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LIBRARIES, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND WHITE FLIGHT: A SOCIAL IMPACT
ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE JACKSON METRO AREA

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
April 2020

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ABSTRACT

CRAFT: LIBRARIES, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND WHITE FLIGHT: A SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE JACKSON METRO AREA

(Under the direction of Dr. Melissa Bass)

In 1969, federal courts forced Mississippi to integrate public schools. Following, droves of white families moved out of Jackson for suburbs in nearby Madison and Rankin Counties. Today, the Jackson metro area is the most partisan segregated and among the top five racially segregated metro areas in the U.S. (Dottle, 2019). With that in mind, I sought to find out: How do libraries in the Jackson metro area impact their communities, and do disparities exist between Jackson's libraries and white flight libraries?

I researched seven libraries inside the metro area's three library systems — three libraries in Jackson and four in white flight suburbs. The research I conducted was mixed-methods. I borrowed and slightly altered a general framework that measures the social good public libraries produce. I collected qualitative data through interviews with the three library directors and seven library branch managers. I collected quantitative information from each of the library systems' central offices and the Mississippi Library Commission.

I came to two major conclusions: All seven of the libraries offer essential, nonreplaceable services and generate beneficial effects and social capital, though Jackson libraries produce less social capital. Second, the relationship between libraries and their communities is a two-way street — libraries impact their community, but communities impact their library. This finding is unprecedented in the existing literature.

Ultimately, I recommend three policy options for policymakers, with the long term solution being to overhaul the Mississippi Code that dictates the way libraries are funded and to shift library funding away from local governments to the state and federal governments.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

An Evaluation of Mississippi's Public Libraries

In 2018, two black men in Philadelphia were arrested for sitting in a Starbucks without making a purchase (Stewart, 2018). They were there to meet a client for a business meeting. Evidently, they were treating Starbucks as what sociologists refer to as a 'third space' — not home or work but a space where social interactions take place. Part of the conflict in this situation (aside from racism) arose from the fact that private businesses that act as third spaces, such as Starbucks, do not have an incentive to create social capital accessible to everyone: their main incentive is to make a profit. Instances like this show the importance of third spaces accessible to all without charge.

Third spaces are incubators for social capital. Social capital is defined “as features of social structure — such as trust, norms, and networks — that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit” (Lochner, Kawachi, Brennan, & Buka, 2003). Publicly funded and universally accessible third spaces with the goal of creating social capital are referred to as social infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2019). Public libraries, perhaps, fit this definition most neatly.

When most people think of a public library, they probably first think about books. Though books are a staple, they are not the most important aspect of contemporary public library services. Libraries offer many things. They are a safe, comfortable environment for people of all economic backgrounds. Libraries give people access to the internet so they can search for jobs. They add tremendous social capital to the community, hosting events where people meet, play, and learn from others with whom they may not otherwise interact. In some cases, they save lives, with some librarians carrying and being trained in the use of Narcan, a medicine that can save people who have overdosed on opioids.

Libraries are one of the most popular public institutions in the county. According to a 2016 Pew research study, more than 90% of Americans see their public library as “very” or “somewhat” important to their community (Klinenberg, 2019). However, this popularity does not translate into generous funding. Funding for public libraries, like most other public institutions, has been in a steady decline. For example, the Trump administration has attempted multiple times to end all federal funding to public libraries (Albanese, 2019). Since 2008, the Mississippi legislature has cut its library funding each year (Pettus, 2019).

Public libraries are important public goods, yet they receive less than adequate public funding. This raises the question: How are Mississippi’s public libraries doing? Are they able to deliver adequate services? What is their impact on their community? This thesis aims to answer these questions.

In the private sector, businesses often conduct economic impact studies in the hopes of leveraging tax cuts and other support from public officials. With those studies, businesses can say, “Here’s how much money I have added to your economy.” In that same line of thinking, some ask, “Why are public libraries needed? It seems like they are an economic sink.” In a now deleted Forbes op-ed, a columnist argued we ought to replace public libraries with Amazon Books — a physical bookstore — in order to save taxpayers money and generate more economic output.

This thesis aims to serve as an impact study for public libraries in Mississippi. It is important that public officials see the impact of public libraries to ensure their funding is not cut further. This type of impact study will have to be different, though. An economic impact study does not make sense for a public library whose main objective is to serve its community, not

generate a profit. Therefore, a study that evaluates public libraries ought to primarily consider the social impact.

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the social impact of the public libraries in the Jackson metro area. In the following chapters, this thesis provides a background and literature review chapter, which lays out public libraries' evolution of inclusion and how that inclusion translates into social capital. Then, the methodology chapter explains and rationalizes the use of a borrowed general framework to evaluate the social benefits of libraries, which is a mixed-methods approach and evaluates seven libraries in three library systems in the Jackson metro area. The results chapter lays out the findings from research and is organized by the general framework. In the discussion and policy proposal chapter, I offer analysis of the data and explain three sets of policy options, in order of political feasibility. Lastly, I offer a conclusion chapter in which I give my final analysis and explain what I will do with my findings.

CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout their history, public libraries have evolved in their purpose, who runs them, and who they serve. Generally, libraries' main purpose has shifted from providing free books to connecting people to data and resources and being a place of important socialization. Libraries, which were at first operated mostly by white men, now are run mostly by white women. What started out as being for only the white and wealthy is now for everyone. It is important to understand the history of libraries and how they operate in contemporary times to understand how they impact their communities.

A Brief History of American Libraries

Though public libraries, free and open to the public, now seem like a staple in every American community, this was not always the case. Libraries were created and now survive because of social activism. To put the American public library in context, it is important to understand its history.

Early History

The American Library Association describes U.S libraries as “advocates for inclusion” (2017). Though this may be true of libraries now, it was not always the case. Like most institutions in America, libraries were first for white men only.

The first libraries in America were neither free nor open to the general public. At first they were private book clubs, also known as subscription libraries, in which users would pay a subscription fee to use the service. Benjamin Franklin opened the first subscription library in the American colonies, the Library Company, in 1731 in Philadelphia (Abbott, 2015). In the 1700s many subscription libraries opened across the country. At that time, books were incredibly

difficult to come by — typically, only the super wealthy and clergy owned books, and most books were written in Latin.

Franklin also helped start the first public library in Franklin, Massachusetts in 1790 (Abbott, 2015). The city wanted him to donate a bell, but he said “sense” is more important than “sound” and donated a collection of books (Abbott, 2015). The town leaders voted for the library to be free and open to the public, thus creating America’s first public library (Abbott, 2015).

After the civil war, libraries began popping up all over the country. Elite New England men were the predominant champions of libraries in the beginning. They saw their work almost as a missionary would — bringing civilization to the masses (Abbott, 2015).

In 1873, the American Library Association (ALA) was founded. By the early 1900s librarians were mostly women. In 1904, librarian Mary Cutler Fairchild noted that despite this fact, men held most of the administrative power. It wasn’t until 1911 that the ALA elected its first woman president, Theresa Elmendorf (Abbott, 2015).

Fight for Equal Access

Public libraries in the South, like other public institutions, were racially segregated. Public libraries in the South did not allow black people in their buildings. Public libraries in the North often did not outright deny black people access, but with racist housing laws, black residents rarely lived close to a library (Abbott, 2015).

In the early 1900s, Andrew Carnegie helped establish and fund 1,795 libraries in America: 1,687 were public and 108 were academic (Abbott, 2015). In states with racial segregation and that usually did not have libraries for black citizens, Carnegie established black libraries (Abbott, 2015).

Black people, therefore, had limited access to public libraries in the South and progress was slow and sporadic. In 1903, Memphis opened libraries in black schools and let the broader black community use these libraries, and in 1904 Galveston followed suit. In 1905, Gainesville public libraries opened separate reading rooms for black residents (Abbott, 2015). Often, black communities would create their own public libraries, but these were not legally recognized or funded by local governments (Manning, 2015). In 1905, Louisville became the first city to open a public library for black people (Abbott, 2015).

People living in rural areas had a difficult time accessing public libraries. To bring greater access, many librarians introduced bookmobiles. The first bookmobiles started in the early 1900s on horseback. They were also used to give black and indigenous populations book access in segregated parts of the country. One librarian in Mississippi used a houseboat as a library to reach people along the Yazoo River (Hudson, 2011).

Real desegregation progress did not happen until the 1960s. Civil rights activists often held “sit-ins” at whites-only public libraries. In 1961, the Tougaloo Nine held a sit-in at a library in Jackson, Mississippi and were arrested for disturbing the peace. It wasn’t until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that segregated public libraries became illegal (Abbott, 2015).

Libraries have evolved from private, subscription book clubs for elite white men to slowly opening up access to women, black and indigenous people, and people living in rural areas. Historically, the objective of libraries was to provide books and promote education. Though these two objectives are still true of contemporary libraries, much has changed.

Contemporary Libraries

Contemporary U.S. public libraries do much more than offer free access to books. For my thesis to evaluate the impacts of contemporary public libraries in the Jackson metro area, it is important to understand the multitude of roles contemporary libraries play.

In their journal article, “The ‘People’s University,’” (2005) Yancey compiled a comprehensive list of the most important tasks U.S. public libraries perform. Yancey conducted qualitative and quantitative research at two U.S. public libraries: A large metropolitan library in Seattle and a small, rural library in Virginia. In addition to providing the long-standing service of free book access, the authors noted six new services contemporary libraries offer:

- 1) providing many kinds of materials in many ways; 2) helping patrons learn to write and to use communication technologies; 3) helping them learn to read ‘visually’; 4) providing alternative learning sites for specific populations; 5) linking ‘free’ library services with retail services, so that the free services are extended; and 6) providing a site for community fairs, celebrations, and citizenship.

As Yancey noted, the interesting thing about contemporary libraries is that no matter their size or type of patrons, they offer the above six services. This source is important to this thesis because it gives a basic understanding of the types of work contemporary public libraries perform.

Contemporary libraries are also advocates for inclusion. For example, in the American Library Association’s *State of Libraries Report* (2019), the organization emphasized one group of patrons that libraries serve: those experiencing homelessness. According to the annual report, U.S. libraries, in 2018, served as many homeless people as homeless shelters did. Public libraries offer homeless individuals a safe, comfortable place. It is common for staff to help teach

homeless people how to read, use the internet, and apply for housing and jobs (American Library Association, 2019).

The report also addresses another vulnerable population. As the number of Americans who abuse opiate drugs has significantly increased over the past two decades, many librarians in the U.S. are trained to administer Narcan — a life saving medicine for individuals who have overdosed on opioids (American Library Association, 2019). This report is important to this thesis because it demonstrates the many ways contemporary public libraries act as advocates for inclusion.

Contemporary U.S public libraries offer services far beyond free access to books. Researchers and librarians alike argue that, with their far reaching resources and inclusive space, public libraries generate social capital.

Mississippi libraries

As I have pointed out, public libraries in the U.S. generally offer a wide range of services and create social capital. However, this thesis has not established anything for Mississippi public libraries in particular. Before moving forward, it is important to establish a few basic details specific to Mississippi's public libraries.

The 1972 Mississippi Code establishes the systems and rules for Mississippi public libraries, which many librarians described as legally ambiguous.

Public libraries in Mississippi get their funding from local, state, and federal governments. In Mississippi, public libraries are their own political subdivisions, which enter into contracts of service with their funding authorities (different types of libraries have different funding authorities). Some libraries' funding authorities are their county governments while others are their municipalities. The funding authority can either establish a millage tax on all

taxable property or it can choose fund libraries by general appropriation (Miss. Code Ann. § 39-3-3). Most of the libraries' money comes from their local funding authorities. Some funding, though, comes from the state. In each year's budget, the state legislature directs a certain amount of money to libraries. Each year, the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) audits each of the public libraries, and if their local funding authority has not cut the library's funding significantly (usually either by 3% or more than other public services), then the MLC gives the library its share of the state's funding (Miss. Code Ann. § 39-3-107).

Additional funding comes from the federal government. Congress appropriates a certain amount of money to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which then, similarly to the MLC, conducts an audit on each state. If a state cuts funding its library too much, that state will lose federal funding. This recently happened to Mississippi: In 2015, the state cut its library funding by 19%, which led the federal government to cut over \$300,000 from Mississippi public libraries' expected appropriation (Pettus, 2019).

As directed by Mississippi Code 1972, public libraries cannot own property (Miss. Code Ann. § 39-3-17). They are not allowed to own their buildings or facilities and cannot repair their buildings or facilities. Instead, the library's primary funding authority owns and maintains the building in which the library is housed. Of the libraries I researched for this thesis, all are housed in buildings owned by their cities. So, even if someone were to donate money to a library, that library could not use that money on their building; only the funding authority can do that and the money "shall" come from the funding authority's general fund. Some cities in the state read the word "shall" to mean that it is suggested, though not required, that funds for the upkeep of libraries' buildings come from the general fund.

A myriad of policies and decisions by lawmakers have left some Jackson public libraries in despair. As stated above, the state cut libraries' funding by 19% in 2015, and this cut led to a loss of federal funds. As a result, libraries in the Jackson-Hinds system have shortened their hours of operation and cut services (Pettus, 2019 & Jackson Free Press, 2016). The Eudora Welty Library, the main library in the Jackson-Hinds Library System, was temporarily shut down by the fire marshal in 2017, and its second floor has been closed due to mold and flooding since 2017 (Vicory, 2018). Even if the Eudora Welty Library had the funds to fix the building it is housed in, it would not be allowed to do so.

White flight in Jackson

_____My thesis would be incomplete without considering the impacts of white flight on the Jackson metro area. In his book *White Flight*, Kruse explains that for southern cities, the main driver of white flight was school integration. Shortly after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, black families could opt to send their children to white schools in Jackson, but very few did (Dreher, 2017). The 1969 U.S. Supreme Court Case *Alexander v. Holmes* went further and forced Mississippi public schools to integrate "immediately." While it is well known that Jackson experienced white flight, I have been unable to find research determining how many white families moved out of Jackson to the surrounding suburbs. Therefore, I have created my own data by comparing census results over time from the tracts in which the seven libraries I study are located. Specifically, I gathered and compared racial statistics from these tracts from 1970 and 2018. I gathered this information from Social Explorer, which gets its information from the U.S Census Bureau and the American Community Survey (Social Explorer). With this data, it is clear that nearly all white families left parts of Jackson. It is also evident that white flight did not

smoothly follow political boundaries: some parts of Jackson have remained overwhelmingly white, while some suburbs of Jackson have also experienced white flight.

Figure 2.1 below shows the dramatic decrease of white families in the west and central part of Jackson, and it shows that white families have remained in the northeast part of Jackson.

Figure 2.1

Branch	White	Black	Total Population
1970 Library C	69%	31%	4,513
2018 Library C	0%	99%	3,711
1970 Library D	100%	0%	4,826
2018 Library D	69%	30%	5,130
1970 Library E	69%	31%	4,425
2018 Library E	3%	96%	1,389

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Figure 2.2 below shows population changes in Rankin County. The census tract Library F is located in has maintained its ratio of white to black population over time, although the population increased nearly three and a half times. Library G’s census tract is interesting and the data may be misleading without context. This community was born out of suburbanization and white flight and wasn’t incorporated until 1973. For decades before its incorporation, the community was white only and had an active Klu Klux Klan organization, which was violent towards civil rights activists in the 1960s (Lamkin, 2016). The fact that Library G’s community was 100% white in 1970 was because of, not despite, white flight.

Figure 2.2

Branch	White	Black	Total Population
1970 Library F	73%	27%	4,022
2018 Library F	73%	26%	13,556
1970 Library G	100%	0%	6,324
2018 Library G	81%	12%	1,091

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Gathering racial census data from Madison County is not as feasible as it is from Hinds and Rankin Counties. The earliest racial census data available in Madison County is 1980, and the census tracts boundaries were different than they are today. The census tract in which the Library B is located has been the same since 1990, and comparing racial data from 1990 with 2018 shows us something interesting. Figure 2.3 below demonstrates that the census tract Library B is located in was majority white in 1990: among people who live in the Jackson metro area, this part of Madison County is thought of as a white flight suburb. However, data from 2018 shows that it is now slightly black majority. According to *White Flight*, American metro areas experienced a second-wave of white flight in the 1990s, this time from the suburbs closest to urban areas to “exurbs” (Kruse, 2005). Library B is the closest suburb to Jackson in Madison County, bordering Jackson’s city limits. Figure 2.3 below suggests that Library B’s census tract experienced the second wave of white flight Kruse mentions.

The boundaries of the census tract in which Library A is located have been significantly altered since 1990, so it is not feasible to compare racial statistics over time for that area of Madison County. However, it is important to note that the city Library A is located in does not border the city of Jackson and should be thought of as an “exurb” as Kruse describes.

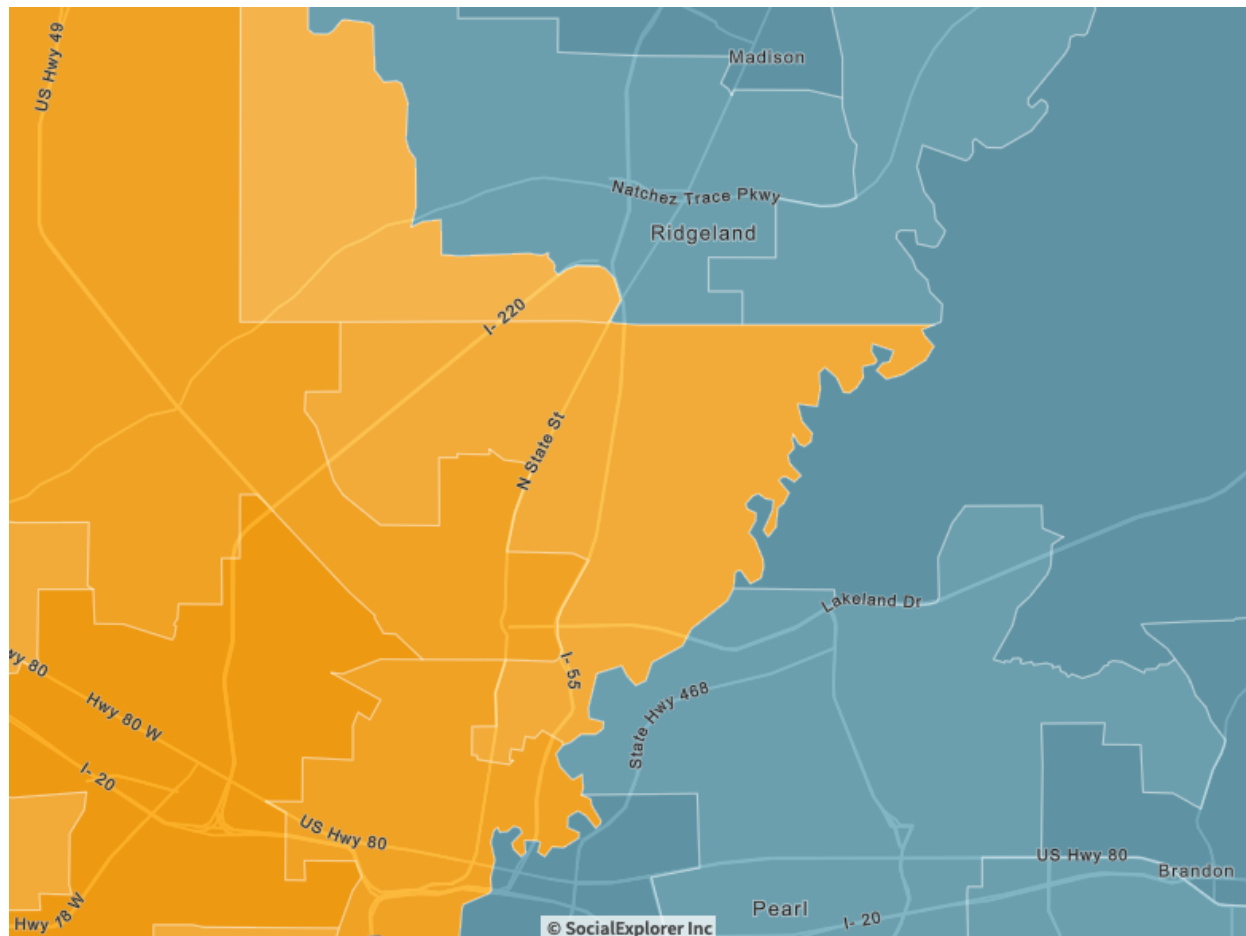
Figure 2.3

Branch	White	Black	Total Population
1990 Library B	83%	16%	7,805
2018 Library B	35%	56%	3,471

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

The numbers above are stark and leave no doubt that white people in the Jackson metro area are resistant to racial integration. This difference can be seen on a map as well. I created the map, figure 2.4 below, using Social Explorer, which gathered its data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 (5-year estimates). The orange areas are majority black areas, while the blue areas are majority white. The darker the orange, the higher the percentage of black people, while the darker the blue, the higher percentage of white people. To the north is Madison County, while to the east there is Rankin County. Nearly all the area between I-20, I-55, and I-220 is Jackson in Hinds County.

Figure 2.4



(Wesley Craft, 2020)

As the above tables show, white Mississippians left swaths of Jackson after 1970, and then more white Mississippians left the community surrounding Library B after 1990. It is crucial for my thesis to include data about the first and second waves of white flights that have taken place in the Jackson metro area, as this recent history impacts the libraries' main source of funding and patronage.

Literature Review

In researching and reviewing literature relevant to my thesis, it is clear that most of the literature in line with my thesis invokes a sociological concept called social capital. Additional literature relevant to my thesis includes the reasons for and impacts of white flight on urban areas, the best methods scholars can use to research libraries, and to what extent libraries create social good.

My inspiration for this research came from Klinenberg's *Palaces for the People* (2018). Using several case studies, Klinenberg argues that with more and smarter social infrastructure, America could gain social capital and thus become a less polarized and healthier society. Social infrastructure is a relatively new term in sociology, and Klinenberg defines it as, "The physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact," which "determine(s) whether social capital develops" (Klinenberg, 2018, p. 5). Klinenberg acknowledges that social infrastructure is an abstract concept that may be difficult for people to visualize, but he also points out that social infrastructure is most visible when it breaks down.

In the summer of 1995, Chicago experienced an unusually deadly heatwave, with an estimated 739 casualties (Klinenberg, 2018). For his Ph.D. dissertation, Klinenberg examined the death toll and death causes on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis. He found that, regardless of wealth, income, or race, neighborhoods that had walkable sidewalks (one form of social infrastructure) had significantly fewer casualties. Through interviews, Klinenberg determined that people in neighborhoods with walkable sidewalks knew their neighbors better than people who lived in neighborhoods without walkable sidewalks — not because the former group made an extra effort to know their neighbors but because they experienced more casual interactions in their everyday life. People living in neighborhoods with better social infrastructure knew which

neighbors were vulnerable to heat and checked in on them, which saved lives. In further research, Klinenberg determined that the same Chicago neighborhoods with strong social infrastructure (and thus more social capital) also had healthier people (Klinenberg, 2018).

After coming to the above conclusions, Klinenberg wanted to pinpoint the most effective types of social infrastructure. He spends much of his book discussing the public library, which Andrew Carnegie referred to as “palaces for the people.” Klinenberg points out that contemporary public libraries are designed to be free and inclusive and have regular programs — a breeding ground for casual social interaction among people who would otherwise never interact. *Palaces for the People* is relevant to my thesis because it builds on decades worth of literature about public libraries and social capital and argues that public libraries are a type of social infrastructure that generates social capital, which makes people more empathetic and healthier, among other things.

Social Capital and the library

In his 1995 article, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” Putnam popularized the idea that the U.S. had been losing its social capital. At the time of its publication, “social capital” was a relatively new idea, which Putnam described as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995). Putnam explained that social capital creates “better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government” (p. 66). He then went on to detail the various ways the U.S. had lost its social capital. Since social capital is so important to communities, Putnam argues, the decline is worrisome. Putnam’s article is important to my thesis since America’s general trend toward losing social capital continues to

contemporary times, especially among the lower-middle and lower classes, and public libraries could help mitigate that loss.

In his journal article, “Public libraries: places creating social capital?,” Varheim presents his empirical research on public libraries and social capital. According to Varheim, sociologists’ understanding of social capital has evolved, and currently, there are two theories for how social capital is generated: the societal perspective and the institutional perspective (Varheim, 2009). Interestingly, the public library intersects with both of these theories.

The societal perspective says that social capital is generated from face-to-face interactions among people in a community. Generally, people within the same ethnic group are more likely to have generalized trust with members of their ethnic group than with members of other ethnic groups. One way people form generalized trust towards other ethnic groups is by having positive interactions with a member of that group — sociologists call this intergroup contact theory. To be more specific, research tells us that intergroup contact only generates generalized trust when the interactions take place under four preconditions: “equal group status within the situation; common goals; inter–group cooperation; and the support of authorities, law, or custom” (Pettigrew, 1998). As Varheim describes, the public library meets all four preconditions, and thus, is a place where social capital forms (Varheim, 2007). Pettigrew’s and Varheim’s research is relevant to my thesis because their work concludes that public libraries generate social capital from the societal perspective.

Additionally, libraries generate social capital from the institutional perspective, which argues that generalized trust is generated within formal political and religious institutions (Varheim, 2009). Rothstein and Stolle, in their 2008 article, “The State and Social Capital,” argue that governments with impartial and fair street-level bureaucracies create generalized trust.

Vårheim also notes that universalistic welfare services, in particular, generate social capital (2009), drawing on Kumlin's 2005 journal article, "Making and Breaking Social Capital: The Impact of Welfare-State Institutions" which argues that "Contacts with universal welfare-state institutions tend to increase social trust, whereas experiences with needs-testing social programs undermine it." Vårheim argues that public libraries generate social capital through the institutional perspective because they are impartial, universal street-level bureaucracy (Vårheim, 2009).

In the article "Demonstrating Impact Through Qualitative Research," Usherwood et al. discuss the best way to analyze the social benefits of public libraries. After analyzing several research papers that aimed to measure the societal impacts of libraries, the authors ultimately argue that the best way to evaluate libraries' social benefits is to conduct a social audit with qualitative data. The authors note, "It is our view that outcome and impact studies are much more than mere measurement. Statistics are just a small part of the reality of the library, and any meaningful demonstration of its value has to go beyond simplistic quantification" (Usherwood et al., 2002). In one study the authors cite, researchers asked library users how they would explain the value of their library to local politicians. The authors also cite a study that evaluated the impact library closures have on communities as a methodological example. This article is important because it serves as my rationale for conducting qualitative research. I have also borrowed some of the questions asked in its cited studies.

In 1995, a strike shut down the Sheffield Libraries and Information Services, located in the United Kingdom, for eight weeks. In the article, *What do people do when their public library service closes down?*, Sobczyk studied how the eight week closure impacted the libraries' patrons, surrounding libraries, and surrounding bookstores (Sobczyk, 1996). Sobczyk gathered

qualitative and quantitative data: they conducted semi-structured interviews of over 500 library patrons, staff, and bookstore managers, and collected data on the number of library book loans for six months after the strike. The researchers found that the public library played an important role in its users' lives: 89% of library users missed the library for at least one purpose, 44% of users were able to replace the library with another service but were unsatisfied, and 31% of users were not able to find any alternative to the library (Sobczyk, 1996). This study is important to my thesis because it demonstrates the enormous societal benefits of public libraries and shows that these benefits are most visible when the library system breaks down. Additionally, this work gives me a rationale for using a mixed-methods approach.

In the article, *Do libraries matter? Public libraries and the creation of social capital*, Varheim, Steinmo and Ide studied whether public libraries matter in the creation of generalized trust in OECD countries (2008). They gathered macro-level data about library expenditures and levels of generalized trust in all OECD countries. Additionally, they conducted two interviews in the U.S. and one in Norway to determine how libraries could generate generalized trust. The researchers conclude that the more a country spends on its libraries, the more generalized trust exists, although they admit this is not a causal claim as countries with high generalized trust might spend more on public libraries. The researchers also note that libraries can be an important space for informal meetings for marginalized groups, but for other groups, they are no different than other spaces. However, for formal programming, libraries are an important space for all groups. This article is relevant to my thesis because it shows a correlation between library expenditures and generalized trust, and my thesis will consider library expenditures.

Additionally, I will consider the fact that libraries are an important informal meeting space for marginalized groups while conducting my analysis.

In the article, *How do public libraries create social capital? An analysis of interactions between library staff and patrons*, Johnson sought to determine how the relationship between library staff and patrons affects social capital (2012). To do this, they performed qualitative research by interviewing library staff at 15 libraries in a midwestern American city. Through the interviews, Johnson determined that the relationship between library staff and patrons could produce social capital. The main interactions which created social capital were: “building patrons’ trust in the library and its staff, connecting people to both community and library resources, providing social support for patrons, reducing social isolation, helping patrons gain skills to function in an increasingly online world, and providing a positive place for neighborhood residents to gather” (Johnson, 2012, p. 52). This research is relevant to my thesis because it explains how social capital can be generated in public libraries, and libraries that fail to do the listed interactions will be unlikely to generate social capital.

How to research libraries

In a paper titled “A Framework for Evaluating Public Investment in Urban Libraries,” a group of researchers discusses the best way to conduct an impact analysis on urban public libraries. Their goal was to answer three questions: “1 What is the most appropriate methodology to quantify the benefits that flow from investment in public libraries; 2 What conceptual framework can we use to quantify the benefits that flow from specific library functions; and 3 What research is necessary to determine the social return on public library investment?” (Holt, Elliot & Dussold, 1996). The authors determine that an impact analysis is the best approach. . They point out that while businesses may be evaluated through economic analysis, that is not feasible for public libraries — after all, in the short-term, public libraries are an economic sink. However, an impact analysis will capture the benefits (namely social capital) libraries generate

that cannot be measured in economic terms. To answer their second question, the authors suggest a general, mixed methods framework with four elements : “1 resources, 2 capability (quality), 3 utilization, and 4 beneficial effects (value).” To answer the third question, the authors note that most libraries already have that data for the first and third elements. The second and fourth, however, will require original qualitative research, for which the authors provide suggested survey questions. This article is relevant to my thesis because it builds on the literature that public libraries generate social capital, makes the case that societal benefits should be considered just as important as economic benefits, and provides a framework to use as a starting point (Holt, Elliot & Dussold, 1996; Orr, 1973).

In the 1970s, there was no standard way for library managers to evaluate their libraries, and when they did so, they usually only considered quantitative data (Orr, 1973). In 1973, Orr wrote, “Measuring the goodness of library services: A general framework for considering quantitative measures,” which lays out a general framework based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The framework has four steps: Resources, capability (quality), utilization, and beneficial effects (value). Orr’s article is relevant to my thesis because I will borrow his framework, which will mean I will be able to compare my results to other researcher’s results.

White flight

As I have stated before, my thesis would be incomplete without considering the impact white flight has had on the Jackson metro area and its public libraries. In *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005), Kevin Kruse explores the impacts of white flight from the grass-roots level. While most research on white flight studies the actions, speeches, and political deals of prominent segregationists, Kruse sought to research ordinary citizen segregationists in the mid-1900s. Kruse’s study is limited to the Atlanta metro area, but he

claims his findings can be applied more broadly: “This is not simply an Atlanta story or a southern story. It is, instead, an American story.”

Since the 1950s, historians have commonly claimed that massive resistance to desegregation failed; after the implementation of court orders and civil rights laws, the resistance gave up. Through his findings, Kruse argues this is not true, that white resistance to desegregation has always been innovative, with roots decades older than previously believed and found in urban contexts, and that white flight is a continuation of white resistance, not defeat.

In his book, Kruse attempts to see the world through the lens of ordinary white people who resist desegregation. He finds they define themselves by what they stand *for*, not what they stand against. For instance, they would argue they are fighting for their right to choose their neighbors, choose their schools, and remain free from federal intervention; they did not see themselves as wanting to take away the rights of black people, and in fact, viewed their policies as race-neutral (Kruse, 2005).

White Flight is relevant to my thesis for a few reasons. First, it is the only in depth research on white flight from a grassroots perspective, which is important because public libraries are meant to serve ordinary people. Second, although this study analyzes only Atlanta, its findings are generally applicable to Jackson. Third, this book defines white flight as a continuation of white resistance and not a result of a defeated white resistance, which suggests that white resistance is an active part of white flight communities I researched. Fourth, this study finds the main driver of white flight in southern cities was school desegregation.

Conclusion

Much of the literature relevant to my thesis focuses on social capital, which is well understood to be a necessary component of healthy communities. I have found a strong

consensus that libraries generate social capital. Within the field of sociology, two theories explain how social capital is generated, and public libraries can be researched through the lens of both. I have reviewed the literature that discusses the best ways to research public libraries and have determined that the Orr framework, a mix-methods approach, is the best option. Finally, I reviewed literature relevant to white flight, which continues to have impacts on the Jackson metro area and its libraries.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

To ensure this research has enough data to be representative, I analyzed three public libraries in the Jackson-Hinds Library System and four libraries in white flight suburbs of Jackson — two in the Madison County Library System and two in the Central Regional Library System in Rankin County.

Most private, for-profit companies conduct economic impact analyses. With these analyses, companies can show governments and the public how many jobs and how much tax revenue they generate — and then, frequently, use that analysis as justification for tax breaks and support. Libraries generally do not conduct economic impact analyses, and libraries can seem like an economic sink, taking in revenue but not producing immediate economic benefits. Researchers have tried to make economic impact analysis for libraries in the long-term, figuring that people educated at libraries will make more money in the future. However, with so many confounding factors, it is incredibly difficult to create an accurate economic impact analysis of a public library. Short-term economic impact is an important consideration for policymakers to consider, but it is not the only consideration that matters. Another crucial factor is the social impact of policies. A social impact assessment is a tool that researchers use to try “to project or predict the (social) consequences of adopting a policy proposal or taking some other form of action” (Kraft and Furlong, 2015). I chose to conduct a social impact assessment because, when determining a library’s worth, it is more feasible and perhaps more important to consider the social impact than the economic impact.

I chose to analyze the Jackson metro area for two reasons. The first is that in recent years, the state legislature significantly cut libraries’ funding, which also led to the loss of some federal funding (Pettus, 2019). I want to know: what type and how much good are libraries in

Mississippi able to produce despite such cuts and how might their goodness be amplified if funding were restored? Second, the Jackson metro area is the most partisanly segregated metro area in the U.S., and this is often attributed to it being highly racially segregated (Dottle, 2019). So I also want to know how public libraries are affected by stark segregation and how public libraries shape that segregation.

In the 1970s, researcher R.M Orr developed a general framework for library directors to use to understand the relationship between their libraries' costs and benefits — or, as the author called it, measuring their “goodness” (Orr, 1973). I have borrowed that framework and slightly altered its implementation. Following the framework's instructions, this thesis uses a mixed-methods approach.

The general framework is:

1. Resources
2. Capability (quality)
3. Utilization
4. Beneficial effects (value)

Following Orr's mixed-methods approach is the best option for this thesis because Orr's framework has been cited in dozens of journal articles; thus this thesis will be comparable to those articles. Moreover, as established in my literature review, several articles have argued that it is not possible to fully capture the good generated by libraries looking at only quantitative data. One author, in making this point, asked, “How does one measure love, kindness, and generosity?” (Usherwood, 2002). When analyzing the social impact of libraries, it is crucial to get both qualitative and quantitative data.

As researchers have explained Orr’s framework, when resources (funding, staff, books, technology, etc) increase, so too does the quality of the library. And when the quality of the library increases, it is used more often. As the library is used more often (utilization), the amount of good done (value) increases. And as value increases, so too will resources, thus, completing a positive feedback loop. Numbers one and three require quantitative research, while two and four require qualitative research.

Orr’s framework is general, so he did not set hard definitions for his categories. I discussed this methodology with two former public librarians who still work in the field (one works for the Mississippi Library Commission and another is an academic librarian), and with their guidance, have altered this framework to fit this thesis’s purpose.

“Resources” include: Funding per year, hours open per week, staff, number of library sponsored programs per month, circulation numbers, and number of computers with access to high-speed internet.

“Utilization” includes: number of patrons, number of times a patron asked a librarian for help, number of people who attend library sponsored programs, number of computer sessions, and number of computer minutes.

“Capability” and “Beneficial effects” are found through responses to in-person interviews with librarians.

Before I started gathering data, I consulted a librarian from the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC) — the commission that offers guidance to the public libraries of Mississippi and does an annual financial audit of each library. She suggested I interview the three library directors in the metro area before I interview any branch librarians, and she helped me craft my

guiding interview questions for both library directors and librarians and put me in contact with the three directors.

In order to protect libraries and librarians, I gave each library and librarian a pseudonym.

I met each of the directors at their offices and interviewed them in the months of December and January. I interviewed each of the three library directors because they had information that their branch librarians do not — information such as: library funding, staff pay, and demographic information of patrons.

During my interviews with the library directors, I asked them which librarians in their system would be most willing to participate in my thesis. I asked that the librarians in my study have an ALA master's degree for two reasons: 1) to ensure that my interviewees were knowledgeable on libraries' issues, and 2) so that all my interviewees had a similar education level. The library directors put me in contact with ALA certified librarians when possible. In each system, there was at least one library that, for various reasons, did not have an ALA librarian. Still, the directors put me in contact with their most qualified librarians within the Jackson metro area. I interviewed librarians throughout the month of January.

First, I conducted quantitative research. Specifically, I researched the “resources” and “utilization,” as laid out in the general framework, of each of the public libraries and put that information in a spreadsheet. Almost all of this data came from the library directors' statistician's office.

Second, I conducted qualitative research. Orr as well as other researchers who have adopted his general framework, suggest the best way to determine the quality and value of a public library is to survey the library's patrons. Because of time and resource limitations, I was not able to survey patrons. Instead, I interviewed the three branch directors and then a librarian at

each of the eight libraries. The guiding questions I used for each of the interviews can be found below.

The reason I interviewed librarians and library directors was to gain qualitative data to assess “capability” and “beneficial effects” as laid out in the general framework. Ideally, I would have interviewed patrons of the libraries, but because of time constraints, that was not feasible.

After I gathered all the above information, I analyzed each library individually, all the libraries as a whole, and split the eight libraries into two groups: libraries in the city limits of Jackson and libraries in the suburbs of Jackson.

Guiding questions for interviews with directors:

1. Questions about the significance of libraries and library system
 - a. If the governor asked you, “What is the value of your library system? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?
 - b. Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your libraries offers?
 - c. How do librarians help patrons with their requests? To what extent?
 - d. If one of your libraries closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?
 - e. What are your biggest challenges as a library system?
 - f. What is one thing you wish your library system could offer but cannot or does not offer?
2. I would like to analyze two libraries in Rankin County, close to Jackson. Are there two where you think an ALA certified librarian would be willing to let me interview them?

3. Questions about funding and demographics for those two libraries
 - a. Demographic questions:
 - i. Would you be able to give me any demographic information for this library's patrons?
 - b. Libraries stats?
 - i. Such as: Books in circulation, computers with internet access, number of patrons per day, questions asked?
 - ii. Have you done any patron surveys?
 - c. How are these libraries funded? Millage? Who is their funding authority?
 - i. What are these libraries funding per year?
 - d. What is the pay range and requirements for library staff?
4. Do you think Mississippi's library policies harm your libraries' functions in any way?
 - a. Specifically, the way libraries are funded and board of trustees?
5. Ask about book boat librarian

Guiding questions for interviews with branch librarians:

1. If the mayor asked you, "What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?" what would you say?
2. What are some of the common things patrons ask your assistance for?
3. How is your library tied to other government services? Winn job center, tax services, etc?
4. What events does your library host every week? Month? Year? Do you have an event calendar I could have a copy of?
5. How do you and other librarians here help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

6. If this library closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?
7. What is one thing you wish your library could offer but cannot or does not offer?
8. What are your biggest challenges at this library?
9. How do most of your patrons access the library? Drive? Walk? Public Transit?
10. Does your library do any outreach? Book mobile?
11. Under what circumstances do you ask patrons to leave?
 - a. How do you implement those policies?
12. Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your library offers?
13. Book boat girl

I intended on interviews with the library directors to last about an hour and interviews with branch managers to last about 45 minutes. My interviews with the library directors lasted roughly two hours each and my interviews with the branch managers lasted between 45 minutes and two hours each. With each interview, I recorded audio on my phone and took notes of their responses. Immediately after each interview, I filled in my notes more thoroughly and referenced my audio recording when I needed exact quotes.

I interviewed three library system directors and seven branch managers in the Jackson metro area, and I gathered quantitative data for each branch. Then, I put all the results in Orr's mixed-method framework.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this section of the thesis, I place the data from each of the three library systems into the Orr general framework. Before doing this, I give demographic data about each county and a brief accounting of the interviews.

Madison County Library System

Madison County is unique in the state of Mississippi primarily because it is both suburban and rural and has pockets of vast wealth and swaths of poverty. Madison, the city, is the wealthiest municipality in Mississippi and its population is unusually white (Borden, 2019). The majority of the wealth in Madison County is located in the city of Madison, while the northern, rural portion of the county is significantly more impoverished. Madison County, excluding the city of Madison, is similar to the rest of the state — rural and racially and economically diverse.

As of 2018, the county had a population of 103,498, with 57% being white and 38% being black. 15% of children lived in poverty. The median house value was \$221,100.

I also gathered data from each library's census tract. This data comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 (5-year estimates) and is listed below in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Branch	Library A	Library B
Population	4,962	3,471
White	78%	35%
Black	11%	56%
Less than HS diploma	3%	13%
HS diploma	28%	57%

Bachelors or more	70%	31%
Children living in poverty	8%	15%
Children living at or above poverty	92%	85%
Median house value	\$264,900	\$135,700

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

On Jan. 8th, 2020, I interviewed the director of the Madison County Library System (MCLS) in her office, which is housed inside the Canton Public Library. The director has a Masters of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree and helped me decide which two libraries to analyze. We decided on Library A and Library B because they (1) are the only libraries in the system that are unquestionably in the metro area and (2) because they had librarians willing to be interviewed.

On January 14th, I interviewed the branch manager of Library A, and the children’s librarian sat in on the interview as well. The branch manager has an MLIS degree and has worked in public libraries for 27 years.

On January 14th, I interviewed the interim branch manager at Library B. The interim branch manager’s main position within the MCLS is the Youth Services Director, and she clearly expressed that she could not answer questions as accurately as a permanent manager could. She has an MLIS degree and has worked in public libraries for over a decade, though a significant amount of that time was spent in New York City public libraries. She has worked in Madison County for less than five years. When answering questions, she frequently fact-checked herself by asking full-time, lower-level employees. She also referenced the time she worked in other

libraries. Overall, though, I thought she had enough understanding of Library B to answer questions accurately.

Resources

The first component from the general framework is resources. This component includes the total number of circulation materials, number of computer sessions, number of early literacy and children’s programs, number of young adult programs, number of adult/family/elderly programs, and number of hours open per week. This number comes from the 2018-2019 fiscal year. See figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2

Branch	Library A	Library B
Circulation	150,911	90,677
# of computers	11	16
Early literacy and children programs	389	241
Young adult programs	71	30
Adult/family/senior programs	145	287
Hours open per week	56	56
Median house value	\$264,900	\$135,700

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

For context, the Madison County Library System had a budget of \$2,401,229 in the fiscal year 2018, which is the most recent data available. I do not have access to each individual library’s budget because even the library director does not have that information. Monies come from many different places and many library system services are centralized, but benefit all users of the library system.

MCLS is funded, in large part, by county millage. Additionally, the city of A gives \$100,000 to Library A annually and the city of B gives \$110,000 to Library B annually. In figure 4.3 below, I list how much money the system gets from each level of government.

Figure 4.3

Funding source	Local	State	Federal	Other
\$2,401,229	81.4%	9.6%	0.4%	8.6%

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

One important component of resources I did not anticipate was the libraries’ friends groups. During my first interview with a branch manager, I saw how useful a friends group can be to a library, so I asked every librarian if their library has a friends group and what their relationship with their friends group is like.

Library A has a very robust friends group. Its branch manager explained that the friends members are always willing to volunteer and that they can easily fundraise thousands of dollars. She also said that the friends group is usually willing to buy anything she asks them to — they respect her requests.

Library B has a friend group that helps fundraise money and has members who are happy to volunteer. The branch manager said her library has a “great” relationship with its friends group, and that the group sometimes has “too much money” and asks her to buy things — they do not want to simply sit on money.

I was not able to find the number of volunteer hours at specific branches, but for the MCLS as a whole, volunteers worked 2,268 hours in 2018 (Mississippi Library Commission).

Capability

The second component of the general framework is capability, which measures the libraries' value. To assess the libraries' value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I asked the director of MCLS two questions to gauge the capability of her library system. It is important to note that the director answered questions from the perspective of the entire system, not just the perspective of Library A or Library B. The director answered these questions via a follow-up email because we did not have enough time to address them in our interview.

What are your biggest challenges as a library system?

“We are fortunate as a library system to enjoy great support from our communities and our elected officials. But we do work hard to expand that support not only locally to non-library users who may not be aware of all that we offer, but also on a statewide and national level as well.”

What is one thing you wish your library system could offer but cannot or does not offer?

“Our greatest need right now is for newer, larger facilities particularly in Madison and Ridgeland. We are somewhat limited in expanding our services because we simply don't have the space. While our communities have grown, our buildings have not.”

I interviewed the branch manager of Library A and the interim branch manager of Library B. In each interview, I asked eight questions to gauge their libraries' capability.

What are some of the common things patrons ask your assistance for?

Both librarians answered that patrons often ask for help with technology, both personal and the library's technology. They also said patrons often ask for government forms — the A librarian referenced census forms while the B librarian referenced tax forms.

Additionally, the A librarian said her patrons often ask questions regarding homeschooling services; she said many of her patrons use the library's space and services to homeschool their children. She also said many patrons ask for help applying to jobs online and for help making resumes.

The B librarian said her patrons ask many "odd" questions. For example, she said a patron recently called the library to ask how to spell a word. She then clarified that this actually isn't actually "odd" because so many of her patrons do not have access to the internet, spell-check, or a dictionary at their homes.

How is your library tied to other government services? Win job center, tax services, etc?

Both librarians said that their libraries offer free public notary services. The A librarian said her library works closely with AARP; for example, AARP offers free classes for seniors on how to pick the right Medicare Part D option and how to avoid online scams. Library A also works closely with City Hall, though the librarian said she is hesitant to enforce some city ordinances that target homeless populations. The B librarian said that census workers had recently used the library to explain just how important it is to fill out census forms and that the library has voter registration forms available to patrons.

What events does your library host every week? Month? Year? Do you have an event calendar I could have a copy of?

Both librarians said their libraries have an eight-week summer reading program for children and teenagers and both libraries have several monthly book clubs. The MCLS recently had a regular computer class and "tech help" sessions in which patrons had up to 30 minutes to ask the tech teacher any questions they had about their personal technology. Recently, MCLS's

tech guy stopped working for the library system, but they hope to hire someone new to provide the same services soon.

At the A library, the annual programs are: A Christmas program in which Santa reads to the children (in 2019, over 360 people attended), a Halloween Carnival, and two health fairs. The monthly programs include: a quilting club and bingo, but programs differ each month. Weekly, there are several childrens' programs for all age groups.

At the B library, the annual programs are: Comic-Con, storybook con, and a magic show put on by a local magician — he, the librarian said, is so talented that he easily brings in crowds of 200 people. Monthly, B has numerous book clubs, a writing club, and a film club. Weekly, there are multiple storytime programs for children and “Teen take over,” which the librarian described as a fun and safe program for teenagers. The librarian said she usually tries to teach the teens important life skills at these programs.

What is one thing you wish your library could offer but cannot or does not offer?

The A librarian answered that she would like her library to have expensive items, such as laptops and bicycles, for her patrons to check out. She also said that she wishes she had more physical space in the library.

The B librarian said she would like to have a paid social worker in the library, even if only a few hours per week. She said a social worker would be better equipped to detect abuse and neglect among children and better at connecting people to resources such as WIC, social security, shelters, and food stamps.

What are your biggest challenges at this library?

The A librarian said her library does not have adequate funding. Though, she then explained that the city had recently allocated six million dollars to fix city buildings, and she was

sure that with that money, funding would no longer be an issue. She also said that the size of the building is a challenge.

The B librarian also said her library does not have adequate funding. She then said that the biggest challenge for her library is the city government. Since the city owns the building, they have to approve and pay for maintenance and they often do not do an adequate job.

Does your library do any outreach? Bookmobile?

MCLS has a bookmobile, which does most of the outreach for all the libraries in the system.

The A librarian said she does outreach at nursing homes, and the childrens' librarian said she doesn't have to do much outreach, especially not for children, because so many people come to the library. The B librarian said staff from her library go to middle schools and daycares for programming.

Under what circumstances do you ask patrons to leave? How do you implement those policies?

Both librarians answered that the patrons they have to ask to leave usually have a mental illness.

The A librarian said she has only had to ask a patron to leave maybe a dozen times in her 27 years. She said the people she has to ask to leave usually have a mental illness or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or are "tweens" yelling and fighting. Once, she had to ask someone to leave for continuously watching pornography. Library A has a policy against patrons sleeping, but the librarian said she tries not to enforce that policy unless the patron is snoring. In the MCLS, there is no written policy against body odor, but the librarian said she once had to ask a homeless patron to leave because of odor, though she did not kick him out; she made an appointment for him to take a shower at a nearby truck stop, gave him money to pay for it,

bought him new clothes from Walmart, and asked him to join the library again when he got cleaned up. The city library A is located in has a law banning cars someone is living out of from being parked on city property. The library is city property. One patron was living out of her car and visiting the library and the police told the branch manager that the patron had to move her car. The librarian explained that the patron was visiting, just like anyone else, and would not ask her to move her car. Eventually, the police asked the patron to move her car to a non-city-owned parking space, and the patron did. Despite this encounter, the librarian said her library has a great relationship with the city police. The police have a lot of free time and do not mind helping to de-escalate and remove patrons. The city police, she said, handle these situations very kindly. Sometimes, mental health service personnel help if the patron suffers from a mental illness.

The B librarian said she asks patrons to leave if they are disturbing others. For example, sleeping is against the code of conduct. One man would fall asleep and snore really loudly, and they'd have to wake him up. She sometimes lets patrons sleep if they don't snore, but other librarians are very strict about it. She said there is not a policy against body odor, but she might ask a patron to leave if it were bothering other patrons, though she has not had to do that at her current library. She said when she asks patrons to leave, she does so in the best and safest way for everyone involved, and that sometimes includes getting police or mental health services involved, with whom the library has a good relationship.

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your library offers?

The A librarian answered: "The people." She said her library is whatever her patrons need them to be. She told several anecdotes about times she has provided unexpected but essential services.

Once, the A librarian cared for and comforted a lost woman with Alzheimer's and helped her find her husband. The librarian said the whole community came together to help find the husband, and while they were searching, she gave the lost woman cake and told her she was at a party to comfort her.

On another occasion, a single mom was getting kicked out of her house and the library was able to find her free legal help.

Once, a toddler got locked in a car, and it took the fire department a long time to get the car open. The children's librarian sang to the scared child while the firefighters worked to open the door.

Another time, at the start of her career, the librarian had to help deliver a baby in a car in the parking lot. She said the young mother was not going to make it to the hospital in time and knew the library was a safe place to stop.

The B librarian said that the most important services her library offers are technology and programming.

Utilization

The third component of the general framework is utilization. This includes patron count, number of hours of computer use, and the number of people who attend early literacy and children's programs, young adult programs, and adult programs. Additionally, I asked branch managers to ball-park, in percentages, how their patrons access the library. I asked managers to guesstimate because the data does not exist. See figure 4.4 below.

Figure 4.4

Branch	Library A	Library B
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Patron count	111,626	82,336
# of hours on computer	5,867	11,896
# of people who attended early literacy and children programs	10,529	2,631
# of people who attended young adult programs	737	201
# of people who attended adult/family/senior programs	3,525	4,627
% of patrons who drive	90	100
% of patrons who walk	9	0
% of patrons who use transit	1	0

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Beneficial effects

The fourth and final component of the framework is beneficial effects, which measures the value of the library. To assess the value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I interviewed the director of MCLS, and asked her four questions to gauge the value of MCLS.

How do librarians help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

She answered that help given depends on the patrons’ particular needs. “We may help them print a resume or teach them how to create one,” she explained. “We try to meet them where they are by providing as much assistance as possible to make sure those needs are met.”

If the governor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

“Strong libraries equal strong communities. Our libraries have a positive impact in our communities in so many ways: economically, educationally, culturally, socially.”

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your libraries offer?

“Our greatest service is meeting the needs of our patrons whatever that need may be. We provide access to information and resources. What information or resource is most important depends on the need of the patron. It may be something as simple as answering a question and providing a single piece of information to providing free WiFi and public computers to do research, take a class, complete homework, submit a job application or access to free tax preparation help, a free health screening or exercise class, a computer or job skills class, participating in a book club, attending a storytime or summer reading program or meeting people where they are through our outreach activities. It’s all about serving our communities.”

If one of your libraries closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

“Short of finding another library, there simply is no other one place in the community that provides the range of services we offer that is open to absolutely anyone.”

I also interviewed the branch managers of Library A and Library B and asked them three questions to gauge the value of their libraries. Their responses are listed below.

If the mayor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

Both librarians said that their libraries are an important community center.

The A librarian said, “This is a village,” and that the library is a “magnet for people in need.” She explained that her library serves many retirees and babies. For some elderly who may be lonely, she explained, “We’re their family.” Additionally, she emphasized that her library is a safe space for all.

The B librarian said that access to computers and the internet, which, among many things, connects people to state and federal aid, is one of the most important reasons. Additionally, the library can teach necessary job skills and she referenced the fact that MCLS offers free Microsoft and photoshop classes. The librarian also made it clear that her library is “More of a community center” and “not just books,” and referenced “gaming groups” that happen at her library as one example. She ended by saying, “public libraries can change people’s lives.”

How do you and other librarians here help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

Both librarians answered similarly: It depends on the patron's needs and how busy the staff is. They will help up to typing in or assisting with personal information. They also let patrons know that though they can help people access information, they are not lawyers or doctors.

If this library closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

The A librarian said: “They’d have to pay,” and “I don’t know if they could replace it,” and “We can’t be replaced.”

The B librarian said she hopes people could go to the nearby Library A, and “There isn’t anywhere that offers our services but doesn’t charge.” Many patrons could not afford to pay for the services they offer.

Jackson-Hinds Library System

Hinds County is primarily urban but has some suburban and a few rural communities. Jackson, Hinds’s largest city, is highly segregated on partisan, racial, and economic lines. As of 2018, the population of Hinds County was 241,774, with 26% being white and 72% being black. 34% of children lived in poverty. The median house value was \$126,700.

I also gathered data from each library’s census tract. This data comes from the ACS 2018 (5-year estimates) and is listed below in figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5

Branch	Library C	Library D	Library E
Population	3,711	5,130	1,389
White	0%	72%	3%
Black	99%	28%	96%
Less than HS diploma	23%	0%	16%
HS diploma	53%	33%	72%
Bachelors or more	24%	62%	11%
Children living in poverty	47%	0%	40%
Children living at or above poverty	53%	100%	60%
Median house value	\$71,600	\$193,400	60,800

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

On December 16th, I interviewed the executive director of the Jackson-Hinds Library System (JHLS), at the Eudora Welty Library — the system's main branch — in downtown Jackson. She has an MLIS degree, and has worked her entire career in libraries, both public and academic.

Although her office is not currently located in a library, she felt more comfortable talking in the Eudora Welty Library, where her office was located for years. This library is the largest one I visited while conducting research for this thesis. It is housed in a two story building (which she told me is over 80 years old) and has many computers, computer rooms, a large children's area, a new, state of the art computer lab where librarians teach computer literacy classes, and much space for books and circulation material. The building, though, is in obvious, desperate need of repair. The second floor of the building has been closed for three years; first, the fire marshal closed the floor for violating fire code and soon after, many librarians who worked on the second floor, including she, became ill due to black mold. She does not expect the second floor to reopen anytime soon. When I visited the Eudora library, many of the patrons I saw appeared to be experiencing homelessness.

During the interview, the director helped me choose four libraries to analyze for my thesis. We chose these libraries because they are in the Jackson city limits and she thought their branch librarians would be the best equipped at answering my questions. The branch manager at one of the libraries did not respond to my request for an interview, so I only researched the remaining three libraries.

On January 13th, I interviewed the branch manager of Library C, which is located in a part of Jackson that experienced severe white flight.

Library C is housed in a small to mid-sized building that seems to be aging but does not appear in desperate need of repair. She said the library has been housed in the building for about 15 years although the building is older. When I visited the library, I saw about a dozen patrons, all middle to upper aged, all black, and all stationed at a computer.

On January 8th, I interviewed the branch manager of Library D, which is located in a part of Jackson that did not experience white flight severely.

Library D is one of the smaller libraries I visited for my thesis, and it was the most beautiful. Its architecture is unique, and it has large, tall windows that look out onto a patio lined by a forest that separates the library from a nearby golf course. The majority of the library's space is taken up by adult books and circulation material, though there is a small childrens' section and a few computers. When I visited, the patronage appeared to be nearly half white and half black with a pretty even spread across age groups. Middle to upper-middle class people seemed to make up the majority of the patronage, but a couple of people did seem to be living in poverty.

On January 10th, I interviewed the branch manager at Library E, located near the city limits on the west side of Jackson.

Library D is housed in the smallest building I saw for my thesis. It is a one room library with seven computers, a few shelves, and a small childrens' area. The library is connected to a senior center and the facilities share a large meeting room. The building was built in 2006, looks new, and has a welcoming atmosphere. This library is isolated. It is not near any major highway and though it is within Jackson city limits, it is in a rural area with fields and forests as its border. While visiting the library, I only saw three patrons, all young adults and all black. One of the

patrons introduced himself to me and explained that he loves coming to the library because it is the only place he is allowed to spend time away from a caregiver.

Resources

The first component of the general framework is resources. This component includes the total number of circulation materials, number of computer sessions, number of early literacy and children’s programs, number of young adult programs, number of adult/family/elderly programs, and number of hours open per week. These numbers come from the 2018-2019 fiscal year. See figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6

Branch	Library C	Library D	Library E
Circulation	6,629	39,856	2,247
# of computers	20	18	7
Early literacy and children programs	134	196	92
Young adult programs	54	19	29
Adult/family/senior programs	75	69	84
Hours open per week	51	51	36
Median house value	\$71,600	\$193,400	\$60,800

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

For context, the Jackson-Hinds Library System had a budget of \$4,418,568 in the fiscal year 2018, which is the most recent data available. Both Jackson and Hinds County have a millage that funds the library system. All the money from both millages, as well as state and federal money, is put in one account and then divided out to each library, whether the library is in

the city of Jackson or not. Figure 4.7 below shows how much money the system received from each level of government.

Figure 4.7

Source of funds	Local	State	Federal	Other
\$4,418,568	80.5%	14%	0.14%	5%

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

I asked all three branch managers if their library has a friends group and what their library’s relationship is to the group. The D librarian explained that there is a “Friends of the Jackson Libraries” that services all of the libraries in the Jackson city limits. She said they are helpful and sometimes purchase things she otherwise could not afford. The E librarian said the Friends of the Jackson Libraries dissolved a couple of years ago, though he heard they are re-grouping. When I asked the C librarian about her library’s relationship to the friends group she said, “Non-existent,” and then explained she has never talked to anyone from the friends group in her four years as manager and has not heard about people bringing the friends group back.

I was not able to find the number of volunteer hours at specific branches, but for the JHLS as a whole, volunteers worked 0 hours in 2018 (Mississippi Library Commission).

Capability

The second component of the general framework is capability, which measures the libraries’ value. To assess the libraries’ value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I asked the executive director of the JHLS, two questions to gauge the capability of her library system as a whole. It is important to note that she answered these questions from the perspective of the entire system, not any individual library. The questions and her responses are below.

What are your biggest challenges as a library system?

She gave two answers: funding and aging buildings. Then, for several minutes, she described financial problems within her local funding authorities. She said there is a good chance the city will go bankrupt in the near future, which worries her deeply. Then, she described that the city roads in Jackson are in terrible condition, so bad that a pothole recently caused a deadly crash. She also explained that most Jackson residents have not received, and therefore not paid, a water bill in years. She said a few years ago the city contracted a private company to fix the water billing system, but the company made the situation worse. The city ended up being sued by residents, and the city lost a few hundred thousand dollars in a settlement. Though, she explained that the mayor and county are big advocates for public libraries.

When she finished explaining the city's financial issues, I admitted that though interesting, I did not understand why she was bringing it up in an interview about the library system. She then explained that because of the 1972 Mississippi Code, the library buildings in the city of Jackson are owned and operated by the city. She said that for a city on the brink of bankruptcy, struggling to maintain its roads and unable to bill its residents for water, public libraries are not always a high priority. The city's many financial issues affect her libraries.

She explained that since the buildings are city-owned, the city is responsible for maintenance, which means the libraries must use the city's maintenance crew. She said that whenever she puts in a maintenance request, it sometimes takes the crew months to get to the library, and if they are unable to fix the problem on the first visit, it will sometimes take the crew another few months to visit again.

She also explained that she believes the city of Jackson has been violating the 1972 Mississippi Code, which states that a library's funding authority (in this case, the city of Jackson)

“shall” pay for maintenance out of the funding authority’s general fund. She said that in the summer of 2019, one of her Jackson libraries lost all of its air conditioners, and the city refused to pay for new ones, arguing that “shall” does not mean “must,” so the library system had to buy them, which cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Additionally, she explained that Jackson can be a dangerous place, and workers and patrons would not feel safe to come into her libraries if there were no security. In JHLS, a security guard is always present at every branch whenever it is open. This costs her system \$180,000 per year.

What is one thing you wish your library system could offer but cannot or does not offer?

The director said that her system’s most pressing need is newer facilities. She said that if the system does not get newer buildings, it will not be able to function.

I interviewed the branch manager of Library C, the branch manager of Library D, and the branch manager of Library E. In each interview, I asked eight questions to gauge their libraries’ capability. The questions and responses are listed below.

What are some of the common things patrons ask your assistance for?

All librarians said it is common for their patrons to ask for assistance with technology such as computers, printing, and faxing.

The C librarian said it is common for her patrons to ask when new books and circulation materials are coming in, and it is common for patrons to ask to buy supplies from the library such as pencils, pens, tape, and the like.

The D librarian said her patrons ask for assistance with resumes, homework, genealogy, history, and job applications.

The E librarian said his patrons ask for assistance with applying for jobs and ask about upcoming programs.

How is your library tied to other government services? Win job center; tax services, etc?

All librarians said their libraries offer free government forms to patrons. No library in JHLS offers notary services. The C librarian said that Kelly Services often hosts job fairs to find substitute teachers for Jackson Public Schools. The D librarian said AARP offers free tax services at her library and explained that her library is a voting precinct. The E librarian said his library is connected to and sometimes works with a nearby senior center.

What events does your library host every week? Month? Year? Do you have an event calendar I could have a copy of?

All librarians answered that they have a six week long summer reading program for children. The C and D librarians said their libraries' monthly programs are themed based on the month; for example, both had a Dr. Martin Luther King themed month in January and had programs to celebrate MLK.

The C librarian said her library has an annual Juneteenth program. Monthly, her library's programs differ and are usually themed. Weekly, her library's programs include two craft and story times for preschool and school-aged children.

The D librarian said her library has an annual black history month program. Monthly her library's programs are themed. Weekly, her library has a storytime and a bridge club.

The E librarian said his library does not have regular annual events other than summer reading, but it does have sporadic programs such as: a credit awareness program, Salvation Army program, Central MS Blues Society program, health related programs, creative writing/painting

workshop, Alzheimer's Mississippi program, and a Toni Morrison display. Weekly, his library has an anime club, storytime, and a movie night.

What is one thing you wish your library could offer but cannot or does not offer?

The C librarian said she wishes her library had a teen center. Right now, there is a small table and a few chairs in a corner where teenagers hang out, but she wants to give them a proper area where they would want to hang out. She said she has the space, she just needs the funds to put it together.

The D librarian said she would like her library to have more materials, a larger children's room, a larger parking lot, and a larger meeting room. She said she is lacking funds to complete these projects, but the library is operating fine without them.

The E librarian said he would like his library to have a coffee bar and more space.

What are your biggest challenges at this library?

The C and D librarians said funding is their biggest challenge. The E librarian did not mention funding.

The C librarian also said a big challenge for her library is getting children to participate in programs that do not involve technology and getting adults to show up to programs.

The D librarian jokingly said her library has too many readers, and she finds it difficult to keep enough books stocked. Her library cannot keep up with its patrons' readership. The librarian said, "This is a thriving library."

The E librarian said his library's biggest challenges are that it is too small of a venue, that there are not a lot of patrons, and that the library is "kind of isolated."

Does your library do any outreach? Bookmobile?

The C librarian said she does a monthly outreach at a local church and a daycare. She said this became possible only recently because the library was short staffed.

The D librarian said her library does not do any outreach other than the JHLS's social media page. After listening to the recording of the interview, I realize I may have asked this question in a confusing manner, which may have led the librarian to answer incorrectly.

The E librarian explained that there are only two full time and one part time employees at his library, and two employees must be at the library at all times when it is open, so it is difficult to do outreach. But, when he can, the librarian sometimes goes to daycares, high schools, and Head Start to do storytime or other learning activities.

Under what circumstances do you ask patrons to leave? How do you implement those policies?

The C librarian said she will ask patrons to leave if they have broken the code of conduct. Unless the patron does something horrendous, she gives her patrons three warnings, after which she asks them to leave. She said a common violation is people talking on their cell phones. She also said many people she has to ask to leave have a mental illness.

The D librarian said a patron would have to do "a lot" for her to ask the patron to leave. She said she always tries to de-escalate situations before asking a patron to leave, and she said the security at the library is always there to escort patrons out.

The E librarian said he will ask a patron to leave if the patron is being disruptive. The librarian said he has had to kick out three patrons over one and a half years. One patron was a teenager being loud while playing video games on the computer. The librarian said he applies the "three strike" rule to his patrons, and if he has to kick someone out, he gets the security guard to escort them out. The librarian explained that technically there is a "no sleeping" and "no body odor" rule, but it has never been enforced at his library.

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your library offers?

The C librarian said computers and technology are her library’s most important service. She said, “The printer and fax is probably 75% of what we do.”

The D librarian said computer and internet access are her library’s most important services, even more so than programs. Books are number one, though.

The E librarian said his library’s focus on community engagement, inclusive culture, and seeing his community as a “family” is its most important service. Since these factors are intangible, I asked again, and the librarian said the computers are his library’s most important service.

Utilization

The third component of the general framework is utilization. This includes patron count, number of hours of computer use, and the number of people who attended early literacy and children’s programs, young adult programs, and adult programs. Additionally, I asked branch managers to ball-park, in percentages, how their patrons access the library. I asked managers to guesstimate because the data does not exist. See figure 4.8 below.

Figure 4.8

Branch	Library C	Library D	Library E
Patron count	105,809	100,703	11,204
# of hours on computer	18,643	32,812	2,479
# of people who attended early literacy and children programs	1,842	1,959	2,869

# of people who attended young adult programs	590	109	201
# of people who attended adult/family/senior programs	984	1,487	494
% of patrons who drive	75	95	90
% of patrons who walk	5	2.5	5
% of patrons who use transit	20	2.5	5

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Beneficial effects

The fourth and final component of the framework is beneficial effects, which measures the value of the library. To assess the value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I interviewed the executive director of JHLS, and asked her four questions to gauge the value of JHLS.

How do librarians help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

_____ She emphasized that her libraries change lives. She said that her librarians will do much to help their patrons, depending on the patron’s need. She also explained that there is a system-wide policy against librarians looking at or typing in patrons’ personal and sensitive information.

If the governor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

She referenced four main reasons her libraries are worth funding. The first is free access to the internet. She said many of her patrons do not have access to the internet outside of the library, and she told a short anecdote about a patron who had recently used the library’s internet

to get approval to visit a loved one in prison. The second reason She gave was early literacy. She explained that throughout the year, the JHLS offers free six week literacy programs for students and their parents, called “Our Reading Family.” The program not only teaches children how to read but also teaches parents how to teach their children. This program offers a free meal to all who attend. The third reason is continued learning for adults. She said her system is about to launch a new program that will teach advanced computer literacy to 20-30 year olds who will be able to use those skills in the workforce. The final reason she gave was that many senior citizens find their only human contact at the library.

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your libraries offer?

After I asked this question, she took several moments to think and then said, “helping people.” She explained that every one of her libraries has free homeless resource guides that tell people where they can find resources in the city. She again referenced the importance of the internet and the early literacy programs offered by JHLS.

If one of your libraries closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

She said she hopes they would go to another library because there is nowhere else they can get the services a library offers.

I also interviewed the branch managers of libraries C, D, and E and asked them three questions to gauge the value of their libraries. Their responses are listed below.

If the mayor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

The C and D librarians both referenced free computer and internet access as a major reason, especially to find jobs. Additionally, the D librarian said her library is essential to the community, and she pointed out that it is a public space and all people use the space. The E librarian said that his library is a hub for the West Side community and that it is a vital educational and fun resource for the community.

How do you and other librarians here help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

All librarians said they can never look at or type in the patrons' personal information.

The C librarian said it depends on the individual patron's needs and how many staff are working and how busy the library is. She also gave an anecdote about one patron who needs one-on-one assistance, which the librarians cannot give her constantly because that would take away from other patrons.

The D librarian said she often helps patrons fill out online applications such as job applications.

The E librarian pointed out that there are only two full time and one part time employees, so he will help depending on how busy the library is.

If this library closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

The C librarian said she hopes they would go to the nearby libraries. She thought and then said, "Whichever way the bus would take them," referencing the high number of patrons who use public transportation. She also added that there is no other place than the library for most of her patrons — she said most of them cannot go to coffee shops because they would need their own computer to use their wifi.

The D librarian said she hopes they would go to other libraries, and she said most of what her library offers could be accessed online.

The E librarian said he hopes they would go to other libraries because there is nowhere else for his patrons to go to replace the services, especially internet access, his library offers.

Central Mississippi Regional Library System

The Central Mississippi Regional Library System (CMRLS) makes up four counties in central Mississippi. Most of the counties are rural, with the exception of part of Rankin County. For my research, I only researched libraries in Rankin County.

As of 2018, Rankin County had a population of 151,240, with 76% white only and 20.5% being black. Fewer than 9% of children were living in poverty. The median house value was \$169,300.

I also gathered data from each library’s census tract. This data comes from the ACS 2018 (5-year estimates) and is listed below in figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9

Branch	Library F	Library G
Population	13,556	1,091
White	73%	81%
Black	25%	12%
Less than HS diploma	7%	12%
HS diploma	63%	81%
Bachelors or more	31%	7%

Children living in poverty	7%	28%
Children living at or above poverty	93%	72%
Median house value	\$147,500	\$88,700

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

On December 17th, I interviewed the director of the CMRLS in her office in Brandon. She has an MLIS degree and helped me choose two libraries in Rankin County to analyze. We chose libraries F and G because they are both unquestionably in the Jackson metro area and because both of the branch managers have a master’s degree and were willing to be interviewed.

On January 7th, I interviewed the branch manager of Library F. She has an MBA degree and has worked in libraries for many years.

Library F is medium sized, very clean, has no obvious structural issues, and is 18 years old. There are a few board rooms, a genealogy room, and a children’s section with a play area and toys and a bird watching station with binoculars. There is a table where several corporations, such as Raising Canes, offered coupons for children who read a certain number of books. When I visited, I saw fewer than 10 patrons and they all appeared to be white and not living in poverty.

On January 9th, I interviewed the branch manager of Library G. She has an MLIS degree, and has worked in libraries for fewer than five years.

Library G opened in 2005 and is 25,000 square feet, the largest library I visited, with a big children’s section, storytime room, young adult section, teenage hangout area, computer lab, three study rooms, a conference room and a large meeting place, close to the size of a small auditorium, and offices in the back.

Resources

The first component of the general framework is resources. Again, this component includes the total number of circulation materials, number of computer sessions, and number of early literacy and children’s programs, number of young adult programs, number of adult/family/elderly programs, and number of hours open per week. These numbers come from the 2018-2019 fiscal year. See figure 4.10 below.

Figure 4.10

Branch	Library F	Library G
Circulation	50,484	61,239
# of computers	33	30
Early literacy and children programs	440	220
Young adult programs	52	56
Adult/family/senior programs	466	205
Hours open per week	53	58
Median house value	\$147,500	\$88,700

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

For context, the CMRLS had a budget of \$3,373,121 in the fiscal year 2018, which is the most recent data available. I do not have access to each individual library’s budget because even the library director does not have that information. CMRLS is funded primarily through counties’ millages. Below, figure 4.11 demonstrates how much funding came from each level of government.

Figure 4.11

Funding source	Local	State	Federal	Other
\$3,373,121	68.7%	18%	0.49%	12%

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

I asked both librarians if their libraries have a friends group and if they do what the relationship is like between the friends group and the library.

The F librarian said there is an active friends group composed of “little old ladies.” She explained that the friends group fundraises for the libraries and buys many things that she cannot buy with the library’s budget. She also said the members of the friends group are happy to volunteer their time at the library’s programs.

The G librarian said there is an active friends group composed of older women. She said the group is not as active as it once was because its members are becoming too old to participate and the group is not getting many newer members. She explained that the group is not able to volunteer much, but that they do fundraise a lot of needed money for the library.

I was not able to find the number of volunteer hours at specific branches, but for the CMRLS as a whole, volunteers worked 4,278 hours in 2018 (Mississippi Library Commission).

Capability

The second component of the general framework is capability, which measures the libraries’ value. To assess the libraries’ value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I asked the director of CMRLS two questions to gauge the capability of her library system. It is important to note that she answered questions from the perspective of the entire system and not from the perspectives of Library F or G. Her answers are listed below.

What are your biggest challenges as a library system?

She said her library’s biggest challenge is staying relevant in the age of the internet. She said that in contemporary times, there is much false or fabricated information on the internet, and

people do not know what to believe. She then pivoted and said that the internet also brings about great opportunity. Much of her library's services can be done over the internet. Her library system recently launched a free music streaming service, similar to Spotify or Apple Music, which patrons can use on their personal devices. She thinks this will help make the library more relevant. She also said that since her library system has so much information accessible online, from anywhere, people can access accurate, trustworthy information more readily.

What is one thing you wish your library system could offer but cannot or does not offer?

She said she wishes her library system could offer a free movie streaming service, similar to Netflix. She said many of her patrons cannot afford private streaming services and that VCRs and DVD players are becoming obsolete.

I interviewed the branch manager of Library F and the branch manager of Library G. In each interview, I asked eight questions to gauge their libraries' capability.

What are some of the common things patrons ask your assistance for?

The F librarian said that her patrons ask a variety of questions. For example, "little old ladies" will come to the library and ask for a number from the phone book (BPL does not own a phone book but librarians access numbers from the internet). Some patrons need someone to read basic information such as the phone book, prescription medicines, and the like to them.

The G librarian, likewise, said her patrons ask many, oftentimes, "weird" questions. Some examples include: One patron wanted to become a satanist and asked for books on the subject (the library had six), another patron asked how he could make himself pee so that he could pass a drug test, and another asked how he could taxidermy his pet dog. She also said that a big ask of patrons is help with taxes. The G library does not get help from AARP services

during tax season, but the library does have free tax forms. Additionally, patrons ask for test prep books (ACT, GRE, GED, etc.) and reference books, they ask to use study rooms, and they ask about programs.

How is your library tied to other government services? Win job center, tax services, etc?

The F librarian said her library is tied to government services in several ways. Every year, AARP sets up a table and helps patrons fill out their tax forms for free. The F library offers programs for retirees to help them understand how to use retiree government services. Over the years, many patrons asked for a notary at the library, so the librarian asked her friends group to pay for several of her librarians to become notaries, and now there is always at least one notary at the F library while it is open. The librarian said her library also has good relationships with private businesses in town. Some businesses (like Home Depot) tell people who are looking to apply to come to the public library to apply for a job if they do not have internet access.

The G librarian said AARP does not offer tax services at her library, but it does have tax forms, and librarians help people access tax forms online. She also said her library has a “symbiotic relationship” with the Win Job Center; sometimes librarians direct people to the Win Job Center and sometimes the Win Job Center directs people to the library.

What events does your library host every week? Month? Year? Do you have an event calendar I could have a copy of?

Annually, the F library offers a summer reading program for kids from toddlers to teenagers, a Halloween Carnival, two book sales (mindful of not having them the week of a big football game), Library Week, and a fair with other libraries in Rankin County. Monthly, it offers Family Night, Third Thursday Book Club, Genealogy Club, Beading Class, Computer Literacy 101, and a DNA Discovery Group. On a weekly basis, it offers “The Makery,” an arts and crafts

workshop that includes activities such as crochet, knitting, coding class, and arts and crafts. The library also offers Free Coffee Friday, Sewing Saturdays, BYOP - Bring Your Own Project, Toddler Time, Baby & Me, Kid Connection, and Preschool storytime on a weekly basis.

Annually, the G library offers a six week summer reading program for children, Comic-Con (which all the Rankin County libraries help organize, but happens at Library G). Monthly, the library has “Third Thursday Flicks,” a free movie night, “Bingo for Books,” crafting, and book clubs. Weekly, the library has three storytimes — for toddlers, pre-schoolers, and after schoolers — and a “Teen Night” on Mondays.

What is one thing you wish your library could offer but cannot or does not offer?

The F librarian wants more physical space at her library, especially study rooms. She said, “On most days, I use every inch of this building.” The G librarian said she wishes she could offer a weekly class for patrons who want to learn Spanish and a weekly class for patrons who want to learn English. She would also like to offer a sewing class.

What are your biggest challenges at this library?

The F librarian said her library’s biggest challenge is staying ahead of patronage and staying relevant. She then explained that in order to do this, librarians have to listen to the community they serve. The librarian said she recently put up a whiteboard in the lobby of the library and wrote on it, “I wish my library would...” and left out markers for patrons to write what they wish the library would offer. Then the library responded to each suggestion and posted their responses — yes or no and rationalizations — on the board and on Facebook.

Thus the library made some changes. They started carrying Astrology books and bought a toy cat (some people are allergic to real cats) and bought a paper shredder.

The G librarian said her biggest challenges are that she does not have the budget necessary to “pay people what they are worth,” and she would like a more active friends group.

Does your library do any outreach? Bookmobile?

The F librarian said there is no bookmobile in Rankin County and she tries to attract patrons through social media, by speaking to groups, and word of mouth. Upon reviewing the interview with this librarian, I think I may have asked this question in a confusing manner and the librarian may not have answered fully.

The G librarian said they go to the Early Childhood Education Center once a week and bring new books and offer storytime, and a librarian also visits three daycare centers on a weekly basis.

Under what circumstances do you ask patrons to leave? How do you implement those policies?

The F librarian said she and other librarians will ask patrons to leave if a patron is disturbing or harassing others (she gave an example of one man who would routinely exposes himself to staff and patrons) or watching pornography on the computer. How she handles these situations depends on the infraction, but usually a warning and de-escalating the situation is the first priority. In extreme cases, a patron can have their card revoked, but only the board of trustees can do that. Sometimes she has to call the police, but she said she can count on one hand the number of times she’s had to do that since working at the F library.

The G librarian said, “I’ve never had to ask a patron to leave.” She’s been at Library G for two years. She explained that if a patron has bad body odor they can be asked to leave. She explained that this has happened once at the Library G since she’s worked there. The librarian also explained that it is against the rules to sleep in the library, and she cites the opioid crisis as the reason. She also said that patrons can be kicked out for watching pornography on computers.

When handling a situation like this, she will usually try to de-escalate the situation. If a patron is sleeping, the librarian cannot ask the patron to leave until they've asked the patron to wake up at least three times. The city has a non-emergency police phone number and they use that when they need assistance.

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your library offers?

The F librarian said the most important service at her library beyond books is videos. She said patrons check out movies from the library more than any other circulation item.

The G librarian said the most important service her library offers is information and technology, particularly access to the internet and computers. Library G has a computer lab — the only library in the system with one. She also emphasized that programs are an important service.

Utilization

The third component of the general framework is utilization. This includes patron count, number of hours of computer use, and the number of people who attend early literacy and children's programs, young adult programs, and adult programs. Additionally, I asked branch managers to ball-park, in percentages, how their patrons access the library. I asked managers to guesstimate because the data does not exist. See figure 4.12 below.

Figure 4.12

Branch	Library F	Library G
Patron count	105,898	89,110
# of hours on computer	10,019	15,047

# of people who attended early literacy and children programs	16,026	7,444
# of people who attended young adult programs	603	1,385
# of people who attended adult/family/senior programs	9,501	5,803
% of patrons who drive	95	90
% of patrons who walk	5	10
% of patrons who use transit	0	0

(Wesley, 2020)

Beneficial effects

The fourth and final component of the framework is beneficial effects, which measures the value of the library. To assess the value, I gathered qualitative data through in-person interviews.

I interviewed the director of CMRLS, and asked her four questions to gauge the value of CMRLS.

How do librarians help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

She explained that librarians in her system help patrons with many basic professional needs such as finding jobs, creating email addresses, creating resumes, and the like. She said her librarians will help patrons through the process but will not fill in personal information.

If the governor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

She answered, simply, “It’s priceless.” Then she explained that the state really needs to fund Magnolia, an EBSCOhost service. She also explained that there is lots of misinformation floating around, and it is essential for people to have reliable information. She sees Magnolia as

an easy way for people to access reliable information. She explained that Magnolia is much cheaper for the state to purchase for all libraries than if every library subscribed to EBSCOhost individually.

Everyone knows people can check out books at the library, but what are the most important services outside of books that your libraries offer?

She said the most important services at her libraries are internet access (for reasons like finding jobs and doing taxes) and human contact. She said many of her patrons are lonely and her staff offers some of the only human contact they get.

If one of your libraries closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

She said they would have to go to another library because there is no other institution that currently exists that could replace all their services. She also emphasized that this would never happen because people care about their libraries too much.

I also interviewed the branch managers of Libraries F and G and asked them three questions to gauge the value of their libraries. Their responses are listed below.

If the mayor asked you, “What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?” what would you say?

The F librarian explained that her library is a “community place.” It is unique in that it is the only place that offers itself to anyone in the community for free. She said that all sorts of people use the library but especially grandparents who often bring their grandchildren to the library to play and explore. Additionally, people come to the library for internet services; for some the library provides their only access.

The G librarian said people use her library for its computer and internet access, which they often use to apply for jobs and to do homework. She then explained that her library has a great relationship with the mayor and the city government. She said Library G gets a lot of support and additional funding from the city. The librarian explained that she meets with city leaders every quarter and explains what she needs, and they are always responsive even if they cannot financially support all she needs.

How do you and other librarians here help patrons with their requests? To what extent?

The F librarian explained that patrons often ask for help applying to jobs, looking up medical information, researching medical conditions, and filling out government forms such as child custody and divorce forms, which her library offers for free. She explained that librarians will walk patrons through the process of accessing these forms all the way up until putting in personal information.

The G librarian said she and other librarians will connect patrons to the best information available depending on their needs. She gave an example of a patron needing assistance to send money to a loved one in prison. She makes it clear that she and her librarians are not doctors or lawyers and will not put in patrons' personal information.

If this library closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?

The F librarian said, "I don't know." Then, she explained that there is a senior center in town that the elderly could use, but that obviously wouldn't cover a large percentage of patrons. She said some patrons could resort to their local church, but not all patrons go to church. There is no public facility in the town that could do what the library does, she concluded.

The G librarian said the patrons who own a car would go to another library, and she noted that Library G is the only government facility to offer free computer access.

Mississippi Library Association Lobby Day

On February 5th, I attended the Mississippi Library Association's (MLA) lobby day at the state capitol building in Jackson. I attended the lobby day to see what policies the library association was asking for and to better understand the contemporary policy issues librarians view as most pressing. Overall, the MLA was asking for more money, around \$1 million in total. They had three specific asks and each would cost the state about \$300,000. I list the three requests below.

First, the MLA asked for the state to fully fund Magnolia, the state's version of Ebscohost. Magnolia costs Mississippi about \$1.3 million each year, and for 2020, the state has only allocated \$1 million and wants the libraries to cover the rest of the cost. The MLA was asking the state to cover the remaining fee.

Second, in 2015, the state significantly cut its funding to public libraries, which resulted in Mississippi's libraries losing about \$300,000 in federal matching funds that year. The MLA was asking the state to repay the \$300,000 the libraries had expected to receive in 2015.

Third, the MLA was asking for about \$300,000 more for the personnel incentive grants program (PIGP), which helps library systems with a small tax base pay their library staff's salaries. Every year, the state gives a lump sum of money to the Mississippi Library Commission for PIGP, and each year the Mississippi Library Commission approves a formula that determines which library systems get how much money from PIGP. Every year since 2008, the state legislature has decreased the funding for PIGP. Currently, the state legislature is planning to fund PIGP at the same level it did in 2005, and the MLA is asking the legislature to instead fund PIGP at the same level it did in 2008.

In this chapter, I placed all qualitative and quantitative data into Orr's general framework, and I described three initiatives Mississippi library advocates are fighting for. The latter advises my policy recommendations.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND POLICY PROPOSAL

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the ability of libraries in the Jackson metro area to generate social good in their communities. After modifying Orr's general framework to measure the libraries and then analyzing that data through the lens of white flight, I have come to two major conclusions. The first is that all libraries in the Jackson metro area are equipped and seem to generate social capital in their communities, though Jackson libraries produce less social capital than do Madison and Rankin County libraries. The second, which I found surprising, is that communities affect their libraries' ability to generate social good; this finding is new to existing literature.

The librarians I interviewed often described their work as serving the community. The director of the Madison County Library System said, "Strong libraries equal strong communities." This sentiment is true, but it only describes half of the relationship. I have found that the relationship between a library and its community — at least in the context of the Jackson metro area — is symbiotic. Yes, libraries serve their communities, but that work is done best when the community supports the library in turn.

To be specific, there are two types of support a library can get from its community: governmental support (such as tax revenue) and volunteer support (such as community raised funds and volunteer hours).

Jackson metro libraries depend on their communities because of the way Mississippi's library systems function. Mississippi libraries receive most of their funding from local governments and very little funding or resources from the state or federal government, so their ability to generate social good is largely dependent on their local tax base. For instance, city and county taxes pay for 81.4% of MCLS, 80.5% of JHLS, and 68.7% of CMRLS. I have found that

libraries located in wealthy communities are best positioned to positively impact their communities. Libraries in Madison and Rankin Counties, which are primarily white flight communities, are much better resourced, have greater capability, and are more frequently utilized than Jackson libraries. The libraries in the white flight communities benefit from both better resourced local governments and wealthier volunteers.

All seven libraries produced beneficial effects, but those effects are largely unique and based on their patrons' needs. Comparing the beneficial effects between libraries is difficult, and I was unable to detect significant disparities in this component of the general framework.

Though libraries in wealthier communities generally perform better than libraries in less affluent neighborhoods, this is not always the case. Library D, which is located in a wealthier and whiter community than Library B, has fewer resources and is less positioned to generate social good than Library B. This is likely due to the fact that Library D is a part of the Jackson-Hinds Library System, whose tax base overall is less wealthy than the Madison County Library System, of which Library B is a part.

Some may read this thesis and assume that library employees are part of the reason disparity exists. That assumption would be incorrect. All of the librarians I interviewed are similarly educated, have similar experience, and were similarly welcoming to patrons. The disparities exist because Mississippi's libraries are made to depend on their communities for resources, and areas that have seen a mass exodus of white people have fewer resources.

It is also important to note that Jackson's libraries perform critical and nonreplaceable services to many people, and especially to vulnerable populations. The fact that Jackson's libraries produce less social capital than do the other two library systems is not necessarily a failing of Jackson's libraries; it may only be a result of the narrow focus of this thesis. Future

research should consider community capital and educational capital, among other sociological perspectives, to more fully understand the value of libraries in the metro area.

All libraries studied in this thesis generate social good. How much good the library generates, though, depends almost entirely on the community and library system it operates in. According to Orr, if a public library is well resourced, it will be capable of producing social good. If a library produces social good, it will be utilized often. If a well-resourced library is used often, it will generate widespread beneficial effects, which incentivizes the government and volunteers to supply the library with more resources, which completes a positive feedback loop. From my research, I find that for Jackson metro libraries, there are disparities between poorer, blacker neighborhood libraries and wealthier, white flight libraries. For poorer, blacker neighborhood libraries, the breakdown in the feedback loop is primarily in resources, with consequences in subsequent components. In this chapter, I analyze the data from each component of the general framework, discuss further findings, and recommend several policy options.

General Framework

Resources

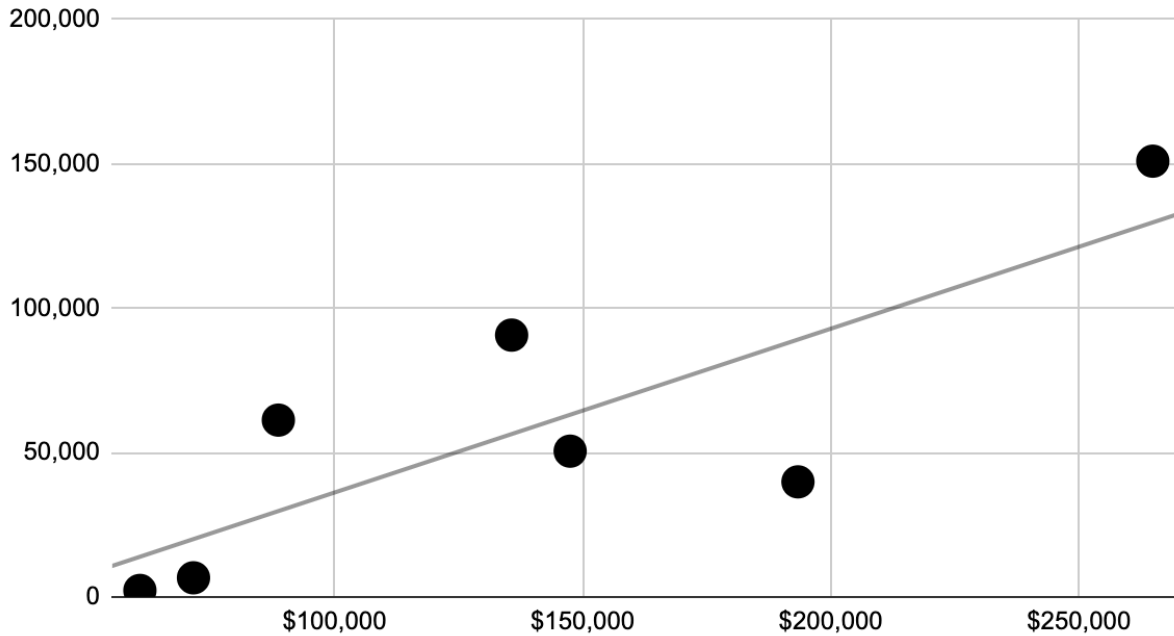
The literature makes it clear that libraries impact their communities (Klinenberg, 2018; Vårheim, 2009; Sobczyk, 1996; Vårheim, Steinmo & Ide, 2008; Johnson, 2012). However, I find that the relationship is a two-way street and that communities also impact their library. Generally, the more wealthy a community is, the more resources its library has. A strong correlation exists between a community's median house value and its library's number of circulation items and its number of programs. Additionally, communities with strong library support — such as having an active friends group — have better resourced libraries. All of the libraries I studied impact their

communities and generate social good, but the extent of the good created relies heavily on support from its community.

A community's median house value and its library's number of circulation material are strongly correlated. Library A is located in the wealthiest community, and its library has 150,911 circulation materials (MCLS, 2020), the most of any library I studied; Library E is the poorest community, and its library has 2,247 circulation materials (JHLS, 2019), the least of any library I studied. The remaining five libraries' circulation materials line up almost perfectly in order with their median house value; the big exception is Library D. The community surrounding Library D is the second wealthiest community I studied but the library has the fifth-lowest number of circulation materials. The community surrounding Library D is an outlier in Jackson's city limits, being unusually white and wealthy. It should be reasonably assumed that Library D has so little circulation material compared to similarly wealthy communities in Rankin and Madison Counties because it exists in a much poorer library system. The correlation between median house value and the number of circulation material continues inside the Jackson-Hinds Library System; Library D, which has the wealthiest community in the system, has over six times as many circulation materials as the library in the next wealthiest community studied in the system. Figure 5.1 below demonstrates this correlation.

Figure 5.1

Median house value compared to circulation materials

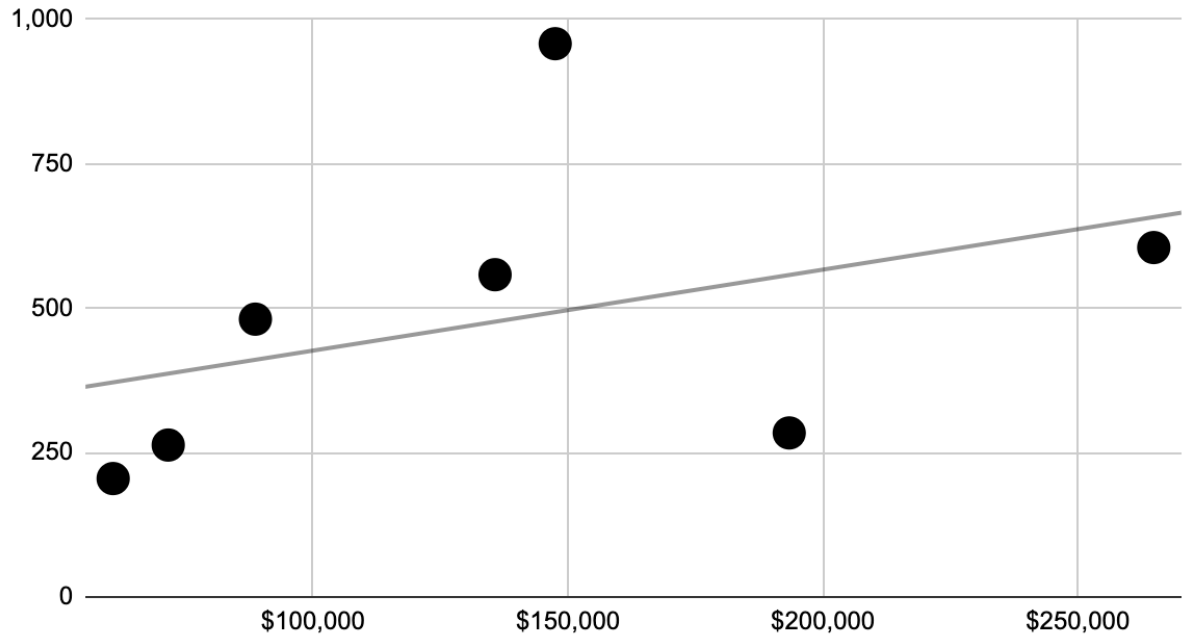


(Wesley Craft, 2020)

A community's wealth and the number of programs its library offers are generally correlated. Within each library system, the wealthiest library offered the most programs, while the poorest library offered the fewest programs. When analyzing across all seven libraries, though, the correlation is not as strong. The community surrounding Library F is the third wealthiest but offered 958 programs last fiscal year — the most of any library I studied. The community surrounding Library E is the poorest, and its library offered the fewest programs — 205 last fiscal year. Figure 5.2 below demonstrates the correlation.

Figure 5.2

Median house value compared to number of programs



(Wesley Craft, 2020)

While a causal relationship seems to exist between the wealth of a community and its library's circulation material and programs, it is unclear how the causal relationship works. It could be that people living in wealthy communities generally demand more circulation material and programs than people living in poorer communities, or it could be that libraries in wealthy communities are able to afford more circulation material and staff who can host programs, or it could be a mix of both.

A library's friends organization can serve as an important resource for a library by fundraising for material the library cannot afford and through volunteer work hours. A library's friends organization can fill in gaps that normal funding sources cannot or do not fill. All four libraries in Rankin and Madison Counties have an active friends group, and according to the

librarians, all are great at fundraising for their library; of those four libraries, the G librarian was the only one who said her friends group did not volunteer due to members' age. The B librarian said her friends group sometimes has "too much money." Likewise, the F librarian said her friends group regularly purchases items that her patrons need but that the library cannot afford, and she referenced the friends' latest purchase, a paper shredder, which many patrons had requested.

Meanwhile, none of the libraries in Jackson have a friends organization. When I asked the C librarian about her relationship with the Friends of Jackson Libraries, she said it was "non-existent." All Jackson libraries rely solely on traditional public funding sources.

I was unable to find volunteer hours for branches, but I was able to gather volunteer hours for the three systems. Although this data is not specific, the drastic difference between the number of volunteer hours in the JHLS and the other two systems points to a system-wide disparity. Figure 5.3 below shows the number of volunteer hours each system had in 2018, the latest data available (Mississippi Library Commission).

Figure 5.3

System	MCLS	JHLS	CMRLS
# of volunteer hours	2,268	0	4,278

(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Despite the disparity between the Jackson-Hinds Library System and the other two systems, all the libraries I studied have a base-level of resources. All have a branch manager with at least a bachelor's degree, all are housed in buildings with some level of security, all have at least several thousand circulation materials, and all have at least several computers with access to high-speed internet.

Capability

All of the libraries I researched add value to their communities. For example, all libraries have at least a six week long summer reading program for children, all libraries offer free government forms to their patrons, at least one library in each system offers free AARP tax services, all librarians receive similar questions and requests from patrons, and all libraries offer reading time for children. However, the libraries in Madison and Rankin Counties are able to offer much more value to their communities than Jackson's libraries. To clarify, this difference has little or nothing to do with the JHLS itself — instead, it is caused by white flight and the way that libraries are funded in Mississippi.

The disparity between Jackson and the other two systems is most evident in my interviews with the three library directors. When I asked the directors what their system's greatest challenge is, the Madison County Library System director did not list a challenge, but instead said, "We are fortunate as a library system to enjoy great support from our communities and our elected officials." The director of the Central Mississippi Regional Library System, which includes Rankin County, said her system's biggest challenge is staying relevant in the internet age. Meanwhile, the director of the Jackson-Hinds Library System explained that her system's biggest challenges are: deteriorating buildings, lack of funding, a funding authority on the brink of bankruptcy, a funding authority seemingly unable and unwilling to maintain the libraries, and sometimes dangerous working conditions. Whereas the Madison County director did not list a challenge and the Rankin County director gave a non-troubling albeit important challenge, the Jackson director listed several challenges that all severely impact her libraries' ability to function.

To assess the capability of the libraries, I also interviewed each of the library managers. The disparity between Jackson's libraries and the other two library systems was evident here as well. I consistently found disparities between the library systems in big and small ways. One small example is that all libraries in Madison County offer notary services for free, Library F in Rankin County offers notary services for a \$3 charge, and no libraries in Jackson offer notary services.

A revealing question I asked the librarians was, "*What are your biggest challenges at this library?*" Five out of the seven librarians said their library's biggest challenge is lack of sufficient funding. Though "lack of sufficient funding" meant different things to different librarians. The A librarian, who serves the wealthiest community I studied, said lack of funding was her library's biggest challenge, but then she explained that she expected her town to give its city services a \$6 million grant in the next fiscal year, which would be enough to pay for her library's maintenance needs. Even though lack of funding is Library A's biggest challenge, the library is operating fine, according to the librarian. Meanwhile, the C librarian library, which serves a Jackson neighborhood, said she has the space and a plan to build a much needed teen area, but she doesn't have the funding to buy basic materials for the area, such as furniture.

Only the E and F librarians did not identify funding as a challenge, but their answers still support my claim that communities impact their libraries and that libraries in white flight neighborhoods are better equipped to generate social good. The E librarian said his biggest challenge is getting more community members to come to the library and participate in its programs, while the F librarian said her biggest challenge is staying relevant in the age of the internet and not having enough space. In other words, the library in the poorest community

cannot get enough people to participate, while a library in a white flight neighborhood has so many patrons that it is difficult to serve them all.

I also asked the library managers, “*Does your library do any outreach?*” and their responses provide further evidence of disparity between Jackson and the other two library systems. None of the librarians at the A, C, or E libraries do much outreach, but their justifications for not doing outreach were vastly different. The A librarian said she does not need to do outreach for two reasons: 1) the Madison County Library System has a bookmobile, which does outreach for all of the system’s libraries, and 2) she said so many people come to the library, there is not much need to do outreach. Meanwhile, the C and E librarians said they do not do much outreach because there must always be two employees present at the library, and they rarely have enough staff working to leave. While the MCLS can afford a bookmobile and a librarian to man said bookmobile, two libraries in the JHLS struggle to have adequate numbers of staff.

I also asked the librarians, “*What are the most important services outside of books that your library offers?*,” and six out of the seven librarians cited some form of technology. The only librarian who did not reference technology was the A librarian who answered, “the people,” meaning library employees and community members who support her library. This suggests that all seven libraries generate social good by offering free technology services to the public, and it also suggests that the wealthiest community has the most community support.

All seven libraries in each of the three library systems offer a baseline level of services and materials to their communities. The types of services offered and to whom depend largely on the community, and wealthier, whiter communities have better equipped libraries.

Utilization

Six out of the seven libraries I researched had a comparable patron count, between 82,000 and 112,000 in the previous fiscal year. The outlier is the Library E, which had 11,204 visitors in the last fiscal year. Though most of the libraries had similar patron counts, patrons in Jackson tended to use technology more and attend programs less than patrons in the other two systems. To compare the utilization statistics of the seven libraries more clearly, I turned the number of hours on computers in the last fiscal year into the average number of minutes each patron used a computer. Then, I figured out what percentage of patrons attended a program. Figure 5.4 below shows those statistics.

Figure 5.4

System	Madison County		Jackson-Hinds			Rankin County	
Branch	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Average # of minutes each patron was on a computer	3	9	11	20	13	6	10
% of patrons who attended a program	13%	9%	3%	3%	30%	25%	16%

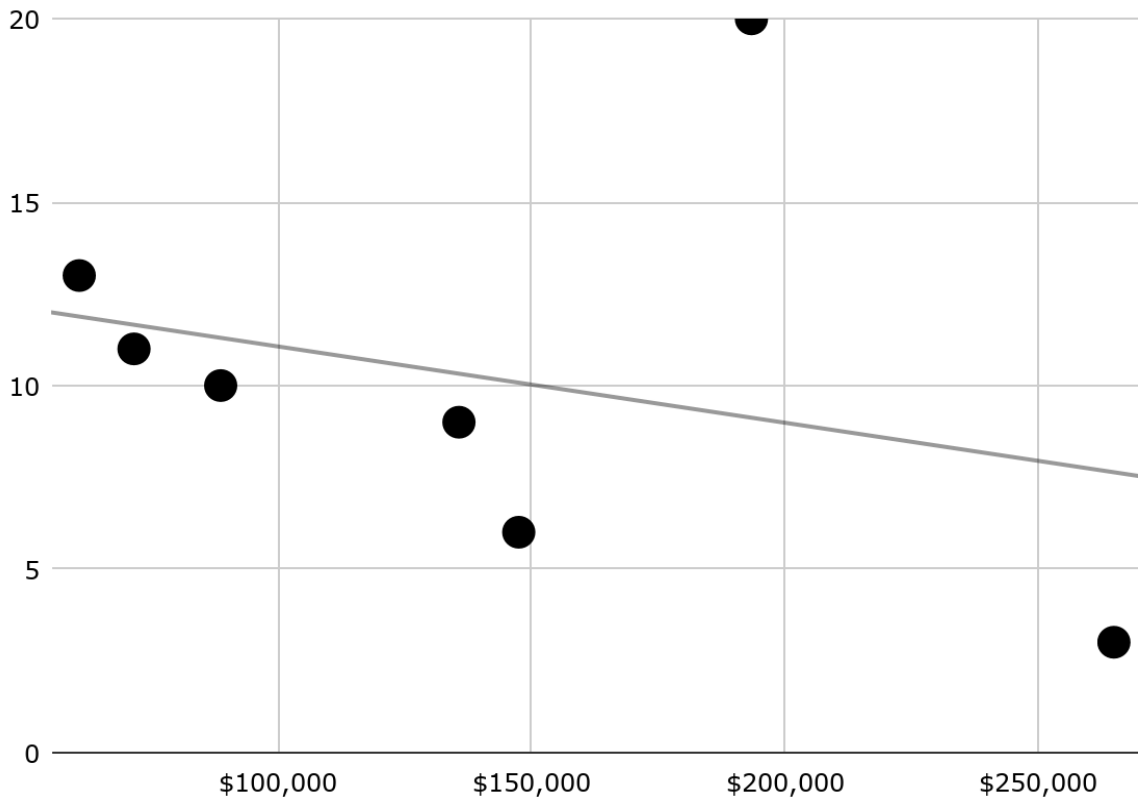
(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Across all seven libraries, there is a clear correlation between the communities' wealth and the way its patrons utilize the library. The wealthier a community is, the less time its patrons spend on a computer at the library. As seen in figure 5.5 below, there is one exception to this rule — Library D. Although it is the second wealthiest neighborhood, its patrons spend the most

amount of time on computers. This is likely because Library D is located in Jackson and is adjacent to poorer neighborhoods where people who may not have computer access at home. Even though the neighborhood is wealthy, its library is easily accessible to people who live in poor neighborhoods. Additionally, there is a noticeable difference between how patrons in Jackson and in the other communities use their libraries. For instance, the average number of minutes each patron spent on a computer in Jackson was 14 minutes and 27 seconds. In Madison County, the average was five minutes and 55 seconds, and in Rankin County, the average was seven minutes and 54 seconds. Jackson patrons spent almost twice as much time on computers as Rankin County patrons and nearly two and a half as much time as Madison County patrons.

Figure 5.5

Time spent on computers by house value



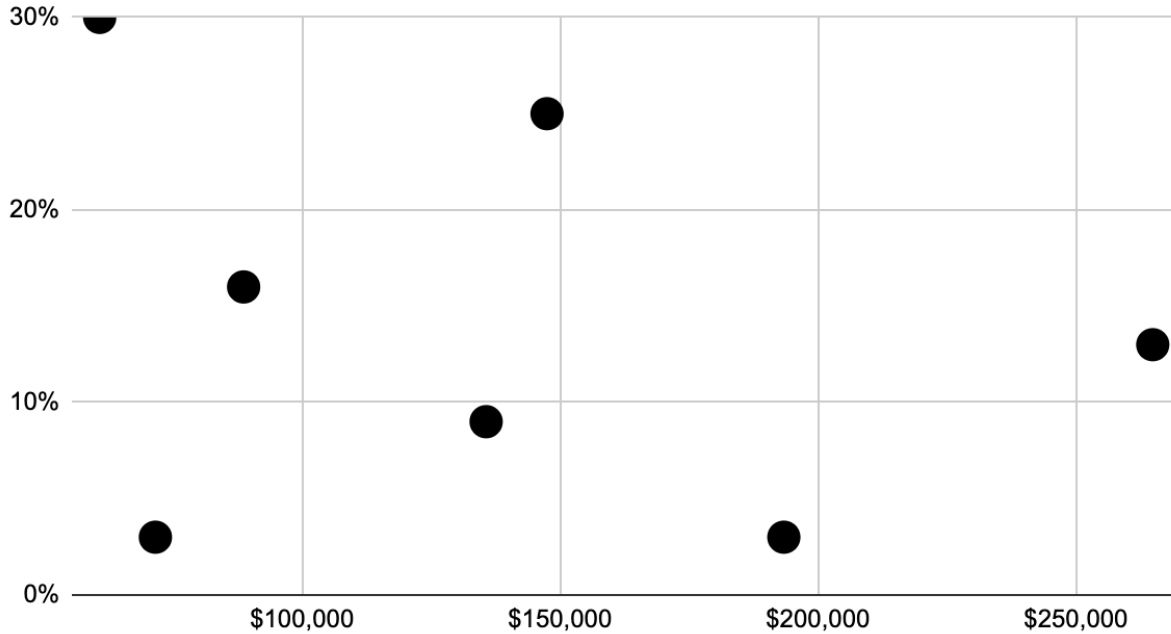
(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Across all seven libraries, there is no correlation between a community's wealth and the percentage of patrons who attended an event. Figure 5.6 below demonstrates this fact. Though, when comparing between systems, significantly fewer Jackson patrons attended programs than did Madison and Rankin County patrons. At Library C and Library D, only 3% of patrons attended programs. Although 30% of Library E patrons attended programs, this number is misleading. Remember, Library E was an outlier when it came to patron count, with only 11,204 patrons in 2019, so even though it has the highest percentage of patrons who attended programs,

only 3,564 people attended programs, compared to Library F's 26,130. While Jackson's lowest percentage is tied at 3%, Madison County's lowest is 9% and Rankin County's is 16%.

Figure 5.6

% of patrons who attended programs by house value



(Wesley Craft, 2020)

Overall, the utilization component of my research shows that all libraries except for Library E, serve comparable patron sizes, and Jackson's patrons generally spend more time using computers and attend programs less frequently. It is likely that this disparity exists because the JHLS's patrons have less access to technology at home than do patrons of the other two systems. Regardless of the reasons, one consequence may be that Jackson libraries produce less social capital than the other two library systems. Social capital is generated through face-to-face interactions, and programs are much more likely to encourage face-to-face interaction than sitting in front of a computer (Vårheim, 2009). Additionally, while conducting research to write

Palaces for the People, Klinenberg found that social capital is generated at public libraries primarily through programs such as children's readings or more innovative programs such as virtual bowling on a Wii gaming system (2018). Though it is likely that Jackson's libraries produce less social capital than Madison and Rankin County libraries, it is not the case that patrons' time spent on computers is useless. In fact, every librarian I interviewed noted that free computer access is important to their patrons because many of them would not have access otherwise and use the computers to perform necessary tasks such as applying for a job or submitting a request to visit a loved one in prison.

Beneficial Effects

All seven libraries generate beneficial effects, and there is no detectable disparity between any of the library systems, which does not come as a surprise. As each of the library directors and several of the branch managers explained, successful libraries must meet their patrons' needs. Since all seven libraries serve seven unique communities with different needs, each library's beneficial effects are different. Despite the disparities in resources, capability, and utilization, all libraries create tremendous beneficial effects in unique ways.

As Klinenberg described in his book, social infrastructure can be difficult to define and difficult to see, but it is easiest to see when it breaks down (2018, p. 14). That is why I believe the best way to access the beneficial effects of the libraries was to ask the following question: *"If one of your libraries closed down, where do you think your patrons would go to replace the services you offer?"* Each of the three library system directors and all seven of the library managers said they hope patrons would be able to find and access another library because the services their libraries offer have no substitute. The MCLS director said, "There simply is no

other one place in the community that provides the range of services we offer that is open to absolutely anyone.”

To assess the beneficial effects of the libraries, I also gave each director and branch manager the chance to pitch the importance of their libraries when I asked them, “*If the mayor or governor asked you, ‘What is the value of your library? Why should we continue to fund it?’ what would you say?*” All the directors and managers cited at least one of two reasons: technology and community. The A librarian said her library is a “magnet for people in need.” The B librarian said her library is “more of a community center” and “not just books.” The director of the JHLS said her libraries are important to the elderly, many of whom experience their only human interaction at the library. The CMRLS director said there is a lot of misinformation floating around so people use her libraries to access reliable information. The C and G branch managers said many people come to their libraries to apply for jobs. In addition to the two main reasons cited, most of the librarians offered a unique reason their library is valuable. The JHLS director said her system has a free six week program called “Our Reading Family” for children and parents, which teaches the children how to read, teaches parents how to teach, and offers every attendee a free meal. The G librarian showed me exercise equipment her patrons can check out for free. The MCLS director pointed out that her system has technology classes, such as Photoshop, which teaches patrons real life job skills.

Overall, each of the libraries produces beneficial effects in their communities, and there is no noticeable disparity in this regard between the library systems. The libraries offer essential, non-replaceable services such as free internet access and inclusive community programming and community space.

Other Findings

All of the librarians I interviewed would argue that their libraries are places of inclusion: Anyone in their community is welcome to use their services free of charge. The CMRLS director told me that in her position, she advocates for inclusion and not for mere tolerance. For librarians who work in white flight communities, this creates interesting and sometimes difficult to navigate legal and ethical situations. White flight cities exist on the premise of exclusion — historically they existed to exclude black people and people living in poverty, and some of the towns I researched continue to have ordinances that explicitly target those in poverty. I sought to find out if any of the three library systems have anti-homeless policies and if so, how the branch managers enact those policies. I came to two conclusions: None of the library systems have explicit anti-homeless policies, though all have at least one policy that affects people experiencing homelessness more than others, and, to my surprise, the MCLS has the most inclusive policies of the three library systems.

None of the library systems have policies that outright prohibit homeless people from using their services, and none of the libraries I visited have anti-homeless architecture, which is becoming common in public libraries in parts of the U.S. (Gee, 2017). However, all three systems have a policy against sleeping in the library, and the JHLS and the CMRLS both have policies against body odor — both policies disproportionately target people experiencing homelessness. However, these two policies are essentially void, almost never being enforced. The A and B librarians said they allow people to sleep as long as they are not snoring. The G librarian said she only knows of one patron her staff had to ask to leave because of body odor and he came back after showering. Overall, from policy and enforcement perspectives, all three systems seem to uphold their value of inclusion.

The city of Madison — located in Madison County — has explicit anti-homeless and general anti-poverty ordinances. For example, apartment complexes are banned in the city of Madison. In 2015, city alderman Ken Jacobs justified the ordinance to the Jackson Free Press by saying,

“The people that usually go into rental properties, they usually aren’t of high quality. They work lower paying jobs. Next thing you know you have crime and you have disturbed citizens. If you can afford Madison, you’re welcome.

We don’t discourage anyone” (Zos, 2015).

Additionally, in the city of Madison it is illegal for someone who is living in their car to park in a city owned parking lot. It is because of Madison’s exclusion that I was surprised to see that MCLS has the most inclusive policies and enforcement of the three library systems.

From a policy perspective, MCLS is very inclusive. It has no policy against body-odor, and people who live in any county that borders Madison County can get a MCLS library card free of charge. All services that MCLS offers are free, such as notary services, for which Rankin county charges a small fee.

From an enforcement perspective, the librarians in the MCLS were incredibly inclusive as well. Once, the branch manager of a MCLS library received several complaints that a patron had bad body odor and was bothering other patrons. The librarian asked the man to join her in her office, gently explained the complaints she had received, and then gave him money to get a shower at a nearby truck stop and to buy new clothes at Walmart. The man came back to the library later that afternoon, freshly showered with new clothes and thanked the librarian. In another instance, city police told the librarian that someone parked in her parking lot appeared to be living out of the car, which is illegal, and the police wanted the librarian to kick the patron

out. The librarian told the police officer that she would never ask a patron to leave for experiencing homelessness and that the patron had every right to use her library. The police insisted that since the library is city property, it is illegal for the patron to park at the library; eventually, the librarian asked the patron to move her car to a nearby private parking lot and to come back to the library.

Despite this city being a place of exclusion, the MCLS policies and the branch managers have made their libraries a place of inclusion. I believe the reason that MCLS is more inclusive than the other two library systems is because MCLS can afford to be inclusive and it may be that MCLS librarians recognize their cities' exclusionary ordinances and work extra hard to work around them.

Policy Proposals

The reason for the disparity between Jackson's libraries and the other libraries has little or nothing to do with the JHLS's ability to perform well and much more to do with the fact that white, wealthy people left Jackson in droves and that libraries are reliant on their communities for resources. No policy could reverse white flight, but policymakers do have tools to address the disparity it causes between our public libraries.

Mississippi public libraries are funded primarily through local property taxes. Since 2008, the state has continuously decreased its library budget, and in 2015, the state lost a portion of its federal funding. The way the library system is structured in Mississippi, coupled with fewer state and federal resources, has forced libraries to rely more heavily on their local governments. Additionally, libraries are not allowed to own property — only their local funding authority can do that. According to the MS 1972 Code § 39-3-3, the money to maintain libraries' buildings "shall" come from the funding authority's general fund — this has caused legal

confusion because the city of Jackson argues that the word “shall” does not mean “must” and sometimes refuses to maintain Jackson library buildings.

Based on my research, it is clear that all libraries in the Jackson metro area generate social good and perform many necessary services that have no substitute. It is also clear that those libraries rely heavily on their communities to generate social good and to perform their many services. Libraries located in wealthy, white flight communities are better resourced and produce more social capital than other libraries. The city of Jackson has fewer resources to allocate to its libraries than the other two systems, the people of Jackson are less equipped to volunteer or donate to their libraries than the other two systems, and the city tries to avoid paying for maintenance on library buildings. There are several policy options that could make Jackson metro libraries less dependent on local resources. I will list three policy proposals in order of political feasibility.

First, and easiest, the state attorney general should issue an opinion on whether the word “shall” means “must” or is a suggestion. Right now, the JHLS is in no financial shape to legally challenge the city of Jackson and doing so could harm the relationship between the library director and city officials whom she relies on for funding. With an attorney general opinion, JHLS would have no need to sue. Even if the attorney general finds that “shall” is a mere suggestion, at least the law would be clear and JHLS could more easily predict future budgets.

My second policy proposal is for the state to accept the Mississippi Library Association’s three requests, which would result in the state allocating roughly an additional \$1 million toward public libraries in 2020. The first request is for the state to fully fund Magnolia — if the state does not, the libraries will have to come up with about \$300,000 on their own. The second request is to pay the libraries the federal money they lost in 2015 as a result of the state’s

significant decrease in library funding, which was about \$300,000. The third request is for the state to increase its PIGP program, which is used to help pay staff, by about \$300,000. Right now, PIGP is funded at 2005 levels, and the Mississippi Library Association is asking the state to pay at 2008 levels. I do not think these three policy suggestions do enough, but they are better than nothing. The first request would prevent libraries from being harmed, while the last two would slightly repair past harm done to libraries. I do not see these policy suggestions as long-term sustainable goals, but they are politically feasible.

For policymakers to make libraries throughout the Jackson metro area less dependent on local resources, the Mississippi state code that governs the library system needs a complete overhaul. The majority of funding needs to shift from the local level to the state and federal levels. To determine how Mississippi's libraries ought to be funded, I have borrowed from another state.

Hawaii's library system is unique for two reasons: First, it is the only statewide library system in the U.S, and second, it is the only state in the U.S. in which 0% of its funding comes from local taxes (Hawaii State Public Library System). Hawaii's library system receives its funding from the state general fund, a statewide grant, fines and fees, and from the federal government. I do not believe that Mississippi should fully adopt Hawaii's library system; I believe that since libraries have unique needs, there should be multiple systems in the state. However, if we follow Hawaii in fully funding our libraries through state and federal taxes, libraries could serve their communities without being financially dependent on their communities.

I foresee two main complications with a policy that redirects all library funding to the state and federal levels. First, the state legislature and governor generally seem reluctant to fund

libraries. Since they have continuously cut library funding for the past 12 years, wouldn't it be a bad idea to give them the power to determine library funding? Second, I expect people who live in wealthy communities to be upset that they are paying for libraries in poorer communities. I have a solution to both of those concerns.

In the state of Mississippi, public education is funded, in large part, from the state's general fund, and the amount paid to each school district is determined by a formula called Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP). To avoid the state legislature simply not funding libraries, there would need to be a funding formula similar to MAEP but for libraries. Librarians and the MLC should be in charge of writing said formula, with input from all stakeholders, and the formula should be written in a way that the state legislature is legally bound to follow the formula. Additionally, to avoid residents in wealthy communities from getting angry that their money is not directly tied to their library, library systems should still be allowed to levy a millage tax on their citizens that would only be used in their library system. Towns, cities, and counties should also be allowed to give money to their libraries from their general funds.

If such a policy were adopted, there would still be a disparity between Jackson and the other two library systems. However, no library would be dependent on its community to operate. Then libraries could serve their communities without needing to be served in return.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the social impact public libraries in the Jackson metro area have on their communities. I conducted a mix-method approach through interviews with three system directors and seven branch managers in the metro area. I collected quantitative data from the library systems' statisticians and the Mississippi Library Commission website. I took Orr's general framework for evaluating the social good urban public libraries produce, slightly altered its implementation, and placed all the data into the framework. I analyzed all of the data through the lens of the metro area's recent history of mass white flight from Jackson to its suburbs.

I found that all libraries in the Jackson metro area produce social good and beneficial effects for their communities. However, there is a disparity between the JHLS's blacker and poorer community libraries and the other two systems' libraries in the amount of value and social capital that libraries produce. I found that the relationship between libraries and their communities is symbiotic; all the libraries impact their communities, and that every community impacts its library. This finding is new in existing literature. I also found that in white flight neighborhoods, librarians sometimes face difficult ethical and legal decisions; whereas the librarians want their libraries to be a place of inclusion, their libraries exist in towns with exclusive policies and attitudes.

The reason for this disparity can be found in the way Mississippi's library laws are written and because of recent budget cuts. In Mississippi, libraries are funded primarily through local governments, and local funding authorities own and maintain their libraries' buildings. Over the past 12 years, the Mississippi legislature has cut its funding to libraries, and in 2015, Mississippi libraries did not receive federal funding they were counting on. This has caused

libraries in the Jackson metro area to become dependent on their communities for governmental support and volunteer support. Therefore, libraries located in the MCLS and the CMRLS, which are predominantly white and more wealthy than JHLS, are able to give their libraries support that the state and federal government once gave. The JHLS libraries — whose communities have been largely and sometimes completely abandoned by white people since the 1970s — do not have communities that can support their library as easily.

Additionally, there is some legal confusion around who is responsible for maintaining the library's buildings. The city of Jackson sometimes refuses to pay for its library's maintenance, claiming it is not their responsibility, while the JHLS director claims it is the city's responsibility.

I have a few policy recommendations for policy makers. The state attorney general should give a legal opinion to determine who is responsible for maintaining libraries; in the short term, the state legislature should grant the Mississippi Library Association's three requests; and long term, the state needs to overhaul the way libraries are funded, moving funding away from local sources and towards state and federal sources.

Further research should seek to find out if the symbiotic relationship between libraries and their communities is a generalizable discovery, or if it is specific to these Mississippi libraries. The literature clearly says that libraries impact their communities and produce social good. However, I was unable to find literature that suggests communities impact their libraries. Some questions that researchers should consider asking are: Are all libraries dependent on their communities for resources and to produce social good? What is the relationship between most libraries and their communities?

I intend on circulating my findings in hopes of passing some of my policy proposals. I will give a copy of this thesis to the Mississippi Library Commission and the Mississippi Library

Association, both of whom are best equipped to advocate for my policy proposals. Additionally, I will turn my main findings into an op-ed and aim to get it published in Jackson newspapers.

In my experience of studying public policy, anti-blackness affects nearly all governmental systems in Mississippi, which harms those systems and the black people they are meant to serve. I am saddened by the fact that our library systems are no exception. With that being said, I found much hope while conducting my interviews. All of the librarians I met, including those in white flight communities, are fierce advocates for inclusion. The librarians I met cannot control the fact that many white families in the metro area resist racial integration, and they cannot, at least anytime soon, recreate their library systems. But, given this reality, all of the librarians make their libraries safe, welcoming places for everyone, sometimes in deep contrast to their city's culture and ordinances. My hope for libraries in the Jackson metro area is that they will continue to be beacons of inclusion and that they will one day be able to serve their community without needing to be served in return.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this thesis without the reliable support, advice, and reassurance of many people. I owe the most gratitude to my thesis advisor, Dr. Melissa Bass. As a junior, my main sources of financial and emotional support came to a surprising and upsetting halt. I met with Dr. Bass and explained that I wanted to drop the honors college and forget my thesis so I could graduate early and move on with my life. She rallied support, doing much more than was expected of her, and helped me figure out a way to stay in the honors college to complete this thesis. Dr. Bass continues to give me much needed advice in my academic and personal lives. I was lucky to have such a thoughtful and caring thesis advisor.

I also thank all of the librarians who patiently and happily helped me through my research journey. I thank Adam Clemons, my second reader and a research librarian at the University of Mississippi for introducing me to unfamiliar ways of creating data and for being enthusiastic about my career aspects. I thank the Mississippi Library Commission and the Mississippi Library Association for introducing me to state library law and inviting me to learn about policy proposals. I thank the three library directors for being eager participants of this thesis and for allowing me to research their systems. I thank the seven branch managers for welcoming me into their libraries to show me the important work they do.

I thank Jacqueline Knrirschild — for whom the terms “roommate” and “best friend” don’t quite seem to encapsulate our relationship — for being my biggest advocate, pushing me to write just a little bit more, and telling me when I should put work aside to enjoy the small pleasures of life.

