FROM STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: LIBRARIANSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN TIMES OF LIMITED RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

Librarians have been urged to emphasize social justice and human rights issues in their library mission, but they may find themselves challenged to provide additional services, such as access to legal information for those who cannot afford an attorney. Social justice services in libraries are seldom adequately funded and providing services in this area is labor intensive. In addition, there is an emotional intensity in library services for social justice that is often not considered in the initial enthusiasm of providing services in this area. Yet there seems to be no limit to the need. An interesting and useful perspective on how a public agency such as a library responds in circumstances of limited resources and unlimited demand can be found in the book Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*, by Michael Lipsky. In this perspective, lower level civil servants who interact directly with members of the general public exercise a level of discretion in the amount of services provided and how those services are administered. This chapter explores how this can generate tensions between more traditional library bureaucracy and social justice services, such as providing public access to justice resources in law libraries. However, the "street-level" response is evolving into a sustainability perspective as librarians embrace a more social justice–oriented outlook in library service planning.*

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INTRODUCTION: A TALE OF TWO LIBRARIES

The focus of the chapter is social justice and access to justice services in the library and information science context. Librarians are critical mediators in the provision of many social justice and government services (Hafner & Camarigg, 1992). For example, the Ferguson Municipal Public Library, rather than closing down in the face of civil unrest after the Michael Brown police shooting, partnered with community organizations to provide a safe place (Wexelbaum, 2016) amid the chaos where students could eat and learn (Inklebarger, 2014; Lankes, 2016). In contrast, some library patrons still encounter stereotypical bureaucratic service desk interactions, such as the more bureaucratic approach to a student request to extend an overdue book, depicted in Mary K. Chelton's article, *The Overdue Kid* (Chelton, 1997). These two responses reflect two radically differing attitudes toward the provision of library services. This chapter discusses a shift in library service philosophy from a more bureaucratic approach, to a more social justice and community-based approach, and how this shift is impacting how librarians provide and plan for social justice services and legal information to members of the public. The more inflexible, bureaucratic librarian stereotype can be easily recognized in the context of Michael Lipsky's theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy (Lipsky, 2010). In contrast, the response of the Ferguson Missouri Municipal library after the Michael Brown police shooting reflects a more expansive social justice and community-centered approach which is more in line with the sustainable communities perspective of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). This chapter begins with a discussion of the theory of street-level bureaucracy and how it relates to library services. This is followed by a discussion of social justice approaches, tensions with more traditional library bureaucracy, and how this is especially evident in the area of access to legal information for the public. Finally, this chapter covers how these approaches are evolving to focus on sustainable development, and how libraries with a focus on social justice and legal information are helping support sustainable communities.

STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY

Every librarian can probably relate to the person at the school library's service desk in Chelton's article *The Overdue Kid*, who appears to be very rule-oriented (at best) when interacting with a student at a school library service desk. Often there is more behind the surface than the outward curtness. Asked to provide more and more with less and less, someone who began work enthusiastically may find themselves in a situation where they feel overworked and disillusioned because there seems to be no limit to the need. An interesting and useful perspective on how a public agency, such as a library that is open to the public,

responds in circumstances of limited resources and unlimited demand can be found in the book *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*, by Michael Lipsky (2010). In this book, civil servants at agency service desks interact directly with members of the general public and exercise a level of discretion in the amount of services provided and how those services are administered. "Street-Level Bureaucrats" start out as idealistic, but eventually give in to a cycle of disillusionment because the more services they provide, the more demand for services will increase no matter what they do.

The Street-Level Bureaucracy approach was developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Marvin Lipsky. Street-Level Bureaucracy provides an approach to understanding how scarce resources are allocated in a public service environment. The preface to Street-Level Bureaucracy states that

> Street-Level Bureaucracy was originally published in 1980 and made two distinctive claims. The first was that the exercise of discretion was a critical dimension of much of the work of teachers, social workers, police officers, and other public workers who regularly interact with citizens in the course of their jobs. Further, the jobs typically could not be performed according to the highest standards of decision making in the various fields because street-level workers lacked the time, information, or other resources necessary to respond properly to the individual case. (Lipsky, 2010, p. xi)

Lipsky mentions "librarians who provide direct services in the schools" as also being a type of street-level bureaucrat, who have limited resources yet face unlimited demand (Lipsky, 2010, p. 5). However, beyond the mere mention, he does not provide extensive discussion of how street-level bureaucracy applies to librarians in his book. Lipsky does, however, present a perspective on what causes the "police brutality" that impacted Ferguson Missouri and that is still relevant today.

In some ways, Lipsky thinks about agency bureaucrat's interaction with citizens in the same ways that librarians do. Lipsky evokes the theme of democratic stewardship that is embraced by librarians when he states that "…in a sense street-level bureaucrats implicitly mediate aspects of the constitutional relationship of citizens to the state. In short, they hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship" (Lipsky, 2010, p. 4). Lipsky also notes that, much like libraries,

> Street-level bureaucracies are labor-intensive in the extreme. Their business is providing service through people, and the operating costs of such agencies reflect their dependence upon salaries workers (Lipsky, 2010, p. 5)

Ultimately Street-Level Bureaucracy assumes that providing services to the public is a zero-sum game where there is only so much available energy.

There are more discussions of street-level bureaucracy in the library literature than one might think (Chelton, 1997, 1999; Williams, 2015). When the concept of street-level bureaucracy is discussed, it is often used in contrast with more community-based approaches to library services (or at least less bureaucratic ones). In her article, *Welcoming the Outsider: The Practices of Public Libraries Towards Immigrants*, Linda M. Williams contrasts the "unwelcoming" behavior of the reference desk with examples of "welcoming" behaviors, specifically from

the perspective of immigrants in a public library (Williams, 2015). In the case of a large immigrant population, welcoming behaviors may include not only the demeanor of the librarian at the public service desk, but also providing multi-language signage, culturally relevant informational materials and programs, immigration services, and collections.

In his article *The Meaning of Service: Ambiguities and Dilemmas for Public Library Service Providers*, France Bouthillier refers to library services as a "black box" (Bouthillier, 2000, p. 245). He notes that part of what he calls "the Dilemmas of Service Delivery" include "the ambiguity of organizational goals… compounded by the lack of adequate resources" (Bouthillier, 2000, pp. 264–265). Street-Level Bureaucracy was not Bouthillier's primary theoretical focus, but he describes the work of "street-level bureaucrats" as developing "simplification routines" and that "Because services cannot be delivered in an ideal manner, due to inadequate resources or other problems, these routines serve as mechanisms for managing service interactions, client behavior, and access to services" (Bouthillier, 2000, p. 247). In other words, the response to the problem of excessive bureaucracy can often be – more bureaucracy. Bouthillier also notes that library services traditionally have been considered from the perspective of the institution as opposed to the perspective of the worker (Bouthillier, 2000, p. 244). Charles A. Bunge mentions Lipsky's work in his article *Ethics and the Reference Librarian*, stating that Street-Level Bureaucracy provides "helpful insights on the complexities of public services practice and coping behaviors that public services professionals develop" (Bunge, 1999, p. 26). Librarians under pressure may therefore fall back on more traditional, "bureaucratic" forms of service.

THE LIBRARY AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE INSTITUTION

A social justice perspective can be traced back to works such as *The Information Poor in America* (Childers & Post, 1975), and the work of Elfreda Chatman (Chatman, 1996, 1999). There has always been a divide between what librarians term as the "information rich" and the "information poor." In their ARIST article, *Information Equity*, Leah A. Lievrouw and Sharon E. Farb state that

> Inequities in information creation, production, distribution, and use are nothing new. Throughout human history some people have been more educated, better connected, more widely traveled, or more well-informed than others (Lievrouw & Farb, 2003, p. 499)

Patrons may come to the reference desk with general literacy issues, computer literacy, or physical disabilities (Gorham, 2017, p. 28). There is clearly a need for library services for people who need help finding social services, immigration outreach, legal assistance, or other forms of help; however, libraries in general have struggled to justify funding for what has been broadly stated as "social justice" services, even as they have expanded their mission (Jaeger, Taylor, & Gorham, 2015, p. 28).

Although librarians under pressure may fall back on the more traditional bureaucratic forms of service, library service philosophies are shifting from a

more bureaucratic orientation to viewpoint based upon social justice and supporting sustainable communities. In recent years, librarians have been challenged to pursue human rights and social justice as part of their library mission (Gorham, Taylor, & Jaeger, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2015; Mathiesen, 2015a, 2015b). This focus on social justice with respect to access to information is not new, however. Punit Dadlani, in *Social Justice Concepts and Public Libraries: A Case Study* (Dadlani, 2016), states that

> …at the heart of the information professions has been the pursuit and application of social justice ideas such as equity/equality of access to information and fair treatment for the disenfranchised. (Dadlaani, 2016)

From the perspective of the history of librarianship one can see waves of social justice services and programs going back to the days of helping immigrants acclimate themselves to the United States in the 1890s (Mehra, Rioux, & Albright, 2009; Wiegand, 2015). In the 1930s A New Deal Program called the "Pack Horse Library Initiative" hired mostly "book women" to deliver books to isolated rural areas such as in Appalachia (Heichelbech, 2019). The pack horse program was contemporaneous with the early days of bookmobile programs.

But what is social justice? Mehra et al.'s article, *Social Justice in Library and Information Science, in the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (Mehra et al., 2009), notes that people think of justice in different ways. They discussed several concepts or definitions or aspects of the word justice. These include justice as dessert, as in getting what you deserve. But justice also has been discussed in aspects such as egalitarianism, equity, utilitarianism, distributive justice such as the "appropriate distribution of resources," and justice as fairness, such as discussed by the philosopher John Rawls. In their article, *The Social Justice Collaboratorium: Illuminating Research Pathways between Social Justice and Library and Information Studies*, Brannon et al. (2016) frame the concept of social justice in terms of fairness, as it is framed in the legal treatise by John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 2009), stating that

> Libraries, archives, and other information centers have been sites through which the tenets of social justice have manifested via the provision of services to communities, in turn having a profound impact on the ways in which people access and interact with information. (Brannon et al., 2016, p. 304)

Jaeger et al. state that

> …over time, social justice research has moved from a focus on relative deprivation (satisfaction with resource distribution) to distributive justice (outcome distributions) to procedural justice (fairness in resolving conflicts and making adjustments) to redistributive justice (how people react to the breaking of social rules). (Jaeger, Shilton, & Koepfler, 2016)

Dadlani (2016) also discusses varying aspects of the term social justice.

However, while many librarians have recognized the importance of social justice (Cooke et al., 2018; Cooke, Sweeney, & Noble, 2016; Jaeger et al., 2015, 2016; Mathiesen, 2015b; Mehra, 2015; Mehra, Albright, & Rioux, 2006), the duty

or obligation of supporting the cause of social justice has not been without conflict, such as the debate between library neutrality and "social responsibility" (Symons & Stoffle, 1998). Brannon et al. note that

> …even in these instances, however, there are tensions within the definition of social justice concerning conflicts posed by questions of individual autonomy and communal responsibility, and which may engender friction between individual rights and what ultimately benefits the broader society. (Brannon et al., 2016, p. 304)

My own focus is law librarianship and the legal profession (Jones & Ilako, 2015; Jones, 2018a, 2018b). However, Bharat Mehra notes that "The term 'social justice' goes beyond the legal sphere in applying the idea of justice in its administration and maintenance of fair laws to every aspect of social life" (Mehra, 2015, p. 180).

In the library management classic textbook by Barbara Moran and C. J. Morner, *Library and Information Center Management*, social justice is seen as one of three ethical/philosophical approaches to library service which librarians will turn to as part of the decision-making process. Moran and Morner call their framework a "Normative Ethical Framework for Ethical Decision-making." Within that framework, the authors describe three primary approaches: utilitarianism (the greatest good for the greatest number), individual rights (standards of fundamental rights and privileges), and social justice (standards of equitable treatment of all) (Moran & Morner, 2017, pp. 372–373). Their framework could be seen to represent a progression in library service philosophy over the years from a stricter neutrality standpoint, to advocacy for various causes and populations, and finally to outright activism with respect to social justice issues. Moran and Morner's perspective on decision-making sheds light on how librarians may take a neutral, advocacy, or activist stance in the provision of library services depending upon their personal philosophical perspectives. They also discuss the decisional role of the library manager as a resource allocator, stating that

> …in their role as resource allocators, managers spend a great deal of time determining how they will distribute assets such as time, money, and people within the organization. There are always decisions that need to be made about allocating resources, especially now when resources are scarce in most organizations. (Moran & Morner, 2017, p. 14)

From a *Street-Level Bureaucracy* perspective, frontline library staff are making allocation decisions that are just as binding as official pronouncements. These "discretionary" decisions may be based upon philosophical approaches to librarianship they were taught in library school, or beliefs that they otherwise hold dear. Jaeger et al. state that,

> When they are prepared to be professionals focused on rights and justice, students in our field are eager to use the skills and ideas from library school to foster change in their communities and promote inclusion. (Jaeger et al., 2015, p. 113)

This is especially true when libraries are under pressure, whether institutionally when they are justifying library value for critical funding, or individually

when helping patrons at the reference desk (Martin, 1990). While librarians have been urged to emphasize social justice issues in their library mission, they may find themselves challenged to provide additional services, such as outreach to immigrants, or access to legal information for those who cannot afford an attorney in times of limited resources (Byrne, 2004).

Kay Mathiesen has advocated for social justice as a "conceptual framework" for library and information science, which is based on the "concept of informational justice, defined as the just treatment of persons as seekers, sources and subjects of information" (Mathiesen, 2015b, p. 198). Maitheisen identifies "five features of a social justice approach," including having: an institutional perspective, an ethic of care, solidarity, and respect; fairness in distribution; participation, rather than "treating people as passive recipients of assistance"; and recognition that "cultural imagery and symbols may create and reinforce structures of domination and oppression." Librarians have been urged to move away from the traditional library neutrality perspectives and emphasize social justice and human rights issues in their library mission (Mathiesen, 2015a; Samek, 2014). Social justice has been seen as part of an evolution of the philosophy of library service (Cooke et al., 2018; Morales, Knowles, & Bourg, 2014; Sloniowski & Williams, 2012). Mathiesen suggests that more social justice topics be taught in library school (Mathiesen, 2015b).

TENSIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND "TRADITIONAL" LIBRARY SERVICES

While some have seen social justice as an evolution in the provision of library service, it is not necessarily a smooth one. There are tensions between the calls for a library social justice mission and the traditional "library bureaucracy." These tensions can result in conflicting goals when implementing mission statements at the institutional level and mixed messages from managers (Gibson et al., 2017). France Bouthillier notes the "ambiguities and dilemmas" in the provision of library service (Bouthillier, 2000). His ethnographic study of a Canadian public library found tensions at the sociocultural level, the institutional level, and the individual level of interaction within the organization. At the institutional level there were issues in terms of the library mission, the role of local government and the community in terms of control over services and financial support. Bouthillier noted conflicting "service ideologies" of "education and popularization" in the Quebec library that is "the same dilemmas that Americans have experienced for the last two centuries" (Bouthillier, 2000, p. 263). This dichotomy between the present needs and the future needs of the individual is behind a lot of the tensions that exist at the heart of provision of library services. Some librarians in his study thought that the cultural role of the library should be the defining factor when considering the needs of future generations, while others argued that the library

should be caring for the needs of future generations by helping the development of sustainable communities in the present day. At the individual level there were also what he called structural ambiguities in terms of job descriptions and informal supervisory roles as well as operational ambiguities such as a personalized service approach versus an inflexible approach to applying library rules. Bouthillier notes that vague or conflicting goals are emblematic of a street-level bureaucracy.

Bouthillier notes street-level bureaucracy as one approach to the service desk, but not the only one. His comments on the role of libraries highlights a cultural versus a community role, and that public libraries in Quebec were more likely to be seen in the former role rather than the latter. He found that various oversight institutions had differing interests and roles in library policy. Bouthillier states that

> …these actors played overlapping roles: the library committee had an advisory role regarding the allocation of resources; the town council had a decision-making role regarding the budget; and the MCC allocated grants for the purchase of books, representing a significant part of the budget. Consequently, they controlled some library inputs and outputs but paid, in reality, little attention to the way that services were delivered and to the resources that were actually made available to staff and users. (Bouthillier, 2000, pp. 255–256)

Punit Dadlani's case study of how a public library interpreted concepts of social justice included observation of a board of trustees (BOT) meeting and analysis of the library's strategic plan. Dadlani emphasized the role of the library strategic plan, noting it "to be a reflection of the social justice ideas that frame and motivate the development of their information services" (Dadlani, 2016, p. 20). He found "evidence of tensions" in interviews of library staff on issues such as a "funding gap," "appropriate uses/misuses of information," and "conflicting rights," such as with interactions with the homeless (Dadlani, 2016, pp. 33–41).

There may often be tension between the desire for a social justice mission and more traditional library ideals (Gibson et al., 2017). Social justice considerations bring to the forefront issues of library neutrality, advocacy, and activism for library managers (Mathiesen, 2015b, p. 204). From the perspective of street-level bureaucracy these tensions often arise from the requirements of administrative goals and mandates versus the realities of the time and resources available to the actual service desk workers. Lipsky noted that the responses of "street-level bureaucrats" can result from today we would call burnout or "battle fatigue" (Gibson et al., 2017; Hogarth, 2017; Matteson, 2017; Matteson & Miller, 2012; Nelson, 1987). A new government agency employee may start with a very idealistic attitude only over time to be ground down into the seemingly uncaring traditional bureaucratic mold or simply quit (Lipsky, 2010, pp. 140–144). Librarians are being urged to avoid stress and burnout, or at least "before assisting others, put your own oxygen mask on first" (American Association of Law Libraries, 2018; Gibson et al., 2017; Hogarth, 2017; Matteson & Miller, 2012; McCormack, 2014; Villa-Nicholas, 2019, p. 95).

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

These tensions are very evident in the area of access to justice, where both public libraries and law libraries struggle to provide legal information to members of the public who cannot afford the services of an attorney. An "access to justice" movement of lawyers, librarians, and others has formed to help close what is known as "the justice gap" (Legal Services Corporation, 2017; Rhode, 2012, 2013). In July 2014 the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) issued a whitepaper titled "Law Libraries and Access to Justice," which discusses activities to assist people who cannot afford legal representation The AALL whitepaper defined access to justice by stating that

> …access to justice includes affordable legal services; readily available legal information and forms; the ability to bring a case to trial without hiring an attorney; the unbundling of legal services; fair treatment and equality in the justice system regardless of social standing; and confidence that the outcome will be fair and just. It is all these things and more. (American Association of Law Libraries, 2014, p. 5)

There has been ongoing debate for years about the traditional neutrality perspective of providing legal information only as opposed to providing more in the way of what could be seen as legal advice (Abrams & Dunn, 1978; Cannan, 2007; Healey, 1995, 2010; McLaughlin, 2015; Rhode, 1981, 2016). Due to unauthorized practice of law restrictions, many take a more conservative approach where the librarian avoids engaging with the patron in any way that could be taken as providing legal advice. Paul D. Healey's dissertation discussed the issue in terms of what he called "uncertainty management." (Healey, 2010). He states that "communication is central to the construction, management, and resolution of uncertainty" (Healey, 2010, p. 22). There is an emotional element to all reference services (Matteson & Miller, 2012), but Healy notes that there is a particular emotional intensity that librarians encounter when providing legal reference services. There seems to be no limit to the need, which, combined with uncertainty as to liability about the unauthorized practice of law, often leads to a more "street-level bureaucrat" response when library patrons are seeking legal information.

Access to justice programs and legal information services provided by libraries have often been seen as a way of alleviating the immense pressures on the court system, which is often overwhelmed by self-represented litigants who are unfamiliar with legal procedures and legal issues. Ursula Gorham, in the introduction to her book *Access to Information, Technology, and Justice, A Critical Intersection*, describes her experience working for the court system in a way that resonates with Lipsky's research in *Street-Level Bureaucracy*. She states that:

> As a law clerk, I was often the gatekeeper between individuals who had filed for bankruptcy and my judge. And in this role as gatekeeper, I regularly found myself on the phone with individuals who were struggling to understand a court order, a motion filed by the bankruptcy trustee, or some other court document. As I was getting accustomed to this new role, I heard increased rumblings about how the recession was leading to unprecedented numbers of petitioners filing for bankruptcy without the benefit of legal counsel, or in legalese, pro se (for oneself). It then dawned on me that we were receiving these phone calls because people did

> not know where else to turn. During one of the most difficult times in their lives, they found themselves in the midst of a legal system that was complex and overwhelming. (Gorham, 2017)

However, law librarians and public librarians who provide access to legal information are also overwhelmed. Many of these challenges arise from lack of funding and staffing. This contributes at times to tensions between providing access to members of the public and, in the case of an academic library, the primary educational service mission. Law libraries have been urged to include access to justice in their mission statement (Zorza, 2012), and some have argued that law librarians have a duty to teach public librarians how to provide basic access to legal information (Anderson, 2016). Law library services to the public reside at a central point within a continuum of services which ranges from legal information in books and databases to sophisticated and expensive legal services by attorneys and law firms (Jones, 2018a, 2018b; Zorza, 2012). These issues have been alleviated to some extent by the rise of legal self-help websites (see Lawhelp.org), which often provide automated online forms and information in areas such as protection from abuse, domestic violence, and personal protection orders; housing issues such as eviction; and consumer debt issues. But availability of an online legal resource does not necessarily mean true accessibility (Gorham, 2017; Jones, 2018b; Rice, McCreadie, & Chang, 2001). Street-level bureaucracy is also noted in the context of e-government applications (Buffat, 2015; Jansson & Erlingsson, 2014; Reddick, 2005). However, librarian mediation is still needed as availability of technology does not necessarily mean that patrons can overcome barriers of general literacy, computer literacy, age, and disability on their own (Gorham, 2017).

Just as there has been a trend toward library collaboration for social justice generally (Brannon et al., 2016), many law libraries are engaging in collaborative partnerships in the area of access to justice. This chapter was inspired by a program I moderated in 2016 which took place at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress titled Bringing the law to the library: connections, collaboration, and community in support of access to justice and the rule of law. (See Al, Öz, & Taşkın, 2016; Anderson, 2016; Applebaum, Bissett, LaLonde, Samson, & Thomas, 2016; Bačić, 2016; Dapo-Asaju & Bamgbose, 2016; Mancini, 2016; Musemburi & Nhendo, 2016; Scarf, 2016.)

In the context of access to justice from the librarian perspective, justice is more than just providing information. Susan Zago states that

> Access is more than being presented with a URL to click on or a book to open. Workable access is not only having the information available, but knowing how the process works and how the different types of documents work together. A librarian is the guide that can identify the information needed, recognize what is missing and can help determine the best strategy to ensure citizens have the most current, authentic and accurate information possible. Librarians are the secret weapon in providing access to justice. (Zago, 2016)

In what can be seen as an update to the classic concept of the bookmobile Hawk 2008 and the pack horse "book women" of the New Deal Era (Heichelbeck, 2019), Zago proposes a mobile library with collaborations between librarians and lawyers, social workers, and medical professionals. These

professionals would "ride circuit," harkening back to the days when judges would ride from community to community to hold court proceedings (Glick, 2002). She notes that:

> Lawyers alone cannot provide long-term, sustainable solutions to the systemic problems in our nation's communities. They must work effectively with others in order to help individuals and bring about systematic change. To do this, they need to not only collaborate with others, but they need to see individual clients and their communities through a holistic lens; a person with a legal problem should be looked at as a whole person. Where legal problems exist, often other social issues need to be addressed, such as housing or food instability, unemployment or underemployment, health challenges, etc. Solving an individual's legal problem may require addressing community needs and librarians, as information experts, can be part of providing change in the community. (Zago, 2016, p. 46)

There have also been broad-based collaborations between public librarians and law librarians to train public librarians and to create online legal help sites and automated forms (L. N. Mancini, 2013; L. Mancini, 2016). Reports by the American Association of Law Libraries and the Self-Represented Litigation Network details this trend and provides overviews of the types of Access to Justice services provided by law libraries, public libraries, and other partners today (American Association of Law Libraries, 2014; American Association of Law Libraries & Self-Represented Litigation Network, 2019; Self-Represented Litigation Network, 2013). The AALL Legal Information Service to the Public Special Interest Section makes available a Public Library Toolkit,

> …meant to help public librarians understand the process of legal research, effectively develop and use the information located within their libraries, utilize information located outside their libraries, with the end goal of helping the patron locate the legal information they need. (AALL Legal Information Service to the Public Special Interest Section, 2020)

This trend toward broad collaborative partnerships for the cause of social justice in libraries is not just evident in the legal community. David P. Moxley and June M. Abbas see public libraries as "collaborative community anchors" for immigrants, the homeless, and other "vulnerable populations." They note the growing partnerships between libraries and social service providers (Moxley & Abbas, 2016). My paper, *Bringing the Law to the Library: The Importance of Librarian Mediation in Access to Justice Services*, discusses the importance of librarians as mediators in making legal information accessible. It also discusses how legal information services by librarians can be seen as part of a continuum of which includes lawyers and other legal service providers. Such awareness is helpful in planning collaborative partnerships in times in limited resources (Jones, 2018b).

TOWARD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

At the same time that librarians are being urged to take a social justice approach, particularly in the sense of being inclusive with respect to race, gender, and economic status, librarians are also being urged to be welcoming,

engaging, participatory, collaborative, and otherwise assume a role of supporting their respective communities. Similar trends in librarianship are framing access to justice and legal information in a more holistic, community-based, and sustainable development framework. Looking at provision of library services in terms of sustainable development adds a new perspective to how libraries can implement services in their communities. This, in turn, can help to close the justice gap and build sustainable communities by helping to provide social justice and meaningful access to justice services for the communities that they serve. This participatory focus can also be seen in the work of Stephen Bales, who authored "*Social Justice and Library Work: A Guide to Theory and Practice*". He refers to "library work" and "library worker" to encompass everyone who works in the library environment on an equal plane, as he said that he considers "everyone acting towards the realization of social justice and human rights through library or related work as equivalent." Bales states that those who have become a "transformative library worker," are those who "have achieved some degree of critical consciousness concerning what they do and who have committed themselves to social justice action within environments directly associated with their work, as well as to social justice action within the larger society" (Bales, 2017, p. 1).

It has been noted that access to information is fundamental to human rights. Cheryl Ann Bishop describes various contexts in which information rights have been framed. These includes general access to information, which underlies all human rights, the right to state-held (government) information, access to an attorney (mostly in the criminal law context) and access to environmental information, or environmental justice (Bishop, 2012). *Our Common Future*, a 1987 study by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainable development, stating that

> …humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, Khalid, Agnelli, & Al-Athel, 1987, p. 43)

In some respects that 1987 definition of sustainability is almost the definition of the generational responsibility a library. The tension between the library responsibility of service to the individual user as opposed to the responsibility to future generations is at the heart of many debates about library service goals. When talking about sustainability it should be noted that when librarians use the term, they are usually talking about the concept of economic sustainability. What is needed is not just economic or practical staffing type of sustainability that librarians commonly use, but the concept of sustainable communities.

Julie Biando Edwards, in her article *Vital Assets: Libraries as Partners in Community Development*, asks "as the world looks toward sustainable development in the information age, what role should libraries play in meeting communities needs?" (Edwards, 2018, p. 1) She discusses the activities of library organizations in encouraging libraries around the world to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular she focuses on the role of IFLA in this effort. She states that

> IFLA has clearly set the agenda for the international library community, and it makes sense for libraries to closely align their own initiatives and advocacy with the zeitgeist. How do local libraries – especially small public libraries, school libraries and others without global pull and influence – advance information for sustainable development on the local level? (Edwards, 2018, p. 5)

She focuses in particular on Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), a grassroots approach which recognizes that "individuals are experts in their own communities and are capable of leveraging their strengths for self-directed community change" (Edwards, 2018, p. 9). IFLA is continuing to be a significant force for change in aligning library standards with the United Nations 2030 SDGs. IFLA has emphasized the importance of the role that librarians play in supporting the United Nations SDGs. The IFLA report, *Libraries, Development and the United* Nations 2030 *Agenda*, states that:

> The inclusion of libraries and access to information in national and regional development plans will contribute to meeting the global United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the context of the UN 2030 Agenda, IFLA believes that increasing access to information and knowledge across society, assisted by the availability of information and communications technologies (ICTs), supports sustainable development and improves people's lives. (International Federation of Library Associations Institutions, 2015)

Looking at provision of library services in terms of sustainable development adds an intriguing perspective on how libraries can implement services in their communities. A July 2019 report by the National Legal Aid and Defender Association notes the unrest after the Michael Brown shooting and states that

> There can be little doubt that the angry reaction of so many of Ferguson's citizens was a direct result of the perceived failure of the justice system to provide those citizens equal protection of justice. (National Legal Aid and Defender Association, 2019)

Although he does not specifically dwell upon social justice or sustainable development, probably one of the most impactful authors in the area of managing for community is R. David Lankes. This chapter began with the Ferguson Municipal Public Library response to the Michael Brown shooting as a contrast to Street-Level Bureaucracy because Lankes in his book, *The New Librarianship Field Guide* (Lankes, 2016), also focused on that event, and Lankes' perspective of serving the community is of particular interest. Lankes does not take a social justice outlook specifically, but rather a community-driven perspective. His references to sustainability are in the traditional sense of the word when librarians speak of sustainability, where it is usually taken to mean sustainability in the economic sense, with particular reference to whether a program, service, or subscription can be maintained over time. Lankes "New Librarianship" approach is not specifically oriented toward sustainable development. However, he presents a curriculum model with key areas of knowledge that he discusses as being critical for graduates of library school: Transformative Social Engagement, Technology, Asset Management, Cultural Skills, Knowledge, Learning, and Innovation, and Management for Participation (Lankes, 2016, pp. 73–89). These approaches strongly resonate with social justice and sustainable development

approaches to library management. This framework of competencies for those who work in libraries and museums called the Salzburg Curriculum incorporates social responsibility to the community as a central tenant of library service.

Under "Management for Participation" (Lankes, 2016, p. 85) he includes "Furthering institutional sustainability" by asking "How can you help align librarian-built systems to your larger organization's vision and goals, whether as an employee or as a project partner?" (Lankes, 2016, p. 85). Lankes writes about "Participatory systems," noting that

> …, to facilitate knowledge creation in their communities, librarians must build systems that allow for learning, which is a participatory act. Because you can't teach people something unless they're willing to learn. That means that they must also be willing to participate. And because people learn through conversations, the systems we build must allow for two-way conversations – they must be participatory. (Lankes, 2016, p. 53)

While I discussed earlier the pressures of limited resources, what Lankes sees are "pressures of participation." He states that there are at least five aspects of the pressure to participate, including "the pressure to converse, the pressure to change, the pressure for social interaction, the pressure of limited resources; and the pressure of boundaries." (p. 54) From an Access to Justice perspective, a further suggestion for library school curriculum would be mandatory instruction in government documents. This would be helpful even if it were just a distance learning or short certificate program. Government information instruction, especially in the e-government era, would benefit librarians in all areas of specialty (Jaeger, Bertot, & Shuler, 2010; Jaeger & Taylor, 2019). Government information instruction for librarians would also help the patrons they serve, particularly in the area of combatting "fake news" (Agosto, 2018; Jaeger & Taylor, 2019). This is particularly relevant in the context of the corona virus or covid-19 pandemic emergency.

In a time of crisis, the Ferguson Municipal Public Library embodied transformative social engagement as described by Lankes. However, a considerable strategic planning and management framework laid the groundwork for this response. Strategic planning is critical when planning for social justice services in libraries in times of limited resources (which is always). Dadlani, (2016, p. 20) notes that "In looking at social justice concepts in relation to public service organizations, organizational rhetoric such as mission statements or strategic plans frame and motivate the work of individuals." Barbara Moran states that "…even when the staffing of a library is only one person, the development of a strategic plan is not only possible, but crucial to the success of the library" (Moran & Morner, 2017, p. 19). Starting with the mission statement, the Ferguson Municipal Public Library very clearly emphasizes a community focus with an emphasis on welcoming their patrons. Their strategic plan starts with their focus on "Learning. Culture. Community." It states that

> The Ferguson Municipal Public Library District strengthens and develops Ferguson and its people regarding lifelong learning and cultural literacy. It brings the community together to create deeper bonds of commitment through shared experiences. The library provides an inclusive public resource that welcomes every member of the community. We believe in the freedom to read, to learn, and to discover.

They list seven goals for the library: (1) Maximize gain from financial resources and opportunities; (2) Increase and improve quality and capacity of staffing; (3) Continue creating and improving strategic relationships in the community; (4) Improve efficiency and appeal of existing physical structure; (5) Improve meeting of patron needs via physical and digital collections; (6) Assess public needs in order to guide services and programs; and (7) Evaluate and implement technology with priority on meeting patrons' needs (Ferguson Missouri Municipal Public Library, 2020).

Under each of these main goals are further benchmarks. They incorporate sustainability initiatives for the facilities, such as researching energy efficiency programs, and creating a capital improvement plan. The plan also focuses on the needs of that staff by clarifying the organization chart, creating new positions, hiring additional staff, addressing salary issues, and providing training. In particular, the strategic plan states that it will address "at least three training needs for each staff member" and include discussions of opportunities for trainings in annual performance evaluations. Staff suggestions are also included in the plan. Fundraising campaigns are also included in order to realistically be able to address staffing issues and other plan goals. What is evident from the mission statement of the Ferguson Municipal Public Library is that in a participatory, community-based view, social justice concerns are not just library issues of resource allocation, but rather a matter of a sustainable community. While the traditional library service perspective can be a viewpoint that leads to burnout or other attributes of a street-level bureaucracy, a sustainability perspective can ignite collaborative efforts which include the entire community, even with a relatively small number of staff. As the pressure of limited resources rises (it never goes down, as per Street-Level Bureaucracy), there is an increasing emphasis on strategic planning for social justice (Mehra & Davis, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The focus of the chapter is social justice services in the library and information science context. This discussion began with the vastly different service responses of a more rule-oriented librarian at a school service desk and the outpouring of generosity of the Ferguson Municipal Public Library in a time of crisis. A community-based, social justice, sustainability perspective is beginning to permeate all aspects of library management. A sustainability library management perspective can help librarians in allocating scarce time and resources without resorting to the responses of a "street-level-bureaucrat." This includes setting missions and goals statements and strategic planning for reference service, library programming, collection development, and applications in terms of a sustainable design for furnishings and facilities. There are other practicalities to consider. If you have a parent institution where do you fit within it? Are your goals aligned with your parent institution's goals? Are you implementing cross-training? Perhaps it is a more informal version of "many hats syndrome." Be clear

about what you are setting out to do. Get a consensus, or at least an understanding from everyone involved as to what is expected. A social justice perspective also means that more librarian collaboration is needed than ever before, both within and outside of the library.

Looking back to the examples from the beginning of the chapter, another factor in how these two responses from the introduction may have differed is the age of the librarians. There seems to be a generation gap in library management as older librarians from the baby boom era are aging out of the profession. As more social justice is taught in library schools and is recognized as a pillar of provision of library services, newer librarians are coming to the profession with a social justice mission. Newer librarians may be more likely to have a more advocacy/activist approach (Branum & Masland, 2017). As more social justice is taught in library schools and is recognized as a pillar of provision of library services, newer librarians are coming to the profession with a social justice mission. When you look at librarianship from a historical perspective, there's always been an impulse to make information accessible to the community. With social justice and sustainability approaches to library services you can say that librarians have come full circle. This may in fact be a case of what is old is new, or perhaps, what is useful always is.

The more realistic (or perhaps more fatalistic) perspective of street-level bureaucracy, however, helps to explain why there will always be resource pressures at library service desks no matter what we do, and quite frankly it is because of *all* that we do. As more library school graduates embrace "social justice," the "new librarianship," or otherwise named social service focused library mission statements, service at the reference desk under pressure may be more influenced by considerations of collaboration and service to the community rather than rationing scarce resources of time and effort. As opposed to rationing, reducing service hours, the focus of librarians leans toward giving more rather than less. However, they must also remember to care for themselves as well as for saving the world. As each new generation of librarians enters into the profession, the task of librarians who are managing social justice services need to hold employees to a manageable pace as well as find creative ways to push them forward. Managers must be mindful of signs of burnout, but a new generation of more socially oriented librarians are poised to create sustainable libraries which are at the heart of sustainable communities.

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