

Little Free Libraries®: Interrogating the impact of the branded book exchange

Schmidt, Jane¹ and Hale, Jordan²

¹ Ryerson University, Canada

² University of Toronto, Canada

ABSTRACT: In this article, we critique the phenomenon of Little Free Libraries® (LFL®), the non-profit organization dedicated to sharing books with one's neighbours. Through our engagement with the discourses, narratives and geographies of the LFL® movement, we argue that the organization represents the corporatization of literary philanthropy, and is an active participant in the civic crowdfunding activities of the non-profit industrial complex. The visible positioning of these book exchanges, particularly on private property in gentrified urban landscapes, offers a materialization of these neoliberal politics at street level. Drawing primarily upon one of the author's experiences as an LFL® steward, as well as critical discourse and GIS analysis, we offer constructive critiques of the organization and their mission, and suggest that the principles of community-led library practice can be more effectively employed to harness the enthusiasm of these self-described "literacy warriors".

Keywords: Little Free Libraries, critical geography, landscape theory, non-profit industrial complex, philanthropy, civic crowdfunding, public libraries



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

1. Introduction

The neighbourhood book exchange is a simple concept. Take a book, leave a book. The exchange may be found in a park, a community garden, a pub, or even on someone's front lawn. The desire to share books with neighbours has a serendipitous appeal, and it is certainly a trend on the upswing. Walking through urban neighbourhoods and skimming the North American news, it seems like these little book exchanges are pervasive, and they are invariably referred to as Little Free Libraries. We can attribute this to the existence of an incorporated non-profit of the same name, henceforth referred to as LFL®.

We intend to critically examine how LFL® has created a dominant narrative of neighbourhood book exchanges via its corporate marketing strategy, one that runs counter to the values embodied by public libraries. We demonstrate that the LFL® movement is an example of the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) in action, and, at street level, reminds us that government funded public libraries are not to be taken for granted in an era of civic crowdfunding where the privileged classes¹ feel emboldened to take control of traditionally government-funded civic services. We are not trying to empirically demonstrate that LFL® has caused damage to traditional public libraries, rather we seek to provide an alternative and critical point of view as a departure from the LFL® narrative that has taken hold in the mainstream media.

Brought together by a mutual skepticism of this so-called movement to “end book deserts” after observing the preponderance of these installations in traditionally wealthy neighbourhoods in Toronto, where we both live, we sought to study the phenomenon with academic rigour and a critical curiosity. Given that we live in an era of austerity and privatized approaches to service provision (commonly referred to as neoliberalism), the visible positioning of these book exchanges, particularly on private property in gentrified and gentrifying neighbourhoods, provides a materialization of these politics at street level. Drawing primarily upon one of the author's experiences as an LFL® steward, as well as critical document (following Bowen 2009) and geographic information systems (GIS) analysis, we offer constructive critiques of the organization, and suggest that the principles of community-led library practice can be more effectively employed to harness the enthusiasm of these self-described “literacy warriors.”

The age of austerity has threatened public libraries in numerous instances. The busiest urban public library system in the world, the Toronto Public Library (Toronto Public Library 2016), famously survived the budget cuts of Rob Ford's mayoralty (Church 2011; Frederiksen 2015). Newfoundland and Labrador's entire public library system is presently undergoing a review (Roberts and Ensing 2016) after narrowly avoiding the closure of more than half of all branches in the province following a public outcry. Canadian Urban Library

1 Defined as those meeting or above median household incomes in a given neighbourhood.

Council (CULC) Key Performance Indicators (2013) data reveals that between the years 2010-2013, total funding for public libraries has shown a net decline. The public library system of the United Kingdom is enduring what has been called “the greatest crisis in [its] history” (BBC 2016). In the United States, nearly half of public libraries saw their budgets reduced in the period from 2009-2012 (Bertot, et. al. 2012). In short, it is becoming painfully clear that we cannot take public library service for granted in this climate. In her work on social reproduction and urban public library space, Lia Frederiksen found that “[l]ocal restructuring and knowledge economy policies have recast public libraries under consumerist and marketized logics” (2015). We ask: how does LFL® fit into this scenario of under-funded public services and neoliberal approaches to governance?

The dominant narrative used to discuss LFL® in the media is unfailingly obsequious in its tone. We provide a needed critical examination of what has become an uncritical culturally hegemonic view of the LFL® movement, particularly when one considers the preponderance of stories in the media questioning the relevance of public libraries in the modern age.

We proceed with background information on the organization to set context, followed by brief descriptions of the theoretical lenses we will use to examine the phenomenon, and the analysis and conclusion will follow.

1.1 Little Free Libraries® – a brief history of the organization

In 2009, Todd Bol, a self-described social entrepreneur, found himself in between careers and searching for something new in his life. He became inspired to build an homage to his mother in the form of a miniature schoolhouse that he installed on his front lawn and filled with books to give away to his neighbours. He called it a Little Free Library. From there, the idea caught on and interest in his neighbourhood grew. He decided to collaborate with Rick Brooks, and together they founded and incorporated the Little Free Library non-profit organization.

Since its founding, it has grown exponentially. As of November 2016, there were 50,000 registered LFL®s worldwide. In order to become a chartered LFL®, there is a registration fee (ranging from \$42.45-\$89USD); once registered, members receive a sign, a welcome package containing information on running the LFL®, have the option to place themselves on the world map, and may join the private Facebook group for stewards. The name Little Free Library is trademarked and restricted for re-use; as Bol asserts in an interview, use of it without permission is not allowed: “we own the name” (Grossman 2015). Customers also have the option to purchase a complete structure from the organization, ranging in price from \$179USD to a top end of \$1254USD. Other branded items are available such as apparel, book stamps and tote bags. Shannon Mattern (2012) describes the website as “essentially a store”.

It is said that the name was chosen as an homage to Andrew Carnegie and his public libraries, and the original goal of the organization was to build as many libraries as he did and to keep going. The institutional mission as found on the LFL® website is to “To promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges worldwide and to build a sense of community as we share skills, creativity and wisdom across generations” (Little Free Library 2012). Their Kickstarter campaign claims they intend to water book deserts, i.e. “rural or urban areas where books are difficult to access or afford” (Bol 2017). They speak of children who live in areas where the school library has been shut down, the public library is too far away, and whose families cannot afford to buy books.

In Todd Bol’s own words: “What we want to do is set the stage for empowering neighborhoods that are literary deserts, places where 75 percent of the kids aren't proficient in reading. The key to fixing that is for all the neighborhood residents to feel responsible for the kids. We got rid of polio and measles; we can do this" (Martin 2015). Bol also feels that LFL® is a force for unifying society: “The (political) right likes us and the left likes us. How do you say 'no' to reading? As a populace, we are upset we are getting pushed apart when we want to come together. That's what Little Free Libraries do" (Grossman 2015).

1.2 Literature Review

Academic enquiry into the LFL® movement has been minimal thus far. Only three articles have been published in scholarly journals. In *Places Journal*, Mattern (2012) describes the rise of alternative library services, including LFL®, and the ways they capture the imagination, angst and consciousness of a society increasingly accustomed to pop-up culture. Mattern observes that “the affective experience these little libraries cultivate can be translated into political consciousness” (2012) and implores libraries both little and large to work to strengthen each other, lest politicians see this trend as a legitimate alternative to funding actual libraries.

Marianne Snow (2015) explored the LFL® phenomenon in a brief article published in *Children and Libraries*. Struck by many of our similar observations in her own city (seemingly visible in privileged neighbourhoods, contain little-used books depicting white affluent characters), Snow makes an appeal for research to be undertaken in this unexplored area. Specifically, she calls for a socio-economic analysis of neighbourhoods where LFL® are present, and a bibliographic analysis of the titles contained therein. She invokes the work of champions for community-led libraries and hopes that the phenomenon is working toward addressing systemic barriers to the use of public libraries and not simply replacing service.

Webster, Gollner and Nathan (2015) embarked on the first qualitative study of the neighbourhood book exchange. The research team conducted a media analysis, and identified six installations in the Pacific Northwest. In-depth interviews were conducted with LFL® stewards and the circulation activity at each location was recorded. The researchers

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

found that the primary motivation of the stewards veered from the homogenous narrative that was uncovered in the media analysis. Rather than seeking to be part of a global movement to improve literacy as was suggested in media coverage, the stewards were instead driven by a desire to create space to scaffold direct and indirect encounters among neighbours in soft edges – defined as a nebulous zone of semi-private space, neither public nor private. The singularity of the media coverage suggested a strong influence from the LFL® narrative, and did not “accurately account for the information practices [we] observed in our study” (2015). The researchers also completed inventories of the books in the exchanges, but felt that the results generated more questions than could be addressed within the scope of their paper.

Webster, Gollner and Nathan’s media analysis spanned two years and yielded 163 articles. In the time since, hundreds more have been published. We performed a search in Lexis Nexis Academic in February 2017 for “Little Free Library” that yielded 999 results - the maximum result in Lexis Nexis, thus there may have been further results not returned. We did not conduct our own media analysis as it has been our casual observation that this homogeneously positive media treatment has not significantly changed since the original analysis. Webster, Gollner, and Nathan observed the predominance of three recurrent themes – *community catalyst*, *literacy promoter* and *LFL® affiliation* – and that the vast majority of articles were presented in an uncritical tone. Among the 999 results, the term “community” appears within 728 articles and “literacy or reading” within 683. We feel that this affirms our observation and that further analysis in this vein does not contribute to the advancement of thought on this topic.

1.3 Theoretical framework and approach to the phenomenon

We view the LFL® organization through a lens that highlights what the anti-violence organization INCITE!_Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Trans People of Color* Against Violence name the “non-profit industrial complex” (NPIC), referring to a system of relationships between local and federal governments, funding foundations and non-profit/non-governmental organizations (NGO), social service and social justice organizations (INCITE! 2016). NPIC scholars argue that activism has lost its grassroots drive for revolutionary change through its change in direction toward corporatization. Rather than fighting against the tenets of capitalism and its discriminatory systems, activism has subsumed itself into the corporate milieu. When a group seeks to become a non-profit organization, in order to maintain this status – for reasons of tax exemption to seeking funding – they (inadvertently) reinforce and conform to capitalist norms, effectively watering down the political motivations that bring like-minded activists together (Dauvergne and LeBaron 2014), serving instead to keep a business running.

These impulses are coupled with the rise of “civic crowdfunding” approaches to urban

planning problems, to use a term coined by Rodrigo Davies (2015) in his PhD dissertation. Davies uses this term to describe situations in which, in the absence of adequate public funding for services typically provided by the government, individuals and businesses contribute to community projects through one-time financial and material donations, based on a perceived worth to the populations they serve. We also argue that LFL®s are a manifestation of this “disruptive” ideal in a space beyond the NPIC: in the gentrifying landscapes of cities. Intrigued by the symbolism we had observed of the placement of these book exchanges on private property in well-heeled neighbourhoods, we look to landscape theory as a means of interpreting the ideologies embedded in these structures. Moreover, does LFL®’s claim to “water book deserts” hold up? A spatial and demographic analysis of the LFL® locations in Canada, specifically the large cities Toronto and Calgary, with the help of Statistics Canada’s (2013) National Household Survey,² helps answer the question: is the impression that these are more prevalent in well-resourced neighbourhoods correct?

In order to understand the experience of stewarding an LFL®, one of the present researchers purchased a pre-built book exchange, registered with LFL®, and installed it on her front lawn in September 2015. This also allowed her access to the private Facebook group and the promotional content meant for “members only”. The intention behind this aspect of the research was not necessarily to perform a bibliographic analysis of the books that came and went, neither was it to present formal fieldwork, but it did provide an experiential immersion into the world of LFL® stewardship.

The researchers acknowledge the presence of personal bias upon entering into this work. For this reason, they did not treat experience of stewarding an LFL® as ethnographic, i.e. data was not collected with any formality. It would have been impossible to do so in an impartial manner, and the first author’s own personal experience was not representative of all steward experiences. Instead, using a mixed method interpretivist approach, we looked to existing theory to create a reasoned critique of a social phenomenon based on personal observation and analysis of content generated by LFL®, and we examined socio-economic data to explore our observational assumptions.

2. Analysis

2.1 Non-profit Industrial Complex

LFL® embodies the corporatization of a grassroots phenomenon. Through trademarking the name Little Free Library and asserting ownership over the concept, LFL® represents the NPIC in action. Put simply, one does not need the assistance of a non-profit corporation to

² After Statistics Canada’s long-form census, which surveyed a 20% sample of the Canadian population about their education, ethnicity, income, migration history, housing, and more, was eliminated by the federal Conservative government, the 2011 Census Program included the National Household Survey, a non-mandatory questionnaire mailed to one-third of the population. The long form has since been restored.

share books with their neighbours. We submit that the benefits of aligning with this organization provide marginal tangible benefits to the individual steward but greatly benefits the growth of this social enterprise.

The primary organizational goal of LFL® is to build more LFL®s. It is easy to measure something that is straightforward to count. By focussing on simplistic metrics to appease donors and would-be donors, the actual effect of the movement on the lives of people who are meant to be helped is dulled. LFL® does not seek to determine how many people have actually improved their literacy or increased their access to books of interest. Building a box of books is one thing. Ensuring that the contents are maintained, relevant to the population being served and consistently stocked is quite another. The serendipity of the LFL® is part of its appeal, however, what is often glossed over is the fact that not all books are treasures (Greenstone 2016; Mernagh 2015), and the simple provision of second hand books does not in and of itself lead to enhanced literacy. If, in fact, it does, there is no evidence that the organization has provided that it does, nor is there a commitment to improving their impact assessment measures evident.

Alnoor Ebrahim (2013), a scholar in social enterprise, writes about impact assessment in the *Harvard Business Review*. Using case studies of three non-profits, he concluded that it is difficult to determine causality in measuring the impact of an organization, however, a commitment to research and collaboration with experts in the fields the enterprises are trying to influence is key to long term strategy. “Overcoming these obstacles will require investors and front line organizations to make a long term commitment to research and collaboration. Simply repeating the mantra of measuring impact won’t get us there”. LFL® discourse is replete with hyperbole about how the movement is changing lives and shaping neighbourhoods. The enthusiasm of the organization and its devotees cannot be denied, however, it is an obfuscation of reality to declare that they are solving real problems by simply placing boxes of used books in neighbourhoods that could theoretically benefit from more nuanced intervention.

Andrea del Moral (2005), reflecting on the non-profit industrial complex, writes about the corporatization of grassroots advocacy:

[...] organizations that began as radical grassroots associations of individuals become corporations that largely copy the mainstream economy. They are professional, though not educated on the ground about the actual issues; organized, but not effective; compliant with tax laws, but not responsive or accountable to community needs. (3)

As described on the LFL® Kickstarter website (Bol 2017), all funding received above and beyond their initial goal would be directed toward an expansion of their organizational infrastructure: their website, their technology, but not research, not partnerships, not literacy

initiatives. Just a bigger corporate structure. When people donate to this organization or register their book exchange, is this really where they want their money to go?

As evidenced by a revenue analysis of the organization's available Form 990s (nb: as an incorporated non-profit, they are obliged to make their financial documents public), LFL® is, according to figure 1 below, growing (Guidestar 2017):

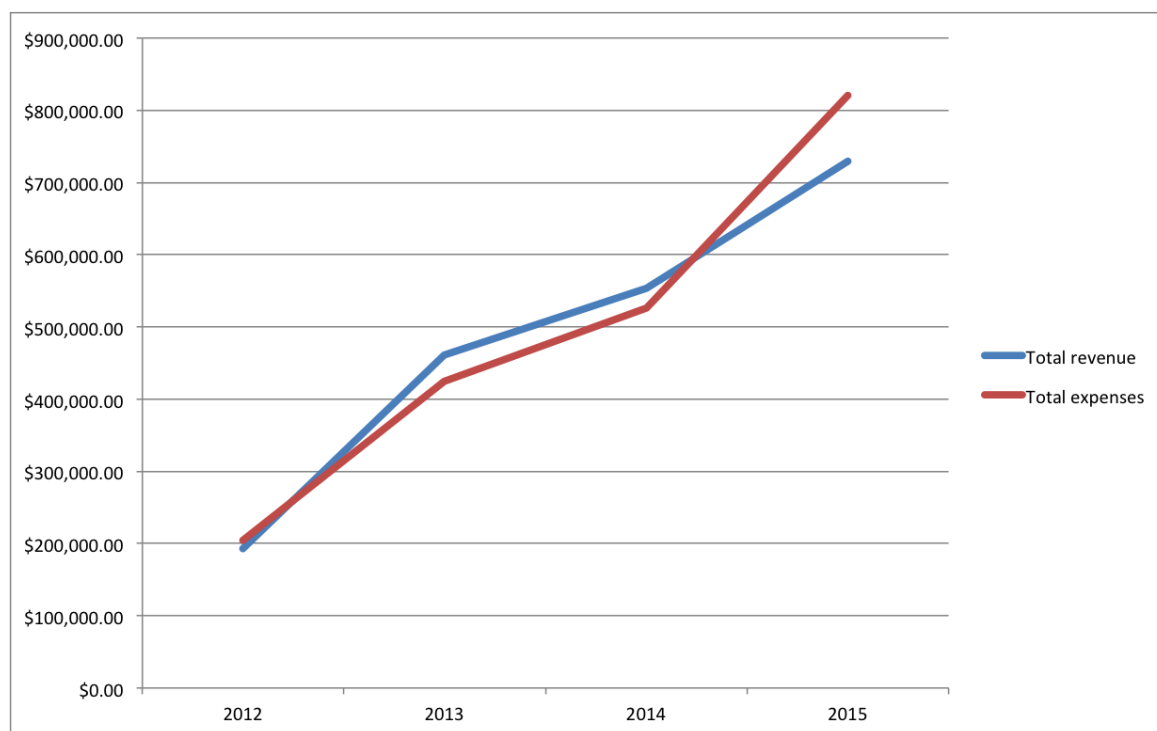


Figure 1: Revenue analysis of Little Free Libraries® 2012-2015: source - Guidestar, 2017

This rapid growth speaks to the success of the LFL® brand strategy – sales of merchandise, including book exchanges themselves, and fundraising activities have created a fast-growing revenue stream. The biographies of LFL®'s co-founders and board members found on their website list their numerous business achievements and highlight their entrepreneurial skills. However, what is missing from this picture is any substantive assessment of what they have actually achieved, beyond the simple number of installations. This is symptomatic of the NPIC at work, as described below:

The non-profit model makes it easier for young economically privileged people just coming out of college to start a non-profit than to engage in long-term established movements; the model is obsessed with institution building rather than organizing; and it forces social justice activists to become more accountable to funders than to our communities. (INCITE! 2007, 83)

Rather than focussing on the needs of marginalized communities and barriers to their access

to libraries, the people behind the organization appear to choose not to worry about unintended consequences, as exemplified in this quote from LFL® co-founder Rick Brooks: “Should we worry that the popularity of Little Free Libraries might tempt taxpayers to balk at supporting public libraries? Truth is, we don't know. But we choose to believe in the goodness of it all” (Aldrich 2015, 220). Instead of aspiring to strengthen the very institution they are emulating via their homage to Andrew Carnegie (Aldrich 2015), Brooks’ statement shows a lack of concern about the possibility that the organization’s activities may, in fact, be doing active harm to the public library.

LFL® has been known to acknowledge – and dismiss – the potential threat they pose to public/school libraries. Whenever this subject is confronted on their website or in their materials for stewards (Little Free Library 2015a), it is dismissed as “silly”, and examples of partnerships with public libraries are invoked to demonstrate their point. Their website even boasts the claim that “the vast majority of public and school librarians fully support the concept and role of Little Free Libraries as outreach and inreach tools for library success” (Little Free Library 2017b). Their methodology for making this determination is unclear. Other mentions of the public library in their literature (Little Free Library 2015b) focus on how public libraries can be leveraged to strengthen or be a champion for LFL®, and not the other way around. True partnerships aim to strengthen one another; it is not evident within the LFL® literature what they are doing to strengthen libraries.

The Village of Vinton in Texas serves as a cautionary tale. In September 2014, it was announced that in response to state imposed cuts to public library budgets, a \$50 fee would be levied for non-residents to access the El Paso Public Library. As a measure to “bring library services [to Vinton]” (Village of Vinton 2014), the State representative and village mayor unveiled a program to install five LFL®s in Vinton. The press release specified that while the structures themselves were the result of a collaboration among several community organizations (including the public library), it was emphasized that keeping them stocked with books would be up to the community. This solution demonstrates that in at least one small corner of the world, politicians looked to this social enterprise as a solution to the lack of access to public library service. This is no less than a move to privatize a public service and an absolution of government responsibility to provide the service as a societal need.

2.1.1 Interrogating so-called book deserts

The LFL® narrative and organizational goals speak frequently about the power of the LFL® to water or end “book deserts”. While there is no standard definition of a book desert, generally, it refers to a geographic area with a lack of access to books, whether through a library or bookstore. We thought it would be illuminating to analyze the proximity of LFL® installations to public library branches. Due to limitations in available data, we opted to analyze two large urban centres that had a substantial number of LFL®s, Calgary and

Toronto, using ArcGIS to geocode a PDF of chartered LFL®s around the world that we downloaded from their website in October 2015, as well as the locations of Calgary Public Library branches. An up-to-date GIS dataset of Toronto Public Library locations was obtained from the City of Toronto's Open Data website. We used ArcGIS to create the following maps; figures 2 and 3 below illustrate that the majority of LFL® installations are located at very close proximity to public library branches. In other words, not in book deserts, but in the neighbourhoods that already enjoy high access to books (as well as transportation and other public services).

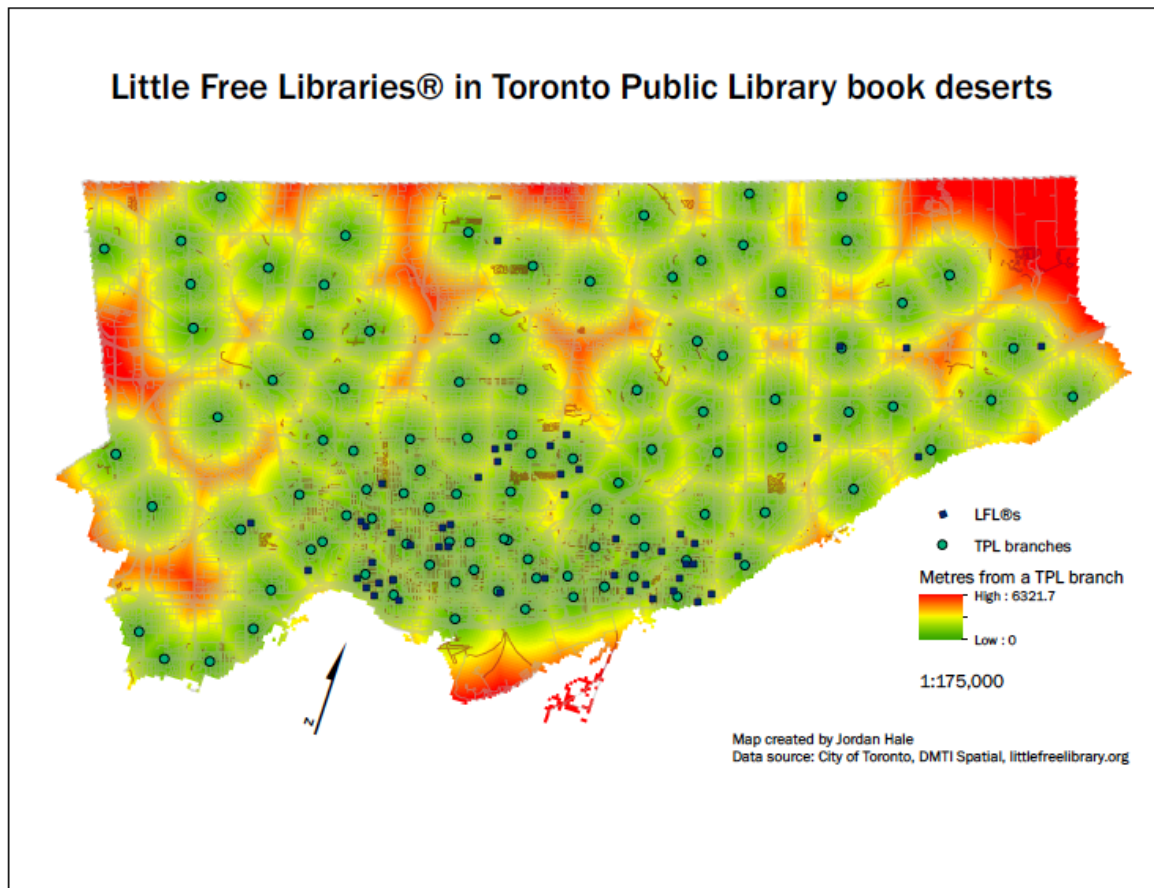


Figure 2: Little Free Libraries® in Toronto Public Library book deserts

If LFL® is genuine in their goal to water book deserts, we submit that they would do well to partner with local public library systems to match installations/stewards to areas truly in need, and to assist in their maintenance where reasonable as an enhancement to existing public library service.

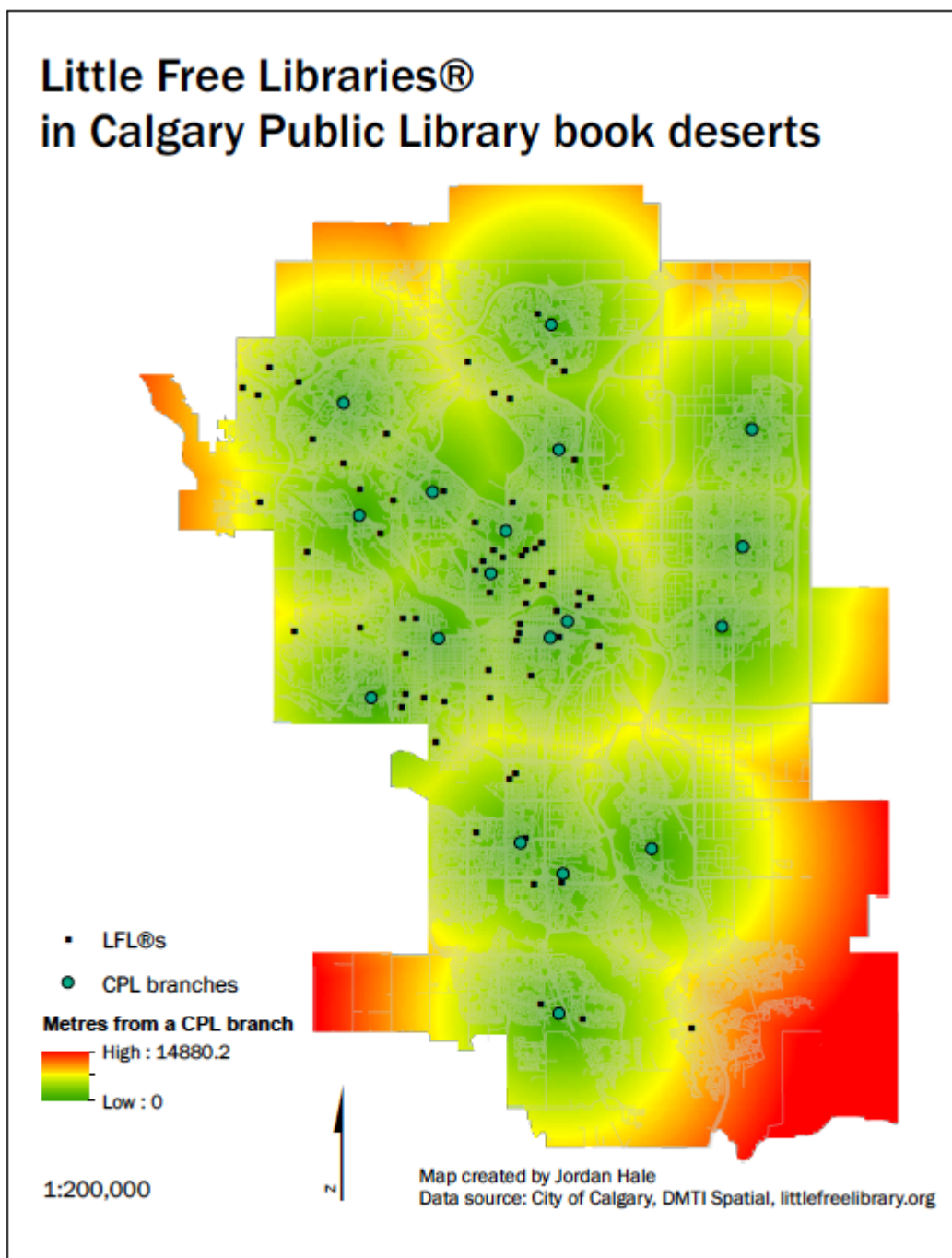


Figure 3: Little Free Libraries® in Calgary Public Library book deserts

A fine example of this sort of collaboration is the Winnipeg Public Library (WPL) with their Build Day 2016, in which they sought to install 12 LFL@s in low income neighbourhoods, stewarded by community volunteers in partnership with the public library (Winnipeg Public Library 2016), including access to free books from used book sales. We maintain that the LFL® branding was unnecessary, however we laud WPL for their attempt to increase service in underserved areas *and* commitment to ongoing support of the stewards. Both of these are key aspects to ensuring the book exchanges are well maintained.

2.2 Philanthropic motivation/performativity

Our discourse analysis of LFL®’s website and marketing materials, combined with participation in the steward community, has led us to conclude that the act of stewarding an LFL® is a performative act of literary philanthropy. The text of the organization’s website contains many references to Andrew Carnegie, implying a comparison of their efforts to the industrialist’s pioneering contributions to public libraries across North America. Participants in the movement refer to themselves as “literacy warriors” and “community heroes”. The organization’s tagline is “We all do better when we all read better” suggests that reading “better” is a form of self-help or improvement. This is consistent with the libertarian-esque beneficence (or, as characterised by Chris Lehman, “blissfully un-self-aware flourishes of elite condescension” (Lehman 2015)) of Andrew Carnegie which has come under scrutiny by philanthropy critics over time (Lehman 2015; McGoey 2015; Young 2015). If only one reads *better* books, they in turn, will become better.

Behaviours affirming this notion were observed by the present authors over the course of about nine months of participating in steward activities, including stewarding a branded book exchange (Schmidt 2016), participating in a Jane’s Walk³ (2016) centred around LFLs in East York (a fast gentrifying community in Toronto) and membership in the LFL® stewards-only Facebook group. These experiences provided a glimpse into how the participants view their contributions to the community, much of which amounts to a sense of “do-goodery”, defined, according to the Wiktionary (2017), as “the activity of those who advocate a certain course of action, often of political or social concern, with the naïve and unreflected conviction of their own moral superiority”. We posit that in absence of any research or evidence of an issue to be addressed (a community in need, a demonstrated lack of access to books), simply encouraging literacy in an already information-rich and privileged environment is hardly a heroic charitable act. Amy Schiller (2015), who writes about modern notions of philanthropy, stated in a recent paper that:

Philanthropy no longer indicates putting effort into something larger than oneself. Instead, it increasingly takes the form of consumption of identity markers that retain the signifying power of communality without the requisite sacrifice or humility. (581)

Choosing to align oneself with the LFL® brand is a motivation that does not always stand up to scrutiny. Defense of the choice to become a charter member is often banal and non-specific. Common refrains include “it was someone else’s idea, I want to give them credit” or, “it was the right thing to do”. Perhaps the allure of visibility via the brand affiliation is hard to resist, or perhaps it is simply a matter of image. In their study of neighbourhood book exchanges, Webster, Gollner and Nathan (2015) found that none of the stewards they

³ Jane’s Walks are citizen led walks that focus in on various themes in cities around the world. They were inspired by famed urbanist, Jane Jacobs.

interviewed identified with the mission of the organization, even the sole steward who had registered her exchange with LFL®. Rather, they found the main motivation was to create a local grassroots effort to nurture relations with their neighbours.

As an altruistic initiative, LFL® is difficult to criticize and hard to assess. Stewarding an LFL® is a charitable act that doesn't require getting your hands dirty, nor does it lend itself to any meaningful outcome when put under the microscope. An oft-cited benefit of running an LFL® is the promise of “community-building”. However, generalizing from comments on the closed Facebook group for stewards, many did not desire interaction with people who came to look at their LFL®; in many examples, it was studiously avoided. This then leads us to question the validity of the pursuit of community building that is purported to be an effect of running an LFL®. Concomitantly, Webster, Gollner and Nathan also found that there was very little interaction among neighbours using the book exchanges, and the stewards they interviewed did not feel they were “building community”. In the *Little Free Library Book*, Todd Bol describes his feelings about what it means to install an LFL®:

“I almost think of it as offering yourself on a platter,” says Bol. “Here are my books, here I am in the community, this is what's important to me. Books are a reflection of what I am, and I love them, and if I can share them with my neighbours, I'm sharing who I am.” (Aldrich 2015, 19)

This quote exemplifies the hyper-individualism of LFL® and juxtaposes its opposition to the tenets of the community-led public library, specifically “strategy, staffing, service structures, systems and organizational culture which enable it to identify, prioritize and meet community needs ... these needs must be comprehensively and holistically assessed.” (Pateman and Williment 2013, 1).

What brings one to have such passion for an LFL® that cannot be met by the local public library? The organization suggests that it is not a preference for one over the other (Little Free Library 2015b). But in reality, what does an investment in an LFL® in close proximity to a public library branch say to the community about the public library? Reluctant readers are unlikely to find material that will appeal to them in the serendipitous scenario; it is often the passionate readers who find the LFL® concept so appealing. This in and of itself is a contradiction of the LFL® mission to enhance literacy in communities. On the contrary, we have found that the neighbourhoods where these installations are most prevalent are highly educated and have ready access to robust public library systems. The previous figures (2 and 3), as well as figures 4 and 5 that follow, illustrate that, not only do LFL®s tend to be located in close proximity to libraries and central business districts, but also that residents of these neighbourhoods are likely to possess university degrees. In the case of Toronto, some neighbourhoods home to LFL®s have upwards of 25% of residents holding university degrees.

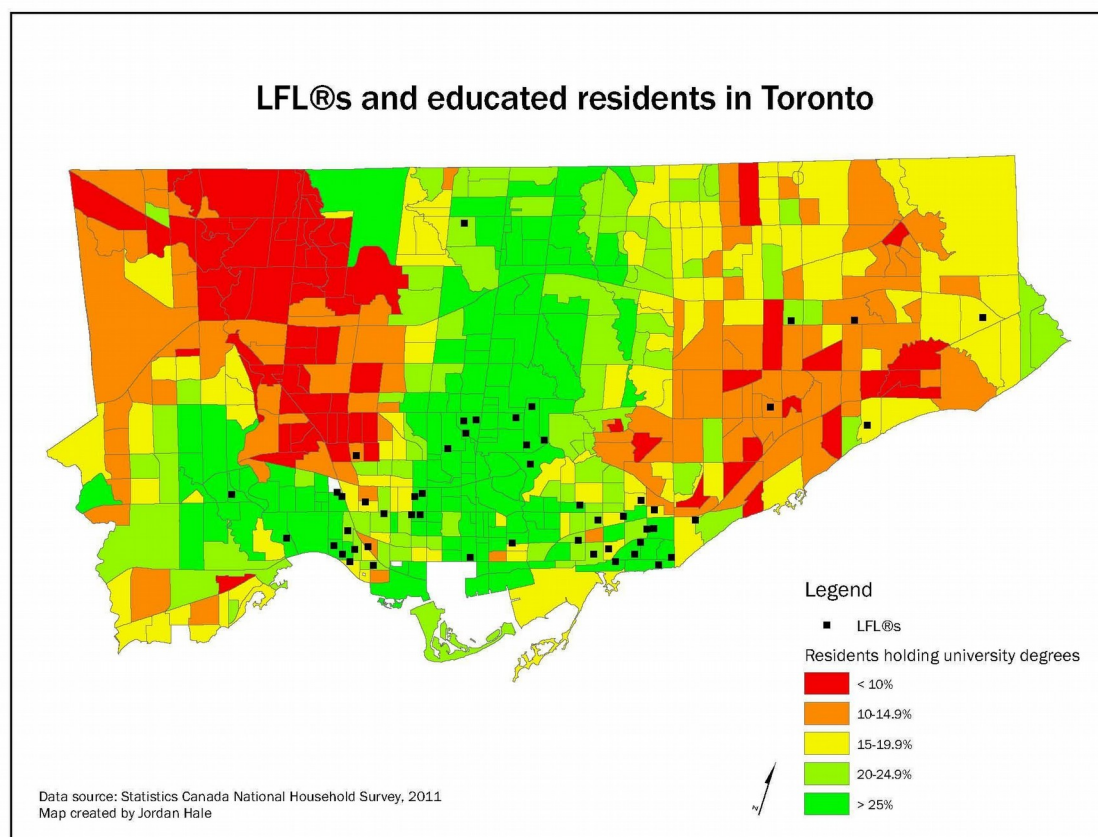


Figure 4: LFLs® and educated residents in Toronto

We submit that these data reinforce the notion that LFL®s are examples of performative community enhancement, driven more so by the desire to showcase one’s passion for books and education than a genuine desire to help the community in a meaningful way. Schiller (2015) argues that modern philanthropy focuses more on the self rather than the world at large, i.e. “The feeling of agency and the narcissism of its reflection onto the participants trumps any critique about the value or effectiveness of their work” (583). LFL®s are a highly visible form of self-gratification cleverly disguised as book aid, and the effects of this visibility can be better understood through a consideration of their role in a landscape, a theoretical lens to which we will return.

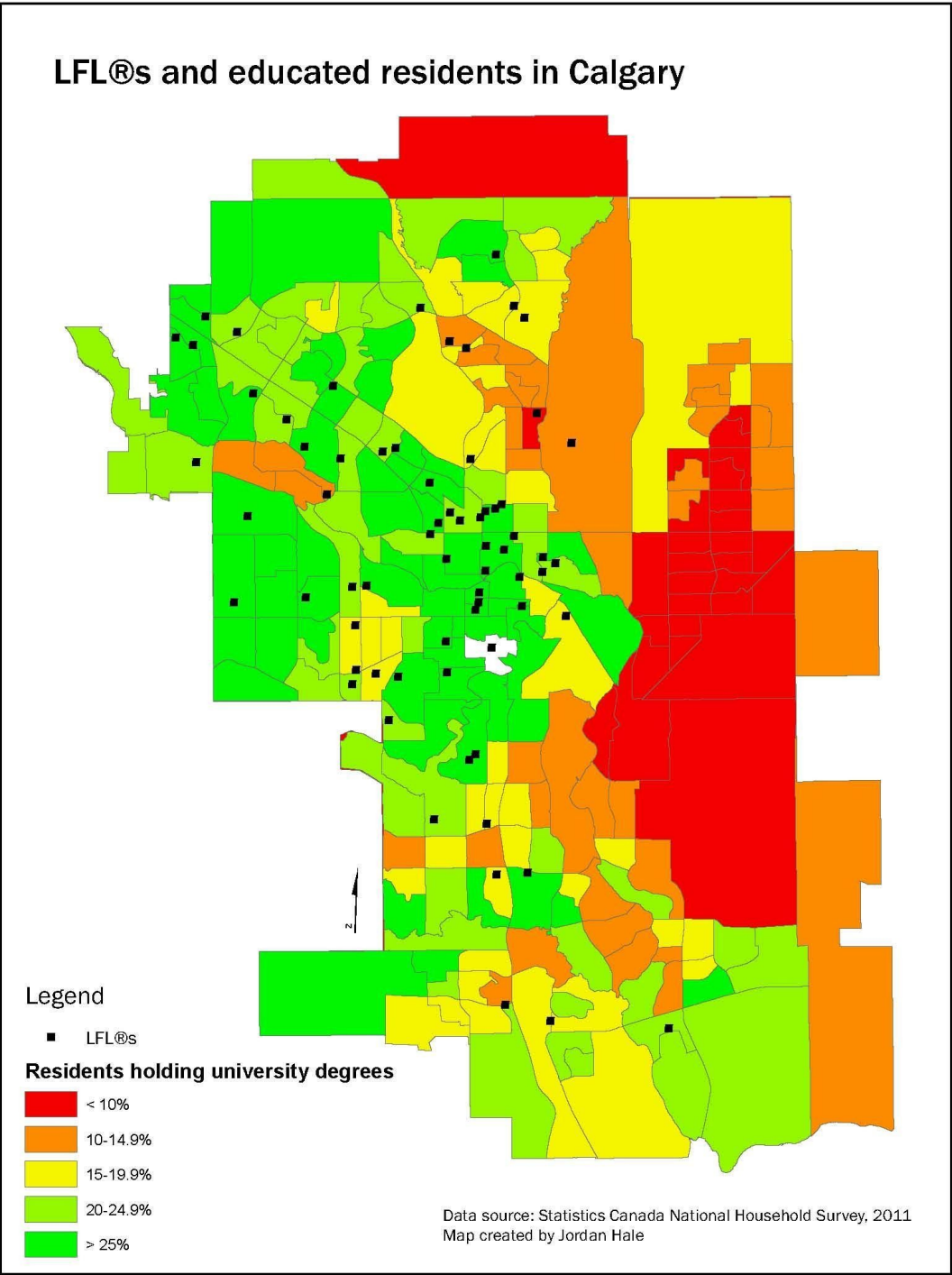


Figure 5: LFLs® and educated residents in Calgary

2.3 LFL® as civic crowdfunding

Civic crowdfunding is defined as “crowdfunded projects that provide services to communities [...] the goods produced are expected to be goods that can be consumed equally by members of a community, regardless of their contribution to the production of the good” (Davies 2015, 343). The participatory nature of neighbourhood book exchange means we can use this lens to analyze LFL®.

Rodrigo Davies, the eminent expert on civic crowdfunding, explores the inequality inherent in civic crowdfunded projects by asking: what does the crowd want to fund? The answer thus far seems to veer toward uncontroversial projects such as community gardens, and for the purposes of this paper, LFL®. The penchant for funding ‘nice’ projects confirms “the suspicion held by many that it serves well-resourced, technologically-savvy, majority communities much more than others.” (Davies 2014, 136).

Similarly, through our GIS analysis we found that that LFL®s are more common in well-resourced neighbourhoods than in the so-called book deserts as espoused by the LFL® organizational goals, as demonstrated in figures 6 and 7 below, illustrating the distribution of LFL®s across high, medium, and low median household income terciles for each of the two cities.

Toronto Little Free Libraries® in areas of high, medium, and low median household income (2011)

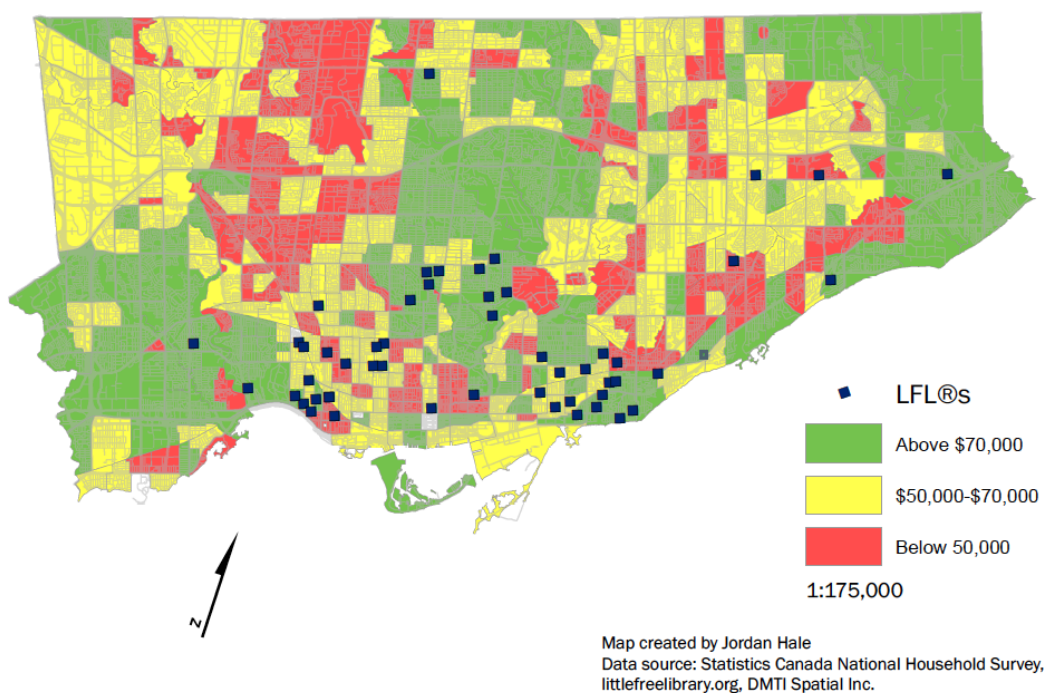


Figure 6: Toronto LFLs® in areas of high, medium, and low household income (2011)

**Calgary Little Free Libraries®
in areas of high, medium, and low
median household income (2011)**

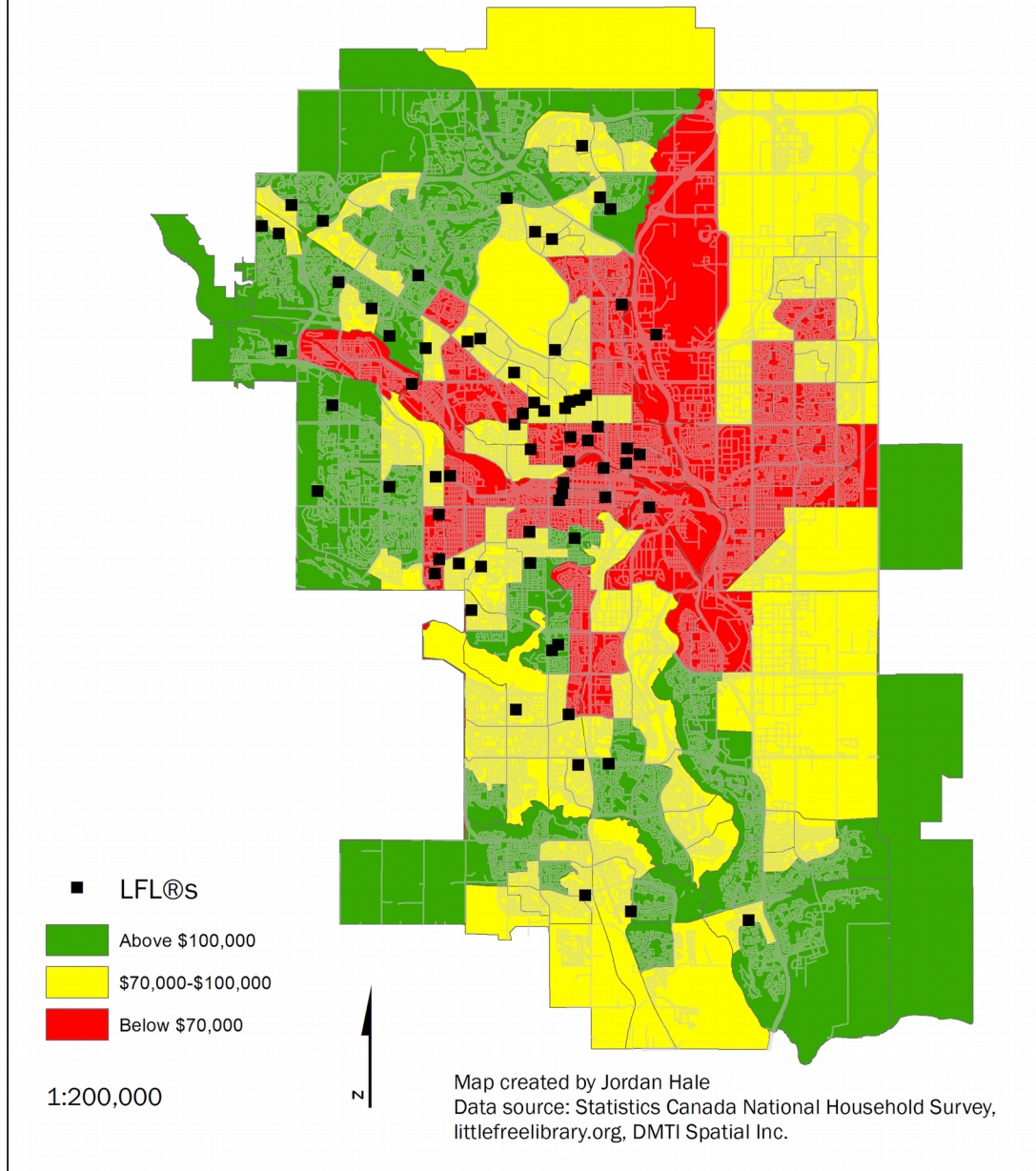


Figure 7: Calgary LFLs® in areas of high, medium, and low household income (2011)

The maps illustrate that the majority of LFL® in Toronto are in high to medium income neighbourhoods. The distribution in Calgary differs marginally, with slightly less than half of the installations in lower income neighbourhoods. However, it must be noted that according to the 2011 National Household Survey, the median income in Calgary is \$81,256CND

compared to the national median of \$61,072CND (Statistics Canada 2013). Calgary is a wealthy city. Nevertheless, based on data from these two Canadian cities on balance, LFL® installations are more likely to be in mid-high income neighbourhoods than low income.

Davies (2015) issued three provocations for scholars to consider in their treatment of civic crowdfunding. Exposing LFL® to these provocations reveals that the organization has much more work to do to make a measurable and significant impact on the sectors of the population they aim to serve.

2.3.1 Is it participatory? Is that participation truly equal?

This depends on three factors (per Davies 2015):

- I. *Access to the platform* – can the user get to the LFL®? Is it in an area that is naturally accessible to them? Is it on private property or public property?
- II. *Their possession of the skills necessary to use the services/goods* – can the user read the material? Do they want to read the material? Is it relevant to them?
- III. *Their financial resources* – perhaps the least relevant in this scenario, but can the user contribute equally to the LFL®? Can they take a book AND leave a book? If they can only take, what effect, if any, does this have on their psyche?

2.3.2 Does it increase or reduce social inequality?

To what extent are LFL®s really being installed in communities that would most benefit? What are the methods being employed in order to make this determination? Community-led practice encourages community mapping and getting to know constituents and their needs/preferences for service delivery before implementation (Working Together Project 2008). This is not being practiced intentionally by LFL®. Their *Books around the Block* initiative⁴ *sounds* like a step in this direction, but details of how this program differs from the business of the rest of the organization's activities are scant, nor does the LFL® website or regular communication channels give it much billing in its placement. Similarly, their *Impact Fund*⁵ claims to “place Libraries in the hands of committed stewards in locations where they can have meaningful outcomes” (Little Free Library 2017a). However, on close inspection of the application process, none of the review criteria are relevant to determination of need in the community, nor are the ‘meaningful outcomes’ defined.

4 Billed (c. 2013) as a program that targeted low-income areas.

5 The *Impact Fund* is funded by donors and provides a free LFL® to qualified applicants.

2.3.3 Does civic crowdfunding support or undermine the role of government?

LFL® has set the intention to install LFL®s in towns that do not have a public library. What research is being done to determine if this is the best course of action for those communities? Is a book exchange truly what the community needs? If so, how has this been determined? Is there a possibility that a nearby regional library would install and steward a small number of book exchanges instead? Are there other ways that the barriers to access could be bridged? While the best of intentions may be present, it is not necessarily a good thing to absolve government of their responsibility to provide civic services by volunteering to “do it yourself”.

2.4 Libraries in the urban landscape

The positioning of LFL®s on the front lawns of city dwellers is far less politically benign than one might initially expect. We argue that taking a landscape analysis approach to the LFL® phenomenon makes clearer the stakes of its role in broader discussions toward public service provision, as well as their relationship to processes of gentrification and neoliberal governance.

Our approach to understanding LFL®s as an element of their surrounding landscape draws upon an expansive definition of landscape that allows us to consider a wide range of textual and visual evidence, as well as in-person and online interactions with the installations, in thinking through the impacts of these book exchanges on public institutions and civic life (for an elaboration of this theoretical framework, see Hale 2014, 13-20). Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels’ (Cosgrove 1998; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Daniels 1985; 1989) pioneering work relating landscape art, vision, materiality, and ideology proposed that landscapes manifest the politics and power relations associated with those who participated in their production. As visibility is a constitutive component of landscape, scholars in this tradition argue that these underlying sentiments and structures are communicated through the act of viewing, both “in person”, and through various representations in art and media.

The LFL® model, engineered by communications professionals and marketing consultants to be social media-friendly, produces many such visual representations on sites like Pinterest, an image-driven bookmarking platform popular amongst crafters, cooks, fashion designers, and do-it-yourselfers, Twitter, and Facebook. However, de Certeau (1984), Wylie (2005; 2010), Merriman (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) and others maintain that the everyday experiences of people moving through urban space – on sidewalks, on bicycles, and in cars – and what appears in *their* visions of landscape, should not be discounted in explorations of landscapes and their meaning. In central Calgary and Toronto, this “audience” encounters LFL®s as they move through dense and heavily trafficked areas of their respective cities, and consideration must be given to how they pass by the quirky box of books on private property.

The ongoing neoliberalization of municipal governance of which library closures are a part, which also includes processes of privatization, downloading, consolidation, and user fees, is concurrent with (and linked to) the ongoing financialization of capital and real estate speculation, patterns that manifest themselves in central cities (Smith 2005, 36-38). North American cities are selling off their considerable land holdings for development purposes. In Toronto, we observe library construction projects tied to condo development, through agreements in which developers obtain allowances to exceed zoning regulations in exchange for investment in “community-building” projects. Meanwhile, LFL® installations that exist in what Webster, Gollner and Nathan (2015) described as “soft edges” – the nebulous space between private and public property – are occasionally the target of municipal by-law enforcers (Friedersdorf 2015). Stories of stewards forced to remove their book exchanges due to by-law infractions inevitably incite moral outrage of the “who would want to take away books?” variety. The emotional reaction is visceral. For example, the subject of one story describes the “deep sadness” and “loss of sense of community” she feels upon having to remove her exchange from public property (Fagan 2016).

We take up the critique posed by Stehlin and Tarr (2016) linking local “progressive urbanist” projects (specifically urban agriculture and cycling) with “increas[ing] property values, consumption, and investment” (4), as well as gentrification, while being ineffective forces for substantive political change beyond the immediately locale. In other words, when these projects are complete and serve the residents of the neighbourhoods they are located in, the momentum for further advocacy tends to dissipate. They claim that advocates of such practices “risk creating merely *performative* spaces for themselves rather than *transformative* actions” (italics in original), and the co-option of activities long associated with low-income and racialized communities (like riding bicycles instead of driving, or relying on the public library) are “made visible in a white and bourgeois form through gentrification” (4-5). We argue that LFL®s are another example of this “progressive urbanist” nearsightedness in action, and suggest that one placed on the private property of an educated white person of means is a powerful symbol of what Duncan and Duncan (2004) refer to as “painless privilege” manifested in landscape. Through the transformation of private property, with its restrictions on who can move through these landscapes without hassle, “residents spatially and visually insulate themselves from uncomfortable questions of race and poverty and keep out of sight as many reminders of the social consequences of what has been referred to as ‘painless privilege’” (9), like homelessness and signs of ‘blight’. While the City of Toronto and its residents are proud to call it a diverse, multicultural city, figure 8 below illustrates the distribution of visible minority populations in the city. For the most part, these minorities are concentrated in the inner suburbs and not in the central city, where the vast majority of LFL® installations are located.⁶ As structural racism in education systems and housing is a

6 Calgary is significantly whiter than Toronto, so a similar map did not demonstrate such clustering and segregation.

key contributing factor to illiteracy, we note that their presence in overwhelmingly white neighbourhoods speaks to a limited commitment to social justice beyond the immediately local. As we have argued, the LFL® appeals to the privileged, the very people who arguably are not in need of a literacy intervention. It allows their lawn to participate in “community building” on their behalf.

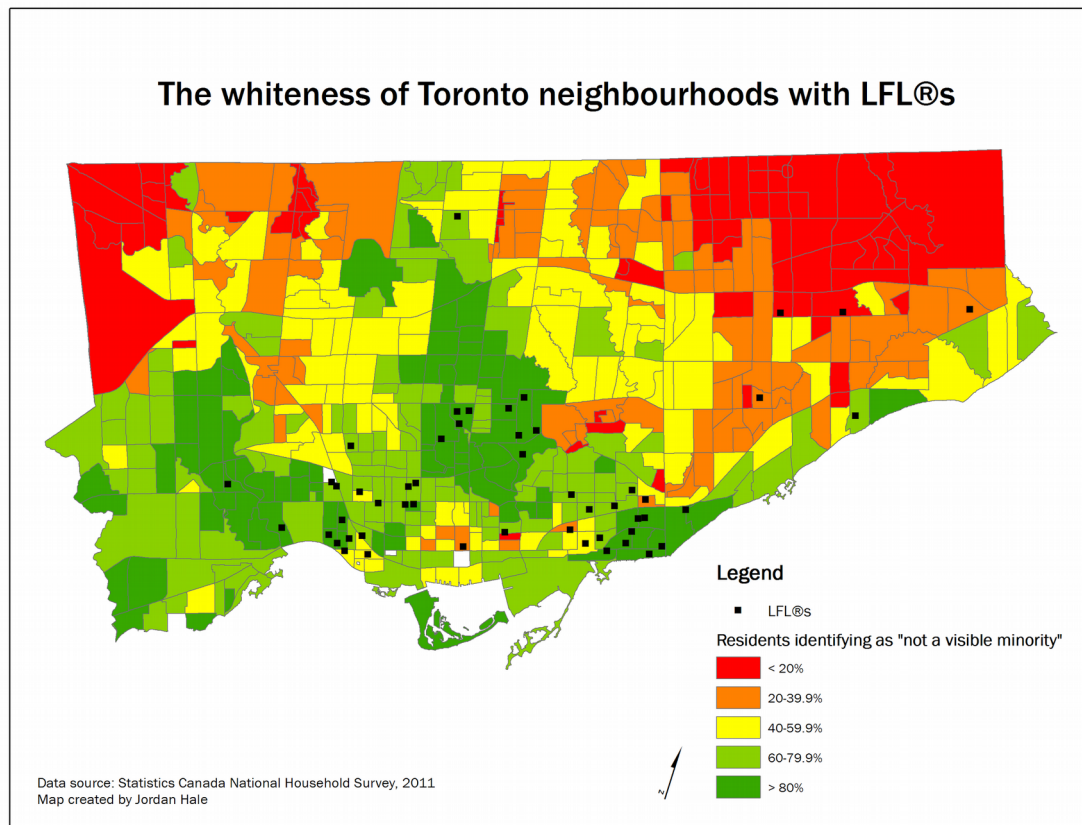


Figure 8: The whiteness of Toronto neighbourhoods with LFL®s

2.5 “Safe places” to read

Library professionals would be the first to insist that the library is not just about books. Indeed there is far more at stake when a community does not have access to a public library. As an illustrative case study in the difference between public libraries and LFL®, we can look toward Cleveland, OH and Madison, WI.

The Cleveland Police Department is a participant in the LFL® Kids, Communities and Cops program (sometimes referred to as Libraries of Understanding), wherein police install LFL®s in or near their stations as part of community outreach. As is consistent with LFL® projects highlighted on their website, there is very little evidence that this program is being assessed meaningfully. We see photos of white police officers reading to black children

accompanied by anecdotes such as this one: “This was community relations at its best. The book was about one story, but the event itself was about another story -- that of the cops and the kids” (Bibb 2016). According to the website *Mapping Police Violence*, more than 1152 people died at the hands of police in the United States in 2015 (Mapping Police Violence 2015). LFL® advertises this program as something for kids to do while they accompany their parents to the police station, with the goal of building “safe places for young people to read” (Little Free Library 2017c). We suggest that public libraries already exist as far safer places to read. Acclimatizing youth to the arguably racist and unjust practices perpetrated by some police officers in their communities, while representing police spaces as “safe” presents a dangerous contradiction. Speaking of LFL®’s partnership with the Minneapolis Police Department, Todd Bol imagined Martin Luther King, Jr. “building bridges” between police departments and urban residents (Golden 2015), suggesting they exist on an equal playing field, while eliding over the complexity of race relations, power dynamics, and an increasingly militarized police force.

A few states over, in Madison, WI, the Madison Police Department are also active participants in the LFL® movement. However, other approaches to the relationship between books and libraries are illustrated in a partnership between the Madison Public Library and 100arts project, Mike L’roy created a mural entitled *Don’t Shoot*:



Figure 9: Don't Shoot, by Mike L'Roy. Image courtesy of the artist, used with permission.

The Madison Professional Police Officers Association and the Wisconsin Professional Police Association issued a joint statement expressing the “collective reaction of Madison's officers who find this publicly sponsored art display as offensive and indicative of terribly poor judgment” (Luthern 2015). L’roy defended his work as a provocation for honest discussion.

The police condemnation of this attempt to spark discussion suggests an unwillingness to accept criticism and participate in sincere dialogue. Intellectual freedom and anti-censorship are cornerstones of public library values. LFL® stewards, on the other hand, are encouraged to avoid keeping overly political or religious materials in their exchanges (Little Free Libraries 2015b). We feel these examples are powerful juxtapositions of the stark difference between public library values and LFL® practice. One embraces discomfort and dissenting opinions, while the other seeks to avoid controversy and tends to overemphasize their impact on systemic issues.

3. Conclusion

There are practical ways forward that LFL® might go in order to increase the impact of the organization. It is clear that the concept has resonated with people. Who does not love a feel-good story about neighbours sharing books with one another? In a letter to the chair of the LFL® Board of Directors, the first author of this paper informed them of the first author’s withdrawal from the organization (Schmidt 2016), and shared with them highlights from the Working Together Project’s Community-Led Libraries Toolkit⁷ (2008).

Specifically, Schmidt recommended that the board look to the community-service planning model, and the service assessment as detailed in the toolkit. Community-led libraries de-emphasize the library and focus on the communities they are serving to ensure the services being offered are appropriately delivered and in line with the community needs. We have found through our research that LFL® is quite good at building a brand and a successful business. However, upon closer examination, they fall short of their potential to be part of a larger strategy of community organizations and constituents that strengthen support for literacy and education as illuminated in the the toolkit. She received a brief response to her letter. The chair of the board thanked her for her time and assured her they would look into her recommendations.

A true homage to libraries would be to learn from the knowledge and research that has been cultivated over decades of practice, study and scholarship, and to make a deliberate effort toward implementation. We remain hopeful that this will happen in due course.

⁷ The Working Together Project took place between 2004-2008 in various urban centres across Canada, seeking to understand social exclusion and public libraries. It culminated in a toolkit for community-led (or needs-based) library service.

We have used a variety of lenses to analyze the LFL® organization and the “movement” it has inspired. Seeking to provide an alternative narrative that counters the hegemonic and uncritical approach the popular media has taken, we have made several assertions about the current operations of LFL® and have offered alternative models (i.e. Winnipeg Public Library’s approach, community-led practice) for what we believe are more genuine in their intention to meaningfully address real and present challenges to literacy and education in underserved and marginalized communities. Looking to the literature on the non-profit industrial complex, civic crowdfunding, landscape theory, philanthropic motivation, community-led libraries, and through demographic analysis, we have demonstrated fundamental flaws in the execution of the stated goals of LFL®.

We feel that there is significant potential for the organization to partner with libraries and other community organizations in ways that would bolster their impact in communities that might genuinely benefit from a multi-pronged investment in infrastructure. The principles of community-led libraries are an excellent place to start. At the same time, traditional libraries could benefit from this partnership as they struggle to demonstrate their persistent relevance in the face of austerity agendas and oft-repeated tropes such as “it’s all online” and “who needs libraries anyway?” LFL® is a media darling and the organization is rallied behind when vandalized or threatened by authority. Given this disparity in image, there is opportunity to learn from one another to collaborate and support each other in meaningful and intentional ways.

4. Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank and acknowledge the insight, expertise and support of Javier Arbona, Gillian Byrne, Annette DeFaveri, Emily Drabinski, Dan Jakubek, Tara Robertson, Bogart Shwadchuck, Brock Silversides, Nicholas Wilson and Alan Wylie, as well as the generous feedback of our reviewers Eamon Tewell and Jennifer Soutter. We dedicate this paper to the memory of Wilshire, Pinchy, Ulla and Mr. Kitten.

5. About the authors

Jane Schmidt is a librarian at Ryerson University in Toronto, Ontario.

Jordan Hale is the Original Cataloguer & Reference Specialist at the University of Toronto’s Map & Data Library. She has an MA in cultural and political geography from the University of Toronto, and is currently pursuing her MI degree in their Faculty of Information.

6. References

Aldrich, Margret. 2015. *The Little Free Library Book*. Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press.

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

BBC News. 2016. "Libraries Lose a Quarter of Staff as Hundreds Close." Accessed July 21, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-35707956>.

Bertot, John Carlo, Ursula Gorham, Paul T. Jaeger, and Natalie Greene Taylor. 2012. "Public Libraries and the Internet 2012: Key Findings, Recent Trends, and Future Challenges." *Public Library Quarterly* 31 (4): 303–325. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2012.732479>.

Bibb, Leon. 2016 "Cleveland Cops Join Kids in Reading Circle inside Police District Police Headquarters." *newsnet5*, March 11. Accessed September 16, 2016. <http://www.newsnet5.com/news/local-news/cleveland-metro/cleveland-cops-join-kids-in-reading-circle-inside-police-district-police-headquarters>.

Bol, Todd. 2017. "Little Free Library Big Book Access Campaign." *Kickstarter*. Accessed March 17, 2017. <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/490112915/little-free-libraris-big-book-access-project>.

Bowen, Glenn A. 2009. "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method." *Qualitative Research Journal* 9: 27–40. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>.

Canadian Urban Libraries Council. 2016. "Key Performance Indicators." Accessed December 19, 2016. <http://www.culc.ca/research/kpis/>.

Church, Elizabeth. 2011. "Library Cuts Will Happen 'in a Heartbeat,' Doug Ford Says." *The Globe and Mail*, July 26. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/library-cuts-will-happen-in-a-heartbeat-doug-ford-says/article557227/>.

Cosgrove, Denis. 1998. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Daniels, Stephen. 1985. "Arguments for a Humanistic Geography," in *The Future of Geography*, edited by R.J. Johnson, 143–158. London: Methuen.

---. 1989. "Marxism, culture and the duplicity of landscape," in *New Models of Geography*, volume II, edited by Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift, 196–220. London: Unwin Hyman.

Daniels, Stephen, and Denis Cosgrove. 1988. "Introduction: Iconography and Landscape," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, edited by Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, 1–10. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dauvergne, Peter, and Genevieve LeBaron. 2014. *Protest Inc. The Corporatization of Activism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Davies, Rodrigo. 2014. "Civic Crowdfunding: Participatory Communities, Entrepreneurs and the Political Economy of Place." Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2434615.

Davies, Rodrigo. 2015. "Three Provocations for Civic Crowdfunding." *Information, Communication & Society* 18 (3): 342–355. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.989878>.

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Stephen Rendall. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

del Moral, Andrea. 2005. "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded." *LiP*. Accessed April 18, 2016. http://incite-national.org/sites/default/files/incite_files/resource_docs/6634_lip-mpic.pdf.

Duncan, James S., and Nancy G. Duncan. 2004. *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb*. New York: Routledge.

Ebrahim, Alnoor. 2013. "Let's Be Realistic About Measuring Impact." *Harvard Business Review*, March 13. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://hbr.org/2013/03/lets-be-realistic-about-measur.html>.

Fagan, Laurie. 2016. "Deep Sadness': Mini-Library in Ottawa Ordered down after Bylaw Complaint." *CBC News*. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/little-library-hintonburg-complaint-1.3753290>.

Frederiksen, Lia. 2015. "'Our Public Library': Social Reproduction and Urban Public Space in Toronto." *Women's Studies International Forum* 48: 141–153. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.11.009>.

Friedersdorf, Conor. 2015. "The Danger of Being Neighborly Without a Permit." *The Atlantic*, February 20. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/02/little-free-library-crackdown/385531/>.

Golden, Erin. 2015. "Minneapolis Police Build Little Free Libraries - StarTribune.com." *Star Tribune*, May 26. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-police-build-little-free-libraries/305100961/>.

Greenstone, Dan. 2016. "My Little Free Library War: How Our Suburban Front-Yard Lending Box Made Me Hate Books and Fear My Neighbors." *Salon*, July 4. Accessed November 15, 2016. http://www.salon.com/2016/07/04/my_little_free_library_war_how_our_suburban_front_yard_lending_box_made_me_hate_books_and_fear_my_neighbors/.

Grossman, Maryann. 2015. "Little Free Libraries: 5 Years Later, 25,000 in 50 States, 70 Countries." *St. Paul Pioneer Press (Minnesota)*. <http://www.twincities.com/2015/03/26/little-free-libraries-5-years-later-25000-in-50-states-70-countries/>.

Journal of Radical Librarianship, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

- Guidestar. 2017. *Little Free Library Ltd. [non-profit profile]*. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/45-4043708>.
- Hale, Jordan. 2014. *Along the Highway: Landscapes of National Mourning in Canada*. Unpublished MA thesis. <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/68074>.
- INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, ed. 2007. *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. 2016. "Beyond the Non Profit Industrial Complex." Accessed July 18, 2016. <http://www.incite-national.org/page/beyond-non-profit-industrial-complex>.
- Jane's Walk. 2016. "Little Free Libraries: An Impromptu Reading Walk With Neighbours." Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://janeswalk.org/canada/toronto/little-free-libraries-impromptu-reading-walk-neighbours/>.
- Lehman, Chris. 2015. "Having Their Cake and Eating Ours Too." *The Baffler*. Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://thebaffler.com/salvos/cake-eating>.
- Little Free Library. 2012. Make it Official: Join the Network." Accessed March 9, 2017. <https://littlefreelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/How-To-Register.doc>.
- . 2015a. "The Complete Guide to Stocking Your Library with New, High Quality Books." Accessed July 26, 2016. <https://littlefreelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Getting-Books-Guide-For-Stewards.pdf>.
- . 2015b. *Steward's welcome package*. Hudson, WI.
- . 2017a. "About the Impact Fund." Accessed March 17, 2017. <https://littlefreelibrary.org/impact-about/>.
- . 2017b. "The Latest News." Accessed April 9, 2017. <https://littlefreelibrary.org/pressresources/>.
- . 2017c. "Kids, Communities and Cops Program." Accessed April 10, 2017. <https://littlefreelibrary.org/community/>.
- Luthern, Ashley. 2015. "Madison's 'Don't Shoot' Painting Draws Police Criticism." *Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*, May 1. Accessed September 13, 2016. <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/madisons-dont-shoot-painting-draws-police-criticism-b99492340z1-302190501.html>.
- McGoey, Linsey. 2015. *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy*. London: Verso.
- Mapping Police Violence. 2015. "2015 Police Violence Report." Accessed March 17, 2017. *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

<https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/2015/>.

Martin, Claire. 2015. "Little Free Libraries take summer reading to the streets (and yards)." *The Denver Post*, July 10. Accessed April 14, 2017.

<http://www.denverpost.com/2015/07/10/little-free-libraries-take-summer-reading-to-the-streets-and-yards/>.

Mattern, Shannon. 2012. "Marginalia: Little Libraries in the Urban Margins." *Places Journal*. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://placesjournal.org/article/marginalia-little-libraries-in-the-urban-margins/>.

Mernagh, Matt. 2015. "Free Little Libraries Have Sprouted across Toronto, but Yield Few Treasures." *NOW Toronto Magazine - Think Free*, August 18. Accessed April 14, 2017. <https://nowtoronto.com/api/content/b35215e2-45c6-11e5-9c71-22000b078648/>.

Merriman, Peter. 2004. "Driving places: Marc Augé, non-places, and the geographies of England's M1 Motorway." *Theory Culture Society* 21: 145–167. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046065>

---. 2005. "Materiality, Subjectification, and Government: The Geographies of Britain's Motorway Code." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23: 235–250. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1068/d362t>

---. 2006. "'A New Look at the English landscape': Landscape Architecture, Movement and the Aesthetics of Motorways in Early Postwar Britain." *Cultural Geographies* 13: 78–105. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474006eu351oa>

---. 2007. *Driving Spaces: a Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pateman, John, and Ken Williment. 2013. *Developing Community-Led Public Libraries: Evidence from the UK and Canada*. New York: Routledge.

Roberts, Terry, and Chris Ensing. 2016. "Hold off on Closing Libraries until Review Done, Dale Kirby Says." *CBC News*, June 30. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-public-libraries-update-1.3659833>.

Schiller, Amy. 2015. "Philanthropy as Political Liquidation." *Society* 52 (6): 580–584. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-015-9952-9>.

Schmidt, Jane. 2016. The LFL Project.

Smith, Neil. 2005. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.

Snow, Marianne. 2015. "Little Free Libraries: A Call for Research into the Tiny Book" *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, Vol. 3 (2017) pp.14–41. Published 19 April 2017.

Depositories.” *Children and Libraries* 13 (4): 30–32. doi:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5860/cal13n4.30>.

Statistics Canada. 2013. Calgary, CY, Alberta (Code 4806016) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013. Accessed March 22, 2017.

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

Stehlin, John G., and Alexander R. Tarr. 2016. “Think Regionally, Act Locally?: Gardening, Cycling, and the Horizon of Urban Spatial Politics.” *Urban Geography* 37: 1–23. doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2016.1232464>.

Toronto Public Library. 2016. “About the Library.” Accessed April 14, 2017.

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/about-the-library/>.

Village of Vinton, Texas. 2014. “The Village of Vinton Unveils ‘Little Free Library’ Program and Book Drive.” September 30. [http://www.vintontx.govoffice2.com/vertical/sites/%7B9571B011-F39E-4B6F-A49E-](http://www.vintontx.govoffice2.com/vertical/sites/%7B9571B011-F39E-4B6F-A49E-0B16AB6056A3%7D/uploads/LittleLibrary_PR_10_1_14.pdf)

[0B16AB6056A3%7D/uploads/LittleLibrary_PR_10_1_14.pdf](http://www.vintontx.govoffice2.com/vertical/sites/%7B9571B011-F39E-4B6F-A49E-0B16AB6056A3%7D/uploads/LittleLibrary_PR_10_1_14.pdf). [dead link]

Webster, Tenny, Kathleen Gollner and Lisa Nathan. 2015. “Neighbourhood Book Exchanges: Localising Information Practices.” *Information Research* 20 (9). Accessed April 14, 2017. <http://www.informationr.net/ir/20-3/paper684.html>.

Wiktionary. 2017. “Do-gooder.” Accessed April 14, 2017.

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/do-gooder>

Winnipeg Public Library. 2016. “Little Free Libraries.” Accessed April 14, 2017.

<http://wpl.winnipeg.ca/library/whats happening/littlefreelibraries.asp>

Working Together Project. 2008. “Community-Led Libraries Toolkit.”

http://www.librariesincommunities.ca/resources/Community-Led_Libraries_Toolkit.pdf.

Wylie, John. 2005. “A Single Day’s Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30: 235–247. doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2005.00163.x>.

---. 2010. “Writing through Landscape,” in *Process: Landscape and Text*. Edited by Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra, 45–64. New York: Rodopi Press.

Young, Scott W. H. 2015. “Andrew Carnegie, Librarian.” *Scott W. H. Young*, November 2.

<http://scottwhyong.com/workbook/andrew-carnegie-librarian/>.