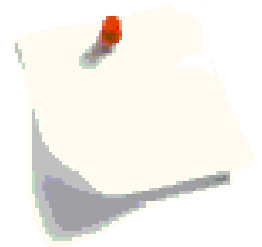


Editorial



LIBRARIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL REVISITED

What kind of a society do you want to live in? To me it's a simple question with a simple answer – one which is high in social capital. According to Woolcock (2001), a society which is 'housed, healthy, hired and happy' has good social capital. In other words a society which has good economic, cultural, and social achievements. Fourteen years back, when Anne Goulding (2004) discussed about libraries and social capital in her Editorial for the *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, she gave impetus to a myriad of research into social capital development in libraries, specifically public libraries. At that time, Goulding relied on the concept of social capital which revolved around citizen participation at community level with an emphasis on public space as a key community resource where people meet and interact. Public libraries gained recognition as advocate for social capital development since it serves different range of communities, have varied collections in language and formats and offer space and facilities that enhance social interactions and trust.

A quick subject search ('social capital' and 'library') in LISA revealed 75 articles relating to social capital and libraries published between 2000-2018. These studies are published in a wide range of journals, mainly *Library Journal*, *Library Hi Tech*, *The Bottom Line* and *The Library Quarterly*. A majority of the studies focus on public libraries (38.7%). Varheim (2007, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017) and Johnson (2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015) are leading researchers in the investigation of social capital development in public libraries. Aabo & Audunson (2012) are more focused on library as a place, which also has close implications to community level integration and trust development. Johnson's (2015) discussion of the conceptualization of social capital in LIS research concluded that LIS researchers interpret the concept widely and use it to demonstrate its relevance in information seeking, ICT adoption in communities and sharing of information. One of the concern raised is the need for measurement validity if social capital is to be accepted as a theory to be applied in LIS.

If libraries are to remain relevant and deemed important to society, then libraries must demonstrate value to the user community. Contribution to social capital development can be capitalized by libraries. However, the research agenda must go beyond the public libraries and beyond the interpretivism paradigm to move on to the postpositivism. We need measurable constructs to quantify the development of social capital in the context of libraries as a public space.

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