



Civic Engagement Through Library Programming

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On Our Agenda Today

- How does civic engagement align with library values and goals?
- The Birth of the Civic Lab idea at Skokie Public Library
- Civic Lab Programs in Three Phases (so far)
- Trying Civic Engagement at Your Library



Civic Engagement in Libraries

Libraries Are Not Neutral

By Cory Eckert on  August 12, 2016  20 Comments

Recently, a librarian posted an image to the [Storytime Lives Matter \(BLM\)](#) book display she created in her teen a Hennepin County (MN) librarian. Several librarians commented on the displays. One commenter asked whether librarians were 'all lives matter' and 'blue lives matter.'" She opined, "[Librarians] provide [viewpoints about] all sides, not endorse one over another based on personal preference." The comment generated dozens of responses. During the same time period, several librarians reported that their library administrators told staff to remain silent on the issue of BLM in order to stay "neutral." The [Joint Chiefs of Storytime Underground](#) felt, collectively, that it was important to publicly take a stance on the issue of "neutrality in the public library." Our voice may be small, but we felt that silence was not an option.

Our stance is this: Librarianship is not a neutral profession, and libraries are not neutral spaces.



Libraries 4 Black Lives

[Take The Pledge](#) [Resources](#) [About](#) [Get Involved](#)

But Aren't Libraries Neutral?

Some will ask, Why should libraries take this stand? Some librarians pride themselves on being "neutral." We respond: **Equity** is a library core value. **Civic engagement** is a core library value. **Intellectual freedom** is a core library value. **Democracy** is a core library value. Yet, marginalization in all forms -- and racism in particular -- disrupts and limits equity, civic participation, and freedom. It deforms democracy. If we are to fulfill our mission and uphold library values then we must be advocates *against* marginalization and inequity, and *for* justice and equity.



Civic Engagement in Libraries

Code of Ethics of the American Library Association

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By Cory Eck

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Our stand



As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs.

Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

- I. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- II. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.
- III. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.
- IV. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
- V. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.
- VI. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.
- VII. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- VIII. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

Adopted at the 1939 Midwinter Meeting by the ALA Council; amended June 30, 1981; June 28, 1995; and January 22, 2008.

About Get Involved

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Inspiration & Ideation

- The Uni Project
www.theuniproject.org
- The Free Black Woman's Library
<http://thefreeblackwomanslibrary.tumblr.com>
- CivicLab
<http://www.civicl原因ab.us>





Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured and difficult to read.



Handwritten notes on a piece of paper, partially obscured and difficult to read.

Voices of Race



Learning Pathways Objective

To engage individuals more fully in the learning experience, develop and pilot a learning pathways model for programming. A learning pathway is an evident continuum of learning opportunities across the spectrum of ages and abilities and is composed of multiple facets of learning. Pathways would support learning and literacy by facilitating social bridging, peer learning, and intergenerational learning opportunities.





Phase I: Civic Lab Boutique



Boutique Components

Collection

- Adults
- Teens
- Kid & Families
- Curated
- Multi-format

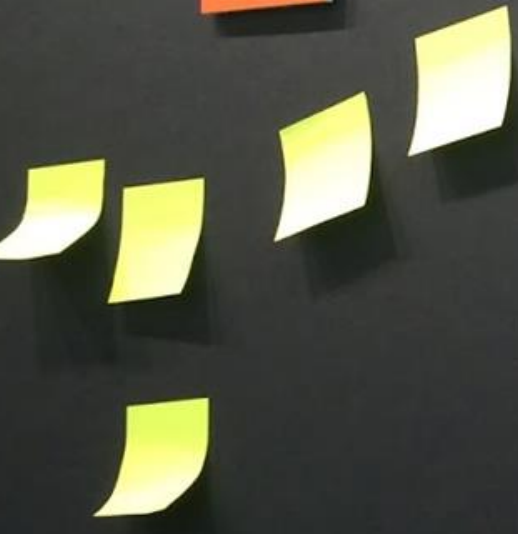
<https://skokielibrary.info/blog/78/welcome-to-the-civic-lab/>



Has the Black Lives Matter movement challenged you to think about racism?

YES

NO

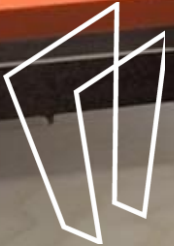


BLACK LIVES MATTER

What can you do to reduce racism in Skokie?

CIVIC LAB

Be part of the conversation.
We hope these questions inspire dialogue both in the library and beyond. Write your thoughts on a postcard, then address it to a friend or family member. Drop your finished postcard in the mailbox. We'll take care of postage.



Learning from the Phase I

- Materials:
microcollections vs. lists
- Engagement:
browsing, voting, talking, writing
- Measuring:

435
Items
circulated
from the Civic
Lab Boutique

108
Resource lists
taken by
patrons

598
Votes cast in
the Civic Lab
& Youth
Department

35
Postcards
submitted
with thoughts
& stories



After living here for 18 years, brought as a 7 year old, yes, please! There are so many people here, good people, who already feel this is their country, even without citizenship.

Patron responding to the voting prompt
"Should all undocumented immigrants be given a path to citizenship?"



Learning from the Phase I

Key takeaways for future iterations:

- Patrons prefer direct conversation with library staff and/or one another
→ Facilitation is vital
- Voting as an activity offers a range of levels for engagement
→ Purposefully think of scaffolded options





Phase II: Civic Lab Pop-Ups



Pop-Up Topics

Election Day

Let's Talk About Standing Rock

DEAR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Blackness in America

Executive Orders & Immigrants

ACTUALLY, SHE DID THAT





Phase IIa: Civic Lab Pop-Ups



Tying to Formal Events

What Every American Should Know

TOGETHER AT THE TABLE

Who is Chin-kee?



Learning from Phase II

Key takeaways for future iterations:

- Patrons are drawn to resource-based conversations around topics they see in the news
→ Provide items for information & inspiration
- Patrons are eager to participate and want to know when & on what topic
→ Rethinking our pop-up philosophy



Civic Lab Team & Standards

Staffing

- Curatorial team
- Staff support across the library

What constitutes a Civic Lab installation

- Event listing
- Central prompt/question w/ activities
- Handout
- Direct facilitation
- Documentation



The Role of the Library in a 21st Century Village

Free Speech vs. Hate Speech

NEWS LITERACY

How does the Supreme Court work?

CRISPR

Bringing in more staff, getting outside...

Phase III: What's Next?



Trying the Civic Engagement Programming at Your Library

Core questions:

What type of engagement is right for your community?

How do you get staff buy-in? Community buy-in?

What topics are timely?

How can you ideate and learn as you go?



CIVIC LAB

TO



The CIVIC LAB at Skokie Public Library aims to support dialogue and engagement on issues that affect our community. We offer thought-provoking activities that start with the belief that others' intentions are good and that we can learn and grow in open conversations with one another.



In Conclusion



If you're tired of arguing with strangers on the internet, try talking with one of them in real life.

President Barack Obama
Farewell Address, 10 January 2017



Questions?

Thanks!

<https://skokielibrary.info/events/group/civic-lab/>

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