

**Advocacy Through Engagement:
Public Engagement and the Academic Library**

Scott Walter
swalter@illinois.edu

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Introduction

The last few years have been challenging ones for library users in Macomb County. Macomb is one of the most populous counties in Michigan, with over 825,000 residents living in its corner of the Detroit metropolitan area.¹ The Macomb County Library (MCL) serves as “an information and reference center for all of Macomb County,” and its collections in popular fiction and children’s literature are complemented by subject emphases in public policy information, consumer health information, business information, and career information.² MCL provides Internet access to school children and job hunters, and its ongoing programs as a federal depository library, a center for literacy education, and a resource for library users with disabilities ensure that “[there] is something for every age at the Macomb County Library!”³ “Something for every age,” that is, as long as it doesn’t require significant funding because the Macomb County budget – like the budget of many state and local governments – is in trouble.

For the library, the trouble began in 2005, when only an intense lobbying effort by its users convinced the Macomb County Board of Commissioners to reject a proposed plan to “cut

or eliminate” the library budget as part of a larger plan to address shortfalls across the county. By 2006, the library budget was back on the table, when the Board voted to reduce its allocation by \$166,000 – a change designed to reduce service hours by several hours each week.⁴ Budget reviews and reductions continued over the next 18 months, and, by 2008, the county and the library budget were in dire straits with no clear path ahead to maintaining library services in Macomb County.

The Macomb County Library story is a familiar one – so familiar, in fact, that it could have served as a model for the description of broader problems facing public library funding found in a recent study by OCLC, *From Awareness to Funding: A Study of Library Support in America* (2008). Public libraries, OCLC argues, play a unique and critical role in their communities: a role defined by their “[provision to] every resident of the United States the opportunity to thrive through access to information and lifelong learning.”⁵ Public libraries are funded primarily by local communities, but the leaders of those communities are increasingly challenged to meet a variety of needs with shrinking resources, including emergency services, health care services, educational services, and recreational services. The Macomb County Board of Commissioners saw this challenge grow between 2005 and 2008, and its members may have appreciated the stark picture of this increasingly difficult budgetary balancing act painted by Bill Finch, Mayor of Bridgeport, Connecticut, when he proposed significant cuts to his own 2008 library budget: “We are getting back to basics: police, fire, and education . . . Libraries are not essential services.”⁶ Recent news stories have demonstrated precisely how essential public libraries can be in times of economic hardship, and many of the long-time advocates of the Macomb County Library might disagree with Finch’s conclusion, but, as OCLC suggested, the way in which public libraries are funded is a mystery to many of their patrons, and the options

available for addressing budgetary shortfalls in ways that do not pit one “essential service” against another are not always clear.⁷

OCLC proposes to address the problem of public awareness of the role of the public library in the community, and the question of whether increased awareness might result in support for increased funding, through a concerted program of “marketing and advocacy” (an approach also embraced by the American Library Association through its “Visibility @ Your Library” campaign).⁸ Perhaps this approach would have benefited the Macomb County Library, and, if it had, we might find the current essay in a collection about advocacy for public libraries, rather than one concerned with academic libraries. Where Macomb County and the broader picture painted by OCLC diverge, however, is precisely where Macomb County and academic libraries overlap: it was not “marketing and advocacy” that promised to save the Macomb County Library from budget reductions as drastic as those announced in Bridgeport; it was the university.

In June 2008, a “surprise plan to save the Macomb County Library . . . emerged” – MCL would become part of Wayne State University.⁹ The university, based in Detroit, proposed to lease the library building from the county, and to manage the library, in part, as a means of supporting the Library and Information Sciences (LIS) program housed at the nearby Macomb Community College University Center. If accepted, this proposal would lead to the rise of a library serving a diverse group of users drawn from the community college, the university, and the broader public. While surprising to Macomb County residents, perhaps, there is ample precedent for this type of partnership. In California, for example, San Jose State University operates the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in collaboration with the San Jose Public Libraries; in Washington, a single library serves the students of both the University of Washington at Bothell and Cascadia Community College; and in Iowa, the Russell D. Cole Library

serves both as the Cornell College library and as the public library of the City of Mount Vernon.¹⁰ Alternately referred to as “joint-use” or “dual-use” libraries, partnerships of this sort are widely seen as a means of maintaining library services in difficult budget times, fostering collaboration across our professional communities, and enhancing services to library users.¹¹ The global scope of the joint-use library model has been noted before, and, were this simply the story of another such library, we might end a brief essay here with the long-hoped-for promise of continued support for library users in Macomb County realized.¹² The partnership proposed between Wayne State and Macomb County, however, is different. The partnership proposed between Wayne State and Macomb County is an example of a broader strategy employed at Wayne State – and at universities across the country – to foster “engagement” between the university and the community.

“Engagement” – alternately referred to in the literature as “public engagement,” “civic engagement,” or “community engagement” – refers to the activities or programs that an institution of higher education pursues in order to serve the needs of communities outside its campus. The School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – home of the university’s East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP) <<http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu> > – defines public engagement as “the application of new and existing knowledge to address real world problems and improve local communities.”¹³ Kelly Ward, Associate Professor of Higher Education Administration at Washington State University, and former Service Learning Director for Montana Campus Compact, describes the “engaged campus” as one that is “committed to its students and faculty and fulfilling its traditional role in teaching and training students and citizens, but also . . . to serving the communities and constituencies that surround and support it.”¹⁴ Speaking most broadly, President Robert Bruininks of the University of Minnesota refers to public engagement as “an institutional commitment to public purposes and responsibilities

intended to strengthen a democratic way of life in the . . . Information Age.”¹⁵ Unlike earlier notions of “outreach” that focused on the simple provision of campus resources to community members, “engagement” is defined by the application of campus-based expertise to issues of public concern, and by the notion of a “partnership” between the university and members of the community that allows mutual benefit to accrue to each side.¹⁶ The mutually beneficial nature of public engagement programs is highlighted in the vision articulated at Illinois, one in which “faculty, staff, and students collaborate with external audiences to address the needs and opportunities of society.”¹⁷ Through public engagement programs, the unique resources and expert knowledge that reside on campus are placed in service to the community, especially as those resources may further the goals of civic responsibility, cultural awareness, lifelong learning, or other locally-defined needs.

If approved, the Macomb County Library may join other Wayne State “community partners,” including the Detroit Public Schools, the Archdiocese of Detroit, and Detroit’s Latino Family Services, in “[providing] faculty with the tools necessary to strengthen their course content; students with the opportunity to give back and apply classroom theories in a hands-on way; and community organizations with the chance to receive assistance from some of Wayne State’s most dedicated citizens.”¹⁸ As in other public engagement programs, the resources and expertise housed in the university – including, in this case, the University Libraries – may be deployed to meet a community need, i.e., the continuation of basic library services to the residents of Macomb County. By making a commitment to engagement, the university demonstrates its value to the community, and by taking part in engagement programs, faculty, staff, students, and community members become the university’s advocates. While the OCLC study provides valuable clues toward a broader strategy for enhancing support for the public

library, it was not “marketing and advocacy” that provided a foundation for the future of the Macomb County Library, it was “advocacy through engagement.”

Academic libraries have provided a wide array of services to members of their local communities for years, including access services, reference services, instructional services, and public programs.¹⁹ The value of these outreach activities was recognized by Derek Bok, then-President of Harvard University, when he identified the provision of access to campus-based cultural heritage organizations, including museums and libraries, as evidence of the commitment of the university to the public good.²⁰ The purpose, direction and scope of library outreach programs, however, have been challenged over the past decade by increasing attention to the concept of engagement – a vision of collaboration between campus and community that goes well beyond traditional notions of outreach.²¹ In making a commitment to public engagement, for example, the library might give the same priority to collaboration with campus public engagement programs as it does to collaboration with traditional academic programs. In making a commitment to public engagement, the library might move beyond the provision of community borrowing services and public programs toward the sponsorship of partnerships across library types, with civic and community organizations, and with professional communities at the local, state, regional, national, or international level. In making a commitment to public engagement, the library might focus on the ways in which the professional expertise housed within its organization – expertise related, for example, to the location, retrieval, evaluation, and management of information, the preservation of artifacts, or the creation, description, and management of digital collections – might be deployed in ways that address community concerns.

Service to the community beyond the campus walls through a strategic commitment to engagement is widely seen as a means by which institutions of higher education may advocate

for their needs in an environment marked by decreasing public support for higher education.²²

The proposed partnership between Macomb County, Michigan, and Wayne State University – an institution that has recently received formal recognition of its commitment to engagement through a new classification process offered by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching – provides a landmark opportunity to demonstrate how academic libraries can contribute to broader campus efforts at public engagement.²³ There are, however, many other paths to this same end that might be pursued by academic libraries not presented with the singular opportunity presented to Wayne State.

The University of Maryland Libraries, for example, have provided a variety of traditional public programs as part the annual “Maryland Day” celebration at the university (including programs on government information, children’s literature, local history, digital collections, and preservation and conservation); an event that, according to University of Maryland President Dan Mote, promotes among its attendees (over 75,000 strong in 2008) “a greater appreciation of the University and higher education.”²⁴ The University of California – Irvine Libraries have supported the “School Partnerships in Research and Information Technology” (SPIRIT) program for the past decade in order “to reach out to the community and enrich the lives of area junior high and high school students,” and to contribute to campus efforts to serve the local community’s need for access to higher education by providing programs that support the recruitment and retention of a diverse student population.²⁵ Finally, the Kansas State University Libraries have worked in collaboration with the United States Army since 2005 to improve services provided to soldiers (and their family members) based at nearby Fort Riley.²⁶ The question is not whether there are opportunities for the library to play a substantive role in campus public engagement programs, but whether academic librarians will choose to pursue these opportunities, and whether their campuses are attuned to the ways in which the

resources and expertise housed in the library may become part of the institutional commitment to advocacy through engagement.

However well versed they may be in strategies for outreach, academic libraries have been slow to adapt to the challenges and opportunities provided to them as part of the public engagement agenda on their campuses. Lynn C. Westney concluded that libraries have been “conspicuous by their absence” from public engagement programs, and Nancy K. Herther has noted the lack of involvement by academic librarians in service learning, one of the hallmark programs in any public engagement initiative.²⁷ While not related to service learning (although the connection to the Wayne State LIS program provides an obvious opportunity), the Macomb County Library example highlights other ways in which academic libraries might add their resources and expertise to those deployed across the campus in support of public engagement programs. There are many examples of academic libraries engaging community members outside the campus – K-12 students and teachers, health information professionals, and local arts and cultural heritage groups, for example – which leads one to ask why academic libraries are rarely discussed as part of the public engagement agenda, or, if they are discussed, why the vision of their contribution to the broader program seems relatively limited.

What factors limit the involvement of academic librarians in public engagement activities? How might academic library leaders better support the involvement of libraries and librarians in campus public engagement initiatives? Most importantly, in an age marked by the dual imperatives of the library to advocate for its significance to the campus, and of the campus to advocate for its significance to the community, how might academic libraries make a strategic commitment to public engagement equivalent to those made in recent years to information literacy instruction and scholarly communication? The library is a critical resource for any campus striving to demonstrate its commitment to public engagement, and a commitment to

designing, delivering, and assessing public engagement programs provides librarians with an opportunity to add a valuable new facet to their efforts to advocate for the ongoing importance of the academic library to the university mission.

Literature Review

There is a rich literature related to public engagement in academic libraries, but it is largely hidden. The most familiar aspect of this literature relates to service learning, but library involvement with K-12 schools is also evidence of the library contribution to the public engagement agenda on campus, as is library involvement with academic programs aimed at fostering the success of first-generation college students or students representing racial and ethnic minority groups historically under-represented in institutions of higher education.²⁸ Studies of library involvement with Cooperative Extension programs offer another example, as do studies of library involvement with cultural heritage organizations.²⁹ There are studies of academic library collaboration with public libraries, school libraries, and state libraries, as well as studies of collaboration between academic libraries in the United States and libraries in the developing world.³⁰ Taken separately, these studies are interesting; taken together, they demonstrate the impact that academic libraries and librarians can have on the public engagement agenda on their campuses. Like the public libraries that OCLC reminds us must focus more attention on their marketing efforts, academic libraries must weave these disparate stories of service together into a narrative of the library contribution to the campus commitment to public engagement. Owing to the broad scope of that narrative across the literature of academic librarianship, this review will touch only upon selected resources for further study. The purpose of this review is not to provide a comprehensive introduction to the literature of outreach and public engagement in academic libraries, but, rather, to identify the “corner pieces” that may allow others to continue putting the puzzle together.

Outreach

Outreach is the foundation for any public engagement program, but it is how one builds on that foundation that determines the degree to which the library contributes to engagement initiatives on campus. In the library context, “outreach” has traditionally been defined as service activities designed to meet the information or instructional needs of an underserved user group.³¹ Historically identified as a function of public libraries, it has become common in recent years for academic librarians to discuss efforts to communicate and collaborate with campus colleagues as “outreach,” as well as to identify library services aimed at off-campus students and faculty as “outreach services.”³² Most recently, efforts to “embed” librarians in academic departments, residence halls, and other campus facilities have been discussed as a feature of outreach services.³³

Outreach activities of this type are critical to the academic library mission, and this use of the term is consistent with what Louise Phelps referred to in the broader campus context as “internal outreach,” i.e., “where faculty members serve as expert consultants and advisors to other faculty or administrators, applying professional expertise within the institution.”³⁴ Critical though they are, however, efforts to communicate with, and to improve service to, core academic library user groups (whether resident on campus, or participating in academic programs through distance learning programs) are not what is meant by “public engagement.” Public engagement relates to those activities that allow the faculty member (or librarian) to apply his or her professional expertise outside the traditional academic context. Given, however, that these internal outreach activities often embody precisely the collaborative and mutually-beneficial approach to service development associated with public engagement initiatives, we may justifiably refer to them as “campus engagement.” Studies of traditional outreach services, as well as campus engagement programs, are staples of the library literature, and these studies

provide the starting point for understanding the potential for public engagement programs in academic libraries.

Tina Schneider, for example, identifies a variety of outreach services housed in academic libraries, including community borrower programs, programs aimed at local high school students, consumer health information programs, and business information services. A review of programs such as these may identify opportunities for academic librarians to contribute to public engagement programs on campus. Likewise, some of the issues that Schneider identifies as germane to the study of academic library outreach, e.g., establishing a library-wide commitment to supporting these “non-traditional” users, and aligning the outreach agenda with the broader mission of the library, are essential to any attempt to integrate the library into campus public engagement programs.³⁵

Colleen Boff, Carol Singer, and Beverly Stearns provide an overview of the range of academic library services associated with campus engagement programs through their analysis of position descriptions in areas such as distance library services and multicultural library services.³⁶ Their study suggests that library positions focused on campus initiatives that go beyond that which has become associated with the work of traditional subject specialists – i.e., communication with, and provision of services to, faculty and students associated with established disciplines and academic programs – may require the library to recruit professionals with different sets of skills and experiences than has been the case in the past. If this is true of the positions identified by Boff, Singer, and Stearns, how much more might this be the case if the academic library were to pursue substantive involvement in public engagement programs? Just as the commitment to public engagement has led to changes in the research agenda and pedagogical practices among campus faculty, so, too, may it require changes to some of the practices and priorities of academic librarianship.

The relationship between a commitment to campus engagement initiatives and the future of traditional public service programs is also the subject of the study by Phyllis Rudin of new approaches to liaison services. Rudin demonstrates how advances in information technology have allowed librarians to take their expertise to the point of need for students by establishing “outposts” in facilities including student unions, residence halls, and elsewhere. Likewise, she shows how changes in the ways in which faculty make use of information in their research and teaching (and, one might argue, broader changes in the information landscape across many disciplines) have given rise to opportunities to re-envision services to academic departments through models that allow librarians to become “embedded” in the physical (and virtual) spaces associated with those departments or disciplines.³⁷ Like Boff, Singer, and Stearns, Rudin demonstrates that campus engagement continues to be a major focus of concern, and a major source of innovation, in academic librarianship. While not public engagement programs, per se, the efforts made over the past decade by librarians to re-envision core public service programs in order to address new challenges and opportunities have led to the rise of new positions and new approaches to the delivery of library resources and services. Innovation in support of campus engagement opens the door to future discussions of the role of the library professional in public engagement programs situated in the academic department, the student union, or elsewhere on the campus or in the community.

Service Learning

If outreach is the foundation for engagement programs in libraries, then service learning is the foundation for engagement programs on campus. Service learning is an approach to teaching and learning that “incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community.”³⁸ According to Campus Compact, a network of over 1,000

institutions of higher education offering campus-based service programs, almost 50% of its members incorporated service learning into their academic majors in 2007, and almost 40% incorporated service learning into the core curriculum.³⁹ John S. Riddle provides a theoretical framework for library involvement with service learning through information literacy instruction, and outlines ways in which information literacy learning objectives might complement the objectives associated with service learning programs.⁴⁰ Westney and Herther provide descriptions of the opportunities provided to libraries by campus service learning programs, but, as noted above, they conclude that pursuit of those opportunities by librarians has been limited.⁴¹

Interestingly, while the literature suggests that the integration of information literacy instruction into service learning programs has been limited, there is ample evidence that service learning models have been adopted within the Library and Information Science (LIS) programs through which most academic librarians enter the profession. Nancy J. Becker, James K. Elmborg, Loriene Roy, Lorna Peterson, and Mary Alice Ball, among others, have written about the integration of service learning into LIS education.⁴² Ball has even written about the academic library, itself, as the site for service learning in LIS education (although we must leave aside for the moment the distinction between “service learning” and “clinical education,” which I would argue is a more appropriate way of describing field-based components of LIS programs).⁴³ At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), the “Community Informatics Initiative” <<http://www.cii.uiuc.edu/>> focuses squarely on the question of how expertise in fields related to information and communication technologies may be deployed to meet the needs of local communities for technology centers, library services, etc.⁴⁴ If service learning is so popular and powerful an approach to professional education for librarians, one wonders why relatively few academic librarians appear to have

built more effective collaboration with faculty taking part in service learning initiatives. Why have academic librarians not pursued service learning programs as partners to the same degree that they have pursued programs such as Writing Across the Curriculum and First-Year Experience?⁴⁵ If they have, why does it appear that their attempts to connect with service learning initiatives have been less successful (or, at least, less well documented)?

Cooperative Extension

“Extension” is an essential component of the mission of over 100 “land-grant” institutions of higher education in the United States.⁴⁶ According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service with which these institutions are associated, contemporary extension programs find their roots in the commitment to the provision of agricultural, vocational, and other “applied” educational programs made by the federal government through passage of legislation such as the Morrill Act (1862) and the Smith-Lever Act (1914).⁴⁷ Today, Cooperative Extension supports research and educational programs in areas including agricultural science, natural resources and environmental studies, family and consumer sciences, nutrition and consumer health, and community and economic development.⁴⁸ At land-grant institutions, Cooperative Extension is typically the “flagship outreach effort,” and the multidisciplinary approach to public engagement taken by extension programs provides rich opportunities for collaboration with academic libraries.⁴⁹

The greatest emphasis in the study of library involvement with extension programs has been on the provision of information and instructional services to extension agents who serve as the link between the campus and extension offices across the state.⁵⁰ Betty Rozum and Kevin Brewer describe a survey of extension agents conducted by Utah State University to determine their information needs, and to design and deliver useful library services to this distributed

network of library users. They found that extension agents were largely unaware of the resources to which they had access. Based on these findings, they developed Web and print-based information resources to help guide extension agents to useful services, including access to digital content, interlibrary loan and document delivery programs, and digital reference services.⁵¹ Kornelia Tancheva, Michael Cook, and Howard Raskin describe the development of a similar set of resources aimed at extension agents at Cornell University, and how the establishment of a formal liaison program led to the development of information literacy programs designed to meet the needs of extension agents, “as well as the needs of end users who contact Extension offices for information and documents.”⁵²

It is in the dual nature of the extension agents’ information needs that one may see opportunities for further library involvement in extension activities as an aspect of public engagement. Extension offices around the state are not only the workplaces of extension agents, but also the sites through which members of the public go for assistance from the university with their information needs. To members of the public, the extension office may be the classroom, the research laboratory, and, yes, the university library. Library services for extension agents are a critical feature of any public engagement program in academic libraries, but imagine the impact of library services – information literacy instruction, for example, or government information services – delivered by librarians to members of the public *through* extension offices and education centers. With public engagement in mind, academic libraries at participating institutions can, and should, make better use of the statewide opportunities made possible through Cooperative Extension.

K-12 Education

Finally, there are the schools. There are few areas in which more evidence of opportunities for public engagement with the academic library is available than in connection

with K-12 education. The Association of College & Research Libraries and the American Association of School Librarians recognized the potential for collaboration between their members in support of common concerns for the information literacy instruction of K-12 students and teachers in the establishment of the AASL/ACRL Task Force on the Educational Role of Libraries (now the AASL/ACRL Interdivisional Committee on Information Literacy). The Task Force's "Blueprint for Collaboration" noted that school librarians and academic librarians "share the goals of fostering lifelong learning and ensuring that students at all educational levels are prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century," and that these goals were likewise shared by K-12 teachers and administrators (and, one assumes, the parents of K-12 students).⁵³ Work in the State of Ohio over the past 20 years demonstrates that opportunities exist for meaningful collaboration between academic librarians, K-12 teachers, and school librarians committed to meeting the shared goal of a "K-20" approach to information literacy instruction.⁵⁴ In an earlier essay, I referred to education librarians housed in academic libraries, school librarians, and children and young adult librarians housed in public libraries as a network of professional support for K-12 teachers and students, and that network continues to provide opportunities for academic librarians committed to public engagement.⁵⁵

Melba Jesudason describes library involvement in "precollege programs" at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) in the early 1990s. While the instructional approach she used may seem dated to many reading her essay today, her description of the library's integration into the broader "precollege programs" at Madison remains valuable. Focusing on their contribution to university outreach to students from historically underrepresented groups and to students identified as academically gifted, the UW libraries were part of a campus-wide approach to providing services to K-12 students. Among the benefits of participation in this campus-wide approach identified by Jesudason were: 1) better communication and

collaboration across library types; 2) more effective networking and communication between academic librarians and other campus groups; 3) enhanced “town-gown” relationships; 4) increased opportunities to market library services; and 5) increased opportunities to integrate the library into campus efforts to enhance diversity among the student body.⁵⁶ While the UW program described by Jesudason pre-dates the recent focus on public engagement, one can see how attention to the design and delivery of academic library services to K-12 students might provide multiple opportunities for highlighting the library contribution to related efforts, e.g., programs aimed at supporting the recruitment and retention of students of color to the university.⁵⁷

While Jesudason described the provision of library services to K-12 students, Janet Nichols and Janet Martorana, et al., describe the development of instructional programs aimed at K-12 educators. Nichols describes a program jointly designed by librarians at Wayne State University and their counterparts at several Detroit-area schools, while Martorana, et al. describe the development of “train-the-trainer” workshops aimed at K-12 teachers in California. In both cases, the programs were designed to meet the information literacy needs of K-12 students, and to address the need for continuing professional education for K-12 teachers expected to provide information literacy instruction to their students. In both cases, the connection between the academic environment in which K-12 teachers and administrators receive their own professional education, and the academic environment in which they prepare their own students for the Information Age is highlighted.⁵⁸

Finally, Kenneth Burhanna and Mary Lee Jensen provide a programmatic view of engagement with K-12 education through their description of “Informed Transitions” <<http://www.library.kent.edu/page/10973>>, a “formal library outreach program to high schools” at Kent State University. Burhanna and Jensen describe an academic library that has

made a broad commitment to engagement with K-12 schools based on common instructional goals and on the shared commitment among K-20 educators in Ohio to support student success. Their discussion of the challenges that any library considering a similar program will face is especially useful, e.g., establishing a sustainable model of human resource allocation to this effort. Providing services to K-12 students and educators seems a popular choice for library-centered public engagement programs, they conclude, but even a popular choice is difficult to make, and to sustain, in an era of constrained financial and human resources in academic libraries. This lesson from the history of K-12 engagement in academic libraries must be remembered in regard to any public engagement program, and the question must be asked if your library has the capacity to add this dimension to its public service portfolio.⁵⁹

Outreach efforts, service learning programs, extension networks, and K-12 schools provide opportunities for library involvement with public engagement initiatives on almost any campus. These programs, singly or together, should be considered closely related to the service missions of land-grant institutions, regional state institutions, private institutions, and community colleges. As Ward wrote: “The service mission of higher education is most strongly associated with the land-grant movement [but examination] of the history of higher education through the lens of service shows how firmly embedded service is in the mission and actions of most colleges and universities.”⁶⁰ Many of the examples highlighted in this essay are drawn from the ranks of public research universities, but engagement activities may be found on campuses (and in libraries) of all types.⁶¹ Indeed, the institution of higher education in America today that does not recognize the need to engage the public, to demonstrate its value to the community, and to pursue outreach and engagement activities designed to enhance its efforts to recruit and retain a diverse pool of students is a rare one! There are many other facets of the public engagement agenda in higher education, but these four were highlighted owing to

the fact that most librarians will find at least one of these programs on campus. With these programs as the “corners,” let us turn next to some illustrative examples of current practice that further demonstrate both the complexity and the vitality of public engagement programs in academic libraries today.

Public Engagement in Academic Libraries – Case Studies

The preceding literature review identified areas in which academic libraries might invest effort in order to make an immediate contribution to public engagement programs on campus. Any such investment will likely build on programs already found in the library, e.g., tours for K-12 students. My argument is not that academic libraries have not been involved in public engagement activities, but, rather, that they have not been as strategic as they might be in identifying those activities as central to the academic library mission. There are numerous opportunities in the contemporary higher education environment for academic libraries to contribute more effectively to institutional efforts to promote advocacy through engagement, and we must pursue them with the same vigor that we pursue opportunities to collaborate with classroom colleagues on the identification of student learning objectives, or with researchers on plans to describe, disseminate, and preserve datasets and other digital content. Having identified some of the broadest opportunities for public engagement in academic libraries through the literature review, let us turn now to a trio of brief case studies that further illustrate the potential for library-based public engagement programs. As with the literature review, the goal of presenting these case studies is not to be comprehensive, but to illustrate both what is possible in terms of making a commitment to public engagement in academic libraries, and what some of the major challenges to making that commitment may be.

Washington State University – Central Washington REACH Program

Washington State University (WSU) is a public research university serving over 25,000 students at its flagship campus in Pullman, at regional campuses in Spokane, Richland (“Tri-Cities”), and Vancouver, and through a variety of distance education programs.⁶² Established in 1890 as the state’s land-grant institution, WSU maintains not only its four academic campuses, but also ten learning centers located around the state, as well as extension offices in each of Washington’s 39 counties.⁶³ For almost a century, WSU has provided service to the State of Washington through its Extension programs, which “[engage] people, organizations, and communities to advance their economic well-being by connecting them to the knowledge base of the University and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.”⁶⁴ From its origins as a resource for agricultural and home economics education, WSU Extension has grown into a network of programs encompassing community development, sustainable agriculture, and research on alternative forms of energy.⁶⁵ While Extension remains the primary sponsor of engagement programs at Washington State, the university’s public engagement agenda is also served through programs provided through the College of Veterinary Medicine, the College of Education, and the Division of Student Affairs, Equity, and Diversity.⁶⁶

The Washington State University Libraries include six libraries on the Pullman campus, as well as libraries on each of the regional campuses.⁶⁷ Library support for engagement initiatives is provided both through Pullman campus libraries associated with academic programs that sponsor engagement activities, e.g., the Education Library, and through the Library Instruction Department, which has developed an active program of liaison and instructional services for campus programs affiliated with the Division of Student Affairs, Equity, and Diversity, and others.⁶⁸ While the WSU Libraries have a history of successful involvement in a variety of public engagement programs, one initiative is notable for the way in which it

demonstrates the potential for library leadership in this area: the Central Washington Resources and Education for Achieving Community Health (REACH) Program.

The Central Washington REACH Program was designed “to improve access to health information for health care providers in central and eastern Washington, especially those who serve the migrant and seasonal worker community.” The need to improve access to high-quality health information, both for health care professionals and for community members, provides not only an opportunity for the academic library to develop instructional service programs, but also to develop partnerships with community health organizations and other social service providers. In this case, the WSU Libraries collaborated with partners such as Washington State WorkSource, Wenatchee Valley College, Columbia Valley Community Health, and Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital, to develop instructional materials, training programs, and Web-based resources aimed at enhancing access to health information for members of an underserved community. Funded by a grant from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (Pacific Northwest Region), the Central Washington REACH Program provided 19 training sessions to members of the target communities during 2003-04, and sponsored a poster session at the annual Western Migrant Stream Forum, a professional conference that offers workshops and other programs “designed to meet the needs of clinicians, administrators, educators, advocates, researchers, and students dedicated to serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers.”⁶⁹ While not sustained past the conclusion of its grant funding, the Central Washington REACH Program demonstrated how the academic library can partner with a variety of community-based organizations to promote a public engagement initiative founded on professional expertise held in the library – the ability to identify, access, evaluate, and manage health information – and how the library can contribute based on that expertise to the public engagement agenda on campus.

University of Kansas – Territorial Kansas Online

The University of Kansas (KU) is a public research university serving over 30,000 students on its campuses in Lawrence, Overland Park (“Edwards”), and Kansas City (KU Medical Center).⁷⁰ Established in 1866, KU is not the land-grant institution for the State of Kansas, but recognizes “Service to Kansans” as a core component of its institutional mission, and identifies a number of teaching and research programs essential to meeting its commitment to public engagement.⁷¹ Among these programs are K-12 and lifelong learning opportunities provided through the Lied Center for the Performing Arts, public programs offered through the Hall Center for the Humanities, health and wellness programs for community members provided through the KU Medical Center, and research activities coordinated through the Kansas Geological Society and the KU Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center.⁷² One of the programs contributing regularly to “service to Kansans,” at the university, however, is one that does not appear as part of the campus overview of its engagement activities – the University Libraries.

The KU Libraries include six libraries on the Lawrence Campus, as well as a branch library on the Edwards Campus. “Community Outreach” is identified, alongside more familiar programs in information literacy instruction and scholarly communications education, as a core component of the Libraries’ instructional services program.⁷³ Bringing the concepts of “lifelong learning” and “community engagement” together under the programmatic rubric of “community outreach,” the KU Libraries identify instructional service commitments to programs aimed at K-12 students and teachers, adult learners, and students associated with a number of programs sponsored by academic colleges, including the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering.⁷⁴ While the KU Libraries are notable for the degree to which outreach and engagement are recognized as essential to the instructional services program, one of the

Libraries' most significant engagement initiatives can be found outside the instruction unit: Territorial Kansas Online.

Territorial Kansas Online (TKO) <<http://www.territorialkansasonline.org/>> is a digital repository of primary source materials related to the turbulent period leading up to Kansas Statehood in 1861. Funded in 1999 through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and with work continuing through 2004, TKO represents a collaboration between the Kansas State Historical Society and the KU Libraries to provide access to “government documents, diaries, letters, photographs, maps, newspapers, rare secondary sources, and historical artifacts” held in the two collections.⁷⁵ While providing enhanced access to materials of public interest in collaboration with another state-sponsored cultural heritage organization might be notable, in itself, the significance of this project for demonstrating library contributions to public engagement programs is most apparent in its attention to how the materials will be used, especially in the K-12 environment. The need to assist K-12 educators in designing inquiry-based learning activities attuned to state and federal guidelines provides an opportunity not only for instructional service initiatives in libraries, but also for initiatives designed to foster increased use of primary source materials and other special collections. In this case, the staff of the KU Libraries' Kansas Collection collaborated not only with the collection curators in the Kansas State Historical Society, but also with the staff in the Society's Education and Outreach Division, which sponsors a variety of programs and resources for K-12 teachers, students, and community members.⁷⁶ In collaboration with these museum educators, KU librarians contributed to the development of lesson plans that demonstrate how primary source materials can be used to support student learning consistent with the Kansas Curricular Standards for Kansas and United States History.⁷⁷

In collaboration with TKO partners, KU librarians provided instructional sessions across the state in 2003-2004 to promote use of the site, including programs at the Shawnee Mission (KS) School District, Kansas History Center, Kansas Territorial Chautauqua, and a number of course-integrated instruction sessions on campus.⁷⁸ Heavily-used throughout the project period with over 40,000 “hits” on the Web site, Territorial Kansas Online was recognized by the American Association for State and Local History with an “Award of Merit” in 2004.⁷⁹ While no new material has been added to its Web site since the conclusion of the grant-funded program, the TKO project demonstrates how digitization projects – dependent on library collections and the expertise of library staff in the application of digitization standards, metadata, and digital preservation strategies – can complement broader K-12 engagement initiatives on campus, and provides another example of how the university can contribute to public education.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – American Music Month

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a public research university serving over 40,000 students on the Urbana campus, and through a variety of distance learning programs.⁸⁰ Established in 1867 as the state’s land-grant institution, Illinois “has a long record of commitment to public engagement and to the discovery and application of knowledge to improve and serve the greater society in which we live.”⁸¹ In addition to its Extension program, which encompasses programs in agricultural education, economic development, early childhood education, and health and wellness, Illinois supports an array of engagement activities, including those housed in units such as the School of Labor and Employment Relations, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science.⁸² With its commitment to public engagement woven throughout campus teaching and research programs, Illinois provides innumerable opportunities for the provision of service to the community, including in the area of “cultural engagement,” which is recognized by the campus as including

not only programs sponsored by fine arts venues such as the Krannert Art Museum, performing arts venues such as the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and cultural heritage organizations such as the Spurlock Museum, but also those sponsored by the University Library.⁸³

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library is one of the largest public research libraries in the world with more than 30 departmental libraries housed in buildings across the Urbana campus.⁸⁴ Built around a traditional model of subject specialists serving faculty and students associated with one or more of its departmental libraries, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library has pursued public engagement activities as an adjunct to traditional public services such as reference and instruction, and in a highly decentralized fashion. The Education and Social Science Library, for example, provided resources for student teachers in local schools through its “Take Us to School” program, while the Applied Health Sciences Library spearheaded the development of a Web site designed to provide enhanced access to health information both to health care providers and to other health information consumers.⁸⁵ The Rare Book and Manuscript Library provided public programs highlighting special collections and rare materials available in the library collection, and sponsored a club for book collectors on campus and in the community.⁸⁶ Recently, the campus attention to “cultural engagement” has provided an opportunity to bring a number of library-supported activities together under the umbrella of the “Preservation Working Group,” a group that includes representatives of the University Library, the Krannert Art Museum, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and WILL-AM (a National Public Radio affiliate).⁸⁷ The Preservation Working Group has sponsored a number of public engagement programs over the past few years, including “Home Movie Day” and the “Preservation Emporium.”⁸⁸ While each of these programs is worthy of note, the one that has had the greatest sustained success has been a campus-wide

effort coordinated through the library's Sousa Archive and Center for American Music (SACAM): American Music Month.

American Music Month is an annual celebration of America's diverse musical and cultural heritage that has taken place at venues throughout the Champaign-Urbana community each November since 2004. With a unique theme each year – "Stars, Stripes, and Sousa" (2004), "Lifescapes of America's Music" (2005), "An Illinois Chautauqua" (2006), "Music Without Borders" (2007), and "Lincoln and his Music" (2008) – American Music Month activities have included lectures, exhibitions and public programs at fine and performing arts venues on campus, as well as at SACAM and other library units, lecture demonstrations at local public libraries, concerts at campus and community venues, and educational programs for K-12 music students.⁸⁹ American Music Month programs have also been coordinated with other innovative library programs, including the Fall 2007 "Gaming Night" at the Undergraduate Library.⁹⁰ Supported through grants from the Illinois Humanities Council, the Lincoln Bicentennial Committee, and the Office of the Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and sustained through ongoing partnerships with campus and community groups such as the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, the University of Illinois Alumni Association, the Community Center for the Arts, and the Champaign Park District, American Music Month has demonstrated the integrative role that the library can play in campus public engagement programs.⁹¹

A growing and ongoing program, American Music Month has fostered partnerships not only between campus and the local community, but between the local community and national cultural heritage organizations, including the Library of Congress, the U.S. Marine Band Library and Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution (which named the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an "affiliate organization" in 2005).⁹² American Music Month is also notable for

the recognition it has garnered for its sponsoring partners, including a 2008 “ACE Award” presented to SACAM Director Scott Schwartz (in his role as coordinator of American Music Month programs) by the Champaign County Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Council, and Schwartz’s recognition as a 2008 recipient of the “Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement.”⁹³ American Music Month is only one example that demonstrates how the library can contribute to “cultural engagement” initiatives on campus and how, by complementing efforts made by programs in the fine and applied arts, and by other cultural heritage organizations, the academic library can embrace opportunities to benefit from advocacy through engagement.

Each of these case studies demonstrates different ways in which the academic library may contribute to public engagement programs on campus, and each demonstrates different ways in which the resources and expertise housed in the library may complement those housed elsewhere on campus. As noted above, these case studies are meant to be initial and exploratory; like the literature review, they present pieces of a very large puzzle. The complexity of this puzzle is evident in the Illinois example where multiple engagement initiatives across campus have come together to be recognized as an important part of the broader campus commitment to “cultural engagement,” and where a number of independent public engagement activities housed in different library units are becoming increasingly coordinated through the efforts of a newly-established Public Engagement Working Group (Appendix 1). While this introduction to public engagement programs in academic libraries cannot hope to provide a true picture of the breadth and depth of engagement activities, there are lessons that may be learned to help us to better recognize both the opportunities for advocacy these activities may represent for our libraries, and how to help foster the development of public engagement programs from what may now only be a disparate set of individual activities.

Fostering Success in Public Engagement Programs

While a tradition of public service can be found throughout the history of American higher education, the contemporary interest in public engagement may be traced back to *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990), the landmark work in which Ernest Boyer articulated an understanding of scholarly activity designed to encompass not only the traditional “scholarship of discovery,” but also scholarly approaches to teaching and service.⁹⁴ Boyer’s definition of the “scholarship of application” would lead to over a decade of inquiry into the question of how one might define scholarly approaches to working with members of the community, as well as how one might recognize and reward scholarly approaches to service – approaches that would be referred to throughout the 1990s as “professional service,” “outreach,” and, finally, as “public engagement.”⁹⁵ Providing an overview of the development of what we now refer to as the “scholarship of engagement” is beyond the scope of the current essay, but our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for public engagement in academic libraries may be informed by what studies have shown about how to foster a commitment to scholarly approaches to public engagement across the campus.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to fostering success in public engagement programs can be found in the professional reward structure, both on campus and in the library. As Ward wrote: “Faculty are unlikely to engage in meaningful service if they are uncertain as to where it fits in larger schemes of work and how likely it is to be rewarded.”⁹⁶ Faculty asked to identify what would motivate them to increase their commitment to public engagement programs regular identify the established system of professional recognition and reward, especially as these are related to decisions about appointment, promotion, and tenure, as a critical component in their decision-making.⁹⁷ In February 2009, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign implemented a new set of tenure and promotion guidelines that recognize the value

of public engagement as a dimension of faculty work.⁹⁸ Illinois joins a number of universities that have modified promotion and tenure guidelines over the past decade to allow for recognition of service activities, and to allow for the rigorous review of scholarly engagement activities, but this remains an ongoing challenge for faculty members and academic librarians interested in pursuing public engagement programs – will these efforts be recognized in a fashion equivalent to efforts resulting in more traditional forms of scholarly output?⁹⁹ To address this challenge, academic libraries that provide for tenure-system appointments, or other “continuing appointments,” should investigate the degree to which public engagement is recognized as part of the campus promotion and tenure guidelines, and should make an organizational commitment to supporting librarians taking part in public engagement programs that may likewise be recognized as a valuable dimension of the scholarly and professional work.

A second challenge to fostering public engagement programs lies in the sometimes vague (and often shifting) definition of what we mean by public engagement and the scholarship of engagement. Ernest Lynton Barbara Holland, Kelly Ward, and others have noted that “service” has been defined in many ways in institutions of higher education over the years, and that this makes it all the more difficult (and all the more critical) to define more precisely the sort of work that is representative of true public engagement.¹⁰⁰ As David J. Weerts and Lorilee R. Sandmann wrote, “the concept of engagement is still emerging and is not uniformly understood”; and, as Ward concluded: “Because service is vaguely understood and defined, it is often viewed as less meaningful and important than the more easily defined (and rewarded) roles of teaching and research.¹⁰¹ To address this challenge, academic librarians must join campus colleagues in identifying the core characteristics of their public engagement programs, and should distinguish these programs from the more familiar approaches to library service found in outreach programs and campus engagement programs. All academic libraries provide

public service, and many provide public access, but how many support public engagement? This is an important question for future research.

A third challenge to fostering public engagement programs lies in planning for their sustainability – both in terms of financial resources and in terms of human resources. Burhanna and Jensen noted this as a key challenge to any academic library considering making a commitment to engagement with K-12 schools, and Holland identified both the time required to cultivate partnerships, and the lack of resources to sustain new activities as key obstacles to faculty involvement in public engagement.¹⁰² Certainly, there is ample evidence from the case studies presented in this essay that even successful programs have difficulty finding the resources to continue following the conclusion of grant projects. To address this challenge, the academic library must articulate a strategic commitment to public engagement as a core feature of its mission, identify library services that have the greatest potential for impact on complementary public engagement programs (or commitments) on campus, and create the funding structures and personnel framework that will allow public engagement to thrive as a feature of academic librarianship similar to information literacy instruction and scholarly communications. Many academic libraries have created positions for instructional leaders and for innovators in digital library and scholarly communications programs, but how many articulate public engagement as a key organizational capacity, and how many have functional leadership for public engagement similar to that found in many public libraries, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions? This, too, is a question for future research.

The final challenge to fostering public engagement programs is the one that complements all the others – leadership. If there is one finding common to every study of public engagement and the scholarship of engagement, it is that leadership at the campus, college, and departmental level is essential to supporting faculty work in this area. Academic leaders

establish the sense of mission at every level that includes public engagement as a core commitment for the institution and the academic units. Academic leaders can provide support for faculty undertaking public engagement programs through the provision of supporting infrastructure and professional development opportunities. Finally, academic leaders may influence the system of professional incentives and rewards that may encourage a faculty member to dedicate his or her time to public engagement and to the development of scholarly approaches to engagement activities.¹⁰³ To address this challenge, library leaders must articulate the library commitment not just to providing public access, but to pursuing public engagement. Library leaders must support librarians dedicated to collaborating with campus public engagement programs and to focusing their work on the information needs of many “non-traditional” users who are not part of traditional academic programs.

There are many challenges to fostering public engagement programs in academic libraries, but perhaps the greatest is the need to help librarians articulate both their connections to campus public engagement programs and the professional expertise that they can bring to issues of concern to the public beyond the campus. In an Information Age, an academic library should be a valuable community resource – not for the services that it cannot share (e.g., access to licensed electronic content), but for the expertise that it can. Expertise is what distinguishes public service from public engagement, and commitment to sharing that expertise through public engagement programs may provide new opportunities for advocacy.

Conclusion

Why are academic libraries so often forgotten during campus discussions of public engagement? We are forgotten because we have historically associated service to “community users” with the simple question of access, and because we have looked at programs such as instruction for K-12 students as an addition to our core programs (or, at best, as an adjunct to

the core programs aimed at faculty and students in teacher education programs), rather than as essential programs in their own right. Over the past decade, academic librarians have made powerful arguments regarding the contributions they can make to instructional programs, the support they can provide to faculty facing a new landscape in scholarly communication, and the expertise they can lend to projects related to the creation, description, dissemination, and preservation of digital content, but the challenge of public engagement remains before us – how can we weave the disparate stories of the many public programs we routinely provide into a narrative of public engagement that will be recognized by the campus as contributing to this strategic concern of the institution, and how can we support librarians in engaging in scholarly approaches to this work that will allow them to be recognized and rewarded for the time and commitment such efforts require?

The challenges are many, but the potential return is great. There are few traditions that run deeper in the history of American higher education than “service.” As Adrianna J. Kezar, Tony C. Chambers, and John C. Burkhardt noted in their collection of essays on the contemporary service movement: “The idea that higher education exists to serve the public good has been at the heart of the enterprise since its inception in the United States almost five hundred years ago.”¹⁰⁴ Over the past decade, academic leaders have come to appreciate service not as an important historical artifact, but as “[the hallmark] of the university of the future.”¹⁰⁵ Pennsylvania State University President Graham B. Spanier led a national discussion of how to foster the development of the “engaged university” by arguing that “successful universities will be those that are intimately connected to their communities, and responsive to society’s needs.”¹⁰⁶ Surely, to remain relevant to this emergent mission of the institution of higher education, and to remain successful in the 21st century, academic libraries must be likewise connected, responsive, and engaged.

To advocate for the academic library – whether on campus, in the community, or with ones friends and supporters – one must present the full range of the library’s riches, and the full scope of what it contributes to the mission of the college or university of which it is a part. Campuses have recognized that public engagement is critical to their success because it is through engagement that institutions of higher education build communities of advocates for their cause beyond the traditional communities of teachers, students, researchers, and scholars. The library, too, may build broader communities of advocates, both on campus, among its alumni, and within its community by making a strategic and sustainable commitment to public engagement as a core feature of its mission.

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Appendix 1:
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library
Public Engagement Working Group

Description

The Public Engagement Working Group is charged by the Advisory Committee to the Associate University Librarian for Services to promote Library activities that support the public engagement mission of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Chair of the Public Engagement Working Group serves as an ex officio member of the Advisory Committee to the Associate University Librarian for Services.

Charge

The charge of the Public Engagement Working Group is to:

- Collaborate with appropriate Library units, committees, working groups, or task forces on the design, delivery, and assessment of public engagement programs
- Collect and disseminate information regarding the public engagement programs of the University Library
- Develop and oversee a “Public Engagement” section of the Library Web site
- Promote the public engagement programs of the University Library through presentation and publication of relevant information in Library publications, University publications, and other venues
- Promote the conduct of the “scholarship of engagement” among Library faculty
- Identify opportunities for Library involvement in public engagement programs at the campus level
- Advocate for the provision of financial and human resources appropriate to the pursuit of public engagement programs as a strategic priority of the University Library

Membership

The membership of the Public Engagement Working Group should be drawn from Library faculty and staff with direct responsibilities for public engagement programs or expertise in the scholarship of engagement. Core public engagement program areas include, but are not limited to: Cultural Engagement, Extension, K-12 Engagement, Lifelong Learning, Health Information and Services to Health Care Professionals, E-Government, and the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs.

URL: <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/committee/public/charge.html>