Library leaders face the challenge of not just leading those who work in the library, but also acting as liaison between the library and the higher powers within their institution for a multitude of issues. Library staff rely on library directors to go to bat for library resources (human, print, and digital) in the realm of an administration whose priority may not include the library in their focus. The literature on the politics of librarianship is not extensive, yet it is clear that library leaders knowingly or not find themselves using political strategy for certain goals. This literature review offers a brief overview of how political capital is used by library directors and attempts to provide an understanding of the necessary politics of librarianship.

John Buschman (2016) provides the theoretical framework behind the need for librarians to be political savvy as he discusses several definitions of what political means. In Buschman's definition, political librarianship is needed for effective leadership, which is very different from being a manager. A leader leads positive outcomes for the library's efforts, thinks proactively, and behaves with a certain charisma that allows the leader to effectively manage conflicts. Politics occur when that leader uses their influence to make decisions based on, for our purposes, the good of the library and community. Politics occur when relationships are formed that are needed for specific purposes. Charles O'Bryan (2018) would venture to say that the commodity needed to accomplish goals with relationships and influence is called social capital. Buschman criticizes current library leadership and urges library directors to become less politically naive, but for what reason?

Seidan and Mitchell (2017) argue that knowing how one stands among the organizational structure is critical to providing quality leadership. When it comes to winning additional funds or other resources, library directors must seek out the members of the institution that have a fondness for the library or learn how to communicate the effectiveness of library resources to the

right people. Unfortunately, some of the goals of the institution do not align with the plans the college or board has for specific spaces and funds, which is when the library director has to gamble their political capital on trying to keep the library's needs off of the back burner. Seidan and Mitchell call on new library directors to form as many informal and formal relationships as they can through high visibility on the campus and service to committees. If libraries are to be thought of in terms of a sustainable future, then library directors must find a way to be in the room where decisions are being made, but this might be an issue if library professionals lack the skills needed to be politically savvy or are unaware of the political waters they currently stand in.

In a study by Kathy Irwin (2021) from Central Michigan University, the researchers sought to understand the political skills of library professionals and the determining factors. Using the Political Skills Inventory that Ferris, Treadway, et al., (2005) created to measure four characteristics of political skills: "social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity" and Bolman and Deal's (2017) political frame skills (p. 209). The study found that a greater age did not necessarily mean that the library professional had a high PSI score, but that the length of time employed in library service meant higher PSI scores. The results indicating the higher PSI capabilities point to the conclusion that political skills can be acquired over time, especially with the aid of mentorship and reflection. The results indicate that the longer librarians work, they are constantly navigating relationships within the institution, which gives them experience communicating with a wide range of others. Institutions hiring for positions of supervision should test for social astuteness and interpersonal communication skills as these are key indicators of a leader's success-- of someone who will be able to effectively communicate the needs of the library to other departments on campus. Irwin argues that these skills are critical to performing outreach. Like Seidan and Mitchell (2017), Irwin concludes that

the respondents' scoring low in networking ability is particularly concerning given that academic libraries cannot afford to silo themselves against the rest of the institution. If libraries want to have the resources they need to serve their communities, then leadership has to be savvy enough to know who the right partners are on the campus and how to approach them.

However, the study done by O'Bryan (2018) suggests engaging with political capital is already something library directors do whether or not they are aware of it. From the respondents' interviews, it is clear that library directors face challenges in three main areas: "budget, human resources, and the use of library space" (p.8). Many of the interviews indicate that behaving like part of a team has been key to the success and advancement-- that attending campus activities where you might find yourself in the path of the provost of board member is always a good idea. Interestingly, many of the interviews talk about political capital as if they were playing it on the stock market at the risk of crashing and, if successful, seeing a return on investment. So like Seidan and Mitchell (2017), the information from O'Bryan's article indicates that an attribute needed to see political gain might be risk-taking or a willingness to go for it on behalf of the library instead of sitting quietly as the institution moves forward without hearing your voice. But the concerning aspect of O'bryan's study is that many of the respondents describe not being consciously aware of how they engage with political capital and, therefore, have not clear strategy for how to use their skills and investments for the good of the library.

Like Seidan and Mitchell (2017), Bromberg (2017) offers an actual strategy for those who are not sure how to use their influence to make gains-- most specifically for securing additional budgeting funds. Bromberg uses their experience to make the case that library directors cannot be successful in accomplish their goals alone, but that a team effort is necessary when it comes to success. Bromberg has a five-step strategy that they follow for diagnosing a

need for their library, building relationships, and following through with effective routes of communication. When Bromberg became director of the Salt Lake City Public Library, they learned what the major issues were and who the campus partners were that would be most influential to tackle these issues with. Bromberg socialized with city council people, the board president-- learning the ways they communicated, the facial expressions they used, and how they behaved so that he could mimic their disposition. Once those relationships were formed, the needs of the library became ever-visible to those that had the power to make change.

If Bromberg had not made the effort to play the political game with those in charge of their library budget, they may not have gotten the funding they needed to accomplish their goals. Fitsimmons (2008) provides helpful research on the attributes that hiring committees look for when hiring for directorship positions. The stakeholders revealed that the most common valued attribute was the ability to collaborate with campus partners and that the applicant has integrity. Academic administrators prefer their new director to have a strong work ethic, to be willing to align themselves with the mission of the institution, and "the ability to change the culture of their library as belonging to the areas of the knowledge category" (p. 306). Most telling, though, were the results in the comments section of the survey, it is clear that academic administrators are looking for someone to lead the library fearlessly into the future of an ever-changing environment. These results are also reflected in Krieitz's (2009) study of emotional intelligence and director-like attributes. One of the most highly-ranked attributes is the ability to visualize change, to understand what is necessary for change, and the ability to communicate with and motivate staff through that change.

Out of these sources, only Krieitz mentions a seemingly negative attribute: narcissism. The researchers were surprised that none of the respondents scored on the narcissism attribute of

the Emotional Intelligence scale because narcissism is often thought to play some role in effective leadership. Yet, the literature points to the need for that future library leader to be self-absorbed and egotistical enough to brave the ladder of their advancement to being a library director then having the confidence to go toe-to-toe with the academic administration. Only these ventures are not for personal reasons, but to make sure the library has a seat at the table-- a piece of the pie so they can continue to provide critical resources to the communities they serve. Regardless, the literature acknowledges the need for libraries to gain political capital through the use of charismatic and political qualities. Library leaders stand on the fence of leading their staff members with integrity and being just manipulative enough to understand how the games of higher education are played. Maybe this means that leaders do not have to choose between honesty and political success-- if library directors lead with the good of their staff and library users in mind then the means behind the bridges they build will have been worth the risk.

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