School Libraries, Disabilities, and a Phenomenological Progression to Policy Change

Patrice Narret Foerster
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SCHOOL LIBRARIES, DISABILITIES, AND A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROGRESSION TO POLICY CHANGE

Patrice Narret Foerster
Disability and Equity in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
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PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROGRESSION TO POLICY CHANGE

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Doctor of Education
in the National College of Education

Patrice Narret Foerster
Disability and Equity in Education

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Abstract

Research has shown that school librarians are not well equipped to work with students who have disabilities. Applying a conceptual framework culled from the public policy process literature, this phenomenological study used interviews with Washington, DC, policy workers--some of whom advocate for students with disabilities--to explore the possible connection between library experiences and the placement of libraries within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The findings indicate that these workers are not framing libraries in the same way that library professionals do and are not viewing school libraries as a direct source of student instruction. This dichotomy suggests that librarians should partner more closely with various advocacy coalitions and join more fully in the reauthorization discussions concerning education legislation, including the Higher Education Act (HEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to foster a more effective role for libraries in the education of all children.
I’ll start with a brief vignette: Early on during my tenure as the librarian at a high school in which all of the students were labeled as having intellectual disabilities, I asked one of my student workers if he would like to try shelving some of the library books on an empty shelf, for practice. He readily agreed and because we had previously discussed spine labels and the Dewey Decimal numbering system in class, I gave him free reign to try putting the books in order on his own. Shortly thereafter, he announced that he had completed the task, and I walked over to check his re-shelving work. I was confused when I saw what he had done. “Can you tell me how you figured out where to put the books?” I asked him, with real curiosity. “Sure,” he said. “It was easy. I just arranged them by size and color.” Oh. Well, why not?

My students never ceased to amaze me with their ingenuity and their ability to show me alternative ways of viewing things. I hope that all librarians have the chance to teach—and learn from—students such as mine, and I gratefully acknowledge those many, many students at Vaughn Occupational High School who helped me grow into the role of a teacher/librarian. I also acknowledge Nancy and Rusty—my two forward-thinking principals—who, over the course of ten years, fully entrusted me to help the students enjoy the school library. And I truly appreciate the various staff members (teachers and paraprofessionals) who collaborated with me on the many lessons we created and taught together in support of classroom learning.

At National Louis University, in the Disability and Equity in Education doctoral program, I learned to be sensitive to the social model of disability. Special thanks go to professors Lana, Elizabeth, and Patrick, for providing a measure of practicality with that sensitivity. I also want to recognize with gratitude my doctoral committee members, Dr. Terry Smith and Dr. Rob Morrison, plus Dean’s Representative, Dr. Vito Dipinto: Your various comments were spot-on in
giving me just enough guidance and freedom at the Proposal stage. Then when I completed my study, you helped me see what I had done in a new light, with the potential for additional areas of scholarship—work ahead. Thank you for supporting me. And, I am especially grateful to my Committee Chair and Advisor, Dr. Valerie Owen, for the suggestions, gentle but firm guidance, and constant enthusiasm and cheerfulness throughout this process. I hope we can continue to meet for breakfast, because the food and the conversation have been a wonderful mix. (Val, you have become a trusted friend to me. Thank you so much for that.)

I also want to acknowledge and thank the following: ● My family—especially Mary, Elizabeth, and Jim—for allowing me the space to complete my work. (Thank you, Jim, for letting me to do this my way, and for being willing to listen to my many tales of woe about the research and writing. You have been kind and forgiving to me, and I love you for that.) ● Donna and Eileen (my two true OS buddies), for your continued faith that I could get this done. ● Suzanne, because your work in Springfield continues to show how wonderfully well advocacy partnerships can support individuals with ASD. ● Gail Bush and Paul Whitsitt (my long-time colleagues)—I am so grateful to both of you for helping solidify my foundation of librarian research from early on. ● Jenn (please don’t give up, because you too will finish). ● Pauli—thank you for the many emails and the wonderful music that helped keep me company as I wrote. And, ● MHM—you have no idea how much your various insights were appreciated during the many months I was working on this.

And finally, I want to acknowledge the graciousness of my participants in Washington, DC, plus John in New York, all of whom provided rich insights about libraries and the work of policy making. I have the utmost respect for the work that each of you do, and I truly appreciate your willingness to share your expertise and experiences with me. Thank you.
This is dedicated to my parents, Manja and Al Narret.
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Chapter One--Introduction

What is it About Libraries?

I remember a day when I was writing the beginnings of this research study. I was sitting at a small table tucked in the far corner of the library at Dominican University, where I did my graduate studies in library and information science. I was flanked on the left by dozens of shelves filled with hundreds--no, thousands--of books. On my right was a floor-to-ceiling window outside of which a huge and gnarled pine tree stood with its long-needled branches waving wildly in the bluster of the day. In front of me was a stack of books that I had just pulled from the shelves, plus the 50 or so pages I had downloaded and printed for later reading. I had a full complement of pens and several legal pads to write on; my laptop was closed, because I just wanted to get some beginning thoughts down on paper. I was completely comfortable working in this venue, and I feel the same about most such public or academic libraries. But I also know many individuals who haven’t stepped foot in a library in ages and who would not consider it as a place to actively engage in thinking, learning, or reading something other than their text messages.

On that particular library visit, in the dead-quiet of the weekend morning (the undergraduates on campus wouldn’t come to life for another couple of hours), I began to wonder, What is it about libraries? That is, what is it about libraries that so easily prompt a “love ‘em or hate ‘em” attitude from people? What is it about libraries that conjures up a sense of excitement and adventure in some individuals (especially young children), while to others, libraries connote stifling boredom? What is it about librarians that make them the butt of the unshakeable stereotype, usually involving sensible shoes and eyeglasses? And given our school and political cultures--where growth in reading skills is under constant scrutiny--what is it about
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school libraries that make them so dispensable? Really, in today’s technocentric world, one might be left wondering if libraries still matter for kids in schools. And if they do matter (I admit to believing that they do), how can librarians best serve students such as mine—high-schoolers who have disabilities and very, very low reading skills? What exactly is the role of school librarians in helping students with disabilities become “well prepared for college and a career” (in U.S. Department of Education [DOE] *Blueprint*, 2010, p.1), as indicated by President Obama as a primary goal in his administration’s plan for our nation’s education policy?

**Previous Research and Need for Change**

| Libraries remind us that as long as books are open, minds can never be closed.” (Abraham Lincoln, quoted on overhead display at the Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum, Springfield, IL) |

| “Is it helpful for ALL students to have library? It is so hard with a regular class [plus] 5 to 8 disabled pushed in.” (Foerster, 2009, “Equipping Librarian” survey, respondent S#132) |

The two quotes above form an ironic juxtaposition: On the one hand, the ideals that Abraham Lincoln alluded to being upheld in the library—that of learning and acceptance—remind those of us who are librarians why we are doing what we do. On the other hand, the comment written by a librarian responding to a survey question on the Librarian Special Education Survey (Foerster, 2009) reminds those of us who are researchers that there still may be a great deal of the work left to do in order for understanding and learning—for all—to routinely occur in school libraries.

The *Librarian Special Education Survey*, hereinafter called the “Equipping Librarians” survey (see the survey form in Appendix A) was meant to provide baseline data about the degree to which librarians in my school district were equipped—in terms of training, disposition, and the availability of resources—to serve students with various kinds of disabilities in the school library. Analysis of the data generated from the 239 librarian-respondents painted a picture of
inconsistencies in how inclusive service was perceived and carried out in the schools in this particular district, which is located in a large mid-western city. The quote at the beginning of this section was in response to one of the three open-ended questions on the survey form. This question simply asked librarians: “What other comments/concerns do you have about library services for students with special needs/disabilities?” (Foerster, 2009) Although this particular librarian seemed to be reflecting frustration about her work, the 91 comments to this same question showed wide variation in their general tenor. Table 1 shows several verbatim examples:

<table>
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<th>Table 1--Librarian Survey Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>•Schools should be encouraged to provide specialty teachers with info. on students who require modifications. (S#27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Why are special needs put into Library classes w/age appro. classrooms – [they] cannot do the work and this is called mainstreaming? (S#28)</td>
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<tr>
<td>•It is so important that we service ALL of our students despite their reading ability or lack there-of. We need more training [and] funding on how to [do] right by our SPED students. (S#94)</td>
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<tr>
<td>•I’m concerned about age appropriate vs. developmentally appropriate reading/literacy activities --There is not enough money for all the things needed to better help special needs students. (S#107)</td>
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<tr>
<td>•Our school library is not ready for students w/special needs. (S#133)</td>
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<tr>
<td>•We need more equipment, audio books, + lower reading level/curriculum aligned materials. (S#145)</td>
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<td>•I don’t think it works well to put SpEd [Students] in w/other [Students] during Library, esp. if they have behavioral problems. Those [Students] take away from the reg. ed [Students’] library time, which I think is unfair. (S#152)</td>
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<tr>
<td>•Librarians and classroom teachers need more common planning time to design lessons and units to meet the needs of students. (S#162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•When children w/disabilities travel all day w/a special ed teacher or aide and they attend library without assistance they have a hard time benefitting from library class. (S#205)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•It is not clear who should be mainstreamed. (S#208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•It isn’t a major problem at this school. (S#213)</td>
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These responses present a partial laundry-list of issues raised by librarians in my school district. Responses from two additional open-ended survey questions, which asked first, about
challenges librarians faced when working with their students who have disabilities, and second, about what particular issues and/or disabilities librarians would like to know more about, were coded into quantifiable categories. Librarians raised issues related to their lack of knowledge, time, and funding (see Appendix A). These results parallel and add to concerns raised when librarians elsewhere in the country were surveyed (Allen, 2008; Allen & Hughes-Hassell, 2010; Cox & Lynch, 2006; Duely, 2000; Small, Franklin Hill, Myhill & Link, 2011; Small & Snyder, 2009; Small, Snyder & Parker, 2009; and even more recently, Buican & Foerster, 2016; Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015; Illinois State Library [ISL], 2013; ISL Forum 1, 2015; ISL Forum 2, 2016; ISL/Waymark Systems, 2015). This body of survey research shows that there are shortfalls in how knowledgeable and well-equipped librarians are to effectively provide service for their students with disabilities. Given the uneven responses of librarians from the survey research, one might well wonder about the school library experience of students with disabilities. Indeed, how might knowing more about these experiences inform the development of education policy that ensures there is an effective and supportive role provided through school libraries for all schoolchildren?

That was a starting point for my wonderings. But there was more: As a researcher and practicing librarian, I could see that school librarians had a different “fit” within the structure of the education system: In fact the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, under which I and all other teachers were working, really did not recognize school librarians as educators in the same way it did other kinds of teachers. (Later herein I discuss this in greater depth.) I wondered whether the views of the policy-makers themselves about libraries had something to do with this circumstance, and also what we librarians could/should be doing to change this somehow in an effort, again, to gain better policy. And so began my dissertation journey.
Libraries and Politics

The research that I conducted looked at the issue of library service to students with disabilities through bifocal lenses: that of librarianship and that of disability studies in education (DSE), but within the bounds offered by a political process framework. The conceptual framework I used is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Political process theory is not a construct typically taken in library land—although libraries and politics have had a love-hate relationship for years. The American Library Association’s (ALA) Bill of Rights “implies an activist political agenda” (Raber, 2007, p. 679). Librarians have long considered themselves as champions of marginalized populations, that is, those individuals who find themselves on society’s fringes due to issues of education, literacy, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious views, criminal history, poverty, immigrant status, and mental, emotional, or physical challenges (ALA, Diversity, n.d.). And most school librarians know those students who come to the library precisely because the kids who tease them or treat them with hostility owing to their differences, don’t come there (Jennings, 2006/2009). Among the more senior members of the library profession are those who recall the decade of the 1960s when questions of “social responsibility” were germane at the ALA’s national conferences, and the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) was created as “a forum for the discussion of the responsibilities which librarians and libraries have in relation to the important problems of social change” (ALA, Bylaws, SRRT, 2010). The decade of the 1960s was a time of social and political unrest in the U.S., and librarians were left wondering: “If librarianship’s fundamental moral commitment is to the progress of democracy and democracy is threatened by social problems . . . then does not librarianship have a moral responsibility to address these problems?” (Raber, 2007). Today, this role of meeting a “moral
responsibility” certainly meshes with the nation’s obligation, as was stressed in the Obama Administration’s plan for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), that “educational opportunity isn’t an option, it’s a civil right, a moral imperative, and the best way we can strengthen our nation” (Duncan, America’s Crossroads speech, 1/12/2015).

According to Library Journal Editor-at-Large, John Berry III, the belief that “good librarians are politically enmeshed in the larger national and international issues of war, peace, social justice, and the vital role of good government in human affairs” is held by many in the profession. However, there are also strong opposing feelings “that librarians and especially [the] ALA must remain neutral on political issues” (Berry, 2014, p. 10). Such feelings may reflect the long-standing fear, dating back at least to the 1940s, of librarians that accepting federal funding for library improvements and resources “raised the specter of federal control and loss of local autonomy” (Halsey, 2003, p. 24). Furthermore, the library profession has fought consistently against the most conservative wing in Congress for issues such as “First Amendment rights, information access, and privacy protection” (Halsey, p. 34)--along with the enduring and particular thorn-in-its-side issue of having the individual who heads the Library of Congress actually be a librarian (ALA News, Press release/Courtney Young letter, 2015; ALA Washington, District Dispatch/Hayden News Alert, 2016).

This polarity of political views versus the librarians’ role played out a while back for public libraries over--of all things--health care, namely, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, or “Obamacare.” At the ALA annual conference in late June 2013, Susan Hildreth, then director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), appeared with a video-recorded and ‘JumboTroned®’ President Obama to appeal to librarians for assistance in helping citizens find information on the Affordable Care Act, which was due to be rolled out later that
fall. On its face this seemed a reasonable request, because libraries have been serving as an important Internet-access pipeline during the past two decades (Becker et al. 2010). But some librarians balked at assisting patrons with finding information on “such a partisan piece of legislation” (Malachowski, 2014, p. 5). Although this backlash of negativity was viewed by many as the antithesis of the librarian core-value of free and open access to all forms of information, it raised the possibility of politics-influencing-duty within the ranks of those librarians who had long tried to maintain a quietly neutral stance (Matthews, 2013)--and perhaps also thereby stay under the political radar.

Unfortunately, keeping an apolitical footing has also placed librarians and libraries squarely in a damned-if-you-do-and-damned-if-you-don’t dichotomy, which has been evidenced by limited attention and under-funding at all levels of government for decades. Writing 35 years ago, Shields indicated that “the library as a social institution has never achieved a level of understanding and support sufficiently broad and fervent to insure [sic] adequate support from the taxpaying public and, indeed, from the appropriators of the tax income” (Shields in Josey, 1980, p. 3). During the George W. Bush Administration, Congressman Major Owens, a Democrat from Brooklyn, NY, was “the one and only librarian in the U.S. Congress” (Kniffel, 2001). He, along with Senator Jack Reed (Democrat, RI), tried to advance legislation that would provide support for school library resources--buttressed Owens had hoped by the fact that President Bush’s wife had herself been a school librarian. But he also admitted to being baffled” by the inattention his attempts at funding seemed to receive. Owens explained:

There’s still a whole lot of stereotypical thinking about libraries and the use of volunteers to run them, and [the public] can’t quite see that libraries need telecommunications equipment and computers and that the whole civilization
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that we’re going into is driven by a whole lot of library science . . . The leadership of America in the world will depend on how we develop our brain power.

Every human being becomes a potential asset. [The] greatness of the nation is all tied up in how we gear up and consummate decisions about the degree to which we want to maintain an educated population. One of the least expensive ways to do that, of course, is to have people educate themselves, and in the process training them how to utilize the sources of knowledge, libraries, and library-like institutions. (Quoted in Kniffel, 2001)

Like the late Congressman Owens, I am baffled: If libraries potentially provide something that is so good, why have they been treated so badly in the realm of past public education policy?

What is it about libraries?

Opportunity for Change

Various policies at the local and federal levels--and even to some extent, at the organizational level of the ALA itself--have combined to create circumstances that hamper librarian effectiveness in working with children who have disabilities. This landscape of circumstances is discussed further in Chapter 2. Yet when I began this research, several factors at the federal level existed, opening what political process theorists call a “policy window” of opportunity that could possibly herald policy changes (Kingdon, 1984/2011). Three such factors are noted below because of their particular timing. And indeed, this element of timeliness is a component of the conceptual framework I used for my study.

First, the partisanship such as that behind the November 4, 2014 mid-term election, can set in motion a dynamic that--in past instances--has helped to slide open the window of opportunity for policy change. The results of this election were viewed as a national outpouring
of criticism of the Obama Administration and of the partisan politics that gridlocked Congressional action during the several years prior. One *Wall Street Journal* writer noted that “Voters went to the polls [on November 4th] deeply frustrated with the political system” (Lee, 2014). Similar sentiments were voiced across the nation in exit polls, in radio and TV interviews, by political pundits, and even by the politicians themselves. A day after the election, President Obama said that he knew that “the message Americans sent [is] you want us to get the job done. Period” (Obama, *Here’s What’s Next* letter, 11/5/2014).

On the one hand, partisanship may be viewed as a negative by the voting public; on the other hand, it also casts a spotlight on policy issues that might not otherwise even get noticed. Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Kimball, and Leech (2009) indicate that “Issues with just one side tend to receive little news coverage and relatively little open debate in Congress” (p. 94). Partisanship is therefore something of a double-edged sword, which can have important consequences when wielded in Washington. In the November 2014 midterm election, disgruntled voters were tired of the divisiveness they had been seeing; thus, individuals who would have otherwise voted Democratic in the past, instead supported Republican candidates. This turncoat voting allowed the Grand Old Party (GOP, or Republicans) to gain enough seats to score a majority in the Senate and to pad their existing majority in the House of Representatives to a degree not seen in decades (Williams, *NBC Nightly News*, 11/5/2014). The Congress seated in January 2015 was thus comprised of a different mix of Democratic and Republican party affiliates than occurred in the prior years of the Obama Administration. Such a shift in the balance of power, and even any less politically dramatic “influx of new members of Congress” (Kingdon, 1984/2011, p. 175) may allow policy agendas to be altered so that change can be
brought to fruition (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Kingdon, 1984/2011; Sabatier and Weible, 2007).

The second factor (also time-bound) played out during the time I wrote and completed this study. The 114th Congress, seated in January 2015, came with the concomitant shaping and advancement of various political ideologies--especially those purported by presidential and legislator wannabes, because this period began the final two years of President Obama’s term of office. In the last part of an Administration it is common to see related activity on Capitol Hill that involves sponsoring or furthering legislation in order to enhance one’s political repertoire for prospective election bids. Kingdon (1984/2011) explains: “Members of Congress become active in order to claim credit for some accomplishment or to gain publicity. Presidential candidates need policy proposals to make their campaigns credible” (p. 123). As I began writing this in early 2015, various politicians were proclaiming themselves to be 2016 presidential candidates (and as I complete my writing herein, in mid-2016, the situation is still in flux). We saw, as Lindsey Jones of the National Center for Learning Disabilities said, that “the megaphone that gets given to people who are going to run for president [is] given very quickly” (quoted in Severns, online Politico, 2015). Thus, ideas that lay dormant previously may suddenly float to the top of the “primeval soup” (Kingdon, 1984/2011) of policy proposals and become active, owing to their visibility and possible political mileage. It is from within this soup that politicians and their associated “networks that include bureaucrats, congressional staff members, academics, and researchers in think tanks who share a common concern in a single policy area” (Zahariadis, in Sabatier, 2007, p. 72)--or, the critical advocacy partnerships that are discussed in the political process conceptual framework--will ladle out solutions to policy issues that can be addressed and advanced as new or re-envisioned legislation (Kingdon, 1984/2011).
And finally, there is one other factor warranting mention owing to timing: Kingdon (1984/2011) points out that some legislation is cyclical and must be renewed or reauthorized on a regular basis. “The scheduled renewal of a program,” he notes, “creates an opportunity for many participants to push their pet project or concern” (p.165). Pertinent to my research was the need to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind (ESEA/NCLB) legislation, which had been signed into law in 2002. While I was completing my study, the much-needed reauthorization of this legislation was a moving target, sometimes prominent in the sights of politicians, the media, and the general public consciousness, and sometimes receding into the background. The evolution of the reauthorized ESEA, or what became known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) when it was signed into law in December 2015, is a fascinating example of political maneuvering in and of itself. For the earlier versions of the legislation that emanated from either Chamber, there was evidence that the votes were barometers of party-line versus bi-partisan politics. The House bill, the Student Success Act (H.R. 5), passed by a vote of 218 to 213 on July 8, 2015 (GovTrack.us, 2015-a, H. R. 5)--divided almost straight down party lines; the Senate bill, the Every Child Achieves Act (S.1177), passed a week later, on July 16, 2015, by a clearly more bi-partisan margin: 81 to 17 (Camera, 2015). By the time the vote on the final version of the ESEA reauthorization legislation came to fruition in early December, party-line ideologies had largely been circumvented (as will be discussed further in Chapter 2). Indeed, there were lopsided votes for passage of the ESEA/ESSA in both Chambers: The Conference Report on the ESSA bill passed in the House on Dec.2, 2015, by a vote of 359 Yeas, to 64 Nays--and all of the Nay votes were Republican (plus, there were 10 members not voting); in the Senate, the ESSA Conference
Report passed on Dec. 9, 2015, 85 to 12--again, all no’s were Republicans (with three Senators not voting) (U.S. House, 2015, and U.S. Senate, 2015, respectively).

There is an interesting history for school libraries in ESEA (see Chapters 2 and 3), with the library piece going from prime importance in the original legislation to almost a complete disappearance--or at any rate, zero funding--in the latter years of NCLB. Of relevance to school librarians, the Strengthening Kids Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLs) Act was an amendment to ESEA that had been pending in various iterations in both the House and the Senate since 2007; like other aspects of ESEA it went nowhere during the past several Congresses. The most recent Senate version of the SKILLs Act (S. 312) was introduced by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) on Jan. 29, 2015, fairly quickly after the seating of the new Congress (Congress.Gov., 2015, S.312). Its companion version (H.R. 1874) was introduced in the House by State Representative Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) on April 16, 2015 (GovTrack.us, 2015-b, H. R. 1874). The Senate version of the SKILLs Act passed unanimously on July 8, 2015 (Layton, 2015); on the other hand, the House version was still in Committee when its parent bill, H. R. 5, passed.

It is unclear why a bill about school libraries such as the SKILLs Act garners so little enthusiasm amongst Congressional members or what may have generated the seemingly lackluster and uneven support for libraries evidenced over the 50+ years of ESEA’s existence. While we cannot go back to definitively determine this, finding out what was going on in the present circumstances concerning school libraries was a prime aspect of my research.

**Research Purpose and Method**

Creswell (2003) suggests that “we use qualitative research to follow up quantitative research” (p. 40). Indeed, as disconcerting as it is, the survey research I and others have
conducted shows that many librarians are simply not working well with the students in their schools who have disabilities and who may most need the resources and support the library can offer. Follow-up qualitative research presents several possible strands for further study.

First, as alluded to in the beginnings of this Introduction, there is the overarching question of what it is that engenders the responses—good or bad, love ‘em or hate ‘em—that are so prevalent about libraries. What do people—and particularly those in Washington, DC, who work on policy—really think about school libraries? Put in a decidedly more phenomenological way, what has been the lived experience of individuals in their school libraries? And of particular interest—given the varying ways librarians have provided service, how have persons with disabilities experienced “library”? If we don’t ask the question and try to find out the answer and its ramifications, we cannot make changes in both practice and policy—as well perhaps, in the policy process—that truly get at the types of improvements needed in this area. And if school libraries are completely off the radar of those in the policy realm, why is this so? How might opening the discussion about the ‘school library experience’ inch open a window of opportunity for change that might bump school libraries up a notch on the policy agenda?

Qualitative research is meant to help gain an understanding about how “the case, the activity, the event, the thing” works (Stake, 2010, p.31). Phenomenological research is one way of gaining understanding into how a group of individuals have experienced “the thing” or the phenomenon under study, which in this instance is school libraries. Using a phenomenological gaze may direct attention to insights that help reap greater sensitivity as well as “thoughtfulness and tact in professional activities, relations, and situations” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 68). Such close inspection of the school library experience may help librarians see what works in our practice or what doesn’t, and why this might be so.
Second, add to this a slightly different but still related strand of inquiry: What is it about the policy process in Washington, DC, that we in the library profession need to know in order to make better policy that can get advanced? In my view, I and other school librarians need to be knowledgeable of and proactive about what goes on in the political realm if we are to have any hope of eventually influencing and positioning policy, especially policy that impacts what we do. In addition, as a special education teacher I believe that policy handed down from the federal level should better situate educators (and school librarians are certainly included under this umbrella) to work effectively with all students—including students who have very limited reading skills—in order to prepare them to be college and/or career ready.

The Obama Administration’s past budget requests were riddled with references to expanding equity in education, including meeting the needs of students with disabilities; supporting inclusion and enhanced educational outcomes; and also calling for “high expectations for learning, no matter [students’] zip code, race or ethnicity, disability, or whether they are still learning English (Duncan, 2015). Well then, how would this translate to school library services in the reauthorized ESEA legislation? How might the library piece be construed to ensure that the school library will better meet the needs of students with disabilities? Looking through the lens of disability studies in education, and within the framework of political process theory, a key concept is that stakeholders must work together to advance policy. By capturing the essence of the school library experience for individuals with and without disabilities who are actually making policy, we may gain insights that further clarify the most needed enhancements to library programs and librarian professional development. And thus armed, we may be better able to ensure that additional and sustainable policy concerning school libraries is moved forward.
Research Questions

Policy process theory suggests that input from advocacy partners can help raise the prominence of an issue on the legislative agenda. Individuals who have disabilities and their advocates should be included among the stakeholders having something to say about libraries. Certainly this is a much needed voice in the development of education policy that includes school libraries. Those individuals from disability advocacy organizations who work to create, evaluate, and comment on educational policy are precisely the stakeholders that I chose to include as participants in my research, because of the valuable perspectives and insights concerning both their school library and their policy-making experiences they could offer. My phenomenological study involved the overarching question concerning the rather lowly status of school libraries in education policy--that is, the What is it about libraries? question. But underlying this were other questions that I needed to ask, namely on the one hand,

(1) What have been the experiences in school libraries of individuals with and without disabilities who work in policy-related positions in Washington, DC? And

(2) How can what is learned about these experiences shape improvements to the practice of school librarians?

And on the other hand,

(3) How can what is learned from these conversations with policy makers increase our understanding of the various factors involved in the policy-making process? And

(4) How then can we in the library profession work to advance policy that ensures an effective role for school libraries in supporting the education of all children, including those with disabilities?
Going Forward

In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature that informed and gave a structure to my research. I focus on the library literature, especially as it pertains to working with students who have disabilities, as well as on the ESEA legislation and the role school libraries have played in it over the past 50 or so years. In Chapter 3, I will present the conceptual framework I developed for helping to understand the policy process, along with background on the classic policy process theories from which the framework was derived. This framework has six critical concepts, including:

(1) *bounded rationality*, or the limited attention decision-makers can give to any particular item on the policy agenda;

(2) *fragmentation*, which recognizes that ideas stem from multiple sources but advancement is often controlled by a relatively few gatekeepers;

(3) *advocacy partnerships*, or the “can’t-go-it-alone” rational that requires a network of like-minded individuals to help move policy;

(4) *time*—that is, the inescapable and sometimes seemingly inordinately lengthy time-element involved with the policy process;

(5) *opportunities for change*, or the acknowledgment that opportune moments—when the time is ripe for policy change to occur—do indeed happen, and one must be ready to act quickly during those moments; and

(6) *framing*, or the fact that *defining* and clearly underscoring the *need for* addressing a particular issue is a necessity to getting the ball rolling towards policy development.

In Chapter 4, I will provide my Method of Inquiry and give a rationale for choosing to do a phenomenological study in conducting my research. Chapter 5 details my findings and offers
some discussion about the things I heard and learned. In that chapter I provide excerpts of my conversations with DC policy makers, as well as quotes from librarians who provide the professional perspective on the library field as it stands now. Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss the implications of my research on library practice, the profession, and policy.

**Note About Terms**

Throughout this paper I will be using people-first language, which puts the disability identifier secondary to the individual or persons having the disability. However, it is also sometimes appropriate to use a term such as *disabled people*: Linton notes that in defining disability as a construct of society and the environment, instead of as a medical condition, *disabled people* is used to designate “a group bound by common social and political experience . . . to identify us as a constituency, to serve our needs for unity and identity, and to function as a basis for political activism” (Linton, p. 163 in Davis, 2006). The need for input from disabled people in creating better school library practice and policy is central to my research.

In addition and regarding the library piece, note that in my discussions herein I frequently mention the person who is the librarian or use *librarian* interchangeably with *the library program*. That is because the librarian is a very real and significant part of the total library package: He or she is the guardian who controls not only what happens in the facility before the library user arrives, but also what happens once the user is on the scene. He or she has a tremendous effect on how students with or without disabilities may view their time in the library. The librarian’s duties should be understood to include: selecting and acquiring resources—whether through outright purchase or via loan from other facilities; organizing and providing access to these resources; ensuring the preservation of resources for future use and then replacing what is no longer usable; helping patrons find what they need, as well as teaching patrons how to
independently find and use appropriate resources; and managing everything that goes on in the
library (Gorman, 2000). Although in a public library these duties would typically be divided
among various employees, school librarians are generally solely responsible for all of the tasks.
And although much of what may transpire as the outcome of my research could also apply to
various types of libraries, I began by specifically focusing on school libraries.
Chapter Two--Literature Review

Libraries in Our History

Good or bad, most of us have a story to tell about an experience we’ve had in our school library. Perhaps our particular librarian was friendly and helpful--someone who would patiently shepherd us from bookshelf to bookshelf until we found exactly what we thought we wanted. Or maybe ours was the librarian who always seemed cranky and unapproachable, with an attitude that suggested we were unwelcome trespassers--and how dare we laugh, click shut our binder, crumble notebook paper, or chew gum--in her (it usually was a her) territory? Regardless of whether we relished the blanket of quiet that seemed to cloak the library or felt smothered by it, the historic tradition in the United States was to place high value on its earliest libraries. These actually evolved from various private collections.

As Fourie and Dowell (2002) explain, colonizing settlers brought their book collections with them to America and insured them as prized possessions. The ministers of early churches offered an array of books to parishioners to encourage faith development. In the 1630s, the first academic library was formed at Harvard University using theology books donated by John Harvard. In successive centuries, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were strong proponents of libraries: Franklin developed a pay-to-borrow library program in Philadelphia in the 1730s with books he and his friends gathered together. Jefferson sold his personal collection of thousands of books to the federal government after the fledgling Library of Congress was destroyed by the British invasion of Washington, DC, during the War of 1812. Public library facilities sprung up in cities and towns throughout the United States in the late 1800s, largely owing to the donation by the Carnegie Foundation of more than $50 million for library construction. During this building wave, many of the Carnegie libraries developed services and
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departments geared specifically to children (Fourie & Dowell, 2002, pp. 22-31). But despite the growth of public and academic libraries throughout America, the presence of libraries in schools was not common until much more recently.

Situating School Libraries

Students in my generation and--even more so--that of my children, likely grew up having a high school library. These facilities were routinely woven into the fabric of secondary school education just after the 1950s as a result of the nation’s competition with the Soviet Union for outer space supremacy (Fourie & Dowell, 2002). The Soviet’s launch of Sputnik spurred an educational introspection in America that led to greater emphasis being placed on subjects that could bolster our economy and scientific prowess (Badolato, Bucholz & Drake, 2008; Rhodes, 2012; Skinner, 1984; Sleeter, 1987; Stein, 2004), and libraries in high schools were seen as a way of readying students for either college or the semi-skilled labor force (Fourie & Dowell, 2002). However, in the decades thereafter, the role of libraries in the educational process has become blurred or, as noted earlier by Congressman Major Owens regarding the policy of funding libraries, misunderstood. Although library programs are still predicated on several basic skill-sets that arguably are even more critical to student learning today than they were when Sputnik was launched, many school districts now do not place an emphasis on having libraries or librarians. This trend is discussed further in a later section. First, in the following section, libraries are situated according to their traditionally recognized role in student learning.

Teaching and learning. Among the fundamental tenets of librarianship are five “laws” that were identified by S. R. Ranganathan in 1931 as part of his conception that libraries should be viewed with a scientific eye (hence, library science as a discipline) and be subject to regulating ideals that would help create more effective facilities (Gorman, 2000). Working in an
academic library well before today’s plethora of technologies came into existence, Ranganathan
developed these laws: (a) books are for use; (b) every person his or her book; and (c) every book
its reader (Ranganathan, 1931/1988, pp. 26, 211, 258). This meant that in libraries, readers
should have unbridled access to books, and that there could be found a book suited to the needs
of each and every library user. Ranganathan specified further that (d) it was the librarian’s duty
to help “save the time of the reader” (p. 287), and that (e) because libraries were constantly
growing, librarians needed to continually and carefully organize materials to ensure ease of
access (p. 326).

These ideas underpin what school library programs still try to accomplish today in
providing access to books and appropriate resources from an organized collection. Now
however, because information abounds beyond books, a greater focus by librarians has been
placed on the act of teaching the searching-and-finding function to the library user, so that he or
she can ultimately become an independent learner. The phrase information literacy (Zurkowski,
1974, quoted in Eisenberg, Lowe, & Spitzer, 2004; Grassian & Kaplowitz, 2001) embodies the
successful searching-and-finding process. Although whole books have been written about
information literacy and the nuances of the process, the term has basically come to mean the skill
of finding and using information resources effectively. Bush (2006) indicates that information
literacy is actually “both the historically dreaded research process and also the process we use to
solve information problems in our daily lives” (p.38)--and it entails various actions including
seeking, evaluating, and using resources, plus communicating one’s findings.

New definitions of the term take into account the fact that, as mentioned, there are
sources of information beyond books, and that these must be evaluated and understood to ensure
their appropriateness for use. Eisenberg and his colleagues, as well as the American Association
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of School Librarians (AASL) suggest that information literacy now necessarily also encompasses visual and media literacy, as well as an understanding of computers sufficient to effectively use digital resources and the world wide web (AASL, 2007; Eisenberg, Lowe & Spitzer, 2004).

LaGarde and Johnson indicate that today’s teacher librarians must have a “working knowledge of the best resources available [whether that be] apps, web tools, e-book collections, digital databases, or the next resource to be invented” (LaGarde & Johnson, 2014, p. 42). They go on to say that the librarian’s role “in closing the digital divide is closing the digital skills divide. [The] focus must quickly shift from teaching students and staff how to operate the devices to teaching them how to harness their power and potential” (p. 43, emphasis added). The availability in the library of digital and audio resources and the technologies necessary to use them effectively may well be one of the most important ways of providing information access to the diverse range of students embraced by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) legislation and for preparing these students for college and careers. Today’s librarians tend to be among the technology gurus of the school, so it is curious that the ESEA legislation over the years has so often ignored these educators.

**Libraries and “reading.”** Teaching information literacy skills is one of two primary functions of school library programs. The other is promoting literacy or “reading.” This emphasis on the need for reading skills predominates in the library field. Indeed, libraries were first developed on the premise that they would be used by those who were literate, and this idea still has a strong hold. Banks, Feinberg, Jordan, Deerr, and Langa (2014) simply say: “Literacy is, after all, what libraries are about” (p. 134). DeCandido, writing shortly before digital devices with an audio component, such as e-readers and Playaways®, became commonplace, presumed that information cannot be transferred by any other means except through reading print:
Traditionally the home of ideas that dwell in books, libraries have become the place for ideas on disk and online as well. What most of these materials have in common is the fundamental truth that if you cannot read, you cannot get at the ideas held there. (DeCandido, p. 168, 2001).

M.C. Weibel (2007) noted in the preface to her handbook on adult literacy that the ability to read is the key to achieving personal fulfillment and true democracy. Reading became a national educational priority with the inception of ESEA and throughout its various later iterations. Particularly with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) version in force during the years spanning 2002 to 2015, student reading achievement measured by standardized test results became both the marker of how well students were doing academically and how effective their teachers and schools were (Carris, 2011; Ravitch, 2010; Rhodes, 2012; Yell & Drasgow, 2009).

Librarians are not charged with the full responsibility of actually teaching students to read, but they most certainly do share the responsibility of enhancing these skills in their school (Bush, 2005; Rojtas-Milliner, 2010; Rosenfeld, 2007). Reading research has shown that access to books is a key factor in improved reading achievement (Krashen, 1993/2004), and the school library may be the only place that some students can conveniently find an array of reading resources. Furthermore, librarians spend a good deal of time reading aloud to students, and a sizeable body of literature (including Bush, 2005; Hayes & Ahrens (1988) cited in Spear-Swerling, 2004; Krashen, 1993/2004; Skouge, Rao, & Boisvert, 2007; Trelease, 2001; Wolfson, 2008—to name but a few) indicates that reading to students leads to positive gains in reading skills. Trelease (2001) notes that the purpose of reading aloud with students is not to teach “a child how to read; it’s about teaching a child to want to read” (p.xiii).
Disabilities lens. Providing the opportunity to read and be read to is fundamental to school library programs, no matter whether students read well or not. Kliewer, Biklen and Kasa-Hendrickson (2006) stress the importance of not allowing students with low reading abilities to become “static: simple, one dimensional, dormant, stalled, and fossilized” (p. 175). ‘To be literate is to be human’ these authors point out. However, these and other disability studies scholars also show a need for growing in our understandings of the varying forms that literate potentiality can take. In describing ableism in education, Hehir noted that the idea students should “read print rather than Braille [or] read written text rather than listen to a book on tape” shows the discriminatory nature of our beliefs about disability (Hehir, 2005, p. 9). Ashby (2010) says: “[There are] different ways of getting through the world . . . communicating or moving, different ways of accessing written material. [But some] ways are not just different, they are [thought to be] deficient” (p. 350). This translates into the maxim that there are ways of doing things in our society that are “better” than others--and the able-bodied way is unfortunately generally viewed as the preferred way. Furthermore, reading print in the “typical” way is largely considered the best way of deriving meaning from text, and a parallel assumption is often that if someone can’t read print, he or she can’t possibly be successful as a learner or a social being.

Data from the National Endowment for the Arts report, To Read or Not To Read: A Question of National Consequence (2007), painted an ominous picture for our nation because of the trend towards lower reading skills among young people. The report indicated that those who do not read well do not “accrue personal, professional, and social advantages” (p. 14), and they are less likely to fulfill their civic responsibilities. They are also more likely to become unemployed and incarcerated (Carris, 2011; Snow, 2010), thus placing additional burdens on society. In line with this concern, former Department of Education Secretary Duncan noted in his American’s
Educational Crossroads speech (2015) that in revamping ESEA legislation, “schools must be a pipeline to opportunity, not to prison.”

High school students (such as mine) with disabilities who have not learned to read at even the most rudimentary levels will likely face a very bleak outlook in getting and keeping jobs. Carris (2011) discusses this issue at length, noting that “discourse among educational policymakers seldom pertains to this population of adolescents who read below a 3rd grade level equivalent” (p. 2), and that these students--despite federal policy--truly are being left behind. Predictions about unemployment and prison time are certainly worrisome, but such outcomes cannot be ascribed solely to the inability to read, nor are they necessarily a given (Carris, 2011). Rather, such outcomes may have a component based on societal attitudes.

We know that the way information is transmitted has changed many times over the ages, and that this transmittal has a decidedly social foundation. In ancient times, humans passed ideas along to partners, children, friends, and enemies variously through storytelling, drum-beats, smoke signals, or the painting of symbolic pictures. Cultures have developed languages, written symbols, and hand signs to transmit their ideas (Fourie & Dowell, 2002). To tell our stories in modern times, we click out our codes, press pages into a series of raised dots, and create patterns of pixels via various technologies. Each of these languages, sounds, or symbols has meaning to some people--but others outside this “circle of knowing” can only gain understanding if and when they are able to decode the transmission. The conveyance of information is a social construction. Storytelling, language, reading, and writing--and the understanding of each--are social activities (Titchkosky, 2008). Without a social context there is no need for any of them.

As a former teacher-librarian in a special education high school, I know very well that the various disabilities within a diverse population of students are apparent primarily in context. The
students in my particular classes ranged in age from 18 to 21 and had reading skills ranging from the pre-primary level to approximately the 3rd grade level. In this school setting, art, physical education, and music classes pose particular challenges to students with visual, physical, or hearing impairments, respectively. Similarly the library can also be a context that engenders disability for those who struggle with reading skills. Librarians might find it difficult to see that a library full of books carefully selected and organized in order to bridge the gulf between those students who “know” and those who “don’t know,” can also create a divide between those students who are readers and the “others”—those who are not (Titchkosky, 2008). When this occurs for students with reading difficulties and they become disengaged from what is going on in the library, it is no wonder that some students end up loving the library and others end up hating it (or that behavioral problems begin to surface). In her book, Library Services for Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorders (2013), Lesley Farmer points out that those who work in libraries need to be mindful of how activities and attitudes might affect students: “If the library atmosphere is toxic [and I would add, inflexible in how it offers resources], few youth will willingly take advantage of the library and its potential riches. Furthermore, one bad interaction tends to outweigh ten positive ones” (p.53).

Knowing of and understanding—and embracing—this contextual issue of disability is the basis for seeing through the lens of the social model of disability versus the medical model. Charlton (1998) indicates that our “[b]eliefs and attitudes about disability are individually experienced but socially constituted” and they are, he continues, largely “pejorative” (p. 51).

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1 I taught at a high school for students who have the primary label of intellectual disability. Many of the students have additional disabilities and impairments, such as autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, visual, hearing, speech, and physical impairments, processing disorders, seizure disorders, traumatic brain injuries, and emotional disturbances. Reading skills for my own students were very low (generally pre-primary to approximately 3rd grade), although the assessments being used throughout the school do show that a few students have comprehension and word recognition skills associated with somewhat higher reading levels.
But the social model of disability recognizes differences as something other than negatives. True, the “biological fact of the student’s disability remains constant [but what] shifts is the response to the disability” (Valle & Connor, 2011, p.42, emphasis in original). Valle and Connor, quoting from Linton’s 1998 work, Claiming Disability (p.2), point out that the term impairment has come to mean “variations that exist in human behavior, appearance, functioning, sensory acuity, and cognitive processing.” This is the “biological fact” noted above. Given the variations in our humanness, there is no real reason for libraries to require reading in a certain way. There is huge potential to create opportunities for students at all skill levels to access information in multiple formats in school libraries, and accordingly, school librarians should be doing everything possible to provide resources that promote literacy learning and access to the curriculum in all formats possible (Canter Smith, Voytecki, Zambone & Jones, 2011; Farmer, 2009). Access should be available to each library user (Bush, 2005; Socol, 2010; Todd, 2010) in a way that ultimately offers the opportunity for a maximum of independent learning (Erickson, Hatch, & Clendon, 2010). Such access may be by iPads and other e-readers, audio tapes or cassettes, Playaway®, interactive CDs, text-to-speech technology, BoardMaker®, class read-alouds, Braille books, reading pens, online audio books, videos, or by whatever means or assistive technology devices the librarian and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team can come up with that works.

**Library Service to Students with Disabilities**

Ideally, access to the library will provide the chance for improvement in various skill-sets for all students. These skills include higher-order thinking; information retrieval, evaluation, and use; and facets of general, media, technological, and visual literacy (Allington, 2001; AASL, 2004; Krashen, 1993/2004; Loertscher, Koechlin & Zwaan, 2007; Loertscher, Koechlin &
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Zwaan, 2008; Loertscher & Woolls, 2002). In the majority of U.S. schools, students in all tiers of special education will spend part of their learning time in the school library, ideally with their non-disabled peers. Indeed an appropriately equipped library media center "assists in reducing learning barriers for students and [the] instructional barriers teachers encounter in traditional classrooms" (Hopkins, 2005). Inclusion can vastly expand and equalize learning opportunities and help to ensure that students with disabilities reach their potential in an atmosphere that is respectful of their human dignity (Peters, 2007).

**Inclusion and collaboration.** With this said, several researchers have shown that when education and training to work with special needs students is limited, teachers have negative attitudes about inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Biddle, 2006; Cook, Cameron, & Tankersley, 2007; Smith & Leonard, 2005; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker 2000/2001). Indeed, the responses of some of the librarians on the Equipping Librarians survey forms do not garner confidence that there is an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards inclusion in the library within my own school district. (See the previous discussion in Chapter 1, and the expanded chart in Appendix A.) Because there is already a good deal of evidence showing the importance of collaboration between classroom teachers and the librarian in ensuring an effective library program (AASL & Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1998; Bush, 2003; Foerster, 2004; Foerster, 2006-a; Lance & Loertscher, 2005), one might expect that collaboration is a commonplace practice in schools and something of an accepted eventuality.

For example, in a study involving interviews with both special education teachers and librarians, Perrault found that there are many areas where the resources and knowledge of these two groups of educators could be combined to provide more effective support of special needs students (Perrault, 2011-a). Similarly, Canter Smith et al. (2011) and Farmer (2009) indicated
that special education teachers and librarians should be a natural pairing owing to their complementary areas of expertise and their focus on “service delivery” (Canter Smith et al., p. 18) to students. But although collaboration is also a key component of successful inclusion (Curcic, Gabel, Zeitlin, Cribaro & Glarner, 2009; Daane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2001; Duelly, 2000), many schools do not have a suitably collaborative framework in place. And unfortunately, the librarian may be one of the last teachers in the school with whom other staff members would even think of collaborating.

In my research when testing the Ask•Plan•Acquire•Co-teach•Assess (APACA) model of collaboration for librarians, I surveyed teachers in nine piloting schools in my district, asking: 

For what subject areas or types of classes do you think that collaboratively planned and taught lessons/units work the best? (List any that apply) (Foerster, 2004, APACA Survey, question 8). Of the 364 responses from the 275 teachers surveyed, a mere three (less than 1%) indicated the library/librarian; and perhaps equally telling, only one response indicated Special Education. From the responses to other questions on the questionnaire, it became clear that factors within the school culture, such as a lack of administrative or faculty interest, and the allocation of time to plan and teach together, were at play to varying degrees within the different schools (Foerster, 2004). This lack of a collaborative mindset within schools directly parallels work done by (Curcic et al., 2009), who noted that the attitude of school administrators toward inclusion is fundamental to its success, as is a collaborative mindset within the school. Without a collaborative framework in place, working in the library in a way that is meaningful and beneficial to the students who have disabilities, will continue to be challenging.

**Libraries and student achievement.** In addition to collaboration, there is a huge body of research that shows that the achievement of students on standardized reading tests is
correlated to various degrees with other components of school library programs. These components include: the hours of library operation, technology, funding, scheduling, collection size, instructional focus, and staffing (Kachel et al., 2011; Lance & Loertscher, 2005; Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2005; Scholastic, 2006/2008; White, 2004). [See also http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies/ for a discussion of and links to many of the reports that discuss the pertinent research.] The research, some of which dates back more than 20 years, was done primarily via questionnaires that were administered to and completed by thousands of librarians in dozens of states. However, none of this research addressed questions about how librarians work with their special needs students or how the library program impacts the achievement of these students. Lance, the major researcher in most of the state-wide studies of library programs, readily acknowledged that none of his studies “included any detail about special needs students” (Lance, personal communication noted in Chase Case, 2011).

This lack of research concerning students with disabilities in the library is disconcerting because there is also a serious shortfall in the training of librarians to work specifically with individuals who have disabilities (Buican & Foerster, 2016; Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015; Duelly, 2000; ISL Forum 1, 2015; ISL Forum 2, 2016; Illinois State Library/Waymark Systems, 2015; Jurkowski, 2006; Murray, 2000-b; Murray, 2002). The Equipping Librarian survey found this as well: Twenty-two percent of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that their library science coursework had adequately prepared them to work with special needs students; the remaining respondents were neutral (26%) or strongly or somewhat disagreed (51%) that they were adequately prepared. Graduate-level library science programs teach prospective school librarians about literature of all genres; ways to access, evaluate, and organize information;
curriculum across grade levels; suitable and cost-effective collection development; as well as about instilling a love of learning in students. Information geared specifically to having students with disabilities, or on using alternative resource formats, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Assistive Technology (AT) is not always covered in detail in library science programs (Huggins, ISL Forum 1, 2015; Walling, 2004).

Response to early legislation. Approximately 35 years ago, the library literature was fairly rife with information that spoke to issues concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities. Baker and Bender (1981) suggested that with the passage of PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, librarians had a tremendous opportunity to advance the library's instructional role in their schools. And indeed, as Farmer notes (2009), the library literature addressed this issue head-on at the time. Writers such as Baskin and Harris (1982); Davis and Davis (1980); Dequin (1983); Petrie (1982); and Wright and Davie (1983) tried to assist librarians in learning about the populations they were then encountering as more and more students with disabilities were mainstreamed into schools.

For example, Dequin (1983, pp. 26-28) took up the concern of how terminology, such as "handicap," "special," "exceptional," and "disabled" can be limiting both to the student and to the librarian's understanding of what the student can and cannot do. Davis and Davis (1980) pointed out that "handicaps" are actually limits imposed by societal attitudes and the environment, while mainstreaming is "a political statement, an assertion of the full humanity of disabled persons, who have been incorrectly considered handicapped, fragile, immobile, special, or exceptional, [and] who have been incorrectly served in isolation, if at all" (p. 5). In both of these works, the authors took issue with Library of Congress and Sears' subject headings that tended to pigeon-hole disabled persons by the demeaning labels in card catalogs. The example
given in Davis and Davis (1980) is as shown: "INSANITY See also ECCENTRICS AND ECCENTRICITIES. / EPILEPSY. / GENIUS. / IDIOCY" (p. 17). According to Dequin (1983, p. 29), "Mentally Handicapped Children" would have been cross-referenced with "Children, Backward," "Feebleminded," "Imbecility," and "Morons." These authors cautioned librarians to be mindful of subject headings and cataloging cross-classifications that perpetuated negative views of persons with disabilities.

In the preface to their work, Wright and Davie (1983) noted that their book is an update of an earlier version published four years prior and that since that time, they had seen some movement within colleges and universities to help librarians understand how to work effectively with individuals who have disabilities. An assessment that librarians could use to determine how they themselves ranked in stereotyping individuals with disabilities was provided in their book. Simulations of 'what it is like' to have various disabilities were also provided. Somewhat later, Karp (1991) also included an appendix that gave simulation examples that could be used to help librarians gain further understandings of various disabilities, including one showing how text would look to someone with a visual impairment, and a paragraph that might be written by someone with a hearing impairment. (Admittedly, such simulations might now be viewed with skepticism and as being rather more offensive than helpful.) But Wright and Davie (1983) felt that a greater degree of knowledge was needed on the part of librarians, and that important attitudinal changes were still in the offing. The results of my 2009 Equipping Librarians survey as well as research by others show that there is still a good deal of room for improvement in how librarians understand disability (Allen, 2008; Allen & Hughes-Hassell, 2010; Cox & Lynch, 2006; Duelly, 2000; Illinois State Library, 2014; ISL Forum 1, 2015; ISL Forum 2, 2016; Small, Franklin Hill, Myhill & Link, 2011; Small & Snyder, 2009; Small, Snyder & Parker, 2009).
Petrie (1982), in a monograph presenting the results of a federally funded two-year study that was field tested in the states of Oregon, Washington, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, and South Dakota, gave an overview of the steps a librarian should take to determine whether his/her collection would meet the needs of students having differing abilities to use resources. Petrie explained that once various disabilities were understood, the librarian could determine what gaps in the collection existed and then work towards filling those gaps through simple alterations (e.g., photocopying a book page to enlarge the type, or reading the text aloud), or by acquiring new resources. Many of her suggestions pre-date UDL parameters, but they would certainly meet those criteria now. For example, she noted that when assessing print materials for individuals with reading and visual disabilities, the print should be clear, dark, and on paper with a matte finish (p. 64). Her model for "developing a media center program which meets the needs of all students" (p. 14) contains salient points for today, including the idea that readying a library to serve diverse users involves the commitment and input of various stakeholders such as the teaching staff, the administration, and district personnel.

The idea of knowing how disabilities may impact learning was a theme woven throughout these discussions. Wright and Davie (1983) described the needs of the cognitively disabled (called "mentally retarded" throughout their text, in keeping with the terminology of the day), and suggested that librarians spend enough time with these individuals to learn their interests and to approximate their reading levels. In Walling and Irwin (1995), Stauffer recommended that librarians provide a selection of "tangible articles such as toys, games, realia (real objects), and models" (p.139) to add an interesting and tactile resource for persons with low vision or developmental disabilities. Baskin and Harris (1982) stressed the importance of careful selection of library materials that not only "address informational, developmental, and
recreational” needs of children with disabilities (p. 40), but which also ensure that students with IEPs gain access to materials helpful in attaining some of their stated IEP goals. And Baker and Bender (1981) encouraged librarians to avail themselves of parent volunteers who can provide assistance doing routine duties, thus allowing the librarian to focus additional attention on students with special needs.

**Attention in recent literature.** In more recent work related to masters’ and doctoral research, several writers in various locals identified the need for better training of librarians who teach students with disabilities. Working extensively in Australia during the 1990’s, Murray (2000-b) found that school librarians would benefit from learning more about inclusion and pertinent special education legislation. Duelly (2000) and Allen (2008) surveyed librarians in New Jersey and North Carolina, respectively, and found that the respondents readily admitted that they were not as well prepared as they needed to be to work with students having disabilities. Research conducted in Missouri also found that although more than half of the librarians surveyed felt that "student achievement increased as a direct result of accessibility” to library resources, there was definitely a need for additional professional development to train librarians on how to use available AT (Cox & Lynch, 2006, p.106).

Beginning in 2006 and continuing to the present, New York’s Syracuse University has spear-headed further study of the need for school librarians to be better trained for service to students with disabilities (Small, 2015; Small & Synder, 2009; Small, Synder, & Parker, 2009). Project ENABLE (Expanding Nondiscriminatory Access By Libraries Everywhere) is a professional development training strand created by Small, Myhill, and Franklin and their team of digital literacy and disability educators at Syracuse, using several federally funded grants (Stirling, 2015). The training was offered first in workshops to cohorts of librarians from across
the state New York, and then widened to pull in librarians from across the country. The training has been made available in online modules, via http://projectenable.syr.edu (Small, ISL Forum 1, 2015; Stirling, 2015). This will help build the knowledge-base of practicing school librarians, but the topics relating to working with individuals who have disabilities should be considered a foundational part of the pre-service training of librarians. Franklin (2011) noted that “Pre-service librarians need to be exposed to instruction, texts, and other material throughout their certification programs to prepare them for working directly with students of varying abilities” (p. 62). Perrault (2011-b) called for librarians to develop as leaders/trainers within their schools; to model people-first language; to be cognizant of resources that should be acquired to suit particular needs of students and staff; and to help students who are going through the transition to the world beyond high school. Adding the disabilities informational component into ALA policy and into the accreditation requirements for all types of librarians has continued to be a need identified by librarians (ISL Forum 1, 2015).

In the past decade and a half, the professional library literature has presented additional discussion of aspects of serving students with disabilities, including incorporating the use of AT in the school--or any--library (Atkinson, Neal & Grechus, 2003; Burke, 2013; Copeland, 2011; Cummings, 2011; Hastings, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; Hopkins, 2006; Minkel, 2004; Neal & Ehlert, 2006; Selverstone, 2003; and Wojahn, 2006). Mates (2010) notes that even if libraries don’t have the resources to purchase the many types of AT available, at a minimum librarians should be aware of the software accessibility features readily available on library computers. A listing of websites with pertinent information about resources in multiple formats was provided by Wopperer (2011) in a special issue of Knowledge Quest (the professional journal of the AASL) that was devoted to helping librarians more effectively work with their special needs students.
In this same issue, Cummings (2011) provides a brief overview and links to various AT websites, while Copeland (2011) suggests that librarians start by asking the student what would be helpful in meeting his or her needs, as well as seeking input on “accessibility solutions, collection development, technology purchases, and website and database accessibility” from school staff, parents, vendors, and organizations that support disabled persons (p.68).

As noted earlier, LaGarde and Johnson (2014) indicate that the profession must be on top of the latest digital technology resources. Public librarian Lyttle (2014) suggests apps that might be helpful for children with disabilities, noting however, that parents need to be the final arbiters of what actually works for their child. Librarians in various settings have taken up the gauntlet concerning the uneven accessibility offered to users of e-readers: Ranti Janus (2012) and Lynch (2013) both discuss features of e-books that make them a promising technology for use by those with print, visual, and hearing disabilities. Such features include the ability to change text size and font type for easier reading, and text-to-speech options for listening to text. Ranti Janus notes that users should be able to “adjust the reading speed and reading accent, show the words highlighted while they are being read aloud, and have menus and tables of contents narrated” (p. 25), but not all e-readers are equally capable of providing these options. Furthermore, the “right” to have a book read aloud is not a publishing-industry given, so not all e-books have this feature (Lynch, p. 14). Because there still is no single universal platform across all e-book devices, librarians need to be aware of what devices will serve their particular students most effectively (Ranti Janus, 2012). On a more global scale, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has been working to ensure that individuals with visual and print impairment worldwide have access to published works, without constraint of copyright issues. The Marrakesh Treaty would allow “reproduction, distribution, and making available of published works in formats
designed to be accessible to VIPs [the blind, visually impaired and otherwise print disabled], and [would] permit exchange of these works across borders by organizations that serve those beneficiaries” (WIPO, Summary, 2013). The Treaty has been ratified by 20 nations, although not as yet by the United States. The ALA has made this a top legislative priority in the last several years (ALA/District Dispatch Issues, n.d.).

Writers have also described the benefits of using the methods associated with UDL (Blue & Pace, 2011; Downing, 2006; Parker, 2007). Strong proponents of using AT and UDL in helping students access science curriculum, Krueger and Stefanich (2011) point out that “if America is committed to universal education, then providing all students with access to the resources and services in our schools is critical” (p. 44).

The ALA itself, as spelled out in its Library Services for People with Disabilities Policy, on the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) webpage, provides guidance on what “must” and “should” be done within libraries to provide accessibility to the diverse body of library patrons. The guidelines includes using Universal Design in planning, along with input by disabled stakeholders; providing AT and a knowledgeable staff to offer assistance; and ensuring that collections have up-to-date information concerning disabilities (ALA/ASCLA, n.d.).

There have also been writings about working with students having specific kinds of disabilities such as mental impairments (Blaum & Bryant, 2004) or mental retardation--now more often referred to as cognitive or intellectual disability (Walling, 2001); developmental disabilities (Dorsey, 2005); visual impairment and other disabilities that make reading difficult (Epp, 2006; Morgan, 2002); learning disabilities (Guild, 2008; Juozaitis, 2004; McAree, 2002); and physical disabilities (Vogel, 2008). Although such literature may be helpful as a starting
point for background information on disabilities, librarians need to be aware that there is a limited shelf-life--to use a term they well know--to the labels used in identifying students as falling into one disability category or another, and that the disability studies literature may actually provide a more useful resource for understanding disability in the context of the library.

As the prevalence and identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) rises (Akin & MacKinney, 2004; Bonanno, ISL Forum 1, 2015; ISL Forum 2, 2016; Farmer, 2013; Farmer & Sykes, 2008; Illinois State Library, 2013; Klipper, 2014; Whelan, 2009), librarians should be aware that some of their students may have this label, and thus a good deal more information in this area is needed. Farmer (2013) and Klipper (2014) describe many ways that librarians can help meet the unique library service needs of patrons on the autism spectrum and their families. The New Jersey based Scotch Plains and Fanwood Memorial Public Libraries have created Libraries and Autism: We’re Connected, a program that has served the ASD population for several years; helpful material is available to librarians via compact disc or online at http://www.librariesandautism.org.

Research and action concerning library service and support needs of those with ASDs is continuing full-throttle: Project PALS (Panhandle Autism Library Services) is a combined effort of Florida State University’s school of Library and Information Studies, and the Autism Institute at the College of Medicine. This federally funded project is providing online information to librarians in rural Florida (Branciforte, 2013; Everhart, ISL Forum 1, 2015). In 2014, the Illinois State Library began a pilot initiative, Targeting Autism in the Library, to help determine how public, school, and academic libraries can partner with community agencies to address the need for wider, community-based support and information that would be helpful to patrons with ASDs (Illinois State Library, n.d.; Illinois State Library, 10/22/2014; ISL Forums 1 and 2, 2015 and
2016, respectively). This initiative was extended beyond its first phase via a second grant, *Targeting Autism: A Comprehensive Training and Education Program for Libraries*, that will ensure that librarians throughout Illinois (and also elsewhere through online training) learn how to best meet the needs of their patrons with ASD by using ASD stakeholder individuals and support groups as primary educators in the librarian training (ISL, Targeting Autism blog post, 4/13/2016; ISL, Targeting Autism blog post, 8/29/2016).

In addition to these disability-specific efforts, Vincent (2014) and Banks et al (2014) have provided manuals for making libraries generally more accessible to individuals with various types of disabilities and their family members. In these monographs, a good deal of discussion centers on the need to enhance librarian communication with those individuals who do not talk in the typical way. Banks et al (2014) point out that: “There is more than one way to ‘talk.’ People use spoken words, signed words, printed words, and pictograms [and] it is important to defer to the child’s preferred mode of communication” (p.141). These writers also indicate that knowledge of various forms of communication, such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) used in the disability community, should be one of the competencies of librarians (p. 77). This mirrors the suggestion by R. Bonanno of The Autism Program of Illinois, TAP (personal communication, December 30, 2015) and by disability scholars (Ashby, 2010; Broderick, 2015; DeThorn, 2015; Kliwer & Petersen, 2015; Orsati & Starowicz, 2015; Vroman & Woodfield, 2015) that greater awareness and acceptance of the various forms of augmented and facilitated communication is needed among educators--and this certainly includes librarians.

School librarians should also be familiar with the IEP process and the document itself in order to understand each student's needs and educational goals (Guild, 2008; Jones & Zambone, 2008; Juozaitis, 2004). Murray (2000-a) pointed out that knowing the students who have
disabilities and ensuring that they feel supported in the library helps build social skills as well as confidence in using the library. And yet, it is fairly common for librarians to not be privy to the information contained in the IEP (Allen, cited in Farmer, 2009) or to be aware of which students may have a disability. Within my school district, 29% of the Equipping Librarians respondents do not review the IEPs of their students on an annual basis; in the open-response questions, 14% of the comments had to do with a lack of access to the IEP or the lack of knowledge librarians had about which students had disabilities.

And although Kluth and her co-writers stressed the importance of knowing about inclusion (Kluth, Villa & Thousand, 2002) and special education law, librarians— as discussed in the Introduction chapter—do not always exhibit a willingness to become involved with policy issues (Berry, 2014; Halsey, 2003; Malachowski, 2014). There certainly are some aspects of the law with which librarians surely should be familiar but unfortunately, may not be. For example, when asked on the Equipping Librarians survey which terms and acronyms commonly used in special education they could explain or define reasonably well, the respondents showed spotty knowledge: Most librarians knew IEP (89% of the respondents), NCLB (85%), modification (85%), and accommodations (83%), but far fewer knew IDEA or Sect. 504 (37% for each), RTI (20%), Sect. 508 (18%), Universal Design for Learning (12%), or FAPE (7%). (See Appendix A for results in Table form.) Such results reinforce the need for increased professional development about disabilities and improved training for pre-service librarians. Plus, by learning more about the public policy process, school librarians might be able to affect a greater presence in the federal legislation and thereby garner additional funding support for the resources needed to work more effectively with their diverse body of students—especially those who have very low reading skills. The original intent of the ESEA legislation to ensure that this could happen has
long since faded into the oblivion of clouded and conflicting political policy objectives. The following discussion explains this more fully.

**ESEA/NCLB Legislation**

The ALA has previously indicated that school libraries are underfunded—if they exist at all—because they were not a high priority in the NCLB legislation that was passed in 2002 (Ballard, 2012). However, this low-level prioritization was not the case in the original ESEA, which as the NCLB’s long-forgotten foundation, actually holds little resemblance to the legislation under which public schools have been functioning most recently. And although providing a detailed discussion of ESEA is not within the scope of this literature review, some remarks on issues related to this legislation provide the background to my research pertaining to the school library presence in the law. Throughout my final year of research, ESEA was in an almost continual state of flux—a circumstance that was both fascinating and frustrating.

**ESEA (and school libraries) through years of change.** As he signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law on April 11, 1965, President Johnson said that the bill “represents a major new commitment of the federal government, to quality and equality in the schooling that we offer our young people” (Johnson Remarks, 1965). He continued:

By passing this bill, we bridge the gap between helplessness and hope for more than five million educationally deprived children. *We put into the hands of our youth more than 30 million new books, and into many of our schools their first libraries.* We reduce the terrible time lag in bringing new teaching techniques into the nation’s classrooms . . . and we rekindle the revolution—the revolution of the spirit against the tyranny of ignorance (Johnson’s Remarks, April 11, 1965, emphasis added).
Indeed, in quickly moving the legislation forward following his sweeping victory in the November 1964 presidential election (Rhodes, 2012), President Johnson was pursuing part of his Great Society and War on Poverty social programming (DeBray, 2006; Hess & Petrilli, 2006/2009; McGuinn & Hess, 2005; Rhodes, 2012; Stein, 2004). The legislation, which was meant to shore up educational conditions for students who were poor, came when several factors converged to create opportune timing: civil rights activism had a growing presence throughout the nation (McGuinn & Hess, 2005; Stein, 2004); the newly seated Congress after Johnson’s victory in 1964 had a Democratic majority (McGuinn & Hess, 2005); and the leadership of Catholic schools dropped its opposition to ESEA when the law was couched to benefit poor children but not specifically just those in public schools (DeBray, 2006; McGuinn & Hess, 2005; Rhodes, 2012).

In the law, a document slightly more than 30 pages in length with a mere five Titles, Title I was the linchpin: It garnered $1.06 billion of the $1.3 billion originally appropriated for ESEA (McGuinn & Hess, 2005) “to provide financial assistance . . . to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means” (ESEA, Title I, Sec. 201, 1965).

Of special importance to librarians, the whole of Title II dealt with school libraries. In fact, when transmitting the bill to the House of Representatives for consideration, President Johnson’s message explicitly addressed the need for libraries, library resources, and librarians. He noted:

Our school libraries are limping along: Almost 70 percent of the public elementary schools have no libraries; 84% lack librarians to teach children the
value of learning through good books. Many schools have an average of less than one-half book per child (Johnson, Message, 1965, Sect. II, Part B).  

Title II of the original ESEA called for spending $100 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1966 [which is approximately $758 million in today’s dollars, if one does the math], and funding as needed in the next four fiscal years “for the acquisition of school library resources and printed and published instructional materials for the use of children and teachers in public and nonprofit private elementary and secondary schools” (ESEA, Title II, Sect. 201, 1965). Notably, the money was actually appropriated at this authorized level. This focus was a boon to the school library profession, seemingly ensuring “that the school library would at last have its day in the sun” (Sutherland, 1970. P. 192, quoted in National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005).

Although the ESEA of 1965 appeared on its face to be relatively simple, it came with a backlash of connected concerns that still exist today. The over-riding issue that ESEA raised was that it clearly represented a more definitive step by the federal government into the realm of

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2 Compare this to the statistics generated for Characteristics of Public Elementary and Secondary School Library Media Centers in the United States: Results From the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey, wherein approximately 92% of traditional public (grades K to 12) schools are reported as having a library media center. Although about 67% have a librarian on staff, just over half (52.5%) of the librarians in traditional (grades K to 12) public schools have professional training that includes a master’s degree in a library-science field. The reporting libraries have an average of 2188 books and 81 audio/video items per 100 students, or approximately 22 books and .8 audio/video items per student. However, the age and condition of these items is not given in the report (National Center for Education Statistics [Bitterman, Gray, & Goldring], 2013), and this information is important to know when gauging how up-to-date a collection is. More importantly, only 31% of the libraries had AT resources for students with disabilities.

3 Note that there is an important difference between authorization and appropriation. A bill may contain language that allows (authorizes) spending up to a specific amount of federal dollars for a given period of time. However, by separate action of the House Appropriations Committee, with Senate approval, the actual funding (appropriation) given by Congress to enact the law comes to fruition. There are frequently huge disparities between the desired level of spending first authorized and the level of spending actually appropriated. This can greatly affect the implementation of a legislated policy, such as the NCLB version of ESEA, especially because “neither authorized nor appropriated amounts necessarily have any relationship to what states and schools need to meet the law’s goals and requirements” (Hess & Petrilli, 2006/2009). This occurred many times with various programs in NCLB and was one of the major criticism leveled against it.
education policy than had occurred in the past. Federal spending for education had been—and still is—an ideological point of contention, pitting conservative Republicans, who traditionally oppose this involvement, against Democrats, who tend to believe it is well within the government’s purview to provide assistance in any areas of need (DeBray, 2006; Hess & Petrilli, 2006/2009; Rhodes, 2012). In keeping with this Democratic ideology, Stein (2004) points out that ESEA’s Title I “conveys an overall sense of confidence that the government can in essence ‘treat’ poor children through compensatory funding to their schools” (p. 19). On the other hand, Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona), who was Johnson’s opponent in the 1964 Presidential race, had several years earlier noted that with categorical legislation, ‘The camel was inching its nose into the tent, and its body would soon follow’ ‘(McGuinn & Hess citation, from quote in Sundquist, Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years, 1968, Brookings Institution, p. 178). However, despite the concerns over federal involvement in education—and the ESEA of 1965 was comparatively innocuous, given what eventually evolved into NCLB and its very “prescriptive and ambitious” (Manna, 2006), albeit ‘punitive’ (Ravitch, 2010, p.110) precepts—the legislation passed by fairly lopsided margins: 263 to 153 in the House, and 73 to 18 in the Senate (Johnson, Signing Remarks, 1965; McGuinn & Hess, 2005).

During the first 15 years or so after ESEA was passed, the federal role in education was somewhat minimal, primarily involving only doling out the money to school districts. During these years, school libraries maintained their separate funding status in the legislation—although under differing Titles—and for the most part, received adequate levels of funding support. The Department of Education had not as yet been formed, and ESEA policy involvement at the federal level was the rather reluctant task of the “small, passive” U.S. Office of Education (McGuinn & Hess, 2005, p. 8). Manna (2006) points out that “Federal capabilities to implement
[President Johnson’s] vision were anemic” because at the time, there was no capacity at the federal level to actually oversee what was going on at the state level. And because nearly all school districts in the nation received some ESEA funding, the oversight job was massive. In implementation, the legislation cast a wide net:

- ESEA funds were allocated to support a wide variety of programs in local school systems including teaching innovations, cultural and social enrichment programs,
- Library improvements, parental involvement activities, nutrition programs, and social and medical services. How best to fight poverty and its effects in schools was thus unclear, and there was no consensus even among child development and educational experts on how government aid might be used most effectively to that end (McGuinn & Hess, 2005, pp.5, 6).

This broad largess proved the undoing of ESEA on several scores. First, oversight, as mentioned was an issue. Second, the original intent of the law to focus support for disadvantaged students became muddied when districts chose to use the funding at the local level for programs that could not actually be tracked precisely to these students. Categorical funding was supposed to limit the parameters of federal involvement, but the programs in the law were not clearly defined and “many school officials did not understand the intent of the legislation” (DeBray, 2006, p. 7).

So while this liberal use of funds was seen as a way to distribute the pie so that everyone benefitted, spreading the money out in such a manner proved ineffectual, and there was little evidence to indicate that ESEA was actually working (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). Despite this, only “incremental” changes (DeBray, 2006, p. 5) were made to ESEA during several reauthorization cycles, and the appropriations continued. It was as if--to use Goldwater’s analogy--once the camel came into the tent, it was difficult to get him out.
However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the economy took a severe downturn, major questions began to surface about whether the billions of ESEA dollars allocated over the years was actually achieving any real educational good. As Rhodes (2012) spells out (see pp. 40-69), new voices began to be heard in the Capital: Conservative business leaders grumbled about the preparedness of the workforce to help strengthen the slipping economy; governors from the National Governors Association, including several from the south (e.g., Bill Clinton from Arkansas and Lamar Alexander from Tennessee) raised concerns about the quality of American education; “civil rights entrepreneurs” (Rhodes, p. 48) emerged to push for school reforms that would more clearly benefit disadvantaged youth; educational historians, such as Chester Finn and Diane Ravitch published books highly critical of the “educational status quo” (Rhodes, p. 52); and the reticence on the part of Congressional Republicans to spend federal dollars on ESEA programs grew once again.

Furthermore in 1981, the newly empowered Department of Education convened a committee of educational professionals, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE), to find out exactly what was going on in the America’s schools (Rhodes, 2012). In its brief, no-nonsense 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk*, the NCEE underscored the many shortfalls in the educational system (DeBray, 2006; Rebell & Wolff, 2008; Rhodes, 2012; Stein, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2009). The report drew the attention of politicians and the public alike to the huge problem of functional illiteracy among American adults and teens. *A Nation At Risk* spelled out various issues, including deficiencies in expectations for graduation and admittance to college; the lower amount of time spent in school as compared with that of other nations; insufficient teacher preparedness and wages; and the lack of rigor in high school curricula (*A Nation, 1983, Findings*). This latter issue included the need for greater focus of the high school English
curriculum to “equip” the nation’s graduates to “comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and use what they read” (A Nation, 1983, Recommendations).

Although the library profession might have recognized in such language its marching orders for addressing this concern via the skill-sets that were foundational in school library programs, school libraries instead took a substantial hit at this time in ESEA funding, after having enjoyed fairly smooth growth in the decade prior. The 1981 reauthorized ESEA of the Reagan years was a streamlined version--in terms of both programming and allocations--called the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (McGuinn & Hess, 2005). This Act completely cut some programs and consolidated others. For school libraries, this meant that instead of a separately funded categorical program within the law as had been the case since ESEA’s inception under President Johnson, support for library resources was merged into a block of grant programs, with the choice of how to use the monies left to the local districts (Cross, 2010; NCES, 2005). Spending for school library resources was allowed, but there was no requirement that the funding in the block grant be used for this purpose (Riddle, 1987, cited in NCES 2005). Accordingly, “school library media programs became competitors for funding . . . [ending] the consistent growth of library media programs throughout the nation” (Hopkins & Butler, 1991, p. 34, quoted in NCES, 2005).

And for local school districts, a new wrinkle was made part of the legislation: the 1981 reauthorization allowed for six years of funding, but in the seventh year, 1988, accountability that showed student achievement was required (Cross, 2010; DeBray, 2006; EdWeek/Klein and others, slide 6, 2015; Jennings, 2001, as cited in Thomas & Brady, 2005; Rhodes, 2012). Thus, the original focus of ESEA on equity in education began to shift towards an emphasis on
excellence in education—and in the ways that such excellence could be demonstrated (Rhodes, 2012).

The reauthorization of ESEA during the 1990s built on the desire for greater accountability and more rigorous standards that was voiced by the nation’s governors, who were convened by President George H.W. Bush at the 1989 Education Summit (Cross, 2010; DeBray, 2006; EdWeek/Klein and others, slide 7, 2015; Manna, 2006; McGuinn & Hess, 2005; Rhodes, 2012; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Among the governors attending was Bill Clinton of Arkansas, who became the next President and who used some of the ideas that evolved from the Summit in the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, the next version of the reauthorized ESEA. It marked an unprecedented shift in “pedagogy and curricular content in mainstream American schools” (McGuinn & Hess, 2005), moving away from the Title I programming that supported remedial programs for underachieving students, to uniform ‘content and performance standards and assessments’ for all students (DeBray, p. 30). In addition, “For the first time, policymakers shifted the [Title I] emphasis from inputs to outcomes” (DeBray, p. 29). In recasting the legislation as the Improving America’s Schools Act, Congress gave the states more flexibility in spending, but also now added the requirement that states show adequate yearly progress (AYP) in student achievement growth (DeBray, 2006; Hess & Petrilli, 2009) and show movement towards a more rigorous curriculum.

And, for the first time in almost 20 years, school libraries reappeared in a separate funding line. Title III, Part F of the Act, was designated as the “Elementary and Secondary School Library Media Resources Program.” However, as the November 1994 School Library Journal proclaimed in its News headline, “ESEA Passes, but Purse Snaps Shut on Library
Materials” (Olson, 1994), there was a caveat here: Yes indeed the new law authorized $200 million in grants for “the acquisition of school library media resources for the use of students, library media specialists, and teachers in elementary and secondary schools” (GovTrack.us, n.d., Improving America’s Schools Act, Part F, Sec. 3601). But--no such money was actually appropriated. The co-sponsors of the library language in the law were two Democrats: Representative Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Senator Paul Simon of Illinois (Olson, 1994).

President Clinton finished his second term of office mired in controversy due to his personal indiscretions. The Republican-controlled Congress of the time became gridlocked on many issues. This allowed George W. Bush, Clinton’s successor in the Presidency, a fairly wide field in revamping the ESEA that was once again due for reauthorization. The problems and complaints with the No Child Left Behind legislation that President George W. Bush signed into law on January 8, 2002, are legion, and it is not my intention to delve into all of them here. (And indeed, as noted in Chapter 3 under the policy windows section of the Multiple Streams model, Congress may have passed this law precipitously as a response that came on the heels of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.) Ravitch (2010) bluntly sums up the NCLB critiques, saying:

NCLB was a punitive law based on erroneous assumptions about how to improve schools. It assumed that reporting test scores to the public would be an effective lever for school reform . . . It assumed that low scores are caused by lazy teachers and lazy principals, who need to be threatened with the loss of their jobs. Perhaps most naively, it assumed that higher test scores on standardized tests of basic skills are synonymous with good education. Its assumptions were wrong (pp. 110,111).
But chief among the criticisms of NCLB has always been the level of funding that went into the law, versus the amount needed to actually fulfill the law (DeBray, 2006; Rhodes, 2012). For example, Washington Post writer Michael A. Fletcher wrote an article entitled, “Education Law Reaches Milestone Amid Discord,” one year after NCLB was signed into law. In the article, Fletcher quoted a letter that was sent to President Bush by dozens of congressional Democrats who had originally supported the law. The lawmakers used the letter to urge Bush to increase educational funding by $7.7 billion, and indicated in the letter that “‘America’s public schools cannot overcome the enormous obstacles they face on the cheap’” (Fletcher, 2003; also quoted in DeBray, 2006, p. 143).

The National Education Association (NEA) was also--and continued to be--highly critical of the legislation, deeming NCLB “fundamentally flawed” owing to its “one-size-fits-all accountability system and severely underfunded mandates” (NEA, 2006, p. 3). Reading scholar and former International Reading Association president, Richard Allington, echoed the funding concern, stating: “insufficient funding provides insufficient responses” (2009, p. 270). He went on to detail the minimal results from NCLB in closing the rich/poor achievement gap as evidenced over time. He also advocated getting rid of the Department of Education--which would be a huge taxpayer savings--and he suggested simply “boycotting all federal education initiatives” (p. 276).

Even fairly recently, when activities directed to the reauthorization of ESEA began to take on prominence in Congress, then Department of Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, noted that the legislation requires more funding whenever it is reauthorized. In his January 12, 2015 remarks, Duncan said:
I believe teachers and schools need greater resources and funds. This year, President Obama’s Budget will include $2.7 billion for increased spending on ESEA programs . . . And we will fight to make sure Congress provides more resources as part of any effort to rewrite ESEA (America’s Crossroads speech, 1/12/2015).

The concern for ESEA funding will continue. At this writing in early September 2016, the federal budget for 2017 is not yet fully in place, and the decision-makers on Capitol Hill and within the Obama Administration are not in agreement as to how programming within the new ESSA law will be funded and thereafter distributed (ALA, Appropriations, n.d.; Brown, 8/31/2016; Camera, 9/1/2016; Ujifusa, 7/12/2016; Ujifusa, 7/18/2016; Ujifusa, 8/30/2016; U.S. House/Committee on Appropriations, 2016). And although the ALA had high hopes that school libraries would receive a much-needed shot in the arm through adequate funding in ESSA (Maher, K., District Dispatch blog post, Good News…, 6/9/2016), already the proposed budget (ALA, Appropriations, n.d.; U.S. House/Committee on Appropriations, 2016) has completely slashed the particular program that has to do with school libraries, namely, the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program. In its report, the Appropriations Committee indicated: “The Committee has chosen to focus resources on core formula-based education programs instead of narrowly-focused competitive grants such as this one” (p. 117, U.S. House/Committee on Appropriations, 2016).

Ah yes, what is it about libraries?

**NCLB and school libraries.** The 2002 NCLB version of ESEA gave only a nod of support to school libraries via a program called, “Improving Literacy through School Libraries” (NCLB/PL 107-110, Title I, Part B, Subpart 4, 2002). Indeed, after a decade of consistently getting an annual appropriation equal to even less than 8% of the $250 million authorized in the
NCLB law (Sensenig, 2010/2011; U.S. DOE-Programs, 2010; ALA, Advocacy & Issues, n.d.), funding for the school library piece was zeroed out completely in the 2011 appropriations. In the subsequent years of 2012 to the present, the funding was never restored. “This funding pattern makes very clear,” says Sensenig, “[that] school libraries were seen as peripheral to the law’s stated central purposes of giving all children the opportunity for high-quality education and closing the achievement gap” (p.9). In addition to this lack of supportive funding, the NCLB legislation did not recognize the need for school librarians to be “highly qualified” like other teachers. This seemed an incongruous slight because, as mentioned earlier, President George W. Bush’s wife, Laura, had herself been a school librarian--but seemingly was not also viewed as a teacher with a need to be highly qualified for her work.

Attempts by the library profession to rectify this lapse in the law were focused primarily on getting an amendment, such as the Strengthening Kids Interest in Learning and Libraries (SKILLs) Act, incorporated into the ESEA legislation. As mentioned previously, Senator Jack Reed has long been the promoter of this type of legislation, and S. 312, sponsored by Reed with the support of Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), passed unanimously as an amendment to the Senate’s rewrite of ESEA in the summer of 2015. However, the reauthorization legislation (H.R. 5) voted on by the House had no specific funding provisions for school library programs. Indeed, H.R. 1874, the House version of the SKILLs Act, never got out of Committee. The ALA had focused its attention on the Senate version of ESEA reauthorization, S. 1177 (Sun, 2015), in seeking legislation that would be more akin to what President Johnson advocated for in the ESEA 1965, that is, a sustainable funding stream in a specific program category that would help support a library and a certified librarian in every school. The ALA even pulled together a coalition comprised primarily of major school-book publishers and database providers that co-
signed a letter to Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA), Chair and Ranking Member, respectively, of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, voicing support of the SKILLS Act (ALA letter, 3/16/2015).

The ALA’s efforts paid off—to a degree. Yes, school libraries and librarians now appear in the language of the ESSA legislation that was passed. [See Appendix C for the ALA’s summary of “Opportunities for School Librarians” in ESSA (ALA, P.L. 114-95, 12/22/2015).] But as noted above, the much-needed funding behind the language is not yet a done deal, as of this writing.

**Disappearing libraries.** Given the continued general lack of recognition at the federal level and the cash-strapped situation many school districts find themselves in, the school library program is often considered a good place to *cut* the budget, because doing so enables realignment of expenditures in ways that appear to yield a greater impact. For example, a principal in one of my first studies of libraries indicated on his questionnaire that he felt he got “more bang for the buck” investing in packaged reading programs in his school rather than in the library (Foerster, 2003/2004). And although other principals on that same survey felt that the most important aspects of their school library program was for students to “learn to do research/learn about resources” and for students to “browse for/get books” (Foerster, 2006-b, p. 30), the study revealed that principals in this district were in a tenuous position when developing their school budgets.

This still holds true: Principals are called upon to raise student test scores, and they may be asked to use particular practices to help them do so. However, they aren’t necessarily given the funding needed to do everything asked of them. Allington (2009) has twice stressed the point that:
Because funding from ESEA/NCLB Title I goes to the vast majority of school districts in the United States, each high poverty school receives only enough funding to provide some services but not enough money to provide the sorts of research-based services that have been shown to accelerate students’ reading development (Allington, p.270, quoting his own earlier work from 2009).

The level of funding and support provided at individual schools for the library program is largely determined at the principal’s behest. She/he may be influenced by factors within the school that include perceptions of value (e.g., ‘bang for the buck’ as mentioned), personalities, and available funds, all of which must be weighed against predetermined manpower allocations, student achievement goals, and other needs within the school. Budgeting thus becomes a numbers game for principals, leaving them juggling to make the limited numbers work, and unfortunately, this often means cutting the school library program, especially in large urban areas. For example, in New York City there is an average of less than one librarian for every 3,400 students, although the state law mandates a 1:1,000 librarian to student ratio (Morrison, 2015). In Philadelphia, numbers are equally grim: there are a total of 11 certified librarians for 218 schools (Graham, 2015).

The 2014/2015 school budget for my own district budgeted for 254 librarians in a total of 664 schools, down from 313 librarians the previous year, and from 454 two years prior (Vevea, 2014; WBEZ, 2014). The then-CEO of the District School Board, Barbara Byrd-Bennett, indicated that “It’s not that we don’t want to have librarians in libraries. [But] the pool is

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4 The website for the District variously shows total numbers of schools as 664 (Stats and Facts page, 2/2015 version), and 685 (“Show all Schools” School Profile pages, accessed 3/10/2015). See links at http://cps.edu/About_CPS/At-a-glance/Pages/Stats_and_facts.aspx and http://cps.edu/Schools/Find_a_school/Pages/findaschool.aspx respectively. According to the 2015 Budget explanation page, in 2013 the District was to do an official count to determine exactly how many schools it did have, and the numbers showed 658 schools in FY14 and a projection of 665 schools for FY15 (see http://cps.edu/fy15budget/Pages/schoolsandnetworks.aspx ).
School Libraries, Disabilities, and Policy Change

diminished” (quoted in Joravsky, 2014). Teacher’s Union representative and school librarian Megan Cusick has countered this argument, stating before the School Board that there were plenty of qualified librarians, but they were being shifted from the library to class-room duty. She indicated: “Hundreds of thousands of [District] students will leave this system lacking the full range of 21st century skills that are required to succeed in college, work and life” (Schlikerman, 2014). District parent Scott Walker indicated that at his children’s school, the librarian had been reassigned to teach the fourth-grade class, but that students could still check out books, because the library was instead being staffed by volunteers and a clerk in a ‘lose-lose’ proposition: “It feels [like the District] has set us up into a situation where we have to decide which finger we don’t want,” Walker said (Vevea, 2014). Weighing in at the same School Board meeting via letter, the testimony of Barbara Stripling, then president of the ALA, and Gail Dickinson, then president of the AASL, indicated that: “School librarians are teachers first and foremost, and the focus of their education and training is to prepare students for the future. . . It is in the library, under the guidance of the school librarian, that students gain a rare commodity: they learn how to learn” (letter quoted in Goldberg, 2014).

However, many administrators, legislators, and those in a position to set education policy clearly do not view the library program in this way. Instead, libraries are seen as dispensable, especially since, as Stripling is later quoted as saying: “The increasing emphasis on testing is lessening the amount of research and independent work that students are doing” (in Morrison, 2015). In addition, with the Obama Administration’s emphasis on digital technologies, many school libraries are--and will likely continue--“morphing into computer labs or digital media centers” (Morrison, 2015). Even though this could be a huge plus for serving students with disabilities who require non-print means of access to information, there is no clear evidence that
policy makers—or school administrators—see libraries in this light. Indeed, at my own school where I had taken a Study Leave to work on this research, I returned one day for a conversation with one of the top administrators. I was told then that she was considering closing the library and using the space as a classroom instead. “We have carts full of iPads,” she said to me. “What do we need a library for?” (Personal communication, High School Administrator, May 29, 2015).

This same attitude was reflected in a somewhat different way within the Fordham Institute’s 2014 publication, *The Hidden Half: School Employees Who Don’t Teach*. Therein, Richmond makes the case that the burgeoning numbers of school personnel, seemingly out of proportion to the numbers of students in past decades, is due in part to unprecedented increases in non-teaching staff. Although Richmond acknowledges that library personnel as a group did not actually show growth in their numbers over the years of his study, librarians are amongst these “non-teachers.” The illustrated cover of the report (I leave it to the reader to determine who is who) shows this positioning rather clearly. Richmond recommends that school district leaders should consider other options when funding is limited. He says: “Staff positions should be assessed based on their contributions to the school’s core mission. If the cost is high and benefit low, those funds would likely be more effective elsewhere” (p. 29). And although the costs and benefits of library programs will continue to be
argued (likely forever), in cutting the library funding from the 2017 federal budget, the House Appropriations Committee echoed this same theme when it said, as mentioned, that it had chosen to provide support for what it viewed as “core” education programs instead of the more “narrowly-focused” school libraries (p. 117, U.S. House/Committee on Appropriations, 2016).

Conclusion

The focus on the academic achievement of all students in core academic areas will continue to be held under the public and political microscope for a while. Today, as in the past, political posturing implicates education as the factor that needs to be fixed so that “our young people [can get] on track for a bright future: prepared for the jobs of the 21st century” (Obama, 2010). All students, including those who may not read in a traditional way, deserve the chance to learn and prepare for college and careers.

When I began this research, the reauthorization of the ESEA was long overdue, and the time for movement concerning this law was opportune. As then-Secretary Duncan indicated, this was the right time to “work together--Republicans and Democrats--to move beyond the out-of-date, and tired, and prescriptive No Child Left Behind law, [replacing] it with a law that recognizes that schools need more support--and more money, more resources--than they receive today” (Duncan, America’s Crossroads, 1/12/2015). And when signing the ESEA/ESSA legislation into law in December 2015, President Obama remarked that the event marked the working together of both parties on the legislation: a “Christmas miracle--a bipartisan bill signing” (Obama remarks, 12/10/2015).

The new ESSA legislation does position school libraries somewhat better than they were in the past legislation. Politics, ideology, timing, advocacy partnerships (and adversarial relationships), framing of libraries themselves and framing of the need for change--all these have
played a role in shaping the ESEA policy we know today and what will continue to transpire concerning how libraries fare in the upcoming years, under the newest version of the law. But the need for professional development and resource upgrades to allow librarians to more effectively serve their students who have disabilities has been shown through research conducted throughout the country. My phenomenological study focused on finding out how policy makers in Washington, DC, some of which advocate especially for disabled students or who themselves have disabilities, have experienced school libraries and what they generally are thinking about them. By learning this, it is hoped that I and others in the school library profession might grow in our understanding of how to better serve all students. Additionally, we might find ways to form partnerships with stakeholders who can provide much-needed input and support to create and move better library policy forward.

In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I will lay out the conceptual framework I developed for helping to understand the policy process, along with background on the classic policy process theories from which the framework was derived. By using this framework as a structure for thinking about what I learned from policy makers, I hoped to see how lived experiences impact policy development.
Chapter Three--Conceptual Framework

Framework for Thinking

In doing qualitative research, Patton (2002) indicates that it is not necessary to align oneself with a particular “intellectual, philosophical, [or] theoretical tradition” nor “to swear vows of allegiance to any single epistemological perspective” (p. 136). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) say that in such research, there are “guidelines to be followed, but never rules” (p. 10). And yet practically speaking, research must have some structure, some boundaries or limits to the paths one veers off into, if there is any hope for actually completing the research project. I want to know how school “library” was experienced by those involved in the policy-making process. This is phenomenological research, and the phenomenologist seeks to know “how people experience some phenomenon [here, the school library]--how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). But there is a corollary to my wondering about library experiences: There is the overarching and nagging What is it about school libraries? question, which seems to place libraries in the underdog position in education policy. Could this positioning actually be caused--influenced or facilitated (both words are from Stake, 2010, see p. 23)--by the library experiences of those individuals who make policy? Granted, qualitative research is not about determining causality. However in trying to figure out how something works, we may discover “preconditions [and/or] correspondences” (Stake, 2010, p. 25) about why something is so. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) say that to the phenomenologist, what people say and do is a product of their experienced world view. The connection between library experiences and policy-making decisions may be flimsy or it may be robust. My research sought to discover which it is.
Stake (2010) uses the phrase “framework for thinking” (p. 22) when he discusses what may come from research about how things work. As I employ this phrase, it is more analogous to what Imenda (2014) defines as a conceptual framework, i.e., “the specific perspective which a given researcher uses to explore, interpret or explain events or behaviour [sic] of the subjects or events s/he is studying” (emphasis added, p. 188). Thus, in this chapter I will define my framework for thinking about what my phenomenological research may turn up. The framework was developed using several classic policy process theories, for which I will also provide brief overviews. I will be using the framework as a way of interpreting and explaining whether lived school library experiences are somehow connected to policy development—or the lack thereof.

Caveat

From the get-go, I want to clarify a few points: First, the realm of public policy theory and decision-making is enormous. The pertinent literature that I consulted in this area spans approximately the years from the late 1940s/early 1950s until the present, and there is still evolving discourse in the literature about theories that were developed early on. My framework for thinking about the policy and decision-making process pulls together six elements that seem to me to be the most essential for looking at how the issue of school libraries might fit into the policy picture.

Second, I admit to being a relative newcomer to the study of the policy process literature—or, perhaps more accurately, I am an old-timer who is looking at this discourse with fresh eyes. I completed graduate studies in urban planning and policy in 1980. Thereafter, I worked for eight years as a transportation planner in a large mid-western city, where my job was to evaluate prospective transportation policy decisions from an environmental standpoint. Kingdon’s research on getting on the policy agenda was being completed during the time that I was already
entrenched in the planning profession. The bulk of the work and the subsequent publications of Jones and Baumgartner, as well as that of Sabatier with Weible and others, in covering additional aspects of the policy-making process, was still a ways off, that is, in the late 1980s up through about 2007. Even the idea of bounded rationality, the first in my original Critical Concepts Framework, was still at that time primarily known within the provinces of political science and economics (Jones, 1999) and not by those actively working in the urban planning profession. Although my conceptual framework uses what I see as important concepts from this particular band of researchers, there are of course other researchers and theories that contribute ideas within the policy process literature that I could also have used.

However, I can safely say that these six concepts are still considered germane to the field. In 2007, Sabatier edited the second version of Theories of the Policy Process, which I used as a source. Included in the various writings of that compilation, one can find the six concepts I selected. Cairney’s Understanding Public Policy: Theories and Issues (2012) was another of my sources, and this book also includes writings that refer to the concepts I am using. Indeed, Cairney says: “There is no single theory applicable to public policy as a whole. The world is too complex to allow for parsimonious and universal explanations” (p. 282). He also indicates that his book is meant to look at early policy theories and see “how best to supplement or replace them with other theories [and] to explore how their merits can be combined” (p. 4). I take this--plus Imenda’s (2014) indication that when one particular theory does not completely capture what a researcher seeks to find out, a blending or “synthesis” of theories can be used (p. 189)--as encouragement for culling from the literature what seemingly makes the most sense for my study. And I am further gratified to see that I still stand on firm ground, because among the material in the massive and recently published tome, The Oxford Handbook of Classics in Public
Policy and Administration (Balla, Lodge, & Page, 2015), one can find the writings from which I have developed the Critical Concepts Framework. Again, this framework will provide the parameters for the way I look at the findings of my phenomenological research.

**Critical Concepts Framework**

Figure 1 is a depiction of what I am calling the Critical Concepts Framework. As mentioned, it merges what I view as six essential aspects of the decision-making process, taken from classic thinking in the political process literature. It includes particularly ideas originating from Simon (1955, 1985); Lindblom (1959; and 1993, writing with Woodhouse therein); Kingdon (1984/2011); Jones together with Baumgartner (2005) and Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Kimball, and Leech (2009); and Sabatier with others and particularly Weible (various years, from the mid-1980s through about 2007). The six concepts are explained in what follows.

1. **Bounded rationality.** The first position in the Conceptual Framework is *bounded rationality*. It is a key concept because it and its ramifications necessarily affect all policy that is brought to fruition. Bounded rationality is a term known in political science, public administration, organizational theory, and (though grudgingly) economics, and it has underpinnings in behavioral psychology (Simon, 1985; Jones, 1999). However, it is applicable to many circumstances and disciplines, and those in the education profession might see how the applications of this concept could impact working with students. Bounded rationality has to do with factors in the decision process. Simply put, it means that people have a limited amount of cognitive capacity, and therefore the attention they give to an issue or a particular subject-matter is limited as well (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009). Thus, decisions are necessarily affected by these limitations.
**Figure 1**

**Critical Concepts framework**

1. **Bounded Rationality**
   Decision-makers can only give limited attention to any prospective policy items. Items/issues must be cogently defined as worthy of attention or in need of fixing.

2. **Fragmentation**
   Ideas stem from multiple sources, but Gatekeepers hold power to proceed.

3. **Advocacy Partnerships must exist**
   (E.g., expert groupings of stakeholders—researchers, staff, interest groups/lobbyists, journalists + ideally, a policy entrepreneur, with cohesive/compatible ideology, and power to influence decision-makers)
   
   "The policy process is not a solitary pursuit."

4. **Policy change takes time (years!)**
   "Trend is towards the status quo."
   
   "The things Congress does best are nothing and over-reacting."
   Great political wit. NY: Broadway Books.

5. **Opportunities for change do occur**
   Be ready!

6. **Framing**
   Cognitive structure/definition of an issue

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*Concepts taken primarily from the Multiple Streams Model, the Punctuated Equilibrium Model, and Advocacy Coalition Framework. See text for full source information.*
Bounded rationality is ubiquitous in the political process literature. It first surfaced in the late 1940s as a construct developed by Herbert Simon (along with several associates whom he credits owing to their earlier conversation with him [see Simon, 1955]). Simon was an “intellectual giant” (Mintrom in Balla, Lodge, & Page, 2015, p. 12) who worked in multiple disciplines that span the social and political sciences as well as the foundational elements of computer science. He received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1978. After interning in a Milwaukee, WI bureaucracy in the 1930s (Simon, 1999, cited in Jones, 1999), Simon sought to replace what was then the reigning idea of rationality and decision making used in economics. The presumption then was that people have the ability to choose the alternative that will be the most advantageous in terms of “pay-off,” “value,” or “utility” (Simon, 1955, p. 102) by weighing each option and ascertaining all possible consequences of each course of action.

However, Simon had seen during his internship that such rational choice (a term used throughout the literature) wasn’t how decision-makers operated. Instead he found that people don’t really go through these mental gymnastics, because they don’t always have access to all the information needed to evaluate each option, and they don’t have the cognitive capacity to foresee each option anyway. Rather than expend the time and energy needed to evaluate all possibilities, Simon said that people tend to choose the alternative that appears to be good enough—which often is the first option that presents itself (Simon, 1955; Mintrom, in Balla, Lodge & Page, 2015). Writing three decades later, Simon (1985) used the phrase “a bottleneck of attention” to describe what occurs when people are given information, saying that this bottleneck necessarily limits processing to “only one or a very few things” (p. 302). Indeed, psychologists suggest that people can only remember about six pieces of information at a time [my framework is fortuitously limited to only six critical concepts], and these tend to be handled serially, not in
parallel fashion (Simon, 1985). Decisions are thus bounded by limitations of time, energy, cognitive capacity, and the ability to pay attention (today’s penchant for multi-tasking notwithstanding).

In the policy process, the implications of bounded rationality are huge: Those making decisions simply cannot attend to all possible matters that could come before them, nor can they weigh all possible policy alternatives and any potential related consequences. This is not meant to be a pejorative analysis of the federal decision-making process nor of our legislators, but rather, recognition of the reality of how full the plates of active politicians actually are. Evidence of the lack of mental managing capacity becomes even clearer when one looks at the Congressional agenda: Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) reported seeing some 8000 bills introduced in a two-year Congress, with about 400 made into law. As I complete the writing of this particular chapter some 22 months after the seating of the 114th Congress in January 2015, there were 11,783 bills and resolutions introduced before the Congress; 2% (244) of these were enacted into law, which is considerably lower than the average passage rate from the previous ten Congresses (i.e., those between 1995 and 2015) of 3.8% (GovTrack.us, Statistics and Historical Comparison, 11/28/2016). And yet, certainly 200-something laws is a lot of information for any one individual to effectively sift through in two years--and the plus-11,000 items coming before one or the other Chamber of Congress is nearly unfathomable.

Given this barrage of policy information, we have to assume that decision-makers can’t and don’t give their full attention to all prospective policy matters. Nor can everything from amongst all the possibilities even find its place on the policy agenda. This reality harbors facets of the concepts of fragmentation and framing, both of which are covered in concept-discussions that follow. Many, many issues may not get acted upon or even thought about, and only those
issues that are defined cogently enough to be viewed as a problem that must be addressed stand even a remote chance of getting turned into policy (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Kingdon, 1984/2011). Therefore, for anyone who hopes to get a change in policy made, the first step is to somehow position a problem-issue so that it is one of the six or so items decision-makers might actually attend to.

(2) Fragmentation and (3) Advocacy Partnerships. Concept #2, Fragmentation, and Concept #3, Advocacy Partnerships, are rather closely related, albeit something of a continuum. The discussion of these two concepts is intertwined because of this relationship.

The idea of fragmentation in policy making is two-pronged, according to Kingdon (1984/2011): First, “public policy is not one single actor’s brainchild” (p. 71). Secondly, in our system of government, “a combination of people is required to bring an idea to policy fruition” (p. 76). Although this certainly increases the opportunities for input by the masses, it also accounts in general for the complexities of time, energy, and resources involved with getting policy made. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) view fragmentation in the political arena as a good thing. Their premise is that more actors means a greater diversity of ideas floating around, and thus a greater likelihood that policy will cover a broader spectrum of the nation’s needs. Kingdon (1984/2011) says that ideas are ever evolving in the policy process, and that they surface and sink periodically over time (see discussion of the primeval soup under the Multiple Streams Model). His interviews with Washington workers indicated that where a particular idea came from wasn’t the key to policy building. Rather and more importantly, an idea needs to become “diffused in the community of people who deal with a given policy domain” (p. 72). Kingdon further indicated that individuals working at any level of policy-making can impact policy development, because there is an “extraordinary looseness” to the system, wherein “ideas,
rumors, bits of information, studies, lobbyists’ pleadings--all of these float around the system without any hard-and-fast communication channels” (p. 77).

The number of people working on prospective policy in Washington, DC, at any given moment is considerable, so a vast potential to float ideas exists. Such ideas may originate from within Congress and its many legislative staff members; from the Executive branch and its various department appointees and personnel; from civil servants in the federal government’s agencies, departments, and bureaus; from advocacy and lobbying groups; from think tank, foundation, and university researchers; from policy commentators within the news media; and from the private citizenry. (These various agents all are also subsumed under the realm of Advocacy Partnerships, as will be discussed shortly.) And given that Kingdon’s research occurred prior to our present penchant for social media as communiqué, there likely are also myriad casual and not-so-casual ideas emanating among and between these legions of workers via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other such social networking venues.

But there is a downside to the concept of fragmentation that is a direct result of our political system and the layers of approval needed to pass a law. As Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) found, some very good policy ideas are simply headed off at the pass by “institutional gatekeepers,” that is:

the majority leader who controls access of bills to the floor of the Senate for an eventual vote, the Rules Committee chair who determines whether amendments will be allowed in House-floor discussion of various bills, or a committee leader who refuses to report a bill out to the larger body. (p. 41)

This means that even well-intentioned legislators, who biennially sponsor bills containing excellent initiatives, will fall victim to these gate-keeping powers-that-be. The SKILLs Act, for
example, has been introduced with minor tweaks in both Houses of Congress about every two years since 2007. Yet each time—until the present, as already noted in Chapter 2 and also just below—it has languished in committee and died with the close of the particular Congress—only to be subsequently resurrected with the seating of a new Congress. And again, as of this writing in fall of 2016, in the larger context of the 114th Congress, some 11,783 bills and resolutions are somewhere in the Congressional system: 244 bills and joint resolutions have been enacted into law; 675 resolutions passed in both chambers; 662 had been voted on in one or the other chamber; 22 were dead after a vote; 9 were vetoed and not overridden; and 10,171 were awaiting further action (GovTrack.us, 2016).

To some extent, this has to do with the partisan nature of politics. Gatekeepers may forestall moving certain kinds of items forward through the decision-making process because the items don’t fit the party-line or promote their party in any particular way. Baumgartner et al. (2009) indicate that:

Certain types of issues, which tend to be partisan, get more attention in Congress, the news media, and the scholarly literature than other issues that tend to be less partisan.

Attention and partisanship tend to reinforce one another. Parties help generate attention for the issues they choose to promote, but party leaders in government can devote their energies to only a relatively small number of issues at one time. (p. 94)

Thus congressional gatekeepers have political reasons to devise a policy agenda in a way that actually mirrors what we know of bounded rationality. Partisan politics was shown in the last mid-term election to cause a good deal of public frustration (as was noted in the Introduction chapter). And yet, in an interesting twist to Congressional fragmentation (or perhaps clout is a better word), the SKILLs Act proposed by Senators Reed (D-RI) and Cochran (R-MS) in
January 2015 passed unanimously in the Senate on July 8, 2015 (98-0 roll call vote) as an amendment to the Senate version of ESEA, the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 (Layton, Washington Post blog, 7/8/2015; Cong. Record, 7/8/2015, p. S4816). The cynic in me says that this passage was primarily political: The SKILLs act is innocuous enough to serve both parties well; by voting for it, each Senator was able to show that he/she can work together with those across the aisle to get something done in Congress. Meanwhile on the very same day (July 8th) in the House, H.R. 5, The Student Success Act—the House version of ESEA—only just barely passed by a vote of 218 to 213, with voting going almost entirely along party lines (Marcos, blog post, 7/8/2015; Press Release/Adams, 2015; Woodside, blog post, 7/8/2015). There was no school library provision in this version of the legislation: The SKILLs amendment (H.R. 1874), sponsored by Rep. Grijalva (D-AR), never got out of Committee before its parent bill came up for a vote. In the House then, getting a prospective library policy-issue noticed may require a louder and more pronounced voice than a single legislator can muster. An effective Advocacy Partnership, Concept #3, may be partly what is also needed.

As noted, there is no single voice that bespeaks policy change in our political system. Politics requires allies, and policy change is not a solitary pursuit: There is no possibility for success in going it alone in our nation’s Capital. The various researchers who developed the models from which I pulled this advocacy partnership concept use terms such as “alliances,” “networks,” “interactions,” “shared interests” (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009, see pp. 61-65); “common beliefs” (Cairney, 2012, p. 14); “negotiations,” “subsystem specialists” (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, see pp. 191-193); “policy communities,” “advocates for proposals” “policy groupies,” and “policy entrepreneurs” (Kingdon, 1984/2011, pp.117-123). Kingdon indicates
that these groups are people “scattered both through and outside of government” (p. 117), but they have the common goal of seeing a particular issue pushed forward onto the policy agenda.

According to the Advocacy Coalition Framework, stakeholders may work pursuing a policy goal for years—“over a decade or more” (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 192). Such stakeholders include a cooperating array of researchers, journalists, legislators, interest group members, and department staff whose cohesion is evidenced by their “nontrivial degree of coordination” over the long-term (p. 196).

Advocacy partnerships are needed to define or frame an issue as a recognizable problem, and to ensure that this issue then gets noticed by the ultimate decision makers as warranting coverage in a policy. The collective voice coming from the partnership participants bolsters attention to a matter. In the case of my study concerning effective school library policy, I have to wonder whether partnering with additional stakeholders, namely the disability community, would impact the potential for a stronger voice to be raised. After all, ESEA and school libraries are meant to serve all students, including those with disabilities.

But, as Kingdon (1984/2011) notes, “government does not act on ideas quickly. To become a basis for action, an idea must both sweep a [policy] community and endure” (p. 130). And ideally, from within the advocacy partnership, there will be at least one particular change-agent (a good term, used by Mintrom, 2015, p. 18) who has the wherewithal to actually push the issue through to the policy agenda at the opportune moment. (This person is Kingdon’s “policy entrepreneur,” discussed as part of the Multiple Streams Model.) Those working within Advocacy Partnerships must have the patience to wait and watch their issue, and then swoop into further action when the first chance arises to turn it into policy. Time and opportunities for change are Concepts #4 and #5 in the Critical Concepts Framework, as discussed following.
(4) **Time.** The fourth concept in the Critical Concepts Framework is *time*. There simply is no getting around the fact that *policy takes time—often years or even decades—to accomplish*. (In extraordinary circumstances, policy is comparatively rushed through. The conditions, such as national disasters or tragedies, that sometimes set up these occasions are noted in Concept #5.)

The fact that the so-called SKILLs Act as an amendment to ESEA has been pending since approximately 2007 seemed to me an unconscionable slight to the library profession. In looking into the matter further, however, it was clear that various legislators had been making attempts to give school libraries greater prominence in federal education policy for a much longer period of time. For example, then-Representative Jack Reed (D-RI) and former Senator Paul Simon (D-IL) both sponsored pertinent legislation, called *The Elementary and Secondary School Library Media Act*, in 1993 when ESEA was previously due for reauthorization (originally retrieved from Library of Congress/THOMAS, 103-H.R. 1151; now, via Congress.Gov, H.R. 1151, n.d. and GovTrack.US, H.R. 1151, n.d.; and originally retrieved from Library of Congress/THOMAS, 103-S. 266, now via Congress.Gov, S. 266, n.d., and GovTrack.US, S. 266, n.d.). Kingdon points out that much prospective legislation is similarly slow (or even more so) to become law. His study of health care issues showed that legislation on national health insurance “has been discussed constantly for the better part of [a] century” (p.172). In particular, Presidents Teddy Roosevelt, Truman, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, and Clinton made attempts to address the issue; President Clinton had even gone so far in his persuasion efforts as to appoint his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, to a leadership role in shaping a healthcare policy proposal (Kingdon, 1984/2011). But it wasn’t until 2010, under President Obama, that a national healthcare policy finally emerged and was signed into the legislation now called the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Some five years later at this writing, the
legislation is still being argued and bandied about in Congress. Researchers are clear on the extensive time element associated with policy making. They are also clear that the lengthiness is due to the trend towards keeping things the same or, as viewed in the political realm, in maintaining the status quo:

There is a status quo, so changing it requires special justification. After all, things have worked up until now, why must the policy be changed at all?
The logic of ‘why change it?’ or ‘why now?’ is present in every issue, and it is a substantial hurdle for proponents of change. (Baumgartner, Berry et al., p. 31)

The idea of the status quo is not the gridlock seen in several recent presidential administrations. Yes, it is a power struggle to some extent, but not so much between political parties as it is between the old and new members of the regime. Those who are holdovers from prior years have a vested interest in maintaining the programs and policies they helped create. In addition, Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) also cite the work of Tversky and Kahneman in suggesting that maintaining the status quo has something to do with risk and loss aversion. Indeed, according to empirical research in psychology, “a riskless prospect is preferred to a risky prospect of equal or greater expected value” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Thus, sticking with a known quantity (the existing policy) is a less onerous option than the problem of negative and unforeseen consequences that could result if the policy is changed. (Additional information about this is covered in discussions herein of incrementalism and path dependency.)

And finally, maintaining the status quo also has something to do with picking one’s battles to yield the most optimal political advantage: Lawmakers are often reluctant to tweak policies and thereby bring “attention to a small issue when there are so many seemingly more important matters being debated in Washington” (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009, p. 43).
The time element creates a juxtaposition to the idea of incrementalism—or the notion that policy change is done via a series of small steps or increments over time. Kingdon (1984/2011) found in his work that “if a program has basically settled down into a stable pattern . . . few questions are raised about it, there is little controversy surrounding it, and whatever changes that do occur are modest” (p. 71). Those researchers who defend incrementalism suggest that this type of decision-making is actually a matter of simplifying the decision process, because making no or very small changes limits alternatives and saves time (Lindblom, 1959; Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993). This stance incorporates the element of bounded rationality wherein decision-makers cannot possibly take into account all available alternatives and outcomes. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) point out that “waiting to act in a complex situation until one understands the consequences is a prescription for paralysis” (p. 32). But the research of Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) suggests something other than small changes occurring: Their study of nearly one hundred cases “demonstrates that most issues before Congress do not move incrementally. Rather, in any given year, the typical issue lobbyists are working on doesn’t move at all” (emphasis added, p. 244).

In light of this, the seemingly inordinate time that has elapsed concerning the SKILLS Act is really pretty much par for the course. The time element in policy generation, frustrating and nonsensical though it may seem to those of us on the outside of the political process, is a fact of life. On the other hand, overcoming the status quo may be possible in two instances: first, during periodic opportunities—shocks, punctuations, and open policy windows—that occur on the national scene; and second, through strategic and successful framing of an issue. These concepts are #5 and #6 of the framework, as discussed following.
(5) Opportunities for Change. Concept #5, opportunities for change, is a combination of the ideas variously put forth by Kingdon (1984/2011); Jones and Baumgartner (2005) and Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009); as well as by Sabatier and Weibel (2007). Called by these researchers “policy windows” and “focusing events” (Kingdon); “punctuations” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, and Baumgartner, Berry et al. 2009); and “shocks” and “perturbations” (Sabatier & Weibel, 2007), these terms all generally signify that in politics, there comes a time when opportunity is ripe for policy-change to occur.

Some of these times occur as part of the normal ebb and flow of political life, such as during the annual formulation of the federal budget or when a piece of legislation is due for renewal or reauthorization. Lawmakers commonly slip pet policy proposals into the pending legislation in the hopes that the whole shebang will pass at once (Kingdon, 1984/2011). Some occasions are also recurring, but more pronounced. When a new President takes office and brings a concomitant change in administration and Executive Branch appointees, or when a new Congress is seated--especially if the balance of power between majority and minority parties shifts at the same time--there is a flurry of focus on new policy initiatives, at least for a while (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Kingdon, 1984/2011).

Then there are circumstances that occur internationally that cause national introspection. For example, concerns about our nation’s ability to maintain its position as a superior global force of innovation were raised after the Soviet Launch of Sputnik in the 1950s; following Japan’s rapid advancement as an automotive giant in the 1970s; and pursuant to reports of the educational prowess of various foreign nations over and above achievement scores of American students. National and international tragedies also tend to focus attention on legislation. The literature contains numerous discussions of the impacts of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, including
new and changed policy concerning gun control (Schnell & Callaghan, 2005); airline and maritime safety, national security, and the status of foreign students in American universities (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009); communications and privacy (ALA, USA PATRIOT Act, n.d.); and education (DeBray, 2006; McGuinn, 2006 in Rebell & Wolff, 2008; Rhodes, 2012). A more recent tragic example in the news would be the intentional downing of the Lufthansa airliner, Flight 9525, in March 2015, by a seemingly mentally ill and suicidal pilot. Airline-industry officials and decision-makers world-wide scrambled to review safety and pilot-health protocols and to put policy in place that would forestall such a tragedy from occurring in the future.

Other occasions for possible policy change include natural disasters; economic downturns; the revelation of new or confounding data on a topic germane to the public interest (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Kingdon, 1984/2011); and civil unrest—as in the cases of police brutality and excessive force against persons of color that are known to have occurred in the past few years throughout the U.S., including in Illinois, Florida, Missouri, Maryland, Ohio, and New York. These types of events may occur, but Kingdon points out that there has to be follow-up as well. He indicates that a single focusing event may stir up an issue that was sitting on the back-burner, but more needs to happen for policy to follow. Sometimes two or more occurrences of the same problem will evoke movement towards a change: The Columbine shooting in 1999 prompted public outcry about gun control; but the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012 led to actual lock-down security policies in schools across the nation (Marklein, 2013). Similarly, the seemingly racially motivated violence in the cases of police brutality were unfortunately followed more recently by the shooting of nine black individuals in South Carolina by a white man; this latter event then prompted calls for the removal of the Confederate flags from public
display and sale in many areas of the country because of its racially tinged and negative--though ambiguous--symbolism (CNN Wire, 2015; Liasson, 2015).

Whenever an opportunity for change occurs, policy advocates have to be ready to jump on this chance to push forward their proposal. Kingdon (1984/2011) indicates that policy windows do not stay open for long; policy entrepreneurs must seize the opportunity to merge a problem with a solution and get it on the decision-makers’ agenda. One of Kingdon’s unnamed respondents suggested the analogy of surfing:

People who are trying to advocate change are like surfers waiting for the big wave. You get out there, you have to be ready to go . . . If you’re not ready to paddle when the big wave comes along, you’re not going to ride it in. (p. 164)

This idea of being ready parallels Gabel’s discussion of her “model for policy activism,” which is based on Kingdon’s Multiple Streams model (2008, in Gabel & Danforth). Gabel suggests that disability activists should be continually working towards a fruitful dialog within the education profession in order to get fuller incorporation of Universal Design into federal legislation. She indicates that when the opportune moment occurs, “it is imperative” that those advocating in the realm of disabilities studies in education be “ready with solutions and [be] visible enough to be called upon” for policy initiatives (p. 320).

There is one other way in which to view the opportunities for change, as noted in the Punctuated Equilibrium Model of Jones and Baumgartner (2005) (a discussion of this model follows shortly). These researchers suggest that movement towards policy change has an element of friction in it (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Baumgartner, Breunig et al., 2009). Accordingly, the policy process is fairly static--stuck around the status quo, with only slight
movements—until a crisis situation causes an abrupt movement forward. In the legislative process, this lurch forward often vastly overshoots the mark for needed change and the resulting policies may ultimately come to be viewed as too far-reaching. Librarians would recognize such a pattern in various elements of the legislation known as the USA PATRIOT Act, which has the actual unwieldy title of, the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act. Over its history, this law has reduced the right to privacy of library patrons in the name of national security and the fear that prospective terrorists might find in libraries all the information they need to wreak havoc on the nation. The ALA has indicated that “certain sections of the USA PATRIOT Act endanger constitutional rights and privacy rights” in how it allows law enforcement officials to garner information about what library users are reading (ALA, USA PATRIOT Act, n.d.). Washington insider Tom Korologos put this type of policy friction/lurching pattern this way: “The things Congress does best are nothing and overreacting” (in Jones & Baumgartner, p. 87, from Dole, 2000).

Both getting noticed and being ready with ideas and the necessary advocacy partners when an opportunity occurs can reap policy change—though sometimes too much change. One additional concept in the policy-change process may also be needed: A policy issue has to be defined or framed in a way warranting action in the first place.

(6) Framing. In reading Kingdon’s *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984/2011), there was a section that particularly resonated with me—and not in a good way—in light of that niggleing *what is it about libraries?* question. In his discussion of the ideas that float through the policy primeval soup, Kingdon explains one reason why some ideas percolate to the top and get noticed, while others remain seemingly forever suspended somewhere down in the muck: “Sometimes ideas fail to surface in a policy community, not because people are opposed
to them, not because the ideas are incompatible with prevailing ideological currents, but because people simply find the subjects intellectually boring” (p. 217). Given my hypersensitivity concerning school libraries, I couldn’t help but wonder, “Hmmm. Could libraries be one of those boring subjects?” Does the way libraries are viewed in Washington’s culture of decision-makers have something to do with the potential for library policy to advance? Concept #6, Framing, pertains to the recognition that how an issue is structured or framed by others dramatically impacts how saleable it is as a piece of prospective policy.

Frames have a lot to do with politics and policy. Getting noticed is key to the policy process (Kingdon, 1984/2011; Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009), and Gabrielson (2005) says that “the packaging of political issues is often as important as the product” (p. 76 in Callaghan & Schnell). Frames are powerful tools from the political playbook of organized interest groups that can be used to persuade (Gabrielson, 2005), to spin and/or to manipulate (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Lakoff, 2004). Fridkin and Kenney (2005, in Callaghan & Schnell) point out that “frames affect the salience of an issue, how an issue is evaluated, and often serve to crystallize support for or opposition to an issue” (p.55). But foremost, an issue has to be defined as a problem requiring fixing in order to be addressed by policy makers (Kingdon, 1984/2011). Stone (1988/2002) indicates that problems are “created in the minds of citizens by other citizens, leaders, organizations, and government agencies, as an essential part of political maneuvering” (p. 156). And framing an issue into a problem is a complicated business: “Getting people to see new problems, or to see old problems in one way rather than another, is a major conceptual and political accomplishment” (Kingdon, 1984/2011, p. 115).

Frames, though sometimes crafted by others, must be individually internalized. They are constructs that help solidify a picture or concept in the mind’s eye, helping to bring
understanding and order (Kinder & Nelson, 2005, in Callaghan & Schnell) to the complex issues of life--and politics. Frames are evocative and sometimes “provocative” (Schnitt & Callaghan, 2005, p. 124), but to be meaningful, they must resonate in some way with what we already know or have experienced. Lakoff specifies that successful “framing is about getting language that fits your worldview . . . The ideas are primary--and the language carries those ideas, evokes those ideas” (p. 4). Stone (1988/2002) previously pointed out that although words shouldn’t matter to the rational decision maker because “labels attached to different alternatives should not affect their evaluation” (p. 248), the reality is that “the way we think about problems is extremely sensitive to the language used to describe them“ (p. 249). A careful wordsmith can thus yield a good deal of power in affecting thinking and definitions. And in the disability world, the dangers of labeling language are a pervasive concern.

In today’s multi-media and technological environment, we are also influenced by the “visual” frames created through images--including those seen on television and the depictions of seemingly real politics in popular television programs, such as The West Wing (Callaghan, 2005, p. 180) [and I would add the more sinister, House of Cards]. Both television and the Internet offer the potential to stream real-time events, and thus these media evoke on-the-spot experience and indelible impressions for those who view the events. Who has not been deeply affected by the horrific sight of United Flight 175 slamming into the South Tower of the World Trade Center during the 9/11 terrorist attacks? It is just such verbal (I could have chosen other words to describe the incident after all) and visual (the graphic video footage that was pieced together from all angles was then and still is re-played countless times) representations that yield power as “instruments in the struggle over public policy” (Stone, 1988/2002, p. 156). And as already mentioned, in the aftermath of 9/11, politicians were able to harness this power into a ‘rally
round the flag’ frame of bi-partisan cooperation that resulted in numerous and far-reaching policy changes (Gabrielson, 2005, in Callaghan & Schnell, p. 91).

On the other hand, while shaping an obvious problem into an issue can have an overt policy effect, Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) questioned whether re-framing an issue was a useful strategy. In fact, because reframing had occurred in only 4% of their case studies, these researchers viewed “initial perspectives” as the most “durable” (pp. 173, 174), especially because re-framing is ultimately “about changing the status quo” (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009, p. 176)--which as was discussed in Concept #4, is a difficult task in and of itself. Jones (2001) says that our knowledge of how personal biases or “prior beliefs”--which are in fact “colored by one’s social status, race, and reference groups”--impact decisions is an area that still warrants further study (p. 55). Other research has shown that even when new information is available, established frames tend to trump facts. Lakoff notes that “if a strongly held frame doesn’t fit the facts, the facts will be ignored and the frame will be kept” (2004, p. 37). Thus, the fact that school libraries have a positive impact on student achievement in reading, as shown in numerous research studies (see http://www.lrs.org/data-tools/school-libraries/impact-studies for a comprehensive listing of and access to the voluminous research in this area), may not count for much in the political arena if the frames of policy-makers concerning libraries are already askew.

The importance of framing in politics is a long-standing given. So again, if the lived experiences of policy-makers are possibly shaping how they define and frame school libraries, then the first order of business in my research should be to determine the nature of these experiences. Depending on these results, the second task may be to determine ways to involve more stakeholders and advocacy partners and thus to do the re-structuring in the library profession that is needed to reshape these frames--difficult though that may be. And the third
task may be to work within these new partnerships on improving policy so that the role of school libraries in supporting students of all abilities can be made more effective.

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The Multiple Streams Model

John Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Model\(^5\) is not in and of itself a model of how policy per se is made. Rather, it is a model of how policy ideas get on the agenda for consideration in the first place. In explaining the reason for his research, Kingdon (1984/2011) said that he wanted to address the need to know more about how seeds of ideas find ‘fertile soil’ (p. 77) and eventually blossom into full-blown policies. Directly quoting from one of his unnamed interviewees, Kingdon writes that he was trying to answer the question, “Why do decision makers pay attention to one thing rather than another?” (p. 2).

Getting on the agenda. Getting on the government agenda is the key idea behind the Multiple Streams Model, and it is the first premise to any subsequent action being taken in policy formulation. To Kingdon, this agenda is “the list of subjects to which people in and around government are paying serious attention at any given point in time” (p. 166).

From 1976 to 1979, Kingdon personally interviewed 247 Washington, DC workers from organizations and agencies both inside and outside the government. His interviewees included individuals such as presidential staff, political appointees in various departments and bureaus, congressional staff members or staff from agencies that provide support for Congress (e.g., the

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\(^5\) Kingdon himself calls it a “model” (Kingdon, 1984/2011) so I am using his term. Others refer to it as a theory (Thurber, J. A., foreword in Kingdon, 1984/2011), framework (Sabatier, 2007), perspective or lens (Zahariadis in Sabatier, 2007), or analysis (Cairney, 2012).
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Congressional Budget Office), upper-level civil servants, lobbyists, consultants, researchers, and journalists--all of whom were somehow connected to either health care or transportation (Kingdon, 1984/2011, pp. 250-252). Both of these topics were becoming rising concerns at the time of his research, which spanned the last half of the Ford Administration and the first half of the Carter Administration. He said of his choice of who to talk to, “My aim was to tap into entire policy communities, not just parts like Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, or lobbies” (p.4).

Policy communities and streams. The idea of policy communities plays prominently in this model. Kingdon considered them to be similar to the “academic professions, each with their own theories, ideas, preoccupations, and fads” (p. 127). It is from these groups of experts that issues evolve into problems that need a solution and eventually may find their way onto the political policy agenda. From his two overarching policy areas--health care and transportation--he and his research assistants developed 23 case studies of “policy initiation and non-initiation” (p.5) to help in seeing and understanding what was happening in the legislative arena. For example, in the area of health care, the researchers looked at eleven case studies that included those concerning Medicare, Medicaid, Health Maintenance Organizations, and clinical laboratories regulation. In the transportation area, the thirteen case studies included airport development, air safety, mass transit funding, and Amtrak. (See p.259 in Kingdon, 1984/2011, for the complete list.) Using Kingdon’s interview notes and other information gleaned from documents such as Congressional hearing transcripts, stories in the media, journal articles, Google Scholar, and newspaper articles, academics begin to see new ideas emerge, and report on them. Kingdon was one of the first to study how policy communities and streams work and how ideas evolve into problems that need a solution.

In later editions of his book, Kingdon added the perspective of occurrences in health care policy during the Clinton Administration in the 1990s and the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) under the Obama Administration in 2010.
presidential speeches, and national poll reports, three kinds of processes were seen to occur in
government. Kingdon writes:

We conceive of three process streams flowing through the system [of government]--
streams of problems, policies, and politics. They are largely independent of one
another, and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some
critical junctures the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow
out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics. (p.19)

Each of Kingdon’s streams has parameters that set them apart from one another, and individual
participants are primarily active in a particular stream, although there is some overlap. For
example, legislators are of course more likely to concentrate their actions in the political stream
where policy is actually negotiated and acted upon. Researchers and others generating
information are more likely to be active in the policy-proposal stream, coming up with data and
ideas for policy. And “interest groups could push for recognition of pet problems and for
adoption of their solutions or proposals”—activities that embrace both the problem and policy
proposal streams (Kingdon, p. 87). Table 2, shown at the close of this section, summarizes the
points that define and separate the three streams.

The Model suggests that the streams flow independently but have to converge at some
point in order for agenda action to ultimately occur. In this convergence (Kingdon calls it a
coupling), a solution from the policy proposal stream becomes attached to an issue from the
problem stream. A participant in the political stream takes notice, agrees that the problem is
worthy of attention and that the suggested solution is feasible, and puts forth the issue for action
on the legislative policy agenda.
But convergence and action does not necessarily happen in this order: Often policy ideas ‘float around’ for a time, undergoing embellishment or adjustment, before becoming attached to an issue. There is always a battery of experts (e.g., consultants, university researchers, think tanks, agencies, and lobbyists) working on proposals that may eventually become policy. Kingdon likens this formulation period to floating in the “primeval soup,” where various proposals are undergoing a necessary “softening up” before they are entirely usable. In some cases favored proposal solutions are available before a problem actually arises; in other cases a viable proposal might effectively be the solution to more than one issue. In such instances, the proposed solution will become ‘attached’ to the problem that appears to require fixing first (Kingdon, pp. 116-137).

**Policy windows.** Kingdon’s findings included the potential for outside factors to have an influence on when the streams might come together. Accordingly, in the model *policy windows*—times of opportunity—open periodically in the problem and political streams, and effectively bump an issue to the top of the agenda as quickly as a viable solution from the policy proposal stream can be attached. Windows open up in various circumstances. For example, the reauthorization of legislation and the budget process are highly political endeavors, and both offer the chance for individuals in the political stream to change the policy. Windows also open in the political stream when there is a new President, when a national election causes a shift in the reigning majority in Congress (as we saw in the last mid-term national election of November 2014, as was already mentioned), or when a notable shift in the national mood causes momentum to swing to the right or left (Kingdon, 1984/2011)—such as the vocal emergence of the Tea Party in the last half-decade. In the problem stream, when a natural disaster or tragic public event occurs, a window opens. Kingdon suggests that a plane crash can be an opening that might shift...
attention to airline safety issues (p. 169); the crash of Lufthansa airliner, Flight 9525, has already been mentioned herein. We can add other events that occurred after the first edition of Kingdon’s book was written as well: Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, in 2005 and 2012, respectively, brought the problem of emergency-preparedness and response forward; the Columbine and Sandy Hook shootings, in 1999 and 2012, respectively, raised concerns about gun control, mental health, and in-school security; and 9/11 brought the specter of terrorism to the collective American consciousness along with a whole list of corollary issues. This latter event had a far-reaching impact in opening a window for policy change that relates obliquely to the present study: The reauthorization of ESEA, in the form of President George W. Bush’s hallmark NCLB legislation, was seen largely as a shoo-in for passage as Congress attempted to put up a unified (bi-partisan) front as a symbolic show of national strength (DeBray, 2006; McGuinn, 2006 in Rebell & Wolff, 2008; Rhodes, 2012) in the face of international threats of terrorism.

But in addition to the opening of the policy window, there has to be impetus to push a change from within the streams towards the policy agenda. This impetus comes from policy entrepreneurs--those who have the resources of “time, energy, reputation, money” (Kingdon, p. 179), plus political clout and know-how to ‘broker and advocate’ for their solution to quickly solve the problem (p. 183). Kingdon indicates that an entrepreneur can be anyone who has the leadership and persistence to push policy along at the best possible moment. Quoting one of his interviewees, he says that these entrepreneurs have the ability to “talk a dog off a meat wagon” (p.181). Kingdon’s list of such entrepreneurs includes consumer advocate Ralph Nader, though in present-day terms, we might think of Microsoft founder Bill Gates as having the capacity to
fulfill that role, particularly given his activity (and the impressive resources of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) in the educational arena.

Figure 2 is a representation of the Multiple Streams Model, wherein the policy entrepreneur is adding a solution onto the comingled political and problem streams, during the available open policy window.
Table 2 -- Factors in various streams of Multiple Streams Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Stream</th>
<th>Policy Proposal Stream</th>
<th>Political Stream</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>•Conditions/issues are only problems if framing, values, timing, bias, feedback, categorization and/or perceptions deem them to be</td>
<td>•Proposals evolve from policy communities, e.g., groups of insiders/outsiders who are specialists on an issue</td>
<td>•Movement here is highly dependent on national mood, pressure groups, perceptions and vocalization of interests, majority rule and competition in Congress, and turnover in key leadership positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Issues can be recognized as problems for sundry reasons (e.g., party platform, activist advocacy, crises)</td>
<td>•Solution ideas float freely in “primeval soup” <em>softening up</em> for later use (pp. 116-117) This is aka gestation period, trial balloons, preconditioning, educating decision makers (pp. 127-130)</td>
<td>•Elections may propel action onto or off of the policy agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Quantifiable information trumps personal stories in problem definition</td>
<td>•Proposed solutions must align with prevailing schools of public thought</td>
<td>•&quot;A balance of organized forces mitigates against change&quot; (p. 151) e.g., the trend is towards inertia (or status quo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Issues/problems have a limited shelf-life (4 - 5 years)</td>
<td>•Solutions must be technically feasible</td>
<td>•A lack of clear supporters and beneficiaries (p. 152) = a lack of political attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Problems get dropped for lack of leadership and/or willingness to pay the costs to pursue (e.g., financial, manpower, time, and cognitive processing/mental energy)</td>
<td>•<em>Persuasion</em> builds consensus among participants in policy communities</td>
<td><em>Bargaining</em> builds consensus here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>•Budget constraints help otherwise unnoticed but least-costly problems to surface and gain recognition</td>
<td>•Policy entrepreneurs are needed to broker/advocate for attaching a pet solution to a problem during an open policy window</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Punctuated Equilibrium

Incremental decision-making. The Punctuated Equilibrium/Friction Model was developed by Jones and Baumgartner as an extension of the thinking on what had been one of the best-known theories of the policy-making process to that point, Incrementalism. The idea of “incremental” decision-making was spurred on by Charles Lindblom, who in 1959 wrote his well-known ‘Muddling Through’ article. Lindblom indicated then that in a democracy such as ours, “policy does not move in leaps and bounds” (p.84). Rather, because information helpful to making knowledgeable decisions is not readily available (nor is it always heeded anyway), and because of limits “on human intellectual capacities” (p.84), policy change tends to be in terms of small increments. As Lindblom put it, “Policy is not made once and for all: it is made and re-made endlessly. [It is] a process of successive approximation to some desired objectives” (p. 86), not really expected to be the final solution to whatever problem was being addressed in the first place.

With incremental decisions, the decision maker “can remedy a past error fairly quickly” (Lindblom, 1959, p. 86) when unintended consequences begin to surface after a policy is in place. Furthermore, longevity is fairly standard within the legislature, and those individuals who first enacted a policy are quite likely to be around somewhat later when the policy gets reviewed for one reason or another. Because legislators are reluctant to admit that their past policy decisions may have missed the mark, small adjustments in the policy tend to be more palatable than the wholesale scrapping of particular program or policy. We see this, for example, during the budget cycle, wherein adjustments in funding can be made to strengthen a policy that seemingly is not working or to provide added support for something that is working quite well.

Such policy adjustments have been common in the case of the ESEA legislation: In the
nearly 50 years of its existence, it has been modified with each subsequent reauthorization and re-appropriation, going from just above 30-pages in the original legislation to the 670 pages that comprise P. L. 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, signed into law on January 8, 2002. Later as I was writing this and reauthorization progress continued, the Senate version (S. 1177), the Every Child Achieves Act Of 2015, was 1026 pages, when it passed in that chamber on July 16, 2015. The House version of the engrossed bill (i.e., approved in the House as of November 17, 2015), the Student Success Act of 2015, was 642 pages long. The final legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), which was signed into law on December 10, 2015, is relatively streamlined at 392 pages (in its pdf version). [For access to various working versions of this law, go to https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/1177/text]

**Graphic representation of policy.** Lindblom’s principle of decisions made in small steps (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009) was a reigning model of public policy for decades. However in the early 1990s, Baumgartner and Jones offered a more detailed and literal view of policy change, and subsequently developed their *Punctuated Equilibrium* version of the policy process. Punctuated Equilibrium was not meant to de-bunk Incrementalism but rather, to expand on it (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Cairney, 2012; Sabatier, 2007; True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007 in Sabatier). Jones and Baumgartner used budget data as the measuring stick for policy change: They graphed budget allocation changes over more than 50 years’ time.

But why look at policy in this way? Stein (2004) points out that “all policies communicate values of what the government *should* do for its public” (emphasis in original, p. xiv), and Baumgartner and Jones indicate that budgets reflect government objectives (p. 92). Siphoning off the budget data of various programs helps to see the intent of the government in meeting its objectives because funding levels can support or submerge a program within a
particular policy (as in the case of funding for school libraries in the later years of ESEA/NCLB legislation). Jones and Baumgartner looked at budgeting data in dozens of policy areas from fiscal year 1947 to 2003, converting everything to 2003 dollar values. They plotted the distribution of change as a histogram⁷, as shown in Figure 3 (taken from True, Jones & Baumgarten, in Sabatier, 2007). The curve in this plot is somewhat skewed towards the right of center, or the zero point, of the horizontal axis. Furthermore, the curve has very long legs and a very marked and tall center-peak. As the researchers indicate, “this particular distribution is considered to be leptokurtic: compared to the normal curve [with] higher than expected … numbers of moderate changes, and a great many more outliers” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 111). Following, in what I hope is laymen’s terms, is an explanation as to why the data distribution forms such a curve. Keep in mind that we are generally looking at the degree of changes to budget allocations over the years.


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⁷ A histogram is a type of bar chart where the bars represent frequencies of the occurrence.
**The legs.** To the left of zero (zero is the point where no change occurred), the leg extends all the way to minus 100%: A program can’t be cut by more than 100%. However, the data show that many programs were deeply cut over the years. That is, there are many bars in the -40% to -75% range, and a sizeable number of programs had their budgets cut completely, as shown by the bars that are at the -100% point where the left leg ends.

Alternatively on the right side of zero, the leg extends beyond 100%: Program budgets that changed 100% on the positive side would have doubled. On this side, there are many bars that hover in the +25% to +55% range, and there is also a large group of programs that received budget increases in the +80% to +90% range. Furthermore, funding for some programs did actually more than double in the timeframe studied, as the bars going beyond 100% show.

These funding bumps and drops account for the long-legs of the histogram. In a normal curve, one would instead expect the distribution legs to be “fat” and to ‘taper off to zero’ much more quickly (Baumgartner, Berry et al., p.37, 2009). Instead, the very long legs reflect periodic huge cuts and huge boosts in some programs, or what Jones and Baumgartner deemed to be punctuations in the budgeting process.

**The peak.** On the other hand, in the center of the histogram the bars are densely packed and very high. This shows that “the typical case falls within a tightly constrained range of small adjustments” (Baumgartner, Berry et al., p.36, 2009). Such budgets hovered around the zero point, staying approximately the same over time. This dense-packing near zero is evidence of “stasis” or equilibriums (True, Jones, & Baumgartner in Sabatier, 2007), the sort of small-step changes Lindblom (1959) noted--but even more so: Jones and Baumgartner called it hyperincrementalism (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; True, Baumgartner & Jones in Sabatier, 2007).
Thus both major change (punctuations) and a trend towards sameness, or status quo, (equilibrium) can exist (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; True, Baumgartner & Jones, in Sabatier, 2007), and hence, the punctuated equilibrium name for this model. This type of budget analysis has been duplicated in other situations (e.g., state and school district budgets) and countries (e.g., Germany, the United Kingdom, and Denmark) by various researchers cited by True, Baumgartner and Jones (in Sabatier, 2007) and as shown by Baumgartner, Breunig et al., (2009).

In continuing work with this model, Baumgartner and Jones and their colleagues added the analogy of the political process having a component of friction in it—even likening it to the movements of the earth’s crust before and after an earthquake (Baumgartner, Breunig et al., 2009). They say that there is little or no movement on any particular issue until attention generates enough force to ‘lurch’ the issue into a newly prominent position. The researchers also indicate that “the political system alternates between underresponding [sic] to pressures and then occasionally overresponding [sic] as the forces of friction are finally overcome” (Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009, p. 38). They indicate that this whole idea is quite similar to the maxim that “’man tends to react by overestimation or neglect’”-- as stated by mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot (quoted in Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p.87); or, more cynically viewed as the penchant of Congress to ‘do nothing or overreact’ (previously quoted from Tom Korologos, also in Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 87, cited from Dole, 2000; and in Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009, p. 38).

**Decision-making features.** Punctuated Equilibrium has another important component besides what decision trends look like over time, and that is its explanation of how decisions come to be made. Like the Multiple Streams Model, Punctuated Equilibrium suggests that
decisions are based on recognition of the problem and a choice among possible solutions. Also as in the Multiple Streams Model, this model assumes that an issue has to first be cogently defined as a problem or it won’t be recognized as worthy of decision-maker attention. Decision makers have a limited amount of attention capacity, and they cannot effectively divide their attention among several problems at once. This is the bounded rationality element coming into play, as was discussed in the Critical Concepts Framework.

Because many policies are holdovers from previous regimes and because many politicians are in fact also holdovers--having held their elected positions for more than one term, much of what comes up on the Congressional agenda is a matter of housekeeping, or what should be simple renewal/reauthorization. Political scientists call this “policy inheritances” (Rose and Davies, 1994, cited in Jones & Baumgartner, 2005), and it accounts somewhat for the continuation of many policies over time. In these cases and in the absence of substantive new information together with a vocal hue and cry about what is wrong with the legislation, decisions are fairly straightforward: i.e., go with the status quo. The researchers also cite Pierson (2000), who calls this sort of repetitive decision-making path dependency wherein “once a path is chosen, it tends to be followed” without further thought or evaluation (Jones & Baumgartner, p.49). Lindblom previously indicated that this actually is a means of simplifying the decision process by limiting the alternatives to be considered (Lindblom, 1959; Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993). Indeed, there are numerous examples of this ‘I-don’t-exactly-know-why, but-that’s-how-we-do-it’ mentality in all of our lives, and perhaps especially in established organizations and bureaucracies.

When new information does become available, change is not always a slam-dunk either. Decision makers don’t always effectively absorb the new information for several reasons. We
are all wedded to our past beliefs (Jones, 2001)—to our ideology, professional identities, and the knowledge gained via our education, training, and experience. Taking a look at an old problem in a new light requires an investment in time as well as in thought, which may involve a complete reframing of the original issue. This creates a host of additional ramifications, not the least of which is that a politician may not want to admit that his or her past thinking was somehow flawed (Lindblom, 1959). In addition, psychological research shows that people are generally risk adverse (Trevsky & Kahneman, 1981), so sticking with the old program, though perhaps not optimum, is viewed as better than taking a chance on the new alternative. Thus, “in humans, in organizations, and in public bureaucracies, there is great friction, or resistance to change” (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005, p. 47).

**Over-reactions.** When something does spark the attention of decision-makers, the outcome is quite often an over-reaction, and Jones and Baumgartner (2005) indicate that sometimes “crises seem necessary to drive change” (p. 51). They suggest that the response of the Bush Administration and Congress to information about Al-Qaeda after 9/11 was an over-reaction that necessitated a good deal of new attention to the issue of terrorism. A related (and more personally disturbing) example of such Congressional over-reaction is the portion of the USA PATRIOT Act—an anathema to most librarians anyway because of, as mentioned earlier, its invasion-of-privacy implications—called the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act (CMEA) of 2005. This legislation limits to a single package the total amount of allergy medicine containing certain decongestant ingredients that individuals can purchase within 30 days (Williams, 2011). Current packaging of the products does not contain a full 30-day supply of the drug for those of us who are severe allergy sufferers. However, the purchase requires the buyer to get the medicine directly from the pharmacist and to enter his or her signature into a
retrievable database at the pharmacy so that the federal government can track the number of
times a purchase is made in a month. Falsifying information entered into the database is a
federal crime, punishable by a maximum fine of $250,000 and up to five years in prison (Drug
Enforcement Administration, 2006).

The purpose of the CMEA policy is to aid drug enforcement officials in thwarting would-
be producers of methamphetamine, or “meth,” in various pockets of activity across the nation so
that they cannot stockpile enough ingredients to manufacture the drug. But post-legislation data
show that the law has not done what it set out to do. The drug problem has not subsided under
the law, and we are now seeing instead “the proliferation of the smaller shake and bake labs,8
[and] the infiltration of Mexican drug cartels to meet the demand [along with] the more potent
meth those cartels bring with them” (Balko, 2014). The number of meth labs nationwide actually
increased under the law (Balko, 2014), with the government reporting 966 such lab incidents in
2009 up from 596 in 2007 (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2011). At the same time the
law makes it extremely difficult for the estimated 50 million (Asthma and Allergy Foundation of
America, n.d; American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, 2014; WebMD, 2012)
individuals who suffer from allergies in the nation to easily get the medication they need to
effectively control their symptoms. Furthermore, as Balko (2014) puts it: “The government’s
decision to focus on supply instead of treatment, and to punish everyone for the deeds of a few,
has led to a number of horror stories” wherein innocent “parents and grandparents (especially
families with multiple children with severe allergies) have been arrested for inadvertently
exceeding their legal allotment of cold medication.”

8 The shake-and-bake method is now the preferred means of producing meth, because it “requires only a few pills, a
2-liter bottle and some common household chemicals--this new method is quick, cheap and mobile, reducing the
likelihood that producers will be apprehended” (Williams, 2011, p. 394).
Thus, the 9/11 attacks revealed a problem that required attention: The threat of terrorism on U.S. soil would fall into the “crisis” category under the Punctuated Equilibrium Model and be worthy of new policy, such as some of the safeguards provided under the USA PATRIOT Act.

On the other hand the government overshot its mark with the methamphetamine drug policy within the USA PATRIOT Act, both in purpose and in outcome. In this instance, decision makers should have moved more incrementally—sticking closer to the baseline of little action—in pursuing a solution to the meth issue, rather than implementing a policy that impacts millions of people who have nothing to do with the problem.

**Advocacy Coalition Framework**

Unlike the Multiple Streams Model, which was developed to explain how a problem gets on the agenda of the decision makers, and the Punctuated Equilibrium Model, which suggested that policy change is a process of fits and starts over time, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is more “ambitious”: It “tries to provide an overview of the entire policy process” (Cairney, 2013). Notably, the framework doesn’t view the policy process as a cycle or a series of stages as very early policy theories did, but rather more like a continuing arrangement of actors working towards an objective. Originally developed in 1988 to explain occurrences in the realm of U.S. environmental and water policy, the framework has been used primarily in case studies involving this type of legislation. However the ACF is a dynamic framework that continues to undergo adjustments as researchers apply it to other policy areas. It has been used in more than 80 studies, in more than a dozen countries in policy areas that include transportation, public health, industrial development, and in a very few cases, education (Cairney, 2012; Cairney, 2015 in Balla, Lodge, & Page; Sabatier & Weible, 2007 in Sabatier).

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9 *Framework* is the term used by Sabatier and his co-researchers in their presentations of this idea, and ACF is a common abbreviation for this model. Therefore, I am commandeering both for this discussion.
There are several important take-away features that separate the ACF from the two other policy process models reviewed herein.

**Advocacy coalitions.** The ACF is so named because *advocacy coalitions* play prominently in this view of the policy process. An advocacy coalition is a grouping of stakeholders (something like the policy communities in the Multiple Streams Model) whose underlying philosophy of the particular issue is similar enough for them to form a working alliance. Coalition members may include “legislators, agency officials, interest group leaders, judges, researchers, and intellectuals from multiple levels of government” (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, in Sabatier, p.196) who may not agree on everything, but who are aligned enough to be better off working together within the arena of the germane issue (the ACF calls this arena a “subsystem”) than working separately. The ACF emphasizes the importance of the media and academics as part of the advocacy coalition. Advocacy coalitions have the advantage of sharing resources, strategies (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), information, and opportunities to learn (Weible, 2008)--all of which may ultimately influence policy formulation.

In this framework, policy change is a long-term endeavor taking a decade or more. There may be several coalitions competing in a policy area (more will be said about this competition shortly), and these all help to concentrate the actions and “behavior of the hundreds of organizations and individuals” who may have an interest in the policy at stake (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 196). These researchers further suggest that the arsenal used by advocacy coalitions include the following:

- some individuals who are actually in decision-making positions, even if this means vocalizing support for specific candidates or pushing for political appointments;
- using public opinion as a tool;
• framing the issue with specific data (discussed below);
• “mobilizing” forces when needed;
• financial backing; and
• having skilled leaders--such as the policy entrepreneurs mentioned in the Multiple Streams Model--at the helm. (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp. 201-204)

**Competition and devil shift.** The ACF recognizes that in any given policy area, several advocacy coalitions may vie to have their particular stance be the one chosen and made into policy. But Sabatier, Hunter, and McLaughlin (1987) have suggested that there exists an interesting phenomenon that enters into this competition. They call it the *devil shift.* The devil shift is the perception among competitors that the opposing side is *more of everything*--more evil, mean-spirited, powerful, liberal, successful, influential, and so on--than is one’s own side.

In 1984, Sabatier and his co-researchers surveyed individuals connected to policy-making surrounding a controversial land-use plan in the Lake Tahoe area along the California/Nevada border. Based on the survey results from 202 respondents, the researchers concluded that the devil shift does indeed exist, particularly in policy areas where views are widely divergent. Unfortunately, such distrust can deepen and these researchers say that “the more one views opponents as malevolent and very powerful, the more likely one is to resort to questionable measures to preserve one’s interests” (Sabatier, Hunter & McLaughlin, 1987, p. 471). Without pointing fingers at particular players in our present Congress, those who have watched HBO’s *House of Cards* series may see some devil shift parallels in the TV program. Given that the distorted views of policy participants concerning other participants may escalate with time, and that policy takes a long time to evolve, one can see how negativity among competing factions
can become quite pronounced (Sabatier, Hunter & McLaughlin, 1987; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) and divisive—to the point of forestalling movement of prospective policy altogether.

Using data. The ACF stresses the importance of using scientific and technical information, or expert-based information (Weible, 2008), in policy decisions. The reliance on data in this framework may stem from its underpinnings and applications relating primarily to environmental and energy issues, which may be esoteric enough in and of themselves to require some technical background to understand the issues in the first place. The ACF also calls specifically for scientists and researchers to be coalition members. Thus, useful data may be generated from various sources, such as government agencies that perform analysis functions, think tanks, consultants, university researchers, scientists, and similar types of technical experts who presumably can provide unbiased information (Ozawa, 1991 cited in Weible, 2008).

Weible (2008) suggests three main uses for data in the policy process: First, data garnered over time (again, this framework includes a large time element) helps in “learning” about the source of, or potential solution to, a problem (Weiss, 1977 cited in Weible, 2008, pp. 619-620). Second, data can have a “political” role, in that it may help frame an issue one way or another, sometimes via the “distortion and/or selective use of information” (Weible, 2008, p. 620). And third, information developed by scientists can be “instrumental” (p. 620) in swaying some policy makers towards a more rational choice, i.e., the alternative that is based on the research findings. On the other hand, Weible, Sabatier, and McQueen (2009) have found instances in the literature that suggest research data increases the conflict between competing coalitions, when such data is not openly shared or when it reflects negatively on the policy position put forth by a particular coalition.
While some qualitative researchers may eschew the use of data as leaning too much towards positivism, the practical matter of getting policy formed may require this step as essential for even getting noticed, much less believed. Even prior to the development of the ACF, Stone (2002/1988) noted how important numbers and counting are in the policy arena. She says:

Every number is a political claim about ‘where to draw the line’... Measures imply a need for action, because we do not measure things except when we want to change them or change our behavior in response to them (p. 167).

**The strength of beliefs.** The ACF suggests that policy decisions are actually tied to several psychological factors, and that “people engage in politics to translate their beliefs into action” (Cairney, 2013). The individuals who form a particular advocacy coalition do so because their underlying belief system bonds them together. The ACF identifies three different levels of belief strength, and they are not equally subject to change. The first and most basic level of beliefs are the *deep* core beliefs. These are shaped by individual upbringing, culture, and life experience; they are based within the personal philosophy one holds and the values this generates (Cairney, 2015; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). These beliefs are unassailable from outside forces because they are part of our individual make-up.

At the second level are the *policy* core beliefs. These are shaped by political positions such as the traditional Republican and Democrat political stances. The ideology of the party with which we align ourselves becomes our own ideology, and for die-hard members of a given political party, these types of policy core beliefs are also immutable. An example germane to the present study would be the traditional Republican view that federal government should not have a major role in education--a view voiced when ESEA legislation first came to be in the mid-
1960’s, and which is a continuing argument now. Of the two versions of ESEA legislation that were in Congress during my study, H. R. 5, *The Student Success Act*, represented more generally the Republican ideology about federal control in education policy. For some conservatives, it didn’t go far enough in the “no-strings-attached” direction (Milbank, 2015), and consequently, it just barely garnered the necessary number of votes needed for passage in the House—with some 27 conservative Republicans switching to vote against the GOP majority (Govtrack.us, 2015-a; Milbank, 2015). Then when it came to merging the House and Senate versions later in the fall of 2015, the resulting ESSA was a mixed bag. Patty Murray (D-WA), a key-player in the rewrites of the combined House and Senate versions tweeted: “It’s not the bill I would have written on my own, it’s not the bill Republicans would have written. That’s compromise” (Wong, 2015).

The final set of beliefs, *secondary* beliefs, is more prescriptive in nature. Such beliefs are tied to an institution, organization, or program, and they include rules or procedures. These evoke far less allegiance and are generally subject to change if new information comes onto the scene that suggests another strategy would be better (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

**Shocks.** In the ACF, because decisions are based on and inextricably tied to core beliefs, accomplishing policy changes can be very difficult. Indeed, the ACF suggests that major change will only occur if there has been a *shock* or event of a magnitude sufficient to shake deeply held policy core beliefs. Cairney (2015) writes that this could occur as the aftermath of “an environmental crises that undermines the ability of a coalition to defend current policy or allows another coalition to successfully redefine the policy problem and seek new solutions” (p. 488 in Balla, Lodge & Page). An example of this may be the earthquakes occurring in Texas and elsewhere in the mid-southwest in recent years. These have been presumed by some, including researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), to have been caused fully or to some extent
by the hydraulic extraction process, or fracking (Howard, 2015; Lett & Morris, 2015; USGS/Fitzpatrick & Petersen, March, 2016; USGS, 2016; Wattles & Egan, 2016). While studies are on-going about the cause of the increased seismic activity, this problem may yield a belief shift after proponents on both sides of the issue determine the ultimate implications of the fracking practice. With that said, according to the ACF, policy change will be very difficult since ideas are so heavily entrenched in beliefs. In Oklahoma, which has also been plagued by a spate of earthquake tremors—even as recently as within days of my editing this chapter in September 2016—the president of the Oklahoma Oil and Gas Association, Chad Warmington, noted: “We are concerned about it because we live here, but we don’t want to have a knee-jerk reaction and have a bunch of regulation put on us that is not effective in minimizing the risk of seismic activity” (quoted in Howard, 2015). Because of Warmington’s working alliances, one can well imagine that he would not readily embrace any prospective policy that suggested a need to overhaul his Industry’s practices. Similarly, Wattles and Egan, with Kuo (2016) blogging via CNN Money, noted in reporting on the 5.6 magnitude earthquake that hit Oklahoma in early September 2016, the American Petroleum Institute has “in the past tried to cast doubt on the link between fracking and large seismic activity” but the Institute did not respond to a request for comment in light of this most recent earthquake. Perhaps, they were marshalling their own data to forestall a seismic shift of their own core beliefs concerning the environment and fracking.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out what I am calling the Critical Concepts Framework, which was developed to help bound my research. This framework has six primary concepts, namely, (1) bounded rationality, (2) fragmentation, (3) advocacy partnerships, (4) time, (5) opportunities for change, and (6) framing. These concepts synthesize what I see as the central ideas within
three classic policy-process models, which I have discussed herein as well. I used the Critical Concepts Framework to guide my thinking about what I learned from interviews with Washington, DC workers concerning their school library and policy-making experiences. In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I discuss my Method of Inquiry for conducting this phenomenological research.
Chapter Four--Method of Inquiry

Introduction

This chapter focuses on my method of inquiry in trying to understand first, the school library experiences of individuals who work on policy in Washington, DC, and second, the policy process itself from the point of view of these workers. We know that historically, school libraries have had an uneven presence in federal educational policy, such as within ESEA/NCLB legislation. On December 10, 2015, a new version of this legislation, now called the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), was signed into law. This reauthorization does contain several provisions that could benefit school libraries and the professional development of librarians. However, it will take some time--perhaps as long as two years (Petrilli, Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 12/17/2015)--before the regulations associated with the new law and the necessary appropriations get fully sorted out enough to see how the ESSA in practice will play out, and whether it will mark any increase in terms of actual spending for libraries.

Several factors likely account for the uneven policy presence of school libraries in the ESEA legislation during the last decade or so, including: the stereotyped, misunderstood images and the prevalent love ‘em or hate ‘em attitudes about libraries and librarians; questions about the need for school libraries given today’s array of technology; perceptions of “more bang for the buck” (Foerster, 2003/2004) through investments in other types of school programs and resources; and insufficient clarification that “school libraries” actually constitute an issue warranting the attention of policy makers.

But the marginally increased presence of school libraries in the new ESSA legislation notwithstanding, policy that addresses the need for the professional development of librarians and resource funding for libraries has been sorely needed. This need is particularly apparent in
the light of prior research indicating that school librarians across the country are ill-equipped to work with their students who have disabilities (Allen, 2008; Allen & Hughes-Hassell, 2010; Buican & Foerster, 2016; Cox & Lynch, 2006; Duelly, 2000; Foerster, 2009; ISL, 2013; ISL Forum 1, 2015; ISL Forum 2, 2016; Small, Franklin Hill, Myhill & Link, 2011; Small & Snyder, 2009; Small, Snyder & Parker, 2009;), and this group of students has a fairly prominent place in the newly reauthorized ESEA/(now ESSA) legislation. Political process theory suggests that stakeholder input and advocacy is a critical element in helping to move policy forward. This meshes well with disability studies, which “privileges the knowledge derived from the lived experience of people with disabilities” (Connor, Gabel, Gallagher & Morton, 2008, p. 448) and calls for the inclusion of those with disabilities in policy formation “to ensure that policy addresses real needs and contributes to the improvement of social and material conditions of the stakeholders” (Heyer, 2007, pp. 282-283).

The Critical Concepts of the political process, shown in the conceptual framework I used throughout my research (see Chapter 3), indicated that the time was right for advancing policy change; and in addition, that framing and limits on attention likely play a pivotal role in whether school libraries are anywhere on the radar of decision makers. While we don’t know exactly what accounts for the disconnect between the need for policy concerning school libraries, and the general lack thereof, we also don’t know what individuals who work in the policy arena--some of whom have disabilities themselves or who advocate for disabled persons--think about school libraries. There are many organizations in Washington, DC, that influence how education policy takes shape, and some of these organizations could be potential advocacy partners in policy that concerns school libraries (and vice-versa: library professionals could join in advocating for disabled individuals). Aside from the actual decision-makers themselves (e.g., the members of
Congress and cabinet officials), policy workers include special interest and lobbying groups--some of which pertain specifically to advocacy for disabled persons; think tanks; the media, including those who write education-related blogs; academic and independent researchers; departments and agencies within the federal government itself; and the staff of members of Congress and the Executive Branch. These workers may have roles on various rungs of the policy-forming ladder, such as initial idea generation and formulation, research and development, data analysis, preparing comments on proposed and existing legislation, coalition building, garnering resources in support of a particular position, and briefing or making recommendations directly to decision makers. The input of these policy workers is key to both helping the library profession gain insights that may improve its service to students with disabilities, and to helping create and move much-needed school-library policy forward.

In this chapter I will explain how I conducted a phenomenological study to gain understanding of the school library experiences of people with and without disabilities in the Capitol Hill area who work in policy-making positions. There were some parallel policy process issues relating to school libraries that I sought elucidation of as well. This additional avenue of inquiry can also be shaped as phenomenological research. When Beckmann and Hall discuss their research in Washington, DC, they indicate that those who want to delve into the realm of political science should “go and (effectively) interview those who work there” (p. 196 in Mosley, 2013). My policy process issues are very much in line with this idea of ‘going straight to the source.’ They connect to my core research questions concerning library experiences in that they provide potential for “Ah, now I see” findings, and for helping to explain the deficient presence of school libraries in federal education policy.

In the following sections of the present chapter I will discuss:
• why I chose a phenomenological research approach as the main core of my study;
• the steps I took in selecting, gaining access to, and getting consent from participants;
• the types of questions I asked in semi-structured interviews;
• the risks, which were minimal, to the participants;
• my procedure for analyzing the interview data that I collected; and
• the limits to and delimits of my research.

Phenomenological Research

In the first chapter of Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work, Stake indicates that his book is a treatise of methods for focusing on “how things work in certain contexts, at certain times, and with certain people” (2010, p. 14). Phenomenology does that particularly well: It “seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people” (Patton, 2002, p. 482). Such a study can provide a “deep understanding” of an experience (Creswell, 2007, p. 62), using the various voices of the “persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). On the other hand, Crotty (1998/2015) bemoans the fact that North American researchers have switched the traditional experiential focus from self to others, and he complains that this aberration misses the point of phenomenological study as a “first-person exercise” (p. 84). Actually my study embraced both: I was trying to understand the library and policy-making experiences of my DC participants (the others), even while I (the self) was experiencing living and researching in the environment and time in which the ESEA policy that affected my prior work as a school librarian was progressing towards change.

Vagle (2014) says that phenomenology “is not a singular, unified philosophy and methodology” (p. 14), nor is there a “single, crystal clear, and unified way to craft
phenomenological research” (p. 52). This sentiment is echoed by Patton (2002) in his discussion of the researchers who have used phenomenology under various labels (e.g., transcendental, existential, hermeneutic, empirical, and social). Certainly phenomenology has come to mean various things in the literature and even across different continents. Van Manen (1990) discusses the philosophical bases for descriptive versus interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology, and assigns the former to Husserl and the latter to Heidegger, although he himself ends up by combining the two in his approach: “Sometimes the term ‘phenomenology’ is used when the descriptive function is emphasized, ‘hermeneutics’ when the emphasis is on interpretation. Often the terms are employed interchangeably” (p. 26). Patton further admits that there is much confusion as to whether phenomenology is actually a philosophy, a method, and/or a means of analysis (Patton, 2002, pp. 484-487). While this should not be taken to mean that anything goes, Vagle (2014) indicates that there is a good deal of freedom in how one can shape his or her research in this area, and that synthesizing the approaches of the past into a new form that works now is acceptable practice.

Van Manen (1990) points out that each phenomenological study should be developed in a way that is “uniquely suited to [the] particular project and [the] individual researcher” (p. 163). The research involves, throughout, a way of thinking and reflecting that has become known as the phenomenological attitude (Sokolowski, 2000/2008; van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2014). This is an attitude of questioning, wonder, and openness (van Manen, 1990). It is seeing the research issue and life generally in a new light, as “the opportunity for a fresh start, a new beginning, not being hampered by voices of the past that tell us the way things are or the voices of the present that direct our thinking” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Husserl called for the practice of epoché or “the freedom from suppositions” (Husserl, n.d., cited in Moustakas), and this
applies concerning the revelations that participants share in the course of their interviews and the possible meanings that ensue. Van Manen (1990) describes this openness as being “presuppositionless” (p. 29). The researcher is called upon to *bracket* his or her prior ideas and “internal suppositions . . . history, knowledge, culture, experience, value or academic reflections” (from Gearing, 2004, in Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 84) or to set them aside as one would partition off or group parts of a mathematical formula (van Manen, 1990; van Manen, 2014, taken from Husserl).

Husserl (1931/2012) also used the word “disconnecting” (pp. 57-58) for this process, which I prefer, because it conjures up an easily applied modern visual: My Keurig® coffeemaker gets disconnected when I am not using it. Of course it is always still there; it just isn’t plugged in and operating at every moment. This disconnecting process is controversial. Those researchers who are more closely aligned to Heidegger would argue that it cannot really be done because one cannot separate out one’s philosophical, cultural, and social underpinnings from the way one views the world or the worlds described by others (Tufford & Newman, 2010): Using my Keurig analogy, I cannot give up coffee for long, after all. Nor is it necessary to actually do so. Crotty (1998/2015) explains that our culture is so much a part of us that even the language used in describing an experience is imbued with the symbols and trappings of our heritage. What matters instead is that we set this background baggage aside and seek its “reinterpretation--as new meaning, or fuller meaning, or renewed meaning” (p. 82) in the experience. [In my Keurig example, that might mean I try flavored coffee instead of my typical basic black for breakfast.] But phenomenologists also do not quite agree about *when* during the research one needs to be most concerned with bracketing or disconnecting. Tufford and Newman (2010) conceptualized it as occurring in each phase,
from the very first inklings of the possible research, through the development of the research questions, in the data collection and analysis phases, and also in the writing thereafter. The data in my study were derived via semi-structured interviews with an array of individuals who work in the Washington, DC, policy arena, some of whom have disabilities themselves or who have close family members with a disability, and all of whom could speak of their “library” experience. Because I came to this project as a librarian in a school for students with disabilities, and my interviewees were detailing their library experiences--for better or for worse--disconnecting, to a degree, on my part was necessary during the interviews. This is discussed in a somewhat different light in the Phenomenological Interpretations section that follows shortly (and in my Findings chapter). And furthermore, this disconnecting also plays into my position as a researcher, which is discussed under “limitations” later in this chapter.

Interviewing is a key means of collecting data in the phenomenological approach. After the interviews, the researcher reduces what he or she has heard, breaking the interview transcripts down into components or themes--or “meaning units” (van Manen, 1990, p.78)--and then writing a description that clarifies the essence of the experience based on the themes that have emerged. (The reduction/analysis process is discussed in more detail a bit later herein.) Van Manen (1990) emphasizes the importance of effective writing in these descriptions. They should not only offer a possible interpretation of what has occurred, they should evoke in the reader a response as well. He cites Buytendijk (no source other than “one of his lectures”) as the originator of the idea that a truly clear description of the interviewee’s experience allows the reader to give the “phenomenological nod” (p. 27). That is, in carefully and thoughtfully writing out the experiential data, the readers should then be able to agree that yes, we have lived that
experience too, and/or we can certainly see how it could be so lived when given the circumstances that were presented.

Seidman describes the use of “a phenomenological approach to in-depth interviewing” (2006, p. ix), suggesting that researchers ask open-ended questions. Those involved with developing political process theory have used interviews extensively as their primary method of research. Mosley (2013) tells us: “Interviews are an important, and often essential tool for making sense of political phenomena. Interviews allow scholars to interact directly with the individuals, or some of the individuals, who populate our theoretical models” (p. 2). And although Mosley (2013) also explains that political scientists tend to be either positivist or interpretivist, that doesn’t preclude a phenomenological aspect to their work. In phenomenology as in other qualitative research, unless we interpret what we hear and see from our interviews and observation, we cannot construct meaning from these endeavors. Stake (2010) says that the meanings we assign in our qualitative descriptions help us to determine how things work, and “the researcher ultimately comes to put forward a personal interpretation, an assertion” (p. 55) of what is going on. Van Manen (1990) declares that the task of phenomenological research and writing is “to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (p. 40, emphasis in original).

Thus interviews are used to explore what an experience was like and what it might mean: “We are interested in the particular experiences [because] they allow us to become ‘in-formed,’ shaped or enriched” (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). Creswell (2007) points out that “knowing some common experiences can be valuable” for others, including, “teachers” and “policymakers” (p. 62). On the other hand, Crotty (1998/2015), as mentioned, is dubious about the value of the ‘North American’ version of phenomenology. He fears that in the process of describing
someone else’s experience, first, the real relationship between the person experiencing the phenomenon and the object that is the phenomenon, gets obscured. And second, when disconnecting their own presuppositions about someone else’s experience, the researcher may lose his or her critical edge and ability to question. This latter shortcoming is the most dire because, per Crotty (1998/2015):

> When the critical spirit is lost, there is at best a failure to capture new or fuller meanings or a loss of opportunities to renew the understandings that already possess us. At worst, it means that oppression, exploitation and unfreedom [sic] are permitted to persist without question (p. 85).

And yet, phenomenology is not generally viewed as a way to solve societal problems but rather, as a way to gain understanding of and meaning in our lives and the world around us. It is an important pedagogical tool that may incite additional action. Van Manen (1990) indicates that as new insights are gleaned, we then “may be able to act more thoughtfully and more tactfully” (p. 23) in our teaching or in our daily lives. He goes on to say that “The thoughtfulness phenomenology sponsors is more likely to lead to an indignation, concern, or commitment that . . . may prompt us to turn to [a] political agenda” (p. 154).

This is an especially important goal for me in interviewing at least some Washington, DC, workers who have disabilities or who are advocates for individuals with disabilities: The library profession is sorely lacking in the insights these experiences can reveal. Through my research, I sought to document the lived experiences in the school library of individuals with and without disabilities. Knowing the essential components—the essences of library—may lead to ways of practicing better librarianship. Such “action sensitive knowledge” (van Manen, 1990, p. 21) may lead down the road to crafting policy that is salient and informed by of a fuller spectrum
of advocacy partners and stakeholders who can help move it forward. And, the study overall may finally allow us to get a bit closer to an answer concerning the lingering what is it about libraries? question.

**Participant Selection, Access, and Consent**

The “universe of actors” (Bleich & Pekkannen in Mosley, 2013, p. 95) I intended to interview included policy workers with and without disabilities from various federal agencies and departments; from organizations that advocate for persons with disabilities; from think tanks; from lobbying and special interest groups; from media outlets; and from the staff of Congressional members. This was a pointedly purposive sample, “a population [selected] according to specific characteristics deemed relevant” (Lynch in Mosley, 2013, p. 41). These characteristics included having had a school library at some point in one’s elementary or high school education (or as it turned out, expressing experiences of other types of libraries as well) and being from an agency, organization, or department that:

- has a presence (office) in Washington, DC, or its vicinity, and that
- does work that involves education-policy generation, research, or commentary, particularly ESEA-related policy.

Table 3 shows the list of agencies, organizations, and departments I contacted to garner participant interviewees from. I was successful in gaining access to individuals from some of these--but for reasons of confidentiality, I will not indicate which of these those were.

Kingdon (1984/2011) explains that he strove for a variety of participants--“congressional as well as executive branch respondents; non-governmental as well as governmental people; [those] with various perspectives, self-interests, and attitudes” (p. 251). This seemed a reasonable objective in my research as well, because I wanted to know the lived experiences of
individuals with and without disabilities who work on policy, from a range of possible perspectives. In consultation with my Advisor and my contacts in the Disability Advocacy community, some convenience sampling—known contacts who are easily accessible (Lynch in Mosley, 2013)—also ensued. Furthermore, as I conducted the interviews, several participants suggested other individuals that I might want to talk to, as in snowball sampling (Beckmann & Hall in Mosley, 2013; Lynch in Mosley, 2013; Patton, 2002). I was able to gain access to a few participants via these suggestions.

Table 3--Prospective Research Participant Pool

- The Arc of the United States
- National Council on Disability
- Easter Seals
- TASH
- Autism Speaks
- Autism Society of America
- Media/Bloggers such as --Politico, Roll Call, CQ Weekly, Education Week
- Legislative staff
- Department of Education Staff
- Lobbyists -- American Library Association, independent consulting firms
- Think Tanks

In *How many qualitative interviews is enough?* (Baker & Edwards, 2012), a wide variety of scholars try to pin down the number of interviews needed to provide sufficient data for one’s research. “It depends” is the most frequent response, along with a litany of caveats that include resources, time, saturation, the nature of the questions asked and of the answers being given, the satisfaction threshold of one’s dissertation committee, career goals, and the discipline one is in. Seidman (2006) agrees, but adds that erring “on the side of more rather than less” (p. 55) is the better stance to take. Similarly, van Manen (1990) cautions that “interview material that is skimpy [may tempt] the researcher to indulge in over-interpretations, speculations, or an over-
reliance on personal opinions and personal experiences” (p. 67). On the other hand, van Manen (2014) also notes that too much data can be overwhelmingly frustrating for the researcher to deal with when in the analysis phase. I was aiming for ten to fifteen interviews and expected to move forward from there if needed, given my resource and time limits. I ended up having a total of 11 formal and informal conversations with individuals. In a moment, I will describe my various participants.

**Opening Doors**

In discussing case study procedures, Yin (2003) suggests that gaining a letter of support for the research from a Senator or Representative can help open doors when seeking interviews. I had thought that this type of letter would be especially useful in Washington, but although several of my participants offered to provide me with such an introduction, I never took advantage of their offer. Actually, during my first interview (with a Disability Advocate), I asked point-blank how such a letter would be viewed by my prospective participants. I was told that it shouldn’t be necessary and that agencies such as hers prided themselves on being of a grassroots nature; getting an introductory letter from a member of Congress might be viewed by those I was seeking information from as putting me on a different footing altogether and perhaps as though I was “trying too hard.” Therefore to find my participants, I searched the websites of the agencies I was interested in, and reached out via email to the person in each case that seemed a likely candidate as a contact. The email provided an introductory overview of my study; my Institutional Research Review Board (IRRB) consent form; and a request for an interview with an appropriate person (see Appendix B). If I did not hear back from someone at the agency in seven to ten days, I followed up with an additional email and in a very few cases, a phone call.
Although I had followed the suggestion of MacLean (in Mosley, 2013), in making available the Informed Consent document (see Appendix B) to the participants in advance of the interview date, this proved a double-edged sword. Yes it did allow time for the participants to glean some understanding of what I might be asking them in the interview, but it also seemed to color their perceptions in a way that was not always helpful. In a few cases, I think the form put off prospective interviewees enough so that they didn’t bother to respond to my initial request, because they thought my questions were going to be of a nature different than what I was intending. Perhaps the consent form overstated my case a bit, and because I wasn’t there to personally explain further my intent, some individuals declined to hear me out. One participant told me that she really didn’t understand what I would be asking, and that perhaps other potential respondents misunderstood my study as well. In the end, sending out the consent form in advance really did not save me much time, and doing so may have kept some individuals from participating in my research. I would not recommend taking this step in the future.

The consent form did however specify that I would be tape recording the interviews if the participant agreed to let me do so, and that the interviews would be conducted “on background.” On background interviewing (a common practice in journalism and political science research) is often viewed as a way to increase the comfort level of participants. The research team of Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) used this approach in interviewing their sample of more than 300 lobbyists and government officials. Essentially, on background allows the participant to be directly and fully quoted while remaining unidentifiable (Associated Press, 2015; Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; New York University, 2007; U.S. Department of State, n.d.). A mutually agreed-upon pseudonym is then used when quoting the material in the research report. I ended up
creating a designation for each of my interviewees, although several of them said they didn’t mind if I used their name.

As Baumgartner, Berry et al. (2009) point out, there is an important caveat associated with interviews done on background: The transcripts of such interviews must have all identifying information redacted if parts of them are to be appended to the research document or if the transcripts in their entirety are to be made available in a separate database for further research. This redaction will be done as appropriate in my case. The transcripts will be housed physically by me in a secure location; any digitized versions on a flash-drive will also be kept secure.

**Interview Procedures and Questions**

Phenomenological questioning is generally loosely structured, with questions used “as tools to draw out the participant to reflect on the experience and its implications in his or her life” (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p 109). Creswell suggests having an overarching question and several sub-questions that follow from the main question (2007). In my study, I used open-ended questioning. (Appendix B shows the question protocol I intended to use.) Leech (2013), who certainly is a seasoned interviewer and researcher, structured her interviews in just this manner, using generally similar questions to open the dialog with her interviewees, but trying “above all, to just let the conversations flow” (p. xiii). Van Manen (1990) cautions beginning researchers to stay absolutely grounded in their overarching question so as not to “get easily carried away with interviews that go everywhere and nowhere” (p. 67). Likewise, Seidman (2006) stresses that the researcher should keep the interviews focused, and limit personal interjections and responses. He makes an excellent point when noting that a 90-minute tape-recorded interview involves some four to six hours of transcription. I tried to bear this in mind--
also because I knew my respondents were very busy and I did not want to intrude for too long on
their time. I thus tried to limit my interviews to an hour, though the shortest ones (with
Disability Advocate #2 and with the DC Consultant) were about 30 minutes each, and the longest
ones (with Disability Advocates #1 and #3) were almost 90 minutes each.

My interviewing protocol was kept flexible (more on this a bit later), and because the
ESEA reauthorization was moving steadily along in Congress even as I interviewed in
Washington, I adjusted my questioning such that the topic of policy-making came to have a more
central place in my interviews.

Vagle suggests, only partly tongue-in-cheek, using a method of interviewing that he calls
“Learning from Others with the Help of Tina Fey” (2014, p. 81). Based on the rules for
improvisation of comedian/actress Fey, Vagle (see pp. 81-84) has commandeered the rules and
couched them instead as several reasonable interviewing tips, shown following:

(1) *Always agree and say ‘Yes’.* Whether we really agree with what the participant is
saying [and since we are practicing époche, and disconnecting our thoughts and other notions
anyway], we can agree “with what they are opening up--how they are helping us gain access to a
complex phenomenon” (emphasis added). We then can “do our part in opening up the lived, felt,
sensed nature(s) of the phenomenon” with an occasional nod or by saying ‘yes.’

(2) *Say ‘Yes, and . . .’* Although the participant is the key ‘producer’ of information
about the experience, the researcher plays an active role as well. The researcher’s goal is in
ensuring that the conversation continues so that it can later be analyzed and elucidated. This may
mean that we sometimes have to add something of our own to keep the conversation going.

(3) *Make statements.* Again, to keep the participant talking, it may be necessary to
“nudge” him or her along by re-phrasing something that was said as a *tell-me-more-about*
statement, in addition to asking prompting questions. [Note that although numbers 1 to 3 are useful, the caution of Seidman (2006) about not interjecting too much is also appropriate.]

(4) *There are no mistakes, only opportunities.* Unfortunately, interviews won’t always go as planned—especially for researchers like myself who are relatively new to this process. An interviewee may veer off into territory that is decidedly off topic. These instances should be considered opportunities to practice even more openness; to hone skills for other interviews; and to learn something unexpected.

I would add to this list:

(5) *Relax and enjoy the interviewing experience.* It may not go exactly as planned, but it is an interesting learning endeavor nonetheless.

**Data Sources**

As noted earlier, I collected my data in Washington, DC, having made three trips there during September, October, and November of 2015. I conducted six formal interviews while there, although two of these were of an impromptu nature. [That is, per the suggestion of my first interviewee, I went to these two particular offices and waited until someone there agreed to speak to me. The strategy worked, although I did find it rather unnerving and outside my comfort zone to show up unexpectedly. On the other hand, it did add the element of surprise to several of the interviews: Participants (Legislative Aide #2 and Disability Advocate #2) did not have time to think about what we would be talking about, so they had no pre-conceived ideas of what I might be asking or how they should/could be answering my questions.] A seventh formal interview was pre-arranged (with DC Consultant), but I conducted the interview in December long-distance from Wisconsin via phone.
In addition to these seven formal interviews, I had three on-the-fly conversations\(^{10}\) with individuals who were in Washington, each of whom was aware of the nature of my research. I also travelled on one day from DC to New York to meet with the Editor-at-Large of *Library Journal*, John Berry III, who had been one of my teachers at Dominican University. I would consider this an informal/informational interview: I wanted his perspective on the organizational structure of the ALA, and we expanded the conversation to include the status and role of librarianship in general, politics, and some personal issues. This conversation led to several important insights and also later led to several introductions that I was able to parlay into a short but useful conversation with the ALA Lobbyist.

Thus, my primary data evolved from a total of eight semi-structured interviews (seven formal and one informal/informational) and three informal conversations, all of which occurred between September and mid-December 2015. My participants included:

- A legislative aide from the office of my State Representative and an aide from the offices of each of my two State Senators. (Hereinafter, these participants are referred to as Legislative Aides #1, #2, and #3, or LA #1, LA #2, and LA #3 according to the order in which I had my conversation with them.)

- A policy worker from each of three different national disability advocacy organizations. (These participants are referred to hereinafter as Disability Advocates #1, #2, and #3, or DA #1, DA #2, and DA #3--again, according to the order in which our conversations occurred.)

\(^{10}\) Although at the time, these participants spoke to me quite willingly in what I would consider to be casual conversations in a public setting (two happened to be at receptions that followed specific programs held at Washington, DC, think tank offices, and one was a phone call made in the capacity of the participant’s job working as a Legislative Aide), I was not sure if or how I would use the information they gave me. After review of my other data, I found that I did indeed want to include parts of these conversations within my study. As a courtesy I emailed the parties and indicated to them that I would be paraphrasing our conversations. Two participants answered my emails with their encouragement; the third (the Legislative Aide) did not respond back.
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• The Vice President of Policy and Development from a Washington-based disability advocacy consulting firm. (This participant is referred to hereinafter as a DC Consultant, or DCC.)

• A policy analyst from a Washington, DC think tank. (This participant is referred to hereinafter as a Think Tank Policy Analyst, or TTPA.)

• The Editor-at-Large of the Library Journal, John Berry, III.

• A freelance journalist who writes for several publications, including Education Week (This participant is referred to hereinafter as a DC Journalist.) And,

• The Executive Director and key lobbyist from the ALA Washington office. (This participant is referred to hereinafter as ALA Lobbyist.)

I recorded four of the eight interviews, and thereafter transcribed the tapes myself. In addition to the actual recording, I used a Livescribe® smartpen to take notes during the interviews, and therefore I also had real-time digital field notes available from each conversation.11 The interviews that I did not record--either at the participant’s request or owing to the particular setting and circumstances of the interview--I documented via the real-time digital field notes mentioned above, as well as in several other ways. For example, I wrote expanded notes immediately after the conversations took place. In one case, after meeting with a legislative aide in the conference room of the particular Congressional member’s office suite, I went to the Capital Building, found an empty marble bench near the gift shop on the Senate side of the lobby, and sat there writing out my notes on a legal pad and emailing the legislative aide

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11 A Livescribe® smartpen such as the one I used has the capability of creating both a voice recording of a conversation and a digitized version of notes taken during the conversation. Both of these can be real-time if the smartpen is synced via wifi to another device, such as an iPad or iPhone; the recordings will be digitally available then and thereafter. Because I view the smartpen’s recording capabilities as somewhat surreptitious, I used the smartpen only for writing notes while interviewing--and a special Livescribe® journal is needed for this--but I did not use the audio recording option. Instead, when a participant agreed to be recorded in an in-person interview, I recorded the conversation on a separate digital recorder that we both could see at all times. For my long-distance interview, I got the participant’s verbal assent to be recorded before we began the formal interview.
with several follow-up questions and concerns. Later that same week, I sat in the lobby of the Hart Senate Office Building and wrote additional explanatory notes following my just-completed conversation with another legislative aide. In neither of these cases did I audio record our conversation. The first instance was such an impromptu meeting that I didn’t feel that requesting permission to record was appropriate. In the second instance the participant asked not to be recorded.

I also digitally recorded my own thoughts after several of the conversations I had. One of my conversations took place at the reception following the Future Tense, Will Libraries Outlive Books? event at a Washington think tank. I was introduced there to the Executive Director of the Washington office of the ALA. We spoke for ten minutes or so about my research and her lobbying role. As I walked to the Metro station shortly thereafter, I recorded via Voice Memo on my cell phone my take on the major points she had just told me. I later emailed the memo to myself. In another instance, after an impromptu but more formal interview at a disability advocacy organization that was located within walking distance of my hotel, I immediately returned to my hotel room, expanded my Livescribe® field notes from the interview, and audio-recorded my thoughts and comments about the conversation. This recording I then transcribed.

These transcriptions, expanded field notes, Livescribe® journal notes, and recordings constitute my primary research data. I have approximately 55 single-spaced pages of transcription notes, 175 smartpen journal pages, a half-dozen pages of notes handwritten on a legal pad, and a dozen or so email messages sent to myself, the participants, and/or my doctoral advisor that contain comments, questions, and/or descriptions relating to the conversations and interviews. Several participants also offered additional information they thought might help me. Such additional information was generally in the form of attachments sent to me by the
participants via email or suggestions from them for additional information I could find on a particular website. One participant gave me copies of several white-paper publications from her organization that she had gathered just prior to our interview.

In my Discussion, I also refer to the webcast/think tank event sponsored by Future Tense on November 12, 2015, entitled, *Will Libraries Outlive Books?* I attended this event and took notes while there, but also later audio-recorded the webcast (located via livestream at http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/77548793) and expanded my notes, because of the pertinent insights it provided about how those in the library profession in and around Washington, DC, see themselves. Several of the panelists from this webcast are quoted in the Findings chapter.

I also used the documentation and media information that followed on the heels of the various stages of the development and passage of the reauthorized version of ESEA, or the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was ongoing throughout this study, and which finally came to fruition just after I left Washington in November. I followed as closely as possible the progress of this legislation, and it was central to how several participants explained the policy process to me. My last interview took place just hours before the Senate floor vote on the ESEA/ESSA Conference Report, and the day before President Obama signed ESSA into law.

**Risk to Participants**

Human subject protections are rather hazy concerning qualitative research that only involves an interview methodology (Brooks in Mosley, 2013), but such qualitative research raises three possible areas of concern for the welfare of participants: (a) the maintenance of personal dignity; (b) the well-being of the participant, including physical, emotional, “social, political, or economic” (Brooks in Mosley, 2013, p. 57) factors, and as suggested by Oakes,
referred to in Brooks, concern about stigma and stereotyping; and (c) privacy. My research posed a very minimal risk to participants in each of these areas.

My participants were working adults, each of whom freely agreed to be interviewed. Before taping an interview I gained the consent of my participant to record; for those I did not record, it was clearly understood that I was--and they could see me--taking notes. The interviews were conducted at the participant’s work location, which positioned the participants (it is hoped) in their own comfort zone. None of questions I asked were of a nature to evoke emotional distress, nor did answering them place the participant in personal or job-related jeopardy. Furthermore, participants had the option of not answering a particular question and of opting out of the interview altogether. None choose to do so, and all of my participants were very gracious in answering my questions. The participants were interviewed on background, and no distinctly personal questions were asked. I had assumed that I would be using pseudonyms, such as “Adam from a government agency,” or “Sarah, from a lobbying organization” in writing the research findings, but I actually ended up referring to each participant by their general work designation and a number for the order in which I had interviewed them (e.g., Disability Advocate #1, Legislative Aide #1, etc.). I will redact all identifying information from the transcripts if I decide to release any of them for future research, and all the study data will be kept in a secure location.

With that said, and given today’s penchant for communication to occur via email on computer, tablet, or cell phone, concern for the privacy and ownership of the information transmitted in this way (Brooks in Mosley, 2013) was a present but minimal concern in my study. In particular, because the timing of my research happened to coincide with much political activity surrounding the 2016 U.S. Presidential race, a good deal of controversy had been
generated regarding the privacy and security of email communications on the national political scene and within various government departments. Because my study—though very innocuous—was being done in Washington, DC, I refrained from asking follow-up questions via email; I also kept correspondence via all my electronic devices in general terms, so as to not fall into danger of betraying the confidentiality of my interviewees or causing other concerns about privacy.

Analysis of Interviews

**Phenomenological interpretations.** Although doing the phenomenological research in our nation’s Capital with policy workers as participants as described herein was an interesting and exciting endeavor, it also generated dozens of pages of transcriptions and many additional pages of field notes. This is, as Patton (2002) indicates, a massive amount of data to sift through and a task that is more than just a little intimidating. In qualitative research there are a myriad of ways to approach the analysis of this mountain of data, and also a number of ways to interpret the potential meanings that exist therein. Patton’s imaginary master-teacher and sidekick, Holcolm, probably says it best: “The complete analysis isn’t” (emphasis in original, p. 431). With phenomenological analysis work, this seems a particularly apt sentiment to bear in mind. I will describe the process I used for my analysis in a moment, but first I provide here some historical traditions concerning this process.

As mentioned earlier, the phenomenological process involves openness, and this continues through the analysis of the interview material that is collected. According to Moustakas (1994), epoché is both the positioning of the researcher in an “unfettered stance” (p. 85) when hearing the experiences of his or her participants, and the first step in the process of interview analysis. It is, to use my previous analogy, approaching the analysis with the Kuerig® still unplugged.
Phenomenological reduction is the second step of the analysis. Here traditionally, the researcher reduces the information into parts, or “themes . . . the experiential structures that make up [the] experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79), and writes a description of it. Reduction should not be thought of as simple summary, however. Moustakas (1994) indicates that reduction is “describing in textual language just what one sees” and the task “requires that I look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe” (pp. 90, 91). This description will reveal the multiple qualities of the experience such that “each angle of perception adds something to one’s knowing of the horizons of a phenomenon” (Moustakas, pp. 90, 91).

I suggest that this reduction process and what it yields can be thought of by using another kitchen analogy, i.e., the reduction of a liquid in a recipe. In this protracted step in the cooking process, one has to slowly simmer and stir the particular liquid, letting its volume decrease. This gradual action, which requires careful vigilance by the chef, allows the liquid to thicken and become more flavorful. The kitchen is filled with the aroma of a richer and more concentrated version--the essence--of the liquid, which is what is left after the reduction. In phenomenological reduction, I as the researcher/cook, gathered together my transcript data, carefully read and re-read it, stirring it and allowing it to simmer in my mind as needed to get to its full flavor. I then wrote--and re-wrote and re-wrote about it--in order for the richness, the essence, of the school library and policy-making experiences to emerge in my description.

Here I will add a caveat that could also alternatively be stated in the following limitations section. As in reducing a liquid, it is up to me to decide when to start and stop the process. In proceeding with the analysis, my background and past cannot be fully disconnected or denied. What I was left with after this reduction/descriptive process, is my version of the lived experiences I was told about. And my version, though I hope is truly rich and well flavored, will
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not be the definitive description of what it means to experience either the school library or the policy-making process. Multiple researchers have pointed out the subjective nature of qualitative results (Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), and the lack of generalizability of such research (Brooks in Mosley, 2013; Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002; and others), and in phenomenological analysis this is no less true. Moustakas (1994) writes about the *horizontalization* of the process, because “horizons are unlimited [and] though we may reach a stopping point and discontinue our perception of something, the possibility for discovery is unlimited” (p. 95). Van Manen (1990) says that “A phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially *richer* or *deeper* description” (p. 31). It is my obligation as the researcher to offer up my best description of the experiences my policy-worker participants lived in their school libraries and in their careers as policy workers; it is my readers’ prerogative to embrace those descriptions or to find other ways of viewing them.

There is something to be gained from a phenomenological study such as mine, over and above a rich description of the experience of being in the library and of doing policy work, and the possible understandings resulting from that. Van Manen (1990) indicates that this type of research is also a call to action. If we can better see the lived experience of others, we may also see the difference between what is and what could be. Phenomenological writing as the final step in the analysis process should evoke a sense of need for change—in my case, for the way we go about doing things in the library world—personally, professionally, and politically. It is thus hoped that in the analysis and writing up of my findings, I will induce a sense of need for changing how librarians work in the school library with their students who have disabilities, and for policy that will help librarians effect this change.
Analysis process. Qualitative researchers are given a good deal of latitude in conducting their studies, and many different approaches constitute acceptable ways of presenting and reporting the results (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Stake (2010) says that “there is no one way of qualitative thinking” (p. 31), and he suggests that in determining how things work, the researcher will necessarily be involved with taking things apart (analysis) and putting things together (synthesis) (see p. 133). Phenomenologists van Manen (1990) and Vagel (2014) indicate that the researcher should be open throughout his or her study, allowing for unforeseen avenues to be explored, and that such openness should necessarily include one’s disposition in the analysis phase. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) note: “When you reach this point in the research process, it is essential to keep an open mind, remembering that qualitative research is all about discovery” (p. 188). And Patton’s wise sidekick, Halcolm, rightfully observes that “Analysis brings moments of terror that nothing sensible will emerge and times of exhilaration from the certainty of having discovered ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight-lifting volumes of material” (2001, p. 431).

In doing the data analysis, researchers are cautioned to be “dependable and accurate” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 189), and so in laying out how I processed the information I collected, I would hope that the reader will agree that indeed, I was that--even though they may see other possible interpretations of the findings than those that I will point out. In the following section, I detail how I reviewed, organized, and clustered my data. Thereafter, in Chapter 5, I will present my findings.

Review. Although time-consuming and labor-intensive (it took me upwards of eight hours to transcribe each audio-recorded interview), I agree with Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), Patton (2001), and Seidman (2006) that there really is no substitute for doing one’s own
transcribing if you want to get to know your interview data as intimately as possible. In completing this task, you can’t help but relive the interview over and over again, and as the novelty of the experience begins to wear off through countless playbacks, it becomes easier to absorb and digest what the participant was saying. Thus transcribing the interviews was for me an essential way of reviewing and getting to know—in-depth—the data.

I also felt that doing the transcriptions myself was a personal practical matter. Aside from being far less costly than paying a service to complete this task, it was a way for me to decompress and reflect quietly in my hotel room for a while, after the rather harrowing experience of circumnavigating Washington to get to and from the interview locale, as well as of talking in-depth for 60+ minutes with a Washington policy-maker. I was exhausted after the interviews. Each participant was graciously forthcoming with me during our conversation, but such intensive back-and-forth discussion, along with the need to think quickly about what I should ask next based on what they had just been telling me, is really hard work. Vagle (2014) points out that in phenomenology “it is not necessary, nor even desirable to ask the same questions in the same way. The goal is to find out as much as you can about the phenomenon from each particular participant” (p. 79). I almost completely abandoned my interview protocol after the second interview, because I knew the questions it contained well enough and I wanted the conversations to flow in the direction the participant was willing to lead me towards. My participants were variable enough in background and disposition that I did indeed get different types of information from each of them—though they did tend to obliquely corroborate each other. Each interview was a uniquely affecting experience for me, physically and intellectually. I thus needed time to process and sift through the conversation before I could deal with the next
interview. Transcribing offered me that breather. (It also made painfully clear some of my interviewing mistakes, which I then was able to try to rectify on the next go-round.)

After returning from Washington and after conducting my last interview in mid-December, I separated myself from the data for nearly a month due to the Christmas holidays and other family-living obligations. I saw this separation as a good thing, because it allowed me time to clear my head and to return to the data with fresh eyes. In order to begin the actual process of analysis I then made dual copies of my journal and expanded field notes and of the transcripts. One set of the materials I squirreled away for safekeeping, and the other I used as my working copy. In phenomenological analysis, it is necessary to read and re-read the material several times over to get a sense of what exactly is going on (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Van Manen, 1990; 2014). I used my working copies to do these various read-throughs. For each individual participant, I read all of the notes and transcripts through at one sitting. While doing so, I used small post-it notes (color-coded for that particular individual) to jot down and mark any information from a particular page that seemed to jump out at me. I finished by writing on larger post-it notes a brief summary of what had struck me about the interview as a whole, and putting that summary on the front page of the transcript or set of notes.

Organizing. My next step was to code or parse the data according to the major ideas that seemed to run through the conversations. Phenomenological researchers are urged to designate categories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016), themes (Van Manen, 1990 and 2014), tentative manifestations (Vagle, 2014), patterns of meaning (Dahlberg, n.d. in Vagle, 2014), meaning units (Giorgi, n.d. in Vagle, 2014; and suggested by Moustakas, 1994, in Rudestam & Newton, 2007), textual-structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994, in Rudestram & Newton, 2007; and in
Patton, 2001), or meaningful clusters (Patton, 2001)--I will be using the term clusters herein--that emerge from within their interview materials. I had already determined that I would be using a conceptual framework to guide my thinking about the interviews. This framework, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, is associated with political process theory. Here, a further explanation about the application of the framework in doing my study and in the analysis of my findings is perhaps necessary.

**An aside about my conceptual framework.** Although Rudestam and Newton (2007) suggest that “creative meaning making and theory building [is] the hallmark of all good qualitative research” (p. 181), and Maxwell (1996) admonishes that “every research design needs some theory of the phenomenon you are studying [in order] to guide the other design decisions you make” (emphasis in original, p. 36), there is a great deal of concern raised about the role of theory in phenomenological research. Vagle (2014) explains at length the controversy that swirls around theory for Heideggerian or Husserlian phenomenologists (pp. 73-75). He explains that on the one hand, those in the Husserl school would eschew theory because it seemingly contradicts the phenomenological bracketing--or the term I prefer, disconnecting--that the researcher is asked to do throughout the study. Seidman (2006), in discussing how to analyze and interpret interviews, puts it another way: “Theory cannot and should not be imposed on the words but must emanate from them”; he is opposed to “taking theoretical frameworks developed in other contexts and force-fitting the words of the participants into matrices developed from those theories” (p. 37).

And yet Vagle also points out that phenomenologists following Heidegger recognize that not everything we know can be set aside; that indeed “it is important to bring all helpful texts to bear on one’s interpretive understandings of the phenomenon under investigation” (2014, p. 74).
Van Manen (1990) recognized that we sometimes suffer from too much knowledge about a subject, and he questioned whether it is possible to set aside all that we know, because our “presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections” (p. 47). He went on to say that being upfront with such forethoughts is preferable: “It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” (ibid.). And Seidman (2006) admits:

It may be naïve for us to argue that researchers can be theory free. Everyone has theories. They are the explanations people develop to help them make connections among events. . . Interviewers walk into interviews with theories about human behavior, teaching and learning, the organization of schools, and the way societies work. Some of the theories are informed and supported by others, and some are idiosyncratic. Others arise from readings interviewers have done in and about the subject of their inquiry (p. 37).

Seidman recognizes that the reading one has done in the proposal stage of a study cannot simply be discounted when the research is being conducted, and that indeed,

It is crucial to read enough to be thoughtful and intelligent about the context and history of the topic [and] to conduct interviews with the context in mind, while being genuinely open to what the participants are saying. [No] prior reading is likely to match the individual stories of participants’ experience (p. 38).

In light of these views that are at such variance with one another, what then should be the proper application in my analysis of the conceptual framework that I culled from political process literature? Perhaps it is also important to ask, What role did the framework play in my
interviews? How did or how should the six concepts bound my thinking? On the one side there is the need for fully disconnecting from preconceived ideas and the need to be open to all the insights my participants might share. On the other side, there was the necessity of approaching my pool of participants--each of whom were entrenched in the very singular context of the Washington, DC, legislative field--with some semblance of background knowledge of and respect for what they do and what they might be up against. It is because I had ferreted out this framework from the literature and because I knew as much as I did about ESEA and the SKILLs Act, that I was able to walk into the various offices and conference rooms of my participants and converse with them as one who was knowledgeable but also as one who knew what I didn’t know--and knew that my interviewees could help me learn more. I’d like to believe that both I and my participants readily saw that reality. Because I had some concepts in mind to draw from and to seek elucidation about, I could ask better questions. And in conducting my interviews, there were “Ah hah!” moments for me--but I also think that there were some of those moments for my participants. I am hopeful that my findings, which will be discussed shortly, will bear this out. Finally, I take from Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) the following permissions and parameters:

Your assumptions are usually articulated in your conceptual framework. Theories and prior research inform this framework, offering potential categories [during analysis]. At the same time, the conceptual framework remains flexible and open to the unexpected, allowing the analytic direction of the study to emerge (p.192).

Clustering. Thus, the six Critical Concepts of my conceptual framework are also the categories or clusters of information that I was seeking to learn and understand more about. I
read through each set of notes and transcripts, and highlighted the text in accordance with the concepts. I also ultimately added the additional Big Ideas category, which included those things my participants had said that struck me as noteworthy, but which didn’t necessarily fit into any of the six original concept clusters. I used a different color highlighting pen for each of the six concepts as shown in the box, plus red for the Big Ideas. I also found that there was some overlap in the clusters: A participant might say something that could be assigned to more than one Critical Concept; these bits of conversation were therefore coded with more than one color.

When I finished coding the data by concept and color, I created a full-color version of the pertinent transcript portions--35 pages in all--in an enlarged font. This version I cut into paper strips by color and manually merged them into the Critical Concept groups. For example, all the transcript-strips related to Concept # 4, Policy Change Takes Time--yellow in color--were put into one pile; all the strips related to Concept #3, Advocacy Partnerships--orange in color--went into another pile, and so on. I then created a “Concept Wall” (similar to the Word Walls I had often used in my teaching) that showed each color-coded Critical Concept and the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Codes for Critical Concept Clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bounded rationality purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fragmentation pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advocacy partnerships orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Time yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opportunities for change green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Framing blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big ideas red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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participant comments that belonged with it. Figure 4 shows first, how this looked as a whole (top portion), and second, how this looked for the individual concept of Policy Change Takes Time (bottom portion).
Study Limitations

Whether one is doing phenomenological research or any other kind that involves interviewing, there are some issues that need to be considered. First, for “new” researchers such as myself, there is a learning curve that necessarily exists. This meant that there was some unevenness to my interviews, with my skills vastly improving as I conducted more interviews.

In addition, I readily admit that the context of my interviews, i.e., the U.S. Capital, holds me in awe. Beckmann and Hall (in Mosley, 2013) indicate that this is not an uncommon reaction and that “academics can find themselves a bit bedazzled when interviewing Beltway insiders inside the Beltway” (p. 197). My level of comfort in the federal arena is certainly not what it would be if I were doing research on my home turf. Add to this the warning of Gallagher (2013) that arranging for and conducting interviews with those one views as “elites” can be “humiliating” (p. 193 in Mosley, 2013). Thus the issue of reactivity, wherein the researcher’s presence influences the participant (Maxwell, 1996), was almost entirely reversed in my case. That is, I believe that overall I was more intimidated by my participants than vice-versa.

Furthermore, it was interesting to see how the possible dynamics involving the positioning of me as the researcher played themselves out when I was in Washington. On the one hand, MacLean (2013, in Mosley) suggests that political scientists tend to be of two sorts: those who play God and hold themselves aloof when doing research, and those who ‘go native’ and immerse themselves completely in the world of their participants. I think (as I touch upon in the Context section of Chapter 5) that I began to blend into the DC environment fairly well as my time there increased. On the other hand, Seidman offers a list of power barriers including race, ethnicity, gender, age, class status, and language, any of which may possibly arise and affect the interview process. These differences between myself and my participants did exist to some extent, and in
some cases more than others, but I believe that my outsider status in DC was a constant reminder to me that in the policy-making arena, those I interviewed had more expertise in this realm than I. I entered the arena hopeful that my position as a doctoral candidate (far down in the academic food chain) and as a political neophyte would help to “smooth entrée into a community and enhance the quality of the interviews” (Horowitz, 1986, and Tamale, 1996, as cited by MacLean in Mosley). I think that overall, things went fairly smoothly. And it bears mentioning again: my participants were very obliging to me in sharing information and helping me to understand their experiences. I am truly grateful to each of them for that.

There is another type of concern that arises in interview research, particularly when doing phenomenological work. As discussed previously, bracketing or disconnecting one’s preconceived notions is a key process in this type of research. However there are varying views concerning this idea, views that run the gamut from, one-simply-must-do-it, to it-simply-cannot-be-done. I fall somewhere in the mid-line of this continuum: I came to this research project having worked for ten years as a librarian in a school for students with cognitive and other disabilities. My past research had involved visiting many libraries in my district, and I have talked to many school librarians. While I cannot say that I have seen it all by any means, I can say that I have seen a lot. I cannot deny or fully ignore my past--just as I cannot leave my coffee maker disconnected indefinitely without coming back to it again. I fully recognized that what I knew as a practitioner, researcher, and doctoral student at the start of this study was not nearly all that there was or is to know. I tried to remain open throughout this experience as a researcher myself in Washington, even while I was letting the experiences of my interviewees add deeper color and flavor to my view of the school library and policy worlds.
Summary

In sum, I conducted a phenomenological study that involved interviewing individuals with and without disabilities who work in the Washington, DC, policy-development arena. This research offered the opportunity for hearing, thinking, and learning about how those involved with policy making have experienced “library” and how they lived and worked with the development of federal education policy. By conducting this research, I hoped to come to a more complete understanding as to how school libraries can more effectively support the learning of students of all abilities, and to determine ways to advance education policy that can help make this happen. In the following chapter, I will present the Findings from the interviews I conducted.
Chapter Five--Findings and Discussion

Overview

In the fall of 2015, I traveled to Washington, DC, to try to discover through individual interviews more about the library experiences of people who are involved in the policy-making process. I wanted to know how or if those experiences are connected in some way to the placement of school libraries within federal education policy. I also wanted to know what might be learned that could bolster our understanding of better library practice, especially for students with disabilities; and, of advancing better policy affecting school libraries. Specifically, I was seeking the answers to the following research questions: (1) What have been the experiences in school libraries of individuals with and without disabilities who work in policy-related positions in Washington, DC? (2) How can what is learned about these experiences shape improvements to the practice of school librarians? (3) How can what is learned from these conversations with policy makers increase our understanding of the various factors involved in the policy-making process? And (4) How then can we in the library profession work to advance policy that ensures an effective role for school libraries in supporting the education of all children, including those with disabilities? All of these questions were actually subsumed under the overarching question of: What is it about libraries that seems to place them in the underdog position in federal education policy?

In this chapter, I will present my findings, that is, the data from my Washington interviews. Peppered throughout short quotes from my participants are boxes containing larger chunks of dialog from my various conversations. In addition, for each Findings cluster, I present the data as a Word Cloud. These clouds offer a visual representation of the frequency that a particular word or phrase was spoken by the participants, with words or phrases that are the most prominent in the visual being the most frequently mentioned. In creating such clouds, it is
necessary to use one’s own discretion in giving proper weight to terms. That is, when necessary I corrected grammar or added a clarifying word or term to complete a phrase that was clear within the interview itself but which could not otherwise stand-alone outside that conversation. The Word Clouds thus, to an extent, reflect my interpretation of the relative importance of various terms used by my participants during our conversations. Sometimes, the fine print of the cloud is as telling--or more so--than the words that stand out most prominently. I leave the interpretation of each cloud to my readers.

This chapter also contains discussion of the findings. Although I could have partitioned my comments and interpretations off into another chapter, I felt it more useful to present this discussion here, as the meanings of my findings began to unfold for me. (Further implications and suggestions for additional research then comprise Chapter 6.) Interspersing such discussion herein makes for a very long chapter, so it is hoped that my sub-headings will help guide the reader through the results. Before presenting these interview findings, I first offer some thoughts about Washington, DC, as a context for completing my study.

Context

In describing one of the reasons why researchers may choose to conduct a qualitative study, Maxwell (1996) suggests that context plays a key role, and the goal may be to better “understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur” (p. 19). This is particularly apt to my study, because it would be difficult to
separate the policy-making process at the federal level from the milieu of the Nation’s Capital. It is indeed a singular place to do research. As I have previously mentioned, Beckmann and Hall (2013) note that even accomplished researchers who are doing interview work in Washington may become “bedazzled” (p. 197) by the location. I agree: Washington, DC, is awesome. It is a thrumming amalgam of power, politics, and personalities. It is a crosswalk of incongruity, at once significant, massive, modern, formal, historic, ornate, impersonal, diverse, inspiring, energetic, complicated, brash, trendy, ostentatious, and truly, truly overwhelming.

On days when I wasn’t interviewing, arranging for interviews--or transcribing them, I got to know the City, its major attractions, and its environs enough to become fairly comfortable with the place. I visited the Washington Monument on a windy but crystal clear day; took in the Jefferson Memorial and the National Gallery on days when the emptiness was almost eerie; wandered through the National Zoo during the last two hours prior to its November closing time (which by the way, is not prime-time for viewing the animals); circumnavigated the crowds of locals on the narrow streets of Georgetown on a cool, rainy Saturday; photographed the fall growth at the Botanic Gardens outside the Rayburn House Office Building; took the Capitol tour and then used my passes to sit and watch the proceedings in both the House and Senate galleries on different days; watched the Mallards laze away the afternoon in the waters of the Capitol Reflecting Pool; was mesmerized by the beauty of the Library of Congress building; and tasted the ethnic offerings from several of the food-trucks that line designated streets in downtown DC. I wasn’t a tourist per se, because I also sipped coffee while people-watching on a bench in Union Station; worshipped at the National Cathedral; used the Metro train and buses to look for early Christmas gifts in the shopping venues of Crystal City, Friendship Heights, and the Westfield Montgomery Mall on the outskirts of Bethesda; traipsed through the empty hallways that
interconnect the three Senate office buildings and their many hearing rooms; spent a good deal of time on K Street, learning the building locations, traveling amongst the workers in the morning and evening rush hours, eating lunch in the International Square food court with its spaceship-shaped fountain (and very clean public restrooms); wrote field notes while sitting in University Yard on the George Washington University campus; attended programs at the Fordham Institute and the New America think tanks; and learned to use the Metro fare-card machines. Apparently I began to blend in so well that I was asked on a few occasions by other out-of-towners if I lived in Washington, DC, and if I could help them figure out how to get to their destination on the Metro system.

The findings of my interviews cannot be relayed without due deference to the place where I did the research. Phenomenology calls for the practice of epoché or the suspension of judgment throughout, but research done on and around Capitol Hill is necessarily affected by this remarkable locale. Washington, DC, added such a measure of substance to my study that it cannot be separated out. It is not just an added flavor but rather an ingredient integral to the recipe: It is the flour in the batter that cannot be tasted, but which forms the essential structure of the finished cake.

Cluster Order

With that said, I offer the Findings from my interviews of Washington policy makers. The material presented is divided into sections according to clusters of the Critical Concepts of my conceptual framework (detailed in Chapter 3). Near the beginning of each Concept Cluster you can see the Word Cloud for that section. Note that the Concept Clusters as presented here are not in the order that they appear in the conceptual framework. This is because after conducting the interviews and reading through the transcripts, there seemed to be a more natural
Figure 6 -- My Washington, DC, Wanderings, Fall 2015

Botanic Gardens, Rayburn House Office

Union

Washington

George Washington University

National Cathedral

Capitol Reflecting Pool

Library of Congress

International Square
order to the way the findings evolved out of the conversations I had. Therefore I am presenting the Findings in the following sequence:

- Framing
- Policy change takes time
- Opportunities for change do occur
- Advocacy partnerships
- Fragmentation
- Bounded rationality

These are followed by a catch-all category I call Big ideas. This cluster is not in the conceptual framework, but it contains some ideas that warrant emphasis.

**Findings**

**Framing.** Although Framing constitutes the sixth of the Critical Concepts in my original Conceptual Framework, after completing my interviews and looking at the transcript data, I began to see that the findings for this concept should actually take front and center stage: These findings provide a platform from which to view the question that overarches this study about libraries, as well as a good deal of information on the library experiences of individuals who work in the DC policy-making arena. As explained in detail in Chapter 3, Framing is the way that people define or view an issue. It involves the internal and external processes that ultimately give a level of prominence to an issue or that provide weight to an item on one’s personal agenda--which in the policy world can translate to a legislative agenda as well. I asked my participants to tell me about their library experiences. In a few instances I did not expressly ask the question, but the participants revealed their thoughts about libraries anyway during the course of our conversation.
As an aside, I found that to a non-librarian, it is difficult to fine-tune one’s thinking into types of libraries. This is not a critique but rather simply an observation that has some implications for the library profession. School, public, academic libraries (to say nothing of the even finer distinctions between special libraries)—these seem to be all one and the same to a non-librarian; there is no particular delineation between the types of libraries. Accordingly, all are framed simply as a “library.” Therefore, the nuances of what each might offer in terms of resources and programming, or the type of training involved in becoming one or the other kind of librarian— which can be considerably different—seems beyond what non-librarians conjure up when thinking about the library venue or the person working there. This implies that a good or bad experience in or with one or the other type of library will have carry-over to all kinds of libraries. This meant that although I had pointed out that I was concerned with school libraries, I let my participants interpret that in their own way. During the interviews, participants would
mention some tidbit about their public or academic library experience as often as for their school library. This general lack of differentiation can be seen in several of the examples that follow.

**Revelations and memories.** Legislative Aide #2 was one of my spur-of-the-moment interviewees [i.e., I had settled in a guest chair in a Congressional office, and politely told the staff that I would wait until someone could see me], so she wasn’t really thinking along the same lines of inquiry that I was when we began our conversation. She graciously offered to help me find information about libraries in general; I thanked her but told her that I could do that myself and I really wanted to know what she thought of libraries. She then readily acknowledged the important role that libraries play in our lives, and she indicated that she could “identify with those who say that library is a refuge for them.” She said that her elementary school library, in a rural community, was not well-resourced, and she was encouraged by her teachers to use the public library. She recalled being taught by several librarians how to cite references and do research [skills generally in line with what a school or academic librarian would teach], which she continued to find valuable in her present work. She was very interested in learning the results of both my doctoral research and of work I was involved with associated with the State Library, in part because she felt it helped in keeping tabs on what was happening in our state—and also because she had a direct personal connection with a young family member who had a disability and who could immediately benefit from the work being done at the State level.

Legislative Aide #3 had “fond memories” of her elementary school library, but she couldn’t recall her high school library “because it wasn’t emphasized as much.” She described participating in several reading contests offered by her elementary school librarian, including

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12 During 2014 to 2016, the Illinois State Library received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for a project called “Targeting Autism: A National Forum on Serving Library Patrons on the Spectrum.” The project investigated ways for libraries to work with multiple stakeholder groups to better address the topic of Autism Spectrum Disorders. I served on the oversight Board for this grant throughout its duration.
those for free tickets to Six Flags Great America and for free Pizza Hut coupons. She was also a finalist in the Young Authors contest, wherein students would create their own story in a white hardcover book with blank pages. She mentioned her excitement when she finally got a computer at home, and could print out the pages for her stories instead of doing them all by hand. Her descriptions of these various contests offered by her school librarian gave us a common ground of understanding, because her experiences mirrored those of my own daughters; it thus became clear as we talked that this participant was most likely in their age group of the mid- to late-20s. She also indicated that she spent much of her afterschool time in her public library, because both of her parents worked.

Disability Advocate #1 relayed her school library experience having come from an open-concept school, i.e., a school-without-walls. The library was thus in the middle of the space with low book shelves so that one could see into and beyond it at all times. An excerpt from our conversation follows. [Note: There is a fine line between the necessity of letting one’s interviewees tell their own story in their own way, and the need to not embarrass individuals and to help move the presentation of data along. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) suggest quoting “verbatim, including errors of speech and repetition” (p. 211), but I feel that doing so exactly can be distracting and sometimes misleading to the reader. It is a judgement call, but I have edited out repetitions, uhms, ahs, etc. from the many excerpts that I present herein, so that participant words are directly quoted minus this editing. Long interviewee quotations are shown in boxes hereinafter using a bold font, but my own comments and questions are not in bold.]

I went to one of those crazy 70’s schools that was an open concept school. So a school without walls. Literally. The only walls of the building were around the administrative offices. So the library was the central sort of hub . . . environmentally a little bit chaotic. It was the kind of space you could see through--because the shelves were all very low and there were no walls . . .
I didn’t spend a lot of time in the library. I was a kid who never enjoyed reading much. I was not a struggling reader in that I was struggling to acquire reading skills. But I was the kid who didn’t necessarily--did not at all--read for pleasure. I barely read for classwork [and] the things I was required to read for. By the time I was in high school, I sort of confessed to my mother that I had never read, and was evaluated and identified as having pretty significant dyslexia and other learning disabilities. So my time in the library was--I don’t know if it was different--[It] just wasn’t necessarily sort of the typical experience for kids . . . .

(Disability Advocate #1)

In trying to learn more about whether this Interviewee had open library (wherein the teacher would bring students to the library as the need arose), or fixed library scheduling (a designated day and time when the students would go to the library), here is how her time was described:

We had an assigned day. And I think it was only one day a week that we were able to go. We never did any other kind of media or technology--I mean granted this was the early 80’s, so it was a little bit different field then. It was still card catalog days so [that] was part of our instruction. We had the general orientation to fiction and non-fiction and then to the Dewey Decimal System and all of that.

When I was in 5th grade, I was pulled out for what they called the talented and gifted. [We] had the ability to go to the library on our own. So very often I would [go] to the library and spend all my time with large reference books because it wasn’t the novel that was interesting to me. It was all of the non-fiction . . . When I think what I was doing if I look back on it, I was supplementing what I was struggling to get in the classroom--I was supplementing it by seeking it out in reference material.

(Disability Advocate #1, who self-identified as having dyslexia)

Disability Advocate #2 said that she loved going to her library and it was “absolutely” a good experience for her. She went on to praise her librarian in college who assisted her greatly with reference work, and she further praised the ongoing improvements to the Martin Luther King Jr. Public Library [which is located in downtown DC], because she thought the intended upgrades would yield a more welcoming environment especially to those who are homeless. On looking back on her time in the library as a child, this participant characterized the library as a
place to “learn how to be quiet”--a place “to just be calm and relax and take a breather.” In talking about how that might translate for today’s kids, she said: “I think they need that more now than ever.”

Disability Advocate #3 didn’t have any particular memories of her high school library. When asked if in general she liked her library in elementary school, she said: “I don’t think I felt one way or another about it. Our public library? I loved it, because I loved to read. I didn’t use my school library that way that I recall.” This comment certainly opens avenues for speculation about how she did use the library if not for reading, and the participant relayed what she did recall of her experiences in her elementary school library in a light-hearted way:

So the reason I was smiling is because there’s two distinct things--memories--that I have from my elementary school library. One is the librarian [she mentions his name]--I cannot believe I still remember his name [she smiles]. But he used to do--when we would do story time--he would do it with puppets [she motions and puts pretend puppets on her hands], and he would do it with different voices. So it was always a very loud, lively read-aloud kind of hour or story hour or whatever, ‘cause he would always do it with the puppets and the voices and the faces and all these things.

So that’s one thing. The other [she laughs]--the other thing I remember from the library--this is horrible: The other thing I remember from the library is . . . when we had The Talk [uses her fingers in the air to denote quotes] in 5th Grade--when they separated the boys from the girls. And the girls went to the library and we watched a movie about our changing bodies [she smiles and laughs].

And those are my two memories from elementary school library [she laughs]. Isn’t that awful?  

(Disability Advocate #3)

**Role in education.** There was some variety in the experiences the participants could remember, but there were differences owing to their positions in the policy realm as well. Most of my participants could be considered to generally fall into two camps in terms of their job responsibilities, i.e., those who were stakeholders representing a specific disability constituency and thus advocating for the needs of that constituency; and those who were representing a
member of Congress and thus listening to the stakeholders and trying to measure their needs. This presented a dichotomy in how views were put forth about the role of school libraries in education. The Legislative Aides stepped carefully and diplomatically into the conversation. They commented in general terms about libraries:

- Libraries are another means of offering students additional opportunities to learn—which is the “democratic” view of them—so yes, they are fully supported by her member of Congress (Legislative Aide #1);
- Libraries play a role in all of our lives; students should have the full opportunity to succeed, and libraries create a strong foundation in the education of children (Legislative Aide #2);
- The Library of Congress should be accessible to all students [and she mentioned both getting letters concerning who should be the next Librarian of Congress, and the fellowships available to teachers] (Legislative Aide #2);
- Libraries are another classroom, although they often are under-resourced (Legislative Aide #3);
- “Libraries are very uncontroversial” (Legislative Aide #3); and
- “I can’t imagine someone not liking school libraries” (Legislative Aide #3).

On the other hand, the Disability Advocacy stakeholders offered up their thoughts about the role of libraries in the educational fabric with something more akin to brutal honesty. Disability Advocate #1 explained to me her role working on a national project with 16 school districts in five states to build school-wide inclusive practices for students with severe disabilities, and how she also functioned as the education policy director at her organization. Here is a portion of our conversation [I am PNF and she is DA #1]:
PNF: You are really involved with ESEA and how it affects people with disabilities. Have you ever thought of school libraries? Is that on your radar?

[DA #1 shakes her head, pauses, and frowns.] She responds: **It’s not. Which is an interesting realization. We’re working for school--for inclusive--reform. But we also have to be inclusive of the adults who we expect to implement that reform as well. And by not including the librarians, we’re not being inclusive.**

A similar mindset was in evidence in another discussion. As I was led by Disability Advocate #2 into the conference room where we were to converse, she said to me: “Do you really think libraries are important today? I don’t mean to be rude or anything, but are people even talking about libraries anymore? . . . In all the policy conversations I’ve ever had, libraries have never been mentioned.” She had worked in the policy arena for about 14 years, and her work stemmed in part from her advocacy for her son who was disabled. She said that he never brings home anything from his school library, and she noted that several of her acquaintances have told her that their children’s schools don’t push libraries anymore either. The Participant thought that possibly “with all the technology, people are thinking that they don’t really need libraries anymore.”

That same theme played out somewhat differently in my conversation with a Washington, DC, consultant whose clients included two non-profit disability advocacy organizations. She herself had two family members with disabilities, and she had previously worked for a national learning disability advocacy support organization. Our first interview was scheduled for the time in November when I was in Washington, but she found herself having to cancel on the spur-of-the-moment because she was called to Capitol Hill that morning to work on the language that would go into the rewrite of the ESEA legislation. Later, in December when I was able to interview her via phone, we talked a good deal about this legislation--which
was scheduled to come up for the final Senate vote within hours of our conversation, and was to be signed into law by the President the very next day. Because of her active role in helping to formulate portions of the new law, I wanted to center our discussion on that and on where and how librarians would fit into such a policy. But early on in our conversation, she interjected the following: “Just as a side note, just so that you know, my sister is a librarian in Cody, Wyoming. [She] was a school teacher and then she became the librarian and [she] runs some of their training programs.” She continued by saying that she and her sister talk “quite a bit” about modern technology “that has really enhanced and supported giving greater access to kids with disabilities to curricula and to assessments.”

Some other portions of our conversation, including my questions to her and her responses, are presented in the following excerpts. (I am PNF, and DCC is the participant, who again, is a DC Consultant.)

PNF: Okay so you have a really strong background with students that have learning disabilities. In any of your conversations about their education has the thought of school libraries come up and the support that they can give those students?

DCC: Well, libraries come up here and there. You know there are a couple of members of Congress who are champions for the library association. [But] I haven’t had it come up in terms of having them be, for instance, a direct source of instruction or something like that. But certainly they’re recognized in the disability community as an ally.

Our conversation continued:

PNF: And it doesn’t come up in this LEARN Act or the piece of legislation that you said? [She had mentioned having been involved in the development of the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (the LEARN Act) for some eight years prior. Now it had been incorporated into the ESSA and she was pleased about that.]

DCC: The LEARN Act is structured as a State grant program, so States would develop a literacy plan, and they can certainly decide to have librarians on the team. So that, it’s not prohibited but it isn’t required.
The role of librarians in the education of those students with disabilities was a sticking point for me, so I sought more information from the Participant:

PNF: I want to ask you something about what you said about the IEP teams. Generally librarians do not sit on that team, and yet, the school librarian sees a student throughout his or her educational career. Is there something we need to be doing to be able to know what’s going on in the student’s IEP? What would you suggest as a policy?

DCC: It would be a school policy because, you know, the parent in me wants to say: *Just tell the parent you want to be there.* The school or the parent can invite anybody to the meeting they want to bring. They just have to give notice to the other party. So there’s no reason you couldn’t be there. But because of privacy and the confidentiality, [unless] the IEP has been shared with you, you can’t really talk to a parent about that child based on an assumption. [T]hat would be inappropriate.

The DC Consultant further added:

DCC: Federal law is never really going to articulate that the librarian is there [at the IEP meeting]. *This is an example of where the school groups would never let another line item be put in IDEA that would require someone else to be there, because they see that as an infringement on their time and [as] being told who should be where, when. [And] those people that are required, they carefully negotiated.*

*There’s never going to be a federal policy that would say the librarian should be there.* [But] I’m sure there are certain school leaders that would be very open to having more help for the most at-risk and challenging kids.

The idea of libraries as a source of instruction for students with disabilities was not on the radar of the Disability Advocates with whom I spoke. However, when I mentioned the possibility of librarians supporting students with disabilities to Disability Advocate #1, she thought that librarians could “unburden some of the teachers” and “share that responsibility.” She pointed out that a well-trained librarian “would be supremely positioned” to help teachers and other educators because librarians “do have mastery of resources that are available.”

When asked point-blank what libraries could do to support students with disabilities, Disability Advocate #3 responded: “The thing that came to my mind was accommodations.
Right? Like the same accommodations should be provided in the library that are provided in the classroom.” She also suggested: “Something really helpful that the library could do for students with disabilities is have a variety of assistive technology devices that students could try out and see what works for them . . . Right? And not just iPads.”

**Competing priorities.** Finally, in speaking with the Policy Analyst from a Washington think tank, a different perspective about libraries in general and how they fit into the education policy picture was presented. She said that in her organization, policy workers saw definite connections between libraries and early childhood education in terms of promoting literacy. She put it this way: “We just think it’s really important in the vein of thinking about tapping hidden assets. Libraries are such a huge asset, and resources are such a rich piece of the learning experience, especially literacy learning for children.” She also noted that children learn in many different ways and places, and libraries “contribute to student success” because they are among the “informal opportunities that students have to learn”--given that [presumably primarily public] libraries are often used for after-school programs and latch-key learning.

Our conversation turned to where and how libraries fit into the policy realm and who the players are that impact decisions. I admitted to not knowing of the influence of think tanks in the policy arena before I began my dissertation research, even though I, like her, had a Masters degree in Urban Planning and Policy. Think Tanks were simply not part of the conversation when I earned my degree in the late 1970s. Part of the conversation is presented in what follows. One of the insights she provided was how funding is a barometer of priority, as was also put forth by Baumgartner and his colleagues (2005, 2007) in the Punctuated Equilibrium model, which I discussed more fully in Chapter 3. In the text that follows, I am PNF; she is TTPA, short for Think Tank Policy Analyst:
PNF: I’m trying to figure out how the little world of school libraries could fit into the political process and how that works [because] I don’t know. What I’m hearing is that it is very complicated, but the fact that I didn’t know about think tanks . . . sort of speaks to the picture of there being players we’re not aware of.

TTPA: I would say though in the library space specifically, the biggest players are, in my opinion, the memberships organizations, like the American Library Association. [And] I would say to a smaller extent the National Governor’s Association, the Chief Council of State School Officers weigh in on some of these issues.

She continued the conversation:

I would say it’s less about other folks talking about policies that should affect libraries, and more [about] competing priorities edging out funding.

So I would highly doubt that you would find any Congressman or woman that would say that libraries aren’t valuable, or that would say that librarians aren’t valuable. And most would probably tell a very tall tale or maybe would spin you a story about their experience in a school library and how much they loved going to the library as a child.

But . . . especially at the Federal level, the real test of anybody’s commitment is whether they’re funding that priority or whether they’re funding other priorities. 

(Think Tank Policy Analyst)

The priorities of items on the political agenda shift and change with time, and what makes it to the agenda depends on how an issue is framed--and by whom.

The librarian perspective. While I was in Washington in November 2015, I attended an event that was fortuitous in both its timing and its topic. Sponsored by Future Tense, which is self-described as a partnership between Slate magazine, the New America Think Tank, and Arizona State University to promote a better understanding of how new technologies affect our society and public policy (The Slate Group, 2012), the event was called Will Libraries Outlive Books? (hereinafter referred to as Will Libraries?). During the two-hour program, there were several individual presentations and panel discussions from the perspective of practicing
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librarians (none of whom was a school librarian, by the way) about how they see themselves and the role of libraries both now and in the future. (The entire program is available online via the Slate website at http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/77548793.) Because this information relates to and is juxtaposed with the Framing cluster of data resulting from my interviews, I provide some commentary on it now to illustrate framing within the librarian profession. Note that in talking about the library profession, the individual Will Libraries? speakers did not have school libraries in mind, although in discussing their own work, what library professionals say about a public or academic library crosses over to the school library field as well. With that said, the shaded box highlights my take on how we librarians are viewed by outsiders, versus how we are viewed within the profession itself.

**Framing Dichotomy**

My time gathering information in Washington turned up a difference between how libraries are framed by those who are making (or not making) policy that directly or indirectly impacts school libraries, verses those of us who are living with that policy (or the lack thereof). On the one hand, the individuals outside the library profession that I interviewed seem to see libraries in a favorably enough light, using words such as “uncontroversial,” “refuge,” “central hub,” and “valuable” to describe them. However, my participants also admitted to not really thinking about school libraries at all until I asked about them, or, as one interviewee said, not feeling one way or the other about them. In addition, my participants generally viewed the school library as an ancillary piece of the educational structure. Certainly the library had not been considered by interviewees as a venue that offered a “direct source of instruction” to students with disabilities—although on second thought and when pressed about how libraries
might support disabled individuals, participants could see that indeed this was a viable possibility; participants then began to offer up suggestions for how this might occur.

On the other hand, librarians themselves apparently view their world in a different light, though of course, still with a very positive spin. Although the participants of the Will Libraries? presentation were discussing the public and academic libraries in which they worked, panel members emphasized again and again that a library isn’t really about the resources it offers. Rather, it is about the space that fosters the activities such as searching for, generating, and sharing knowledge in community. Indeed, DC Public Library Executive Director, Richard Reyes-Gavilan, said: “Libraries were never really about the books but about the information contained therein. [A] library is a space where learning can take place. The space is the service.”

Panelist Deborah Jacobs, Director of the Global Libraries Initiative at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, critiqued the San Antonio, TX, public library, the Biblio Tech, noting that it does not provide a community space but only offers personal computer and Internet space for its patrons. And yet, only one of my participants (Disability Advocate #2 in describing the upgrades to the DC public library) zeroed in on the library space as anything even close to this idea of the space being something so important to the collective community of library users or students. My participants overall still seem to frame the library as a collection of resources. And as one of the participants indicated, given her learning disability, those resources were not readily accessible to her when she was visiting her school library.

Here is another example: I am fairly certain that the vast majority of school librarians would take great exception at hearing that their work is not being viewed by some policy makers as a direct source of instruction to students, disabled or otherwise. And indeed, if nothing is coming home from the school library--as one of my Disability Advocates mentioned is the case
for her disabled son--one could wonder what is going on in that library. On the flip side, library professionals indicated that they see themselves in a different light in support of education, i.e., as “personal learning agents [that] help any person [to] accomplish their own learning goals [and their] exploration of the world,” as Elizabeth Merritt, Director, Center for Future of Museums, American Assoc. of Museums, said during the Will Libraries? panel discussion.

Furthermore, the issue raised by my policy-making participant about whether anyone really needs libraries anymore given all the technology we have, was summarily put to rest by lexicographer Jesse Sheidlower in his Will Libraries? presentation about the use of the words library and librarian. Sheidlower pointed out that given more technology and information, there comes an even greater need for the assistance of a professional librarian to ensure access to the most reliable online resources. Similarly, panelists Daniel Russell, Google Uber Tech Lead, and Reyes-Gavilan stressed that the work of a librarian is a value-added piece to the library experience. These panelists stressed that today’s librarians don’t just point a patron in the right direction towards a resource, but they also help train him or her to use that resource when necessary, whether it be a hardcopy reference book, an e-book, a dvd, software, MP3 files, databases, or whatever kind of “curated content” the library has to offer. Russell indicated that this piece--helping develop, to the utmost, information literacy skills--means that those who have those skills will not be “hobbled” by being a part of the population not able to fully find, evaluate, and use Internet resources. This idea comes full circle from what was discussed at the very onset of my research (see Chapter 2) relating to how school librarians have been and should continue to be situated in learning to bridge the digital-skills divide. And yet, the value of the school library and the librarian also has been--and will likely continue to be--a question raised at my own school and nationwide by school administrators and school boards, and even at the
federal level where appropriations are made, given the limitations on funding that must be dealt with by all decision makers. This question of value comes despite the comments by my interviewees that no one doesn’t like libraries, and that none of our Congressional leaders would say that libraries and librarians are not valuable.

But there are degrees of value, sometimes dependent on funding priorities--as one of my participants indicated--or on one’s personal usage perspective: Panelist Jacobs pointed out that the tax-paying public in many communities isn’t necessarily using libraries, but it routinely offers opinions about them. And I can add that in conversations with DC workers and even with my own personal acquaintances, the majority of individuals have not been in or used a library for a very long time. The Will Libraries? panelists counted the “vulnerable populations” (veterans and the homeless were mentioned, but those who are disabled, illiterate, immigrant, or marginalized due to criminal history or sexual identity also come to mind) among those who still need to use libraries--and surely there is overlap here with the clients of Disability Advocates. The answer to the What is it about libraries? question and thus the ultimate value placed on libraries is therefore fraught with perceptions based on the present and sometimes long-past experiences of both users and non-users.

This then leads to one further comment: Although one of my participants suggested that the model of libraries needs to change so that people better understand what a library can offer, to hear some librarians speak on this issue, one would think that as a profession, we are pretty much fine as is. Will Libraries? panel member O’Donnell indicated that the library profession still has a very “fabulous brand” despite the somewhat laughable stereotypes that exist: “You know, librarians are okay, and if we can hang onto that brand, then there is all sorts of stuff we can do with it.” He and panelist Miguel Figueroa, ALA Future of Libraries Director, indicated
that perhaps the future lies in modeling libraries after Starbucks, as a third-space provider that is transparent, flexible, possibly even transient, and that can accommodate many activities done either alone or in groups. Then again, the idea of what libraries and librarians can do had an aura of haziness about it to my Disability Advocates: one suggested that an article in their national newsletter that explained the opportunities for service to the disabled population would be helpful to her community.

In developing a new model for libraries, we in the library profession need of course to ask: *How does the diverse body of library users--and non-users who might be pulled in somehow--want the facility to work for them? What model do they see as most beneficial?* The voices of the huge array of stakeholders outside the library profession in each school and community to be served, will provide the appropriate answers to these questions. But our frames of what a library is and does still will need to converge to a greater degree. The librarian panelists emphasized the importance of aligning the library with the individual community’s needs for space, technology, resources, and a shared responsibility for educating children. Such alignment should help create a more consistent and cohesive frame of library over time.

In the major sections that follow, I will present the findings that relate to Critical Concepts #4 and #5 of my framework, Policy Change Takes Time, and Opportunities for Change Do Occur. My interviews were conducted during the time in our nation when a very full and colorful slate of individuals were positioning themselves as possible 2016 Presidential candidates, and House and Senate members were gearing up for re-election campaigns. Timing was thus an important factor on the policy scene.

**Policy change takes time.** This critical concept recognizes the sluggish pace at which
policy change occurs. It also suggests that very small, incremental changes over time are more palatable than large overhauls of a system. Here again, there was evidence of differing perspectives between Disability Advocates and Legislative Staffers--although individuals in both groups indicated that they were in the policy realm to personally have an influence on change.

On the one hand, Disability Advocate #1 explained: “I got to this place of doing policy work because I [became] increasingly frustrated by the lack of change or the incredibly slow pace of change--and the satisfaction with the status quo.”

She went on to relay this story:

> I had a client who--all he wanted to do was feel the sun on his skin. And nobody would ever take him out. And his way to solve that problem for himself was to take his wheelchair and wheel himself outside the stairwell on the second floor [and] roll his wheelchair down the stairs.

And I realized that by being there, I was tacitly involved--I mean you know, I wasn’t supporting him, and I was part of the problem. And I couldn’t do that anymore. And so I refigured things and went and got a Master’s degree and found this world that was advocacy as opposed to strict service provision.

(Disability Advocate #1)
Later in our conversation she went back to the idea of status quo as stonewalling change. We had been talking about the need to look at more than just the ESEA legislation in the provision of training for librarians to work with students who have disabilities. The Participant noted that there were other laws and other actors in the process. She drew a figure out on paper that looked like that shown here. It had three arrows, equidistantly placed and each pointing to a circle in the middle.

Our conversation went like this:

**DA #1:** It’s the State Board of Education that is writing what it looks like to receive a certificate in library science [and] it’s the colleges and universities--it’s the institutes of higher education that are preparing these students to be professional in schools. So it’s not one moving part. It’s three independent moving parts. And it’s like the teeth of the gears just barely miss each other. They never connect to really drive [the] whole gear together. Does that make sense?

**PNF:** Yes. But how do you get it to mesh?

**DA #1:** Lots and lots and lots of conversations. I don’t know. I have not yet been successful in getting it to mesh. [because] there are so many perceptions of barriers [posed] by people who are quite comfortable in doing the work that they’ve been doing their entire lives. And doing it the way they’ve been doing it. [They] are quite happy with it.

Legislative Aide #3 told me that she wanted to make sure that her perspective as a minority woman was represented, and that she hoped to “create something meaningful for other under-represented people” through her work. But, her take on the unhurried movement of the policy process seemingly was not at all edged with frustration. She said: “Congress is supposed to work slowly so that there is careful consideration of the legislation.”
In my conversation with the Think Tank Policy Analyst, she pointed out that the ESEA legislation that was moving forward at the moment could “end up that it won’t pass again and it will just be another few years before we revisit this conversation.” Her reluctance to count on true movement was based on what had happened in the past: “You know, they’ve had hearings on ESEA every year since 2006, and it hasn’t mattered. [A] lot of it was just kind of blowing smoke for years.”

But when the time is ripe for movement, what then? In the following section, the information that falls under the cluster of Opportunities for Change is discussed.

**Opportunities for change do occur.** This concept acknowledges that there are cycles and hiccups in the federal policy-making process that create opportunities for legislative modifications to be made. Changes in administration at the very top level (i.e., a new President) or at a slightly lower level (a new Speaker of the House, a new Department of Education Secretary--both of which were named while I was working on the present research) may force a different focus in policy. Conversely, a change in the majority party in either or both Chambers of Congress can push policy one way or the other or seemingly stop movement altogether. This was mentioned earlier, in Chapters 1 and 3. This circumstance was in evidence when I was completing my research throughout 2015, but especially in the Fall session of the Congress. The annual budget cycle can also cause a shift in spending priorities. The need for reauthorization or extension of a bill can yield insertions and deletions in the language of the law. And a pending election can exacerbate the Korologos “nothing or over-reacting” outcome mentioned previously--with Congressional members scrambling to make an impression as they bump up against the finish-line of their time in Congress. This latter occurrence may have been evident in
the completion of the reauthorization of the ESEA legislation, which had been pending since 2006, but which was actively in progress from spring of 2015 until it was actually signed into law on December 10, 2015. Patty Murray (D-WA), the ranking member (i.e., highest member from the minority party), of the Senate’s Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee--under which the ESEA legislation falls--was facing a November 2016 re-election. She is credited with spearheading much of the work on the new ESSA law (Aldeman, 2015; Klein, 2015; NCLR Awards, 2015; Rendeiro, 2016), and the cynic in me wonders if she was working so assiduously on this legislation so that she could add the Law’s passage to her political resume.
Experience (or lack thereof). The ESEA reauthorization was a frequent point of discussion with my participants. It was a topic I tried to cover in some form in each interview. I wanted to know the extent to which school libraries fit into this policy picture, but I also wanted to gain an understanding as to how my interviewees were involved in the policy-making process and what that involvement looked like. As it turned out, the Legislative Staff had a different base of knowledge about the legislation than did the Disability Advocates. For example, one Legislative Aide indicated to me that she had been on board in the role of the Education Policy Advisor for approximately six months, but that her background was in health care. Another Legislative Aide relayed a somewhat similarly inexperienced background, having been a Legislative Intern previously, moved away, and only having returned to Washington four months prior. When I asked her about how the process for ESEA would work now that it was in active discussion within the Senate’s HELP Committee, she indicated that she wasn’t sure because she had never been through the process before.

Being ready. On the other hand, Disability Advocate #1 was able to walk me through the process of providing input for the ESEA reauthorization. As discussed further in the Advocacy Partnerships section, participation on a Task Force that has an active role in developing changes in the legislation is a necessary piece of this work. As this interviewee explained, the Disability Advocacy Community had been working carefully for months and was ready to voice its concerns about the law when the need arose. Following is the explanation of what occurred when the ESEA legislation started to gain prominence on the Congressional calendar. Much of the advocacy efforts were headed by the Leadership Conference of Civil and Human Rights, a coalition mentioned by several participants.

I’ll give you an example of the way that the Leadership Conference has engaged in a lot of the advocacy and lobbying work [around] the ESEA reauthorization. There was a -- they
called it a Principle’s meeting. It’s the Executive Directors of all the coalition members [who] came together to discuss and identify principles. So, what are our principle positions--values around ESEA reauthorization? What are the things that matter to us most? [We] have these basic principles . . .

So ESEA hit in the early spring [of 2015]. Early, early spring. January or February. We were ready for that [and] the Leadership Conference was prepared for that. [W]e had the principles. It was an immediate drop into gear of--what do we do now? [The] House just slammed [ESEA] through, [so] everybody was working around the clock trying to get things prepared and trying to be positioned to be ready. [Once] that part settled out, we were able to breathe a little bit [and] then start to work to encourage the Senate to take some time to [she laughs] talk to their constituents and to, you know, be more measured in their draft bills.

(Disability Advocate #1)

She went on to specify some of the action scenarios that had been talked about in these coalition meetings:

[I] would say that in that early spring process when the House was slamming the Bill through, we had probably three separate emergency meetings of, ‘Where’s the bottom line?’ And ‘What are all of the potentials for how this can play out? And what are we going to do about each of them?’

So for Potential A, we’re going to hold a press conference; for Potential B, we’re going to, you know, stand on the rooftops and decry the total civil rights violations that are going to come down. And if this happens [then] it’s we all go into advocacy mode: We all engaged our grass roots . . . and then it became, ‘Mobilize everybody: Contact everybody to say, Slow down--let’s be reasoned about this.’

(Disability Advocate #1)

**Paying attention and timing.** Policy workers in DC are vigilant in terms of pending legislation and the need to be prepared to make their case when the time arises. Disability Advocate #1 told how after the reauthorization of ESEA began to take on more prominence in early 2015, the Leadership Conference was ready to respond with a letter expressing the key principles that had come out of their various meetings; this letter went out to every member of Congress.
In a similar vein, I had a conversation with the Think Tank Policy Analyst (TTPA in the excerpt below) about how and when a think tank would dive into the policy-making process. This participant had indicated that it was the job of think tanks “to connect research to government.” Given that, I wondered how exactly that connection would occur, or what would happen if the decision-makers seemed to be moving in a direction that wasn’t taking research into account. Following are portions of the interview.

PNF: Okay... so the hearings are going on, and you hear something that you don’t like and you want to respond to it. I mean, how quickly does stuff move [on] Capitol Hill to where you have time to make a response? [And] who reads it?

TTPA: You know, interacting with government is a very tricky process. [The] hard thing when you are outside the DC area is figuring out how to weigh in and how to impact the process. [But] when you are inside DC and you are more familiar with the legislative process and how things are progressing on the Hill, you have a stronger sense of when to weigh in, who to talk to, what your audience is.

She continued to explain:

[Sometimes] an op-ed in the New York Times is great if you want your reach to be broad. [But] if you’re really just saying, ‘Okay, I heard this terrible thing that happened [when] someone [was] testifying in front of the Senate HELP Committee [and] I want to make sure that Patty Murray—who’s the ranking Democrat—that she doesn’t buy into that’, [then] there are ways to be more targeted in outreach to that person. [For] instance, her staff reads Politico like the Bible. And so that is a very good venue to try and have [in] their morning education briefing [a] link to an article that we would write—whether that article is in the New York Times or it’s on our own blog.

(Think Tank Policy Analyst)

Being ready and targeting a message are important aspects of the process. Both Legislative Aide #3 and Disability Advocate #2 noted that both IDEA and HEA would be up for reauthorization in a year or two. Accordingly, already organizations were looking at the language and gearing up to present their positions and to think about what needs to be re-worked within those laws. These participants indicated that if the library profession wanted a piece
about training librarians to work with individuals who have disabilities in either law, now was the time to be thinking about that as well.

But biding one’s time was also important. Policy workers might be working on legislation almost continuously, but they also knew that holding back was sometimes the most prudent course of action to take. Here are some of their comments about waiting for the right time to occur:

- “When less is happening on the Hill, we aren’t quite as deeply engaged in what’s happening over there if they’re not taking up any education issues.” (Think Tank Policy Analyst)
- “[The Disability] Community has written a set of recommendations and it is just really waiting for Congress to get serious about it to kind of dig into that law.” (DC Consultant)
- “We know politically opening up IDEA is not a good idea in a Republican-controlled Congress.” (DC Consultant)

Perhaps the bottom line for this concept is that you have to know who and what to focus on when the opportunity does arise. But how do those who are advocating for policy-change make this happen? In the next section, I will present the cluster of findings that deal with Advocacy Partnerships, which was initially the third concept in the conceptual framework.

**Advocacy Partnerships.** My participants were in agreement with the idea behind this Critical Concept, i.e., that within the realm of policy, there are no lone wolves making it happen. The policy-making arena is just too complex to circumnavigate as an individual organization—or at least, as an organization that is not comprised of member agencies. Collaboration and partnering--and compromise--among the players are key in order for desired outcomes to ensue.

Disability Advocate #1 said: “The message is that none of us can do the work on our own.” This idea was echoed again and again in various ways throughout the interviews.
Collaborative mindset. My Disability Advocate participants recognized the need to work in partnership, particularly owing to the sheer size and diversity of the Disability Community. The DC Consultant indicated that “there are over 150 disability organizations; about 60 of them coalesce around education [and] of those 60, about 25 are really active and even have an active legislation agenda.” Disability Advocate #2 indicated that coalition building was an important part of the work she was doing; she mentioned that her organization partnered with other agencies, including the Arc, the Autism Self Advocacy Network, Learning Disabilities of America, the National Disabilities Association, the National Association of Mental Illness, and TASH. Each of the Disability Advocates I spoke with indicated that their agencies were members of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, which was described by one interviewee as having the “largest [and] most powerful coalition” of education-based members. [According to its website, the Leadership Conference is a 501(c) (4) organization with a “diverse
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membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States” via active “legislative advocacy” (The Leadership Conference, 2016).] Disability Advocate #3 stressed that the disability agencies “try to do things together because more voices have more weight.” Legislative Aide #1 recognized this as well, saying, “When you form coalitions, you are unified. Your voice is that much louder.”

This idea of working together is predicated in part on practicality. Disability Advocate #1 indicated that having the louder voice was important. She explained that in working alone, “We can’t get the ear . . . we can’t get the attention. We can’t get the press. [We] become the chorus of little yappy dogs rather than standing together to be the really big dog that no one can ignore.” When I asked her, “Who is the really big dog in Washington?” she responded that the Leadership Conference was, along with its Education Task Force. Later in our conversation she explained further what the concept of working in coalition is like: “[It’s] just the perfect example of--I could carry some of your water, and the next day I might need you to carry some of my water. And we can do it together, and it’s easier when it’s all together.”

There were other aspects of this practicality: “You also just don’t lose your mind in the work, because it’s really isolating work,” said Disability Advocate #1. And there are time-savings and expertise issues as well:

| Working in a coalition means that I don’t have to read all 1900 pages of the legislation. I can say: ‘I’ll take the sections that apply specifically to students with the most significant disabilities.’ [And] so I can bring that level of expertise into the Coalition and sit at the table with all these other organizations that have a different perspective on the same issue, and work together with them. |

(Disability Advocate #1)

Disability Advocate #1 mentioned several individuals who were active on the Education Task Force of the Leadership Conference and on other Education Task Forces, and in fact, she put me
in touch with one of these; I was ultimately able to arrange an interview with this contact (i.e.,
the DC Consultant participant).

Disability Advocate #3 explained in greater detail how a coalition divided up policy work
by Task Forces. She used the example of the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (the CCD).
[This organization is “a coalition of approximately 100 national disability organizations working
together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self determination, independence,
empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of
society” (CCD, n.d.).] She said:

| So how the coalition works is in Task Forces. [They] separate into Task Forces having to
do with different topic areas and there’s usually co-chairs of each of these Task Forces. So, for example, there’s an Education Task Force, there’s a Housing Task Force, there’s [an] Employment Task Force. [There’s] a bunch of them. And for each of those, they will have co-chairs. So it could be anywhere from two to four people who kind of share the responsibility of heading up that Task Force. |
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<td>[The] Task Forces work pretty autonomously. Like, they make sure they don’t butt up against other Task Forces, but--if the Task Force develops a statement or a letter of support regarding a piece of legislation, it comes through those co-chairs.</td>
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(Disability Advocate #3)

This participant indicated that the Task Forces generally meet once a month, usually dependent
on the Congressional legislative calendar. And she noted that “Task Forces might set up a group
of Hill meetings with staffers from key committees, and anyone from that Task Force who would
like to go, can come.”

**Many voices.** I wasn’t clear on how helpful such meetings with Legislative or
Department staffers are in the policy arena--or how effective were the blanket requests for an
organization’s membership to send letters and emails or make calls to a Congressman or woman.

In one of my informal encounters, I spoke with the chief lobbyist of the ALA’s Washington
office, who gave me a ten-minute mini-lesson on the policy process. We were chatting at the
reception that followed the Future Tense presentation, *Will Libraries Outlive Books?*, which was
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held at the headquarters of Washington think tank, New America. The lobbyist explained how her cell-phone had buzzed during the panel presentation, and she had to leave the room to take the call: Her contacts on Capitol Hill were informing her at that moment that a deal had been struck on ESEA, and they indicated that she ‘would be very pleased’ with the way it turned out. But now she told me, it would be incumbent on her to ensure that the ALA membership sent messages to Congress voicing the opinion that this legislation should be approved when it came up for a vote in early December. However, she noted, the actual public airing of the new legislation wouldn’t happen until several weeks hence, because the law-makers didn’t want to allow for too much time for public scrutiny of the new legislation. She added, “You know all the things you learned in school about how policy is made? None of it is true.” And she laughed.

Indeed, on December 3, 2015, shortly before the Senate vote was to occur, the ALA put out the message shown in Figure 7 to those who subscribe to its Washington, DC, newsletter, the District Dispatch. This was one way for the ALA lobbyist to fulfill her part of the policy process obligation. Several postings on the District Dispatch blog mirrored this ‘Take Action for Libraries’ theme, including those under the headlines of: “Movement on ESEA!” (McGilvray, posted on 11/19/2015); “We Made It Into ESEA,” (McGilvray, posted 11/30/2015); and “ALA Advocacy Pays Off As House Passes ESSA!” (McGilvray, posted 12/3/2015). Then, the news changed to “ESSA Passes Senate!” (McGilvray, posted 12/9/2015), and “Significant Victory for Libraries As President Signs ESSA Into Law” (Gravatt, posted 12/10/2015).
Another of my interviewees indicated that it is indeed voices in chorus along with one-on-one conversations with Legislative Staffers that have the most effect:

I think it takes the personal relationships that you build with those staffers as one professional to another. Then I think it also takes the voices of your membership echoing what you’re saying to them on a larger scale. So if you go to [the staffers] about ESEA [and] you say, ‘I’m worried about A, B, C.’ Then you’ve got members calling in saying, ‘We’re worried about A, B, C’ and they are echoing everything that you’ve talked about in person, I think that’s more effective than if I just went in or if they were just calling.

(Disability Advocate #3)
**Possible partnerships with libraries.** Because advocacy partnerships are necessary to the movement towards policy change, several of my participants were curious about the involvement of the ALA in coalitions—and actually, I was asked several times whether there even was a professional membership organization for librarians that did any work in Washington. Disability Advocate #1 wondered: “Do they work in coalitions?” and, “Why aren’t they working with the large education coalitions that are cross disability?” She named the Leadership Conference as one coalition the ALA should be part of.

In my interview with the DC Consultant, this issue of collaboration was also discussed. Following is a portion of that conversation.

PNF: Librarians need to know how to work with all kinds of students [and] with students who have disabilities. And it concerns me that the disability community and the librarian community aren’t coming together in ways that they could.

DCC: Yeah. That’d be a great conversation to have. [So] I’m part of a large consortium called the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities--CCD is our acronym, and I’m one of the co-chairs of the Education Task Force. We would certainly be open to having a joint meeting [and] having the one or two groups that represent librarians advocacy organizations come together and talk about what our areas of common interest are.

Also in our conversation, this participant said:

[The school library groups] should be part of another coalition that we’re all together in, the [National] Universal Design for Learning [Task Force]--the Coalition for UDL. That would be another place to get them connected because that group actually includes the groups like the teachers’ unions [and] it’s very education focused. [Lots] of groups like to be part of the UDL Coalition because it keeps them out of some of the weeds, for instance, on assessment and other issues that might be challenging--the policy issues that might be more challenging. But we can all together talk about the importance of UDL.

(DC Consultant)
Disability Advocate #2 told me that: “We’re trying to open ourselves to other types of agencies that would work with people with special needs [and we’d be] very open to working with libraries.” She also indicated that an article in her agency’s newsletter explaining the opportunities for libraries to support the disabled population would be helpful, and she wondered who she could contact at the ALA to make that information-sharing partnership begin to happen.

During my interview with Disability Advocate #3, the idea of librarians working with the disability community her agency serves was also discussed. We talked about how that might look, including perhaps having staff from her agency offering to train local librarians on ways to work effectively with her population of clients. Her thoughts included the following:

One thing that this conversation makes me think [about] is when potential funding opportunities come up -- Like thinking about if there’s a way to include local libraries or the library association in some partner-shipping around a service project. If that type of funding makes itself available.

(Disability Advocate #3)

In sum, concerning how librarians could better tap into the collaborative mindset that prevailed among Washington policy makers, I asked the DC Consultant point-blank, “So there’s no reason why librarians couldn’t be in partnership with disability advocacy groups?” The Participant’s response: “Correct.”

Librarian perspective revisited. I can well imagine a knowledgeable librarian attending and participating in the coalition meetings that my Disability Advocate interviewees also participate in. Although this seems rather a simple and straightforward step to take from the library end, there may be obstacles blocking the path. Here again, I interject additional related information from the librarian perspective that I also collected during the course of my data gathering in the fall of 2015. This shaded box provides a discussion and commentary concerning
the ALA and its workings as a national professional organization. I will preface this box with a bit of background: Part of the information stems from the short chat I had with the ALA Lobbyist after the *Will Libraries?* event that was held at the headquarters of the New America Think Tank. But I also sought out another source of information so that I could get a better handle on the organizational structure of the ALA itself. I wanted answers to the *Who’s in charge? How does the ALA bureaucracy really work? Who makes the action-agenda decisions?* kinds of questions. This box addresses the conversations I had about this general topic.

**Who’s in charge here?**

During the brief conversation I had with the ALA Lobbyist, I mentioned that several of my participants were completely unaware of our national organization and of the Washington office of the ALA. The Lobbyist wasn’t surprised at all by this lack of knowledge, which she ascribed to the vast number of lobbying groups in Washington--too numerous for one to be aware of them all. [But the ALA was established in 1876; its Washington Office of Government Relations began its work pushing for a legislative presence in the mid-1940s (ALA, Office of Government Relations, n.d.). Surely with such longevity our presence should have been made known in the DC culture to a greater degree.] When asked about working in coalition with Disability Advocacy groups, the Lobbyist expressed a willingness to do so--when they give her some legislation she “can get behind.” She also indicated that actually, the decision wasn’t really hers to make: Her marching orders come from ALA’s National Headquarters located in Chicago. She suggested that those in the Chicago office might be better able to address the disability advocacy piece than her staff in DC. [This may be so, but only to a point. The national Disability Advocacy organizations are generally headquartered in DC, after all. The
directive for work in this arena may come from the ALA in Chicago, but action on a continuing basis will have to occur in Washington.]

**How does the ALA work?** In trying to understand how the ALA organizational structure operates within the policy arena, I had arranged to have an extended conversation in New York City with Editor-at-Large and current *Blatant Berry* columnist for the *Library Journal*, John Berry, III, in November 2015. I wanted his more global insights on ‘how things work’ (Stake’s phrase, 2010) within the ALA, and Berry did not disappoint. I met with him on a wretched day of driving, cold rains that had me dodging umbrellaed-people, puddles, traffic, and construction canopies near Penn Central Station to find the small restaurant where we were to have lunch.

Berry generously offered his time and fully seasoned perspective on the ALA, leveling some caveats concerning its proclivity towards stability. He commented about status quo within the organization, telling me, “Don’t underestimate how difficult making change in the ALA bureaucracy is.” He noted that as in most large organizations, the role of the executive staff is to ensure that everything runs smoothly. Accordingly, the ALA leadership--like legislators--responds to pressure from its constituency. Berry further indicated that within the ALA itself, public libraries form the largest constituency, followed by academic libraries, with school libraries coming up third.

As I have previously discussed, the separation of libraries into types is not the way *library* is generally framed by the public. However, within the ALA, the differences in its own constituency groups may result in a sort of hegemony, which in turn yields a rank-ordering of the attention that is given to prospective action on various issues. This is not to say that those lobbying in DC for legislation such as the ESEA (now ESSA) are not doing a good job. Berry
commented that the ALA Washington office is very effective\(^{13}\) and subsequent to our conversation, with the passage of the ESSA legislation, we now can certainly see that school libraries are present to a greater degree in the language of the reauthorized law, and that more federal dollars may be targeted to school library programs than in the recent past (Maher, 4/21/2016; Maher, 6/9/2016). However, it does seem likely that the fealty of the ALA leadership is not evenly spread across its various constituencies and that the ALA does have its own interior political agenda.

When I talked with Berry, I explained the research I was doing in Washington and some of the comments of my Disability Advocacy participants. Berry noted that unlike what occurred in years past, there does not seem to be the activist attitude that was so prevalent earlier within the ALA membership--such as when the Social Responsibilities Roundtable (the SRRT, as discussed in Chapter 1) was formed in the 1960’s. Instead according to Berry, activism tends to be viewed as the articulations of the “radical nuts” that are interspersed throughout the profession, and the ALA leadership pays only minimal attention to it--usually only as much as is necessary to quell the rumblings within the ranks. Attention then to the issue associated with service to the disabled that I was focused on, is admittedly not high on the agenda of ALA’s leadership. “The problem is not big enough for them to look at, so why should they bother?” Berry asked, playing the devil’s advocate with his typical candor.

**Influence in DC.** The ALA as an organization has carefully picked its battles\(^{14}\) and in this way, it has managed to sidestep many a skirmish on Capitol Hill. But in so doing, it may

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\(^{13}\) See also the article Berry wrote after our conversation at: [http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2015/12/opinion/john-berry/idealism-reawakened-a-former-student-rejuvenates-an-old-editor-blatant-berry/](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2015/12/opinion/john-berry/idealism-reawakened-a-former-student-rejuvenates-an-old-editor-blatant-berry/)

\(^{14}\) The ALA’s focus in 2015 was on the SKILLs Act (S.312); the Freedom of Information Act (S.337 and H.R. 2048); the Electronic Communications Privacy Act Amendments (S.356); The Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (S.779); the USA FREEDOM Act (S.1123); and the Every Student Succeeds Act, i.e., the reauthorization of ESEA (S.1177), as well as promoting additional funding for the Innovative Approaches to
have sometimes flown too far under the radar to get noticed when the need arose. Berry characterized the ALA is an “organization with a huge membership but a thimble-full of power.” In fact, the ALA has a membership numbering more than 58,000 (ALA, Office of Government Relations, n.d.), certainly a respectable number of constituents. And although some of my participants didn’t know of its existence, they made clear the necessity of getting the organization to work to a greater degree in coalition for policy change. In point of fact, the ALA does have quite an impressive bevy of partners. [For example, the ALA was a co-signatory to a letter dated March 17, 2016 to the Appropriations Committee, along with eight pages of other signees (ALA, Education, 2016). See also the links to other letters evidencing partnerships via http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/federallegislation/schoollibraries. ] The willingness of the Disability Advocate participants in my study to also partner with the ALA and to have library representatives participate in policy-related discussion may offer another important inroad to getting noticed, to getting better policy on the books, and to actually getting much-needed funding so that school librarians can work with their students in the best way possible.

**Fragmentation.** Closely aligned with the Advocacy Partnerships Concept, the next cluster of findings has to with Fragmentation, Concept #2 in my original Conceptual Framework. This involves the multiple sources that help to generate ideas for policy, as well as the means used to forestall further development, discussion, and/or movement of those ideas. This created an interesting and rather disjointed Word Cloud.

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Literacy program and for the Library Services and Technology Act. (For access to a “legislative scorecard” that summarizes the voting of Congressional members on these various legislative items, see the House and Senate links at [http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/federallegislation/legscard](http://www.ala.org/advocacy/advleg/federallegislation/legscard).) More recently, it has also worked with the 114th Congress to see ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty, which is an international agreement to foster better access to copyrighted material for people with print disabilities, and in support of rules to ensure greater coverage of Internet access (as explained at [http://www.districtdispatch.org/policy-issues/issue-summary/](http://www.districtdispatch.org/policy-issues/issue-summary/)). It also aggressively pushed to have Dr. Carla Hayden named as the next Librarian of Congress (District Dispatch, LOC, 6/2016 and 7/2016).
Gatekeeping. Gatekeeping—that is, controlling access and discussion—in DC is fairly ubiquitous, and it impacts the general policy process on several levels. For example, at the highest level, the House Speaker or Congressional Committee Chair can effectively squelch movement of an issue by simply refusing to let it reach the Floor for discussion. Shortly after my time in DC, when ESEA discussions were heating up to a high degree, the ALA’s District Dispatch reported that “Speaker Ryan has said that unless he feels sure of passage, he will not bring the [ESEA] Conference Report to a vote” (McGilvray, 11/30/2015).
Somewhat lower down, and certainly familiar to anyone who has tried to gain access to a Congressional member or to his/her high-ranking staff, there is the frustrating experience of finding oneself headed-off-at-the-pass by the junior staffers manning the front desks that seem to be a fixture in every Congressional office. When doing the present research and visiting three Congressional offices, these junior staffs were unilaterally pleasant and helpful, but they do wield a discomforting amount of power in how they exercise control over who gets access to higher-ranking staff members. On the other hand, when I asked one of my participants whether messages ever actually made it through to a Congressional member, my fears were somewhat allayed:

[If you call the main line in the senator’s office, and say. ‘My name is such and such. I live in this zip-code. I’m a voter. I’m your constituent, and I’m concerned about this part of this bill’, [staff members] are documenting it. They’re looking at trends.]

(Disability Advocate #1)

The various agencies outside Capitol Hill that I visited also had gatekeepers—literally. Not only did each building on K Street have a security guard working the front desk at the ground-floor building entrance, but oftentimes there also was a receptionist greeting me in the offices I visited further within the building. In one instance of a cold-call I was making, the receptionist cheerfully took my introductory papers and seemingly quite sincerely promised to pass them along to the person I had asked to speak with and to get back to me with the contact information for that person; I never heard back from anyone at the organization. In another case, I had sent my materials and a request for an interview to a specific person at a Disability Advocacy agency; I was hopeful that I had found a kindred spirit, because in doing my review of the agency’s website, I had read that this individual was a former librarian. When I did not hear back from the individual in several weeks, I visited the organization to see if I could pinpoint a time for an interview. I made it past the ground-floor security guard, and then the receptionist in the
agency’s offices dutifully called the individual into the front office to chat with me. This would-be participant was something just short of hostile, saying that if I wanted information on libraries, I should visit the local public library. I then asked if there was someone else in the organization with whom I might speak, and was told that everyone was very busy and could not take the time to talk to me. Later, I received an email from this individual indicating that my information had been passed along to someone else in the organization--but I never heard back from anyone. I finally resorted to using two outside contacts of my own to help me gain access to someone else at the agency, and I was ultimately able to conduct an interview of another individual there. I thus learned firsthand that gatekeeping is very much a reality in DC. Accordingly, sometimes one has to detour around it to even begin a discussion within the realm of policy-making.

*Stakeholder input.* The idea that policy is developed with the input from multiple sources was indicated in several ways throughout my interviews. Each participant that presented some comment on the matter of idea sharing seemed to see this as part-and-parcel of the policy process, and some welcomed the input from diverse stakeholders. At the same time, there were indications that only certain individuals held the reins controlling how discussions proceeded.

Legislative Aide #2 indicated that it was standard procedure in her office to “speak to everyone,” and indeed, the Senator she represented insisted that all constituents get a prompt, human response when they voice their desire to talk to a staff member. When we discussed the reauthorization of the ESEA and whether the school library piece would be in the final version, the Participant noted that because Patty Murray, the ranking member of the HELP Committee, had herself been a teacher, school libraries would likely remain intact in the final ESEA. The
Participant also qualified this idea somewhat by pointing out that there has to be the “political will” for a Bill to reach the Senate floor.

Disability Advocate #1, in explaining further to me how individual agency values and positions filter through the policy-making process noted that: “Being a member of the Education Task Force does not mean that you speak in a single voice on any issues. We all have our specific issues and our specific perspective on the bigger and broader issues.” She further noted that “everybody listens to everybody. Yes, there’s disagreement. Yes, there’s friction. But we all know that we’re working towards the same end. We need a Bill that works.” And also, “Some of us have drawn the bottom line in different places from others. Some of us have drawn bright red lines over certain issues.”

But in explaining how the powerful Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (see also the findings sections on Timing and Advocacy Partnerships) helped to merge these sometimes divergent, individual agency-stakeholder voices, this Participant said:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The members came together to discuss and identify principles . . . Every single organization had the opportunity to sign on in support of that.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So it’s not just [names her organization] saying, ‘This is what we think is valuable in terms of ESEA reauthorization.’ It’s the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights that’s sending a letter to every single member of Congress, signed by 60 some organizations. Broad spectrum--civil rights, disability, education, child-serving, family-serving, women-serving organizations. Saying, ‘We, the undersigned, these are our values. This is what matters to us.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Disability Advocate #1)

The DC Consultant mentioned how the groups she has worked with had all together prepared a memo that outlined their position on the reauthorization of the HEA and its impact on students with disabilities. She alluded to the process, saying, “Okay. We know we have these
several themes, these are kind of our footholds in the HEA--what else would we like to do with that?” She recognized the need to work together, as well as the need to compromise. When we were discussing the ESEA legislation that she had worked a good deal on, I asked if she was satisfied with the way the legislation had ended up. She said: “Satisfied is probably the right word. [It] is a Bill of--as many of us have said--of many compromises. [The] Disability Community compromised with the Civil Rights Community.” And she went on to detail some of the areas in which the two communities had worked together over the assessment and accountability parts of the legislation.

The Think Tank Policy Analyst also weighed in on the idea of compromise and consensus. This Participant acknowledged that her organization was only: “a voice in the policy debate. We are not the voice, or the only voice.” She also indicated: “We try to build consensus. We don’t advocate for policies that are super out-of-left-field, that don’t make sense in the broader context of what’s happening.” She noted that they have--and use--professional contacts within the Department of Education and on Capitol Hill to help get their ideas across. But more players are needed to participate in the process: “Without really engaging people with diverse opinions and differing opinions than yourself, the solutions that you’re coming up with probably will not be as high-quality as they could be.” Furthermore, the Think Tank Participant said that it is “really important to consider the full spectrum of people involved and also all the overlapping communities that are impacted” when it comes to policy-making decisions.

However, this Participant also recognized the disparate views that come into play in the policy arena. Here is that part of the conversation:

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The highly technocratic nature of policy making in DC has spewed these kind of silos and silos and silos of different types of organizations trying to jockey for influence in the policy-making space. [It’s] just a very different world to step into. . . . [What] we really try to do is engage new audiences, engage new stakeholders, and engage folks at all levels of
governance, as well as the public, in what we’re doing—to re-inject voices, new voices, into the policy conversation.

[The Think Tank Policy Analyst later described a project she was working on that involved curriculum reform and working with several divergent groups of stakeholders.]

I’m trying to forge new relationships between groups that have never heard [of] one another because I think they could each benefit from one another’s perspectives. But often times your silos just don’t overlap at all—there’s no kind of middle to your Venn diagram. And so I don’t know that there are enough people who are actively making connections, either in academia or government, or quite frankly between local governments and state governments, between state governments and federal governments. I think people are very much content to sit in their own sphere of influence and not venture outside.

(Think Tank Policy Analyst)

This Participant summed up the concept of divergent groups helping to create policy, by saying:

**Having a healthy dose of all sorts of other groups—trade associations that are representing lobbies of businesses; membership organizations that are representing constituents; groups like ours that try and have objective policy research that is infusing academia [and] academic research into the policy conversation—there are a lot of people involved in this ecosystem.**

And then you have your lobbyists and your governors . . . It’s just a very busy cacophony of voices.

(Think Tank Policy Analyst)

In the next section, I will present the cluster of findings on Bounded Rationality—the ways in which an issue gets noticed within this busy cacophony of voices.

**Bounded Rationality.** The final cluster of findings stemming from my conceptual framework is the concept that I had originally placed first, Bounded Rationality. This concept represents the limited amount of attention that decision makers can give to an issue—and the necessity for the issue to be seen as an item that warrants attention in the first place. It would seem fairly straightforward to acknowledge that decision-makers do not have unlimited amounts
of time and energy to devote to the various and sundry issues that may be presented to them. However, this idea was threaded through several of my interviews indirectly, with differing implications for each.

**Congressional offices.** Getting noticed within a Congressional office as worthy of further time and attention is key to ensuring movement of a new policy or of policy change. Such notice is unnervingly precarious, however, and may be subject to—as one Disability Advocate put it, “personalities--always, you know, as with anything there are personalities.”

**Sympathies.** The sympathies of some legislators can be garnered because it is widely known that within Congress, there are “champions” for both libraries and for disability policy. Regarding the former, throughout my research into ESEA and its connection to school libraries, it was quite clear that Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) in particular, and Senators Cochran (R-MS) and Whitehouse (D-RI) were frequent proponents of positioning libraries in the law (Congress.Gov,
S.312 SKILLs Act, 2015/2016). Regarding the disability community, Disability Advocate #3 told me that “It’s finding out who has been touched by disability and what their experience is. Often times you meet with staffers and they’re like, ‘Oh yeah, my nephew has autism.’ Or, ‘My cousin has MS’ -- or whatever it is.” My own experience echoed this finding: While interviewing Legislative Aide #2, we talked briefly about my role working with the Illinois State Library’s Targeting Autism grant. This participant was very interested because her nephew falls on the autism spectrum, and she knew that his family members had tried to find resources in their community to support his needs.

**Gatekeepers again.** But there is more involved here than honing in on a decision-maker’s sympathies, and the additional aspect hearkens back to the notion of gatekeepers in the Fragmentation cluster. Legislative Aide #3 made it clear that staff like herself play an important role: “We are the eyes and ears of [and she mentions her Congressperson’s name]. He can’t possibly be aware of everything, because there is a lot of legislation.” So if these young professionals are those eyes and ears, how can we on the outside be sure that information is actually passed along? We can’t really. But as mentioned in the Fragmentation cluster, at least one of my interviewees seemed to be confident that the messages were getting through somehow. Disability Advocate #1 indicated that “there are very, very clear communication protocols that are expected as a member of Congress,” so staff members are obligated to track the messages that come in.

**Bottom lines and priorities.** The issues that might grab a Congressional member’s interest long enough for him or her to take some action are dependent on sympathies and personal experiences as was mentioned, as well as on political priorities. One of my Disability Advocate participants put it this way:
As easy as it is to say that Congress is completely obstructionist right now—as a whole, I would agree with that. But as individuals, a lot of these folks really do understand what their job is. I was going to say that they really do care, but I don’t think I should go that far. They understand what their job is. [The] other part of it is that, that member of Congress has a bottom line too, because they’re accountable to all kinds of people besides their voters.

So where does that position fall within their bottom line? I can tell you that I have been in Congressional offices where the staff and/or member of Congress themselves has said, ‘I haven’t heard from ANY of my constituents about this issue, so I’m not sure that it’s the problem that you think it is.’

The flip side of that is if they’ve heard from three people on the same issue that I’m sitting in their office talking about on that day? Then it sorts and sifts [she gestures with her fingers to show floating and filtering downward] through their priority level—to at least a discussion. I mean, they may not support it, but --at least, a discussion.

(Disability Advocate #1)

**Focusing attention.** My interviews also turned up findings suggesting that advocates trying to make compelling arguments for policy change also try to provide information in its most palatable form. As discussed previously (see the Timing section of this chapter), the Think Tank Policy Analyst had noted that within her organization “there’s a varying kind of response rate and how targeted you want your message to be” when policy movement is in the offing on Capitol Hill. But it seems clear that think tank workers are operating under the assumption that providing information to the legislative staffers is a critical element in the policy process. And that information has to be available quickly and in a form that will be easily digested: “When you have such young staffers staffing Congressmen and women on such a diversity of issues that they may or may not know anything about, they’re looking somewhere for bullet points. They’re not reading peer-reviewed research.” In my conversation with this participant, she also commented on how prolific Fordham Institute president, Michael Petrilli, is on social media—which certainly could be another means of getting a message across to young DC staffers. And
so a think tank may try several tactics to ensure that information is made available to those in contact with top-line decision-makers, including using blogs, op-eds, syndicated publications, fully researched reports, commentaries on federal hearings, books authored by policy analysts, and a smattering of writings for peer-reviewed journals.

**Libraries.** The question of libraries warrants mention regarding the concept of Bounded Rationality in terms of how it plays out with Washington, DC, policy-makers. In the Framing section, I noted that the topic of libraries was not on the minds of the participants of my interviews. Yes, for the most part the interviewees spoke in generally favorable terms about their library experiences—although these experiences were not just in school libraries. But the fact that libraries were not on their radar speaks to the very likely possibility that libraries are not viewed as an issue that merits the limited attention available to lawmakers. Senator Jack Reed worked for decades—from the time when he was a State Representative in the 1990’s (see the discussion of this in Chapter 2)—to position school libraries back into the ESEA legislation. And while libraries do appear in the language of the new ESSA law, time will tell how much funding will actually accrue to school libraries when individual States determine how to spend their federal ESSA dollars in coming years. This will then involve the issue of where libraries fall in the attention fields of the State and local decision makers.

Perhaps the positioning of school libraries within the realm of DC policy was put best during a casual conversation I had with a freelance journalist from *Education Week* as we left an event at the Fordham Institute in early November. I explained my research to the journalist, who listened with interest, but then responded: “You know, in my 25 years covering education issues, I have never been asked to write about libraries.” She paused, thought a bit, and then added: “Maybe libraries are so ubiquitous, we don’t think about them until they are gone.”
Big Ideas. In my Washington, DC, conversations, Participants sometimes said things that fell outside the six Critical Concepts I had outlined in my conceptual framework. In addition, there were findings that seemed especially important to me in understanding the complex policy arena. This last cluster of findings I have labeled simply, “Big Ideas,” and it is a catch-all for Participant comments that I view as most notable. I highlight some of the terms and ideas that stand out for me in the resultant, rather full Word Cloud; and I would note again that the fine print is often more--or quite as--telling as the large print.

Government and young staffers. Before I began my interviews, I recognized that some aspects of completing my work in Washington, DC, might make it difficult for me to completely practice the disconnecting necessary in phenomenological research (see my earlier discussions in the Context section that begins this chapter and in the Methods of Inquiry chapter). What I did
not anticipate was that some of my participants would be far younger than I was—and in fact very close in age to my daughters in their mid- to late-twenties. This was particularly true of the Legislative Aides I talked to (and virtually every staffer that I saw in the Congressional offices I visited). I do not in any way want to denigrate these workers: they were helpful, sincere, articulate, and seemingly excellent spokespersons for the Congressional members they represented. But I was concerned and curious about why they were all so young, and this factor came up in my conversations with two Participants.

The Thank Tank Policy Analyst explained to me her view of the matter. This followed our discussion of the types of media used by her organization aimed at reaching these staffers.

PNF: I was struck by the fact that like you said, the people that are staffing the Legislators are all young. Is that just now or has it always been that way?

TTPA: Having never worked on the Hill myself, I couldn’t speak to the historical nature, but I know that the burnout rate is pretty quick, from my observation. And there are certainly still staffers who work on the Hill who’ve been there for a very long time and who’ve worked for their Congressman or woman for a very long time--starting, you know, maybe at a State office and working their way here, and working their way up to Chief-of-Staff. But I feel like those positions are often replaced with younger faces.

I suspect that part of that has to do with the very large presence of lobbying organizations that recruit staffers away from the Hill at much higher salaries. There’s a premium that is placed on folks who have Hill experience working for a lot of the Associations and lobbying firms in DC, because they understand the legislative process and they have connections.

During my chat with the ALA Lobbyist, I mentioned my amazement at how young the Legislative staffers were that I had encountered. The Lobbyist indicated that the job is so demanding, requiring such long hours and so much energy, that the staffers have to be young.
Voice, groups, and organizations. There is no doubt that in order to be heard in the policy arena, a unified voice of merged groups and organizations is more effective than individual voices. The idea of working in coalitions is the accepted practice in DC, and there was general openness amongst my Disability Advocate Interviewees to expanding this participation to include the library profession.

What was somewhat surprising, however, came up in the conversation I had with the DC Consultant. She told me: “You need to understand the Disability Community.” She noted that while the library groups in comparison are far more limited in number, “It is different in our community, because of the size and range of issues.” This results in diverse needs and legislative agendas stemming from the 150+ disability organizations that are part of this complex community. Given that attention is at such a premium on Capitol Hill, it would therefore be necessary for these disparate groups to join forces—the “more voices have more weight” idea.

Named in my various interviews, the Leadership Conference of Civil and Human Rights, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, and the very education-focused National Universal Design for Learning Task Force (see http://www.udlcenter.org/advocacy for more information on this latter organization), were groups that I had previously been unaware of, but which have agendas that could certainly overlap with those in the library profession.

Silos. On the other hand, the comment by the Think Tank Policy Analyst that oftentimes in Washington, “silos don’t overlap” could be paired with another comment I heard from one Disability Advocate that perhaps, libraries are too insular and that the business model of libraries needs to change with the changing times. Here I will mention that part of this issue may in fact stem from the differing views that the general public has about libraries, versus how the library profession sees itself. This was addressed in the blue box discussion of the Will Libraries? panel
in the Framing cluster section. But the concept of silos in the policy process forms an
incongruous juxtaposition with the prevalent presence of coalitions. What other groups besides
libraries were considered as possibly being siloed?

The term was mentioned relative to both the many kinds of organizations that are part of
the policy-making scene in Washington, as well as, in particular, the world of academia. The
Participant from the think tank said: “I think that there is a real disconnect in how siloed higher
education has become.” In the conversation that ensued, there was discussion of the kind of
disconnect between the education practices learned in universities and colleges, and the world of
education-research in DC—such as that produced within the many think tanks there—that is
influencing the actual policy under which teachers have to work. So while think tanks may try to
instill “new voices into the policy conversation,” there is a gap in how this connects with—and is
translated into—what is taught back at the university level. And vice versa: The Think Tank
Policy Analyst also pointed out: “Someone had to try and mine what was happening out in the
world and bring it back to DC”—which is part of the think tank’s function. And yet, combining
the real world of practice with that of DC policy generation is not easy and has not necessarily
been very effective.

**Tricky business.** The comment made by the Think Tank Analyst that “interacting with
government is a very tricky business” is an understatement of colossal proportions. Several mid-
sized words and phrases taken from the Big Ideas Word Cloud, e.g., *real challenge, talk, changes, in DC, issues, between, figuring out,* and *opinions,* are in line with this sentiment.
Indeed, for those of us who are not in DC, some very real barriers exist concerning exactly how
what we know from our work in the trenches of teaching, librarianship, and/or disabilities can
possibly be translated into meaningful policy. The many complex aspects of the policy-making
process not only make movement towards change a daunting task, but also result in the disconnections spoken of earlier. This is particularly so because while there is a tendency towards the status quo in Washington, there are also the uncertainties and shiftings in leadership and the nuances of political ideologies that impact opportunities for change. Such opportunities may be more prevalent in pre-Presidential election years--such as the time during which I was doing my research. But the fact that a Congress is seated as a particular entity for only two years before House members come up for re-election, likely means that the attention of many Congressional members is actually focused for a substantial percentage of their term in office on their own re-election bids, and that the time to solidify a shared understanding of and concern for policy issues that require change is in reality extremely short. Keeping traction in these shifting sands of attention is truly a tricky and difficult undertaking.

Further Discussion

My initial study questions were aimed at trying to find out what it is about school libraries that have made them so seemingly inconsequential in federal education policy. I was trying to find out:

(1) What have been the experiences in school libraries of individuals with and without disabilities who work in policy-related positions in Washington, DC?

(2) How can what is learned about these experiences shape improvements to the practice of school librarians?

(3) How can what is learned from these conversations with policy makers increase our understanding of the various factors involved in the policy-making process? And
(4) How then can we in the library profession work to advance policy that ensures an effective role for school libraries in supporting the education of all children, including those with disabilities?

Following, I discuss these questions relative to my research findings. In addition, in response to Question #3, I reconsider the conceptual framework that I used to view the policy-making arena, and offer an explanation of its general accuracy in terms of how I saw things unfolding in Washington throughout my study.

**Question 1--School library experiences.** I began this research in part because I was baffled--to use the word of the late Congressman Major Owens--about why school libraries were not considered an integral part of education policy, and in particular, of ESEA during the past several decades. Indeed I wondered if school libraries conjured up recall of experiences and images that caused a collective shunning by policy makers. What I found by talking to disability advocates and legislative staff who work on policy development in Washington, DC, was something else altogether: School libraries are not thought about in a generally negative way; they simply are not thought about at all. As one of my participants said about her school libraries, “I don’t think I felt one way or another about them”--and this unconcern has kept them off the radar of policy-makers. My interviews thus did not turn up a single essential description of the school library experience, which is what I had set out to do.

My discussions about libraries involved a topic that simply was not on the minds of those I interviewed, making the “Is anyone really even talking about libraries anymore?” response pretty much par for the course. To be sure, once a discussion was underway, interviewees had generally good things to say about their school library experience. And although there are some
negatives in evidence, these have more to do with what was not said or the way wording was couched than with actual criticisms raised due to personal library experiences.

On the plus side, the school library was seen as a place to develop important fundamentals, i.e., early literacy skills, recognizing and reading books of various genres, research, reference work, story-telling and story writing, listening, and learning how to be calm. It was a refuge and an environment suitable and safe enough to house the obligatory public school first sex-education lessons. It was also viewed as an asset--though “hidden”--and as being uncontroversial in the main. But on the other hand, there were things school libraries were not: In the case of high-school libraries in particular, they were simply not memorable at all, and school libraries in general were not well-resourced or emphasized as an important venue for learning. Indeed, one participant noted how she was steered to her public library for information, while another participant mentioned, surprisingly enough, not using her school library for the reading she loved to do. School libraries also were not considered essential because of the prevalence of technology everywhere else; they were not thought of as a direct source of instruction; and in at least one instance, the resources in the library were not accessible.

Of particular interest in my research, the school library did not spring to mind as an adjunct to the education and support of students with disabilities. One of my participants, who self-identified as having dyslexia, indicated that she knew what was in all the books in the library, but she could not access what was there. Another participant indicated that her son, who has special needs, never brings home anything from his school library. Granted these instances may reflect more about the way special education services and support were and are handled in these particular schools, but they may also point to a pervasive lapse in what the school library could and should be providing for students with diverse special needs. And these comments by
SCHOOL LIBRARIES, DISABILITIES, AND POLICY CHANGE

Policy-makers are not well aligned with what librarians say about themselves and the service their facilities offer, including to “vulnerable populations”: Librarians may view themselves as “learning agents” in a premium space (“the space is the service”), but non-librarians aren’t viewing things this way. These differences in perspective, particularly the fact that the library is not seen as a direct source of instruction to students—a most damning finding—are likely a primary reason why libraries have not been routinely included in education legislation.

Question 2--Shaping improvements to library practice. By and large, policy makers are not thinking about school libraries. More importantly, they are not thinking about them as connected to the educational structure that is influenced by federal policy. My participants did not dislike libraries, but the general nonchalance evidenced towards them is not likely to engender widespread spontaneous support for them either.

What do these findings suggest about improvements to library practice that might be needed? Although I recognize my response smacks of vacillation, the answer to this question is more complicated and convoluted than it seems. Prevailing thought, common sense, practice, and the law do not necessarily converge on how students are or should be supported in the school library. It is thus the case that in too many settings, libraries and librarians are not having the kind of impact on students with and without disabilities that they could be having. Mentioned by my participants were under-resourced libraries—which of course make it difficult to support the learning needs of the students who spend time there. In addition, a participant noted that she thought the same accommodations that are provided elsewhere in the school for students with disabilities should be provided in the library. But this is not necessarily the way things play out in actuality. Accommodations are often not provided in the school library, and this is owing in part to the lack of resources—as just noted—but also because, as the DC Consultant indicated,
unless an IEP is shared with the librarian, he or she cannot take action based on an assumption that a student has a disability. The constraints of confidentiality don’t allow for this. And although many kinds of disability are indeed contextual, as a practical matter not all students can leave their particular disability outside the library and function completely unsupported when they enter there.

This creates the conundrum of the school library: On the one hand, libraries are under-resourced and therefore, what students need cannot always be provided; but without the knowledge of what is needed, the resources that are provided may continue to miss the mark. And if libraries are not viewed as a direct source of instruction, then the limited funding available is likely to be diverted to purchase resources elsewhere in the school. Thus there becomes even less opportunity to provide what is needed in support of the students (especially those with special needs)—and the cycle continues to spiral away from the library as an effective venue for student learning. And on the other hand, although improvements in the actual practice of school librarians may indeed be necessary, such improvements will be unlikely to occur unless and until the library garners a larger chunk of the professional-development pie.

However, if librarians are not viewed as instructional, the emphasis on training them, whether in-service or pre-service, is unlikely to occur. And so it becomes a perpetual cycle of ill-fit. The new ESEA/ESSA legislation does allow for library resources and specific professional training to be provided—although not necessarily with students who have disabilities. It is too early to tell how this will evolve into the potential for improved practice. Part of the resolution here may ultimately lie in the policy process. By understanding it better and becoming a more integral part of it, the library profession may gain an important foothold to improving its own practice. This is discussed in the next section.
**Question 3--Understanding the policy-making process.** There is no doubt that policy making is complex, and as I learned through my conversations with policy workers in Washington, DC, it involves numerous players, much time and effort, and many, many bumps in the road. Here I will re-visit my Critical Concepts Framework in light of what I understood to be happening in DC. This will provide insights to the third question, *How can what is learned from these conversations with policy makers increase our understanding of the various factors involved in the policy-making process?*

**Critical concepts framework revisited.** I developed the Critical Concepts Framework because I needed some way to reign in my thinking about what might be going on in the federal education policy-making realm. I had a background in urban planning and policy—but my experience in that field was long past and actually more closely aligned to the planning end than to the policy piece. There are admittedly various ways one can view the policy-making process and there are many moving parts involved. The six critical concepts in my original framework offered what seemed to me to be a logical means of honing in on what I viewed as the most pertinent aspects of policy making. But with that said, exactly how good a fit did I find the concepts in the framework to be, once I was in the midst of my research and given the areas of policy-making that I was investigating? As I indicated earlier when analyzing my interview transcripts, I found firstly that I needed to reorder the six concepts to better reflect what the data appeared to emphasize. Figure 8 is a revised diagram for the Framework, depicting how I interpret the critical concepts now. This represents my own progression in understanding the policy-change phenomenon.

**Framing.** The concept of Framing was confirmed as a key to the policy process, but admittedly with a degree of irony in this case, because of its absence in my study, not its
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presence. The idea of something, such as an issue, an event, or a needed action, has to exist in a fairly similar way in the minds of enough policy makers for it to become a policy agenda-item. This is the basic structure of framing, and politicos work hard to get a certain frame fixed in the minds of policy makers. In my research, it was clear that this basic structure did not exist concerning school libraries in the thinking of my participants. Indeed, there was not a particular frame in mind, because libraries were not on the minds of those with whom I spoke. Such a circumstance throughout the DC policy-making realm likely accounts for the lackluster presence of school libraries in educational policy during the past several decades. This helps to explain the “baffling” piece spoken of by Congressman Major Owens. The frame has to exist in order for action to occur: No frame, no action. Framing is very closely tied to the two critical concepts that involve timing, as is discussed in the section that follows.

Timing (policy takes time & opportunity for change does occur). Subsumed under the single heading of Timing in the revised conceptual framework are the critical concepts concerning the length of time policy-change takes and the opportunities that occur for changes to be made. During my study, I found both of these concepts to hold true, and indeed, their importance should not be underestimated. Efforts to change policy take a long, long time. In my DC conversations, this was an accepted condition of the policy process. One participant mentioned having worked on a piece of legislation for eight years or so, and it finally was made part of the 2015 reauthorized ESEA. Similarly and although the ALA has proven its ability at lobbying over the long-haul to get language about school libraries into ESEA legislation, its own efforts and those of its major champion, Senator Reed (D-RI), were often thwarted during the past decades. In addition to patience, the evolution of policy involves watchfulness and readiness. My participants noted something of an ear-to-the-ground aspect of keeping in touch
Figure 8—Critical Concepts Framework, Revised

- Policy Change
- Bounded Rationality
- Fragmentation
- Advocacy Partnerships
- Timing
- Framing
- Opportunities for Change Do Occur
- Policy Change Takes Time
with possible allies, as well as the various strategy sessions their coalitions held as the ESEA legislation started to heat up on Capitol Hill. This level of ever-ready preparedness meant that when the time was right, policy-makers were able to jump into the fray, well-armed and with the strength of their numbers behind them.

However, I also learned that the timing concepts are closely tied to framing: In my study, participating disability advocates who were involved in the ESEA reauthorization arena, were not thinking at all about school libraries in the education policy they were working on. There simply was no library frame in their minds. But once the idea came up in my interviews with them, it seemed that a preliminary and a useful school-library frame started to form. To several participants the frame became structured to the degree that a library piece presented itself in their view as potentially viable enough to be raised within other legislation besides ESEA, namely, within the Higher Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (HEA and IDEA, respectively) as well. To this end, participants indicated to me that the time for getting a library piece into these other laws was now, even though reauthorization is likely several years down the road. It became clear to me that to be successful in gaining a position in prospective policy, an entity/issue has to be consistently framed and well-known in the present, as well as going forward and for as long as it takes. Plus, it also takes time to develop and keep a suitable frame in the minds of policy makers. Closely related and also necessary in this scenario is the critical concept of Advocacy Partnerships, which I will discuss very shortly.

I should mention here that an element of timing, or, maintaining the status quo--which for good or ill holds policy at a relative stand-still--came up a few times in my conversations. There was no doubt that some of my policy makers recognize it as a reality, even as did many political policy theorists (e.g., Baumgartner, Berry et al., 2009; Kingdon, 1984/2011; Lindblom, 1959;
However, the sluggishness of Congress was viewed favorably by at least one legislative aide who saw it as a way of ensuring carefulness within the policy process. But there is another aspect of not changing legislation that also was apparent: Sometimes maintaining the status quo is a way of biding one’s time. For example, one of my participants saw no utility in moving on IDEA or HEA policy now, given the make-up of our present Congress. Another participant was dubious about the excitement over ESEA reauthorization in early November 2015, because in the past, whatever movement did exist was soon proven to be merely “blowing smoke.” I learned in Washington that although there is a tendency towards the status quo in policy making, holding back may look the same from the outside, but it is a purposeful strategy that is used when necessary.

Advocacy partnerships. Advocacy Partnerships are essential within the policy process—if one wants to be sure that policy gets advanced. Membership in an established coalition is the norm in Washington. My disability advocate participants were clear on the necessity of working in coalition, and most were also active members of the various break-out specialized task forces that the coalitions have developed. It is important for an organization to participate and devote the resources of time, effort, and expertise to these coalitions.

Such membership has clear advantages. There is indeed power in numbers: Voices in chorus—even if not unison, but in some semblance of harmony instead—are the reigning cry of those who create policy. I heard this from several disability advocates, from the think tank participant, and from a legislative aide. But I learned that there is more involved than that louder voice. Membership in a coalition affords one a seat at the table when policy discussions are first occurring. That is where those who want to create or change policy need to be. Even when there is disagreement among the coalition members—and there always will be, as several participants
noted—-a seat at the table still yields a crucial say in the conversation. And this is where the seeds of ideas are planted to eventually become policy.

In addition, by sitting in on these conversations, the various organizations that make up a partnership become recognizable and familiar to their fellow members. Several of my participants were unaware of the existence of the ALA and had wondered about its absence in some of their coalitions. Being present might expand the opportunity to better learn about and listen to the issues and needs faced by these other members and, most importantly, to form new reciprocal support relationships. Such visibility and mutual cooperation (the ‘I carry some of your water today, and tomorrow you carry some of mine’ idea) may have a particular benefit to those organizations that typically maintain a fairly low profile (like the ALA) amongst the DC powerhouse lobbying organizations. By being present at the table, an enhanced frame may begin to develop and stick in the minds of other advocacy partners when they see this lesser known organization working with them on a continuing basis. Thus cultivation of all types of partnerships, even those with seemingly disparate legislative agendas (versus the ‘they need to show me some legislation I can get behind’ sentiment that was voiced to me) may reap significant benefits further down the road. Building and keeping Advocacy Partnerships is necessary to advancing policy in DC.

**Fragmentation.** Fragmentation as a concept in the policy-making process is especially difficult to get a handle on. Yes there was the realization amongst my participants that multiple stakeholders should weigh-in when policy is formulated. But unfortunately, the mechanisms for engendering this weigh-in are not clearly defined in the policy arena. Knowing the *when* (as noted in the *Timing* section), the *who*, and the *how* of articulating a view to government is “tricky” indeed. It can also involve multiple methods of attack and some level of insider status
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(e.g., membership in an Advocacy Partnership). Furthermore, weigh-in attempts are often thwarted by individuals and/or institutional rules and traditions of various sorts: There are those making the orders (the House Speaker who refused to bring the ESEA Conference Report to the Floor without a guarantee of the necessary votes), those who are following orders (the Legislative Aides I talked to), and then there are those who just can’t imagine doing anything differently (as noted by one Disability Advocate concerning the bureaucrats she had worked under). And so gatekeepers, intentional or not, are everywhere. Bumping up against them may require an unanticipated change in plans to allow for circumnavigation, waiting it out (as discussed in the Timing section), rethinking a plan (e.g., the strategizing sessions held within an Advocacy Partnership), giving in a bit (the necessary compromise noted by several of my participants), or giving up completely to put one’s efforts and resources elsewhere. But as my Think Tank Participant indicated--and Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) as well--the wider the pool from which policy ideas are drawn and the more buy-in from diverse stakeholders, the more likely good policy will actually come to fruition. Fragmentation does exist in the policy realm. It is a necessary evil.

*Bounded Rationality.* Although it is true and important that decision-makers can only hold so much information in their heads at once, I have exchanged the position of Bounded Rationality in the framework with that of the concept of Framing. Legislators cannot know everything about a piece of policy: one of my Legislative Aide Interviewees indicated as much. DC policy makers garner attention from such a vast array of sources--“a lot of people [are] involved in this ecosystem”--it would be impossible to keep fully abreast of everything that is going on and all of the implications involved. This is precisely what Simon (1955; 1985) indicated years and years ago. What I grew to understand was that the *what* of the information...
coming to mind is more important than the how much. An issue in a commonly recognizable form (e.g., a frame) has to be lurking somewhere within the mindset of a decision-maker—even if only as a glimmer now, but with the potential to become a larger idea later—in order for any sort of policy change to occur.

The policy process and school libraries. The information coming out of my conversations in Washington, DC, confirmed the importance of the various concepts I had identified in my conceptual framework, with some re-positioning and changes in emphasis. The concepts of Framing, Timing (sub-divided into Policy Change Takes Time, and Opportunities For Change Do Occur), Advocacy Partnerships (Fragmentation falls within this province), and Bounded Rationality should be recognized as important pieces of the policy-making puzzle. Framing has taken on the top position in my Critical Concepts framework now. When those in the policy-making realm are not even attuned to the idea of school libraries within education legislation and there is no clear school library frame in their minds, the issue of libraries simply will not find a foothold in the policy. This factor likely accounts for the lackluster appearance of libraries in federal education legislation in the past several decades. Even now, although school libraries have found a place in the new ESSA, it is not a prominent position by any means. Additionally, the all-important funding of library programs is not a done deal, even with library wording in the law. This has implications for the answer to my fourth research question, discussed following.

Question 4--Working to advance library policy for all students. When I began this research, I admittedly did not expect that movement on ESEA would take on such a life of its own. It was indeed serendipitous that my work coincided with both a critical change in the reigning party of the Congress owing to the November 2014 mid-term elections, and the pending
2016 Presidential and Congressional elections—circumstances that together impacted the opportunity to reauthorize ESEA. On the one hand, the Republican-controlled Congress had a vastly different ideology to put forth in the revamped legislation than President Obama’s current Department of Education administrators were operating under; and on the other hand, President Obama presumably wanted to close out his term with the new education law having his stamp on it, even while many Congressional members on both sides of the aisle were working towards adding to their accomplishment arsenals for their own November 2016 re-election bids. So while tracking the prospective changes to ESEA throughout 2015 was challenging, the legislation (like my research), remained an evolving work-in-progress from month to month. This offered a unique opportunity to see policy-making in action and to hear from those who were familiar and actually involved with the process.

**Co-existing circumstances.** My research showed that the policy process involves several circumstances that need to exist together, namely, a clear and cohesive frame that suggests an issue should be addressed; coalitions or partnerships that can give a stronger voice to policy work; and appropriate timing. A reauthorized version of ESEA did become a reality and it did contain more school library language than did prior versions of the law. None of these library references in ESSA specifically mention working with students who have disabilities—although a case can certainly be made for construing them in that light. Funding for the school library pieces in the new ESEA/ESSA is not assured at this writing by any means, so the potential for school librarians to more effectively work with their diverse body of students, including those who have disabilities, is also not assured. What could we, as the library profession, do to gain a stronger foothold and more effective role in such policy?
Initial contacts. My participants from the Disability Advocacy Community expressed interest in forming a working relationship with the library profession. Three specific examples that came up in my conversations are:

(1) A contact person at the ALA. This person would serve as something like an informational liaison to work with the disability community, including for example, first, writing an article for the newsletter of the national organization where I conducted an interview--and other organizations might follow suit--to explain how libraries can be of service to disabled patrons; and second, discussing and making other kinds of possible interactions and connections.

(2) A partnership between the library profession and the disability community under a service project grant program. The agency at which I conducted the interview during which this was mentioned also procures grants, and this particular participant voiced interest in getting local library groups involved in a project that might cement a relationship with her clients.

(3) A meeting between the library profession and the education task forces of several DC-based coalitions to discuss points of common legislative concern. The DC Consultant was quite open to seeing how the library profession can partner more closely with the education and disability advocacy task forces she is active on.

These opportunities warrant follow-up, and they are not necessarily too far afield from actions librarians are taking elsewhere in communities around the country. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are a number of programs and pilot initiatives wherein librarians are working with various disability support and service groups to better understand the needs of persons with autism spectrum disorders and other disabilities. But greater involvement at the ALA organizational level in Washington with disability stakeholders in DC would signify the library
profession’s commitment to better understand and partner with the disability community\textsuperscript{15} and would provide an opportunity for the disability community to better understand us. Such involvement would also help us become better recognized as an ally to our stakeholders, and open new paths for action within the policy-making arena.

\textit{Legislative days.} Another way for librarianship to gain a stronger foothold in the policy process could involve its annual National Legislative Days event (held this year, May 2-3, 2016), which actually coincided with my writing the Findings chapter of this paper. As is typical during this event, library advocates converged on Capitol Hill to speak to Congressional members and/or staff about the importance of libraries, pending legislation that impacts librarianship, and funding needs. The ALA’s press release deemed the event “successful,” indicating that some 400 library advocates participated in the meetings and sessions held on Capitol Hill, and that hundreds more participated via online links to the proceedings (Lindle, 2016).

I suggest that the ALA take a new approach to its Legislative Days: In addition to the time spent meeting with Capitol Hill staff, this event could be used to make progress in developing new partnerships with the types of disability advocacy organizations for which my interviewees worked, as well as with various well-known DC-based education coalitions such as those mentioned by my participants (i.e., the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, and the National Universal Design for Learning Task Force). Via contacts with disability representatives who are headquartered along K Street, Legislative Day conversations could be aimed at gaining further understanding of the service-supports that the library profession could provide to this community. These conversations would also provide an opportunity to exchange ideas about

\textsuperscript{15}I can provide information concerning the agencies at which I conducted interviews to the ALA’s Washington office or to the appropriate individuals within its Chicago headquarters; the need to protect the anonymity of my participants precludes my doing so herein.
pending legislation and the potential points of intersection within these policies between the library profession and the various disability-advocacy stakeholder groups. To expand on the comment by my Think Tank Participant (as mentioned earlier in the Fragmentation section):

There is a good deal of room for overlap in the Venn diagram formed by the library profession on the one side, and various disability advocacy groups on the other; working together during the Legislative Day event, and beyond, to broaden this intersecting space would be beneficial to all.

Summary

In this very long chapter I have laid out the findings of my interview research with policy-makers in Washington, using the six concepts of my Critical Concepts Framework as points of discussion. These concepts are: framing, policy change takes time, opportunities for change do occur, advocacy partnerships, fragmentation, and bounded rationality. I also added one general category, Big Ideas, which embraced findings that stood out for me but that did not fall within the six critical concepts. Of the original concepts, the framing, timing, and advocacy partnerships concepts emerged as the most important.

I also provided herein answers to the four primary questions with which I began my research. These questions concerned experiences in school libraries and in the policy-making arena. I was not entirely successful in finding what could be considered the essential “school library experience” as I had set out to do. Instead, I found that policy-makers in DC are not thinking at all about school libraries when they are working on education policy. In addition, I saw discrepancies between how my participants were framing libraries and how the library profession frames itself. One of the most unsettling discrepancies was that those outside the profession are generally not viewing libraries as a direct source of instruction. In order for school libraries to take on a greater role in education policy, this view has got to change. My
interview findings did yield some possible steps that the library profession—and particularly the ALA—could take to help change this view and enhance its position amongst its community of stakeholders and thereby also possibly within education policy.

In the chapter that follows, I discuss the limitations of my study and some caveats about doing similar research in a venue such as Washington, DC. I offer several ideas for future research, and I also reflect on the primary takeaways I got from completing this investigation.
Chapter 6--Conclusions

Research Overview and Recap

In the fall of 2015, I made three trips to Washington, DC, to conduct interviews with DC policy makers about their experiences in school libraries and within the federal policy-making arena. My initial study questions were aimed at trying to find out what it is about school libraries that have made them so seemingly inconsequential in federal education policy. I was trying to find out:

(1) What have been the experiences in school libraries of individuals with and without disabilities who work in policy-related positions in Washington, DC?

(2) How can what is learned about these experiences shape improvements to the practice of school librarians?

(3) How can what is learned from these conversations with policy makers increase our understanding of the various factors involved in the policy-making process? And

(4) How then can we in the library profession work to advance policy that ensures an effective role for school libraries in supporting the education of all children, including those with disabilities?

In doing this research, I stepped far outside my comfort zone and onto the shaky ground of interviewing people I did not know in a culture I was not part of. In the following section I offer up limitations, suggestions, and general comments concerning doing this research. Thereafter I summarize my key findings and the follow-up actions suggested from this study. Interspersed throughout are several ideas for further research.
Limitations and Suggestions

Patton (2002) points out that qualitative research may be constrained by context, timing, and selectivity. This is indeed true for me. It is difficult to imagine that future researchers will be able to avail themselves of the plum positioning that I had. I did my research in Washington, DC, just prior to a Presidential election, when a major piece of legislation was up for reauthorization after years of languishing in controversy. Policy-makers at various levels were actively working to ensure that ESEA was overhauled and signed into law. Although I was looking through a disability studies lens at only a very small piece (i.e., school libraries) of this legislation, I was able to talk with individuals who understood how this revamping process occurred and who were actually involved in it. Certainly the context, timing, and the selection of my respondents was unique. And yet, my study provided a glimpse into the lived experiences with libraries and the policy-making process of individuals who represent a larger continuum: There is really no reason to suspect that my participants are the only ones in Washington who are not thinking about school libraries when they work on education policy. However, future research could review policy processes at the state and local levels to confirm whether those policy-makers are thinking at all about ways that school libraries can more effectively fit within our educational systems, and why or why not this might be so.

Interviewing insights and caveats. I came to Washington with a limited amount of interviewing experience. I thus had a steep learning curve to surmount very quickly in DC’s policy-making culture. This is a limitation for which more seasoned researchers likely do not need to account, but I believe my interviews improved over time. My interview data ultimately consisted of seven formal interviews, one informational and more informal interview, and three conversations that were somewhat casual in nature.
I began my study with a list of questions I intended to ask about school library experiences, and about the impetus in becoming enmeshed in the policy-making arena as well as experiences within that arena. But even with my first participant encounter, I found that I was often led down a path of discussion that was richer with insights than my original questions could afford. I readily took such opportunities to flush out further information, and I rather quickly dispensed with my original list of talking points. I was still able to get the answers to my questions, but in a more round-about way. (And yet because time was always a constraint, I felt pressured not to go too far beyond what I had promised would be the length of our interview.) Those who do interview research--and perhaps phenomenological research in particular--need to be flexible in letting their respondents lead the way as much as possible in relaying their own experiences. My dissertation advisors had granted me this freedom from the get-go of my study, but I needed to realize it in the course of my interviews to see how important it actually was. Allowing for this flexibility may mean (as I found) that the conversations with various participants are not directly comparable to one another because they took different paths; but it also means that the scope of what is learned broadens appreciably.

With that said, there is a difference between availing oneself of the opportunity to gain new understandings, and spending precious interview time learning basic information one should already know. There were instances during my conversations when I had to admit my ignorance, and I consequently sometimes felt sheepishly ill-prepared in terms of my inexperience with federal policy and with the background knowledge I possessed. Fortunately, my participants were extremely polite and patient in offering me explanations when needed. I would thus say that despite the need to dispense with one’s preconceived ideas and to be thoroughly open to new discoveries in phenomenological study, as a practical matter researchers need to be very well
prepared and to have a good working knowledge of the language of their participants—for example in my case, acronyms, existing organizations/coalitions, and legislation—to ensure that there is a common foundation for understanding the conversations that ensue during the interviews.

**Comfort level.** There are a few other things I learned and would offer up to other researchers. Firstly, there is no real way to get completely comfortable conducting a study in a place you do not know, especially one as significant as our Nation’s capital. I give high praise to the huge studies of other researchers such as Baumgartner et al. and Kingdon, whose work was far deeper than mine and encompassed hundreds and hundreds of interviews and months and months of time in Washington. Working alone, my work was necessarily more limited in scope, but I was still able to accomplish a good deal during my time in DC. I made three trips to Washington, spending nearly a total of 26 days there, which was about the right amount of time for what I needed to get done. I lived in an extended-stay residence outside of DC proper, which gave me a bit of the perspective of distance that I felt I needed (and which was considerably less costly than living in the District itself). And I took the time necessary to become familiar enough with the place to be able to find my way around Washington and its surroundings with relative ease. Finally, on a somewhat superficial—but to me necessary—level, I admit that I very early-on also researched, observed, and took into account the way Washington women dressed, so that I myself could dress similarly. I wanted to blend in and look the part when facing my respondents. This gave me an important measure of confidence and it helped me feel somewhat less like an outsider when walking around Capitol Hill and along K Street.

**Getting a foot in the door.** I don’t know of any good way to get one’s foot in the door when trying to interview DC policy makers. I accomplished garnering my pool of interviewees
in several ways, including sending out advance notice of my concerns and a request for an
interview, and then following up with another email or a phone call; visiting offices cold to see if
there was anyone who would talk to me; striking up a conversation about my research with
someone at an event we were both attending; and using personal contacts to help arrange for a
connection to be made. Each of these worked to some extent, and each has its problems.

Sending out my materials in advance meant that I was never quite sure if I had sent it to
the right person or if he or she had simply deleted my information from their email inbox. It also
meant that some potential respondents may have misunderstood what I was trying to accomplish
(a concern raised by one of my participants) and therefore chose not to become involved in my
study. Making phone calls to offices meant that I was at the mercy of the person answering the
phone to relay my message to the proper person, and frankly, this never worked. Doing cold
calls to offices is unnerving to the nth degree, and although it worked in several cases, it takes
such a psychological toll and requires getting one’s composure back so quickly in order to
complete the interview, I do not suggest this tactic for the feint at heart. Finding prospective
interviewees unexpectedly while chatting at a DC event is an interesting route to take, and indeed
in my case it happened to work for three of my data sources (two of these were simply informal
conversations at that moment, and the third ended up being a formal interview that I conducted
with this participant at a later date). This method of gaining participants is entirely dependent on
luck however: one needs to be at the right place at the right time, talking to the right person.
Finally, using one’s existing contacts probably provides the best of the possible outcomes for
pulling in prospective interviewees. In this case at least you have an “in” with the organization
and you know you have an existing connection to the individual to use as a possible starting
point for conversation. On the other hand, this approach also likely introduces an element of
bias: The participant may be trying (subliminally or otherwise) throughout the interview to please both their colleague who provided the contact, and the researcher sitting before them.

In sum, I have to agree with Gallagher (2013) that arranging for and doing this type of interview work is exhausting and sometimes quite humiliating. Researchers need to accept this as part-and-parcel of the study process.

**Findings**

**Views from inside and outside.** I was not able to extract a definitive picture of the lived “school library experience” from my policy-worker participants. However, I did learn how libraries are generally viewed, and indeed, that these individuals view “library” as a generality. That is, they do not easily differentiate between their school library experiences versus their public or academic library experiences. To a non-librarian this likely is a moot point, but this has some ramifications for the library profession: Such haziness means that a good or bad experience in one type of library may bode good or ill for all types of libraries.

This is related to a degree to a more disparate mindset about libraries coming from outside and inside the profession that I saw evolving from my data. It came to me via a degree of serendipity, which by the way, a researcher should be open to embrace. My time in Washington happened to coincide with the timing of a program called, *Will Libraries Outlive Books?*, which was co-sponsored by and presented at a DC-based think tank. Attending this event provided a fortuitous opportunity, because the program represented a glimpse into how various library professionals see their role and that of libraries now and in the future. Other insights came when I took a side-trip to New York City to have an extended conversation with *Library Journal* Editor-at-Large, John Berry, III (who writes the *Blatant Berry* column/blog), concerning ‘how the ALA works’. This conversation and the *Will Libraries?* program provided an interesting
contrast to my interviews with legislative aides on Capitol Hill and with DC-based disability advocates, showing that there are notable differences between how the library profession views itself versus how libraries/librarians are viewed by others. As was laid out in Chapter 5, this dichotomy reflects our different frames, or, the way issues, experiences, or needed actions are intellectually adopted. In turn, these different frames have implications for how libraries in general, but school libraries in particular, have been treated within federal policy.

**Conceptual framework.** The idea of a frame is one of the concepts in the conceptual framework I had developed from my readings of political process literature. This framework, which I called the Critical Concepts Framework, had six concepts that I felt were most important in leading to a path of policy change. There are many pieces to the policy-making realm, but the six concepts I chose seemed to best capture the process.

As I have discussed at length in prior chapters, the use of a framework is eschewed by some qualitative researchers, and perhaps particularly by phenomenologists. However, I hoped that keeping the concepts of various well-known political process theories in mind would help bound my conversations with DC policy makers and provide me with a basis for understanding the arena in which my participants functioned. Indeed, it did. Because I had these basic ideas in mind, I could furrow somewhat more deeply in my interviews to find the information that helped me learn how the policy process works. And although I retained the six original concepts throughout the study, when analyzing my data I revised the framework visually to encompass more closely what seemed to jump out as important from my findings. The condensed, reordered, and revised framework is shown following.
Three important concepts. Three factors, namely framing, timing, and advocacy partnerships, were the most important concepts of the policy-change process that I saw unfolding in Washington, DC. Framing is first and foremost an essential piece of the process. The non-librarian individuals that I heard from in Washington did not have a clear frame in mind when I asked them about school libraries. Libraries were not something they were thinking of within the realm of their educational policy-making activities. Yes, they could recall some experiences when asked, but these experiences were merged together with their experiences in other types of libraries (i.e., with academic and public libraries). And while there was no overt negativity concerning the library experiences I heard relayed, there were some conspicuous weaknesses.

Table 4 shows what school libraries are and what they are not, in the minds of those I interviewed in Washington. The ‘are nots’ are the most telling in this case, and they are juxtaposed with how the library profession in the Will Libraries? program saw itself. These professionals--which did not include any school librarians (a short shrift that was likely unintentional but which may actually reflect a certain hegemony within librarianship itself)--saw themselves as important third-space providers for the community; technological experts who
could help library patrons wade through and properly utilize the quagmire of Internet
information available; and as personal learning agents readily available to help everyone
accomplish their learning goals. All of these facets may be true, and they could easily apply to
the school library profession as well. Still, they are not very closely aligned with what my DC
participants were saying. Thus, one of my key findings is that school libraries and libraries of all
kinds are not recognized outside the profession in the positive and pertinent way they should be
by students, parents, patrons, and policy-makers alike. This framing difference has
consequences that impacts our position within federal education policy.

Table 4--School Library Interviewee Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What it is:</th>
<th>What it is not:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncontroversial</td>
<td>Memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard copy texts/books</td>
<td>Well-resourced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hidden resource</td>
<td>A direct source of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lively/somewhat chaotic</td>
<td>Needed, given technology today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filled with wonderful things</td>
<td>Talked about/on the radar of those making education policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A place to learn:</td>
<td>Accessible to students with learning disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference work/citation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to be calm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And yet, two other critical elements in the policy-making process, namely timing and advocacy partnerships, may help provide a way to re-position ourselves in the policy arena so that our role can be more effective--and so that it can be more universally viewed as such. Several of my interviewees noted that the time was now upon us when inroads to policy change should be made concerning other legislation that might impact school libraries. This includes both the HEA and the IDEA, which will likely be tweaked when they come up for reauthorization within the next few years. It was not within the purview of my study to focus on school libraries within these laws, but perhaps we do belong there: Further research might look at how this could best occur.

My interviewees confirmed the need for advocates to be ready to jump into the fray when the discussions of legislation start to heat up. Reauthorization and budget cycles; changes in Administration, which will occur very shortly owing to the coming of a new President; and changes in the make-up of the Congress, which also have resulted from the November 2016 election, offer opportunities for making changes in legislation. The Disability Advocates and the Legislative Aides with whom I spoke suggested that the library profession get involved in the conversations about these laws now.

Getting involved in these conversations will necessarily require a commitment by the library profession to openly join forces with some of the education coalitions in Washington with which it does not as yet actively partner. My participants indicated again and again that a collective voice is needed to be heard on Capitol Hill: “When you form coalitions you are unified. Your voice is that much louder.” In my conversations, there was a clear interest in having libraries included more fully in disability advocacy as well as in educational policy discussion and development. Such inclusion is perhaps the best way for us as a profession to
better align our frames with those we are trying to serve. The Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, and the National Universal Design for Learning Task Force were named as possible places where library organizations could be plugged in as active advocacy partners. And the question was raised as to why the ALA was not a member of the powerhouse coalition, the Leadership Conference of Civil and Human Rights. The ALA does have existing relationships with many groups, but looking more closely at the who, how, and why of these connections would be another area for further study. It may be that our voice would stand out more clearly in a different chorus.

**Final Thoughts**

Among the most notable takeaways for me from my research in Washington, DC, were ten comments/questions voiced by my interviewees as well as by several library professionals. These are the crux—the essence—of my own phenomenological progression concerning coming to an understanding of library and policy-making experiences; they form the basis for the answer to both the over-arching, *What is it about libraries?* question that has haunted me from the get-go of my research, and to the question concerning how to make better policy. The remarks epitomize the disconnect between how our profession views itself and how non-librarians—in particular, the various policy makers I spoke with--view us.

*From the policy-makers in DC I heard:*

1. Are people even talking about libraries anymore?
2. School libraries haven’t come up in terms of having them be a direct source of instruction.
3. Why isn’t the ALA working with the large education coalitions that are cross disability?
4. Without engaging people with diverse opinions, the solutions you come up with will not be as high quality as they could be.

5. Everybody listens to everybody.

6. None of us can do this work on our own.

And from the library profession I heard:

7. The problem [of service to the disabled] is not big enough, so why should they [the ALA leadership] bother?

8. The library profession has a fabulous brand.

9. Librarians are okay.

10. The ALA is an organization with a huge membership and a thimble-full of power.

I love libraries, and I think that they offer something of great value--that is, information resources in a safe place--to patrons of all kinds. One of my primary goals all along was to learn more about the policy process so that the school library profession could help create better policy that would support us in more effectively providing library service to students who have disabilities. But my research showed that in the minds of policy makers--and despite what the library profession may say about itself--our brand is far from fabulous. Indeed, we librarians are not okay. We certainly do not come to mind as a source of instruction when education policy is being devised, and accordingly, we are barely acknowledged in the broader scheme of our nation’s educational fabric. This is unfortunate, to say the least.

The policy workers with whom I spoke emphasized the importance of working together and listening to one another to create the best legislation possible. The process in Washington is a result of shared voice, strength, resources, and burden, as well as a good deal of compromise.
amongst those with diverse opinions: Policy making is necessarily a communal endeavor. Yes, the ALA has its champions in Congress and it has a fair number of groups--some of whom do represent vulnerable and disabled populations--to call upon as signatories on correspondence going to Capitol Hill concerning various legislative issues. But, we have only ferreted out a small amount (a thimble-full) of power when actual legislative priorities are set. We can and must do better.

I have discussed at length the importance of advocacy partnerships within the policy-making process. Making the types of initial contacts with disability advocacy organizations as my participants mentioned, and adding the broadened focus to the ALA’s Legislative Day event of visiting with stakeholder groups to discuss needs and legislation, are ways in which the library profession can offer to pull up a chair at the table when policy is in development. We should be getting involved more thoroughly with the policy process at all levels and stages of development so that we can add our voice to the conversations that help create better policy. This idea is not new: In A Place at the Table: Participating in Community Building (2000), de la Peña McCook, admonished that those in libraries need to be willing to put forth the effort and the resources to ensure that they are working effectively within the community. Nowhere is this more important than in Washington, DC, where the community of stakeholders and policy makers with and without disabilities needs a better understanding of libraries--and vice versa.

My Disability Advocate Interviewees were willing to embrace those in the library profession as fellow allies. When it comes to learning more about how best to provide service to students and patrons with disabilities, those stakeholders who represent the disabled population are our best source of information. School libraries should have a place in the education of all students, and accordingly, the school library profession needs to have a place at the table where
education policy for all students is formulated. The library profession needs to listen to and participate in these conversations and actively work on partnering within these coalitions and task forces because we have much to learn--and because we have much to offer those who do not as yet know us well.

*We do indeed need to bother.*
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SCHOOL LIBRARIES, DISABILITIES, AND POLICY CHANGE


SCHOOL LIBRARIES, DISABILITIES, AND POLICY CHANGE


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SCHOOL LIBRARIES, DISABILITIES, AND POLICY CHANGE

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Appendix A --
Equipping Librarians Survey Data
Equipping Librarian Survey form

1. **How long have you been the librarian at your present school?**
   - Less than 1 year
   - 1 - 3 years
   - 4 - 6 years
   - 7 - 9 years
   - 10 or more years

   [Please skip to Question #14 on page 4.]

2. **About how many students in all do you provide library services to during a typical week?**
   [Please indicate the approximate total number.]

3. **What grade levels are these students?** [Check all that apply.]
   - Pre-K
   - Kindergarten
   - 1st
   - 2nd
   - 3rd
   - 4th
   - 5th
   - 6th
   - 7th
   - 8th
   - 9th
   - 10th
   - 11th
   - 12th
   - Other

4. **Which statement best describes your library program?** (Assume that for a "fixed" schedule, students come to the library while their classroom teacher has a preparation period, and for an "open/flexible" schedule, teachers bring their students to the library on an as-needed basis.)
   [Check the response closest to your situation.]
   - Fixed Schedule
   - Partly Fixed & Partly Open/Flexible Schedule
   - Open/Flexible Schedule

5. **During the past school year, about how many times did you collaborate to create a lesson or unit and/or co-teach with another teacher?**
   - 0 times
   - 1 to 4 times
   - 5 to 8 times
   - 9 or more times

6. **How would you rate your principal's general support of the library program at your school?**
   - Extremely Supportive
   - Supportive
   - Somewhat Supportive
   - Not at All Supportive

7. **About how many students with special needs do you provide library services to during a typical week?**
   [Indicate the approximate total number.]

   [Please continue on Page 2.]
8. Who in your school is most likely to make you aware of the disabilities of your students? (Indicate the title (not the actual name) of the individual(s) who have provided you with this information, e.g., 'classroom teacher', 'resource teacher', 'social worker', etc.)

9. Of the students that you provide library services to, what types of disabilities do these students have? (Please put a check mark (✓) beside all those for which any of your students are receiving special education services.)

- ADD/ADHD
- Autism Spectrum
- Behavioral Disorders/Social Maladjustment
- Cerebral Palsy
- Developmental Delay
- Down Syndrome
- Dyslexia
- Emotional Disturbance
- Intellectual Disabilities (also called "Cognitive Disabilities" or "Mental Retardation")
- Learning Disabilities
- Print Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairments
- Seizure Disorders/Epilepsy
- Visual Impairments
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Dyscalculia
- Hearing Impairments

Other (Please list here:)

I don't know what kinds of disabilities some/all of my special education students have

10. Briefly describe any particular challenges you face as the librarian working with students who have special needs/disabilities at your school.

11. Which of the following resources are presently part of your library collection?

- One or more fiction book(s) with a prominent character who has a disability
- One or more biographical title(s) about a famous person with a disability
- One or more non-fiction book(s) covering disability-related information
- Professional book(s) giving disability-related information
- Professional journal(s) discussing disability-related topics
- One or more video(s) related to disability issues
- A listing of websites providing disability-related information
- Other? Please specify:

Please continue on the next page.
12. Which kinds of resources and/or assistive technology devices are available in your library? 
   [Please put a check mark (✓) beside all those that apply.]

| Alternative Keyboard, Mouse, Pointer, Trackball, Joy-stick, etc. to help students perform computer functions |
| Amplification/receiver system |
| Audio books (books on tape, CD, Playaway®) |
| Braille devices |
| Closed-circuit (CC) TV |
| Computer screen magnifier |
| Computer interactive books and/or interactive learning software |
| Highlighter pens and/or tape |
| Leapfrog® Reading materials |
| Letter- or word-magnification software |
| Page magnifier |
| Talking dictionary, thesaurus, and/or spell-checker |
| Text-to-speech software |
| Touch screen |
| Voice-recognition software |

---

13. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by checking (✓) the best response for your situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. My library has adequate resources to meet the needs of students who have disabilities that severely limit their reading abilities.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Teachers in my school are helpful when I ask them about the special education needs of their students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Student behavior is the main challenge I face when working with special education students in the library.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. At least once a year, I review the IEP’s of students with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. I am regularly consulted for input regarding the IEP’s of students with special needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. I effectively differentiate instruction when the library class includes students who have disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. There is always another staff member (resource teacher, classroom teacher, or an aide) with me when I have special needs students in the library.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Having students with special needs in the same classes as general education students makes it more difficult for me to decide what to teach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. I have enough prep time to develop special library lessons for my students with disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[There are several more pages to go. Please continue on page 4.]
THIS NEXT SECTION WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING CONCERNING ISSUES RELATED TO WORKING WITH SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS.

14. Without looking up any items or asking someone else, which of the terms and acronyms in the box below could you explain and/or define reasonably well at this moment? [PUT A CHECK MARK (✓) BESIDE THE ACRONYMS AND TERMS YOU FEEL THAT YOU KNOW.]

- ADHD
- ADA
- DHS
- Ed
- FAPE
- IAA
- IDEA
- IEP
- LD
- LRE
- NCLB
- OSEP
- PUNS
- RTI
- TBI
- accommodation
- due process
- continuum of services
- Corey H. settlement
- modification
- Sect. 504
- Universal Design for Learning
- Sect. 508
- transition planning

15. Please list the colleges or universities at which you have taken one or more graduate level library science courses.

__________________________________________
__________________________________________

16. Please check (✓) those that apply to your status.

- I have a master’s degree in Library Science.  
  [If so, when did you receive your degree? ____________]

- I have a Library endorsement but NO Masters degree in Library Science.

- I am certified to teach another content area BUT NOT Library.  
  [If so, specify the other area(s) _______________]

- I am certified to teach another content area AS WELL AS Library.  
  [If so, specify the other area(s) _______________]

- I am working on my Masters in Library Science and I have completed at least three courses towards the degree.

- I have National Board Certification in Library Media.  
  [If so, in what year did you receive this certification? ____________]

- I have taken TWO OR MORE Courses in Special Education.

- I am currently endorsed/certified to teach special education.

[Please continue by answering the questions on Page 5.]

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17. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by checking (✓) the best response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. What I know about working with students who have disabilities I learned mostly on the job.</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. The information presented in my library science courses adequately prepared me to work with special needs students in an actual school setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The overview of special education that I got in my teacher preparation courses adequately prepared me to work with special needs students in an actual school setting.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. During my student teaching experience, I taught students who had disabilities.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. School librarians should get additional information in their library science courses about working specifically with students who have disabilities.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. I am up-to-date on information about Federal and State legislation that deals with the education of students who have disabilities.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Professional librarian organizations (e.g., ALA, AASL, and/or ISLM) have provided me with adequate information about working with special needs students in the library.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. The inclusion of students with disabilities in library classes really does not work well in my particular school.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Somewhat Agree</td>
<td>Somewhat Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. What is the best way for school librarians to learn more about working with students who have disabilities? [Please pick only your top three choices below, and rank them by marking 1, 2, and 3, where #1 is the best way, #2 the second best way, and #3 the third best way.]

- Read as much as possible about disability-related issues.
- Attend all-staff professional development sessions in their own school.
- Talk to colleague teachers at their own school.
- Talk to the parents of their special needs students.
- Talk to other school librarians to see what they are doing in their schools.
- Attend librarian professional development sessions offered by the school district.
- Attend professional library conferences.
- Take a special education course at a nearby college of university.

19. If a workshop on special education issues was offered to school librarians in the future, what particular issues and/or disabilities would you like to know more about? [Please specify one or more topics.]
20. What other comments/concerns do you have about Library Services for students with special needs/disabilities?

21. Check (✓) the professional organizations you belong to:  
AASL  ALA  
ALSC  ASCD  CTLA  HSLMA  IRA  IRC  ISLMA  
ISTE  YALSA  Others? [Please specify]  

22. How long have you been a school librarian? [Please indicate the total years]  

23. In what neighborhood or town is your school located?  
[CPS Librarians, Please indicate your Area number if you know it]  

If you would not mind my getting back to you for a brief interview and possibly a school visit, please fill in your contact information here:

Your Name:  
Your School:  
School Address:  
Your e-mail address:  
Your Phone number:  
Do you prefer to be contacted by phone or e-mail? ___ Phone*  ___ E-mail  
*When is the best time to reach you by phone?  

[Please check your survey one more time to be sure you answered each question.]

For CPS Librarians at the In-Service Session, please leave your completed form in the designated drop-box. All other respondents, please return the form by mail in the envelope provided.

Thank you very much for your participation!
The Equippeing Librarians survey had three open-ended questions, shown below:

Q. 10 -- Briefly describe any particular challenges you face as the librarian working with students who have special needs/disabilities at your school.

Q. 19 -- If a workshop on special education issues was offered to school librarians in the future, what particular issues and/or disabilities would you like to know more about? [Please specify one or more topic(s).]

Q. 20 -- What other comments/concerns do you have about library services for students with special needs/disabilities?

The responses to these questions are shown in the spreadsheet pages that follow.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian</th>
<th>Particular Challenges</th>
<th>Other Comments</th>
<th>SPED Students per week</th>
<th>What do you Want to Know More About?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>classroom management &amp; distractions</td>
<td>classroom management workshops would be beneficial</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>have little or no assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>many are violent</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>violent behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>difficulties socializing and working with peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>dealing with behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>with 30 students, is challenging working with autistic students unless there's an aide</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>don't know who or how to help; resources</td>
<td>schools should have to let specials know who needs modifications</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>behavior &amp; AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>no support, collaboration with teachers</td>
<td>why put SPEDs in age-appropriate classes when they can't do the work?</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>time; students pick books too difficult</td>
<td>would love to learn more tips to help SPEDs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>autism, dyslexia, ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>LD &amp; BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>keeping SPEDs on task &amp; on level while working with rest of class</td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
<td>inclusion &amp; modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>giving SPEDs extra help in large classroom with no aide</td>
<td>SPED students should always have an aide with them</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>inclusion &amp; modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>time to accommodate</td>
<td>have good program for SPED @ Prosser</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>students without aides needs time &amp; attention to complete tasks</td>
<td>don't have time to spend with SPEDs; don't always know who is SPED</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>how to help students pick right book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>autism &amp; aspergers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>wheelchair access; time limits accommodations &amp; modifications</td>
<td>how not to overwhelm but still have SPEDs participate</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>modifications vs. accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>adapting library &amp; materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Particular Challenges</td>
<td>Other Comments</td>
<td>SPED Students per week</td>
<td>What do you Want to Know More About?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>accommodating lesson to each child</td>
<td>need to spend more time on IEPs and correlate goals to lesson plans</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>LD, BD, autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Disruptive BD students; one student takes too much time in class with 33 others</td>
<td>&quot;inclusion&quot; = SPED students put in any grade level to give teacher prep—not meaningful for students</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>ED &amp; BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>don’t know who has disability</td>
<td></td>
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<td>48</td>
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<td></td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>have no support during library because SPED teachers have prep then</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>behavior management</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Bilingual SPEDs need interpreter</td>
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<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>seating, mainstreaming, materials at correct level</td>
<td>hard to mainstream 7/8 graders with very different ability levels</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>alternative assessments, teaching &amp; interest levels, jigsaw grouping</td>
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<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>space and resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>differentiating instruction</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>class size with mainstreaming = massive</td>
<td>annual PD from district</td>
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<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>IEPs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>assistants will not stay with students</td>
<td>teach SPEDs one-on-one and in inclusive setting</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>inclusion: so many students with different issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>inconsistent attendance due to other services</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>aides need to stay with student in library</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>integrated with other students so try to help any student needing help</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>no collaboration; teachers don’t know computers; getting low RLs interested in books</td>
<td>more AT; sessions geared to high schools; teachers need more training in using libraries</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>working with autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>time; appropriate use of computer, books for lower RLs</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>severe &amp; profound; autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>not enough time to work with individually</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>all areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Particular Challenges</td>
<td>Other Comments</td>
<td>SPED Students per week</td>
<td>What do you Want to Know More About?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>have no computers or projector in library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>funding (not controlled by principal for AT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>behavioral problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>how to teach inclusively</td>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>how to keep SPEDs busy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>more than hi-lo readers; how to reach bilingual SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>modifications; lesson plans for self-contained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>severe &amp; profound; BD; LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>how to manage lessons with whole group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>don't know who SPEDs are</td>
<td>library should be thought of as more than a prep; librarians can be valuable resource to SPEDs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>have a well organized program</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>use hands-on learning centers and keep close during classes</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>include in Pd library</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>require more one-on-one; can be disruptive; need a lot of preparation</td>
<td>need up-to-date materials</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>materials &amp; tech for SPEDs—what works? What doesn’t?</td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>autism—students with one-on-one get dropped off in library &amp; aide takes a break</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>differentiated instruction for autistic students</td>
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<td>200</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>library doesn’t have materials that students can use</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>special equipment is non-existent in library</td>
<td>library must be receptive to all students with special needs</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>reading levels; behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>meeting students’ individualized needs causes behavior problems</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>how to help students without proper resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
<td>provide more PD for working with SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>lesson modifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>matching autistic students with RL they want to read vs. what they can read</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td>ED &amp; BD; autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 'Equipping Librarians' Survey Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian</th>
<th>Particular Challenges</th>
<th>Other Comments</th>
<th>SPED Students per week</th>
<th>What do you Want to Know More About?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>better understanding of appropriate instruction with support (not enough assistance) in 5-8 class with more than 20 students and only one aide for CP student</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>no problems—working closely with SPED dept.</td>
<td>in many instances, self-contained classes seem to work better</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>students take out books but don’t read them</td>
<td>mainstream thing leaves SPEDs out of loop—not enough personal attention in a class of 40</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>addressing interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>inclusion without students picking on and making fun of SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>lack of personnel: assistants are scheduled for break during library</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>inclusion—how to deal with SPEDs and gen. ed. Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>classroom management with autistic students who don’t focus and can’t write; lack of resources for SPEDs</td>
<td>a variety of ideas are needed</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>examples of lessons, modifications, accommodations, activities for students with disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>how to formulate lessons for autistic students</td>
<td>what types of materials are available to teach special needs students in the library?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>aspergers &amp; autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>need several sufficient adult coverage for many SPEDs with the gen. eds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>class sizes and assistants who are more disruptive than students</td>
<td>need for funding and trained assistants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>lack of funding for materials (matching grants too book-specific); lack of assistance and PD</td>
<td>we need more training plus funding on how to work with AT</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>PD on SPEDs individual problems; strategies for adapting lessons in regular classes, worksheet samples, projects, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADD, autism, developmental delay, BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>in large groups, difficult to differentiate; don't know all disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>not being informed about classroom behavior plan, accommodations, grading requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>high school students with low/no reading ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>inclusion is generally a good idea</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>time to collaborate in order to find out more about the students</td>
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<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more school-based PD should be for librarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Aides don’t stay in library, can be unsafe</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>being aware of disability/finding out more info about particular needs; hard to create routine when only once a week</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>autism; time; differentiated instruction when self-contained classes are mainstreamed for library</td>
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<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>working with autistic students, plus those who struggle but haven’t been evaluated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>autism; ADHD</td>
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<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>modifications; behavior, communication with teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>curriculum modifications for TMH &amp; EMH for inclusion classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>integrating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>autism; LD; ADHD; sensory integration issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>students with profound LD are integrated with gen. ed. and there are no assistants; student conflicts arise</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>don’t receive info about students from resource teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>providing appropriate lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>not enough time to do all needed</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>dyslexia, Down Syndrome, BD</td>
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<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>having students buddy with another works well</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>violent behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>individualizing their IEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>keeping SPEDs on task while working with 32 other students in class</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>don’t know who is SPED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>accommodations</td>
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<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>aides don’t come to class with SPED students</td>
<td>most of the students want to be successful and fit in</td>
<td></td>
<td>integrating alternative tools; creating great lessons</td>
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<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>need more AT</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
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<td>115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>making a smooth educational arena for SPED included with gen. eds; not enough books or materials for uniquely challenged students; no $ for 6 years; not enough space</td>
<td>library has no AT or books for special needs students</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>AT; list of books/computer programs highlighting special needs children; terminology for PH/CD</td>
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<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>hard to differentiate in such a short time</td>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>meeting individualized needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>differentiated instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>finding appropriate materials/ways to connect</td>
<td>librarians need methods/strategies used by SPED teachers</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>ADD, LD</td>
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<td>120</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>how to make them part of the group</td>
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<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>aides don’t stay in the library; students come in half-way through lesson &amp; can’t catch up</td>
<td>grants and resources just for SPEDs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>reading difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>teachers do make me aware of special strategies or tools</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>visual and hearing impairments</td>
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<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>scheduling them to come; funding for resources; cooperation between teachers, aides so that they assist and don’t leave</td>
<td>need more money to provide sufficient service to SPED students</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>autism, LD, EBD</td>
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<td>124</td>
<td>providing instruction to SPEDs mainstreamed into behaviorally challenged gen ed classes</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>keeping attention &amp; assignment completion</td>
<td>dealing with 7th/8th grade students</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>modifications; behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>lack of resources</td>
<td>access to IEPs</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>behavior issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Particular Challenges</td>
<td>Other Comments</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>meeting needs of SPED students in addition to 200 other students seen per day</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>behavior issues</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>challenge when several disabilities are in same classroom</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>self-contained students get put into very large gen ed classes (45 at a time); difficult to work effectively with such diverse group and no aides</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>how to better serve autistic students</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>have 40% SPED and no training; Pre-K autism and CD = esp. difficult with no training</td>
<td>is it helpful for all kids to have library? It is so hard with a full class and 5 to 8 SPEDs. 200</td>
<td>pre-k autism; differentiated instruction for severe CD, book checkout for severe CD</td>
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<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>students need an aide with them</td>
<td>our library is not ready for SPEDs 200</td>
<td>BD, ADHD</td>
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<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>no real problems</td>
<td>mainstreamed along with SPED teachers and support personnel for 2 years, has worked well</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>differentiation is hard because gen. ed. classes are hard to manage alone, and when combined with SPED students without aides makes groups too large.</td>
<td>Librarians should meet with SPED teachers and other ancillary staff (speech and PTs); principals should encourage meetings between SPED teachers &amp; librarian, and librarians should have more PD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>not enough time in class period to meet needs of SPEDs and all other students</td>
<td>knowing basics to ensure AOA compliance</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>general inclusion strategies, bullying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td></td>
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<td>12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>fighting/socializing with other class that comes in</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>lessons with accommodations</td>
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<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>lack of resources &amp; materials to teach SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>inclusion models &amp; lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>giving one-on-one time</td>
<td>how can we get more books for SPED students</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>lessons for SPED students</td>
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<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>mixed with student body, library work is tailored to expectations of whole grade need classes focusing on needs and modifications</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>more resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>adapting lessons esp. in classes with various types of disabilities; attendance by SPEDs is inconsistent</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>best AT and modified lessons</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>am experienced SPED teacher; must have aide for Category 3 SPEDs need more equipment, audio books, low reading level/curriculum-aligned materials</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>no further PD needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>aides come with SPED teachers talk to in advance to determine materials not enough money to accommodate students IEPs and aides not available, limited time and space info. on grants or funding to get technology for SPEDs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>ED &amp; ED; aspergers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>time and reach? finding appropriate leisure reading</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>modifications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>space, budget, large class size space constraints</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>grants for materials for SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>40 minutes = too short to work with self-contained SPEDs come to library (lute) to blend with 30 other kids—but their reg. SPED teacher and aide don’t stay. staffing and $ are biggest concerns—need AT and adult guidance for BDs</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>differentiated instruction with 30 gen. kids within 40-minute period &amp; still do book check-out and deal with behavior—with no assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>combined with gifted students in library Unfair to put BD kids with others in library</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>ED &amp; ED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>mainstreaming with large classes—would be better to put with smaller classes district PD</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>funding for materials and AT</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>reading materials for SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>lack of awareness about modifications legal requirements re: assistants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>modifications by category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>modifications of content with inclusion, class size = issue, unless there is adequate assistance</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>autism; deaf &amp; hearing impaired, cross category severe &amp; profound</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Equipping Librarians’ Survey Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian</th>
<th>Particular Challenges</th>
<th>Other Comments</th>
<th>SPED Students per week</th>
<th>What do you Want to Know More About?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>no aide, large class sizes</td>
<td>finding time for individual attention to help with book selection</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>staffing issues with self-contained classes esp. at 6-8 level</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>behavioral issues with inclusion classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>lack of concentration/ inability to focus/ low interest in appropriate reading material at level</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>strategies for keeping SPEDs on task for 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>no teacher assist. or aides with me in the library while SPEDs are present</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>AT; teaching special needs students in the library, working with SPED teacher and aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>shortage of hi-low materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>not being told about student in timely way</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>difficulty 2300 students by myself</td>
<td>more needs to be done by all teachers &amp; admin. to improve library service for SPEDs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>working with SPEDs with a full class of ‘normal’ students (e.g., severe &amp; profound with kindergarten class; ADHD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td></td>
<td>little is taught about severe &amp; profound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>giving help &amp; attention (esp. with 28 other students) to 5 self-contained students; BD kids</td>
<td>no way to make special lessons—can do accommodations (buddy system, moving student closer, giving earphones for reading &amp; listening on computer)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>time for helping SPEDs; finding hi-low teen books</td>
<td>Librarians &amp; classroom teachers need more common planning time to design lessons to meet SPEDs needs</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>how to provide support for students with reading disabilities; collaboration w/reading teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>most come with a class &amp; I modify lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
<td>SPEDs not really problem in this HS—they’re all crazy anyway!</td>
<td></td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Particular Challenges</td>
<td>Other Comments</td>
<td>SPED Students per week</td>
<td>What do you Want to Know More About?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>SPED is accustomed to self-contained get lost in large classes in library w/o aides; have aide only for autism but then &gt; 40+ students with only one aide</td>
<td>Aides [should] come to library with students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>LD, BD, ACNID, ED</td>
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<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>inclusion only during library so adjustment is choppy; collaboration with SPED teacher isn't optimal</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>books for students with disabilities (Rules)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>helping ACNID students w/research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>not enough time to help as needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>concerned about age-appropriate vs. developmentally appropriate reading materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>severe &amp; profound who come with reg. ed. Kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>awareness of all IEPs &amp; modifications given 3 binders full of IEPs; more than just once a week time with students would be beneficial</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>as many as possible!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>when servicing whole school, hard to keep track of all IEPs, disabilities, modifications</td>
<td>SPEDs with aides have aides leave during library</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>none—students check out books according to interests &amp; level</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>inclusion with lack of personnel to assist SPED students</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>For vis. Impaired students, if not prepared enough ahead of time, can't service them as needed; teaching so many students makes it hard to remember/track who they are</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>takes a long time for task completion</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Particular Challenges</td>
<td>Other Comments</td>
<td>SPED Students per week</td>
<td>What do you Want to Know More About?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>how to teach them and ensure they get something out of each lesson</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>how to teach library lesson to 8th graders + inclusion students at 1st grade level</td>
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<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>autism, dyslexia, integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>I want to be able to reach all my students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>how to deal with vis. Impaired, blind &amp; autistic kids who come with regular class of 30-35 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hands-on activities</td>
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<td>190</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>if classes are large, these students may not receive attention/instruction they need</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>don’t have materials to teach SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>194</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>195</td>
<td>give instructions more than once model peer help</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>better assist students</td>
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<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>small SPED classes are paired with gen. ed. classes of inappropriate age</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>autism &amp; BD</td>
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<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>giving them the attention they need</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>201</td>
<td>time budgets for SPEDs needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>helping different levels at once</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>students have one-on-one aide here</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>how to best accommodate in library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204</td>
<td>with various disabilities, hard to target</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205</td>
<td>no additional resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPEDs who have an aide all day except when in library have a hard time benefiting from accommodations &amp; modifications to library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207</td>
<td>more input to librarian re: SPEDs needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>materials for these students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208</td>
<td>autistic students who are noisy or disruptive</td>
<td>it is not clear who should be mainstreamed</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>funding and sustainability</td>
<td>working with SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211</td>
<td>teaching assistants are not adequately trained to help SPEDs</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>isn't a major problem at this school</td>
<td></td>
<td>ED, teaching/planning really low students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213</td>
<td>students come to class w/out resource person, resulting in behavior management issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>autism/AHD resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214</td>
<td>don't know who students are, so can't modify for them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>how to acquire the resources we need to make accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>reading levels, AT, materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>AT in curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>217</td>
<td>modifying lesson plans</td>
<td>open to any library lessons for different needs; have a variety of resources</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>218</td>
<td>teaching a reading class where all students are &quot;special&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>221</td>
<td>never see IEP's; don't know who is SPED</td>
<td></td>
<td>How to work with (CTT teachers) aides—class in library and aide read the newspaper!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222</td>
<td>keeping SPED student engaged with age-appropriate peers</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>223</td>
<td>adapting lessons for severe &amp; profound</td>
<td>expense of sound/sensory books, not enough $ in budget to provide enough</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>All SPEDs are included in classes with 25 or more students—too many to serve all needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
<td>physical limitations inside library; book selection; physical &amp; behavior problems during mainstreaming</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 'Easing Librarians' Survey Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>229</th>
<th>1st month is hard because not all SPEDs have their placements</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>AT; finding more info.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>230</td>
<td>during short library period, hard to provide individualized attention</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>231</td>
<td>needing help when more than one student needs help</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>232</td>
<td>Regular ed. classes are large then add self-contained = 42 students. Difficult to give accommodations</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>233</td>
<td>Order generally is difficult; add SPEDs and problem is worse—hitting and running around. Aides think this is free time.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>Disparity in AT availability in suburban vs. city and getting results without tools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>info. on how to help children with real physical needs—not BD labeled as LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235</td>
<td>don't always know classroom assignments so can't help them; SPED teacher is usually with them</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>236</td>
<td>disruptive BD students; limitations of LD students; little time and no aides</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>inclusion tips and modifications for disruptive BD and LD students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237</td>
<td>Self-contained students come during teacher prep so they sit by themselves and I have 40 students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238</td>
<td>workshops geared to the librarian not the classroom teacher</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>inclusion; behavior; autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Particular Challenges Working with Special Needs Students (Q.10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian response</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
<th>% of Librarians Giving Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating instruction</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large classes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance and/or issues with aids, (leaving, reading, not helping)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior issues</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to teach properly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about IEP/disabilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources at proper reading levels</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited resources</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifying lessons</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting student needs effectively</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No challenges</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collaboration/communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g., space, assistive technology, funding)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong> [107 librarians mentioned 274 challenges]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equipping Librarians for Inclusion Survey Results

Patti Foxeler, National-Louis University
### What Workshop Topics Would You Like to See Offered? (Q.19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Librarian response</th>
<th>Number of Mentions</th>
<th>% of Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorders</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiating Instruction</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modifications and Accommodations</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Management</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Disorders</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistive Technology</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Resources/H-LoMaterials for Range of Students</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disorders</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe &amp; Profound Disabilities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. Topics (e.g., mainstreaming/inclusion, assessment,</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dyslexia, visually impaired)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Responses** 130 librarians responded with 221 suggestions
# Librarian Knowledge of Special Education Terms (Survey Q. 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Education Term</th>
<th>Librarians who Know Term (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAPE</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>89</td>
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<tr>
<td>LD</td>
<td>82</td>
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<td>LRE</td>
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<td>PUNS</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBI</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodations</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>due process</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>continuum of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corey H settlement</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modification</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sect. 504</td>
<td>37</td>
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Equipping Librarians for Inclusion Study (P. Foerster, Nat'L-Louis University)
Appendix B --
IRRB Materials and Interview Protocol
Introductory Email Request for Interview

Dear __________,

I am a doctoral student at National Louis University (NLU) in the Chicago area, and I previously worked as a school librarian at a Chicago high school for students with intellectual disabilities. I now serve as a member of the oversight board for the Targeting Autism in the Library Illinois State Library grant. My dissertation research involves the intertwining of education policy with school libraries and the support libraries can provide to students with disabilities.

As part of my research, I will be interviewing individuals in Washington who work as advocates for the disabled population for input concerning school libraries and education policy initiatives. I will be in Washington, DC during the week of October 12th to the 16th, and I would very much like to interview you or a designated member of your staff. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete, and my schedule is fairly flexible in terms of timing or days.

Please let me know whether you or someone under your direction would be available to talk to me and when such a meeting would be most convenient.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you or your designee.

Sincerely,

Patti Foerster, NLU Doctoral student

Cell phone: 773/XXX-XXX

Email: XXXXXXXX@gmail.com and pfoerster@my.nl.edu
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Introduction and Study Purpose

My name is Patti Fester, and I am a doctoral candidate at National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois. I am conducting a study that focuses on the need for policy concerning the way school libraries support students who have disabilities. There is a large body of research indicating that strong school library programs are positively correlated with enhanced student achievement on standardized tests. Research also indicates that many librarians are not well equipped—in terms of disposition, training, and resource availability—to work effectively with their students who have disabilities. Recognition of the need for funding and support of school libraries within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act legislation over its lengthy history has been uneven. I would like to learn more about how individuals involved with the policy process view their school library experience and whether there are factors that need to be addressed within the library profession to better position libraries in education legislation.

Procedures

During this coming October and November, I will be interviewing individuals from a wide variety of organizations and agencies located in Washington, D.C., whose work is related to federal educational policy development, analysis, or commentary. I am asking that you agree to be interviewed for my study. The interview would be conducted at a time and location convenient to you, and it will take 60 to 75 minutes to complete. The interview will involve questions about what you recall of your experience as a student in your school library, as well as about your work in the policy arena and your ideas as to a possible intersection between school libraries and education policy.

With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The taping is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will instead just take notes. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don’t wish to continue, you can stop the interview altogether at any time.

Confidentiality

All interviews will be conducted on background. That is, although I may directly quote something said in an interview, no information that can personally identify you or your work setting will be used in the study report. Instead, the findings will refer to participants in general terms such as: “Participant A [or a pseudonym that you choose] from a government agency [advocacy group, lobbying firm, non-governmental organization, think tank, media outlet, etc.] indicated that . . .”.

All interview recordings, notes, and the transcripts generated thereafter will be held in a secure location and will not be seen or used by anyone except me and my Dissertation Committee in providing data.
pertinent to my dissertation research. When this research project is completed, I may decide to save the tapes and notes for use in future research. If I choose to make any transcripts available to others for further research, I will maintain control over the access to the data, and all identifying information will be redacted before any materials are released. I will retain the data for up to five years after the study is over, and thereafter destroy the tapes, transcripts, and notes in their digitalized and hardcopy formats.

Benefits:

You will not be paid for taking part in this study. This research will have no direct benefit to you as a participant, although your responses will add to the body of knowledge we have about school library experiences and the policy process. Such inspection of the school library experience from a variety of individual perspectives may help librarians see what works in our practice or what doesn’t, and why this might be so. By enhancing our understanding of the policy-making process, your participation in this research may have the added benefit of helping us find ways to build better policy.

Risks:

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the study, and/or you can decline to answer any questions I ask. You are free to stop taking part in the interview at any time. The nature of the questions I will be asking during the interview are not distinctly personal nor do the questions pose any physical, emotional, social, political or economic risk to you if you agree to participate. Whether or not you choose to participate in my research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or to continue with the interview, there will be no penalty to you.

I am most willing to share the findings of my study with you on its completion sometime next spring, and if you wish, I can highlight in the study text any information that you provided in particular.

Consent and Questions:

If you agree to be interviewed, I will ask that you sign two copies of this Consent Form in my presence, and I will sign the forms in your presence. We will each keep one copy of the form. If you have questions about this research or your participation, please contact me or my National Louis University Dissertation Advisor or the IRRB Chair, per the contact information on the following page.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

If you agree to participate in this study, please print your name, and please provide your signature and the date below. (You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.)

Participant’s Name (please print)

Participant’s Signature __________________________ Date __________

Researcher’s Signature __________________________ Date __________
CONTACT INFORMATION:

Researcher: Patti Foerster
Doctoral Candidate, Disability and Equity in Education program
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Professor Emerita
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Chicago, IL 60603
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Email: vowen@nl.edu

IRRB Chair: Skrauti Knauth, Ph.D.
NLU Institutional Review Board Chair
National Louis University
122 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603
Phone: 312-261-3526
Email: skauth.knauth@nl.edu
Interview Protocol

Following is the interviewing protocol I used at the start of my study. However, very soon into the process I found it necessary to adjust the line of questioning and to be flexible/responsive to the direction my interviewees took me during our conversation.

I. **Procedural issues:** Begin with greetings, “**thanks for taking the time to talk to me,**” weather pleasantries, etc.. Briefly give an overview of the study and why I wanted to interview the person. **Ask if any clarification is needed for the informed consent; reiterate desire to tape record interview;** if no issues are mentioned, get two copies of the form signed. Test recording equipment using date and time of interview + agreed upon pseudonym of individual.

II. **Getting-to-Know-You questions.** **Just to begin, I’d like a little bit of background about what you do here . . .**

 ● *To get a better idea as to what your job entails in this agency, can you describe several activities that filled your morning/afternoon?*
 ● *Was that sort of a typical day for you? If not, why so?*
 ● *How long have you worked here?*
 ● *Which of these age ranges best describes you: under 30, between 30 and 45, or over 45?*

Next we will be talking about the school you attended for either high school or elementary school -- your choice.

I don’t need the name or exact location, but –

 ● *What state was that school in?*
 ● *Would you say your school was in a rural, suburban, or urban area?*

III. **Major question.** **Now I want to get to the major focus of my research and ask you about the library in your school when you were growing up.** I’d like you to think about either your high school or elementary school library--pick one--and try to remember what it was like for you to go to the library as a student. [Clarify that the participants can give an account of their experience with either their elementary or high school library--and they should pick only one particular library to describe if they went to several schools.]

 ● *What was the experience of going to your school library like for you? And/or*
 ● *Can you describe a particular event/incident/moment that you especially remember?*
 ● *Can you give me a few words or phrases that capture the ‘aura’ or ‘vibe’ of your school library?*
Follow-up/prompting questions. Subset A. Ask as needed [e.g., if they didn’t already answer in their description]:

● How often did you go to the library? ● What did you do there? ● What did you like/not like about going to the library?
● Is it the library [place] or the librarian [person] that stands out the most in your mind? Why do you say that? ● How were you treated by your librarian?
[Because I may not be able to determine if an interviewee was a disabled student, I will ask questions such as those that follow.]
● Is there a story you can share about a student with a disability in your school library?
● How would you characterize the inclusiveness of your library? Why do you say that?
● How were students with disabilities treated by others [by your classmates, the library aides, the librarian?]

IV. Follow-up/prompting questions Subset B. Let me shift now and ask about something related but from a different perspective. I think that school libraries are important and could be better positioned to support students with disabilities. But this view is not generally reflected in education legislation--neither in the past nor in the present/pending ESEA legislation. [Here, I will go into only as much detail as seems appropriate, given my participant’s knowledge. For example, I would explain: Over the lengthy history of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (or ESEA), school libraries have been treated with un-evenness. In the first ESEA, under President Johnson, they had a prominent place with a separate title and a good deal of funding--$100 Million in 1965 = about $758 Million now. Under President George W. Bush’s NCLB, there was designated programming, but the funds appropriated were always less than 10% of authorized amounts, or under $20 million per year—till 2011, then $0. The Senate version of ESEA that is now under discussion in the House has been amended with the SKILLS Act—which recognizes the need to support librarians and the work they do with more resources and training. The House version of ESEA does not recognize school libraries . . . ]

I’m trying to understand if there is any connection between the way policy workers have experienced school libraries and the positioning of school libraries in policy. Some policy process theorists suggest that people engage in policy work to translate their beliefs into action. Beliefs are often based on experience. So perhaps the question becomes something like -- ● How much of what gets into a policy do you think is a translation of the beliefs of policy makers--which may be based on their past experiences?

● Is that an idea that resonates with you? How so?
● Can you help me understand how--or if--your life-experiences might be reflected in the policy work that you do here or that this organization does?
● Can you give me an example of how this has happened with a policy you worked on or that your organization has worked on?

So getting back to libraries,
● Are there any intersections that you can see between school libraries, the work librarians should do with students who have disabilities, and the work that you or your organization does with education policy? Please explain.
● And in general terms, where would you say that the American Library Association and its school libraries fall on the radar of your organization/agency/department related to education policy?

● Is there anything else you think I should know about the policy process and/or the work you do here?

● Is there anything else you would like to add about your school library experience?

V. Close. Thank you for your time.
● Would it be alright if I contacted you again if something I wonder about comes up? [Be sure to get email address and phone number, if needed.]
Appendix C-
ALA Summary,
Opportunities for School Librarians in PL 114-95

Conference Agreement to Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

This document highlights library-related provisions in P.L. 114-95, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and provides an overview of initial next steps to help maximize opportunities for effective school library programming under the new law.

TITLE I, PART A – IMPROVING BASIC PROGRAMS OPERATED BY STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

Background

- Under Title I, Part A of ESSA, States (referred to as State Educational Agencies) and school districts (referred to as Local Educational Agencies) must develop plans to implement federally-funded education activities.

- States and school districts must develop their plans with “timely and meaningful consultation with” teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including school librarians.

Library Provisions

- ESSA includes new provisions that authorize – but do not require – school districts to include in their local plans how they will assist schools in developing effective school library programs to provide students an opportunity to develop digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement.

Next Steps

- Because the local application provision related to effective school library programming is allowable (not required from the federal level), it is critical that school district personnel be made aware of their ability to develop and implement effective school library programming.

- Contact and work with the superintendent’s office in developing the local plan under Title I, Part A to ensure that the school district takes into consideration:
  - The importance of developing and maintaining effective school library programs; and
  - How effective school library programs can help with the development of digital literacy skills and improve academic achievement.

- Contact and work with State and school district officials regarding the ability of school librarians to participate in both the State and school district planning and application process (as part of “specialized instructional support personnel”).
TITLE II, PART A – SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Background

• Title II, Part A of ESSA provides funds for States and school districts to increase academic achievement through professional development.

Library Provisions

• ESSA includes new provisions that authorize States, as well as school districts, to use grant and subgrant funds for “supporting the instructional services provided by effective school library programs.”

Next Steps

• Because States and school districts can now use their Title II, Part A funds specifically to support effective school library programming, it will be important to make sure that school district and school personnel that develop and implement professional development activities are aware of the new uses of funds related to libraries.

• Work with school district and school personnel to encourage the use of Title II, Part A funds specifically for effective school library programming, as well as part of other professional development efforts taking place with these funds.
  o Note that under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Title II, Part A funds were primarily used for professional development for "teachers" which made it difficult for other instructional support personnel to participate in activities. ESSA rectifies this by specifically authorizing funds to be used to support instructional services provided by effective school library programs.

TITLE II, PART B, SUBPART 2 – LITERACY EDUCATION FOR ALL, RESULTS FOR THE NATION (LEARN)

Background

• ESSA includes a new literacy program that provides federal support to States to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans. States award competitive subgrants to school districts for activities that focus on children in kindergarten through grade 5 as well as children in grades 6 through 12.

Library Provisions

• ESSA specifically authorizes school librarians to participate in required grant activities that focus on children in kindergarten through grade 5 as well as activities that focus on children in grades 6 through 12.

• In addition, ESSA allows all local subgrants (that serve children in kindergarten through grade 5 and/or children in grades 6 through 12) to be used to provide time for teachers and school librarians to meet, plan and collaborate on comprehensive literacy instruction.
Next Steps

- Since this is a new competitive program under ESSA, it will be important to work with individuals responsible for literacy instruction and development at the State, school district, and school level.

- Encourage/assist appropriate State, school district, and/or school personnel in developing and applying for grants or subgrants.
  - Note that subgrants awarded for local uses of funds must include professional development for school personnel that specifically includes school librarians. Therefore, any grants awarded at the school district level under this program must provide professional development for school librarians.

TITLE II, PART B, SUBPART 2, SECTION 2226 – INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LITERACY (IAL)

Background

- ESSA includes a new authorization of the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program (previously funded through appropriations legislation) that provides dedicated funding to promote literacy programs in low income communities.
  - Note that while IAL activities have been funded over the past several years through appropriations bills, the "codification" (or explicit authorization) of this program in ESSA provides a specific "line item" to help better secure funding in future years.

Library Provisions

- ESSA specifically authorizes funds to be used for developing and enhancing effective school library programs, which includes providing professional development for school librarians, books, and up-to-date materials to high need schools.

Next Steps

- Since IAL is a competitive grant program that has been funded in the past (through appropriations), but is newly authorized under ESSA, it will be important to focus advocacy efforts at the federal level to ensure enough funds are appropriated to continue and possibly expand the IAL program.
  - Note that while efforts to fund IAL in the past have been successful, the lack of an explicit authorization for these activities has hindered advocacy efforts related to expanding the program. The specific authorization of IAL under ESSA will help with future funding as Congress has expressed its support for these activities under the most recent authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
TITLE IV, PART A – STUDENT SUPPORT AND ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT GRANTS (BLOCK GRANT)

Background

- ESSA authorizes a new program to provide Student Support and Academic Enrichment activities (commonly referred to as the “Block Grant” under ESSA) to help States and school districts target federal resources on locally-designed priorities.
  - Funds are allocated to States and then school districts based on their share of Title I, Part A funding (formula grant allocated on the basis of poverty).

Library Provisions

- ESSA authorizes (but does not require) States to use funds to assist school districts in providing programs and activities that increase access to personalized, rigorous learning experiences supported by technology, including adequate “access to school libraries.”

- ESSA also authorizes (but does not require) States to use funds to assist school districts in providing school librarians and other school personnel with the knowledge and skills to use technology effectively, including effective integration of technology, to improve instruction and student achievement.

- In developing their local applications, school districts must consult with teachers, principals and other stakeholders, including “specialized instructional support personnel” which is defined under ESSA as specifically including school librarians.

- In addition, ESSA requires that school districts conduct a “needs assessment” prior to receiving funds from the State (that must be conducted every 3 years). The needs assessment must include access to personalized learning experiences (which may include access to school libraries).

Next Steps

- Because States are authorized (and not required) to support school districts by providing programs and activities that increase access to personalized learning experiences (which may include professional development for school librarians and better access to school libraries for students), it will be important to contact and work with State Educational Agency officials to make them aware of their ability to use funds in support of personalized learning experiences.

- Since school districts are required to consult with stakeholders that may include school librarians on the development and implementation of their local activities, it is critical to work with technology leaders at the school and school district levels to ensure that school librarians can adequately participate in the planning process.