

Getting Involved in the Political Process: A Selected Bibliography for Librarians

by John Welch

In researching articles and monographs for this bibliography, it became apparent that librarians do not write enough about our practical participation in the political process. Many of the periodical citations under the "library — political activities" and "library legislation — political support" headings were short, capsule reports of legislation that had been passed or defeated or recapitulations of the "how to contact your legislator variety." The same is basically true for monographs.

This lack of in-depth practical analysis reveals a weakness on the part of our profession, and it may help to explain why we generally fare so poorly in political terms. We are all affected in some way by political events; thus, our professional journals and literature should reflect our desire to know how political processes work. They also should examine our political failures and successes. We must research, critique, and write more on our local, state, and national political roles. We must also read and discuss the political process as it is viewed from other disciplines such as political science and economics.

The following bibliographic items offer the reader a variety of approaches to involve libraries in the political process. Readers should pay particular attention to Brettschneider and Benn's article on the legislative strategy of Connecticut libraries and Hall's analysis of the Chesapeake, Virginia, library building campaign. E.J. Josey and Kenneth Shearer's collection of essays is an excellent introduction and overview of the subject.

Alderson, George and Everett Sentman. *How You Can Influence Congress*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1979.

A comprehensive, "nuts and bolts" approach to lobbying at the national level, the authors' remarks can also be translated to state and local level political needs. Included in the discussion are letter writing guidelines, how to make effective telephone calls, how to participate in hearings, and how to develop tactics and strategies for legislative campaigns.

Brettschneider, Sharon and James R. Benn. "Legislative Action: the Connecticut Model". *Library Journal* 112, 3 (May 1, 1989): 31-36.

An analysis of the planning, legislative program, and political process that Connecticut libraries employed in a special state-wide campaign designed to enable the state's citizens to gain full access to library materials. This article could serve as a grassroots training manual for any type of library.

Getz, Malcolm. *Public Libraries: An Economic View*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1980.

Economics and politics go hand-in-hand in contemporary society. Getz offers an economist's view of how to evaluate library programs and services. Although the book focuses on public libraries, many of the ideas and examples can be applied to the evaluation of other types of libraries, too.

Hall, Richard B. "Winning a Bond Issue for a New Library: The Chesapeake, Virginia, Campaign." *Bottom Line* 3, 2 (1989): 22-27.

A case study highlighting one library's successful public political campaign. The article focuses on the importance of a carefully thought out political strategy that reaches both voters and politicians.

Hernon, Peter and Charles R. McClure. *Evaluation and Library Decision Making*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1990.

To justify funding requests, libraries need to have a solid understanding of their own services. This work provides spe-

cific examples of how to plan, construct, and carry out detailed evaluations of various types of typical library services. There is also a special chapter dedicated to dealing with the political content of any evaluation program.

Ihrig, Alice B. "Librarians and the Political Process." In *As Much to Learn as to Teach*, edited by Joel M. Lee and Beth A. Hamilton, pp. 83-93. Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1979.

Ihrig argues that libraries themselves should be responsible for taking the lead in any political process.

Josey, E.J. and Kenneth Shearer, eds. *Politics and the Support of Libraries*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1990. An eminently readable selection of essays by nationally known librarians, this volume encompasses federal, state, and local political arenas. Especially read U.S. Representative Major Owens's article (pp. 23-31) on the federal congressional process and David Shavit's essay (pp. 87-94) on the politics of state budgeting.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1961.

Machiavelli's observations on power and politics are well established. When set in the context of current political environments, his insights still prove true to life.

Mason, Marilyn Gell. "Politics and the Public Library: A Management Guide." *Library Journal* 114, 5 (March 15, 1989): 27-32.

The public library's political position as viewed from the library director's chair.

Roper, William, L. *Winning Politics: A Handbook for Candidates and Campaign Workers*. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1978.

How do aspiring as well as established politicians organize and run their campaigns? When and where can libraries insert themselves into a candidate's platform? This work offers detailed insights into the anatomy of a political campaign.

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