THE POLITICAL LIBRARIAN

EveryLibrary
Institute

The Political Librarian

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The Political Librarian

CONTENTS

The Political Librarian: A Harbinger of Library Advocacy

ANDREW T . SULAVIK

As I assume the role of editor in chief of *The Political Librarian*, my goal is to help make this journal the harbinger of library advocacy. We are dedicated to publishing material that contains certain tenets of thought, diverse perspectives, strategies, recommendations, and pertinent knowledge, all aimed at inspiring readers to keenly engage in advocacy for libraries and the library profession. This comes at a propitious moment. Free speech and intellectual freedom in an open society such as ours are under assault. Within the body politic others are attempting to restrict access to books, censor language, and shout down any ability to criticize and contest the views of others – all in the name of shielding individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive. It is a time when we need to put out a clarion call for library advocacy and rise above today's rhetorical disruptions to examine recent events in a clear-eyed and impartial manner, which is necessary to make us better library advocates. *The Political Librarian* is poised to do just this.

Emerging threats to library professionals also make it an opportune moment to reflect on our core values, and to redouble our dedication to the five laws of Library Science, first proposed by S.R. Ranganathan in 1924:

1. Books Are for Use
2. Every Reader His/Her Book
3. Every Book Its Reader
4. Save the Time of the Reader
5. The Library Is a Growing Organism

These tenets have been the pillars of Library Science for the past century. The arduous task of consistently applying and defending these tenets in practice have lent credibility to the notion that libraries are the institutional foundation of a true democracy. If these pillars crumble, the edifice will fall.

Moreover, these tenets preserve libraries as great social equalizers. There are many inequalities in our society, but perhaps the most unnecessary inequality surrounds education for all. Libraries and their staff offer the widest possible array of indispensable, informational resources needed to nourish the mind and help all to express themselves with intelligence, confidence, compassion and, perhaps most important, with dignity. Libraries provide every

person, no matter their educational level, socio-economic status, or religious creed, a place to improve their capacity to think -- to ask *unrestricted* questions and get *unrestricted* answers -- thus enabling a broadening of views and a deeper substantiation of opinions and convictions. As public educational assets, libraries are in the business of expanding mutual respect, democracy and liberty, not fencing them in. Inviolable, they offer an ideal setting where the commerce of ideas can flow in a deep and uninterrupted current. In a pluralistic society of haves and have-nots, unmitigated access to that free flow of information and ideas leads to a level playing ground, where all are better prepared and welcome to participate in, and contribute to, this fragile and thus far brief experiment we call Democracy.

At this moment, it appears that *The Political Librarian*–in its unique mission to expand the discussion of, promote research on, and help to re-envision locally focused advocacy, policy, and funding issues for libraries–remains a solitary, singular and undeterred voice. Our goals are an admittedly large order for a small publication. However, this journal remains a critical and growing voice within the much larger arena of the public square. It is not merely a critical voice, but one that leads to deeds of advocacy. Teddy Roosevelt reminds of us our mandate in his "Man in the Arena" speech:

> "It is not the critic who counts … but the man who is actually
> in the arena … who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short
> again and again … but who does actually strive to do the deeds …
> who spends himself in a worthy cause."

To all who contribute to this journal's mission – our staff, our authors, our readers, our financial supporters, to all librarians, library staff and trustees, researchers, policy experts, and friends of the library -- know that we are all in this arena together, in the same struggle. All that needs to be done is to spend yourself in this worthy cause.

Andrew T. Sulavik, MLIS, ThD
Series Editor

This Issue

ANDREW T. SULAVIK

We are pleased to publish this Spring issue after a one-year hiatus, during which time the journal has moved to a new digital publishing platform (Janeway), its layout and typeset have been reformatted, and its publication team reconstituted. I would like to thank Christopher Stewart for his two years of service as series editor, and John Chrastka for his unremitting support during this transitional period. Special thanks are also in order to Martha McGehee and Sanobar Chagani for their requisite contributions proofreading and typesetting this issue on a very aggressive time table.

This issue assesses and responds to the the gathering, external political pressures and legislative actions to censor, review, or ban books at local and state levels, not only at school libraries, but also at public libraries. The content of this issue is of two kinds. The first three pieces are original publications, the final four are republications.

Our lead article, "The Urge to Censor," by Paul T. Jaeger et al., offers eight historical tenets of censorship that shed light on the current censorship movement by placing it within a much broader historical context. It also offers practical means by which library advocates can and should face the latest round of threats to ban books. The second article by Allison Jennings-Roche, "Delegitimizing Censorship," discusses the charged rhetorics employed by those who attack library collections and librarians. She argues that by giving credence to the rhetoric of censorship, it normalizes what should be considered unacceptable rhetoric. Instead, she suggests that there is a need among librarians to build a base of rhetorical power by implementing alternative communication strategies that will protect librarians, the integrity of library collections, and effectively mute and disarm the rhetoric of censors. Our third piece by Sonya M. Durney, "The Library Advocacy Gap," is a mixed methods research study that measures 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. Based on the results of her study, she recommends that librarians need to close that gap. To achieve this, LIS programs need to provide better library advocacy training, and library associations, state libraries and other nonprofits need to continue to increase professional development that prepare librarians to advocate effectively.

The final four pieces, although formerly published by EveryLibrary Institute, remain relevant and timely pieces. "Voter Perceptions of Book Bans," first published September 2022, reports the results of a public opinion poll of American voters, taken from August 31 to September 2, 2022, that shows most voters oppose banning books based on race, sexuality and other concerns. "Factors of Success for Libraries on the Ballot" by Valarie McNutt et al., first publised January 2021, studies 700 libray elections between 2014 and 2018. Her findings are especially advantageous now, when a movement to defund libraries could be on the horizon. Nijma Esad's report, "Could School Librarians Be the Secret to Increasing Literacy Scores," first published in January 2022, provides invaluable data that indicates the

important contributions school librarians make with respect to improving student literacy scores. Again, this report merits republication given the recent censorship movement aginst school libraries. Finally, Megan Blair's and John Chrastka's whitepaper, "Cannabis Tax Policy and Libraries," first published in July 2022, explores the revenue sharing policies from cannabis taxes, which often leave libraries out of this new revenue stream. As libraries continue to struggle to increase funding, librarians ought to build coalitions with groups and lobby local governments to advocate for increased funding from this revenue source.

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Series Editor

The Urge to Censor: Raw Power, Social Control, and the Criminalization of Librarianship

PAUL T. JAEGER, ALLISON JENNINGS-ROCHE, NATALIE GREENE TAYLOR, URSULA GORHAM, OLIVIA HODGE, and KAREN KETTNICH

ABSTRACT

Censorship is an act of control, driven by a combustible mix of power, privilege, and fear. Large pro-censorship movements historically occur in response to social changes that alarm a privileged population, with the goal of dictating access to information for the entire community according to the personal beliefs of the privileged group. The urge to censor is rooted in the use of raw power to preserve the currently privileged, and censorship will be a threat to libraries as long as privilege seeks to perpetuate itself. With the current censorship movement against many marginalized groups, the intent behind banning access to materials representing the voices and experiences of those populations is to keep them marginalized. The current censorship wave represents not only a threat to intellectual freedom, but to civil rights and human rights. This paper offers eight historical tenets of censorship that shed light on the current censorship movement, which are useful to libraries seeking ways to understand and to navigate the latest threat of book bans. While this new movement has added seemingly unthinkable dimensions, like laws that threaten to imprison librarians for simply doing their jobs, much of what is occurring now is also deeply rooted in past attempts to thwart social change.

I. Introduction

The movement to censor books in libraries that began near the onset of the pandemic has accelerated to the point that many activists and politicians actively portray the library as a threat. States and local communities have implemented extensive book bans covering an odd assortment of materials, proposed – and in some cases passed – laws that criminalize librarianship, and opted to defund their own libraries over certain materials in the collections (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, and Hodge 2023). While overall perceptions of libraries remain strong, librarians are facing the most sustained, powerful, and wide-ranging censorship effort in a century.

Historically, economic and social upheavals result in popular attempts to curtail the individual rights of marginalized populations, and the past few years have seen the pandemic, economic stagnation and runaway inflation, mass migration, and the terrifying acceleration of climate change (Galston 2018; Inglehart 2016). While schools across the country were closed

for extended periods of time, social media platforms provided a means through which people could organize, refine incendiary rhetoric, and spread misinformation. These platforms amplified pandemic-fueled social upheaval, as evidenced by widespread vaccine resistance and a surge in false narratives peddled by QAnon. They also served as incubators for galvanized censorship efforts across the US, wherein those looking to marginalize certain populations could take advantage of an increasingly chaotic information environment to do so (Jaeger Kettnich et al. 2022). For instance, someone can make a claim against a title – regardless of whether they've actually read it – in a social media post that gets shared widely online and, within a matter of days or sometimes even hours, gets repeated around the country at school board and county council meetings by others who also haven't read this title. It would be hard to imagine a more perfect recipe for an explosion of censorship.

Many librarians have quite reasonably focused on the immediate threats and impacts of these attempts to purge materials from libraries, shut libraries down, and put librarians in jail. However, these current events also fit into much larger trends about censorship. Examining the historical threads interwoven into the current censorship movement reveals that what libraries face now are not random or unprecedented, but part of a long historical progression. Summarizing these historical and cultural trends has the potential to offer avenues by which to better understand what is happening and explore ways to respond to this latest round of threats. While a greater understanding of this broader context will not make the current dangers disappear, it can help librarians determine how best to navigate the very large storm in which they now find themselves.

II. Censoring, Banning, and Burning in a Democracy

America has a rather paradoxical history when it comes to censorship, both in the abstract and in application. As a matter of principle, on one hand, most Americans hold the First Amendment of the Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of expression, to be nearly sacred; for many Americans, the right to speak one's mind is the essence of the country (Jaeger Lazar et al. 2023). It is so beloved that most Americans are unaware that the protections only apply to attempts by the federal government to limit individuals' speech. On the other hand, censorship's long and vibrant presence in American history has been due to its periodic political popularity. In practice, freedom of expression is often a struggle between tangible political fears related to national security, public morals, and "explicit" content, and intangible political ideals of expression, access, and openness. In short, "[t]he human instinct to censor thrives, as it always will, living in irrepressible conflict with the human instinct to speak" (Smolla 1992, p. 42).

These broader conflicts inherent in censorship efforts obviously have significant implications for libraries, yet, as information institutions, the information-based conflicts inherent in censorship efforts also carry great weight (Jaeger Kettnich et al. 2022). Censorship efforts exist at a confluence of numerous aspects of information: access, policy, literacy, and politics. Decisions made in policy and political realms lead to curtailments of access and literacy. The very nature of censorship efforts blurs these aspects together, and it is vital to pry them apart to examine them. What follows are eight tenets of censorship, through which the current censorship movement can be better understood, viewed, and navigated.

1. Censorship Is the Original Information Policy

Censorship goes back as far as the act of writing; ancient civilizations – before the Common Era in Greece, Rome, China, and Jerusalem – left records of organized censorship policies in the time of papyrus scrolls (Manguel 1996). The first censorship campaign for which detailed records have survived was in China in 213 BCE, in which emperor Qin Shi Huang called for the burning of all texts contradicting his preferred version of history, along with the more than 400 authors of those texts. Most governments and religions kept an index of banned materials as a matter of basic policy. As the printing press made texts much more readily reproduced, disseminated, and read, government censorship policies grew with similar speed.

Records indicate that censorship really is the original information policy, and one that has remained popular – often with both governments and citizens – throughout history (Taylor and Jaeger 2022). In the US, there was broad public support for censorship in politics and policy well into the middle of the twentieth century. "At every phase of our history, some Americans have had their liberties violated in spite of the Bill of Rights" and most egregiously during times of war (Slack 2015, p. 259). For instance, the Sedition Act of 1918, the most notable of such laws during wartime, made it illegal to say anything negative about the US, which resulted in many convictions. The recipients of long jail sentences included a member of Congress for questioning military leaders about the war's progress, a member of the clergy for passing out pacifist literature, a man for criticizing the Red Cross at a restaurant in a private conversation, and a filmmaker for casting the British in a bad light in a film about the American revolution. The Sedition Act was followed by the creation of a military office of censorship during World War II, requiring the press who wanted access "to apply for credentials from the office, which meant they had to play ball with the military" (Goethe 2019, n.p.).

The rest of American history – and the history of every other state in history – abounds with examples of censorship. The instances of states turning against censorship as common practice, either through their populace or their elected officials, are atypical responses to social upheaval. Censorship is not only an ever-present threat to intellectual freedom, it is in all likelihood the longest running information policy that humans have created.

2. Censorship Is Raw Hegemonic Power

No matter how censorship is framed by its adherents, it is an act of unbridled hegemonic power. Regardless of whether the hegemon represents the majority of the population or a privileged few, the act of censoring is the intentional removal of the intellectual choice of others. It is a brutal and blunt method of attempting to control access literacy, and discourse, and by extension all other social interactions.

World War II represents a period in history when more books, works of art, historical records, libraries, archives, and museums were destroyed than any other event in human history, with the destruction primarily being direct and intentional (Knuth, 2003). Destroying the information and the information institutions of a culture or a nation is an extreme form of censorship that only highlights the brutality of these acts. The Nazis burned books with great enthusiasm, holding what they called "Feuerspruche," which means fire

incantations. They would burn books written by authors from cultures and perspectives they intended to annihilate. After that, they systematically pillaged and destroyed every library, archive, and museum in the territory that they conquered, obliterating a large, irreplaceable portion of recorded human history, experience, and expression in the process. Because these actions defined the world's view of the Nazis, when members of the American military liberated a population, they were instructed to immediately reassure it by saying: "We are not book burners" (Rosenberg 2020 p. 216).

The symbolism, gravity, and legacy of these fire incantations is nobly explored in a recent work of fiction called *The Bookshop of the Brokenhearted* (Hillman 2018). The main character, based on the author's long-running interviews with several Holocaust survivors, is a Jewish woman from Hungary who moves to rural Australia after being freed from a Nazi death camp at the end of World War II. She had two goals: getting as far away from Europe as possible and opening a bookshop so she could sell at least 25,000 books or as many books that were destroyed in the Feuerspruche in her hometown.

The Russian assault on Ukraine provides a contemporary example of the same brutal power behind censorship. In the areas of Ukraine that Russian forces successfully occupied (before having to flee), the collections of libraries, museums, archives, and schools have been ransacked. Books and other materials in Ukrainian, as well as items about Ukraine's history and culture, have been systematically destroyed to advance the claim that Ukraine never existed, with the ultimate goal of erasing it from history (Jaeger Kettnich et al. 2022).

The exercise of this raw hegemonic power need not be an application of physical force to be successful; it can be drawn entirely from privilege. In the US, that usually derives from white, Christian, high socio-economic privilege. The now-widespread movement to have Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison's scathing enslavement narrative *Beloved* removed from high school libraries began when a student who read the book was upset by learning about the horrors of enslavement. The student's mother, Laura Murphy, decided the proper response was to get the book out of schools so other similarly privileged children could remain blissfully ignorant about the genuine horrors of certain major parts of US history. Not only has her work to organize other privileged parents against the book been depressingly successful, it has made her enough of a celebrity that she appears in political ads and at campaign events for pro-censorship candidates.

The power of censorship extends beyond the removal of materials. When state legislatures such as Texas began to debate new censorship laws, new book orders by schools and libraries significantly decreased due to the uncertainty about what will be banned and what will be allowed (Natanson 2023a). Further, in the ten states that have recently passed laws which give parents the ability to review proposed book orders and/or give local authorities the ability to limit access to books, librarians face many new administrative hurdles, directly hindering their ability to acquire materials of any sort. In Florida, the state delayed creating training for school librarians about compliance with new censorship guidelines from the state, rendering school librarians unable to purchase books for more than a year until the training was finally made available (Natanson 2023b). There are many ways to wield the raw power of censorship.

3. Censorship Is an Attempt to Prevent Social Change

Detailed studies of those who seek to censor materials in libraries are unified by framing

their activities in terms of defending society from some form of moral decline (Knox 2015). This defense against moral decline, however, is simply packaging a resistance to change or the expansion of rights to others under a different guise. Those launching this defense generally stand to benefit the most from a rigid adherence to the status quo.

The current surge in censorship is focusing heavily on materials written by and exploring the experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color), LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/questioning, Intersex, and Asexual, Plus), and Jewish communities. While censorship rhetoric focuses on protecting children from "explicit" materials, the examples given by censorship enthusiasts fall heavily on books by members of these groups. The Indiana legislature has bafflingly offered Ibram X. Kendi's 2019 book *How to be an Antiracist* as an example of the "obscene" literature it wants to protect its communities from, while the legislature in Missouri has banned *Maus* (Spiegelman 1991), a graphic novel about the Holocaust, as similarly "obscene." In addition, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has censored the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and *The 1619 Project* by Nikole Hannah-Jones, in addition to works by other acclaimed authors, in Florida schools. His misleading rhetoric justifying the censorship, such as "we won't allow Florida tax dollars to be spent teaching kids to hate our country or to hate each other" (Bridges 2023, n.p.), contributes to the spread of misinformation as well, as he misstates the aims of both CRT and *The 1619 Project*. In the state legislatures that have debated statewide book bans or laws criminalizing librarianship for providing access to banned books, members have not attempted to disguise that their goals truly are to further marginalize the voices of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Jewish communities (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, & Hodge 2023).

Most major periods of censorship in the US have followed a similar pattern. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anthony Comstock was the official censor of the US government, working through a position in the Postal Service. His job was to stop the flow of the "obscene," immoral," "explicit," and "indecent" – without the need for specific definitions, of course – and he bestrides that period in American history, being seen by the public as a hero at the time (Jaeger & Taylor 2019). His career totals include the seizure and destruction of hundreds of thousands of pounds of print materials, along with tens of thousands of birth control devices and boxes of medications, as well a great many convictions and suicides, of which he was proud to note. The list in the previous sentence provides an obvious tipoff to the actual focus of Comstock's job. Comstock's role was a reaction to increasing freedom for women in society and campaigns for women's suffrage and other human rights (Sohn 2021). Comstock primarily focused on materials written by and for women – medical materials for women, women's fiction, materials related to women's rights – and the contraceptive devices and medicines that gave women greater autonomy over their own bodies (Cockrell 2019).

His efforts sent enough people to fill 61 passenger train cars to jail, to put it in an appropriate metaphor for Comstock's day, and among the prominent people he hounded into suicide were female medical practitioners focused on women's health and well-known advocates for women's rights, most notably Ira Craddock and Ann Lohman. Comstock's rhetoric and arguments would be effectively revived in the movement to stop the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) protecting women's rights in the 1970s (Lepore 2018). Similarly-inclined crusaders in Comstock's time tried to apply his methods to the passage of felony laws regarding women's fashion, attempting to make the possession of a pair of high

heels worthy of a year of imprisonment in multiple states (Ford 2021). The impacts of Comstock's campaign are incalculable, as he was the first to realize "that citizens and societies of organized citizens might function as aggressive vigilance groups that directed attention of authorities and, moreover, could and should lobby lawmakers for strong laws governing personal and social behavior" (Cockrell 2019, p. 74). This is the playbook in use by today's censorship movement.

Hysterical claims about the social harm caused by the banned materials have likewise conjoined censorship movements in American history. In 1900, a minister improbably named Washington Gladden published a widely distributed pamphlet decrying books that gave women any sense of empowerment or rights or identity outside of domesticity, claiming that such literature "takes away all relish from the realities of life, breeds discontent and indolence and selfishness" and ultimately makes a woman "a weak, frivolous, petulant, miserable being" (Scheeres & Gilbert 2022, pp. 28-29).

Similar waves of censorship-based resistance to social change are a recurring reaction to changes in popular music that reflect larger demographic changes. The city of Boston banned performances of the opera *Porgy and Bess* because it had a Black cast, and Dvorak's music because he argued for respect and rights for BIPOC peoples (Horowitz 2022). During the Red Scare, members of Congress blocked the performance of Aaron Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait* at the 1953 presidential inauguration (Rosenberg 2020). While Copland was widely acknowledged as America's greatest living composer at that time and had written and spoken very clearly about his opposition to communist ideas as a threat to artistic freedom, he was highly progressive politically, Jewish, and gay, which was more than enough for conservatives to paint him as a red menace. When the Beatles were at the peak of their popularity and seen as the representatives of unsettling major social change, some sarcastic remarks about the Beatles' popularity by John Lennon led to the widespread banning and burning of Beatles records in the US in 1966 (Norman 2006; Spitz 2005), including hundreds of public bonfires, Beatles records in trash bins on streets, the banning of their music from scores of radio stations, and even physical intimidation of the band at tour stops by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). A 1979 riot in Chicago resulted from a "Disco Sucks" event at a Chicago White Sox baseball game, which began with the dynamiting of crates of disco records and went downhill from there (Hyden 2018). LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC artists dominated disco, and despite their increased representation in mainstream culture, bigotry against the LGBTQIA+ community in particular was running very high; hence, dynamite. Hip hop music's progress into the mainstream was also met with widespread censorship efforts in the 1990s as a reaction to Black culture and perspectives gaining much greater exposure among youth, with the then President of the United States even warning against the dangers of rap music (Carlin 2021).

The current attempts to muzzle BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Jewish perspectives are revivals of censorship's greatest hits from past eras, replicating the approaches that Comstock used so successfully. The American Library Association's (ALA) most recently published list of the "top ten most challenged books" was once again filled with works "that tell the stories of Black and LGBTQ people or by authors in those communities" (Chavez 2022, n.p.).

4. Censorship Targets Access to Impactful Materials

Materials get banned because censors are afraid of them. Censors are afraid of access to

them because the materials have the potential to open minds about the experiences and feelings of others. Librarians know this — and too many of them unfortunately have firsthand experience with people consumed by this fear — but it cannot be bypassed in this discussion.

Books that are targeted by censors are seen as threats, and usually, the threat is increased by the importance and potentially large impact of the work, as can be seen by the four books already mentioned in the discussion above: *Beloved*, *How to be an Anti-Racist*, *Maus*, and *The 1619 Project*. These are significant works. A rundown of the perpetually banned and challenged authors through US history is a rollcall of notables, many of whose works challenged social hierarchies and prevailing attitudes, including Maya Angelou, Margaret Atwood, Walt Whitman, and Mary Wollstonecraft, among many others.

The new book banning movement seems to be trying to capture both the troublesome classics and the alarming modern titles. Along with *Maus*, the new book ban in Missouri includes works by Kendi, Morrison, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci; much of the 2022 Banned Books Week list; Batman, Shakespeare, and Twain graphic novels; and the Gettysburg Address for good measure; all deemed to be "explicit" in nature (Education Week 2022). In early 2023, the West Virginia state legislature offered an inverse path to the same outcome, requiring all librarians — under threat of criminal prosecution — to promote the undefined but ominous "ideological equality." Anything not promoting ideological equality, which presumably would include the perspectives of all marginalized groups, thereby should be removed from the library. Simply put, book bans attempt to thwart access to and literacy in empathy.

5. Censorship Is Uniquely Human

No other animals can censor information; only humans. Again, this is obvious, but relevant. Almost all the ways in which humans held themselves apart from other animals have been disproven by science in recent decades. Sign language, naming, physical communication, large vocabularies, synchronizing to a beat, making group decisions through communication, and singing in harmony are all information traits found in other animals (Berns 2017).

As far as we know, the one thing that distinguishes humans from all other animals is literacy and the accompanying ability to communicate ideas through time and across distance; all other human uniqueness and accomplishment flows from literacy (Battles 2015; Wolf 2007). With this truly distinguishing development being definitional of our species, it is vital to acknowledge that the urge to censor — i.e., to make sure that only *some* ideas are communicated through time and across distance — is an aspect of that. It is unhappily linked to literacy and access as part of the development of human societies. "Censorship is a social instinct" (Smolla 1992, p. 4). That does not mean that censorship is necessary or inevitable, but it clearly must be actively guarded against on an ongoing basis.

6. Opposition to Censorship Forged the Modern Library

Opposition to censorship was something that libraries had to grow into. In their early forms, libraries were proscriptive in the materials that were provided to patrons and supportive of efforts to censor materials that were seen as detrimental to community health. Strange as it may seem from a contemporary perspective, censorship was widely supported in librarianship and in society as a whole even one hundred years ago (Jaeger and Sarin 2016). Libraries also actively engaged in censorship of their own materials by removing all kinds of

German-language, pacifist, and labor-associated materials during the First World War, for example (Wiegand 1989).

Nevertheless, by the 1930s, libraries were beginning to turn away from their previous support of censorship. Numerous factors affected this reorientation, but a key change was the effect fascist governments were having on public access to information in many parts of the world in the late 1930s, specifically through lethal suppression of expression, closing of libraries, and public book burnings (Gellar 1984; Robbins 1996). The widespread book burnings and other oppressions of expression in 1930s Europe, coupled with the censorship of books in the United States on purely political grounds, like John Steinbeck's 1939 book *The Grapes of Wrath*, led the ALA to draft the Library Bill of Rights. It clearly established the library profession's stance against censorship and for free access to information (ALA 2010; Lincove 1994).

Even during the Cold War, the collections of many libraries were still directly and indirectly influenced by the politics of the McCarthy era, often leading to the silencing of unpopular viewpoints in many library collections (Richards 2001). Although the Library Bill of Rights underwent a major revision in 1948 in response to McCarthyism and again in the 1960s, the relationship between the library profession, social responsibility, social justice, censorship, and democratic responsibility would remain controversial (Robbins 1996; Samek 1996).

During the time of McCarthyism and the Civil Rights movement, the stance against censorship in many libraries forged the public perception about and presentation of libraries in popular media (Jaeger and Kettnich 2020). Prior to the late 1940s, popular media had generally portrayed librarians as meek and unhappy in their careers. Yet, when libraries became the focus of censorship efforts, the presentation morphed rapidly into librarians as strong, intelligent, and determined, with a string of major dramatic, and even some comedic, films starring leading actors portraying heroic librarians in the 1950s and 1960s. Becoming prominent opponents of censorship efforts established the identity of libraries both for people in the profession and outside of it.

While this path toward the protection of access and promotion of literacy has been far from entirely smooth, it is now definitional of librarianship as a profession. Taking this collective professional stance against censorship came to politically and socially define the library in the minds of governments and communities, to the consternation of many political figures enthusiastic about trying to ban materials (Jaeger Zerhusen et al. 2017). For many, the essence of the library is providing access to as wide a variety of materials and perspectives as possible. Book bans advocated for by community groups and imposed by governments on libraries truly go against the elemental principles of librarianship.

7. Censorship Will Always Be a Political Challenge for Libraries

While the type of materials being censored and ferocity of the attempts to censor may change, the threat of censorship will always be a looming political problem for libraries. Censorship has literally been around for centuries in the United States, extending well before there was a United States (Steele 2020). Less than a century ago, censorship was largely popular, as many viewed it as a reflection of patriotism. While this may seem strange from a contemporary perspective, the ALA's stance against censorship in the 1930s was actually a bold political assertion (Jaeger and Sarin 2016). The ensuing decades would find libraries

dealing with energized censorship movements against materials related to feminism, civil rights, the Vietnam War, anything remotely critical of capitalism, and anything perceived to be Communist, among others (Foerstel 2002). As Emily Knox (2015) has so ably documented, even when there is not a major censorship movement afoot, random individuals and small groups will still be pursuing innumerable means of trying to deny access to works that they disagree with.

Because the library profession has been reluctant to engage the political world, few books have been written about libraries as political entities (eg, Garceau 1949; Jaeger Gorham et al. 2014; Shavitt 1986). Yet each of these works, separated by decades between them, makes the foundational point that the failure to actively engage with political processes exposes libraries to great jeopardy and undercuts the ability of libraries to fulfill their missions in their communities. Censorship is an especially glaring instance of this problem, as censorship movements continually organize around new types of materials, yet the library profession seems consistently caught off guard and unsure how to respond to them.

While the examples of censorship movements noted above may seem rooted in the past, there have already been two impactful censorship movements in libraries in this millennium. First, the federal law passed in 2000, the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), was inspired by fears of the kinds of "obscene" content that children might find on the then-new browseable web. This law mandated filters on all of the computers of libraries that received funds under certain federal programs, and many states were inspired to implement similar laws for state funds, ultimately forcing the implementation of filters on the computers in the great majority of school and public libraries (Jaeger, Bertot, McClure, & Rodriguez 2007; Jaeger & Yan 2009). Many filtering programs over filter in vital spaces like health information, are difficult to set and therefore result in much unintended blocking, or are intentionally designed to target types of content – such as feminism or environmentalism – that are categorically not obscene. Therefore, the laws had a huge impact on the amount of information available online in many libraries (Jaeger, Bertot, & McClure 2004; Jaeger, McClure, & Bertot 2006). ALA mounted a challenge to this law, but the ineffective nature of the legal challenge reflected the limited engagement with political processes preferred by the profession (Jaeger and McClure 2004).

 Even more recently, the 9/11 terror attacks were swiftly followed by a series of federal laws that limited access to a wide variety of information, including many previously available government reports. Libraries around the nation had items removed from their collections by government agents, had inquiries from law enforcement organizations about who was reading certain "unpatriotic" materials, and even had to learn how to handle secret Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrants for their patron usage records (Jaeger, Bertot, and McClure 2003; Jaeger, McClure, Bertot, and Snead 2004). While both of these examples are of censorship mandated by federal – rather than state or local – laws, they serve as unmistakable reminders that censorship will always be hanging over libraries like the sword of Damocles. These federal laws from two decades ago even helped to set the stage for the current surge in book bans; in the 2000s, some states passed state laws inspired by CIPA creating stricter filtering standards, and seven of those states are now among the most active in creating book bans and other anti-ibrary laws (Alter 2023).

8. Censorship Is Ultimately Driven by Fear

Perhaps the most important driver of censorship is that it is an act of fear perpetuated by the fear that society is changing, the fear that these changes will erode existing privilege and challenge majority beliefs, the fear of people with different cultures and experiences, the fear of having to live in a different world (Knox 2015; Smolla 1992). The specific works being challenged, then or now, are symbolic of the larger fears of change, meaning that defending whatever work is currently being challenged will not end the censorship movement. Even if a particular work survives the challenge, the censors will simply move on to the next set of works they want banned. Every example of censorship movements noted above were fueled by a desire to suppress social change, which means that censorship in most cases is not a necessarily reasoning-based process but something much more primal. The rhetorical claims such as librarians being "the arm of Satan" indicate the level of fear underlying current censorship movement (Fleishman 2023).

The spiraling increase across the nation of laws that are focused on the LGBTQIA+ community, reveal the broader truths of the goals of the current censorship movement. Along with attempts to ban many books by and about LGBTQIA+ people, many state legislatures are currently also considering laws that would ban drag performances in any public venues or entirely (Kindy 2023). That legislative goal is not about limiting access to information for a certain age group, it is about stifling a marginalized population completely. It is raw power and based upon fear.

Libraries find themselves at the center of the current censorship movement – and at the center of many that have come before – because they not only provide access to a wide variety of information, they defend that access. The perceived threat of libraries, especially public libraries, to the privileged extends back well over a century. Dating to the first federal support for public libraries, some conservative members of Congress and some presidents worked through federal legislation and budgeting processes to attempt to restrict the reach or even the existence of public libraries (Chrastka 2017; Jaeger Gorham et al. 2014; Jaeger Zerhusen et al. 2017). The Trump administration went so far as to produce annual budget proposals that would eliminate all federal support for libraries and literacy programs (Douglass et al. 2017). And as state and local governments play ever greater roles in controlling library funding (Chrastka 2016), these anti-library political tactics have blossomed at the local level, culminating in the new censorship movement.

This focus on the library as a place to direct fury at the fear of social change has been a recurring problem for libraries. Consider the following statements by two of the greatest library leaders and champions of intellectual freedom from the twentieth century, the first writing about censorship efforts tied to the Red Scare and the second about censorship efforts tied to civil rights and the Vietnam War:

"If there is one agency above all which has the power to put teeth into the principle of free speech, it is the public library" – Leon Carnovsky, 1950

"Those who fear social change already fear the library" – Everett T. Moore, 1968

These statements resound through the decades with no small amount of relevance to today. Yet, the challenges faced by librarians of those generations in standing up to censorship did

not include the threat of imprisonment. The energized censorship movement of today has created many more legislative weapons and seems quite prepared to use them.

Along with bans of materials, many states have considered or enacted felony laws that would sentence librarians, who are convicted of allowing access to banned materials, up to 5 years in jail for each offence, along with many thousands of dollars in fines (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, and Hodge 2023). This far exceeds loss of a job as a penalty for opposing censorship. In Missouri, as the laws banning materials with great criminal liability to librarians were about to go into effect, librarians reported police officers examining their collections for banned books (KCUR 2022). Again, this started happening *before* the ban went into place. How enormous must the fear of social change be to require this level of legal intimidation against libraries? While librarians cannot eradicate such fears in their communities, it is vital to remember that such driving fear – and in the current context, apparently all-consuming fear – limits how rational a censorship movement is when responding to it.

III. Practical Frameworks for Effective Opposition in an Age of Unprecedented Attacks

As the calls for criminalizing the practice of librarianship reach a fevered pitch, it is important not to lose sight of the very practical and concrete steps that must be taken immediately to advocate for intellectual freedom – and protect all library workers. This is a broader struggle for a democratic and civil society with the library as a battle ground. Within the field, decades of choices and decisions have eroded libraries' ability to effectively counter these assaults. Due to the systemic lack of investment and advocacy for libraries – and other public institutions – in the post-Reagan era, libraries are particularly vulnerable. Neoliberal policies and practices that pervade American society have weakened the bedrock of the library profession and these inflammatory attacks are opening up new and old fault lines every day (Buschman 2017). Unfortunately, many of the advocacy efforts by and on behalf of libraries do little to demonstrate the actual contributions of libraries (Chrastka 2018; Sweeney and Chrastka 2017), leaving libraries more exposed to attempts to undermine and disempower them.

More research is needed into the motives and means of the current challenges, including taking seriously the language, rhetoric, and political implications of each organized campaign and message. This is a moment of rhetorical disruption, when not only are books being painted as threats to the status quo, but library workers as well, with some accusing them of being "groomers," who seek to indoctrinate small children (Hatzisavvidou and Martin 2022; Public Religion Research Institute 2022). Neutrality and milquetoast calls to theoretical democratic principles are not enough to combat the wave of threats facing libraries and library workers (Jaeger Gorham et al. 2013). The current political and rhetorical fight is rooted in a distinct, and deeply partisan, world view, which because of its unwillingness to engage in the political sphere, puts librarians and our communities at risk.

Now is the time to employ new and evolving research in the creation of well-crafted toolkits to equip library workers, educators, and other organizations with the means for effective communication and advocacy. Political communication is exceptionally nuanced, and it is unreasonable to expect librarians to add that skillset to an already overburdened and underfunded labor force. Funding for communications professionals and materials, focused

on not just library promotion but political messaging, should be considered a core part of each library system's operating budget. Political advocacy needs to be added to the LIS curriculum nationally to outfit the next generation of librarians with both the knowledge and skills to respond to these shifting norms (Jaeger and Sarin 2016). Librarians currently working in the field also deserve support with ongoing and accessible professional development related to both the theory and the practice of fighting censorship.

That said, librarians cannot fight these battles alone, and therefore encouraging library "super supporters" to engage in the political sphere is critical (EveryLibrary 2020). Surveys indicate that libraries have strong and broad public support, but if the vocal minority with extremist viewpoints seizes control of local school boards, library boards, budget oversight committees, and local and state politics writ large – libraries are bound to lose (Hylwak 2022). Finding ways to encourage public supporters to meaningfully engage in local political spheres is essential and cannot be overlooked while libraries focus on immediate threats and challenges. These effective attacks at the local level also further clarify the need to advocate for clear state and federal policies protecting intellectual freedom. Lobbying may not currently be at the forefront of the work of librarians or professional organizations, but it needs to advance.

Library workers should not have to fear losing their jobs, their livelihood, or their freedom due to their commitment to intellectual freedom. Individual librarians under attack have come to rely on personal resources or even crowdfunding to access legal representation ("Legal Fees for Librarian Amanda Jones, Organized by Tiffany Whitehead"). Well-coordinated legal defense funds, administered by trusted professional organizations, are an essential defense when activists and politicians seek to use the legal system to threaten librarians simply trying to do their jobs and serve the public.

No one ought to face these challenges alone. It is time to take advantage of the groundswell of labor organizing in the US. Unionizing library workers will not only protect them, but will also provide a nexus for the kind of coordinated action required to effectively challenge these vicious attacks. The pro-censorship organizations currently seeking to control the narrative to not only shape policy, but also to dismantle libraries as a bastion of intellectual freedom, will be less able to threaten the livelihood of individual librarians if they are protected by organized labor. As ALA President-elect for 2023-2024 Emily Drabinski stated, "The most important thing we can be doing right now is building collective power with one another relative to demands that we develop in the struggle together" (Bennett 2022, n.p.).

While the possibility of unionizing library workers may not be achievable – or perhaps, appropriate – in every library system or organization, library leadership and human resource officers need to immediately create explicit polices protecting the jobs of all library workers targeted by organized political campaigns. The threats of legal prosecution, defamation, and potential job losses from these attacks is already having a chilling effect on the field, and the nation is poorer for the loss of dedicated public servants in the face of zealotry and hate (Fleishman 2023). All librarians should, at an absolute minimum, know that the conditions of their employment will be protected when modern book burners darken their doors and inboxes.

Legacy organizations, like the American Library Association (ALA) and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), have been at the very core of these struggles for nearly a century

(Jaeger Sarin et al. 2013). At this time, though, it is also imperative to also look to the work of other organizations joining in the fight like EveryLibrary, PEN America, and Bookriot. This is the time to encourage collaboration, listening, and creative problem-solving from voices both inside and outside of the field – all perspectives are valuable in this battle for libraries, intellectual freedom, and democracy itself.

IV. Facing Censorship

These eight tenets of censorship are an attempt to collate the primary strands that undergird contemporary censorship efforts. Various historical periods of censorship in libraries have been documented in much greater detail in the works cited in this paper, but the above themes distill the ways in which core aspects of information – access, policy, literacy, and politics – interact in censorship efforts. These tenets should help to bring some understanding to the censorship movement. What is going on now has tenacious and pernicious historical roots. While the depth of this movement's roots is troubling, we need to remember that librarians have confronted and thwarted similar movements in the past. That knowledge hopefully brings some comfort to the troubles of today.

Shannon Oltmann (2019) has brilliantly distilled the ideal stance of libraries toward intellectual freedom: "individuals can make their own choices, but cannot compel others to abide by those choices" (p. 113). The heart of censorship is always to remove the ability of others to make intellectual choices. In the current context, censorship also coexists with a great many other intrusions into the work of libraries. The acceleration of censorship efforts is part of a larger network of local, state, and government political and policy intrusions into libraries in the twenty-first century. This network encompasses filtering mandates, the politicization of subject headings and metadata, the evisceration and micromanaging of budgets, a significant expansion of parents' ability to dictate library activities, the current banning of materials related to the experiences of certain communities, and the threats to put librarians in jail (Jaeger, Bertot, and Gorham 2013; Jaeger Sarin et al. 2016; Work 2016).

Even the arguably most important source of hope for librarians right now – the fact that members of the public overwhelmingly support libraries in the current struggle over censorship – can be undermined at the ballot box. A national poll conducted by the ALA in March 2022 revealed that 70 percent of voters oppose censorship efforts in libraries and 90 percent have an overall positive opinion of libraries. In addition, 75 percent of parents of public school parents trust their school librarians to make the right decisions about materials (Hylwak 2022). And, in those states where the legislatures have debated laws that threaten to imprison librarians who provide access to banned books, the voters strongly oppose the laws (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, and Hodge 2023). That support is welcome and needed; however, in reality, most voters are unlikely to cast a ballot on the single issue of censorship. In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis, perhaps currently the most zealous politician regarding education and information restrictions in the US, won his most recent reelection by nearly 20 percentage points – a striking win in a state previously considered evenly split along party lines.

That said, there is hope. Thus far, in many of the states where the legislatures have considered laws with criminal penalties for librarians and educators, with some exceptions like Missouri and Florida, libraries and their supporters have been able to prevent these proposed bills from becoming actual laws to date. Glimmers of hope can also be gleaned

from the ACLU's recent use of a novel legal argument to strike down a school district's removal of books with LGBTQIA+ themes from library shelves. Efforts to combat censorship traditionally rely on First Amendment grounds; the ACLU of Texas, however, has raised the question of whether the school district's action also violates Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. In December 2022, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights opened an investigation into this book ban; the central question in this inquiry is whether the ban constitutes a form of discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation (Taylor 2023). Regardless of the outcome of this particular investigation, the introduction of this additional legal argument opens up a new avenue to challenge censorship efforts.

Nothing else will suffice but to oppose these laws and find legal means of challenging them, otherwise failure to do so will only embolden future efforts to censor books. Examples like the aforementioned successful censorship efforts in Missouri and Florida could turn into bellwethers for other states. In March 2022, Florida's Governor DeSantis signed into law a bill (HB 1467) that requires a certified media specialist to take an annual online training course, designed in part by the pro-censorship group Moms for Liberty, before reviewing every book in the school according to the training's requirements. In response to this law, teachers who fear being prosecuted with a third degree felony have taken to covering their classroom libraries with paper, or taking them home, until the law is more clear (Grant, 2023; Salum 2023).

The current situation, both in Florida and nationally, is stressful for librarians, who are distracted from the actual work that libraries need to do. Nevertheless, the exploration of these issues conveys this necessity, both in principle and practice, namely that – opposition to censorship efforts demands time and effort. And a weak response to the current censorship movement will likely make things worse for libraries in the longer term. While our field tends to frame censorship campaigns as challenges to intellectual freedom, this new censorship movement is an outright attack on prominent marginalized populations in the United States. This is a fight about books that embodies a fight about civil rights and human rights, and who in our society will be allowed to have them. Defending our institutions against this movement seems daunting and rightly so, given the threat of imprisonment. But if we do not work collectively within our field and with other organizations and professions dedicated to protecting the rights of the marginalized, the new censorship will only continue to expand in its power and privilege over our institutions andthe entire country.

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Delegitimizing Censorship: Contending with the Rhetoric of an Anti-Democratic Movement

ALLISON JENNINGS-ROCHE

ABSTRACT

Attacks on library collections and library workers have reached a fevered pitch. To effectively combat these threats, library advocates and organizations must move away from debate and dialogue about specific challenges and move towards a political communication strategy that actively disrupts these openly anti-democratic censorship movements. This is a moment of rhetorical disruption; along with the texts and the books that are being perceived as harmful, library workers are now being portrayed as threats to society, being called "groomers" who seek to "indoctrinate" children. Contending with the true nature of this evolving rhetoric is essential to be able to respond appropriately and avoid normalizing these debates. If libraries and our communities are to prevail in the defense of intellectual freedom, free expression, and cultural representation, censorship simply cannot become ordinary. This paper examines the ways in which the rhetoric of censorship operates, the ways it risks becoming normalized, and the ways in which libraries, librarians, and their supporters can work to counteract and delegitimize this rhetoric.

Introduction

Public libraries have been considered a beloved institution in American life throughout their history, and yet, throughout that history, they also have consistently failed to appropriately advocate for themselves and the communities they serve (Buschman, 2018; Buschman, 2016; Chrastka, 2018; Ndumu, Dickinson, & Jaeger 2020; Weigand, 2015). The ramifications of this lack of effective advocacy has recently come to the forefront in a new and disturbing way as today's energized drive for censorship has moved beyond content-based book bans and into criminalization of the practice of librarianship itself (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, & Hodge, in press).

Recent research shows a substantial number of Americans now believe that public libraries are actively seeking to indoctrinate their children, a radical departure from being one of the most trusted professions (Public Religion Research Institute, 2022). While there have been other periods of uproar over specific books in United States history, the threats to libraries and library workers today have reached a heretofore unheard-of level of public

outrage and practical threats to library workers (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, & Hodge, in press, Jaeger et al., in press) This is a moment of rhetorical disruption. Now, not just the texts and the books themselves are being perceived as harmful, but librarians and library workers are now being portrayed as "groomers" seeking to "indoctrinate" small children (Hatzisavvidou & Martin, 2022; Public Religion Research Institute, 2022). This shift from the direct challenge of books to the broader rhetoric of neoliberalism and parents' rights is pernicious and, thus far, has achieved an alarming level of resonance with large portions of the public. If we do not understand the nature of this rhetoric, library advocates will be unable to respond appropriately.

Pro-censorship movements have risen to the forefront of public discourse throughout American history — always in response to changing social conditions for previously marginalized groups of people (Jaeger et al., in press). While the specifics of some book challenges may be new, the political activation of American citizens based on intentionally manipulative rhetorical strategies from right-wing politicians and activists is hardly unique and treads a well-worn path in reactionary social discourse.

Censorship in an Age of Disconnection

The United States is in an era of profound social and civic strife, and that discord is playing out in battles over library collections and the work of librarians across the country. While the conflict may not be a new one; the tenor of these challenges is uniquely vitriolic. Nationwide, "our lack of participation in our communities and our lack of trust in our government and for traditional leaders had left a nation vulnerable to attack" (Mercieca, 2020, p. 24). Libraries as physical and ideological representations of both community and government are both particularly vulnerable, and have proven a particularly useful target for "rage baiting" right-wing extremists in the ongoing fight over social progress (Molloy, 2019).

Library advocates must understand and take seriously the real material threats to our collections, institutions, and personnel. Protecting our libraries, library workers, and communities is essential for the long-term welfare of the public good. Studying and ultimately developing effective responses to the shifts in rhetoric and communication will give library workers and advocates the ability to turn the tide against these incendiary attacks. Underlying these attacks are ongoing changes and cultural reimaginings (within right-wing, extremist rhetoric) of the meanings of books, libraries, and library workers. Understanding these changes is especially important, because, "although social and political changes become actualized through practical, material changes that take shape in policies, production and consumption patterns, behavior changes, and so on, such forms of transformation also require change in the use of language" (Hatzisavvidou, 2022 p. 192). The languages and rhetorics employed by this movement belie the larger cultural and social campaign, and should be a red flag for library workers and advocates.

Censorship in this current moment is fundamentally about deploying "social power and influence to proactively impede access to cultural goods" (Knox, 2021, p.13). Those seeking to impede access to collections and dictate how library workers do their job are doing so to silence and obscure the voices and perspectives of those whose opinions the attackers feel do not have a right to full and active participation in American society. These battles over books that reflect the lived experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/questioning,

Intersex, and Asexual, Plus (LGBTQIA+) and Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) peoples are merely an opening salvo in a larger war to actively strip civil rights from fellow Americans (Clarke & Wilson, 2022). It is absolutely essential that those campaigning to preserve access and inclusion reckon with the true nature of this conflict, which is heavily dependent on persuasive rhetorics of what is safe and who is an American.

Current LIS Advocacy Strategies Risk Normalization

By not calling out the pernicious nature of the rhetorics of these attacks and instead acting as if there is a good faith disagreement on the merits of individual books, library advocates risk normalizing the far-right extremist influences of this current social and political movement. Libraries often provide a point-by-point breakdown of how and why each book is acceptable instead of dismantling the arguments and tactics of the reactionary movements themselves (American Library Association, 2023, Gabbatt, 2022). As Jason Stanley stated in his prescient 2018 book, How Facism Works, "what normalization does is transform the morally extraordinary into the ordinary" (p. 190). If libraries and our communities are to successfully defend intellectual access and free expression, and thereby an equitable society, censorship simply cannot become ordinary.

As an essential starting point, library advocates need to reorient their current messaging and toolkits to align with the current political reality. Right-wing, extremist activists and politicians are not operating in good faith and are not willing to listen to sincere pronouncements about the literary and educational value of targeted books. Each time a library campaign engages with a book challenge on the merits of the complaint, the process of normalizing arguments over the limits of acceptable censorship is reinforced. "Normalization means precisely that encroaching ideologically extreme conditions are not recognized as such because they have come to seem normal" and these challenges are anything but normal (Stanley, 2018 p. 190). Thus, it is self-defeating to respond to them if they are normal.

For a field that is actively engaged with the work of dismantling structural oppression and epistemicide, perhaps of even greater concern are the larger cultural and social ramifications of these kinds of debates (Patin et al., 2021). By engaging in this way with right-wing, extremist speakers, we risk normalizing "debate" over the lived realities of minoritized and socially oppressed peoples and communities. Legitimizing debates and (ostensibly) good faith disagreements over appropriateness of content risks further marginalizing the very people our most ardent advocates are attempting to protect.

Library advocates should not engage in this kind of direct dialogue over threatened texts, but should shut down this kind of rhetoric at every turn. These things are not up for debate. Therefore, library advocates should not engage in debate on the merits of racist/ sexist/homophobic/antisemitic/extremist/fascist arguments at any point in our political advocacy work. Understanding and implementing alternative communication strategies is essential to not only protect libraries and shut down censors, but to respect the human rights and the dignity of those who right-wing extremists are seeking to harm and further marginalize.

Rhetoric Matters

This current wave of book bans, and accompanying attacks on librarians, signals a shift in rhetoric, in which there is an ongoing "redefinition of terms and categories to expand or retract meaning," particularly as it pertains to the role and meaning of librarians in American life (Hatzisavvidou & Martin, 2022, p. 150). Rhetorical analysis "is concerned with the situated forms that discourse takes as a series of arguments within a particular context," and while the context here is a political firestorm over library collections, the rhetorical moves of the movement parallel a much larger cultural movement (Hatzisavvidou, 2022, p. 153).

Taking the time to unpack the constitutive rhetoric inherent in the communications of this movement is essential as libraries and their advocates grapple with an evolving political reality. Constitutive rhetorics "reaffirm or reconfigure accepted demarcations of social space, and to affirm as well as challenge established sources of cultural authority, bonds of affiliation, and institutional relationships" (Jasinski & Mercieca, 2010, p. 318). Thanks to social media, we can see such reconfiguring happening in real time as librarians are no longer being referred to as trusted public servants, but are being described in terms such as "threat" or "groomers" (Greene, 2022).

Social progress and its attendant changes in language and to "established sources of cultural authority," have also been met with censorious activity in the past (Jasinski & Mercieca, 2010, p. 320). In the Comstock era, the work of the Postal Service was wielded as a means of restricting access to materials related to women's rights (Cockrell 2019; Sohn, 2021). During the Cold War, McCarthyism meant that fears over communism and alternative political viewpoints were inflamed to the point that libraries were forced to remove related materials (Richards, 2001; Robbins, 1996). The contemporary censorship movement may currently be focused on issues related to LGBTQIA+ rights and racial social justice, but the ideological perspective is much the same.

Much like the McCarthy or Comstock eras, weaponized fears over changing social norms, current political actors have created a whole new reality where books, libraries, and librarians become an existential threat by pure rhetorical re-creation of reality by a small concerted group of speakers (Jaeger et al., in press). While it would be easy to dismiss language as existing in the purely theoretical sphere, understanding the connection between rhetoric and legal policy illuminates the dangers of not taking such speech seriously. Indeed, "like law, rhetoric invents; and, like law, it invents out of something rather than out of nothing. It always starts in a particular culture and among particular people. There is always one speaker addressing others in a particular situation, about concerns that are real and important to somebody, and speaking a particular language" (White, 1985, p. 695).

These concerns over specious claims of sexualizing children and promoting anti-American materials in the boogeyman of critical race theory are made real by the speakers of such falsehoods. Those speakers, namely politicians, activists, and "concerned parents," are speaking a particular language to a particular audience, which does not include library workers, or even the general library-supporting public, — they are instead riling up a weaponized and vocal minority of citizens in order to enact their regressive social agenda.

Politicians like Bill DeSteph of Virginia and Marjorie Taylor Green of Georgia make extraordinary claims about the dangers posed by libraries and librarians, as well as the content of children's books and young adult novels, in order to direct the vitriol of their constituents at institutions dedicated to public access. DeSteph, according to reporting in *The*

Virginia Mercury, went so far as to say, "I think it's a sad state when our children are safer turning on the TV or radio than perusing their local school library" (Cline, 2023). Greene often relies on similar incendiary rhetoric for all sorts of political issues from gun violence to calling for a "national divorce," and has stooped to calling library defenders "groomers" on Twitter (Slodysko, 2021; Greene, 2022; Murray, 2023). This kind of language and rhetoric goes far beyond the norms of democratic political disagreement and is being intentionally wielded by right-wing, extremist politicians to foment fear and rage among their followers. Fear and rage that are being directed at libraries and librarians.

Parents' Rights, Neoliberalism, and Wielding Government Power to Enact Reactionary Policies

These rhetorics are not purely rooted in fear or in anger, but, as is so common in American discourse today, these particular uses of language and political communication are deeply rooted in the neoliberal impulses to commodify all aspects of American life (Buschman, 2012). Libraries, as public services, do not naturally conform to the demands of neoliberal ideology, despite the field's ongoing insistence on communicating value by those standards (Buschman, 2020; Jaeger & Sarin, 2016). Expectedly, though, right-wing actors have taken that idea and run with it, insisting that each school and public library conform to the whims of their implied customers and markets. By focusing on the idea of consumer and market demand, and not on any form of social or educational best practice – it is easy to take the step of removing unfavored items from collections.

Conceding to a consumer demand – real or imagined – to limit collections would be the proper response for public institutions beholden to such values. In fact, "the neoliberal economic ideology mandates that decisions of governance be based on what is best for markets, meaning that economic, political, and social decisions are all driven by market concerns and organized by the language and rationality of markets" (Jaeger et al., 2017, p. 355). Book banners understand this market-driven impulse and are harnessing it to undermine any kind of expertise or legitimacy lent to libraries as public services, and educational institutions.

In fact, politicians have started to explicitly call for free market/neoliberal solutionism in trying to claim that their calls for censorship are reasonable and rooted in other existing social norms. Republican Virginia Senate member Bill DeSteph said in an interview: "What we're seeking to do is, like you have parental controls on your telephone, your computer or at home on your TV, we want to put parental controls at the library" (DeFusco, 2023). This language is not only explicitly neoliberal, but it misses the fundamental difference between voluntary guidelines adopted by a private industry and the imposition of government restrictions on speech, in clear violation of constitutionally protected First Amendment freedoms (U.S. Const. amend. I). Public libraries and libraries within public schools are publicly controlled, governmental institutions that cannot and should not operate as if they are private corporations. The First Amendment has very little to do with policies implemented by media corporations to protect their bottom line, but it has everything to do with the laws regulating the public sphere.

Educational institutions in particular have become familiar with coming under attack by groups of parents who have been intentionally spun up in service of a regressive social

agenda. Neoliberal impulses fit handily with a call to respect parents' rights in classrooms, curriculum, and collections. There is a renewed focus on leveraging the rhetorics and arguments of parental rights as a means to assert control and further marginalize the perspectives of targeted populations. This kind of language has been used to call for everything from vouchers to private school to a right to keep children from receiving proper sexual education (Schneider & Berkshire, 2020). A huge reason this kind of discourse has caught fire at such a rapid pace is "because the neoliberal approach to educational reform has been so successful in reframing public education as a private good to be consumed" (Slater, 2022, n.p.). That framing has provided an excellent structure upon which the most reactionary organizations have been able to build and improve upon at breathtaking speed.

One of the groups at the vanguard of this movement, the self-proclaimed Moms for Liberty group, hearkens to this idea with their central slogan of "we do not co-parent with the government" (Craig, 2021). While on its face, such a rhetoric would call for the removal of all government influence in educational settings. Instead, it is a shrewd means of obscuring their intent to leverage local and state-level governments to enforce their ideas of whose voices and perspectives are valid and valued in our institutions. In reporting from *The New York Times*, a Florida activist makes this intellectual and rhetorical tightrope walk explicit:

> "This is not about banning books, it's about protecting the innocence of our
> children," said Keith Flaugh, one of the founders of Florida Citizens Alliance, a
> conservative group focused on education, "and letting the parents decide what
> the child gets rather than having government schools indoctrinate our kids"
> (Harris & Alter, 2022, n.p.).

Clamoring to keep the [federal] government out of their parenting, while essentially harnessing the power of state and local government, does not at first glance make sense to those outside of the particular rhetorical norms of this movement. However, socially regressive and fascist movements are not historically concerned with the logical conundrums posed by such conflicts. Rather, their often wholly created linguistic reality allows for government to be government while not really being government if it is in service of the group's interests (Stanley, 2018).

These current censorship groups are using identity-based ideas and language to subvert currently acceptable norms of complaints over children's books. Instead of making ostensibly good faith arguments over the tone or content of a particular text, this movement seeks to leverage local governments, and ultimately the local police and judiciary, to enact their demands by criminalizing the fundamental tenets of librarianship (Jaeger, Jennings-Roche, & Hodge, in press). This rhetoric also builds and reinforces group identity.

Language Signals Belonging in Reactionary Social Movements

While intentional collaboration between each of these seemingly organic state and local coalitions to attack library workers and collections may not be something evident or provable to those outside of these rhetorical cultures, the consistency of the messaging paints a clear pattern of coordinated rhetoric and a shared ideological outlook from the would-be censors. There are clear communities and even "tribes" being imagined and affirmed in the digital

sphere, often extending well beyond local or state boundaries (Cowan, 2021). This movement is not merely focused on issues related to libraries and their collections, but in these attacks, has found a way to reinforce the ideological commitments and fears of its members.

By focusing on the collections and library workers under threat, it can be easy for library advocates to overlook the very real political transformations signaled by these movements. Newly re-emboldened, right wing movements in the United States have coalesced around a pretty consistent and succinct set of ideas. In fact, Francesa Tripodi's "Five F's of Conservatism" developed in *The Propagandist's Playbook* can provide a useful framework for investigating this intersection of seemingly disparate ideas. The ideological tenets of "faith, family, firearms, forces, and free market" provide a bridge between voters and politicians (2022, p. 26). For this group:

> "Political success is about defining both the Right and the nation in a particular way, emphasizing boundaries that clearly demarcate who is included and who should be excluded. A central component of this unification strategy centers around the idea that the country must be taken back and that American values must be preserved. Compounding this fear and distress over being underdogs in their own country is a feeling documented by other scholars: that conservatives tend to think about social change and civil rights progress as a zero-sum game: if liberals are gaining power, conservatives must be losing ground" (Tripodi, 2022, p. 27).

In this zero-sum game, control of libraries is a way to further "demarcate…who should be excluded" (Tripodi, 2022, p.27.) Using this logic, social change, even in the form of charming children's books about penguins, cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged (Gomez, 2018).

The current movement may indeed derive some of its legacy from the Regan-era neoliberalism, but has rhetorically and intellectually progressed far beyond a capitalistic, or even a conservative understanding of our country, and into one that is running headlong into all-out facism. As "fascist politics seeks to undermine public discourse by attacking and devaluing education, expertise, and language," libraries are the most logical target for those who are set on the project of curtailing all forms of "intelligent debate" (Stanley, 2018 p. 36). Those seeking to censor are not concerned with the justice-oriented, or even merely logical, reasoning of library workers, instead they have openly created a new reality in which they are blatantly manipulating the emotions of parents and community members to enact their agendas and build support for their political campaigns.

This manipulation is clear to not only those trying to protect libraries, but is also an accepted tactic by those within the movement. As an incoming Republican State Senator for West Virginia, Jay Taylor, said to those who were also seeking to ban certain books and titles, "You gotta be careful, because as soon as you try to ban something, you're declared racist or whatever and all that stuff. We'd be torched if — we can't do book banning. It's gotta be about 'age appropriate'" (Karball, 2022, n.p.). Right-wing extremists' focus on alternative

messaging – whether it is a call to values, parents' rights, neoliberalism, or other principles – simply provides the kind of reasoning and rhetorical cover that will allow censorship to flourish in a society where, even those in favor of censorship admit, it remains deeply unpopular (Public Religion Research Institute, 2022).

Pro-Censorship Movements are Anything but Grassroots

Though each individual utterance, speech, or social media post from a politician, activist, or concerned parent may not on their own indicate larger social forces at play, analyzing the pattern and tenor of these kinds of statements illuminates the coordinated and intentional rhetorical moves of those inside this political coalition. Indeed, even slightly bizarre arguments like those that liken censorship to "turning off" books that are not appropriate are a clear example of right wing speakers calling for the state to assume a parntal role while trusting neoliberal "free market" solutions more than libraries and public institutions (Jaeger et al., in press; Tripodi, 2023).

While many of the activists and groups involved may seek to portray themselves as only recently concerned citizens and parents, it would be unwise to take those claims at face value. This represents a national movement of right-wing extremists with populist and fascist motivations attempting to redefine fundamental principles of American democratic institutions.

As we see in the ever-growing list of book-banning coalitions in communities across the country, "when a reactionary groundswell in any given municipality, school district or state issues calls to ban specific books… the merging of neoliberal ideas with populist rationality accords dangerous legitimacy to what are, in fact, fascist acts of erasure" (Slater, 2022, n.p.). Erasure is exactly the point for this movement. Of all the values and ideologies called up by those in the pro-censorship movement, the strongest impulse by far is the one that seeks to exclude specific groups from our public discourse and educational spheres.

Social Exclusion and Undermining Access are the Goals

Each pro-censorship speaker is using very particular rhetorical moves, and signaling their insider status in a reactionary community that values upholding the status quo at all costs, so as to not allow room for any progressive ideas of moving additional voices into the American mainstream. Fundamentally, this political network does not seek to ban a few books, or even a set of viewpoints; instead, they seek to dismantle the public sphere, particularly where it preserves the rights of communities minoritized within American society (Buschman, 2020). As libraries have played a strong – although sometimes arguably theoretical – role in the upholding of the ideals of American democratic values, this new movement is intentionally targeting them as a means of limiting access to alternative viewpoints and narratives that may undermine their narrow understanding of the American project (Mercieca, 2023; Stanley, 2018).

These right-wing extremist's attempt to hold on to a mythological, romanticized vision of the American past shows its fascist leanings as well as its growing fear of "cultural displacement" (Stanley, 2018, Tripodi, 2022). In fact, "understanding this fear of cultural displacement is particularly important when it comes to circumventing political propaganda," and indeed incendiary statements about books and libraries are at their core

propaganda (Tripodi, 2022, p. 27). The right spins up smaller fears into larger threats, "repeating these narratives over and over again legitimiz[ing] the idea that whites are dispossessed, despite their retaining an overwhelming majority of powerful positions and land wealth in the United States" (Tripodi, 2022, p. 27).

As some ongoing educational, collection development, and professional development initiatives within the field may signal a strong commitment to social justice, the "overwhelming majority" of library infrastructure still upholds the cultural hegemony and, therefore, fears of new policies displacing the supremacy of majoritarian views in libraries are not rooted in reality. Instead, these activists are seeking to turn back any social progress they see, such as attempts at cultural inclusion in schools and libraries. As United States Representative Cory Mills from Florida said on Twitter, on February 9, 2023: "The battlefield for the future of our society is being fought within the classrooms of American schools" (Mills, 2023). His view is reflective of others in the movement who seek to undermine the legitimacy of public institutions as a means of limiting the perspectives of future voters and engaged citizens (Mercieca, 2023; Stanley, 2018). Schools, libraries, and books continue to be a threat, even in the age of smartphones, to those seeking to uphold right-wing extremist positions on exactly who deserves to have their voice heard in American society.

Library Advocacy Efforts Merit Reconsideration

Libraries and library workers who become bogged down in the details of each particular title, challenge, or threat, though well-meaning, are missing the forest for the trees. As public libraries are perhaps the only institutions that are truly open to the entire public in the United States, they are uniquely at risk in this moment of rhetorical, political, and cultural disruption. The risk here is not just one of ineffective political advocacy. There is a clear risk that by engaging the merits of these arguments, library advocates tacitly normalize these kinds of movements and actions. All the well-intentioned toolkits and suggestions to read the challenged material in order to respond point-by-point, risk missing the true threat entirely. Library organizations large and small need to take the time to understand the political nature of these constitutive rhetorics. Ultimately, "trying to avoid being politically engaged, even under the cover of "neutrality," actively hurts libraries, as we are silent about or unprepared to deal with many of the political issues that directly impact our institutions" (Jaeger & Sarin, 2016, p. 23). While it was certainly unwise to claim to be outside the political sphere during past censorship challenges, financial strains, and other attempts to undermine the profession, to do so now would all but guarantee failure for library advocates. Our communities deserve better than lukewarm calls to outdated and fictitious ideas like neutrality (Cooke et al., 2022).

More Analysis is Needed for Effective Political Advocacy Strategies

Across the country, book banners are building and reaffirming imagined communities and identities through their use of this kind of rhetorical "identification" (Cowan, 2021, p.195). Those on the other side of the conflict would be wise to engage in the kind of discursive practices that will allow them to build a socially positive rhetorical situation for

libraries writ large (Cowan, 2021). By developing our own clear and effective messaging for library advocates, we will not only rise to meet the rhetoric challenges of this extraordinarily violent and reactionary social movement, but we will also honor the people and communities we serve. To do anything less is to risk normalizing the debate around censorship and normalizing public debate over the lived experiences of minoritized communities already targeted by right-wing extremists.

Practically, library and educational advocates' messaging, rhetorics, and languages must evolve to meet these challenges, and to provide a clear path forward for all seeking to defend our institutions. A critical engagement with the rhetoric of politics, and the "concrete ways public speech practically assembles meaning," as much as with financial and legal implications of policy, is essential for the survival of all libraries (Martin, 2022, p.182).

Now is the time to devote resources to the analysis of how the rhetorical and political frameworks used by libraries have provided much of the ammunition of these current attacks and challenges. By striving to communicate in ways that would placate the whims of neoliberal forces, libraries have undermined their value and standing in the political sphere, and yet still lack clear and universal alternative rhetorical strategies.

Libraries as an institution may not be able to survive these kinds of prolonged and overwhelming attacks if there remains a rigid adherence to internal ideological purity in our public political communication, instead of adapting our messages to meet the demands of modern politics. That rigidity, and an unwillingness to communicate in ways that will be most heard by the broader community, only removes vital potential instruments from the toolbox of library political advocates. Libraries can still accomplish their mission and align actions with values, while speaking externally in ways that are proven to be most effective. Taking the time to analyze and confront the challenges of internal and external rhetorics is one way academics can support the work of library advocates across the country.

A Call to Rhetorical Arms

"The goal is to disrupt, critique, and expose anti-democratic communication to diminish its power and effectiveness" (Mercieca, 2023, n.p.).

In the immediate term, library advocates and organizations must move away from debate and dialogue about specific challenges and move towards a political communication strategy that actively disrupts openly anti-democratic censorship movements. Libraries, schools and other public institutions absolutely cannot rest on historical notions of neutrality when those seeking to manipulate public opinion are operating with openly fascist intentions.

In fact, "it is only by recognizing education's [and libraries'] inherently political nature that societies can imbue it with democratic force and, in turn, cultivate the agency of populations to act transformatively" (Slater, 2022, n.p.). Broad and sweeping public support for libraries has been affirmed by public opinion surveys time and time again (Horrigan, 2016; Public Religion Research Institute, 2022). Now is the time to engage in our own forms of rhetorical imaginary (i.e. how a culture imagines the role, function, features, norms, and values of communication) in order to harness that support and serve the public good (Cowan, 2021).

We cannot wait. We cannot rely on outdated norms of neutrality and nonengagement. Collectively, library workers need to build our own base of rhetorical power to protect that which we hold so dear. The work of libraries is essential, not just for our democracy — but the people we serve. It is time to tell our stories in ways that will resonate with not just our super supporters, but with each and every person within the United States.

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

SONYA M. DURNEY

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 library/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.
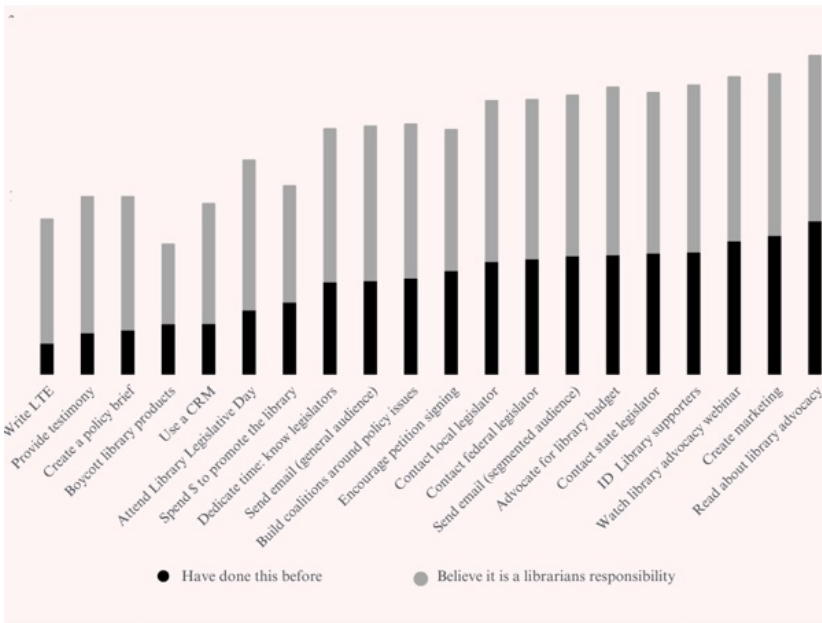
Librarians' Political Self-Efficacy (LPSE): A statistically significant relationship was found between LPSE and library advocacy activity.

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	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1
(Y/N)	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.
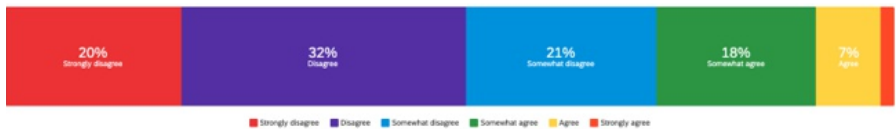
Image 3
My library school curriculum provided me with sufficient library policy training.

Image 4
Professional development has provided me with sufficient library advocacy training.

Image 5

Professional development provided me with sufficient library policy training.
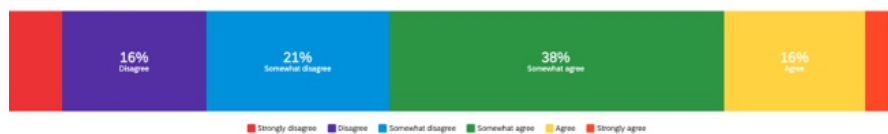
Interview Themes

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 LPSE and 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?

Author

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Voter Perceptions of Book Bans and Censorship

EMBOLD RESEARCH

ABSTRACT

This report publishes the results of a public opinion poll of American voters undertaken to understand political support and opposition to book banning. Commissioned by EveryLibrary Institute the poll surveyed registered voters from August 31 to September 3,, 2022. Results show that most voters oppose banning books based on race, sexuality, and other concerns. They also oppose legislation that bans books.

Methodology
EveryLibrary Institute commissioned Embold Research to survey 1223 registered voters nationally from Aug 31-Sep 3, 2022. Respondents were recruited via dynamic online sampling to obtain a sample reflective of the population. Post-stratification weighting was performed on age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, and 2020 presidential vote. The modeled margin of error is 3.4%.

Key Findings
•Nearly all American voters (92%) have heard at least something about book banning.

•Half of voters believe there is "absolutely no time when a book should be banned," and 41% think "there are rare times when it's appropriate to ban books," and just 8% think "there are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned."

•At the outset, this issue transcends partisanship - 31% of Republicans think there is absolutely no time when a book should be banned.

•Voters are most offended by the idea that children and classic books are being banned.
•Only 34% of voters support banning books about sexuality.

•At least 75% of voters will consider book banning when voting in November.

Libraries and librarians are broadly favorably viewed

- Impressions are comparable to teachers, better than for local schools, and vastly superior to any of the politicians or political parties tested.

How favorable are your feelings about each of the following?   EMBOLD research

● Very favorable ● Somewhat favorable ○ Neutral ○ Somewhat unfavorable ● Very unfavorable ● Never heard of them

Teachers	48	25		15	9	3
Libraries in your area	43	26		25	4	
Librarians	45	21		29	3	
School librarians	41	21		31	4	
Schools in your area	16	37	26	15	6	
Your Governor	22	20	15	11	31	
The Democratic Party	14	23	9	13	41	
Joe Biden	15	21	10	7	46	
Donald Trump	22	14	7	5	52	
The Republican Party	13	23	9	12	43	

Provision of free education resources and programs/support services are top "brand" attributes

What do you think are the most important reasons to support libraries in your area? Select your top 2.   EMBOLD research

Libraries offer resources and education tools for people who otherwise couldn't afford it	50
Libraries offer more than just books, they also offer programs and support services	40
Libraries are important for intellectual and social development for young children	26
For many people, libraries are the only place to access the Internet	22
Libraries are important for the education of our students	21
Libraries offer great reading material, both print and online	15
Libraries are one of the few places where you can hang out and access entertainment for free	6
None of the above, I don't support libraries	3
Other	3

- Just 3% of voters say they can't find a reason to support libraries.

EveryLibrary Institute

Nearly all voters have heard about efforts to ban books in school and public libraries

Have you heard about efforts to ban certain books in school and public libraries?

EMBOLD research

	Yes, a great deal	Yes, something	No
All voters	56	36	8
Female	59	33	7
Male	52	39	9
Non-college	52	39	10
College	63	31	6
Democrats	73	22	5
Independents	51	40	10
Republicans	39	49	11
West	59	32	9
South	59	34	7
Northeast	53	40	7
Midwest	54	38	9
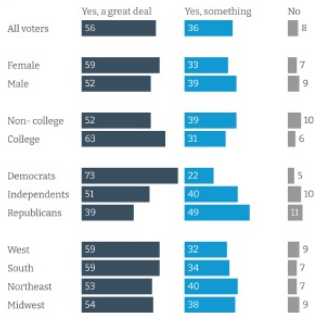
- More than half (56%) have "heard a great deal" about this issue.

- Women, college-educated voters, and Democrats are most likely to have heard a great deal about this.

- Any regional differences are slight.

EveryLibrary Institute

Voters are divided on the appropriateness of banning books

- Half of voters believe there is "absolutely no time when a book should be banned".
  - This includes a sizeable portion (31%) of Republicans. This has great potential as a wedge issue.

- 41% choose a middle position - "there are rare times when it's appropriate to ban books".

- Just 8% of voters think there are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned.

EveryLibrary Institute

Which statement best describes your opinion about banning books in school and public libraries?

EMBOLD research

	There is absolutely no time when a book should be banned	There are rare times when it's appropriate to ban books	There are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned
All voters	51	41	8
Female	53	39	7
Male	48	44	9
18 to 34	47	48	5
35 to 49	56	37	8
50 to 64	53	39	8
65+	47	42	11
White	51	41	8
Hispanic	45	42	13
Black	59	36	4
AAPI	54	44	2
Non-college	50	40	9
College	51	43	6
Democrats	66	33	1
Independents	62	32	5
Republicans	31	53	16
Northeast	57	39	4
West	55	39	6
South	48	43	9
Midwest	46	43	11
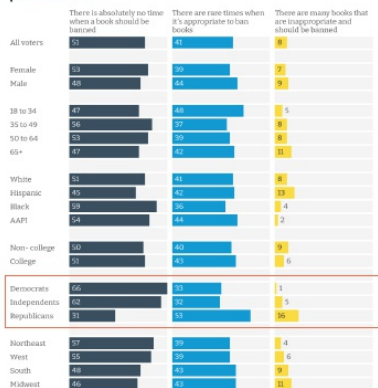
Evidence related to state bans of certain books and blocking attempts at diversity are most worrying

Below is some information about the increase in book banning across the United States. Which are most concerning to you? Select your top 3.

Statement	Value
States are introducing legislation to ban certain books and/or the teaching of different topics, such as racism, inequality, and sexuality.	50
Politicians are trying to block attempts to make reading material more diverse and representative of the full picture of America.	43
In some states, prosecutors are considering charging library employees for stocking certain books.	30
Bills have been introduced that would prohibit public school libraries and public libraries from keeping books on hand that focus on sexual activity, sexual identity or gender identity.	26
More than 1,500 book bans have been established in US school districts and public libraries in the past year.	25
Nearly 240 bills were introduced in the first three months of 2022 targeting books about LGBTQ issues.	19
Challenges to books, specifically books by non-white male authors, are happening at the highest rates we've ever seen.	16
None of these are concerning to me.	20

Below is some information about the increase in book banning across the United States. Which are most concerning to you? Select your top 3.

	Dem - Absolutely no bans	Dem - Rare bans	Rep - Absolutely no bans	Rep - Rare bans	Rep - Many bans	Ind - Absolutely no bans	Ind - Rare bans
Legislation to ban books on racism, inequality, and sexuality	73	75	39	19	27	57	37
Block attempts to make reading material more diverse	62	61	38	18	9	50	36
Prosecutors charging library employees	28	25	35	27	13	38	34
Prohibit books that focus on sexuality, gender	39	25	26	14	26	21	23
1,500 book bans in the past year	28	21	41	16	4	37	18
240 bills first three months re: LGBTQ	26	31	9	9	13	20	13
Challenges to books, non-white male authors, highest rates	19	33	11	12	5	18	10
None of these are concerning to me.	3	3	21	44	53	11	33

Type of book influences how book bans are received

- Banning classic novels and children's books are nearly universally opposed.
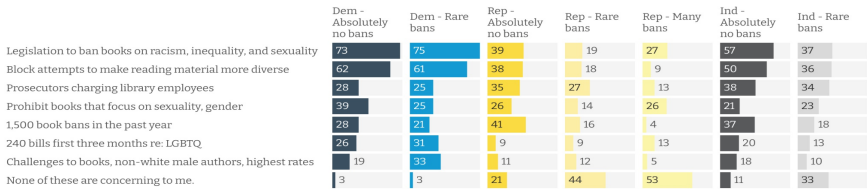- Only 18% of voters support book banning on issues of race/CRT and only one third of voters support bans for books that discuss sexuality.

Classic novels, such as "The Handmaid's Tale, "Of Mice and Men" and "To Kill a Mockingbird," have been banned because of their depiction of violence and/or race.

Support: 3%
Oppose: 93%

Children's Books have been banned for random reasons. For example, The Lorax was banned because a school board member was a logger, and Walter the Farting Dog was banned because it has the word "farting" in it.

Support: 4%
Oppose: 91%

There have been many efforts to ban books that focus on **race** and slavery, such as "The 1619 Project," because some people feel they are "racially divisive".

Support: 18%
Oppose: 72%

Many politicians and activists are trying to ban books that focus on **sexuality**, such as Maia Kobabe's "Gender Queer" and Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye," because some people feel it's too explicit.

Support: 34%
Oppose: 59%

Below are some examples of the types of books that have been banned and the reasons why. Do you support or oppose banning each type of book?
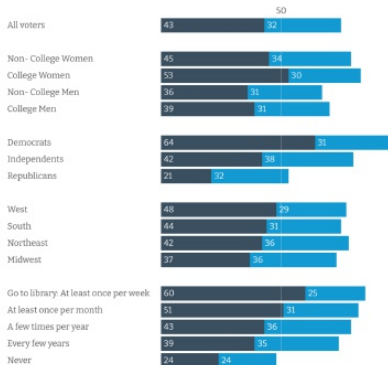
EMBOLD research

Total Support

	Children's books	Classics	Race	Sexuality
Dem - Absolutely no bans	1	2	1	1
Dem - Rare bans	3	2	2	12
Rep - Absolutely no bans	2	2	13	31
Rep - Rare bans	9	2	41	77
Rep - Many bans	24	18	65	97
Ind - Absolutely no bans	0	1	4	13
Ind - Rare bans	5	2	30	55

This is an important <u>voting</u> issue for 3 in 4 voters

How important is preventing book banning to how you decide to vote?

EMBOLD research

● Very important ● Somewhat important

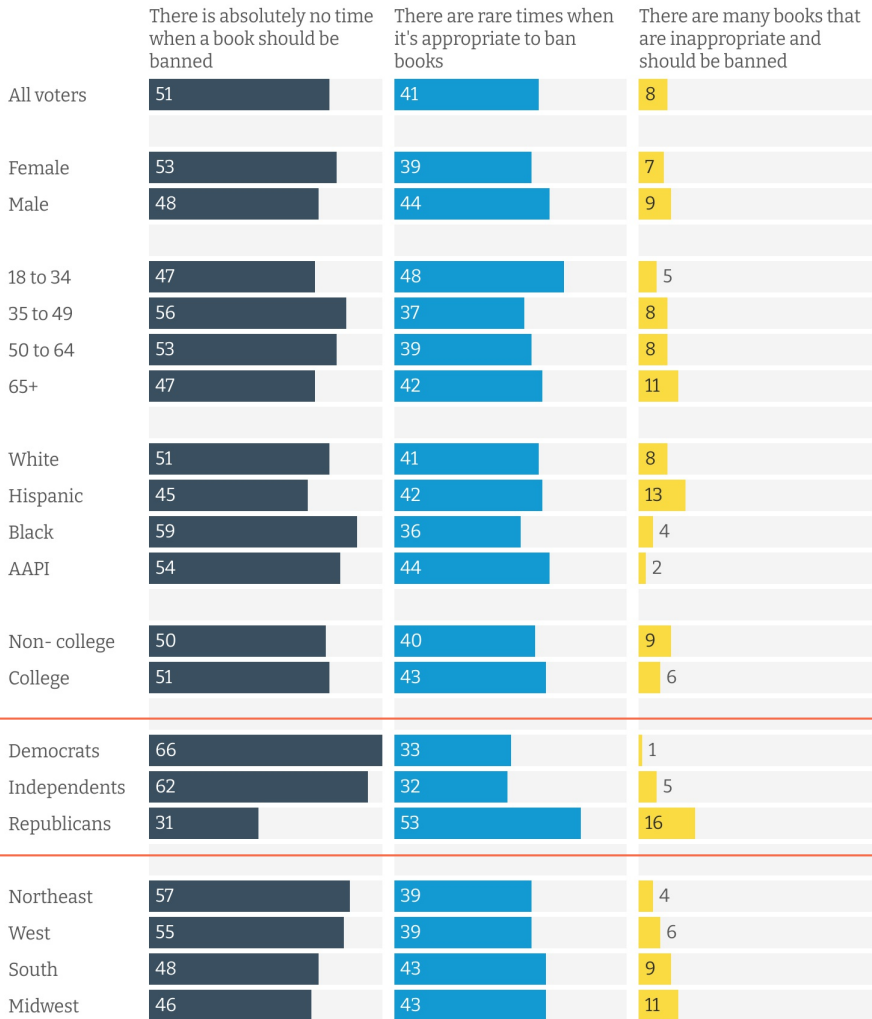|		
	50	
All voters	43	32
Non- College Women	45	34
College Women	53	30
Non- College Men	36	31
College Men	39	31
Democrats	64	31
Independents	42	38
Republicans	21	32
West	48	29
South	44	31
Northeast	42	36
Midwest	37	36
Go to library: At least once per week	60	25
At least once per month	51	31
A few times per year	43	36
Every few years	39	35
Never	24	24

- It is especially mobilizing for college-educated women, Democrats, and those who frequently go to a library.

- Preventing book banning is also "very important" to 1 in 5 Republicans, and 42% of Independents.

EveryLibrary Institute

Which statement best describes your opinion about banning books in school and public libraries?

EMBOLDresearch

	There is absolutely no time when a book should be banned	There are rare times when it's appropriate to ban books	There are many books that are inappropriate and should be banned
All voters	51	41	8
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Hispanic	45	42	13
Black	59	36	4
AAPI	54	44	2
Non- college	50	40	9
College	51	43	6
Democrats	66	33	1
Independents	62	32	5
Republicans	31	53	16
Northeast	57	39	4
West	55	39	6
South	48	43	9
Midwest	46	43	11

Factors of Success for Libraries on the Ballot

VALERIE McNUTT, JIEQING "LETTY"YANG, AND JOHN CHRASTKA

ABSTRACT

    There is a tremendous amount of speculation and hearsay about the internal and external factors that potentially influence the outcome for a library on Election Day - even before the campaign starts. In this report the authors analyze over 700 library elections between 2014 and 2018 across 50 variables taken from the IMLS Public Library Survey for each library and the American Community Survey (ACS) for each locality to try and dispel the conventional wisdom for library leaders.

    This study demonstrates what library-level activities and/or community-level characteristics can be correlated to a library ballot question's success or failure. Its approach is focused on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to understand two things: 1) Is there a set of conditions that will largely pre-determine the results on election day? and 2) Are there any specific management-choices that can be made in the lead-up to a campaign to create those conditions? It seeks to understand what influences the outcomes for public libraries on their election days and what are the factors of succcess for Libraries on the ballot.

    More than 90% of library funding is determined at the local level, either by the will of elected officials or by voters themselves (Sweeney, 2016). In the ten years since the Great Recession, more than 1,400 ballot measure questions about public library funding or building projects have been placed before the voters on local Election Days.

    Annually, hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake for operations, collections, staffing, facilities, technology, and other services. Since 1988, our Library Journal colleagues have tracked library ballot results via library surveys. In 1994, they began tracking high-level capital funding referenda and eventually all capital and operations initiatives (Hall, 1997).

    Since 2002, Library Journal has actively surveyed and collected Election Day results from contemporary news reports, local Clerks of Elections, and state library reports to provide a comprehensive annual understanding of libraries and library issues on the ballot. With more than 30 years of data, to the best of our knowledge, no one has ever tied the campaign passage or failure information to voter characteristics and library behaviors until now. This study aims to demonstrate what library-level activities and/or community-level

characteristics can be correlated to a library ballot question's success or failure. Our approach focused on both intrinsic and extrinsic factors to understand two things:

1. Is there a set of conditions that will largely pre-determine the results on Election Day?
2. Are there any specific management-choices that can be made in the lead-up to a campaign to create those conditions?

We chose to focus on intrinsic library-level activities like programs, collections, hours, technology, and staffing levels because — to a large extent — these factors are controlled by the library leadership team. We also looked at community-level demographics and characteristics like wealth, education, and tax rates to learn if there were any determinants of the outcome that were simply beyond the control of library leadership.

Ballot questions for libraries are generally sorted into three categories, funding questions, debt or capital (buildings), and governance or structure. From 2014 to 2018, Library Journal and EveryLibrary collected and reported annual outcomes of 751 funding or building-focused ballot questions for libraries. These library questions appeared on Election Days administered by Clerks of Elections or by the library itself as a local government unit. Each state has its own laws concerning how public libraries are funded, structured, and governed, and each state has its own rules regarding the conduct of elections (Courtney et al., 2016). Forty-one states had at least one library measure on the ballot, while nine states ad no library ballot measures during the review period.

The ballot measures included in this study were questions placed before voters at a regular or special election. They did not include measures decided by a municipal council or town hall meeting. While town hall meetings are a form of participatory decision making, the framework of the annual Library Journal and EveryLibrary referendum review focuses on direct elections. Actions by town, city, or county councils were reported separately and not included in this review.

Over the five-year period of this study, approximately 60% of the ballot questions considered were placed on the ballot by the library district's board or other independent self-governing body. Close to 30% of the questions were authorized to be placed on the ballot by a municipal authority like a city council, county commission, or town board. For the remaining 10%, the measure was placed on the ballot through a citizens' petition or judicial order—usually to create or otherwise modify a library district.

Each year, a significant number of funding-focused ballot measures are made up of renewals or reauthorizations of a previous levy, ad valorem, parcel, or other tax. In every year in recent memory, renewals have passed at rates of 85% or higher. While Election Day results are never assured, a renewal or reauthorization of a library's current tax rate provides some degree of operational stability. That said, a simple renewal of the tax rate without an increase in the cost of living or an index to inflation is, essentially, a budget cut.

Overall, during the 2014 to 2018 period, 81% of the library funding and building ballot measures passed and 19% failed. Annually, in 2018, 79% passed; in 2017, 90% passed; in

2016, 79% passed; in 2015, 88% passed; in 2014, 78% passed. Please see Appendix A for a detailed chart of passage and failure rates by type.

Study Criteria and Methodology

While 751 ballot measures were eligible for inclusion, we also overlayed three verification factors to improve the data's reliability. These were the ability to verify the results of each election retrospectively; the ability to accurately match the library on the ballot with an administrative unit's statistics compiled by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in its annual Public Libraries Survey (PLS); and the ability to match the library to specific community-level demographic information compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau in its American Community Survey (ACS). Of the 751 library ballot questions available between 2014 and 2018, only 560 were verified, matched to the IMLS PLS and the ACS,and are included in this report.

The federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) produces the Public Libraries Survey (PLS). Collected since 1988 with data files available from 1992, the survey tracks more than 100 data points for nearly all library administrative units in the United States. According to the IMLS, "[a]t the state level, PLS is administered by Data Coordinators, appointed by the chief officer of the state library agency from each state or outlying area. State Data Coordinators collect the requested data from local public libraries and report them to us via a web-based reporting system" (IMLS, 2020).

For the sake of this study, we chose to look specifically at 40 data points concerning: the nature of the library's service area and hours; the size and comportment of the staff; the available revenue by category; the types of expenditures by category; the number of programs by the audience; the size and formats of the collection; and the counts of top-level activities like circulations, door counts, staff interactions, and interlibrary loans. The full list of factors from the PLS is available in Appendix B.

The American Community Survey (ACS) from the U.S. Census Bureau is the leading source of large- and small-area socioeconomic and demographic statistics for every community in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The ACS is intended to augment the decennial census through an annual survey using a standard set of questions and a five-year study of greater length and breadth.

For our study period, we reviewed and included demographic and community characteristics that were available annually at the county-level, including:

- Percent of households with children
- The ratio of men to women
- Median age
- Percent of the population that are veterans
- Percent of the population that is foreign-born Median household income
- Percent of the population with a high school education
- Percent of the population with less than a high school education

- Employment rates
- Percent of the population that fell into defined race/ethnicity categories

With all of these community-level and library-level variables in mind, we scored the data to determine what factors, if any, were influential or determinant on the outcomes of the ballot questions. With 50 total variables, we chose to apply a fisher scoring algorithm to conduct a multi-variable linear analysis. As demonstrated in Appendix D, we determined whether any independent variables provided a statistically significant correlation.

Top-Level Findings

The most surprising outcome was that most of the 40 IMLS PLS variables and 10 ACS variables did not significantly influence the odds of a ballot initiative passing. Of the 50 variables included, only seven had any significant correlation that increased or decreased the odds of a campaign passing or failing (see Appendix). At the library-level, these were:

- Visits to the library
- Programming for children
- The available technology
- The extent of electronic collections
- The library's total revenue

At the community level, these factors were:

- the median income of the community
- the education level, particularly high school graduation rates

However, significant factors like the demographics of a community and its current tax burden, the number of library staff, the size and scope of a collection, and overall engagements with the community had little to no influence on election outcomes. While the number of children programs appear to have a negative influence on the odds of passing a library measures, it is important to note that none of the other PLS-described library programmatic or services areas had any apparent influence in our analysis. This directly contradicts much of the conventional wisdom in our sector.

These findings are important because if the factors of success or failure of library ballot measures are not tied to existing characteristics of a community or, in the main, to how the library is used, then we must as a sector improve the type and quality of our campaigning and communications in order to influence voters on Election Day.

Visits Appear to Matter

The IMLS PLS data included many variables related to in-person services, including programming attendance for all programs; the number of public service hours per year; the

total annual reference transactions; the number of internet-enabled computers for public use; and the total number of visits per year. Of all the library-level factors that appeared to matter on Election Day, the leading odds-increasing factor was the total number of visits per year.

As detailed in Appendix A, when a library had a higher number of visits reported in the IMLS PLS, it had a slightly higher likelihood of passing a ballot measure. In other words, the more in- person traffic or footfalls at the library, the higher the odds of success.

This is cause for some concern for our sector because even before the current COVID-19 crisis, visits were down. Volume II of the IMLS Public Library Survey (2017) showed that while, "[p]ublic library staff offered an increasing number of programs attended by increasing numbers of patrons (at libraries serving varied population sizes and in various locales), even as the use of traditional library services—circulation, library visits, reference transactions, have declined since 2008" (IMLS, 2020). Likewise, OCLC reported that the average number of library visits dropped from 13.2 in 2008 to 8.6 in 2018 (OCLC Summary, 2018). Following COVID-19, no one can predict when regular visits to the library will involve more than curbside pick-ups and virtual programming. Given the relationship between visits and success at the polls, it is crucial to market the library so that when patrons can come back in person, they will actually come back.

For more successful campaigns, there may have been a "virtuous circle" at work; that is, people tend to vote for candidates representing their personal value system and political ideology (Westen, 2008). More community engagement and communications efforts may result in more visits to the library while also improving the awareness of the library and understanding of the library's staff among the community. For whatever the reason, personal visits may work to validate a voter's understanding of the library's current situation and, therefore, the question's legitimacy on the ballot. If research about voter behavior is correct, staff-driven relationships should translate to more success at the polls.

Demographics Don't Matter

Our analysis matched county-level breakdowns for each library ballot initiative with the Census Bureau's six primary race and ethnicity categories: American Indian/Native American, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Two or more ethnicities, and White. None of these variables showed any statistically significant impact on the odds of a campaign passing or failing. Likewise, ACS data points like gender ratios, median age, rates of households with children in a home, percentage of foreign-born, and percentage of veterans in the community did not appear to influence the odds of either passage or failure.

Our findings corroborate the findings from OCLC in their From Awareness to Funding reports. In 2008 and again in 2018 (in conjunction with ALA), OCLC found that voter demographics did not drive voter support. This is a significant shift from some earlier studies. For example, a 1997 study of California library initiatives found that, "there were, also, important variations by race and ethnicity, with Black and Asian areas having been more supportive of library measures than white or Latino areas" (Cain et al. 1997). Perhaps our data combined with OCLC's insights can put to rest any lingering thoughts that race or ethnicity demographics matter in relation to voter support for libraries.

Community Wealth and Library Income are Negative Factors

Income is often lumped in with race, ethnicity, and gender demographics and viewed as something that is not a factor at the ballot box. Still, we found that as the average median household income increased, the odds of a campaign passing decreased. This is in contrast to earlier research and surveys like OCLC's. Likewise, the 1997 report (Cain et al.) on library supporters in California found that, "highly educated communities (i.e., those with a high percentage of college-educated persons) were more likely to vote for library measures, as were commuties with higher median household incomes" (Cain et al. 1997).

Roughly ten years later, the 2008 OCLC From Awareness to Funding report found income to be a non-factor for library funding support. The 2018 OCLC report reiterated the finding that income was a non-factor even among the "super supporter" group. A group that is likely to be made up of homeowners and have more education, both hallmarks of higher-income households. This evolution of higher-income groups, from increased support in the '90s to non-factor in the '00s and seemingly decreasing support in the '10s, is concerning.

Outside of household incomes, we found that increases in total income for libraries lead to slightly lower campaign passing odds. With that said, this is an area that would be well-served by more research. Our data included several variables from the IMLS data related torevenue, including state and federal funding.

None of those variables had a significant impact on whether a campaign would pass or fail. Library financing has not been deeply researched, but a 2019 study on public library funding and spending found that greater sources of income from federal, state, and "other" sources hurt per capita library spending. The authors of that study posited that "this might be due to a form of "crowding-out" of local sources when funding is received from other sources" (Ebdon et al., 2019, pp. 540).

The authors of that same paper found that libraries with taxing authority had higher per capita spending and suspected that "voters may be willing to support specific activities with additional tax dollars. This may particularly be the case when taxpayers see a relatively small tax bill for library services compared with a general city or county tax bill that aggregates all service functions" (Ebdon et al., 2019, pp. 540).

While no definitive conclusions can be drawn, all of this points to the impact of voters' perceptions about a library's revenue. Suppose they know (or at least perceive) that a library's total income is high, perhaps compared to other neighboring libraries. In that case, they are less likely to support a campaign, but their willingness to support a campaign may change if they are given a broader picture of spending in comparison to other local services.

Kids May Not Win at the Ballot Box

Anecdotally, library staff and supporters have stated for years that children and children's services matter when it comes to winning at the polls. When reflecting on why her 2003 ballot initiative passed, one library director said, "she believes people are more persuaded to support the library for children's sake than for abstract ideals like the common good" (Pierce, 2003). A 2005 wrap-up of ballot initiatives in the Library Journal

surmised that, "elected officials know that libraries are one of the public services most likely to attract voter support, as the willingness for governing boards to put library measures before voters indicate. It's a feel-good opportunity for communities—and elected officials—to support their libraries at the polls, linking investments in kids, education, and reading" (Gold, 2005).

But that may not be true. Our data found that when children's programming increased, the odds of a campaign passing decreased. Other variables related to kids, such as percent of households with children, circulation of children's materials, and total audiences at children's programming, did not have an impact one way or another on the odds of a campaign passing or failing. Given the lack of impact of other kid-related variables, it's hard to draw any conclusions about whether focusing on kids' offerings is good for a campaign.

Looking at this result from a programming perspective also yielded some interesting findings. In 2018, OCLC's report found that the community aspect of the library was important to voters and that 33% had attended a library program or event within six months of the survey date (OCLC & ALA, 2018). The report also recommended that libraries use programming to reach out to voters who were not currently supporters, specifically urging libraries to highlight their role in the digital space. While the availability of technology is important, as we'll discuss later, our data showed that programming might not be as important as previously thought. We included three other variables from the Public Library Survey data related to programming: total programming, programming for young adults, and attendance at all library programs. None of those variables had a significant influence on the odds of a campaign passing or failing, and as mentioned earlier, as the amount of kids' programming increased the odds of a campaign passing actually decreased.

Education Levels Do Factor

The impact of education levels is something that comes up frequently when discussing both voters and library supporters. The 2018 OCLC and ALA study found that "super supporters" of libraries were likely to have more education (OCLC & ALA, 2018). In 2014, the Milken Institute found that higher education levels correlated strongly to economic prosperity in a community (DeVol, 2013). However, our findings are mixed regarding how the local educational attainment level influenced the odds of passage or failure.

Concerning education, we considered three variables from the ACS in understanding the local (county-level) community: the percent of the population with less than a high school degree; the percentage of the people with a bachelor's degree or higher; and the percentage with only a high school diploma. Of those three variables, the only one that had a significant influence on the odds of a campaign passing or failing was the percentage of the population with only a high school diploma. As that percentage increased, the odds of campaign passage decreased. On the one hand, a higher percentage of the population with only a high school diploma may have indicated a lower dropout rate, but it also indicated a lower percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher. This could support OCLC's (2018) finding that more education equals more support, but this area would benefit from more research.

Investments in Technology May Up the Odds

Two of the intrinsic variables that appeared to influence the odds of passing a library ballot measure are centered around electronics and computing. While we cannot definitively point to a cause or effect, our data did show that the higher the number of internet-connected terminals that a library possessed, the greater the odds that their campaign would pass. In addition, a higher number of electronic resources provided through the state library (as defined by the IMLS Public Library Survey) also increased the odds of a campaign passing.

This finding aligns with the data from OCLC and ALA, which found that 66% of voters placed high importance on free access to books and technology from the library. Specifically, 65% emphasized providing free access to computers and the internet, while 64% placed high importance on providing WIFI access. That said, the report also found that "only 48% of voters today agree that the public library has done a good job of keeping up with changing technology" (2018). Voters are not the only ones who think that libraries have not done a good job keeping up with technology. A 2012 study on public library funding and technology found that, "over 65% of libraries report an insufficient number of public computers to meet demand some or all of the time. Overall, 41.4% of libraries report that their Internet connection speeds are insufficient some or all of the time" (ALA, 2012).

With hard choices brought on by budget constraints, focusing on areas like technology that have repeatedly been shown to be important to library supporters and voters may be an easier (and wiser) choice.

Existing Tax Rates Do Not Pre-Determine Success or Failure

The overall tax rate in a community did not appear to have any measurable influence on the odds of success or failure of a library ballot measure. This finding is important because it dispels the conventional wisdom that voters will not differentiate the library from other taxing bodies like schools, public safety, infrastructure, and recreation, while also dispelling the notion that voters believe they are over-taxed. While our analysis of the tax rate variable showed that there was neither a positive or negative influence on the outcome of the election, we did not look at more detailed questions like the margin of victory or defeat in relation to that variable. This finding was consistent across both operating and funding questions as well as building initiatives. For capital projects particularly, a detailed look at the 2016 election year results failed to show any relationship between the overall cost of a project in real dollars and whether it passed or failed (Chrastka & Hart, 2017).

If the current local tax rate does not appear to influence voter behavior in any way, then it is important for library leaders to question the conventional wisdom that communities with higher taxes are disinclined to vote for more taxes. Likewise, it is important to dispel uninformed opinions about voter attitudes toward the library related to other taxes. Instead of these common assumptions, it is vitally important that library leaders ask specific questions of their own community and voters about their interest in the library and their tolerance for new taxes.

Staffing Should Be of Influence but Isn't

Nothing in our analysis indicated that any aspect of "staffing," as reported in the Public Library Survey, had any positive or negative influence on library ballot measures. This finding is a real concern for our sector. We know from the political sciences that voters look to support candidates who share a similar set of values (Westen, 2008) and support issues on the ballot that are values-aligned (Jankowski, 2002). By definition, librarians and library staff are the people who operationalize the organizational values, vision, and mission of a library. However, in our analysis, staffing levels and the staff's professional competencies appeared toplay little to no role in the outcome of library measures.

This apparent lack of influence may be tied to an overall decline in the perception of librarians and other staff among the public. The 2018 From Awareness to Funding report (OCLC & ALA) showed that the enthusiasm for library staff decreased in the decade since 2008. 53% of their respondents rated librarians as "friendly and approachable" in 2018 as opposed to 67% in 2008. Only 42% of respondents rated librarians as "knowledgeable about their communities" as opposed to 54% in 2008. In 2018, only 31% of respondents said thatlibrarians were "well-known in the community," down from 40% in 2008.

With librarians and library staff polling poorly, it is not surprising that librarians and other staff were non-factors on Election Days. Staffing levels and the professional competency of staff are a through-line to the number of programs libraries can offer, as well as the type and focus of their programming. In Public Library Survey Data: Some Answers, Many Questions, Jill Hurst-Wahl (2020) looked specifically at the effects of staffing size and the ratio of degreed librarians to non-degreed staff in the measurable outputs from public libraries. While refraining from making any strong conclusions, she described the need for libraries to be properly staffed in relation to the size and make-up of the communities they served.

An appropriate number of staff members is important; however, if voters are values-aligned and the frequency of visits establishes or deepens a relationship between the library and the voting public, then library leaders must be more focused on enhancing the visibility of their staff in their community.

Conclusion

From what we have seen in this study, the factors that underpin voter support for libraries were not driven by voter demographics or community characteristics. However, our findings from hundreds of library campaigns indicate that library leaders who are planning a ballot measure should engage their communities to create a current (and accurate) awareness of the library and particularly of individual staff. Increased library visibility and meaningful library visits that demonstrate how tax dollars are being used increase the chances of a successful Election Day. It is important to note that there were few if any indicators in the data about what specific activities by the staff helped or hindered the chances for success on Election Day. While we have seen that an overabundance of children's' programming may create too narrow of a perception of the library and that new technology may show that the library is spending its budget on higher-value items, there is

not enough evidence in the data to recommend any ready-to- implement programming, collections, facilities, or other feature that, if adopted, could smooth the path to Election Day success.

With this new data-driven understanding that the odds of a library winning or losing on Election Day are not largely contingent on factors like the activities of users and the existing budget for the library (intrinsic factors), or the nature and characteristics of the community (extrinsic factors). It is clear that library leaders must focus on how to communicate with voters and campaign in a way that influences results. It is true that when factors like programs and visits appear to make some difference in the odds, library leaders need to place their staff in front of the voting public through marketing and outreach. When all other factors are held equal, as our colleagues at OCLC and Library Journal have reported—and we here at EveryLibrary and the EveryLibrary Institute have experienced time and again—it is an attitude or a belief in libraries and librarians that cuts acrossdemographics and personal benefit that motivates voters at the polls.

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Appendix A

Passage and Failure Rates

Passage and failure rates by year and by type of ballot question (excluding "governance" questions). Taken from Library Journal's "Measured Success" report concerning results from 2002 to 2016 and augmented with original reporting by the authors. Fields in BOLD denote the study period of 2014 to 2018.

TABLE 1 - PASS/FAIL RATES

	Operations and Funding			Buildings and Bonds		
YEAR	Count	PERCENTAGE		Count	PERCENTAGE	
		PASS	FAIL		PASS	FAIL
2019	124	93%	7%	24	70%	30%
2018	**94**	**88%**	**12%**	**41**	**61%**	**39%**
2017	**85**	**96%**	**4%**	**39**	**73%**	**27%**
2016	**121**	**86%**	**14%**	**47**	**68%**	**32%**
2015	**123**	**94%**	**6%**	**21**	**43%**	**57%**
2014	**147**	**81%**	**19%**	**33**	**73%**	**27%**
2013	146	88%	12%	30	63%	37%
2011	96	88%	12%	18	44%	56%
2010	220	87%	13%	29	55%	45%
2009	123	84%	16%	28	54%	46%
2008	42	74%	26%	27	67%	33%
2007	29	69%	31%	46	74%	26%
2006	69	74%	26%	36	64%	36%
AVERAGE	109	85%	15%	32	62%	38%

Appendix B

Intrinsic Factors

The authors compiled and normalized library administrative unit-level data from the 2014 to 2018 Public Library Survey by the Institute of Museum and Library Services found at https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/public-libraries-survey to create a dataset of "intrinsic factors" considered in this study. Please see the IMLS PLS for a full and extensive set of definitions for the following fields included in the study.

POPU_LSA - the population of the legal service area

POPU_UND - the unduplicated population of the legal service area

BRANLIB - the number of branch libraries

MASTER - the number of FTE paid librarians with MLIS degrees from an ALA-accredited school

LIBRARIA - the total number of employees holding the title of librarian

OTHPAID - All other paid staff

TOTSTAFF - total paid FTE employees

LOCGVT - operating revenue from local government

STGVT - operating revenue from state government

FEDGVT - operating revenue from the federal government

OTHINCM - any other operating revenue not from local, state or federal sources

TOTINCM - total operating revenue

PRMATEXP - operating expenditures for print materials

ELMATEXP - operating expenditures for electronic/digital materials

OTHMATEX - operating expenditures for all other materials

TOTEXPCO - total expenditures on the library collection

TOTOPEXP - total operating expenditures

LCAP_REV - local government capital revenue

SCAP_REV - state government capital revenue

FCAP_REV - federal government capital revenue

OCAP_REV - other capital revenue

CAP_REV - total capital revenue

CAPITAL - total capital expenditures

AUDIO_PH - audio physical units

VIDEO_PH - video physical units

EC_ST - state electronic collections

SUBSCRIP - current print serial subscriptions

HRS_OPEN - total annual public service hours

VISITS - total annual library visits

REFERENC - total annual reference transactions

REGBOR - registered users

KIDCIRCL - total annual circulation for all children's materials

LOANTO - total annual loans to other libraries

LOANFM - total annual loans from other libraries

TOTPRO - total library programs

KIDPRO - total children's programming

YAPRO - total young adult programs

TOTATTEN - total audience at all library programs

KIDATTEN - total audience at all children's programs

GPTERMS - Internet computers used by the general public

Appendix C

American Community Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) from the U.S. Census Bureau tracks hundreds of community characteristics on an annual and a 5-year basis to augment and deepen the understanding of the population between decennial censuses. The study's authors compiled and normalized county-level data for the study period 2014 - 2018 to create a data set of "extrinsic factors." Please see the ACS itself at https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs for detailed definitions of the fields used in this study:

Percent of households with people under 18. ACS Table DP02

Ratio of men to women (per 100). ACS Table S0101

Median age. Source: ACS Table S0101

Percent of veterans. ACS Table S2101

Percent of foreign-born population. ACS Table DP02

Median household income. ACS Table S1901

Percent of the population 25+ with a high school diploma or equivalent. ACS Table S1501 Percent of the population 25+ with some high school education but no diploma. ACS Table S1501

Percent of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher. ACS Table S1501

Median amount paid in property taxes. ACS Table B25103

Employment rate. ACS Table DP03

Race_BOAA; Race_AIAN; Race_Asian; Race_HOL; Race_TWO; Race_White. ACS Table DP05

Appendix D

Linear Regression Analysis

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates						
Parameter		DF	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Intercept	Void	1	-0.7505	0.5789	1.6805	0.1949
Intercept	Pass	1	2.7430	0.4714	33.8530	<.0001
Intercept	Fail	1	3.1881	0.4746	45.1147	<.0001
Intercept	1	1	4.3101	0.4903	77.2788	<.0001
KIDPRO		1	-0.00019	0.000053	13.3949	0.0003
Median_Household_Inc		1	-0.00002	4.201E-6	33.6411	<.0001
High_School_Graduati		1	-0.0352	0.00849	17.2367	<.0001
TOTINCM		1	-6.6E-8	2.039E-8	10.4755	0.0012
VISITS		1	9.672E-7	2.297E-7	17.7299	<.0001
GPTERMS		1	4.885E-6	2.054E-6	5.6539	0.0174
EC_ST		1	0.00393	0.00194	4.0823	0.0433

The odds ratio of KIDPRO was EXP(-0.00019) = 0.999810018 (less than one). It indicated that for every increase of 1 in KIDPRO the odds of passage increased by a factor of 0.999810018, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with low odds of passage.

The odds ratio of Median_Household_Inc was EXP(-0.00002) = 0.99998 (less than one). It indicated that for every increase of 1 in Median_Household_Inc the odds of passage increased by a factor of 0.99998, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with low odds of passage.

The odds ratio of High_School_Graduation was EXP(-0.0352) = 0.965412314 (less than one). It indicated that for every increase of 1 in High_School_Graduation the odds of passage increased by a factor of 0.968216074, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with low odds of passage.

The odds ratio of TOTINCM was EXP(-6.6E-8) = 1 (equal to one). It indicated that for every increase of one in TOTINCM the odds of passage increased by a factor of one, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with low odds of passage.

The odds ratio of VISITS was EXP(9.672E-7) = 1.000000967 (greater than one). It indicated that for every increase of one in VISITS, the odds of passage increased by a factor of 1.000000967, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with high odds of passage.

The odds ratio of GPTERMS is EXP(4.885E-6) = 1.000004885 (greater than one). It indicated that for every increase of 1 in GPTERMS the odds of passage increased by a factor of 1.000004885, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with high odds of passage.

The odds ratio of EC_ST is EXP(0.00397) = 1.003977891 (greater than one). It indicated that for every increase of 1 in EC_ST the odds of passage increased by a factor of 1.003977891, holding everything else fixed, which was associated with high odds of passage.

The LOGISTIC Procedure

Model Information		
Data Set	WORK.TOTAL	
Response Variable	LJ_Pass_Fail	LJ Pass Fail
Number of Response Levels	5	
Model	cumulative probit	
Optimization Technique	Fisher's scoring	

Number of Observations Read	560
Number of Observations Used	560

Response Profile		
Ordered Value	LJ_Pass_Fail	Total Frequency
1	Void	1
2	Pass	339
3	Fail	80
4	1	114
5	0	26

Probabilities modeled are cumulated over the lower Ordered Values.

Model Convergence Status
Convergence criterion (GCONV=1E-8) satisfied.

Score Test for the Equal Slopes Assumption		
Chi-Square	DF	Pr > ChiSq
191.1036	159	0.0420

Model Fit Statistics		
Criterion	Intercept Only	Intercept and Covariates
AIC	1194.863	1126.176
SC	1212.174	1372.868
-2 Log L	1186.863	1012.176

The LOGISTIC Procedure

Testing Global Null Hypothesis: BETA=0			
Test	Chi-Square	DF	Pr > ChiSq
Likelihood Ratio	174.6871	53	<.0001
Score	154.4933	53	<.0001
Wald	146.1239	53	<.0001

Note: the following parameters have been set to 0, since the variables are a linear combination of other variables as shown

TOTSTAFF =	LIBRARIA + OTHPAID
TOTINCM =	-0.00001 * Intercept_Void - 0.00001 * Intercept_Pass - 0.00001 * Intercept_Fail - 0.00001 * Intercept_1 + LOCGVT + STGVT + FEDGVT + OTHINCM
TOTEXPCO =	-2.38E-6 * Intercept_Void - 2.38E-6 * Intercept_Pass - 2.38E-6 * Intercept_Fail - 2.38E-6 * Intercept_1 + PRMATEXP + ELMATEXP + OTHMATEX
CAP_REV =	LCAP_REV + SCAP_REV + FCAP_REV + OCAP_REV

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates						
Parameter		DF	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
Intercept	Void	1	8.6980	4.0281	4.6627	0.0308
Intercept	Pass	1	12.6744	4.0221	9.9303	0.0016
Intercept	Fail	1	13.1876	4.0238	10.7414	0.0010
Intercept	1	1	14.5225	4.0359	12.9482	0.0003
Education_Attainment		1	0.00278	0.0159	0.0307	0.8609
Local_Property_Tax		1	7.752E-6	0.000050	0.0236	0.8779
Households_w_childre		1	-0.0212	0.0170	1.5511	0.2130
Ratio_of_Men_to_Wome		1	0.0249	0.0140	3.1822	0.0744
Median_Age		1	0.0393	0.0198	3.9147	0.0479
Veterans		1	-0.0241	0.0371	0.4202	0.5169
Foreign_Born		1	0.0221	0.0169	1.7090	0.1911
Median_Household_Inc		1	-0.00004	8.484E-6	20.9402	<.0001
High_School_Graduati		1	-0.0400	0.0182	4.8532	0.0276
Drop_Out_Rates		1	0.0111	0.0465	0.0567	0.8117
Employment		1	0.0231	0.0149	2.4056	0.1209
Race_BOAA		1	-0.1490	0.0313	22.6664	<.0001
Race_AIAN		1	-0.1491	0.0456	10.6804	0.0011
Race_Asian		1	-0.1169	0.0380	9.4813	0.0021
Race_HOL		1	-0.1972	0.0375	27.6367	<.0001
Race_TWO		1	-0.1387	0.0782	3.1474	0.0760
Race_White		1	-0.1367	0.0298	21.0526	<.0001
POPU_LSA		1	-0.00002	0.000021	0.5501	0.4583

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates					
Parameter		DF	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
POPU_UND		1	0.000016	0.000021	0.5965	0.4399
BRANLIB		1	0.00859	0.0545	0.0249	0.8746
MASTER		1	-0.0140	0.0137	1.0444	0.3068
LIBRARIA		1	0.0104	0.0107	0.9517	0.3293
OTHPAID		1	0.00120	0.00682	0.0312	0.8598
TOTSTAFF		0	0	.	.	.
LOCGVT		1	-1.27E-7	1.162E-7	1.2008	0.2732
STGVT		1	-1.18E-7	1.353E-7	0.7637	0.3822
FEDGVT		1	-8.94E-7	1.406E-6	0.4041	0.5250
OTHINCM		1	-4.62E-7	2.532E-7	3.3334	0.0679
TOTINCM		0	0	.	.	.
PRMATEXP		1	5.632E-7	6.385E-7	0.7781	0.3777
ELMATEXP		1	-1.66E-7	5.406E-7	0.0942	0.7589
OTHMATEX		1	1.087E-6	8.732E-7	1.5489	0.2133
TOTEXPCO		0	0	.	.	.
TOTOPEXP		1	3.117E-9	1.211E-7	0.0007	0.9795
LCAP_REV		1	-5.25E-8	1.14E-7	0.2122	0.6450
SCAP_REV		1	1.976E-6	4.419E-6	0.1999	0.6548
FCAP_REV		1	-1.82E-7	5.442E-7	0.1118	0.7381
OCAP_REV		1	-5.58E-8	1.622E-7	0.1182	0.7309
CAP_REV		0	0	.	.	.
CAPITAL		1	-4.38E-8	1.658E-7	0.0699	0.7915
AUDIO_PH		1	-2.57E-6	9.978E-6	0.0665	0.7965
VIDEO_PH		1	-2.01E-7	7.991E-6	0.0006	0.9799
EC_ST		1	0.00505	0.00230	4.8336	0.0279
SUBSCRIP		1	0.000144	0.000169	0.7301	0.3928
HRS_OPEN		1	-9.87E-6	0.000027	0.1303	0.7181
VISITS		1	2.152E-6	4.688E-7	21.0785	<.0001
REFERENC		1	-2.52E-7	9.501E-7	0.0703	0.7909
REGBOR		1	-1.91E-6	2.523E-6	0.5717	0.4496
KIDCIRCL		1	-3.99E-7	4.464E-7	0.7982	0.3716
LOANTO		1	4.775E-6	3.125E-6	2.3357	0.1264
LOANFM		1	-3.63E-6	3.149E-6	1.3299	0.2488
TOTPRO		1	0.000167	0.000171	0.9494	0.3299
KIDPRO		1	-0.00036	0.000271	1.7435	0.1867

Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates						
Parameter		DF	Estimate	Standard Error	Wald Chi-Square	Pr > ChiSq
YAPRO		1	0.000684	0.000391	3.0630	0.0801
TOTATTEN		1	-0.00002	9.961E-6	3.0115	0.0827
KIDATTEN		1	9.961E-6	0.000013	0.5470	0.4595
GPTERMS		1	6.275E-6	2.557E-6	6.0201	0.0141

Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses			
Percent Concordant	75.9	Somers' D	0.522
Percent Discordant	23.7	Gamma	0.524
Percent Tied	0.5	Tau-a	0.298
Pairs	89303	c	0.761

Could School Librarians Be the Secret to Increasing Literacy Scores?

NIMJA ESAD

ABSTRACT

This report shows a strong connection between student access to librarians and gains in the literacy-based component of standardized tests for students in DCPS. In a survey of DCPS librarians she conducted for the report, a majority say that the support they provide to students through book clubs, author visits, reading challenges, and access to books have all contributed to the literacy gains their schools have seen. The school librarians surveyed in the report acknowledge that they could do even more to help boost literacy with even more funding and support.

Understanding the Impact of a School Librarian

Increasingly, students are becoming data points instead of young people with names, personalities, and talents. It is disheartening to watch, especially as a librarian who fosters a love of reading, creativity, and critical thinking skills development.

In an educational system that attaches value to students based on their standardized test scores, school districts, and educators find themselves scrambling to identify new tools and techniques to help increase students' math and reading scores.

Investments in online learning tools have been made throughout districts across the nation, and seemingly every year, new products or initiatives are being touted to further boost testing outcomes, with varying degrees of success. A few school districts, it seems, have chosen to invest in people, rather than only online tools, in their quest to increase test scores, at least for reading. Their secret weapon? School Librarians.

During SY19-20, administrators from my school district, the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) system, targeted School Librarians/Media Specialists for cuts. After years of fighting for and appearing to have finally won the support needed from Central Office, we lost several positions. The battle to retain positions was over the relevance of

librarians during budget talks.

Do we really need them? What, actually, do they do? Can't we just have mini-libraries in each classroom; why do we need a dedicated space? Why not just hire an Educational Aide to 'man' the space? These were just a few of the questions I can imagine were asked/proposed by those in the budget talks as well as some principals who didn't see the value in our positions.

"Reading and writing scores tend to be higher for all students who have a full-time certified librarian, and when it comes to reading, students in at-risk subgroups tend to benefit more thanall students combined." (Lance & Kachel, 2018)

In the 2019-20 school year, the outcome of those budget talks were that School Librarians were demoted from L1 to L2s, meaning their previously mandatory position in schools was left at the discretion of the principals. This resulted in a cut of over 20 library positions, many in our most underserved, under-resourced communities.

This mind-boggling and egregious act led me to conduct my own research for the Washington (D.C.) Teacher's Union, which quantifies the importance of School Librarians in schools since, it seems, numbers are all bureaucracies understand. I wanted to see how librarians in my school district felt. I chose to use a survey that I distributed to DCPS school librarians. The school librarian survey, which garnered 35 responses, asked respondents various questions about their roles in the school, their access to students, the school's standardized test results, and the expectation the school community had of them. Survey respondents represented schools from every ward in the district.

- 49% of respondents worked as elementary school librarians
- 11% worked in either an education campus or middle school
- 29% worked in a high school
- 63% of respondents taught classes or assisted teachers with instruction
- 91% of respondents said their school saw gains in literacy-based component of standardized tests while they have been the librarian
- 69% of respondents said they have regular access to students
- 57% believe that having more access to students would further increase literacy gains
- Over 80% of respondents believe their additional support through book clubs, author visits, reading challenges, and unrestricted access to books for pleasure, reading have contributed to the literacy gains their schools have seen by fostering a love of reading
- 100% of respondents acknowledge with even more funding and support, they could do even more to help boost literacy

Excitingly, in my research, I also discovered parents had been the key to ensuring schools had fully certified school librarians in DC from 2013-2019.

In 2012, then Chancellor, Kaya Henderson, came very close to eliminating school librarian positions. Perhaps she would have been successful were it not for the advocacy ofthe

Capitol Hill Parents School Organization (CHPSPO), according to the testimony of D.C. Schools Advocate Pete MacPherson. (Jablow, 2017). Due to this organization's campaign, not only were librarian positions saved, but systemwide, there was a further push to staff all school libraries with certified librarians. A further benefit was that, for the first time, schools received an additional allotment in their budget to purchase books that allowed librarians to bring their collections up to date.

National Surveys Demonstrate Value of School Librarians

Multiple studies have shown that certified librarians and a fully-funded program play a significant role in reducing the literacy achievement gap. In the 2011 study commissioned by a group of Pennsylvania State Library organizations, it was concluded that increased reading and writing scores amongst students could be contributed to their access to a strong library program with a certified School Librarian. (Kachel & Lance, 2013).

Research has proven that librarians are a key component in the academic success of countless students. The infographic below shows a clear correlation between advanced placement on the Pennsylvania State assessments, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or native language, if students interacted with a certified School Librarian 35 hours or more per week.

Despite these findings, there has been a steady decrease in the number of Pennsylvania
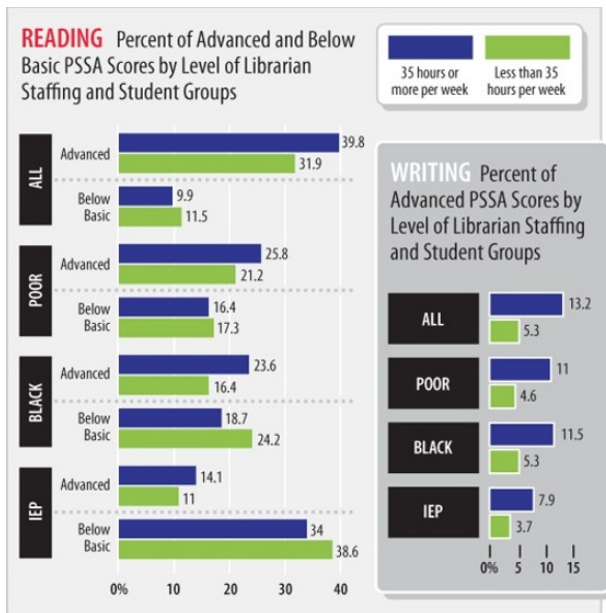
Kachel, D. E & Lance, K. C. (2013). [Infographic]. www.slj.com/?detailStory=librarian-required-a-new-study-shows-that-a-full-time-school-librarian-makes-a-critical- difference-in-boosting-student-achievement.

State schools with certified school librarians. During SY 20-21, Pennsylvania saw the most cuts in the past four years to School Librarian positions. Across 500 districts, 93 positions were cut, up from 34 the previous year.

    While there has not been a new study conducted to determine whether the most recent

Professional Staff: Certified School Librarians

Professional Staffing (Certified School Librarians) in 500 School Districts

Years	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Positions	1,686	1,640	1,629.05	1,536

Professional Staffing Reductions Year to Year

Years	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Positions Eliminated	31.5	58	34.95	93.05
Districts	45 (9%)	40 (8%)	33 (7%)	55 (11%)

Professional Staffing Gains Year to Year

Years	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Positions Gained	35.75	16	15.5	17
Districts	23 (4.6%)	16 (3.2%)	15 (3%)	8 (1.6%)

Professional Staffing Changes Year to Year

Years	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Net Positions Lost	-4.25	-42	-19.45	-38

Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA). (2021). [Infographic]. https://psla.memberclicks.net/assets/ Staffing%20Survey%20Results%20Summary%202020-21.pdf
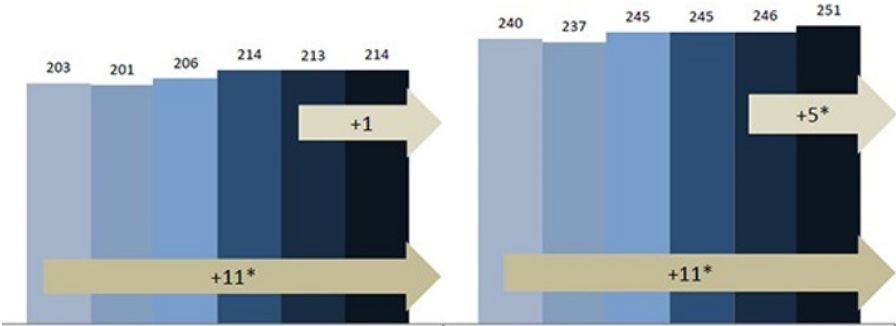
Pennsylvania State exam results were affected by the decline in Librarians, we can look to other school districts to see how having certified full-time Librarians affected their data outcomes.

    A 2011 study conducted by NAEP, in conjunction with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), found that reading scores of 4th-grade students decreased in schools that were without librarians. On the other hand, scores increased in schools that were staffed with librarians. (Lance & Hofschire, 2011a)This reinforces the idea that students who receive regular support from certified librarians produce greater gains in reading than students with no such assistance.

    According to a 2019 study conducted by Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) and data collected from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) was determined to be the nation's fastest-improving urban school district (DCPS, 2019). Students in grades 4 and 8 have made consistent gains in reading. Furthermore, as can be seen in the graph below, the most consistent gains in reading occurred between 2013-2019. This was a period in which library programs in D.C. Public Schools were fully funded and staffed with certified librarians.

As previously mentioned, the level of funding and support for school library programs

NAEP TUDA Reading Scale Score Trends – DCPS

District of Columbia Public Schools. (2019). [Infographic] https://dcps.dc.gov/release/dc-public-schools-continues-be-fastest-improving-urban-school-district.

within the District of Columbia decreased for S.Y. 19-20 and S.Y. 20-21 but a recent budget amendment by the D.C. Council ensured School Librarians would be back in the buildings. D.C. Council reallocated $3.25 million from an enrollment reserve to hire full-time Librarians. (Henry, 2021). Although this amendment is not yet permanent, many who support librarians in the district are hopeful it will become law.

Similarly, a 2019 bill package introduced in the Michigan State House sought to provide legislation that required all schools to have libraries and certified librarians. (Every Library, 2021)**.**

> •House Bill 4663: Requires a school district board to employ at least one certified media specialist for each school library operated by that district beginning in the 2021-2022 school year. (Rep. Camilleri)
> •House Bill 4664: Requires every public school in Michigan to offer a library beginning in the 2021-2022 school year that meets certain criteria. (Rep.Koleszar)
> •House Bill 4665: Requires a principal or other appropriate administrator to designate an individual to supervise students in a school library when a certified media specialist is not present. (Rep. O'Neal)

Such bills have become necessary because school districts seem to be ignoring the data they claim to hold so dear.

A study conducted by the School Library Journal showed public schools in the United States lost 19% of their full-time librarians from 2000-2016. (Rowe, 2018). The number of Librarians/Media Specialists decreased from 54,000 in 2000 to 44,000 in 2015. (Sparks & Harwin, 2018). Surprisingly or perhaps not so much so, school districts that retained

librarians were 75% white. While the districts that lost librarians were majority students of color, a whopping 78% of students lost access to a certified librarian.

Currently, Michigan ranks 47th among 50 states in the ratio of students to librarians. (Dietzer, 2019). The state's reading scores have not varied much since the mass expulsion of librarians from schools between 2000 and 2016. Over 60% of the students in Michigan are reading at Basic or Below Basic, according to nationsreportcard.gov.

The 2019 bill introduced by three Democrats in the Michigan House, which would have made certified library media specialist and instruction on literacy, information research, and technology standards; required in all public schools, as of this writing, has not yet passed. However, it shows some legislatures understand a librarian's value to students. (House Bill 4392, 2019).

To be fair, there are a few districts that see value in librarians, but budget constraints tie their hands. When we talked to districts that have chosen to put resources elsewhere, we really do see more than one who have then come back and wanted to reinstate [the librarian], said Steven Yates, the president of the American Association of School Librarians. (Sparks & Harwin, 2018).

The DCPS Connection

GRADE 8 | READING

Average scale scores, percentage at Advanced, percentage at Basic, percentage below Basic, percentage at Proficient and percentage at or above Proficient for grade 8 reading, by All students [TOTAL] and Jurisdiction: 1992, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019

SET BASELINE AT: ○ at or above *Basic*   ◉ at or above *Proficient*

Assessment Year	below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced	Percentage at or above Proficient	Average Scale Scores
2019	27	42	29	3	31	263
2017	24	42	31	3	34	265
2015	24	44	29	3	32	264
2013	23*	45	30	3	33	266*
2011	23	45	29	3	32	265
2009	28	41	28	3	31	262
2007	28	44	26	2	28	260
2005	27	44	26	2	28	261
2003	25	43	30	3	32	264
2002	23	45	30	2	32	265

Percent

below Basic   Basic   Proficient   Advanced

* Significantly different (p < .05) from 2019.
NOTE: Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2019 Reading Assessment.

Nationsreportcard.gov. (2019) [Infographic].
https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/MI?
cti=PgTab_OT&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=MI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.
+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single +Year&tss=2019R3-2 019R3&sfj=NP

A 2012 Colorado State Study which, like the Pennsylvania Study, examined the link between school librarians and reading scores and found that the loss of certified librarians in schools led to a decrease in reading scores. While "schools that either maintained or gained an endorsed librarian between 2005 and 2011 tended to have more students scoring advanced in reading in 2011 and to have increased their performance more than schools that either lost their librarians or never had one." (Lance & Hofshire, 2012).

Chart 1
Colorado Public Schools by Advanced Reading Levels by
Endorsed Librarian Trends, 2005-2011
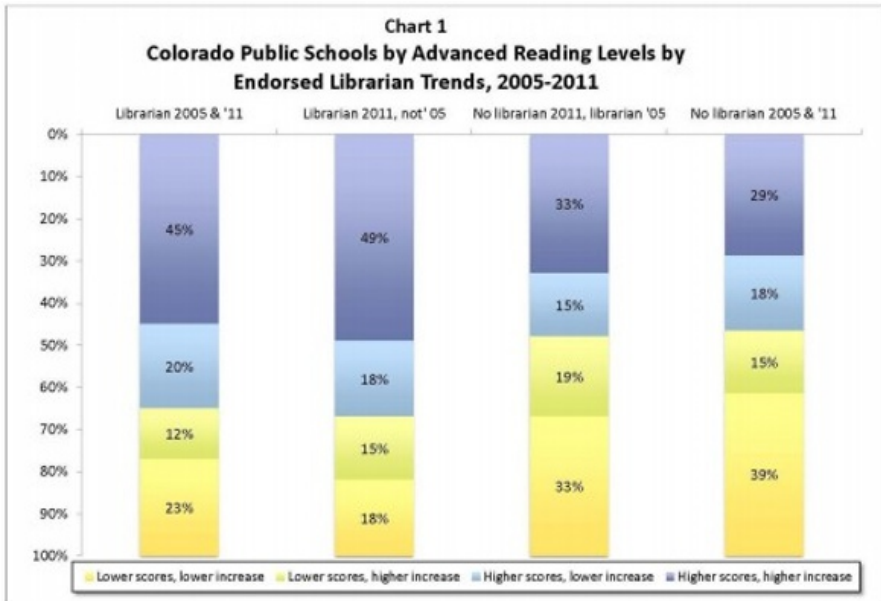
Lance & Hofshire. (2012). [Infographics]. https://www.lrs.org/documents/closer_look/
CO4_2012_Closer_Look_Report.pdf?lrspdfmetric=no

The DCPS Connection

Year after year, from district to district across the U.S., school librarian jobs are constantly in peril. Overwhelmingly, districts across the nation have been forced to make cuts in education. The motto seems to be; if it isn't a testing subject, we don't need it. There has been a decrease in students' access to arts and music education, as well as library programs. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, the number of librarians dwindled to less than half of their previous numbers prior to 2018. (Sparks & Harwin, 2018). In Chicago, 450 librarians decreased to 150 in less than four years. (Sparks & Harwin, 2018). As evident in the charts below, the cuts in librarians and the subsequent investments elsewhere did very little to increase reading scores for these districts.

School librarians in Washington, DC, have worked diligently to increase literacy in

Test Scores at Chicago Public Schools

In Chicago Public Schools, 26% of elementary students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 21% tested at or above that level for math. Also, 26% of middle school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 20% tested at or above that level for math. And 18% of high school students tested at or above the proficient level for reading, and 19% tested at or above that level for math.

High school college readiness	29.5
High school graduation rate	75.9%

Test score proficiency

■ Elementary ■ Middle ■ High

U.S. News. (n.d.) [Infographic]. https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/illinois/districts/city-of-chicago-sd-299-110570

Chicago Public Schools. (n.d.) [Infographic]. https://www.cps.edu/about/district-data/
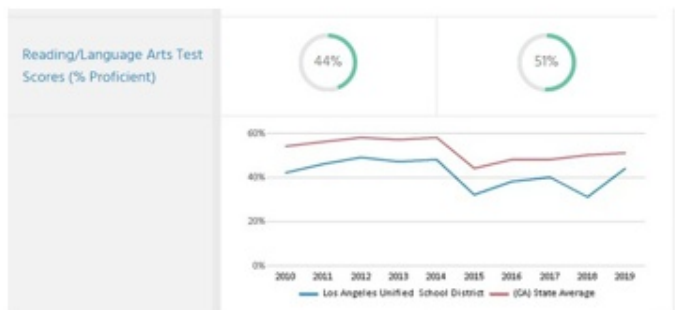
Public School Review. (2021). [Infographic]. https://www.publicschoolreview.com/california/los-angeles-unified-school-district/622710-school-district

every school over the past several years. It is clear the role librarians play in supporting school-wide literacy gains has been overlooked by principals as well as the Central Office. Data that speaks to increased reading scores within the district do not address the correlation between fully staffed school libraries. However, this fact should not be ignored, especially since there are over 50 years of research and more than 60 studies showing that students attending schools with well-stocked libraries staffed by a credentialed librarian do consistently better academically and have higher standardized test scores. (Jablow, 2017).

While further, specific, and more up-to-date research is needed to determine the impact certified librarians have in boosting literacy scores throughout the nation, I believe a clear case has been made to, at the very least, invest in quality library programs while these studies are being conducted.

Immediate recommendations to ensure certified librarians are in every school would be advocacy. There is power in numbers. As librarians, we are some of the most informed and researched people on the planet. We know how to find answers to most questions anyone poses, so it stands to reason that we should be able to find allies in this fight to ensure students have access to us. Parents, politicians, unions, bloggers, and lobbyists need to know who we are and what value we bring to students' educational experiences.

This leads me to my next recommendation. We need to promote ourselves! Perhaps the reason central offices across the nation don't appear to value our contributions is that they don't see them. We, librarians, are, for the most part, behind-the-scenes workers. We enjoy the smile we bring to a student's face when they check out a new book, but we don't necessarily feel compelled to share that with the principal or other school staff. Perhaps we need to start. Whether via social media, newsletters, or even postings throughout the school building, we need to promote the work we do. We are running makerspaces, and book clubs, inviting interesting and intriguing guests with a plethora of skillsets into our spaces exposing students to so much more than just literature. While also fostering a love of reading, we are curating a space for students to explore the world, and very few people outside of our students know about this. That needs to change.

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Cannabis Tax
Policy and Libraries

MEGAN BLAIR

with JOHN CHRASTKA

ABSTRACT

This whitepaper explores how revenue from cannabis taxes is being utilized in states with current recreational sales and recommendations for states considering recreational sales as well. As cannabis has become legal for adult use, state governments and municipalities have earned large amounts of tax revenue. The revenue from cannabis sales has helped increase funding to various programs and communities. However, perhaps due to inaction or oversight, libraries have been largely left out of this new revenue stream. This paper aims to explain how state-level cannabis tax policy works in several states, demonstrate the ways in which tax revenue has been utilized historically, and discuss ways that libraries can and should be included in the state and local tax system.

An Emerging Opportunity from a Rapidly Expanding Industry

Cannabis taxes are a huge potential source of funding that libraries should not be left out of. Libraries in states with current recreational cannabis should be actively working with state legislatures to allocate funding from tax revenue. In states that have not yet legalized recreational cannabis, libraries have an opportunity to anticipate and influence the future allocation of tax revenue. In states with a local option tax, it is necessary for library leaders to collaborate with municipal officials to see dedicated funding move to the library. Being proactive and establishing a plan before legalization will help ensure libraries receive tax revenue that can help keep libraries sufficiently funded.

As cannabis has become legal for adult use, state governments and municipalities have earned large amounts of tax revenue. The revenue from cannabis sales has helped increase funding to various programs and communities. However, perhaps due to inaction or oversight, libraries have been largely left out of this new revenue stream. This paper aims to explain how state-level cannabis tax policy works in several states, demonstrate the ways in which tax revenue has been utilized historically, and discuss ways that libraries can and should be included in the state and local tax system.

For decades cannabis legalization seemed out of reach because the substance was

viewed as illicit and taboo, yet public opinion has changed drastically over recent years. Americans now overwhelmingly support legalization with most supporting both medical and recreational sales. Colorado and Washington became the first two states to legalize recreational cannabis in 2012, and since then many states have followed suit. The states that have legalized cannabis to date have seen little to no impact on crime or any of the other concerns that opponents of cannabis have claimed could cause harm. Young people, including 70% of people under 30, support recreational legalization. Supporters of legalization see this positive attitude as an indicator that the industry will continue to expand. The trend in public opinion will play an important factor for legalization in states that have not yet allowed cannabis sales and for legalization at the federal level.

Legalization and Taxes

As of April 2022, eighteen states have legalized recreational cannabis while many other states have legalized cannabis for medicinal use. Recreational cannabis is taxed at a significantly higher rate than medical cannabis. In those states that do tax medical cannabis, the rate remains relatively low or are on par with the state sales tax rate. Medical cannabis is not taxed in Massachusetts or Connecticut.

Revenue from medical cannabis is either dedicated to the general fund or earmarked in highly prescriptive ways, mostly to fund the regulation of their medical cannabis systems, address public health concerns, support medical cannabis research, or fund law enforcement. Given this historic approach by states, it is very unlikely that libraries would be identified as programmatic beneficiaries of medical cannabis revenues.

Tax policies on recreational cannabis, however, are generally more discretionary by states and allow more leeway for policymakers to determine how tax revenues are allocated. In every current recreational state, the nominal tax rate for recreational cannabis is
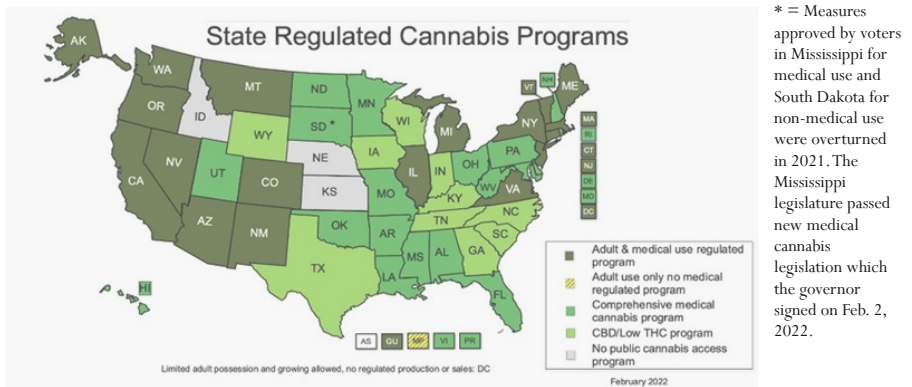

* = Measures approved by voters in Mississippi for medical use and South Dakota for non-medical use were overturned in 2021. The Mississippi legislature passed new medical cannabis legislation which the governor signed on Feb. 2, 2022.

Figure 1. State Regulated Cannabis Programs. Adapted from "State Medical Cannabis Laws," 2022, NCSL, https://www.ncsl.org/research/health/state-medical-marijuana-laws.aspx

significantly higher than for medical. Billions of dollars in tax revenue have been collected by the states that have legalized recreational cannabis. State governments collect revenue from the excise and sales tax while revenue from the local option tax is kept by the cities and towns in which the cannabis business operates. Each state that has legalized cannabis has seen an increase in revenue each year since retail sales began. For example, Washington state has earned more than 25 times its 2014 revenue in fiscal year 2021.

Tax Schemes in Use by States

Cannabis Revenue in Washington State

Year	Estimated Washington State Tax Revenue from Adult-Use Cannabis*
June - Dec. 2014	$22,399,058
2015	159,451,910
2016	$302,976,832
2017	$397,358,420
2018	$437,169,560
2019	$477,310,790
2020	$614,417,720
2021	$630,863,570
Total	**$3,041,947,860**

*This figure does not include local taxes
Adapted from https://www.thecentersquare.com/washington/washington-state-s-marijuana-tax-has-raised-more-than-3b (July 2022)

States with recreational cannabis have chosen to tax it in several often-simultaneous ways that are "stacked" between state and local schemes. Across eighteen states with recreational cannabis sales, we see both an excise tax and sales tax imposed on recreational cannabis in many places. Local tax options have also been enacted in many states, with most municipalities with cannabis retail locations opting to impose this tax as well.

An excise tax or "sin tax" is levied on certain goods like tobacco and alcohol. There are three major types of cannabis excise taxes: taxes on the price of the product (similar to general sales taxes, but typically at higher rates), taxes on the weight of the product (similar to cigarette taxes), and taxes on the potency (i.e., THC level) of the product (similar to alcohol taxes). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "When it comes to setting tax rates, states have attempted to engage in a balancing act. The rationale for

imposing an excise tax on cannabis sales is the same as for any other type of "sin" tax. It is intended to dissuade consumption of the product by raising the price as well as offset costs to society that consumption of the product creates. Young or rare users may find high taxes cost prohibitive."

In addition to state taxes, half of the current states allow municipalities to levy a local option tax on recreational cannabis. This is a way for communities with retail outlets to raise revenue for local programs, projects, and services. The local option tax is collected based on the location where the buyer takes possession of the item or where the product is delivered. Generally, the end-use of the revenue is determined by the local municipal authority.

The following tax data is provided by The Federation of Tax Administrators:

Alaska
- Excise tax of $50/ounce for flowers
- Excise tax of $15/ounce for stems and leaves
- Excise tax of $25/ounce for immature flowers/buds

Arizona
- Proposition 207 would place a 16 percent tax on marijuana sales, in addition to the existing transaction privilege tax and use tax

California
- Cultivation Tax of $9.25/ounce for flowers [$9.65 after 1/1/20]; $2.75/ounce for leaves [$2.87 after 1/1/20]; Fresh plant material $1.29/ounce [$1.35 after 1/1/20]
- Excise tax of 15% of Retail Sales
- State retail sales tax applies (7.25% plus local taxes)

Colorado
- Excise Tax of 15% of Average Market Rate, sales to retail stores
- Retail Tax of 15% (10% before July 2017) - local government receive 10% of this tax.
- (2.9% retail sales tax before July 2017)
- Local Option Retail Tax up to 8%

Connecticut
- Excise Tax of 0.625 cents per milligram of THC for cannabis flower 0.9 cents per milligram for other product types 2.75 cents per milligram for edibles
- 6.35% retail sales tax plus 3% municipal sales tax Local Option sales tax up to 3%

Illinois
- 7% Tax on Sales to Dispensaries
- Retail Excise Taxes 10% on marijuana with THC level of 35% or less, 20% on cannabis-infused products, 25% for marijuana with THC level above 35%
- Local option tax up to 3% [7/1/2020]

Maine
- Excise tax of $335 per pound - flower
- Excise tax of $94 per pound - trim
- Excise tax of $1.50 per seedling
- Excise tax of $0.35 per seed

• Retail sales tax of 10%

Massachusetts
- 10.75% Excise Tax on Retail sales
- 6.25% Retail Sales Tax applies
- Local Option Excise Tax of up to 3% is permitted

Michigan
- 10% Retail Excise Tax
- 6% State Sales Tax

Montana
- Marijuana and marijuana-infused products would be taxed at 20% of the retail price. Local option up to 3%
- Medical marijuana taxed at 4% of retail price

Nevada
- Wholesale Excise Tax 15% [Fair Market Value determined by DOT]
- Retail Tax 10%
- Sales tax imposed 6.85% plus local option

New Mexico
- Excise tax of 12% of Retail Sales [tax rate will increase annually beginning in 2025 to 18%]
- Retail sales tax applies

New Jersey
- The ballot measure would apply the state sales tax (6.625%) to recreational marijuana but prohibit additional state sales taxes
- The state Legislature would be authorized to allow local governments to enact an additional 2 percent sales tax on recreational marijuana

New York
- A tax of 0.5 cent/milligram of THC in Flower, A tax of 0.8 cent/milligram of THC in Concentrate, A tax of 0.3 cent/milligram of THC in Edibles
- A Retail Tax of 9% plus a 4% local tax

Oregon
- 17% Retail Sales Tax
- Local Option sales tax up to 3%

Vermont
- Cannabis Excise Tax 14% of Retail Price
- State Sales Tax

Virginia
- Retail sales tax of 21% for all products sold through Marijuana stores a 3% local options sales tax may also apply

Washington
- 37% Tax on Retail Sales

• 6.5% Retail Sales Tax, plus local tax

Each of the eighteen states that allow for the sale of recreational cannabishas a different approach to allocating how revenue is used for programs or services. Revenue is allocated to a wide variety of programs in each state with some being used for education, public safety, and drug prevention programs. Washington uses the majority of its cannabis revenue on health care with the state's general fund being the next biggest beneficiary. State general funds consist of all revenue that is not restricted to specific appropriations. A state's general fund is used for things like education, health care, and other operations of the state.

New Mexico also uses a cannabis tax to help stimulate its general fund. The state uses over half of its revenue from the general fund on education. Around 45% of the general fund is used for public education with another 12% being in higher education. Public schools not just in Nevada, New Mexico, and Washington, but across the country are benefiting greatly from cannabis sales.

While some states proscribe by statute where revenue is going, other states have less proscriptive funding plans. For example, recreational cannabis was legalized in Massachusetts through a ballot initiative. The language surrounding the allocation of revenue was vague as originally written. The following is from the 2016 Massachusetts ballot question number 4, "Legalization, Regulation, and Taxation of Marijuana":

> Section 5. Application of tax revenue. The commissioner shall deposit
> revenue collected pursuant to this chapter, other than revenue collected
> pursuant to section 2 of chapter 64H of the General Laws, in the Marijuana
> Regulation Fund established by chapter 94G of the General Laws and it shall
> be subject to appropriation.

The Massachusetts state legislature rewrote the ballot initiative before enacting retail sales of cannabis, but the above language remained the same when the legislation was passed. The law leaves the state legislature with the responsibility to allocate cannabis tax revenue. In a state like Massachusetts, this less-proscriptive language could provide libraries with a pathway to lobby the legislature for funding to support libraries and library programs.

How Revenue is Used by States

01 Alaska
50% Recidivism Reduction Fund (supporting reentry programs for current and formerly incarcerated individuals), 25% drug treatmentand education programming, 25% general fund.

02 Arizona
Community colleges, municipal police, fire districts, the Highway User Fund, Justice Reinvestment Fund, and the Attorney General

03 California
Equity programs, childcare services, environmental programs

04 Colorado
Health care, education, substance abuse prevention and treatment programs, and law enforcement

05 Connecticut
General Fund, Social Equity and Innovation Fund, and Prevention and Recovery Services Fund

06 Illinois
General Fund, equity programs, public health, substance abuse and prevention

07 Maine
Public health and public safety

08 Massachusetts
Equity programs, public health, public safety, police training

09 Michigan
Local governments, public schools, transportation

10 Montana
Substance abuse prevention, wildlife and state parks, veterans, general fund

11 Nevada
Education, rainy day fund

13 Washington
General Fund, health programs, local governments

12 Oregon
40% to the state school fund, 20% to mental health, alcoholism, and drug services, 15% to the Oregon state police, 5% to the Oregon Health Authority for drug treatment and prevention, 20% to cities and counties

Local Option Sales Taxes

As noted above, in half the states with recreational cannabis, there is a provision for local option sales taxes. Throughout the country, municipalities with cannabis shops have levied local tax options in order to bring in a new stream of revenue. Most communities in states with a local option have chosen to levy the tax and this revenue remains in the community in which the tax is levied. For example, in Oregon, where there is an option for a 3% local tax, 92 cities and towns voted for the full 3%. This tax gives communities the opportunity to use the revenue in any way they see fit. Municipalities do not have to follow the state cannabis funding plans. Local option taxes provide an opportunity for libraries to obtain funding from their communities. In each community with a local tax on cannabis, libraries have the ability to lobby the local government for revenue.

Public libraries in the United States are usually funded through property taxes and are structured in one of three ways. Libraries are either a department of municipal government (with or without a dedicated revenue line), a non-profit corporation working under contract with a municipality, or an independent district or jurisdiction with the power to levy taxes, generally on property. When state cannabis laws allow, municipal governments are empowered to collect local option sales taxes on recreational cannabis. In some jurisdictions, the tax rate and uses are set by the municipal council. In others, it is set by voters through a ballot measure. Because local option sales taxes are administered and collected by municipal governments, the opportunity to use these revenues to fund libraries is only available to departmental and contract libraries.

Local option sales tax revenue is utilized by municipalities for a wide variety of programs and services. These run the gamut from health programs and public safety to

economic development, neighborhood improvements, and social impact projects to rainy-day reserves. Public libraries are eligible be beneficiaries of a local option tax. For example, in 2019, residents of Craig, CO., passed Ballot Measure 2A to help fund the Moffat County Library and Museum with marijuana tax revenue. While local option sales taxes are not available directly to every type of public library, in localities where the library is a department or under contract with local government, the opportunity to use this revenue should be considered in states considering an expansion of recreational cannabis.

Recommendations for Library Leaders

During debates about cannabis legalization, discussions frequently involve how to use tax revenues to improve communities, and we would argue that libraries do just that. Libraries are in a unique position to use their role as community centers to provide resources about the cannabis industry. Libraries can serve as a resource center for those looking to get involved in the industry. This would be especially impactful in states that have not yet legalized recreational cannabis but may do so in the near future. Libraries could also host drug prevention programs because many states are allocating cannabis tax revenue to such programs.

There are several ways in which libraries could get involved with the industry, which would provide incentives for receiving tax revenue.

State Tax Revenues

Library advocates should be lobbying their state legislators. Elected officials in states that have legalized adult-use cannabis have met with advocates from countless organizations and industries seeking cannabis tax revenue. There is no harm in libraries requesting increased funding from states that are using tax revenue in their general fund. A state's general fund can provide funding in any way the legislature sees fit.

It is important in these state-level lobbying activities to connect education funding to libraries. Many states have made education a priority for cannabis revenue. Early literacy programs like those run by libraries are an excellent example of how libraries can become directly linked to cannabis funding. This is also an opportunity to work with education advocates and advocates for social justice. Both groups are currently receiving cannabis revenue funding in several states. Forming coalitions with other revenue and legalization advocacy groups can lead to new opportunities for libraries.

We also recommend that state library associations position libraries as community resources. Many states that have legalized cannabis have added equity initiatives to their legislation. Libraries can help make the industry more equitable by providing a space for community members to learn about the many ways to get involved in the cannabis industry. Libraries in low-income communities and communities with large populations of people of color can serve as education centers.

Many states have also used cannabis tax revenue to fund programs that help people with drug addiction or help prevent drug prevention. Libraries can also contribute resources to these kinds of initiatives, especially in communities that have been greatly impacted by the opioid epidemic and the War on Drugs. If libraries can get more directly involved with the

cannabis industry, they can secure funding from tax revenue.

In states that have not yet legalized recreational cannabis, state library associations should meet with cannabis advocates in states as early in the process as possible. Library advocates should meet with cannabis industry stakeholders who are writing ballot initiatives and legislation in order to pre-qualify public library projects or libraries as eligible institutions like education, health, and social welfare. With any "sin tax", there are significant options for outcomes that positively impact social goods to become beneficiaries of that excise tax. Libraries must actively engage in this process in order to be written directly into the language as eligible for funding from state cannabis tax revenue.

Local Option Taxes

In states where there is a local option tax in place, library leaders at eligible libraries need to lobby local governments to be included in a local tax option plan. This local sales tax provides the perfect opportunity for library advocates to increase funding to libraries. Local taxes give the community complete control over where the revenue goes, whereas state funding is more restrictive. Because libraries are such an important asset to communities it is rational that communities invest cannabis revenue into libraries.

In states where recreational cannabis legislation or ballot measures are being considered, state library associations should consider a policy position that includes a local option sales tax scheme in order to pre- position libraries for future funding opportunities. Again, this work must be done in concert with other legalization stakeholders in order to be successful. While our sector understands that libraries can work with their local government to create programs such as early literacy, substance abuse prevention, and cannabis education, other stakeholders may not see libraries as interested in being a part of the local option system. Early engagement is key to success.

Working with Cannabis Policy Organizations

State library associations that are interested in seeing new revenue opportunities become a reality should research and consider joining policy-focused coalitions in their states. Several national organizations with strong state-level chapters or groups are good examples of the intersection of industry interests and public policy. These include the National Cannabis Industry Association, a leading trade policy group, the National Cannabis Roundtable, which is organized among trade and non- profit groups for "sensible regulation, criminal justice reform, social equity and community reinvestment", and NORML, the oldest cannabis-focused organization in the United States.

One important national organization that amplifies and supports state- level cannabis legalization and social justice policies is the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP). MPP is composed of two separate organizations: MPP which is organized as a 501(c)4 to focus on lobbying and ballot initiatives, and the MPP Foundation, which is the 501(c)3 educational branch. In addition, MPP has state committees in the states where MPP is running ballot initiatives. Since 2000, MPP has directly supported the voter initiatives to legalize cannabis in Colorado, Alaska, Maine, Massachusetts, Nevada, Michigan, and Montana. MPP also employs lobbyists in a number of states. Any state library association that is interested in tax policies

should connect with MPP in strategic ways.

Cannabis remains a Schedule 1 substance under federal law. However, this has had little effect on state legalization, and it is possible that more states might legalize cannabis in 2022 and 2023. The relatively new United States Cannabis Council (USCC - https://www.uscc.org/) is organized to lobby Congress about federal policy issues for medical and recreational markets. As public opinion has shifted, it seems likely that most states will move in this direction. There is also potential, although slim, that the federal government may alter its stance on cannabis this year. On April 1, 2022 the U.S. House passed H.R. 3617, legislation that would decriminalize cannabis at the federal level and impose a tax on sales. Although the bill may not pass in the Senate this session, this is an important first step for legalization at the federal level. It seems certain that the legal market of cannabis sales will continue to grow.

Conclusion

While the cannabis industry is still very new and is rapidly expanding, cannabis no longer holds the same stigma that it once held. Now is the time to get involved in markets that have already been established and get ahead in those that will open in the future. Libraries have a singular opportunity to boost their funding and their role in our communities. Library advocates should not be afraid to work with other community groups fighting for cannabis revenue. Now more than ever libraries are under attack, and it is important to build coalitions with groups with similar goals and priorities.

Recreational cannabis taxes have provided substantial revenues to state and municipal budgets. As the market continues to grow, profits continue to rise. Because the industry is so new, states will likely be amending where their revenue is going. Libraries need to take advantage of the newness of the industry to push to receive this revenue. In states that have not yet legalized, but where legislation has already been filed or is currently being written, library advocates should meet with legislatures to discuss funding. There are some states that may legalize cannabis through a ballot initiative and in these states library advocates should meet with the stakeholders writing the ballot question. As state general funds grow, more money can be distributed to libraries, and libraries should be advocating for increased funding from this revenue source. Local tax options provide local leaders with total control over allocation. These taxes have the potential to play a huge role in library funding.

Authors

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