

Introduction to Public Librarianship

Second Edition

Kathleen de la Peña McCook

Neal-Schuman Publishers
New York London

Published by Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.
100 William St., Suite 2004
New York, NY 10038

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Printed and bound in the United States of America.

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McCook, Kathleen de la Peña.

Introduction to public librarianship / Kathleen de la Peña McCook. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-55570-697-5 (alk. paper)

1. Public libraries—United States. I. Title.

Z731.M355 2011

027.473—dc22

2011004985

Dedication

To three women whose values have affected the development of public librarianship in the twenty-first century:

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt

Human Rights

The Human Rights Years, 1945–1948 (Thomson Gale, 2007)

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Democracy and Global Affairs

It Takes a Village (Simon and Schuster, 1996)

Laura Welch Bush

Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries

Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services)

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Foreword

Public libraries today operate in a perpetually changing environment and many managers, staff, and board members feel overwhelmed by the dual pressures of rapidly expanding technologies and limited budgets. Dr. Carl Sagan said, “You have to know the past to understand the present.” *Introduction to Public Librarianship* provides a framework and context that will help both current staff and the next generation of librarians know more about the past. This in turn will help them to better understand the present and to plan more effectively for the future.

As I read *Introduction to Public Librarianship*, I realized how long it has been since I thought about the roots of the services that public libraries offer and the evolution of our values and principles. If Melvil Dewey walked into a modern public library, he would probably be astonished at the transformations that have occurred in the institution he so strongly influenced. Today’s public libraries, with their open and friendly public spaces, programs and services for all ages, multiple types of media, advanced technology, and emphasis on meeting community needs would appear to be completely different from the venerable public libraries of the nineteenth century. However, if Mr. Dewey spent some time talking to the people who manage and staff modern public libraries, he would discover that the libraries of today are built on the foundations that were established 150 years ago.

The significant changes in the past 100 years have been in the values and principles that support the services provided by public libraries. *Introduction to Public Librarianship* traces the increasing acceptance of the principles of equal access for all ages, races, and ethnicities; intellectual freedom and the Library Bill of Rights; human rights; and support for democracy. It is easy for those of us who work in libraries today to take these principles for granted and to forget how hard previous generations of librarians and library advocates fought for them. *Introduction to Public Librarianship* provides an important reminder that the values which we share must be sustained and that there is more work to be done to ensure that everyone receives the public library services they need and want.

When I work with library staff on identifying priorities, developing new services, measuring the library’s success, or creating advocacy plans, I find that many lack the context they need to be able to effectively translate theory into practice. Dr. McCook is an academic whose work is grounded in the real world of librarianship. There is noth-

ing theoretical about her discussions of library statistics and standards, infrastructure and funding, administration and staff, and advocacy and politics. All current and potential librarians need to understand how these issues affect their libraries and their jobs.

Not surprisingly, the chapters that describe the evolution of the library planning process and the current models of service for adults and youth were of great interest to me. Dr. McCook makes a clear distinction between the functions of state public library standards and the purpose of a community-based public library planning process. She underscores the importance of public library planning and the value of the Public Library Association's *Strategic Planning for Results* process.

Strategic Planning for Results includes eighteen public library service responses, defined as "what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet a well-defined set of community needs" (Himmel and Wilson, 1998: 54). The current service responses were identified through an open process that I facilitated with June Garcia in 2007. The process involved several hundred library staff members from across the country who participated in open hearings and in discussions on the PLA blog. The final service responses reflect a consensus about the range of possible service priorities a public library might select to meet community needs. Libraries using *Strategic Planning for Results* are encouraged to match the possible service responses with the needs of their communities and to select only those that will most benefit the community as priorities.

Strategic Planning for Results provides detailed information about each service response, including a general description, suggested target audiences, typical services and programs offered by libraries that select the service response as a priority, potential community partners, library policy implications, critical resources, and possible measures (Nelson, 2008: 143–217). The descriptions do not provide any information about the historical context of each service response, and that is what Dr. McCook has done so well in this book.

Dr. McCook has written two chapters on library services, one that discusses adult services and a second that discusses youth services. In each of these chapters, she has organized the service responses into four groups "to reflect a broader vision of the public library's centrality to its community" (p. 206): public sphere, cultural heritage, education, and information. In doing so, she has helped her readers understand not only *what* the service entails but *why* the service is important and *how* it fits into the broader issues of public librarianship.

Last, but by no means least, I want to acknowledge the detailed notes, citations, and bibliographic references that are provided throughout the text. As I read the book, I found myself stopping to look up an article that was referenced or to check a website that provided more information on the topic being presented. This book is a treasure trove of information for any serious student of public librarianship, and I include my-

self in that category. I have been a practicing librarian for 40 years and I am still fascinated with the profession—its past, its present, and all of its potential futures. *Introduction to Public Librarianship* added to my knowledge and has provided me with new avenues to explore. That is all any could ask of a book such as this—and far more than one usually gets.

Sandra Nelson

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Sandra Nelson is a consultant, speaker, trainer, and writer specializing in public library planning and management issues. She is a leader in the development of planning and management tools for public librarians and is the Senior Editor of the Public Library Association (PLA) Results series, an integrated library of planning and resource allocation manuals.

Sandra is the author or co-author of six of the books in Results series, including *Strategic Planning for Results*, the foundation of the series, and the recently published *Implementing for Results*. She has used her planning expertise to help library managers, staff, and board members to develop strategic plans in dozens of public libraries of all sizes.

Preface

Public libraries in the United States of America are in their third century of service as the heart of communities throughout the nation. Our public libraries are our public sphere open to all who desire to use their services—both as cultural spaces and as virtual services. The literature of public librarianship is extensive, but it is also dispersed among many specializations such as management, information technology, youth services, and community planning. In truth, public librarianship incorporates all of these specializations, just as public librarians work to serve all people—all backgrounds, all ethnicities, all ages, all religions or no religion, all abilities, all economic means. This universality of mission and responsibilities presents a grand challenge. The public library of the twenty-first century is more complex than its nineteenth-century predecessor with multiple formats, mobile access, and the mandate to provide equity of access to all. The larger community is made stronger by a vibrant public library and the library remains a positive indicator of the quality of life in every community.

Purpose

Introduction to Public Librarianship, Second Edition, provides the historical, sociological, and cultural background of the public library in the United States. Full understanding is necessary for the future inheritors of this fundamental institution of democracy. This volume is a guide to the extensive literature of the field's various areas of specialization. This book was written for students, new librarians, library trustees and friends, and the general public who wish to understand the historical and sociological foundations of different aspects of public librarianship. Readers of *Introduction to Public Librarianship* will gain a greater understanding of the following key areas:

- The history of public librarianship within the broader historical and cultural movements of the times
- The landmark literature of the field's development
- The evolution of standards and planning for public library service
- The role of the political process in the growth of libraries and library services

- Public libraries' adult and youth services as reflections of changing societal trends in the context of the Public Library Association Strategic Planning model
- The overarching ideas, principles, and goals that drive public librarianship and the necessity of continuing to work toward these goals
- Human rights and human capabilities as the lodestars that will guide public library service in the twenty-first century

Organization

Each chapter provides a holistic approach to its subject. I have provided a historical background to the subject, an organizational context, and discussion about the development of public libraries.

Each chapter is keyed to Selected Readings in Appendix A to help readers better understand the wealth of information available in public libraries and to help them explore topics in greater detail.

Chapter 1, “The Landscape of Public Libraries in the Twenty-First Century,” provides readers with a context for understanding where we are today. The scope and range of public librarianship is defined and summarized. This chapter also includes background information about services to Native Americans, a population that is increasingly seeing new service and support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This presentation will help readers understand the progress and development outlined in the rest of the book.

Chapter 2, “Brahmins, Bequests, and Determined Women: The Beginnings to 1918,” reviews the historical antecedents and the legal basis for establishing tax-supported public libraries. It explores and discusses the fundamental *Report of the Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, 1852*, one of the key documents of U.S. librarianship. This chapter pays special attention to the important role played by women in the establishment of public library service across the United States.

Chapter 3, “Public Library Growth and Values: 1918–Today” covers the history of public libraries from 1918 to the present. It focuses on efforts to equalize opportunity through the growing role assumed by the American Library Association, the enactment of federal legislation (LSA, LSCA, LSTA), and an expanded scope of activity for the public library. It also discusses the work of national and state library associations and the role of state library agencies, as the growing voice of advocacy for libraries that resulted from these actions.

Chapter 4, “Statistics, Standards, Planning, Results, and Quality of Life” explores public library statistics and reviews the development of standards for public library service developed by the American Library Association. It analyzes the evolution of a

planning process to replace standards and explores the role of the public library as a quality-of-life indicator in local communities.

Chapter 5, “Organization, Law, Advocacy, Funding, and Politics,” reviews the political and economic context in which the public library functions. This chapter pays due attention to the organizational, legal, and funding basis of the public library, noting the parallels to municipal government structure and the move to larger units of service. The importance of advocacy at all levels is emphasized.

Chapter 6, “Administration and Staffing,” surveys the structure of governance including model-enabling legislation. It presents the changing role of the library board over time. This chapter also introduces typical position descriptions and describes the need to recruit a diverse staff.

Chapter 7, “Structure and Infrastructure,” looks at the history of public library buildings (including the symbolism of the public library building), as well as the influence of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) over construction during the last third of the twentieth century and the shift in federal funding from construction (structure) to support for technology (infrastructure). This chapter also summarizes design standards including accessibility. The need for security and disaster planning are presented.

Chapters 8 and 9, “Adult Services” and “Youth Services,” review the history and current status of these two distinct areas of service. In both chapters the service responses enumerated in the Public Library Association *Strategic Planning for Results* (Nelson, 2008) are reorganized under four categories to reflect a different way of looking at the public library’s importance to its communities:

1. Public sphere
2. Cultural heritage
3. Education
4. Information

Chapter 9 is coauthored with me by Alicia K. Long, research associate, teacher, Spectrum Scholar, and community volunteer. A list of recommended websites for libraries serving youth is provided.

Chapter 10, “The Interconnective Nature of the Public Library,” examines the importance of networking in public librarianship—the role of professional organizations, state library agencies, library consortia, and social networking. The boundary-spanning nature of public librarianship is defined and the importance of this to future development noted.

Barbara J. Ford, distinguished professor of international librarianship and director of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote Chapter 11, “Global Perspectives on Public Libraries.”

This chapter analyzes the importance of the “IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto” (UNESCO, 1994), offers points of interest on public library development around the globe, and characterizes international library development initiatives.

Chapter 12, “The Future of Public Libraries in the Twenty-First Century: Human Rights and Human Capabilities,” is coauthored with me by Katharine J. Phenix. Ms. Phenix is the Adult Services Librarian (aka Experience Guide) at the Huron Street branch of the Rangeview Library District, Thornton, Colorado. This chapter presents the millennium development goals in service of a human capabilities approach. We note that the path will be clear to achieving universal human rights with the support and commitment of public librarians.

Appendixes

There are four appendixes at the end of the book. Appendix A, “Selected Readings,” is an extensive list of readings keyed to each chapter, selected from 150 years of books, articles, and government reports, addressing topics related to the history and development of public libraries. Although I have also included websites, I have taken much care to review and assess salient items, especially those predating 1985. My rationale in this is gauged from a review of much current literature, which seems, increasingly, to rely upon bibliographic citations from online databases. It is my judgment that by providing this selected bibliography at the outset of the twenty-first century, I am helping to connect the public librarians of tomorrow with those from the past, who have written so much and so well for the good of librarianship.

The welcoming remarks from the 21st Century Learner Conference on November 7, 2001, by the first librarian to be director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Robert S. Martin, are presented as Appendix B. After the events of September 11, 2001, the nation was in mourning. I felt that this conference would be momentous in the history of librarianship. It was about the convergence of cultural heritage institutions and free-choice learning. My husband, Bill McCook, and my friend the Louisiana state librarian for computing services, Sara M. Taffae, drove with me from Tampa, Florida, to the conference. Dr. Martin’s remarks were initially posted at the IMLS website, but they were taken down after 2008. I reproduce his remarks here because I believe that this historic conference, which took place at such a turning point in the history of the United States, was also a turning point in public library development.

Appendix C, “Community Foundations and the Public Library: Libraries for the Future,” is an important document that defined the role of foundations in supporting public libraries. It was written by Diantha Dow Schull and William Zeisel for Libraries for the Future (LFF), a national nonprofit organization that championed the role of libraries in American life. LFF ceased operations in March 2009.

Appendix D is “Bibliography of National Statistics on Public Libraries.” Beginning with the first federal report on public libraries, completed in 1850, I present in chronological order the record of publications that track statistics about a wide array of aspects of public libraries, such as their numbers, activities, uses, physical features, management, programs, and holdings. The reports by Herbert Goldhor (1983), “U.S. Public Library Statistics in Series: A Bibliography and Subject Index” and Robert V. Williams and Mittie Kristina McLean (2008), *A Bibliographical Guide to a Chronological Record of Statistics of National Scope on Libraries in the United States*, were key to the development of this bibliography.

Introduction to Public Librarianship, Second Edition, provides essential information for future library workers to inherit the future of public libraries as developed by their past and to continue to follow the ideas, principles, and goals that have shaped over 150 years of public librarianship in the United States.

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