

END OF FUNDING PERIOD REPORT

LAUC Statewide Grants, Research & Professional Development Committee

Primary Applicant(s): Yolanda Blue
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TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring pathways to political information: facilitating civic engagement in a diverse California community

Time Period of Grant: FY2013-2014
Amount of Award Received: \$293.58

Original Abstract as Submitted:

This is an era in which political information may be delivered across various forms of multimedia, (i.e. print, internet, You Tube, Twitter, and Face book). How can librarians help the community navigate this plethora of political information? In the United States of America the right to participate in our civic society's discourse is paramount to reaping the benefits of a healthy democracy. Access to political information helps community members to view how their representative/government officials will act on economic, and social concerns.

As librarians, we specialize in selecting and organizing information while providing access to all types of multimedia. We instruct users on how to evaluate and efficiently use information to meet their research and personal enrichment needs. As a result, we help users develop information literacy skills. In the article, "In Pursuit of Information," according to Rettig (2008) "information literacy intersects with civic literacy." Milner (2002) defined civic literacy as "knowledge and the ability of citizens to make sense of their world to act as competent citizens." Librarians have a critical role to ensure that information literacy skills translates into the community's ability to acquire and understand the political knowledge that impacts their lives.

In our academic library, librarians create finding aids, subject guides, and links to candidate/political sites. In addition, we provide instruction services designed help users to locate and to evaluate political resources. In addition, in some cases, neutral public forums for diverse groups to discuss social, political, and economic issues have been implemented. We network with local advocacy grass roots community groups to market the library's political information resources.

In 2010, a team of librarians started a project to focus on a crucial and elusive literature – that of electoral campaigns geared toward the local multicultural communities. From our research, at that time, we found that California was only mandated to collect ballot measures, campaign finance information, candidate data, and election results. An initial assessment of the available political information such as election flyers, websites, and social networks that had been collected and preserved was limited in scope. Our goal was to explore tools that would provide sustained access to political information in its various forms such as traditional archiving, digitization, and web archiving.

Our PechaKucha will focus on the progression of our research and investigations of civic literacy and civic engagement in our local community. It will include examples and images of methods that librarians can use to provide some pathways to political information in all types of libraries. As librarians, our goal is to ensure that the community members understand and have knowledge of past and present issues expressed by their political representatives. We want to promote the knowledge needed for members to fully engage in the civic process. Rettig (2008) stated that, "elections come and go, but issues abide, as do our roles to promote information literacy and civic literacy."

I. ACCOMPLISHMENTS and EVALUATION

- Describe what was achieved during the time period of the grant.

The PechaKucha “Chit Chat” presented at the 2013 European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) was a culmination of a research project that began in 2010 by a team of UCSB librarians. The project came about as a response to the crucial need for librarians to provide sustained access to political information for our local diverse communities.

As our research progressed, during various conferences, we presented poster sessions and a paper/panel discussion relating to aspects of political information, civic literacy, and civic engagement. The co-chair of the (ECIL) attended the panel discussion and was impressed with our discussion on civic literacy. We were requested to submit a proposal. As a result, we utilized our knowledge and experience to produce a PechaKucha that highlighted the opportunities and challenges information professionals face in providing resources that facilitate communities’ engagement in the civic process.

- Did the project accomplish what it intended? Did it make a difference?

Even though the PechaKucha was limited to 6 minutes, we successfully incorporated visual excerpts that demonstrated methods librarians could employ to not only provide access to political information but also to enhance the information literacy skills of communities as they seek to make informed decisions about issues that impact their lives.

The PechaKucha was well received by the attendees from all types of worldwide institutions. Notwithstanding the short presentation, it generated an in depth discussion about the role of librarians and the services they render to users regarding civic literacy.

In particular, a United States librarian working at the New York University Abu Dhabi library in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) posed a thought provoking question on the role of librarians in facilitating civic engagement via access to political information where freedom of expression is more restrictive. Attendees responded with suggestions regarding how the librarian as well as the institution could maintain a neutral position and still provide the services.

- What would you do differently next time, if anything?

I would consider participating in a paper/panel discussion.

- What advice do you have for others applying for LAUC research grants?

To focus on a project that has a benefit not only for the research community but also for information professionals and their various institutions.

II. IS YOUR PROJECT COMPLETED? Yes X No__

If No, what is needed to complete the project? Is more time needed? Or more funds?

III. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Timetable:

Depart: October 20, 2013

Conference: October 22-25, 2013, Istanbul, Turkey

Return: October 27, 2013

Summary of the budget:

Airfare: 2100.00 US

Shuttle/Taxi: 20.00 US per day

Registration: 350 EUR = 460 US (present exchange rate)

Hotel: 157.00 US per night

Per diem for food: 50.00 US per day

The original budget estimate was close to the actual expenditures for the conference. The original budget estimate was \$3425.00. The actual expenditures totaled \$3247.30.

IV. SHARING YOUR PRODUCT/RESULTS

European Conference on Information Literacy (ECIL) October 22-25, 2013 Istanbul, Turkey

Abstracts: Hacettepe University Department of Information Management: 171

http://ecil2013.ilconf.org/docs/ecil2013_abstracts.pdf

V. NOTE

Information included in this report may be reprinted or posted on the web for dissemination to UCOP, other UC Libraries, and future potential LAUC grant applicants.