School Library Roles in Civic Education

Il ruolo delle biblioteche scolastiche nell'educazione civica

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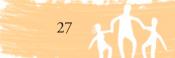*Lesley.Farmer@csulb.edu*

Abstract

Especially in democratic societies, youth have the right and the responsibility to participate in civic life. However, youth need civic education that supports the knowledge, skills, communication tools and access to public spaces in order to civically engage effectively. School librarians can support such efforts through physical and intellectual access to civic-related resources in several ways: in collection development, reference and information services, civic education curriculum support, instruction in relevant literacies, mentoring, and connecting with the community at large. These efforts also model school librarians' own civic engagement.

Keywords: civic education, school librarians, physical and intellectual access to resources

Soprattutto nelle società democratiche, i giovani hanno il diritto e la responsabilità di partecipare alla vita civile. Tuttavia, i giovani hanno bisogno di un'educazione civica che supporti le conoscenze, le abilità, gli strumenti di comunicazione e l'accesso agli spazi pubblici per impegnarsi civicamente in modo efficace. I bibliotecari scolastici possono sostenere tali sforzi attraverso l'accesso fisico e intellettuale alle risorse legate al civico in diversi modi: nello sviluppo di raccolte, nei servizi di riferimento e di informazione, nel supporto del curriculum di educazione civica, nell'istruzione nelle alfabetizzazioni pertinenti, nel tutoraggio e nel collegamento con la comunità in generale. Questi sforzi modellano anche l'impegno civico dei bibliotecari scolastici.

Parole chiave: educazione civica, bibliotecari scolastici, accesso fisico e intellettuale alle risorse

Government actions impact everyone: from local entities such as schools and businesses to international entities such as NATO and UNESCO. Therefore, it behooves everyone to know what government resources, services and regulations impact them in order to comply with them, take advantage of them, and change them if they need to be improved. Furthermore, if people are denied certain government actions or if governments do not offer certain services and resources, then those people should determine the possible impact and the bases for those government decisions so they can determine what to do accordingly.

To be aware of, to understand, to comply with, and to change government actions requires civic knowledge. To that end, K-12 schools need to provide relevant and applicable civic education. In support of such education, school libraries can play important roles.

Some Definitions

The term "citizen" usually refers to a person who is a governmentally recognized subject with legal rights and protection, but that term might be more broadly applied to any member of a community. As such, the term "citizenship" usually refers to the rights and responsibility as a participating member of that community. Viola (2020) broadened the indicator of citizenship to include an emotional sense of belonging, legal status and legal right to belong, and active involvement in the community. Today's youth tend to see citizenship as a self-actualizing activity rather than a duty (Freelon, Wells & Bennett, 2013). These days, the term "digital citizenship" constitutes an important part of citizenship; it usually means the ability to use technology safely, purposefully, productively, responsibly, and civically.

A related term, "civic engagement," typically refers to participation as a community member or, more narrowly, a citizen in order to address issues of public concern in order to improve the community (Crowley, n.d.). While this paper uses the above meaning, it should be noted that definitions can vary significantly, depending on the source, the agenda, the implied actions, and the target audience (Adler & Goggin, 2005; Ekman & Amnå, 2012;United Freedman, 1999). The degree of engagement can range from voting to helping keep the neighborhood learn to petitioning for bicycle lanes and to actively advocating for human rights. Even though youth cannot vote, they can still get civically involved.

The term "participatory politics" is one movement within civic engagement, and may be defined as interactive, peer-based acts to voice and influence issues of public concern (Cohen et al., 2012). Examples of participatory politics include online community affiliation such as Changemaker Xchange (https://changemakerxchange.org/) and Global Girlhood (https://www.globalgirlhood.org/), creative expressions for social change, and collaborative problem solving.

The term "civic education" generally refers to instruction for participation as community members. The typical outcomes include students' "knowledge of civic-related content, their skills in understanding political communication, their concepts and attitudes towards civics, and their participation or practice in this area" (OECD, 2002, p. 1).

One of the literacies that support civic education is information literacy: the ability to locate, access, evaluate, use, and manage information effectively and responsibly. A related literacy is digital literacy, which includes digital aspects of information as well as technical skills such as producing information using technology tools. Another related literacy is media literacy, which focuses on the impact of formats or medium on production and meaning; media literacy also entails information literacy in terms of its location, access and management. School librarians tend to serve as experts in these literacies within K-12 settings.

Models of Civic Engagement

Westheimer and Kahn (2004) identified three models of citizenship and civic engagement, which can be supported by school libraries.

- Personally responsive citizenship. At this level, youth comply with laws and act responsibly. They keep current with issues of public concerns and make informed decisions. They evaluate the credibility of civic information and avoid sharing mis- and dis-information. They respect others and their property, and might volunteer at, to donate to, a food bank, for instance. School libraries can provide information about current events and legislation for youth to access. School librarians can teach information and media literacy to help students access, evaluate and use civic information effectively and responsibly.
- Citizen deliberation and participation. At this level, youth interact with others: exchanging ideas about a social issue, participating in a neighborhood clean-up event, signing petitions for community improvement, or collaborating with others for a common good such as creating a website on discerning fake news. School librarians can locate information about relevant civic groups and events that youth can participate in.
- Social justice-oriented citizens. At this level, youth contribute to social justice, such as ensuring human rights, equity and inclusion. To be effective at this level, youth need to have the knowledge and skills to effect sustainable social improvement. School librarians can provide social justice resources and teach information land media literacy as well as work with the school community to provide opportunities to practice these skills.

Conditions for Civic Engagement

The benefits of civic engagement seem apparent: greater awareness and use of socio-political resources and services, greater sense of belonging to the community, greater awareness and knowledge about socio-political issues, greater ability to help address socio-political issues to improve the quality of life, and greater social capital as the value of their interpersonal relations and their resources in contributing to society is recognized. However, several pre-conditions need to be in place for effective civic engagement. To an extent, school librarians can help address those conditions.

Personal conditions, which reflect both nature and nurture contexts, may come to mind first. Cognitive, affective and physical conditions impact civic attitudes and actions. For instance, youth with good reading and communication skills, who exhibit leadership qualities and have a sense of agency are more likely to be civically engaged than their peers who do not feel they have those qualities (Anyon et al., 2018). School librarians can support positive reading habits and help students gain information and digital literacy skills.

Social environments – familial, community, ethnic – impact civic norms. For instance, youth whose parents are civic engaged are more likely to participate as well than youth who do not have such role models (Anyon et al., 2018). How individuals interact with their physical environments also impacts their reactions, and influences future feelings and behaviors, including their choices to engage civically. These interactions include awareness of civic issues, understanding of those issues, and motivation and skills to act upon those issues. School libraries can provide a positive learning environment in which students are encouraged to engage with the library's civic-related resources independently and with others. School librarians can also offer students opportunities to contribute to the library program as aides and library club members.

Civic engagement entails communication skills, both in its consumption and participation. While youth gain social skills in communicating in daily life, they are less likely to have opportunities to practice communication skills in voice civic discourse, which makes them less effective in those venues (Bennett, Wells & Rank, 2009). Giroux (2016) asserted that education offers tools for systematic critique of power and social contexts, and language for creating democratic change. However, most civics classes focus on teaching government basics and encourage students to follow political events, but they do not provide opportunities for students to self-express their opinions in the public arena and engage in thoughtful civic deliberations. In the realm of social media, youth are likely to witness more personal opinion than evidence-based respectful deliberation. Even formal debates typically try to advance each side's stance rather than advance negotiation. In contrast, civic engagement should reflect collaborative problem-solving to meet mutual goals. To that end, then, youth need to be taught how to

communicate and collaborate effectively in public settings (Mihailidis, 2018). Again, school libraries can provide resources that showcase impactful public discourse and successful collective social justice efforts (e.g., Fitzgerald et al., 2020; Mardis & Oberg, 2019; Winberry & Bishop, 2021).

In today's society, physical and intellectual access to technology constitutes an important condition for civic engagement. Increasingly, governmental entities are using the Internet to provide information and services, often requiring individuals to request access online. Similarly, public announcement about possible actions and associated hearings are increasingly conducted mainly online. At the same time that such communication may be more convenient physically (e.g. reducing transportation limitations), it can limit participation because of the digital divide, especially if Internet connectivity is not equitably stable and free or low cost. In that respect, socio-economic status becomes a critical issue; likewise, individuals with disabilities and other special needs may be marginalized. School libraries serve as a safety net to provide access to Internet-connected computers throughout the day, and school librarians also provide instruction and guidance in digital literacy.

The issue of public discourse points out the need for civic space in both physical and virtual environments. Such spaces provide convenient, well-coordinated communications channels found in educational institutions, town halls, media outlets, reputable agencies and organizations, and workplace settings. As minors, youth sometimes do not have access to some civic venues (Brunelle et al., 2018). As bridges between the school community and the community at large, school librarians can suggest feasible public civic spaces and may even facilitate students' access to them via invited speakers or community networking.

Civic engagement conditions also involve the systemic level of governments themselves. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2003) identified five challenges for online civic engagement, which continue to persist.

- Capacity: how can individuals gain and practice civic engagement skills?
- Scale: how can governments pay attention to, evaluate and address an increasing number of civic voices?
- Commitment: how can governments be mandated and made accountable to civic input?
- Coherence: how can government provide coherent, transparent and inclusive communication systems, incorporating technology, to maximize civic engagement?
- Evaluation: how can government measure and access online civic engagement and its effectiveness?

Educational systems are part of this picture. Certainly, they need to facilitate capacity and should be part of the communication system. In these two areas, school librarians are centrally positioned to provide efficient and inclusive physical and intellectual access.

One international initiative that has impacted civic engagement is United Nation (UN)'s 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals (SDG), adopted in 2015. Its seventeen goals serve as pathways to make the planet sustainable economically, socially, and environmentally so that all people can reach their potential in a peaceful world. Goal 4 specifically focuses on inclusive and equitable lifelong education, but the overall vision asserts that universal literacy is needed to achieve the other goals, such as ending poverty, promoting well-being and healthy lives, and sustaining ecosystems. Moreover, the agenda also states that interconnected information and communications technology accelerates human progress and knowledge. Several school library projects use SDG as their framework (e.g., Garcia-Febo, 2021; Mkumbo, 2016; Samantaray, 2017).

Even if all those conditions are met, challenges may remain, some of which might be beyond personal or educational control. Individuals can feel overwhelmed by the amount of information that they encounter, and not have the time to sort through and evaluate all that information. Individuals may manage the glut of information by choosing just a couple communication channels to follow, which may just reinforce their pre-existing worldviews; such limitations tend to decrease civic engagement (Feeseel & Jones, 2017; Mihailidis, 2018). In terms of active participation, some individuals may curb their opinion because of social pressure or distrust in their government (Sakariassen & Meijer, 2021). Furthermore, when young people think that their voice does not count or they think about no change is possible, they may give up or despair.

Youth and Civic Engagement

What is the status of youth and their civic engagement? Issues of gun control, sexual assault, racism, the environment, and war have stimulated students to engage civically through social media posts, videos, protests, boycotts, walk-outs and sit-ins. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg exemplifies youth civic engagement, which inspired teens around the world to strike and otherwise enter the public discourse about climate change. Behind the scenes, many other youth are civically engaged, although such practices are not the norm.

While youth are key stakeholders in governmental actions, they have fewer rights and fewer opportunities to be civically engaged. Youth are also less likely to be seriously considered by government entities if for no other reason than they cannot vote and have less fiscal power (Viola, 2020). Furthermore, they have less

civic knowledge and less experience in public discourse to articulate their case convincingly.

Holbein and Hillygus (2020) found that 90 percent of American youth were interested in politics, and 80 percent intended to vote. However, only 43 percent eventually cast a vote, and even fewer took steps to get actively engaged civically. Youth may have a narrow definition of citizenship, equating it with voting or running for office, which also limits engagement to those with adult status (Viola, 2020). Youth may choose not to be civically involved because they have little interest in, or distrust, the media, the government, or generally people in power. Youth might not have an interest or empathy for some social issues, especially if those issues are distant or do not seem to impact them. Furthermore, youth may not feel empowered to make a difference civically. They may feel frustration or even despair.

In writing a UNICEF report, Cho, Byrne and Pelter (2020) focused on digital civic engagement of youth between nine and seventeen years old living in eleven countries. Even though many youth distrust political processes, 43 to 64 percent read news online, and 12 to 27 percent discussed political issues online. These youth preferred digital civic engagement to more traditional forms, and they preferred personally meaningful issues such as climate change where they could network and self-express rather than traditional citizenship actions such as party caucusing or attending town halls. When choosing which issues to follow, youth are motivated by their friends' activism and by their identification with other activists (such as Greta Thurman) who align with their own personal values (Wallis & Loy, 2021).

Social media has become the de facto platform for civic discourse and action. Indeed, youth examine civic groups' online platform's features and functions as much as the agendas themselves as they consider participating civically (Cho, Byrne & Pelter, 2020). Cohen and Kahne's 2018 study revealed that Youth use social media regularly to connect with family and friends and to pursue personal interests. Across ethnicities, with Blacks being most highly represented, 41 percent have engaged in participatory polities, and 44 percent have engaged in other political acts. Online political engagement correlates with higher offline political engagement because it helps develop digital social capital. The study also revealed that youth would like to know how to judge the credibility of online information, which would make them more effective civic participants.

Taken as a whole, then, youth bring their own background, knowledge and interest to the civic engagement table. Their social affiliations that support civic engagement help them to take action, particularly when they have access to civic spaces where they feel they have agency and can make a positive difference. (Viola, 2020) Since civic engagement is contextually situated, its traditional view such as voting and politically caucusing should be broadened to embrace more issues-based and personally-meaningful participation as well as the incorporation of new media.

One caveat needs to be mentioned: differing perspectives as to socio-political goals. More than ever, it seems, attitudes about social issues have been polarized. Stances on climate change, immigration, abortion, gun rights, and vaccinations are recent examples. Especially as social aspects can significantly impact youth, some extremist groups intentionally recruit and even radicalize vulnerable youth. Therefore, it is even more imperative to help youth gain critical thinking skills and to provide opportunities for positive relationships, which school librarians are well positioned to do.

Civic Education

The case is clear that civic education positively impacts youth civic engagement, be it political or not. In 2017 OECD stated that civics education affects individuals' beliefs, commitment, abilities and actions as community members. Civics education fosters civic knowledge and skills, it improves attitudes towards public and political institutions, it promotes civic equity, it facilitates social empowerment, and it leads to greater civic engagement effectiveness. Nevertheless, similar to civic engagement in general, civics education also encounters challenges: ensuring high quality curriculum when governments do not prioritize such knowledge, inequitable instruction to marginalized populations, lack of funding for instruction, and polarized political climate where curriculum change may be perceived as a political agenda more than as a public good (Guilfoile & Delander, 2014).

No universal civic education exists, and in the United States no national curriculum exists. Therefore, it is not surprising that the quality and impact of civic education is uneven. Moreover, most existing civic education curriculum focus on content knowledge with little attention to skills development or student agency. The fact that fewer than a quarter of eighth graders met the proficient level on a national civics exam demonstrates that there is serious work to do (Shapiro, Brown & Center for American Progress, 2018).

Many civic education frameworks address the rights and responsibilities of citizens and their community in terms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. In examining civics education curriculum around the world, OECD (2017) found that civics education concepts usually include human rights, politico-institutional arrangements, and electoral processes. UNESCO (2015) parsed the domains of civic learning into cognitive (knowledge about societal issues and critical thinking), social-emotional (sense of belonging, empathy, solidarity, and respect), and behavioral aspects (action for peace and sustainability). Holbein and Hillygus (2020) discovered that "non-cognitive" skills (self-regulation, effortness, and interpersonal interaction) were better predictive factors for youth voting and civic engagement than political knowledge. Viola (2020) asserted that media studies

and digital skills were necessary for both civic consumption as well as civic participation. The Center for Civic Education (Branson, 1998) identified three general foci: civic knowledge, civic skills of critical thinking and methods of participation, and civic dispositions that support democracy. The Council of Europe (2016) detailed those strands, and subdivided disposition into attitudes and values.

- Knowledge and critical understanding of self, language and communication, and the world
- Skills of listening and observing, analysis, lifelong learning, empathy, flexibility and adaptability, linguistics, cooperation and conflict resolution
- Attitudes of responsibility, self-efficacy, openness, respect, civic-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity
- Valuing human dignity and rights, cultural diversity, democracy, justice and fairness, equality, and rule of law.

The 2016 International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA) (Schulz et al., 2016) posited a similar framework for civic and citizenship education: content knowledge, cognitive processes, and behavior. IEA then contextualized this framework within school community characteristics and perceptions as well as the wider community's characteristics and relationships with education.

Here is a sampling of K-12 civic education curricula. School librarians can share this list and draw from it as they collaborate with relevant teachers to develop and implement civic education curriculum.

- Center for Civic Education. https://www.civiced.org/
- Generation Citizen. https://generationcitizen.org/our-programs/our-curriculum/
- Educating for American Democracy. https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/
- Chicago Public Schools Social Science and Civic Engagement: https://cps.edu/Pages/socialsciencecivicengagement.aspx

While a well-considered curriculum is a foundation for youth civic learning, it is not sufficient to ensure that students will be civically knowledgeable and civically engaged. How that curriculum is implemented is key. A synthesis of studies on civic education results in the following factors for effective practice and outcomes: civic content knowledge, awareness of civic issues and their impact that are meaningful for students, effective use of communication tools, and opportunities to practice and apply civic education for positive change (Schulz et al., 2016). These factors can serve as criteria for assessing the degree and quality of

student civic knowledge and engagement. Other representative assessment models and tools include Jenkins, Zukin and Andolina's 1990 measures of youth's community-based civic engagement; Zaff et al.'s 2010 factorial analysis of civic engagement constructs; Freelon, Wells and Bennett's 2013 assessment of user civic activity levels in web sites; Wray-Lake, Metzger and Syverton's 2017 comparison of youth civic engagement models; and Cho, Bryne and Peter's 2020 analytical tool for evaluating youth digital civic engagement.

The LEADE center at UCLA (2022) stated that civic learning involves civic learning, civic associations, and civic action. They further posit key qualities of civic instruction: information rich, critical and strategic, participatory, culturally responsive, and reflective. The Civic Mission of Schools report (Gould et al., 2018) identified a similar, researched-based set of principles: classroom instruction, discussing controversial issues and current events, service learning, extracurricular activities, student school governance participation, and simulating democratic processes and adult civic roles. Likewise, in their research-based recommendations for civic education, Holbein and Hillygus (202) asserted the need to start earlier (in middle school), to emphasize applied learning, and to integrate civics throughout the school's curriculum. In their 2021 report on educating for civic reasoning and discourse, Lee, White and Dong discussed the need for students to develop a civic identity based on self-knowledge, student-centered open discussions, information literacy development, and project-based inquiry across academic domains. Based on twenty years of research, CIRCLE (2021) made the following recommendations for effective civic education: affirm every youth's place in, and responsibility to, civic life; address and critically analyze issues from a variety of information sources and points of view; link curriculum to real-world events and groups; and provide teachers with needed resources and full support. Kahne, Hodgin and Eidman-Aadahl (2016) also emphasized the need for civic education students to network for change, applying their knowledge to produce and disseminate factors and recommendations about meaningful social issues. Campbell (2019) emphasized the need to address aspects of civic education outside the classroom: co-curricular activities such as debating, service learning, and the school's ethos of active citizenship. In their study of voting participation, School libraries play a vital role in this school-wide culture, which is detailed in the following section. Bennion and Laughlin (2018) reviewed of twelve years of Journal of Political Science Education to identify best civic education practices. Authors recommended incorporating reputable news publications for discussion, developing students' knowledge of policy-making processes, providing a wide range of activities, providing opportunities for social interaction, incorporating civic engagement role-playing, combining coursework with community-based civic engagement such as analyzing a community's civic issues and assets, facilitating student involvement in the electoral process, and having students practice democratic leadership skills.

The following list offers a variety of resources and activities to help educators teach civics. School librarian can consult this list for their own instruction and share it with all faculty.

- American Political Science Association Civic education and engagement. https://www.apsanet.org/RESOURCES/For-Faculty/Civic-Education-amp-Engagement
- Annenberg Classroom Resources for excellent civics education. https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/ and
- Baylor University How to teach civics in action in K-12 students. https://onlinegrad.baylor.edu/resources/teaching-civic-education-democracy/
- Better Arguments Project. https://betterarguments.org/
- Cardinali, E. (2018, August 14). How to make a civics education stick. *NRP*. https://www.npr.org/2018/08/14/632666071/how-to-make-a-civics-education-stick
- Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) Growing voters report. https://circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters
- Civic Engagement Research Group. https://www.civicsurveyo.org
- Civics Connected. https://www.civicsconnected.com/
- Digital civics toolkit. https://www.digitalcivicstoolkit.org/
- Educating for participatory politics. Youth Participatory Politics Research Network. http://ypp.dmlcentral.net and https://ypp.dmlcentral.net/projects/educating-participatory-politics.html
- Education Week Citizen Z Project. https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/-civics-education/index.html
- iCivics. http://www.icivics.org
- International Debate Education Association. https://idebate.net/resources/debatabase
- Kidizenship. https://www.kidizenship.com/
- National Action Civics Collaborative. http://actioncivicscollaborative.org/
- Rock Your World. https://www.rock-your-world.org/flexible-and-creative-school-curriculum

When civic education is effective, youth act. For instance, after a high school shooting in Georgia, students from that school staged demonstrations, worked with the media, built coalitions based on mutual values and goals, and lobbied for meaningful gun safety laws (Graham & Weingarten, 2018). To stimulate students to civic engagement, classroom teachers and school librarians can draw attention to:

- 15 youth-led organizations to follow for International Youth Day. https://www.tiramisuapp.com/2021/08/11/15-youth-led-organizations-to-follow-for-international-youth-day/

- Fridays for Future. https://fridaysforfuture.org/
- Engaging Youth for Positive Change. https://eypcprogram.org/
- Massachusetts Library System. https://guides.masslibsystem.org/youngchange-makers/resources

School Libraries and Civic Engagement

School librarians provide physical and intellectual access to information, and can use a civic education lens to optimize student success as they support the school community in this curriculum.

Resources

School libraries offer a centralize repository of developmentally-appropriate resources in various formats that support civic education across academic domains. For instance, science materials inform students about environmental crises, propaganda posters stimulate artistic protests, primary sources reveal historical social efforts, and databases provide reputable information about current events. To be effective in such collection development, school librarians should examine civic education curriculum and course materials, participate in school-wide discussion about civic education, and reach out to community civic groups to facilitate civic service learning. The earlier that school librarians can collaborate with classroom teacher on civic education, starting with co-developed curriculum and identifying possible resources to creating bibliographies on civic issue, the more impactful the library program can be in contributing to student learning.

School libraries provide physical access to civic information resources through the organization of the library facility itself, classification schemes, the library catalog, the library web portal, webliographies, directional signs and posters, magazine racks, book displays, reserve shelves, directories, files, Internet-connected computers, other equipment such as audio players 3D printers, and assistive technologies.

Instruction

Intellectual access includes teaching youth and staff how to gain competence in information and media literacies that support civic education. The options are many and diverse: showing how to use encyclopedia indexes, providing just-in-time reference help for a civics assignment, demonstrating how to use advanced

searching options such as reading level filters, producing topical research guides, creating screen-capture videos to demonstrate how to find a magazine article in a database, providing citation style links on the library web portal, conducting a webinar on media production, helping debate teams find relevant case studies, collaboratively designing instruction on fake news evaluation, and so on. Such efforts may occur as one-time class orientations, project-based guidance, ongoing co-teaching of research skills, one-to-one consultation with a teacher, readers' advisory, or co-curricular coaching. A main goal of intellectual access is to empower students to use information effectively and purposefully, including contributing to positive social change. School librarians can also collaborate with faculty as a whole to develop a civic education scope-and-sequence curriculum that is incorporated across the grades and disciplines. In that way, student learning build upon prior experience that is contextualized to optimize meaningful civic engagement. Instruction can be more strategic, particularly for the library program of instruction in terms of supporting literacies such as information, media, and technology.

In that respect, school librarians play a key role. American civics teachers nationwide see information literacy as a vital skill, particularly in light of increasing misinformation, but the majority of those teachers do not feel confident in teaching information literacy skills (Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2014). They would welcome training and resources, which school librarians can provide. co-teaching these skills within the context of civic education optimizing learning and facilities civic engagement.

Even traditional library skills of locating and evaluating information undergird civic education. Especially as students use technology to access information, they need to know the ever-broader universe of information collections such as online database aggregators as well as the original information sources: human experts. Each type of information source requires different searching strategies; for the above examples, students need to know how to use faceted key words and how to develop interview protocols. In evaluating information, students need to identify the original source and determine its authority and credibility, determine the perspective and possible agenda, identify the content's scope and what is omitted, and examine the evidence that justify claims. Students also need to know how to find and evaluate multiple sources of information about the same issue, and do lateral reading to compare the content. Media literacy is also needed in order to determine how the format, be it a magazine article or a video, impacts the message.

Among best practices in teaching civics is the use of inquiry-based projects for meaningful learning. This instructional approach leverages the library's collection and access to online information as well as the use of information and media literacies for personally-meaningful investigation. Kuhlthau (2010) is known for her guided inquiry learning process. To begin this process, students are initiated into an issue, such as climate change. To gain a baseline of knowledge, the learning

team (librarian, classroom teacher, and possibly another subject expert) select one or two key background resources for students to examine and discuss. Next students become aware of, and explore, a variety of relevant resources. At that point, students can then formulate personally meaningful research questions and identify possible approaches and resources. Then students gather, evaluate and interpret relevant sources. This effort enables them to create and share a knowledge product. While inquiry learning can be conducted independently, it is optimized when students can share their ideas with peers, and get valuable feedback. Furthermore, since each student pursues a unique research question from a unique perspective, the class benefits from collectively investigating an issue, resulting in a rich repository of knowledge that can be acted upon. Civic education itself benefits from the learning team's expertise and information resources.

Because school librarians work with the entire school community, they can incorporate civic education in many ways.

- School librarians can take advantage of existing civics learning activities such as the federal government kid-friendly "adventure" https://bensguide.gpo.gov/, CIRCLE's Growing Voters project (https://circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters) and Stanford's Civic Online Reasoning curriculum (https://cor.stanford.edu/) as a stand-alone series or as a co-taught unit in a civic course.
- Taking a life skills approach to school library's role in civic engagement, Woolls and Williams (2019) provide sample civic learning activities for grade ranging from preschool to high school graduations, such as interviewing community agencies, exploring student-friendly government websites, researching students' and minors' rights, exploring immigrants' experiences, getting informed and participating in emergency/disaster relief, and analyzing political media campaigns.
- Mihailidis (2018) emphasized the relevance of civic-based media literacy to teach critical consciousness and analysis of media messages about social issues and then to leverage media tools to communicate compellingly about those social issues. For instance, school librarian Joquetta Johnson (2019) developed a Lyrics as Literacy program, which used hip-hop to advance a social justice agenda. Students practiced hashtag activity to create issues-center social media messages. As a culminating experience, the library hosted a town hall meeting to address school and district issues.
- The Mecklenburg (NC) Public Library held a virtual summit and four follow-up town halls to discuss issues of interest to youth, planned by the library's VolunTeens. A panel of adult and teen experts talked about ways to address social inequities. The library then held monthly workshops, and some teens met weekly to produce social justice programs (Udell, 2020). A similar project could be done in school settings, vanguarded by the school librarian.
- In considering skills for youth civic engagement, the Carnegie Library of Pitts-

burgh focused on data literacy. Students participated in a week-long Civic Data Zine Camp, where they researched civic issues and produced a zine about their findings and recommendations (Dankowski, 2018). This kind of activity can be done as an elective course or interest club cosponsored by the library and mathematics department.

• Student hackathons have become popular, and increasingly focus on civic issues (Brennan, 2020). These hackathons collectively problem solve using technology, based on analyzing existing data sets. These activities enable youth to apply civic knowledge and skills to real-life issues, and foster a culture of civic engagement. School librarians can help in several ways: hosting hackathons, locating and providing relevant data sets, teaching students how to find and evaluate them, collaborating with mathematics faculty to teach data literacy and data management, helping students analyze the data, and helping students communicate their conclusions and recommendations.

Venues

Schools need to help students locate and access venues to practice civic engagement. While social media provides low-bar access opportunities, but it can be hard to be taken seriously amid the millions of participants (Cohen et al., 2012). In that respect, introducing students to local social justice groups and media outlets can facilitate participation and build a sense of community belonging. Even producing and publicizing a list of civic groups and volunteer opportunities shows the library's efforts to facilitate student civic engagement.

Opportunities for civic engagement can start in the library itself. Among other ideas, the library can display student artwork on civic issues, produce zines of student research on civic issues, post student civic efforts on the library web portal, and host social justice themed poetry slams.

School librarians can mentor student library aides, giving them opportunities to gain workplace and leadership skills. Student library aides can locate civic websites to be added to the library web portal, coach peers on digital literacy skills using the library's computers, and blog about library resources on civics. Aides can also troubleshoot technical problems in classes and videotape presentations about civic issues. Students can also serve as library advisory board members, helping to improve the library and planning library programs on civic issues. School librarians can also serve as advisors for civic-related clubs and interest groups such as civic-themed book or film clubs, social issue zine writers, debate, Model UN, diversity allies, LGBTQ+, Back Lives Matter, social issues-theme video or blogging group, children's story group, as well as student chapters of service organizations such as Rotary Club or Lions.

School libraries can network with other local libraries – schools, public, aca-

demic, and special – to facilitate student civic engagement. As examples, students can volunteer in public and special libraries, read stories to children in preschool, video academic libraries to facilitate successful transitions from high school to post-secondary libraries.

Focusing on news media, community-based activities that apply civic education to give students a civic voice include: adding content on community websites; creating news for the community via photos, artwork, videos, newsletters, and social networks; training others in responsible news literacy; and participating in social initiatives. One news-specific pathway for student civic engagement is citizen journalism: user-centered news production and participatory journalism. This type of journalism leverages social networking and collective intelligence to support more voices and different perspectives resulting in more inclusive and informed news coverage (Ess, 2014). School librarians can help students connect with local media outlets, and offer programs that bring journalists to the library to explain media production and impact.

Science-related social issues such as the pandemic and the environment offer several venues for student application of civic engagement. Scientists are trying to reach out to the public, not only to inform then but also to engage them in scientific initiatives. Concurrently, the Open Science movement has pushed for more transparent research and more open exchange of information, which leverages the use of new technologies and citizen participation. The most common civic engagement in science is data collection in which people in different locales measure specific scientific data, such as weather or pollution, and send it to a centralized data collection site for analysis. Such participation facilitates scientific recommendations as well as produce a community of participants who feel a sense of consequential community (Peters & Besley, 2019).

Within the scope of science, but impactful in many other areas of life, are environmental concerns. Especially as people need to share environmental resources, working together civically can help address ways to optimize how those resources are distributed and used. As the future stewards of that environment, youth have a big stake in engaging to solve environmental problems. As an example of action civics, middle schoolers in Upper Michigan worked with community adults to monitor local streams and protect local beaches. The students not only became more environmentally sensible, but they also became more aware of the civic responsibility and their positive role in the community (Hart & Youniss, 2018).

Because school librarians work with the entire school community and network with other librarians and community groups, as well as locate online civic-minded organizations, they are well positioned to facilitate authentic venues for student civic engagement.

Conclusion

Especially in democratic societies, youth have the right and the responsibility to participate in civic life. However, youth need civic education that supports the knowledge, skills, communication tools and access to public spaces in order to civically engage effectively. School librarians can support such efforts through physical and intellectual access to civic-related resources in several ways: in collection development, reference and information services, civic education curriculum support, instruction in relevant literacies, mentoring, and connecting with the community at large. These efforts also model school librarians' own civic engagement.

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