Libraries Leading the New Normal & Beyond

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Insurrection, pandemic, racial awakening, climate crisis, a looming wealth gap. Libraries of all types are functioning in a time unlike any in history. What role can librarians play in times such as these? The answer must be to rebuild trust and reaffirm the foundations of our very democratic ideals one community at a time. Librarians are joining with those in our communities in forging a new normal that embraces diversity over division, collaboration over ideology, and seeks a unified equitable future. But how do libraries have a bigger impact, how do they ensure their communities see libraries as a major partner, and how do libraries move to next level and advance their agenda on a global scale.
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The Death of Internet Utopia?

“Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.”

“We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear.”

John Perry Barlow’s “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” 1996
Today’s Internet
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The Zimmerman Telegram

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: Make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement is detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, declare Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediation between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace.” Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our Government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may
The German Approach…Sucked

• “Germans were the largest non-English-speaking minority group in the U.S. at the time. The 1910 census counted more than 8 million first- and second-generation German-Americans in the population of 92 million”

• Bunds and Social Groups

• Undermining the propaganda campaign
  • Zimmerman Telegram, the RMS Lusitania
The British Approach...was Sneaky

- Wellington House dedicated British propaganda aimed at the US
- Built on control of telegraphy
  - Censorship: burying negative stories
  - Misinformation: planting positive stories or deliberate lies of German “Atrocities”
- Wire services
  - US media (newspapers) unknowingly coopted into the British narrative
The American Approach...was Deadly

- Introducing Total War
  - Conscription, urban battlefields
  - Propaganda internal and external audiences
- George Creel and the Committee on Public Information
  - Growth of Public Relations
- Opportunity to create a national narrative
The American Approach…was Deadly

- Espionage Act of 1917 and Sedition Act of 1918
  - “criminalized any ‘disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language’ about the U.S. government or military, or any speech intended to ‘incite insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty.’”
  - “resulted in the arrest and prosecution of more than 2,000 Americans, some of whom were sentenced to 20 years in prison for sedition”
- Supreme Court Supported
The Great Influenza

• Suppressed news and action on the Flu

• Philadelphia Liberty Bonds Parade

• “Within 72 hours of the parade, every bed in Philadelphia’s 31 hospitals was filled. In the week ending October 5, some 2,600 people in Philadelphia had died from the flu or its complications. A week later, that number rose to more than 4,500.”

• Fanned the Flames of Hate
The Great Influenza

• 1918 in Two Waves
• H1N1 Influenza (bird flu)
• 50 million dead [4.9 million COVID deaths]
• Origin: Camp Funston, Kansas
• So why “Spanish Flu?”
  • Censorship, Propaganda, War
The Consequences: Nazis, Skepticism, Antisemitism

- The demonization of propaganda
  - Revelation of British efforts
  - Increased Isolationism
    - America First Committee 1940
- A Punished Germany
  - Growth of Hitler
    - Mein Kampf
The Consequences: Nazis, Skepticism, Antisemitism

- Holocaust deniers in World War II
- Antisemitism in the publishing industry
- Antisemitism and Immigration
- Slow to accept and long term damage

“nearly one-third of all Americans and more than 4-in-10 Millennials (41 percent) believe that substantially less than 6 million Jews were killed (two million or fewer) during the Holocaust. While there were over 40,000 concentration camps and ghettos in Europe during the Holocaust, almost half of Americans (45 percent) cannot name a single one – and this percentage is even higher amongst Millennials.”

Society recovered
...but not on its own
Saving Our Communities

• It took protestors and politicians, students and scholars

• Crafting a new narrative…one community at a time

• Knowledgable People Embracing Diversity in a Passionate Drive for Inclusion

• Knowledgable? That’s our jam
Not a Library; A Movement

• Distributed cadre of professionals focused on knowledge and learning

• Building trust in our local communities through connections and relationships, not transactions or a false sense of neutrality

• Dedicated to democratic principles

• Ensuring the future by connecting the past to the present
Read More and Join the Conversation

https://DavidLankes.org