

PRESERVING THE SOCIAL COHESIVENESS AND LIFELONG LEARNING MISSION OF SCOTLAND'S PUBLIC LIBRARIES: EVALUATING THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL LIBRARY STRATEGY THROUGH THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: The following paper is based on my master's degree thesis written as a graduate student at the University of Glasgow from 2014-2015 titled, "Preserving the Social Cohesiveness and Lifelong Educational Mission of Public Libraries in Times of Austerity: Assessing the Potential of the Scottish National Library Strategy through the Capabilities Approach." The purpose of my research is to understand how austerity policies have weakened and compromised the public library service in Scotland. In June 2015, the first Scottish national library strategy for public libraries was issued. Entitled, *Ambition & Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020*, was released as a policy response to ongoing austerity cuts in public services from the UK government. My research is a literature-based analysis of the new strategy using Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical framework in which to examine and evaluate the policy's strategic aims and recommendations. In carrying out my research, I identified those central capabilities which I thought best corresponded to each of the strategic aims outlined in the Scottish national library strategy. Also, I used various examples of public library programs and initiatives (in Scotland and elsewhere) to help illustrate the links between the strategic aims and central capabilities. Throughout my analysis, I define public libraries as a vital community and social service that provides lifelong learning opportunities, social and community cohesion, adult and family literacy, and other innumerable benefits to the communities they serve.

Keywords: Scottish public libraries, lifelong learning, social cohesion, capabilities approach, austerity, public library policy

Public libraries are important to the communities they serve, especially as centers for lifelong learning, community development, social cohesion, and the preservation of local history and culture. Scotland's public libraries have been offering these services and more to communities across the country for more than 150 years (Aitken, 1971; SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). Since the conservatives came to power in 2010, austerity cuts to public and social services have served as the government's main strategy for stabilizing the British economy after the global economic crisis in 2008 (Sparrow, 2015). Because of this policy, public libraries have become increasingly easy targets for cuts as local governments across the Union seek to balance their budgets and provide essential services to their communities (CIPFA, 2014a; 2014b). Austerity cuts to public libraries include not only slashing and limiting operating hours, hiring freezes, staff layoffs, eliminating funds for new materials, but also the closure of community libraries altogether (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). In comparison, Scotland's public libraries have fared much better than the rest of the UK. Part of this can be attributed to Scotland's more liberal, devolved government which shows more support for public and social services than the national government based in London (SLIC and Carnegie UK

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Trust, 2015). When I wrote my thesis, I used available statistical information on public libraries from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) from 2009-2014. This data were striking in that they revealed cause for concern regarding public libraries across the UK. The statistics indicated significant decline in the number of public libraries operating in the Union from 4,482 down to 4,145 (CIPFA, 2014a). In total, 337 libraries were closed across the UK. Out of this figure, Scotland lost 17 brick and mortar libraries and 12 mobile library services (CIPFA, 2014a; 2014b; Public Libraries News, 2015). Since then, data for 2014-2015 have become available and the picture continues to look discouraging. According to CIPFA, 228 libraries closed their doors bringing the total number of libraries across the UK down to 3,917 (CIPFA, 2015). My research is a literature-based study that strives to illustrate the contributions that public libraries make to the communities they serve. Contextualized in Scotland, my thesis research serves as a contribution to the growing body of knowledge pertaining to the effects of austerity cuts to public services.

Objective, Rationale, and Method of Research

The objective of my research is to understand how ongoing austerity cuts weaken the ability of Scottish public libraries to carry out their lifelong educational and social mission. I carried out a literature-based study analyzing the Scottish national library strategy, its strategic aims and recommendations, using Martha Nussbaum's (2003; 2009) expanded definition of the Capabilities Approach as a theoretical framework in which to base my research study. To do this, I used specific real-life examples of public library initiatives to relate the policy document's strategic aims with the central capabilities that compose the Capabilities Approach. As a literature based study, the process for collecting information, resources, and literature involved several steps. I worked closely with my thesis supervisor Dr. Bonnie Slade and University of Glasgow librarian Ms. Honor Hania to help me with initiating an initial keyword database search and to obtain background information to provide me with context of the overall situation facing Scottish public libraries. Using NEXUS, I was able to pull more than one hundred brief newspaper articles pertaining to cuts in public library service provision, including cuts to branch operating hours and staff, closings, and proposed closures of branch libraries across Scotland. Afterwards, I used other databases, including ProQuest, LISA, EBSCO HOST, Gale Research, and more to expand my search for articles providing general and background information concerning public libraries, as well as for research studies relevant to adult education and the Capabilities Approach. Additionally, I used the university's inter-library loan service to order books about public library policies, services, and programs.

Furthermore, I attended the annual conference of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Science Professionals for Scotland (CILIPS) that took place in Dundee from June 1st-2nd 2015. At the conference, I was introduced to a UK wide public library advocacy website called Public Libraries News which provides an online archive of news reports about the status of public libraries, including notices of closings, proposed closures, cuts in staff and operating hours, and other administrative reorganizing of libraries (CILIPS, 2015a; Public Libraries News, 2015). Although the website focuses

mainly on library developments in the UK, it occasionally features news and information about libraries in other countries. Next, I conducted an online search for demographic information about Scotland and Scottish public libraries. Additionally, I contacted all thirty-two local councils as well as library professional associations by email and telephone to make inquiries regarding freedom of information requests in order to obtain historical budget and statistical data for public libraries going back the last five years. In particular, the Inverclyde Council Libraries was immensely helpful to my search for information by providing me with electronic copies of the annual statistical reports (from 2009-2014) published by the Chartered Institute of Finance and Public Accountancy (CIPFA). To mention, CIPFA is the main professional and accrediting organization that represents the public finance sector across the UK. It conducts annual performance reviews and publishes statistical reports about public services nationwide, including public libraries (CIPFA, 2010; 2012; 2014a; 2014b). Finally, I contacted the Scottish Library and Information Council to request a copy of the national library strategy. These were the steps I took to collect literature and information for my research.

Theoretical Framework: The Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum further expanded its definition by developing a list of ten central capabilities (entitlements) that all countries must work towards providing their citizens (Nussbaum, 2003, 2009; Robeyns, 2006). Nussbaum refers to the Capabilities Approach as a “partial theory for social justice” because she considers it an evolving, conceptual theory that she may expand upon as she sees appropriate (Nussbaum, 2003; 2009). As a partial social justice theory, the Capabilities Approach offers an alternative perspective and framework in which to assess and evaluate a country’s development, growth, and progress. Its crux rests on the idea that the goal of national development should be guaranteeing citizens the rights and opportunities to reach their full potential and that conditions should be such that it makes it possible for individuals to thrive and have a healthy, fulfilling life. Furthermore, it recognizes the role of women play in society and within the formal and informal economy (2003). The ten central capabilities serve two purposes. One, is as a list of rights and entitlements. Two, they also represent a set of outcomes that could result when individuals are able to fully develop their talents, abilities, and reach their highest potential (Nussbaum, 2003, 2009). With that, here are the ten central capabilities provided directly by verbatim (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-42).

1. **Life**-being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily health**-being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily integrity**-being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. **Senses, imagination, and thought**-being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.
5. **Emotions**-being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. **Practical reason**-being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. **Affiliation**-being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)
8. **Other species**-being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. **Play**-being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. **Control over one’s environment:** (a) Political-being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association, (b) Material-being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, [that means] being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason, and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

I chose the Capabilities Approach as my theoretical framework for this research, because I think it complements the overall social justice ethos of the fields of adult education and lifelong learning (Jarvis, 2006, 2008; Knowles, 1972). As an evolving social justice theory, it offers an alternative perspective in which to analyze and evaluate a variety of social, economic, political, and public policy issues through its focus on essential aspects of an individual’s human development, including one’s physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, intellectual, social, economic, and political development. Furthermore, as

centers and resources for lifelong learning, adult education, and community development, public libraries play a contributory role in helping individuals and communities develop awareness of the central capabilities. Libraries offer a variety of adult learning opportunities, such as literacy classes, ESL classes, special interest topical classes, as well as host a special community and cultural events that enrich adult and lifelong learning and much more (Edwards, Robinson, & Unger, 2013).

Summative Analysis I: The Strategic Aims correlate to The Capabilities Approach

Ambition & Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020 is a response to austerity policies and attempts to define the role of public libraries as essential, invaluable community resources. The strategy was written as a collaborative effort by SLIC, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Carnegie UK Trust, and the Scottish Government. The strategy consists of six strategic aims that correspond with the Scottish Government's plan for national development. At this point, the remainder of my paper is devoted to summarizing how I analyzed the strategy using the Capabilities Approach. To do this, I identified those central capabilities which I thought best corresponded to each of the strategic aims, and, in addition, used various examples of public library programs and initiatives (in Scotland and elsewhere) to illustrate the links between the strategic aims and central capabilities. The text of each strategic aim is provided directly by verbatim from the strategic document (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015).

- 1. Libraries promoting reading, literacy and lifelong learning-** Public libraries Scotland promote education and learning for all, develop a culture of reading for pleasure, offer support for everyone from early years to older people, and enable people to make informed choices (p. 14).

This strategic aim sums up what public libraries are all about. As places that offer non-formal education and information services, libraries offer a wide variety of programs, reference and reading materials for patrons of all ages and backgrounds, and they are actively engaged with the communities in which they serve. As articulated and described by the titles of the chapters in Edwards et al. (2013), libraries as serving key educational, social, and cultural roles in communities as “centres for civic action, centres for diverse populations, centres for arts, universities for the community, and champions for youth” (pp. 133, 146, 161, 175, 189, 199, 209). Therefore, these strategic aims closely correspond to the fourth, sixth, and tenth central capabilities pertaining to senses, imagination and thought, practical reason, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2003). An illustrative example that is pertinent to this strategic aim is the Welcome Centre at the New York Queen's Library. The Welcome Centre offers a variety of adult learning programs, including ESL courses, GED prep courses, and adult basic education courses for adult learners with little to no literacy skills. Other courses offered include family literacy courses, foreign language literacy courses for native speakers with little to no literacy skills in their native language (Muphy & Clark, 2013).

- 2. Libraries promoting digital inclusion-** Public libraries in Scotland make the best use of digital technologies to deliver high quality, efficient and responsive services, enabling access to information and services wherever and whenever citizens want them (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p. 18).

Libraries were amongst the first institutions to embrace technological innovation, and they are making efforts to coexist alongside ever changing information technology despite smaller budgets and limited resources. Therefore, this strategic aim closely corresponds to the fourth, seventh, and tenth central capabilities related to senses, imagination and thought, affiliation, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2003). An example that highlights this strategic aim and is relevant to adult education and lifelong learning is the introductory tutor-led computer courses available through Glasgow public libraries. The Glasgow libraries offer two types of introductory courses. One course is for learners with very little or no experience with using computers (Glasgow Life, 2014). Courses run for two hours each over five weeks and cover computer basics and introduction to using the internet. The second course is for learners with some knowledge of computers but who need to refresh and update their skills. These courses run for two hours over four weeks and cover computer basics, such as using email, preparing a resume on Microsoft Word, and learning to conduct a job search online (Glasgow Life, 2014).

- 3. Libraries promoting economic wellbeing-** Public libraries in Scotland contribute to Scotland's economic wellbeing, supporting jobseekers, offering courses in digital skills, language courses, and support for small businesses (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.22).

Public libraries are free public services that are invested in the communities in which they are situated (Edwards, et al., 2013; McMenemy, 2009). During these difficult and uncertain economic times, public libraries have continued to enrich and preserve communities (Dudley, 2013; Edwards, et al., 2013). They contribute and preserve communities through their advisory and information services, non-formal educational programs, as well as their links with local stakeholders, such as local governments, emergency assistance organizations, charitable organization, and knowledge of major employers and job search resources (Dudley, 2013; Edwards, et al., 2013). For the most part, this strategic aim corresponds with the tenth central capability. To note, the tenth central capability consists of two parts: The first part pertains to an individual's basic civil and political rights and freedoms, while the second part refers to an individual's economic rights and freedoms (Nussbaum, 2003). Therefore, this strategic aim relates to the second part of the tenth central capability since it pertains to economic development. An example that illustrates this part of the tenth central capability is the Edinburgh Libraries' business hubs (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). These business hubs offer free IT classes and technical assistance for small businesses and internet start-ups (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). More than 2,150 people interested in starting a small business have attended approximately 174 workshops since the library system started offering this service in 2010 (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015).

4. **Libraries promoting social wellbeing-** Public libraries in Scotland contribute to social wellbeing, tackling social isolation, inequality, disadvantage, fractured communities and ill health (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.25).

This strategic aim reiterates the essential function of public libraries as a free community service and social good and closely corresponds to the seventh central capability pertaining to affiliation (Nussbaum, 2003). The Scottish national library strategy identifies five ways libraries contribute to developing community and societal cohesiveness by responding to the social needs of individuals and groups in their communities. The strategy also includes developing activities and programs to respond to particular needs; making library space and support available for community interest groups and members of the community looking to support one another. It further includes contributing to the ability of individuals to become involved in their local communities and take part in local and national life; strengthening the identity and sense of community, and creating a public service hub for the delivery of a range of public services (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p. 25, verbatim). Innovative, original library programs, such as adult literacy classes, children's story times, summer reading contests, book clubs, as well as library collaborations with local charitable organizations and social service agencies all help to build and unite communities and provide a sense of social cohesiveness. Additionally, libraries provide numerous opportunities to volunteer. Library volunteers help libraries carry out their daily tasks and services. Volunteering at the library helps individuals develop marketable and transferrable job skills, such as organization, time management, multi-tasking, customer service, interpersonal communication skills, and more. Above all, volunteering, at a library or elsewhere, helps ease social isolation by enabling one to feel included and belonging as a member of society.

5. **Libraries promoting culture and creativity-** Public libraries in Scotland promote their role as cultural centres, inspiring people through books and literature, music, film, and theatre, and encourage creativity (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p. 30).

Furthermore, in addition to their mission as providers of lifelong learning and information services, public libraries also act as preservers of local history and culture. Hence, promoting culture and creativity is an inherent part of their mandate and commission to communities. Public libraries hold special collections of local history and cultural resources, as well as archive local government documents for public access. Moreover, library staff research literature, fine arts, practical arts, performing arts, science, and more and use this knowledge to design programs that educate and engage patrons of all ages and diverse backgrounds. They collaborate with local artists, theatre groups, musicians, and other professionals to enhance learning, literacy, and foster a love of reading. In turn, this strategic aim closely corresponds to the fourth and ninth central capabilities relating to senses, imagination, thought, and play (Nussbaum, 2003). There exist abundant examples of such

programs; however, one example is the Dumfries and Galloway Public Libraries' oral history project on the Lockerbie Disaster which seeks to interview and record the memories of eyewitnesses to the tragedy (SLIC & Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p. 31).

- 6. Libraries as excellent public services-** Public libraries must be supported to continuously improve their services (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, p. 33).

This is strategic aim is the crux of the national strategy and sums up what it takes to keep libraries alive. That is, they need full financial and material support in order to continue their mission and serving communities. When given proper support, public libraries are able to fulfill their educational and social development missions, including playing a vital role in helping individuals, communities, and countries achieve the central capabilities. The next part of my summative analysis looks at the big picture so to speak, which is how the national library strategy recommends implementing the strategic aims. As the reader will note, the recommendations plainly express the need for continuous, reliable support, both financially, materially, and human resource wise. At the same time, the recommendations raise several issues for concern. I provide a brief explanation of these issues in the next section.

Summative Analysis II: Recommendations and Issues for Concern

The Scottish national library strategy provides recommendations for achieving the strategic aims (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). In sum, the recommendations plainly express the need for continuous, reliable financial, material, and human resources support. At the same time, some of the recommendations raise some important issues for concern which could pose potential and real affects upon the social development and lifelong learning mission of public libraries. These issues include the consolidation of public services, encroachment of commercialization and corporatizing of library services through the extensive use of performance metrics, and risks to patron privacy and freedom of information (McMenemy, 2009; McMenemy & Rooney-Browne, 2010). Table 1 outlines the Scottish national library strategy's recommendations. The text is verbatim (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, pp. 6-7).

Among the recommendations that I believe raise issues for concern are those relating to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth strategic aims. For example, two of the recommendations for achieving the third strategic aim are concerning because they suggest possible consolidation of public services, such as libraries, job centers, social services, and creating business partnerships. While consolidating services may help them survive during the current state of economic affairs, following through with these recommendations, without proper planning and oversight, would undoubtedly place libraries in conflict with their overall mission as free, impartial spaces for study, research, non-formal learning, and social cohesiveness. Moreover, these two recommendations would likely have potential conflict with public libraries' standards and professional ethics which guarantee patron confidentiality and privacy (McMenemy, 2009; McMenemy & Rooney- Browne, 2010).

Table 1

Scottish National Library Strategy: Recommendations

Strategic Aim	Recommended Actions
1. Libraries promoting reading, literacy and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access to library services for all citizens using new technology. • Develop and promote the core offer from public libraries in Scotland.
2. Libraries promoting digital inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Scotland-wide digital access resources. • Ensure WiFi is available and accessible in all public libraries.
3. Libraries promoting economic wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop national, regional and local partnerships with advice services, job centres and enterprise organisations. • Mainstream activities to improve STEM skills in young children. • Test and replicate a model of public libraries providing co-working spaces for small businesses.
4. Libraries promoting social wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create strong national, regional and local partnerships with all public services and community planning partners. • Share best practice on how to create effective and accessible public service or community hubs. • Build on current practice to become champions of community engagement and empowerment. • Develop guidelines on the appropriate use of volunteers to bring added value to services.
5. Libraries promoting culture and creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and strengthen national, regional and local partnerships with arts and culture organisations. • Pilot a collaborative venture to provide access to eBooks from Scottish publishers. • Support librarians to become effective voices for freedom of information and expression.
6. Libraries as excellent public services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop methods for reporting on the impact and outcomes of library activities through <i>How Good is our Public Library Service?</i> (HGIOPLS). • Develop and implement a learning and development programme for all library staff. • Explore alternative approaches to generating financial investment. • Engage proactively with models for efficient procurement of goods and services at national level.

Source: SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, pp. 6-7

In addition, three recommendations that accompany the fourth strategic aim raise issues for concern. Further clarification is needed, because, again, these recommendations may or may not suggest possible consolidation of libraries with other public and community services. In reality, consolidation of services is already underway in some parts of Scotland. The national strategy mentions that Aberdeenshire, Fife, the Highlands, and Perth and Kinross councils are already piloting “community hubs” (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.27). Moreover, another issue for concern is whether or not combining and consolidating libraries with other public services will detract from public libraries’ overall mission as centers for lifelong learning and social development and their intended use as spaces for study, research, and preservation of local culture and history (McMenemy, 2009; McMenemy & Rooney-Browne, 2010). Also, another recommendation for the fourth strategic aim that raises concern is the use of volunteers (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.25). There is good reason to mention this issue, because citizens across the UK and elsewhere value their public libraries. In the case of the UK, hundreds of community volunteers in England and Wales have taken over the operation of dozens of public libraries in more than seventy districts as a last resort to saving library services in their respective communities (Public Libraries News, 2015; SLIC, 2015). In Scotland, so far, there is just one library within Moray Council that is currently being run by volunteers (SLIC, 2015).

Furthermore, with regard to the fourth strategic aim, the national library strategy indirectly exposes another worrisome issue concerning libraries in Scotland and the rest of the UK, which is the increasing closure of school libraries (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.27). For example, within Scotland, Falkirk Council decided in January 2015 to eliminate its school library service to save £325,000 (approximately \$432,000) (Eyre, 2015). This year, East Renfrewshire Council will be eliminating half of its school libraries to save about £130,000 (approximately \$172,828) (CILIPS, 2015b; Hepburn, 2014). As austerity cuts continue to expand across Scotland and the rest of the UK, perhaps, consolidating public and school libraries might be another possible means to save these important services.

Moreover, I believe there are issues for concern associated with the recommendations pertaining to the fifth and sixth strategic aims. These recommendations raise an important issue regarding patron privacy, confidentiality, and access to freedom of information in the digital age. It is easy to take it for granted how much of our daily lives have become digitized, and when you stop to think about it, many internet tools, such as online banking, online library renewal systems, and online shopping, certainly make our lives more convenient and help us save time. At the same time, however, we do pay a price for having the conveniences that digitization offers, particularly the loss of personal privacy (McMenemy, 2009; McMenemy & Rooney-Browne, 2010; Palfrey, 2015; Usherwood, 2007). Moreover, to make matters even more complicated are ever-changing national and international security laws introduced in the wake of 9/11 terrorists attacks in the U.S. that make it perfectly legal for the government to track citizens’ online activity and cell phone calls. These laws and others make it difficult for public libraries to continue ensuring patron privacy and access to freedom of information.

Finally, the sixth strategic aim and its corresponding recommendations are most revealing of the increasingly precarious situation facing public libraries in Scotland--which is, without financial, material, human resources, and community support, libraries will continue to face a difficult, uncertain future. Without essential investments in staffing, building construction and renovation, ICT infrastructure, learning and studying spaces, and collection development, public libraries cannot fulfill their public service mission as community resources and centers for lifelong learning, social development, and promoting community. In the face of an indifferent, careless political and economic system and largely concurring society that insist austerity cuts are the way forward; public libraries really have no choice but to find alternative sources of funding if they are to survive (SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015, p.33). The issues that these recommendations generate are numerous. Still, in the course of trying to raise funds and seeking a steady source of revenue, one wonders whether or not this detracts libraries from their original intended purpose as places for study, research, and community (Jerrard, Bolt, & Strege , 2012; McMenemy, 2009; McMenemy & Rooney-Browne, 2010; Usherwood, 2007). In sum, these issues for concern are real, and they are the potential trade-offs, the costs, individuals and communities will have to pay in order to sustain and support libraries for the foreseeable future.

Yet, despite these increasingly difficult circumstances, there may be a way to mitigate these issues for concern and prevent them from having a negative effect on public libraries. One way is to suggest that public libraries seriously consider applying the principles of the Capabilities Approach to carefully and strategically plan how they will carry out the recommendations provided in the Scottish national library strategy. For example, as regards consolidation of public services and creating partnerships with business, libraries could be more selective by choosing potential services and partnerships whose organization complements and is simpatico with the principles of the fourth and ninth central capabilities pertaining to the development of an individual's senses, imagination, thought, and sense of fun (Nussbaum, 2003). An example of a potential partnerships could be a library leasing meeting room space to a tutoring service. By making use of the Capabilities Approach in this way, public libraries would continue to be in sync with their original purpose and mission as centers and resources for lifelong learning, spaces for community cohesiveness, and preservers of local history and culture. Another way libraries can use the Capabilities Approach is to use it in helping make decisions regarding the best use of volunteers. Volunteers provide an invaluable service to public libraries and their generosity and willingness to help and assist should not be taken unfair advantage of, especially as replacements for paid, professional staff (SLIC, 2015).

Closing Thoughts

Most certainly, the process of researching and writing raised more questions than it was able to answer. In short, more in depth research needs to be done, including more news and media coverage featuring public libraries and the effects of austerity policies on the ability of libraries to continue serving communities in Scotland and elsewhere. This issue is important and it deserves more coverage in both academic and journalistic spheres in

order to affect positive change on public policies pertaining to public services, especially public libraries. The following are questions that can be used as a starting point for developing further research of public policies pertaining to public libraries.

1. Case study: Could applying principles of the Capabilities Approach help better inform the implementation of the national library strategy's recommendations with respect to the purpose and mission of public libraries as centers for lifelong learning and community?
2. Would requiring libraries to generate their own revenue affect the quality of services?
3. Libraries are increasingly challenged to "prove their worth." However, evaluative metrics are not applied in the same way to other public services, such as unemployment benefits, disability benefits, food stamps, rubbish collections, and more. Are public libraries being unfairly singled out for scrutiny?
4. Will libraries be able to sustain constant changes in ICTs and digital entertainment to keep up with competition? What are they exactly competing with? It seems like they will have to "compete" with all types of media. How is this relevant to the purpose and mission of public libraries as centers and resources for lifelong learning and spaces for study, research, and community cohesiveness?

In writing this conference paper, I sought to share my research about public libraries in Scotland and to fervently declare that public libraries are important and essential community resources. They make an invaluable contribution to the communities they serve. With the current conservative government in London, austerity policies will continue wreaking havoc on public service budgets, including libraries. For the most part, Scotland has managed to avoid massive closings of public libraries that have befallen England and Wales (CIPFA, 2014a; Public Libraries News, 2015; SLIC and Carnegie UK Trust, 2015). Still, the conservative government is slated to hold power until the next election cycle in 2020. Anything can happen between now and then. In June 2015, SLIC, the Carnegie UK Trust, the Scottish Government, and COSLA together issued the first national strategy for Scotland's public libraries entitled *Ambition & Opportunity: A Strategy for Public Libraries in Scotland 2015-2020* as a policy response to current austerity cuts. Using Martha Nussbaum's expanded definition of the Capabilities Approach, a conceptual and evolving theory for social justice (Nussbaum, 2003, 2009), as my guiding theoretical framework, I analyzed the national library strategy's strategic aims and recommendations to evaluate the document's potential to preserve public libraries, their mission, and purpose as centers for lifelong learning and spaces for social cohesion.

Moreover, I conducted desk research to locate as much wide-ranging information about public libraries in Scotland in which to provide context for my study. Also, I attended the annual CILIPS Conference in Dundee in June 2015 to gain a better understanding of how austerity policies have been affecting Scottish public libraries. In utilizing the Capabilities Approach to analyze the national library strategy, my intention was to

present an alternative perspective to evaluating and determining the intrinsic value of Scotland's public libraries as opposed to the more commonly used neo-liberal economic and performance metrics that are only concerned with the bottom line and emphasizing super efficiency. Additionally, the Capabilities Approach is simpatico with the overall social justice ethos that lies at the core of adult and community education. Finally, my goal in conducting this literature-based study is to help contribute to the growing body of research using the Capabilities Approach; however, with a focus on lifelong learning and public libraries. Concomitantly, this research also helps contribute to filling a knowledge regarding the effects of persistent austerity policies on Scottish public libraries.

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