

3B—Civic and Democratic Engagement #1

Democratic Theory and the Role of the Academic Librarian: Melding Theory and Practice

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This paper discusses the concept of democratic theory: the convergence of the public sphere philosophy of the library space and the promotion of democracy through access to information in academic librarianship. Using selective LIS literature and scholarship, including the works of John Buschman who first proposed democratic theory in LIS and public sphere philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, this paper illustrates the role academic libraries and librarians might have in promoting democratic theory. Additionally, examples of collaboration between librarians, professors, graduate students, and scholars are presented for the reformulation of democratic theory, leading to increased library engagement and social responsibility not only to members of the campus but the wider community as well.