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Today's Essential Library Advocacy— and a Search for Tomorrow's Carnegies

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Investment in Community



- ▶ Investing in and supporting libraries strengthens and promotes community engagement, advocates note.
- ▶ A Pew Research 2016 survey found that half of all Americans 16 or older used a public library in the past year, while two-thirds said closing their local branches would have a “major impact” on their communities.
- ▶ Countless library budgets are fixed or shrinking.
 - ▶ Tax levies are a major source of funding for public and school libraries...
 - ▶ ...And often viewed similarly to a rise in property taxes.
- ▶ The problem for libraries is that “so few influential people understand the expansive role that libraries play in modern communities.”
 - ▶ Eric Klinenberg, NYU sociologist, in “To Restore Civil Society Start With the Library,” in the *New York Times* of 9/8/2018.
 - ▶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/08/opinion/sunday/civil-society-library.html>

Reimagining Libraries: Not *Just* Books

- ▶ Free Computers
- ▶ Ebooks and Ebook Readers
- ▶ Computer Classes
- ▶ Study Rooms and Meeting Rooms
- ▶ Reading Programs for Children
- ▶ Book Clubs
- ▶ Special Events
- ▶ Power Tools, Fishing Poles, Seeds, Etc.
- ▶ Museum Passes
- ▶ Family Literacy
- ▶ Everything I need is *not* online
- ▶ Digital Literacy
- ▶ Anti-Fake News—Credible Information.
- ▶ Trustworthy Health and Finance Info
- ▶ Voting- and Tax-related Activities
- ▶ Bridging the Digital Divide
- ▶ Internet Access for Those without It

When the *Forbes* Web site ran a column suggesting that Amazon replace libraries, the reaction was so negative that the magazine deleted the commentary. The economist author failed to understand that public libraries provide social infrastructure for all and a mix of content and services that the marketplace just can't replace.

“Social infrastructure is not ‘social capital’—a concept commonly used to measure people’s relationships and interpersonal networks—but the physical conditions that determine whether social capital develops. When social infrastructure is robust, it fosters contact, mutual support, and collaboration among friends and neighbors; when degraded, it inhibits social activity, leaving families and individuals to fend for themselves.” - Eric Klinenberg in *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (New York: Crown, 2018).

Library Advocacy Is Critical

The American Library Association (ALA) has recognized the critical need to advocate for libraries as places for community engagement and more:

- ▶ Jim Neal, the 2017-2018 President, appointed 12 library and information professionals to work with decisionmakers at the federal and state level to represent the values of today's modern libraries.
- ▶ Loida Garcia-Febo, the current ALA President, introduced in June 2018 another advocacy effort, "Libraries = Strong Communities." This national initiative highlights the value of academic, public, and school libraries.
- ▶ ALA is raising public awareness of the value of libraries.
- ▶ It is also advancing legislation and policies that support information and library services in all types of libraries.

Work of library advocates across the country is paying off. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) actually received a \$2-million increase for FY 2019 to \$242 million.

Neil Gaiman: "Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one."

Other presenters today will discuss ALA's laudable initiatives.

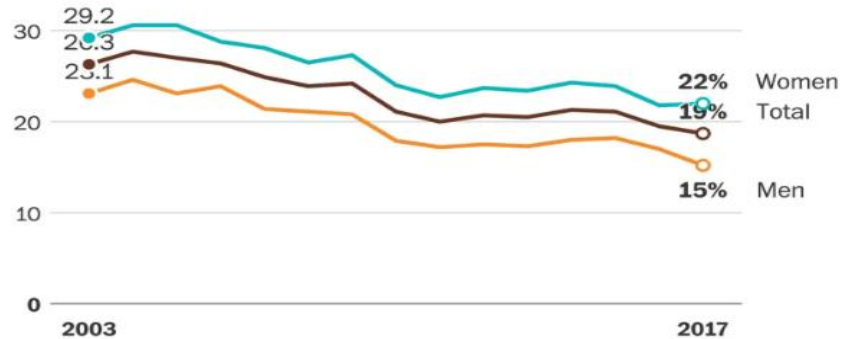
**But Will Even Those Heroic Efforts Be
Enough—Given All the Needs Out There?**

National Library Endowment:
Finding New Carnegies

Among the Needs: A Better-Read America

American reading declines

Percent reading for personal interest on a typical day



Source: American Time Use Survey

WAPO.ST/WONKBLOG

**“Leisure reading in the U.S. is at an all-time low”
--Washington Post headline above the graph**

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/06/29/leisure-reading-in-the-u-s-is-at-an-all-time-low/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.49991292ca80

Related: Massive U.K. study shows academic benefits of recreational reading. “Perhaps surprisingly, reading for pleasure was found to be more important for children’s cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parents’ level of education. The combined effect on children’s progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at 16 was four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree.”

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/6/6675/BEd_interview_article_Reading_for_pleasure_puts_children_ahead_in_the_classroom.pdf

An Example of the Mess We're in Despite Library Advocates' Hard Work



Schools See Steep Drop in Librarians, New Analysis Finds



—Getty

Yet student numbers continue to rise

By Sarah D. Sparks and Alex Harwin

May 16, 2018 | Updated: May 25, 2018 | Corrected: May 17, 2018

American schools—particularly those serving black and Latino students—have seen a precipitous drop in their school librarians since the Great Recession.

The nation's public school districts have lost 20 percent of their librarians and media specialists since 2000, from more than 54,000 to less than 44,000 in 2015, according to an Education Week Research Center analysis of federal data. Many districts lost

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<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/05/16/schools-see-steep-drop-in-librarians-new.html>

The Dismal Statistics Showing the Need for a *National Library Endowment*

- ▶ Libraries are about much more than books and reading. Couldn't better-funded public and K-12 libraries not only boost literacy but also serve as more effective economic drivers and life enhancers in general? We've got a *lot* of room for improvement—especially with books losing out so often to competition from TV and social media.
 - ▶ Almost half the adults in Detroit lack functional literacy according to a 2011 report, and almost surely the city still has a long way to go.
 - ▶ <https://detroit.cbslocal.com/2011/05/04/report-nearly-half-of-detroiters-cant-read/>
 - ▶ Libraries in at least two communities, in Oregon and North Carolina, have had to close.
 - ▶ U.S. libraries can spend only around \$1.3 billion a year on books and other content. That's a mere \$4.33 per capita as of Fiscal Year 2016.
 - ▶ https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2016_pls_tables.pdf (Table 25)
 - ▶ “Savage inequalities” abound.
 - ▶ The King County Library system in Washington State—that's the county where Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos live—can spend about \$10 per capita on books and other materials. But Pierce County in the same state was spending only \$5.91 per capita as of this writing.
 - ▶ <https://www.thenewstribune.com/opinion/editorials/article218423810.html>
 - ▶ Worse, Mississippi libraries as of FY 2016 could spend just \$1.47 per capita, while the figure was 27 cents for the territory of American Samoa and nine cents for Guam. As of FY 2009, the last year David could easily find, the number was 35 cents for Puerto Rico.

Lost Library Jobs: Minorities Especially Hit

- ▶ Thousands of K-12 library staffers have lost their jobs, especially in minority communities, as documented in the Education Week article shown earlier.
 - ▶ <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/05/16/schools-see-steep-drop-in-librarians-new.html?r=819206836>
- ▶ What a shame! An ALA infographic links to research documenting the academic benefits of school libraries.
 - ▶ http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/advocacy/AASL_infographic.pdf
- ▶ In addition, as noted earlier, a massive U.K. study shows the rewards of recreational reading.
 - ▶ https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/6/6675/BEd_interview_article_Reading_for_pleasure_puts_children_ahead_in_the_classroom.pdf
- ▶ Minorities are outrageously underrepresented in the library world, and the endowment could help with more money for scholarships and other assistance. Just 563 of 114,227 credentialed librarians were African-American men in 2009-2010 despite the benefits of role models, especially in K-12 libraries.
 - ▶ <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org.aboutala/files/content/diversity/diversitycounts/diversitycountstables2012.pdf>
- ▶ “Having just one black teacher in third, fourth or fifth grade reduced low-income black boys’ probability of dropping out of high school by 39 percent.” Fully credentialed school librarians in effect *are* teachers, and the whole school interacts with them.
 - ▶ <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/04/10/522909090/having-just-one-black-teacher-can-keep-black-kids-in-school>

Beyond the Numbers: Anger Building against Underfunded Libraries

- ▶ We need to look beyond the numbers. If you're viewing our PowerPoint slides online, check out a disturbing video, titled [“This is a Library, but Where Are the Books?”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C8oVH5eeOY)
 - ▶ An African-American activist rapper visits a Philadelphia high school and bemoans the shortage of up-to-date Black history books—while noting the presence of a number of copies of “the God-damn Diary of Anne Mother F—king Frank.”
 - ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C8oVH5eeOY>



Could a \$20-Billion Library Endowment Help?

- ▶ Twenty billion isn't small change. But guess who already has an endowment approaching double that size?



Yes, Just One Ivy League School's Endowment Is Nearing \$40 Billion...

- ▶ The just-seen photo shows “[Harvard Yard](#) as seen from the [Smith Campus Center](#)” (Wikipedia: [Chensiyuan](#). CC BY-SA 4.0).
- ▶ Of course, Harvard has had almost four centuries to accumulate and grow the assets in its endowment. But remember, it's just one school.
- ▶ No anti-Harvard prejudice. Plenty of stray billions are sloshing around for all—libraries as well as Harvard—with the right vision and allies. What's more, from the Graduate School of Education to the Harvard Kennedy School of government and the Law School, Harvard has a wealth of expertise to contribute.
 - ▶ The Harvard-nurtured Digital Public Library of America could be the start of a more ambitious academic library system with far-better financing. Despite its name and valuable work, the DPLA is a long way from a genuine public library. Let the real public libraries take over that side while tapping the rich resources of academia.
- ▶ Now let's compare the Harvard endowment with the current total for all the public library endowments and equivalents in the United States.

...While Public Library Endowments and Equivalents Add Up to Just a Fraction of Harvard's

FOUNDATIONS

Library foundation assets of \$2.5 billion tallied in Wilmington research



The New York Public Library tops the list of library trusts



The bulk of the assets are concentrated in 25 foundations

BY BARRY B. BURR - FEBRUARY 12, 2014 12:01 AM

Library foundations supporting presidential and public libraries have an estimated combined \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion in assets, according to new research from Wilmington Trust N.A.

The total represents the assets of 1,300 library investment portfolios in the U.S., although the bulk of the assets is concentrated in the 25 largest, accounting for \$2.2 billion.

http://www.pionline.com/article/20140212/ONLINE/140219963/library-foundation-assets-of-25-billion-tallied-in-wilmington-research?utm_campaign=ramp_rss&utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss

Where the Real Money Is

Opinion

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

As Government Retrenches, Philanthropy Booms

By David Callahan

June 20, 2017



Bill Gates in February. Michael Gottschalk/Photothek, via Getty Images

Last year, as Kalamazoo, Mich., struggled with a budget deficit and other economic woes, two local philanthropists stepped forward, pledging \$70 million to improve the city's fortunes. Earlier in 2016, a group of foundations put up even more money to help another troubled Michigan city, Flint, recover from the contamination of its water supply. And a few years before that, foundations helped to rescue Detroit from bankruptcy.

These episodes, coming after years of cuts in state aid to Michigan's cities, may offer a glimpse of America's future.

In Washington, D.C., where it's already difficult to get things done, governing is likely to get exponentially harder in coming decades as the baby boomers retire and fiscal pressures mount sharply. More states and localities will also face budgetary crises as pension bills come due and as fiscal conservatives prioritize tax cuts over public investment.

So where will the leadership and money come from to take on urgent challenges?

In Michigan and beyond, we're already seeing an answer: Philanthropy

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/20/opinion/jeff-bezos-bill-gates-philanthropy.html>

\$20+ Trillion for Philanthropy over the Next 50 Years: Will Libraries Miss Out?

- ▶ Takeaways from the New York Times op-ed of June 20, 2017, by David Callahan, founder-editor of *Inside Philanthropy* and author of *The Givers: Wealth, Power and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age*:
 - ▶ “In Washington, D.C., where it’s already difficult to get things done, governing is likely to get exponentially harder in coming decades as the baby boomers retire and fiscal pressures mount sharply. More states and localities will also face budgetary crises as pension bills come due and as fiscal conservatives prioritize tax cuts over public investment.”
 - ▶ “Nondefense discretionary spending totaled \$518 billion in 2016, compared with charitable giving of \$390 billion last year. This gap is likely to keep narrowing as budget cuts hit harder and the wealthy step up their giving. Donors are also using for-profit social investments on a much larger scale—like when Bill Gates recently organized a slew of billionaires to invest in clean energy research.”
 - ▶ Among Forbes 400 billionaires “with a combined net worth of at least \$2.4 trillion are numerous billionaires who plan to give away much of their wealth. All told, over \$20 trillion is likely to find its way to philanthropy in the next half century.”
- ▶ *How Corilee and David feel about the above:* Maybe Mr. Gates needs to help organize his fellow billionaires to “invest” in a nonprofit library endowment.
- ▶ *Related:* Far from competing with IMLS, the endowment would create an advocacy spin-off to push for more funding for this federal agency *and* the rest of the library world. The spin-off could partner up with and support existing advocacy groups that showed interest. That way, private resources could help expand public ones. IMLS’s \$242-million budget for FY 2019 is a fraction of the approximately \$12 billion in public libraries’ operating expenses.

A Cost-Effective Way for Well-Intentioned Donors to Get Their Money's Worth

- ▶ Innovative philanthropy outside established institutions has its place. But do we want public libraries and other essential institutions to miss out?
- ▶ As proven by authoritative studies, we already *know* that well-run libraries can excel as knowledge- and literacy-spreaders. And Pew research shows libraries' continued popularity. All philanthropy comes with risks, but to a great extent the endowment would simply help scale up the library world's existing good work.
- ▶ Spending would be focused to a great extent on the poorest communities. But along the way the endowment could also pay for innovations helping all—such as well-stocked online collections. Imagine the boon to isolated and non-isolated communities of all income levels.
- ▶ Library professionals and other stakeholders—such as publishers and well-regarded representatives of disadvantaged people—would have a voice in the endowment's operation.
- ▶ A conference at Harvard or another prestigious institution could bring together prospective donors with other stakeholders to refine the current endowment vision.
- ▶ This would be far from an all-digital vision. Money would be available for paper books, too (especially for the young in poorer communities). Same for many other budget categories.

Room for the Multi-Donor Endowment *and* Givers' Pet Projects

- ▶ Some public-spirited billionaires want to spend down most all their money in their lifetimes. But we also need the library endowment model. It would offer a perennial revenue source for libraries even when short-sighted politicians cut budgets.
- ▶ The endowment would be multi-donor, so the billionaires could still devote most of their charitable dollars to their favorite projects. Jeff Bezos could still mainly focus on Montessori preschools and the homeless, for example. But with other major donors participating, libraries nevertheless would end up with a sizeable endowment.
- ▶ Of course, we would hardly mind if some donors wanted to make the endowment itself their favorite.
- ▶ Most of the approximately \$12 billion spent yearly on U.S. libraries' operations would still come from local tax money—we are not calling for billionaires to replace public money with philanthropic donations.
 - ▶ Again, the key is to focus on communities without sufficient tax and donor bases while also helping to pay for innovations everywhere that public agencies can't afford on their own.
 - ▶ Furthermore, in the case of better-off communities, the endowment could use such means as matching grants to encourage local efforts rather than expecting the endowment to pay for everything. Adjustments could be made for the poorest communities. Either no matching would be required or the percentage would be much lower.

What would be in this for the donors?

- ▶ Both wealthy corporate leaders and ordinary Americans would come out ahead with a better-read, better-educated workforce (better able to cope with increasingly complex technology). Not to mention smarter voters.
- ▶ Yes, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and others have their altruistic sides. That doesn't necessary mean we would agree with them on all consumer and labor issues and others. But as F. Scott Fitzgerald said, "The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."
- ▶ Major donors will want historians and others to recognize them for their good works. That is a very human instinct and far superior to, for example, using the endowment for short-term marketing or PR. Topic- or theme-related collections within national digital library systems could be named after donors who made them possible.
- ▶ Participation in the endowment would be good for stock prices, just as a matter of course. Even a small rise in market valuation due to this halo effect could help donors cost-justify their gifts to the endowment. At the same time, remember that the billionaires themselves, not their companies, would make the donations—reducing shareholder-related complications.
- ▶ A multi-donor endowment with more transparency and more diverse participants would be a chance to hedge philanthropic bets rather than just following the DIY approach.
- ▶ In many cases, the endowment would overlap with donors' existing priorities to a great extent in areas such as education. Better K-12, public, and academic libraries—and better-read and more curious students—could only help.

Poverty-reduction: A way for the library endowment to get major donors' attention

Game Changer? Just Maybe. Why Gates' Move Into Anti-Poverty Work Is a Big Deal

Caitlin Reilly



EVN HOUSING THE HOMELESS IN SILICON VALLEY. PHOTO: PHYLLIS PETERSON/SHUTTERSTOCK

Editor's Note: This article was originally published on May 3, 2018.

The Gates Foundation is getting into anti-poverty work in the United States in a big way with a four-year, \$158 million initiative. The move is a significant departure from the foundation's past domestic endeavors, which focused almost exclusively on education.

Though the initiative represents a pivot, Gates' commitment to education played a major role in pushing the foundation in this direction, CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann told *Inside Philanthropy*.

- ▶ The Gates Foundation is scaling down library support while stepping up anti-poverty efforts. Clip is from [Inside Philanthropy](#), May 3, 2018.
- ▶ The endowment could remind Gates and other possible funders that public and K-12 libraries, working together, can be powerful nurturers of literacy, teamwork abilities and other skills that employers value. Family literacy should be a major part of libraries' missions in low-income places and perhaps many others. Local needs vary!
- ▶ Strive for a good balance between positioning libraries as general community-strengtheners and promoters of literacy and other socioeconomic mobility-improvers.

Upside of Existing Advocacy Efforts Is Limited

- ▶ The midterm and presidential elections could result in a Washington more open to spending on libraries, education, and culture in general, but we shouldn't expect miracles.
- ▶ Gerrymandering, voter suppression, and massive political donations from billionaire tax-haters aren't going away overnight, even if the fiscal environment improves somewhat.
- ▶ Even under Barack Obama, a brilliant, well-intentioned lover of books and education, libraries did not always fare as well as they could have.
 - ▶ Granted, GOP congress members limited how much Obama could spend on IMLS, but he could still prioritize other cultural endeavors over libraries.
 - ▶ <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/02/obama-budget-proposal-slashes-cultural-agencies-by-13.html>
- ▶ The demand for library services does not always translate into voter support and massive grassroots activism conducted with NRA-level fervor. That is why libraries need more money for full-strength professional lobbying and other persuasion at all levels.
- ▶ What's more, in some cases, a *generous* amount of PAC money may be necessary in D.C. and statehouses and city hall. This is American political life today in our disgraceful pay-to-play era of "access." Even if Democrats regain power, we may not see the true campaign finance reform we so badly need and should work for.
- ▶ It is important that small contributors also support persuasion efforts and that the library culture prevail over the lobbying culture. IRS-compliant library groups, using offshoots where needed, could run the PACs the endowment made possible.

Summing up LibraryEndowment.org

- ▶ Small, Net-based group, two years old, seeking the creation of a national library endowment. Goal: help address the “savage inequalities” of America’s libraries but still encourage innovation to benefit libraries of all kinds even in well-off communities
- ▶ A different kind of advocacy in some ways. The main endowment would directly target major donors—not the general public—even though local taxes would remain the biggest revenue source for public libraries.
- ▶ Just 400 Americans are worth some \$2.5 trillion, so the goal of a \$20-billion endowment in five years is doable. Private philanthropists give far more than corporations, which worry about shareholders. Many shareholders would prefer higher dividends instead.
- ▶ Tightly focused on the public interest. But just as a matter of course, publishers and other vendors would benefit, with more money available. What’s more, by elevating the level of literacy, the endowment would expand the universe of readers. It could even pay libraries to promote individual titles of *their* choice via social and mass media. Catalogues could offer buying links, not just borrowing ones—even links to local brick-and-mortar stores.
- ▶ Self-financed. No investors, no Russians, no one behind us. Our only expenses are for a low-cost, do-it-yourself Web site. No one has paid Corilee, David, or our third cofounder, Jim Duncan. Informal governance via phone and email.
- ▶ Not out to create the endowment—rather to get well-intentioned people with sufficient resources to do this. We’re offering a very preliminary roadmap subject to refinements.

The People behind LibraryEndowment.org

- ▶ **Jim Duncan**, our strategy consultant. He is executive director of the [Colorado Library Consortium](#). Jim's endowment-related comments are his own, but they reflect the needs of cash-strapped small town libraries and others the consortium serves. Firsthand, Jim can vouch for the economies of scale that cooperation among libraries can bring. A united approach can also mean a stronger hand in censorship battle, which Jim has been fighting with people who even dislike the idea of electronic databases. Jim holds a masters degree in library and information science from the University of Iowa. Reach him at jduncan@libraryendowment.org.
- ▶ **Corilee Christou**, our Ohio-based [director of publisher and library relations emeritus](#). Corilee has worked in public, K-12, and academic libraries, as well as for Reed Publishing, former owner of Library Journal, School Library Journal, and Publishers Weekly. Among other achievements, Corilee was among the people responsible for those PW blurbs on the Amazon site. Corilee holds a masters in library science from Simmons College. To devote more time to her grandchildren, Corilee is now "emeritus," but she continues to believe in the library endowment cause. We are looking for a replacement—contact drothman@libraryendowment.org.
- ▶ **David H. Rothman**, a former poverty beat reporter interested in digital and educational divide issues since the early 1990s. His [TeleRead](#) site is the oldest devoted to ebook news and views. David has appeared in Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, Education Week, the Chronicle of Higher Education, the Chronicle of Philanthropy, and the *Washington Post*. He is also author of *The Silicon Jungle* (Ballantine) and other books. As cofounder of the old [OpenReader Consortium](#), he pushed for a common reflowable consumer format for ebooks—in effect helping to [prod](#) the International Digital Publishing Forum to create the ePub standard.