom been a pronounced need for libraries to serve more than merely as polling stations for elections. They must be places where an informed and educated electorate can turn to—and count on—for unfettered information about the candidates themselves, their political platforms, and their proposed legislation and policies, untainted by political partisanship. But, more than that, libraries must remain our cultural home and moral compass. Their critical purpose within our society is to make their depositories available to all who seek a better and more comprehensive understanding of our rich collective past and present, including our cultures, traditions, scientific discoveries, theories, struggles, and aspirations. Inside their walls (both physical and digital) are housed inherited facts, knowledge, theory, and diverse opinions that span millennia and are available to all. They, therefore, are the keys to transcending our present state of affairs and making informed decisions about how to accept, reject, or integrate that past—for better or worse.

Whatever President-elect Trump does, two things are certain. His surrogates and supporters will feel they have a mandate for continued multifaceted attacks upon libraries and librarians in both blue and red states, and *The Political Librarian* will continue to be a journal of public record that defends against these unprecedented attacks. The blight of legislation, local policies, and rage politics of ideologues who seek to restrict content (both through book censorship and database filtering) and intimidate librarians to self-censor has dialed up the stress and fatigue in our profession. Yet, we cannot expect such tactics to abate. Librarians and our partners must continue to repel these assaults. Libraries must remain beacons of light—places to reflect, nourish the mind, and unite our communities with the luminescence of intellectual freedom and critical thinking. We shall not permit the hollowing out of our libraries by base, political operatives. What John Winthrop said of New England in 1630 is

applicable to us today: “For we must consider that wee [sic] shall be as a citty [sic] upon a hill. The eies [sic] of all people are upon us”.

### Author

Andrew Sulavik has spent most of his professional library career as a cataloger and an ILS administrator at university libraries but has also worked at specialized and government libraries along the way. He is serving a three-year appointment as the editor in chief of ATLS’s journal *TCB: Technical Services in Religion & Theology*.