

# EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY-LOCAL NEWS COLLABORATION



**THOMAS ALEXANDER**



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*THOMAS ALEXANDER*

LIBRARY FUTURES  
NEW YORK, NY



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# About Library Futures

Library Futures is the vanguard nonprofit organization uncovering and confronting the fundamental policy issues that threaten libraries in the digital age. We believe librarians, policymakers, and community leaders deserve a new approach to digital rights so they can protect, advocate for, and advance a fair digital future for libraries and the communities they serve. Library Futures meets this need with fresh research, visionary policy and advocacy initiatives, and engaging education programs.

Library Futures is a project of the Engelberg Center on Innovation Law & Policy at New York University School of Law.

Visit us [online](#).



# About this Project

This resource was developed by Thomas Alexander during the Library Futures [Internship Program](#). The Program is an applied learning experience for the next generation of information professionals and future leaders of information and technology policy and advocacy. Interns in the cohort-based program work across the organization with project advisors and mentors to advance projects in advocacy, law, policy, research, and outreach on a variety of topics facing public institutions, libraries, museums, and archives. Student interns in the program create outputs ranging from podcasts and zines to research papers and resource templates.

## About News Futures

[News Futures](#) is a community of journalists, organizers, and civic allies working together in a “do-ocracy” to build a future for news that is service-oriented, participatory, and reparative. As a partner organization, we are committed to pursuing opportunities that allow us to better understand, highlight, and grow our mission-aligned work.



## About the Author

Thomas Alexander was an intern in the Library Futures 2024-25 Internship Program. He is an MLIS graduate of UCLA and an aspiring librarian—public or academic, anywhere he gets to help people run down the rabbit holes of their curiosity. He was inspired to become a librarian by his experiences first as a public library patron (shoutout LA County Library and Oakland Public Library), and then later as a library assistant (♥ Contra Costa County Library). He is committed to advancing democratic, non-commercial avenues for producing and sharing knowledge. He organizes with the Los Angeles Tenants Union and enjoys tennis, improvised music, birdwatching, and singing in his car.

# Introduction

## Project Scope

[Library Futures](#) (LF) and [News Futures](#) (NF) want to understand how libraries and local news organizations can better support one another in their shared goal of democratizing access to quality information for the public good.

The goal of this project was to learn from librarians and community journalists within the orbit of LF/NF about the opportunities and challenges they face in partnering with one another.

This report presents learnings from the project to aid both LF and NF in identifying fertile ground for joint initiatives going forward.

## Methodology

From February 19th to April 2nd, 2025, I conducted 11 semi-structured interviews with librarians, community journalists, and professionals who straddle both fields, guided by [a set of questions](#) which I developed based on [NF's charter](#) and [LF's 2021 collaboration](#) with the Albany Public Library and *Albany Times Union* newsroom.

Between interviews, I conferred regularly with LF's Director of Programs Michelle Reed, as well as my mentor April Hines, Librarian for the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida.

After the interviews, I compiled individual notes documents for each session, including key takeaways and summaries of the conversation, impactful quotes, and resources referenced by the interviewees. In this report, I have aggregated the key takeaways from across all 11 interviews into thematic buckets.

Interviewees	Interview Date
Sierra Sangetti Daniels, Community and Culture Steward at News Futures	2.19.25
Talya Cooper, Research Curation Librarian, NYU	2.21.25
Jennie Rose Halperin, Executive Director of Library Futures	2.28.25
Teresa Schultz, Scholarly Communications and Social Sciences Librarian, University of Nevada, Reno	3.3.25
Sarah Houghton, Director of Discovery and Delivery at the California Digital Library, Former Director of the San Rafael Public Library	3.5.25
Sarah Asch, journalist and library studies student located in Texas	3.12.25
Maria Bustillos, journalist and founding editor of Flaming Hydra, Popula, and Brick House Cooperative	3.13.25
kate (k.e.) harloe, independent journalist based in Kingston NY, News Futures member	3.17.25
Karolle Rabarison, Director of Communications at the Online News Association and Library Futures Advisory Board Member	3.19.25
Terry Parris Jr., Director of the Library Newsroom Project, Public Square Editor at Headway, an initiative of The New York Times, and a recent MLIS graduate of Pratt Institute	3.21.25
Darryl Holliday, journalist and civic strategist, co-founder of City Bureau, Documenters, and News Futures	4.2.25

## Limitations

A clear limitation of this exploratory project has been the lack of input from public librarians. Librarian interviewees were selected informally based on existing connections to LF staff, and these connections skewed toward academic librarians. Only one of the four librarians interviewed had spent significant time working in a public library. At the same time, the conversations with journalists mostly concerned potential partnership with public rather than academic libraries. Any future work on this project should include a concerted effort to solicit ideas and input from public librarians—especially those involved in either collection development or public programming.

# One: Libraries Are Where People and Journalism Meet

**Libraries are where the people are. Journalists want to reach the people. The people need better civic information in order to fully participate in their communities.**

Journalism has a community engagement problem. Media literacy has not kept up with the proliferation of information sources and this has led to distrust. Libraries are trusted by their communities, and they're also where the people are.

- Because public libraries attract such a wide spectrum of people and because those people so often show up with open minds, community journalists see partnership with libraries first and foremost as means to convene with those they most want to reach.
- In speaking about this dynamic, some journalists characterized public libraries as spaces “with a great capacity for community organizing.”
- Some journalists and librarians recognize that the community engagement problem actually starts way upstream from journalism, and is related to declining community connection in general (see [Bowling Alone](#)). Partnerships between journalists and libraries should therefore prioritize building genuine connection between local community members, rather than simply asking them what stories they have to share or pointing them to their local council meeting.

Journalists and local media outfits can reach far more community members when public libraries conduct outreach along with them.

- The [Albany Public Library + Times Union project](#) and [New York Focus Community Listening Tour](#) are clear examples.

People struggle to find basic information about how to participate in local and state government.

- Journalists and librarians could co-lead public workshops on navigating online government systems, much like academic librarians do with library databases.
- Involving library patrons in the process of creating local news and civic information can ensure they have the relevant local information they need to fully participate in their communities.
- Librarians and journalists should look to public access television/community media centers for inspiration on this front. Programs like [YOUmedia](#) at the Chicago Public Library point to what's possible when you put the means of media production in the hands of the public and support them in building a local community of practice (see the work of media scholar [Antoine Haywood](#)).

Partnership between libraries and local news is not one size fits all. There are going to be many models which are all hyper-locally mediated. The big picture, however, is that these projects should seek to plug members of the public into active coalitions working to build the information they need. Libraries can be the scaffolding.

- LF and NF should seek to identify and promote as many of these experimental partnerships as possible in order to encourage their replication.

One reason that so many newsroom + library partnerships are one-off projects is that journalists often come

to find stories and leave with a product. We need to design projects with ongoing commitments to continue working with the community—the benefit to community members has to be the primary goal.

- Terry Parris Jr.'s [Library Newsroom Project](#) at BPL is one such model.

Libraries and librarians are already overstretched and underfunded. Not all of them will want to take on the role required of them for these partnerships and programs. One way to build their capacity long term would be to partner with library schools (MLIS programs), so library students could help sustain news + library pilot programs and better prepare themselves to lead similar programs when they get into the field.

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*“[When we think] libraries we’re like buildings, tables, computers, markers, heat, local, streets—this is what journalism is thinking of, finally we can convene people and have dialogue, and share information in that way.”*

– Sierra Sangetti Daniels

*“The kind of authentic diversity that you see in libraries is really fertile ground for the kind of work that nonprofit and civic media outlets intend to do, which is place-based, in-person, more about connection than consumption. That idea of: How do we equip more people to work alongside us? Libraries, I think, are right at that Venn diagram of the perfect kind of space where the right people, the right environment, the right assets are all in the same place for that kind of community of practice.”*

– Darryl Holliday

*“The news problem of community and audience is actually not a journalism problem, it’s a society problem. And it’s way upstream. It’s so far upstream that we have to think about how people come into a room, know each other, see each other, and talk about their stories, their information, before we say, ‘Do you want to sign up for a newsletter and read our investigations?’ So the mission of the Library Newsroom is to think more deeply about conversation and connection than it is about creating a news product.”*

– Terry Parris Jr.

# Two: Libraries, Local Media, and Findability

**Librarians want to make quality local news and media accessible to their patrons. Community journalists want to increase the discoverability of their work.**

There is interest among librarians, at universities at least, to create access to independent and/or local journalism and media through their collections. Working with one of these media creators to pilot a technically sound and replicable institutional subscription to their content could be a useful proof of concept.

- At least one prominent independent media creator seems to have developed such an institutional subscription via the Ghost platform (See [Next Steps](#)).
- From a journalist's perspective, the demise of Google search makes it an imperative that we conceptualize new ways to enhance the discoverability of quality local news and information. Given this, it makes total sense for libraries to step in and leverage their communities' trust—which is legitimate and earned—to lift up quality local information sources.

A news/media-side consortium that could allow libraries to subscribe to bundles of geographically or topically relevant local/independent digital content would make this financially feasible for libraries.

- One initial barrier to this work is that journalists don't understand how digital collection development works in libraries. LF could help educate the news world about this process (See [Next Steps](#)).
- Might libraries that have built these kinds of consortiums (on the buyer side) have models, wisdom, or technical assistance to offer news organizations in creating something similar (on the distributor side)?
- This is the kind of project that philanthropic funders would be likely to support. [John Bracken](#), as someone who used to be on the journalism philanthropy side at the Knight Foundation and is now on the library side at DPLA, might be a good person to approach with this idea.

This consortium would need to offer a platform or application through which libraries could facilitate patron access.

- Half of the needed tech exists ([OPDS](#)), the hard part would be building out the desired user functionality.
- Sarah Houghton doesn't see any reason why libraries couldn't begin pulling in web news content through OPDS feeds into the [Palace App](#).
- RSS also still works. What if libraries leveraged [existing open source RSS feed readers](#) on their websites?
- The new [BRIET](#) application might be a feasible technical solution for libraries to lend subscription-based local news or independent media on a CDL model.

Other considerations:

- News website search functions are awful. On the other hand, browsability in library news databases is awful. Any platform created in partnership should try to solve both problems or meet in the middle.
- Academic library acquisition is largely based on demand, but if we aren't discussing the possibility of collecting independent news media, then students/faculty/patrons don't know to demand it.
- Does this warrant a public advocacy campaign? Or is that putting the cart before the horse?
- It would be helpful for libraries, at a minimum, to highlight local public news sources on their websites or

in their social media.

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*“It would be interesting if you could do local bundles or local packages. So in a smaller state it might be everything in Rhode Island, here you go. And in a state like California it might be the Bay Area, Central Coast, or Santa Barbara area. You might be able to find ways to portion it out. Because I think local interest doesn’t die at your city border, depending on where you work and depending on the things that you care about, it could extend pretty far.”*

– Sarah Houghton

*“Journalism has a distribution problem. Nonprofit news, particularly, has a distribution problem. And it sounds like if we were able to figure out that block (distribution through library websites/catalogs), there’s a creative solution there that enables both. It creates distribution pipelines for news information, and it could break the block of like, who has rights to what? Because in journalism, we’re constantly producing stuff that we have the rights to, and, from the nonprofit side, I don’t see good instances of that connection being made. I think it’s totally feasible.”*

– Darryl Holliday

# Three: Libraries Can Preserve Local Digital News

**Libraries can preserve local/independent digital news and media for posterity.**

Librarians have an opportunity to help journalists and media creators archive and maintain perpetual access to their content. Some of this is already happening in projects like [Preserve This Podcast](#). At a minimum, librarians (and archivists) could offer their professional expertise through training to groups like News Futures.

Some academic libraries have made agreements with local newsrooms to archive their photo morgues—[UNR for example](#). Academic libraries could similarly archive digital articles that local nonprofit newsrooms have published under creative commons. These kinds of partnerships could be good entry points for building ongoing collaborative relationships.

Beyond technical solutions, there is a need to normalize among rights originators, including journalists, that what matters more than capturing every dollar from their work is ensuring that every library can make it available in perpetuity.

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*“I’m a rights originator. I do not care if I make every dollar. I care if my work is preserved in libraries. Much, much, much, much more than that. And that is what we need to normalize for all rights originators. For poets, for writers, for journalists, for novelists, for essayists. Everybody needs to know the most important thing about the posterity of my work isn’t that I get every dollar for it. It’s that it’s in every library I can get it in so that it will survive.”*

– Maria Bustillos

# Four: Librarians Want to Support Local and Independent Media

**Librarians see an opportunity to use their budgets to support local/independent media. Library administrators do not.**

Some librarians feel an ethical responsibility to use their collection development budgets to support independent/nonprofit journalists who have been squeezed by the collapse of their industry. While this can't happen at scale, it's a justification for libraries to subscribe to content that may be freely available upon initial publication.

Library admin and collection development don't often see a reason to subscribe to sources that produce freely available content.

- How can we make the case that libraries have a role to play as sustainable funders for high quality local information?
- As Library Futures calls for public libraries to divest from platforms like Hoopla—which are dramatically increasing public library budgets and not providing corresponding value for communities—they should simultaneously call for library investment in local alternative digital media.
- When [THE CITY](#) partnered with Brooklyn Public Library on its [Open Newsroom](#) program, the library allocated funding for part-time staff to support the project, which directly led to several ongoing newsletter products. While these weren't collection development funds, the example shows that some libraries are willing to financially support local news, especially when their patrons are directly benefiting.
- While financially supporting local newsrooms with their collection budgets would certainly be welcome, libraries shouldn't let their inability to do so stop them from seeking partnership with nonprofit newsrooms. For these newsrooms, the ability to reach more of the public is a benefit in and of itself. They know that their work will never be self-funding, they'll always need philanthropic support. These partnerships might help them make the case for that support.

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*“Something that frustrates me here, it's, I guess, a bit of an irony. I know a lot of these newspapers, the nonprofits, they're starting to use Creative Common licenses, which I love, and I think it's so great.... Our attitude here at the library is, if it's open access, creative commons, why are we paying for it?”*

– Academic Librarian

*“I think nonprofits should address market failures, and should be pro-public. We just shouldn't run as businesses...Nonprofits are a kind of moral ethical response to rampant commercialism, and I don't think they should be around to sustain their bottom line. They should be around to address societal problems...We have to fund the stuff, but not on the backs of people who are least equipped and resourced to have it.”*

– Darryl Holliday on why nonprofit newsrooms shouldn't let financial concerns stop them from working with libraries to distribute their content publicly.

# Five: How Librarians Can Support Journalists

**Librarians can and do support journalists now, but lack of awareness and time on the part of journalists prevent it from happening more often.**

One basic way that librarians can better support journalists is by training them on what resources and databases are available to them with a library card.

- Sarah Houghton has done this before at the San Rafael Public Library and seen the local impact.
- April Hines recently [presented on this topic](#) for the National Press Club Journalism Institute.

Journalists can use academic library resources at public universities, but licensing restrictions require that access be limited to guests who are physically on campus.

- Might there be a way to develop some kind of digital “press pass” so journalists could have remote access to databases at local/regional universities?
- Some journalists know they are not fully leveraging library resources. Sarah Asch mentioned talks in her newsroom about how they could better use archival resources, for example. That said, the type of deep reporting for which these resources would be most helpful happens infrequently.

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*“When I was a working journalist, I worked in Northwest Indiana. We actually had several universities nearby, and they were public universities, but I never had any idea that that could have been a resource for me. And so that was really interesting to me now as a librarian, because I actually would love to reach more journalists and help them, because I do work at a public institution here.”*

– Teresa Schultz

*“I don’t even use librarians to the extent that I should for things that I’m working on. And I feel like for me, of all people, there should be like the least barrier to entry. I should feel like the most comfortable of anyone reaching out to librarians to help me with what I’m working on, but I don’t often do it. I’m working on a book proposal right now and it occurred to me that I could do that recently. But as a freelancer, independent person, it’s just like, I’m used to kind of being like blocked out of the institutional stuff. But there’s still a lot of ways librarians could help me.”*

– kate (k.e.) harloe

# Six: How Journalists Can Support Libraries

## **Journalists could support librarians through media and communications training.**

One clear offering that journalists can provide libraries is media training. This is especially important as libraries find themselves on the front lines of political battles over the very existence of public institutions. The [Op-Ed Project](#) and [New Protagonist Network](#) are potential models for training programs. (Karolle Rabarison gives all credit to Laura Crossett for this idea!)

Journalists can also help librarians write to the public in an accessible and engaging way. The [What's Your KCQ?](#) partnership between the Kansas City Public Library and Kansas City Star is an example.

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*“Librarians are frontline in a totally different way, not in a new way, but at a much more intense level, I suppose. What would it look like if it wasn’t just a one hour webinar, but something that’s happening in an event space in the library where reporters and media experts work with librarians on these kinds of skills and how to—I was gonna say, how to get their story out, but it’s really like, how to interact with the media? It’s not a natural thing for people to talk to reporters.”*

– Karolle Rabarison

# Seven: Library Futures Can Lead Libraries in Supporting Local News

**Library Futures can lead libraries in advocating for policies that sustain local news.**

Libraries face pressure from some of the same forces that have decimated local news (i.e. [private-equity firms](#)). Recognizing this shared struggle is a first step to advocating for alternative strategies for funding and organizing the work of both institutions.

- Library Futures, specifically, can advocate for and sign on to public policies that create sustainable avenues for community journalism. They can make clear that the crisis in journalism is a library issue because current mainstream news outlets are not meeting the information needs of their communities.
- One media reform LF could support in the near term is “[replanting](#)”, which has been proposed by [Rebuild Local News](#). These are a set of proposed laws aimed at allowing communities to take control of dying local newspapers.

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*“Thousands of local newspapers have closed in the last 20 years, and I can’t really think of anything that’s comparable. Maybe the closing of malls? But I really can’t think of anything that’s comparable in modern day media to rival what is going on in news. And you can point fingers in a lot of different directions, largely private equity and conglomerates. But I also think that, as horrible as it is, it is also an opportunity for us to make a media of our own choosing.”*

– Jennie Rose Halperin

*“The things that matter the most have been correctly identified by our enemies as a problem. Journalism, librarianship, teaching, art. These are sort of central areas where free thinking people associate and exchange ideas. And so, like ‘Girl, you in danger’ as they say.”*

– Maria Bustillos

# Eight: Could Libraries and Journalists Host Digital Spaces Together?

## Could Libraries and journalists work together to host digital public spaces?

One other potential point of collaboration is in digital public spaces like local listservs and forums. Often newsrooms are active in these spaces. What would it look like for libraries to be active in them, or to host them?

- Vermont's [Front Porch Forum](#) is a promising example.
- [New Public](#), which recently joined the News Futures coalition, is working on creating better digital public spaces.

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*“Are librarians active in neighborhood listservs? Or could there be one that has librarians and local news workers managing it? Is there some kind of digital space equivalent to people showing up at the library to participate in whatever the news collaboration project is, that could be an engaged and trusted space? We talk a lot about in-person community events as key points for connection, but of course we’re also very much reachable online. I live in my neighborhood listserv. There have been many examples over the years of journalists successfully engaging online communities for their reporting, and it’s an opportunity to consider for any library-local news collaboration.”*

– Karolle Rabarison

*“What we’re really talking about is it’d be cool if people talk with each other about stuff that’s going on around, and we have access to it. It’s just not, it’s not anything more complicated or difficult than that. And, you know, the Internet was meant to facilitate that and has been also turned into the opposite of it. Right? Into a way to forbid.”*

– Maria Bustillos

# Nine: Librarians, Journalists, and Professional Neutrality Norms

**Librarians and journalists are both reckoning with norms of professional neutrality.**

The journalists that make up News Futures community of practice are working to address what they see as their profession's harmful attachment to an idea of "objectivity" or "professional neutrality" which ultimately upholds status quo power and knowledge regimes.

Though librarians have long been reckoning with this same attachment to neutrality, journalists see librarians as professionals who can very clearly articulate their goal of advancing the public good.

Partnering could be a way of centering positive social change as a goal of both professions.

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*"I always feel like librarians are so far out ahead of journalists in this regard that I'm like, 'Oh, you guys are radical compared to the journalism field.' Most public librarians have a baseline understanding that they should help people. And that's not the case in journalism."*

– kate (k.e.) harloe

*"Journalists can have such a poor opinion of public engagement, generally speaking. They often underestimate what people are willing to do, what they care about, and what they can create together, especially when you root it in connection and conversation, which can be hard to find in any sort of structured or invited way."*

– Terry Parris Jr.

# Ten: A Shared Vocabulary

## **We need a shared vocabulary for library + news partnerships.**

As evidenced by the varying terminology used throughout this report, it could be helpful to develop a shared vocabulary for how civic media organizations and libraries can talk about the intersections between their work.

- The journalists who make up the News Futures network are “community journalists” working in “civic media”—what do we call the librarians who want to partner with them?
- We may need a taxonomy that describes the types of partnerships that exist or have been tried, as well as those we can envision.
- “Civic engagement” is the buzzword of the day, but shifting our language to “civic participation” might help make clear that the goal isn’t helping the government run better, but ensuring people have the information, connections, and resources they need to meaningfully participate. (Terry Parris Jr.)
- One possible umbrella term for the big-picture shared project of journalists and librarians who increasingly see facilitating community conversation and connection as part of their work is “place-based civic renewal.” (Darryl Holliday)

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*“If I would have known the term ‘community journalism’ that would have gotten me way further when I was working in commercial media. It would have just been something to hold on to. So I think a lot of what the working groups do is they identify themes, questions, problems, solutions that people in the field who are practitioners might want to engage with.”*

– Sierra Sangetti Daniels

# Next Steps

**LF should create an explainer (or maybe host a training) that breaks down public libraries' digital collection development workflow, including its pain points, for an audience of journalists and nonprofit newsrooms.**

This need was identified by Darryl Holliday after I explained how librarians I had interviewed mentioned that it would be easier for them to acquire digital content from local newsrooms if those newsrooms were organized into some kind of consortium that would allow libraries to subscribe to bundles of topically or locally relevant materials. He was curious to know why a consortium would be more appealing than one-off subscriptions. He also wanted to know more about the problems the current digital material licensing model creates for libraries generally. The goal of the explainer would be to facilitate understanding among journalists that could help set the stage for the development of such a consortium.

**LF should work with the [Online News Association](#) to host a conversation about creating public access to digital news through libraries for its audience of journalists and digital media professionals.**

Karolle Rabarison was intrigued by the idea of libraries creating access to independent digital news content for their patrons. This falls squarely within ONA's mission to elevate new revenue models and best practices for audience engagement in digital journalism. She is interested in partnering with Library Futures on some kind of event/webinar/training for ONA's audience that could help spread this idea.

**LF and NF should convene librarians and community journalists who want to explore partnership.**

While each of the individual interviews were generative, it was clear that a structured conversation between the interviewees, or between forward-thinking community journalists and librarians more broadly, would surface additional ideas and challenges while also building direct connections that could lead to future partnerships. LF and NF should consider organizing something to this effect after reviewing this report.

**LF should follow up with Nathan Tankus to learn more about the institutional subscription he created for his independent newsletter.**

As we were discussing how libraries could create access to independent media/news content, Talya Cooper pointed me to [this recent announcement](#) from Nathan Tankus, an independent economist who reports on the Federal Reserve via a Ghost newsletter. I emailed Nathan in late February to inquire about how he set up this institutional subscription and whether other creators might be able to adapt his tech. He was interested in talking, but is currently too busy reporting on the federal payments crises. It might be worth someone from LF circling back with him in a few months.

# Reading List

The following articles, books, reports and websites were referenced by interviewees or were linked in their written work. They may provide helpful background for future work on this project.

[Bowling Alone](#), Robert Putnam

“In a groundbreaking book based on vast data, Putnam shows how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and our democratic structures— and how we may reconnect. Putnam warns that our stock of social capital—the very fabric of our connections with each other —has plummeted, impoverishing our lives and communities.” Both Jennie and Terry referenced *Bowling Alone* as guiding their vision of the big-picture goals of library + news partnerships. These partnerships should ultimately seek to build the types of interconnected and informed communities we want to live in.

[Civic Media Census](#), Nina Wiengrill, Future of Local News Network (now News Futures)

“A research report aimed at understanding the characteristics, values, and practices of local civic media — a growing movement of organizations advocating that journalism is a tool for change and should not be limited to merely informing the public. The report offers insights into patterns among these organizations, such as methods of community participation and engagement, mechanisms for measuring local impact, and the emergence of a new journalistic ethos.”

[Civic Media Series](#), The Objective, Free Press, and the Future of Local News Collective

Personal essays from local news leaders in the emerging field of civic media highlighting impactful local projects and partnerships across the U.S.

[Info Districts](#), Simon Galperin, The Community Information Cooperative

“A public policy program that advances media policy to establish local news as a public utility. The Info Districts program enables the development of special service districts and other public media institutions that meet the local news needs of BIPOC and working-class people by supporting participatory, public service news models like The Jersey Bee.”

[Is Your Journalism a Luxury or Necessity?](#), Harry Backlund

An article in City Bureau which documents the “information pyramid” framework developed by several community journalists as a way of re-conceptualizing journalism to better meet a given community’s information needs.

[Journalism is a public good. Let the public make it](#), Darryl Holliday

An essay in the Columbia Journalism Review in which Darryl makes the case for the necessity of participatory civic media.

[“Librarianship as Citizenship”: The Promise of Community-Based Learning in North American Library and Information Science Education](#), Poole, Agosto, Lin, and Yan

This journal article details a program at Drexel in which library students are embedded at either the Philadelphia Free Library or a local nonprofit where they partner with staff and community members to

co-design new information services. This could be a model for the type of collaboration between MLIS programs and public libraries that Terry mentioned as a way to seed and sustain more Library Newsroom projects.

[Library Futures](#) + [Albany Public Library](#) + [Hearken](#) project outputs

[Supporting Equitable Access to Local News](#), Jennie Rose Halperin

A blog post announcing LF's 2021 collaboration with the Albany Public Library and Hearken to provide more equitable access to local news for Albany residents and library patrons. Features an interview with both partners laying out the local context of the project.

[Library Futures & Albany Public Library Discovery Insights – Initial Findings](#), Hearken

A report detailing the results of initial research and listening with Albany Public Library staff, librarians, patrons, and Albany residents.

[Improving Digital Access to Local News Through Library-Newsroom Collaboration – Case Study](#), Prepared for Library Futures Written by Aria Joughin and Jennifer Brandel

“A case study of the pilot program of a 3-month collaboration between the Albany Public Library (APL) and Times Union (TU) news organization. The program focused on producing content in partnership with the public and each other using a specific reporting methodology called public-powered journalism.”

[Media 2070](#)

“A 100-page essay examining the history of anti-Black harm in the U.S. media system. From the critical role that trafficking of enslaved Africans played in making our nation's earliest newspapers financially viable, to decades of targeting of Black press and journalists, the history of harm runs deep. This dynamic is then traced to the present day, when deregulation has resulted in very few Black owners of traditional media – while racist algorithms amplify the voices of white supremacists across online platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.”

[Meet Me at the Library](#), Shamichael Hallman

“Shamichael Hallman argues that the public library may be our best hope for bridging these divides and creating strong, inclusive communities. While public libraries have long been thought of as a place for a select few, increasingly they are playing an essential role in building social cohesion, promoting civic renewal, and advancing the ideals of a healthy democracy.” Sierra recently [moderated a book talk](#) with Shamichael for LF and was encouraged by how many people from the NF community attended—she believes this speaks to the appetite for collaboration.

[New Jersey Civic Info Consortium](#)

“A first-in-the-nation project, the Consortium builds on the foundation laid by public media in the United States, and reimagines how public funding can be used to address the growing problem of news deserts, misinformation, and support more informed communities.” It funds nonprofit news startups across New Jersey, but [its funding is currently under threat](#).

[News Futures Charter](#)

The guiding ethos which connects all those in the News Futures community of practice.

[News Futures Dominant to Emergent Values](#)

A chart laying out how the values of the News Futures community of practice differ from dominant values in mainstream journalism.

[Reporting in the “Post-Truth” Era: Uncovering The Research Behaviors of Journalism Students, Practitioners, and Faculty](#), Boss et al. (including April Hines)

A study that sheds light on how librarians may be able to better support journalists in researching/fact-checking. “This paper uses the (ACRL) Framework to shed light on the expert information-seeking behaviors and assumptions of journalism students, educators, and practitioners. More specifically, this paper presents the methodology and preliminary analysis of an interview study examining journalism students’, educators’, and practitioners’ roles as intentional information consumers, users, and creators.”

[Revitalizing America's News Deserts](#), Victor Pickard

An article in which media and journalism scholar Pickard makes the case for “systemic projects that guarantee a baseline level of news and information for all members of society, not just the privileged few who live in affluent neighborhoods.” He believes that post offices and libraries are the ideal public institutions at which these projects should be seeded.

[Roadmap for Local News](#), Elizabeth Green, Darryl Holliday, and Mike Rispoli

The result of “a year-long research effort informed by a broad and diverse coalition of newsroom leaders, journalists, and innovators in the field of local news. These contributors shared ‘a vision of a world in which people everywhere are equipped to improve their communities through abundant access to high-quality information, on urgent health and safety emergencies, the environment, the people and processes of local government, and daily social services like healthcare, education, and transportation.’”

[Root Shock](#), Mindy Thompson Fullilove

Jennie referenced Fullilove’s concept of root shock as a metaphor for what has happened to journalism over the past 20+ years. “Fullilove reveals the disturbing effects of decades of insensitive urban renewal projects on communities of color. For those whose homes and neighborhoods were bulldozed, the urban modernization projects that swept America starting in 1949 were nothing short of an assault.”

[The State of Local News: The 2024 Report](#), Medill Local News Initiative at Northwestern

A great source for the latest statistics and trends on the state of the local news industry across the country. Updated annually.

# News Futures + Library Futures Interview Questions

## Questions for community journalists/News Futures community members

Could you briefly summarize your professional background and how it informs your perspective on journalism?

How would you characterize your dream local news/civic media landscape? Are there any existing models or practices that point toward that place?

What excites you about the potential collaborations between local news and libraries? What support or asset do you think libraries have to offer community journalists, and vice versa?

[Library Futures' 2021 report with the Albany Public Library](#) pointed to the existing appetite, among both librarians and community members, for public libraries to play a role in curating/aggregating local news for and with their community. On the local news side, what do you see as the potential opportunities or barriers to getting local news into public libraries?

I've been talking with librarians about the potential for creating institutional access for their patrons to local news/independent media in the way they do with NYT. This would both create broader public access and use library collection funds to support independent creators. How important does that feel to you?

Relatedly, given that the current trend of hyper-individualized platform-based subscription media/journalism (i.e. Substack) is probably not our ideal model, does figuring out how libraries can provide access to these sources from a tech/operations side move us any closer toward the dream model for independent local news/civic media?

The [2023 Roadmap for Local News](#) identified the need for a shared open-source tech and operations infrastructure for local news/civic media orgs. Are you aware of any movement on this front? Is this something you hear the journalists in your network talking about?

I want to acknowledge the political moment we're now in. What does it mean to be doing community journalism at this moment? What specific challenges do you face as someone working to make sure people have access to quality information at a moment when so much information is being disappeared and civic infrastructure is being torn apart?

Is there anything else about libraries + local news you're curious about? What haven't we touched on?

## Questions for librarians

What excites you about the potential collaborations between libraries and local news? What support or asset do you think libraries have to offer community journalists, and vice versa?

In your role as a librarian, have you ever done reference for or provided some other direct support to a journalist or civic media creator?

What might it look like for libraries to acquire/make discoverable non-mainstream/local news like they do for mainstream news outlets, like NYT? What are the barriers to this aside from budgets?

How much are libraries paying for institutional subscriptions for mainstream news outlets, like NYT for example?

To what extent do vendors like EBSCO, NewsBank, etc. create barriers or chokepoints to libraries acquiring/disseminating this kind of non-mainstream news content?

What changes to common library systems, practices, or vendor relationships would be required to overcome these challenges? (in your dream scenario)

What about on the programming side? Might partnerships between local news outfits and libraries to co-create news (with patron participation) be a step toward making non-mainstream and local news content accessible? Some existing examples of such partnerships: [Civil Beat in Honolulu](#) or [this project between the Albany Public Library and Albany Times Union](#) (which was facilitated by LF)

What questions did I not ask? What excites you about the potential collaborations between local news and libraries that we haven't yet touched on?

How might the current political climate (read: federally sanctioned hostility to quality information for the public good) create challenges (or opportunities) for this kind of work?