

The Public Library System as an Element in the 2007 and 2015 Electoral Programs of Spain's Political Parties in the Region of Castilla-La Mancha

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In the Public Interest

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THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM AS AN ELEMENT IN THE 2007 AND 2015 ELECTORAL PROGRAMS OF SPAIN'S POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE REGION OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

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ABSTRACT. *To assess the relevance of the Public Library System in the political agenda, programs presented by the Political Parties competing in Regional and Local elections in the Spanish Region of Castilla-La Mancha were analyzed and the proposals about these library institutions were identified.*

All Regional programs were collected and also an ample sample from the Municipalities for the 2007 and 2015 elections, trying to find the differences influenced by the impact of the financial crisis and recession on the public-library policies.

The conclusion arrived at was that, although the Public Libraries may be reasonably present in the studied programs, there is a low awareness by the Political Parties of the main problems.

KEYWORDS *public libraries, public policy, Spain, elections, electoral programs.*

With the end of the Dictatorship and the commencement of the Democratic Transition, Spanish Public Libraries began a huge development within the framework of a new political model of a Decentralized State and the assumption of Educational and Cultural responsibilities by Regional governments. In the case of Castilla-La Mancha, during the final 20 years of the last century, there arose an exemplary model, which transformed a previously impoverished library situation into one of service to practically the entire population.

Nevertheless, a variety of political decisions and budgetary restrictions paralyzed this development from the beginning of 2011, even arriving at occasioning a reversal which was in turn facilitated by service management being frequently undertaken without a clear model, without precise planning, and allowing the Public Libraries to occupy a secondary position in the agendas of both Governments and Political Parties.

Such a situation motivated this investigation into the relationship between the development of Public Libraries and the presence of these in the political agenda; also to investigate if it interested the politicians (be they elected or executive), and if this interest, in its turn, is motivated by citizen demands about these library institutions.

For this analysis, there is a reliance on a very useful instrument; that of the programs of the different Political Parties which contested the Local and Regional Elections of Castilla-La Mancha. In these programs, there is presented the offer of each Political Party on a range of diverse aspects of public life, and consequently society's concern about them. Thus, the greater or lesser appearance of Public Libraries in the Party's political programs will be a significant indicator of political sensibility about these same libraries. Equally so, it allows for an evaluation of electoral processes undertaken in radically-different socio-economic situations; in 2007, before the Crisis and the economic recession when they had budgetary importance, and eight years later in 2015.

It is a question seldom dealt with in the literature of the Theory of Librarianship, in spite of the relevance it has on political analysis, by reason of its impact on Public Libraries and their professional employees. Hence, it appears opportune to explore the effects of the Crisis on Public Libraries and whether or not such an investigation could lead to making changes in the model.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The general objective is to ascertain the interests of the Political Parties in Public Libraries through their mirroring in the electoral programs with which they compete in this essential process of democratic participation; identifying topics and highlighted situations and their changes in the 2007–2015 study periods. The evaluation of the proposals helps us to understand the political-citizenry-libraries relationship; understanding that there will be a connection between the citizens' demands and the conception, which the Political Parties may have of the society, its culture and education.

Moreover, this investigation will attempt to relate the evolution of the electoral program proposals with the economic Crisis and with the recession lived through in the period of years here studied.

Finally, it was deemed desirable to check if it could be inferred that the Political Parties, in the writing up of their electoral proposals, have progressed; in so far as having a model; some guidelines, an overall vision of public libraries.

The methodology in this study is both quantitative and related to the content information compiled about different Parties and their political proposals. These proposals have been registered in a database, which considers diverse categories or management scopes and Public Library Services. To reach conclusions, the comparative method was applied, and then the reflection and the critical analysis.

Focus will be centered on the Party programs presented in Municipalities of more than 1,000 inhabitants during the Local and Autonomous Region Elections of 27 May 2007 and of 24 May 2015, since, in the Region of Castilla-La Mancha and under its Law 3/2011 of Reading and Libraries of 24 February, it is obligatory for such municipalities to have a Public Library.

In addition, and because many of Castilla-La Mancha's 637 Municipalities of less than 1,000 inhabitants also have available Municipal library services, the political programs for these small towns, in both elections, have also been collected and analyzed.

From such programs, the proposals about libraries, as much as those referring to the services of promotion of reading, and access to Internet, have been extracted; since they are services which could be, or ought to be, provided through Public Libraries; even though at times they are provided in ways not linked to them.

The selection of the 2007 and 2015 electoral processes, taking into account the intervening period, allows for knowledge as to whether electoral programs have changed, whether there may be new interests, or whether the economic crisis, in which current society finds itself immersed at local and global levels, is reflected in the political agendas of the different Parties. Equally so, the time passage of two legislatures is an appropriate period over which to consider trends in the competing Party's interests in Public Libraries.

The proposals, which make up the sample were obtained through the reading and analysis of the content of the electoral programs during the fortnight of the electoral campaign prior to Election Day and were completed in the subsequent two weeks.

One great difficulty in the collection of electoral information has been that the programs are perishable documents. This is because the Political Parties do not comply with the regulations regarding their Statutory Storage; surprisingly, they do not preserve them after each electoral round. In the case of electronic documentation, these are found in provisional pages and are designed for the specific purpose of the electoral campaign. This documentation likewise disappears once the electoral process is finalized. What is more is that, to obtain such documentation is a complex matter because its diffusion is managed locally and the Parties do not have a system of centralized access through their organization's Internet portals for making them publicly known.

That made it essential to obtain them, in the moment of their production and diffusion, in those same Electoral Periods. This was carried out in several ways; requesting them directly from the Parties, extracting them from Websites or social media and through Public Libraries. These last-mentioned were generously participative in the collection of such programs in their own Municipalities.

Other sources and documentation types consulted were:

- Press releases related to both Municipal elections
- Interviews of candidates of the different Political Parties
- Electoral videos
- Commentaries and proposals made through social media
- Electoral Meeting discourses

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICS AND LIBRARIES

Previous Research

In spite of the importance of politics in the development of a library system, there is a scarcity of publications about politics and libraries (Jaeger, Bertot, & Gorham, 2013). It appears that the juxtaposition of the words *Library* and *Politics* would have caused an uncomfortable shiver among some librarians (Feather, 2003). That, however, is inevitable, since the very creation of these institutions results from a decision, decidedly political (Wahnich, 2011), and “Federal, State and Local governments are involved in the formulation and implementation of Public Library policy” (Meneses, 2013, quoting *The Politics of Public Librarianship* of David Shavit, 1986).

This absence can be caused by the preferred interest in technical aspects, the distancing from theory and the fear of distancing oneself from neutrality. “Politics is certainly a field usually remote from reflecting on library technology; but definitive in library practices especially for Public Libraries” (Jaramillo, Álvarez, & Moncada, 2005).

Evjen (2015) reviewed publications about the relationship between politics and libraries, incorporating related aspects such as their social value, which has remained the most studied element. Other authors have published material about the relevant question of how librarians and politicians relate to one another, and how they ought to relate, for the promotion of their services: Audunson, Usherwood or, in the Spanish domain, Javier Echeverría, Orlanda Jaramillo, Juan Sánchez and Felipe Meneses (2013).

Also of interest is a series of investigations into the attitude of politicians towards Public Libraries (Gazo, 2011; Stenström, 2012 in respect of Canada; Usherwood, 1993 and 2003 for the United Kingdom). The last mentioned of these, initiated, in the United Kingdom, a series of works within the framework of an ambitious international project of the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) so as to identify the interest of governments in these institutions (Audunson, 2005; Smith & Usherwood, 2003; Stadsmonitor Vlissingen, 2003; Usherwood, 2003).

In the same spirit are to be found Michnik (2015) and Evjen (2015), and there are various articles which revise the impact of the *New Public Management* (NPM) and, above all, of those politics denominated as Neo-Liberal in the Libraries: changes of management models, focusing on individual wishes instead of in the collectiveness, or the enfeeblement, of the public sector. For example in the United Kingdom (McMenemy, 2009; Boughey & Cooper, 2010), and in Canada (Stevenson, 2011).

DIMENSIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP: POLITICAL—LIBRARY

When we analyze the relationship between politics and libraries we can refer to:

- Public Library policy, its determination, the inclusion of librarian concerns in the agenda.
- The relationship between librarians and politicians as a fundamental component of stakeholders; something that is often linked to the previous point.
- The political participation of the libraries and librarians.
- The political bias of services, and above all, library collections; the use of the Public Library for the diffusion, or imposition, of an ideology.
- Literacy in democracy and its political procedures; and the diffusion of these.
- The Public Library as an instrument for the objectives of world-wide political organizations, such as ONU and UNESCO (IFLA 2015): Social Value of the Library, universal access to information and support for life-long learning, basic literacy and the overcoming of the digital divide.
- The library as an instrument of democracy, catalyst of transparency, weapon against corruption (Sturges, 2008) and ideal forum for the development of public and political debate (Alstad & Curry, 2003) in accordance with the concept of a public sphere of Habermas and that of the “third place” of Oldenburg.

Library Policies and Electoral Processes

For the purposes of analyzing the relationship between electoral programs and library policies, various aspects ought to be considered:

In the first place, there is the necessity that libraries should be present in the political agenda and should be positively valued in the taking of decisions. Although it may be considered obligatory, because of Spanish legislation (*Law 7/1985 regulating the Fundamentals of Local Government*), in municipalities of more than 5,000 inhabitants or in the diverse provisions about Libraries of the Autonomous Regions, this doesn't mean to say that

they may be provided, merely for convenience or by chance. The legislation has not been complied with on numerous occasions or has been complied with instances of zero real value.

Because of the foregoing, the first priority is to obtain a political willingness in favor of Public Libraries, beyond that which the laws provide, and in spite of “public library issues are politically small and not prioritized on the political agenda,” even in countries such as Sweden (Michnik, 2015, p. 674).

Jaeger, Gorham, Bertot, and Sarin (2014) emphasize that there ought to be intervention in political spheres, in public forum discussions so that the libraries may be taken into account and therefore form part of the agenda. It does not suffice that the value they may have for society is recognized in abstract mode if, for the greater part of this, they are considered as an obsolete institution or that their functions may be unknown. Except in the case of positive exceptions, as in the case of Denmark (Evjen, 2015), the general perception is that libraries have little mention in electoral programs, in spite of being a basic service according to the legislation and as alleged in the Spanish case of Sánchez (1994), and other authors relative to other countries of greater library tradition (Michnik, 2015; Gazo, 2011; Tuleu, 2011; Sveum & Tveter, 2012).

Boughey and Cooper (2010) carried out an enlightening analysis of library policies in the United Kingdom between 2003 and 2009 comparing the proposed library policies with social demands (known by way of surveys and reports). The result was that often library politics imposed what they believed necessary for citizens and not that which the citizens had requested.

From this situation the need can be deduced for making clearly known these needs, of assisting in the taking of decisions and in the correct conformance of an agenda. If politicians reflect in the agenda, that which society, and particularly voters, demand, then those concerned, including librarians in this case, must make libraries a priority for these voters. Otherwise in times of restrictions, it can be one of the services most affected, causing it to be postponed ahead of other basic services, perhaps erroneously so. And this situation obliges those concerned, in a situation of limited resources, to enter into a political game and into an undeniable competition with other services. Elteto and Frank (2003) indicate this in reference to North American university libraries. Administrators, people with decision power and, in general, the entire community, need to be persuaded to value activities, to promote them and be supported in personal contacts.

Secondly: what can be added to a political decision once taken of constructing a new library center even in current conditions of restrictive budgets? Evjen (2015) helps to identify the causes, beginning from specific cases of large libraries in the cities of Aarhus, Birmingham and Oslo; all of these being icons of their cities from their inauguration. It surprises librarians to observe that, although politicians approve libraries for their links with cultural and social development, they decide to construct a library thinking

of urban development in a city or district. That is to say, from a point of view primarily economic: libraries as pivotal development centers and as regenerators of districts, as has been seen from Medellín to Hamburg. It is a line of argument that can be used together with an ROI (Return on Investment) study of the very same library. It is an issue, which has been used in Spain to try and legitimize its economic and social contribution and to protect it from cutbacks (Gómez-Yañez, 2014). The fact is that one must be assured that Public Libraries are known and valued so as to continue with a program without excessively trusting in a type of political “sympathy.”

A third aspect for consideration would be if there were differences in library policies in accordance with political tendencies or bias. Even the very location of the library can be the object of a decision influenced by political tendencies and bias; “Public libraries are a product of history. Like other public institutions the public library functions within the context of different political systems. Because of this there are many different views as to its political purpose. Governments of some description fund public libraries worldwide. The existence of these libraries is in a political milieu which might not be altogether favorable for them.” (Smith & Usherwood, 2003, p. 76).

In the debate on the relationship between ideology and cultural, educational, and in our case library, policies, there is a tendency to think that governments of the left are more favorable to Public Libraries, but that view is difficult to corroborate after a comparative review of development in the different Autonomous and Municipal systems in Spain during the democratic era. Considering this test relative to international realities, opinions can be seen on both sides. Neither Sveum and Tveter (2012), nor Evjen (2015), find that there may be an ideological impact in the treatment of policies relevant to public readership. Neither did Crook (1999) find significant variations in an Australian study. Compared with this, Usherwood’s (1991 and 1993) studies for the United Kingdom reveal small differences, although it should be remembered that these were before “New Labour.” By contrast, Hendry (2000) indeed finds substantial variations between Conservative and Labour policies for Public Libraries. All this tends to affirm Michnik’s (2015) expression that “therefore, political affiliation among the local politicians seems to be relevant, but not to a large extent as the odds ratio is quite low in both cases.”

Fourthly there is the question of the political neutrality and activism from within the libraries themselves. Durrani and Smallwood (2006) try to dismiss “the myth of the ‘neutral’ librarian”; affirming that, if the library does not approach politics and yet maintains its neutrality, it will not be capable of offering information, which its immediate users may need about the functioning of the world. This is obvious, but it does not mean that neutrality may not be maintained. It ignores the fact that to maintain neutrality does not mean to say ‘no’ to the stocking of political books; but rather,

to allow space for a range of opinions. In the previously quoted work of Crook (1999) something important is indicated; that the universal belief in the virtues of libraries independent of political color is reinforced by their ideologically neutral character.

SOCIOPOLITICAL AND LIBRARY CONTEXT: THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

Spanish Library Organization

The Spanish State is politically structured into three levels; National, Autonomous Communities or Regions with jurisdiction and responsibilities similar to those of federal states, and Local or Municipal. Political responsibilities are distributed among these three levels although at times in a shared and non-exclusive form. In the matters which concern this investigation, Public Libraries are a Municipal or Local responsibility and all Municipalities with more than 5,000 inhabitants are obliged to have Public Library services. This figure is reduced to 1,000 inhabitants in Castilla-La Mancha, as already mentioned. Nevertheless, responsibilities are maintained over some Public Libraries, and over their coordination and promotion, as much at National as at Autonomous Regional administration levels.

This territorial and responsibility division sees itself reflected in the elaboration of electoral programs which, in the case of those which here are of concern (Local and Autonomous Region elections), can cause the Parties to develop at least three different programs:

- An electoral program for each Autonomous Community
- An electoral program for each Municipality
- “Framework Programs” which give guidelines for the development of the aforesaid.

Spanish library organization is determined by the structure of the Spanish State; that is to say by the establishment, following the 1978 Constitution, of the State of Autonomous Communities. These different Autonomous Communities have developed their own library laws which link themselves to the national one, with each one of them being within the responsibilities assigned in Articles 148 and 149 of Chapter VIII of that Spanish Constitution and with the Autonomous Statutes of each Region.

The Spanish State’s responsibilities are focused on cooperation between the different administrations and the management of the national State’s own libraries, such as the National Library, and are regulated by the following legislation:

- Law 10/2007, of 22 June, concerning Reading, Books and Libraries.
- Royal Decree 1573/2007, of 30 November, by which the Regulations of the Council of Library Cooperation are approved.
- Royal Decree 1574/2007, of 30 November, by which the Study Centres of Readership and Books are regulated.

There are Autonomous Laws for the libraries in every Spanish Region, except Asturias and the Canary Islands. By means of these, systems have been configured according to two models: either based on cooperation and coordination or, based, in an organized unitary grouping of services. The Autonomous management systems are usually pyramidal systems integrated by the administrations of the Autonomous Region, Province or Municipality. This gives rise to problems when this last-mentioned level, the Municipalities, forgets or overlaps its obligations; thereby yielding services totally insufficient. This problematic situation has made it necessary to forge more formal relations through formal agreements between the different administration levels, and similarly Regional entities, for coordination and progress.

The different legislative patterns among the Regions have given rise to an unequal development of Regional library systems, with big differences between those which the citizens have in other Autonomous Communities. The 2007 Law of Reading, Books and Libraries of 22 June, which ought to have facilitated a framework harmonious with the Spanish Library Systems and to have guaranteed the same rights for all citizens, has not fulfilled these objectives. For that reason, the correction of possible inequalities in accessing Libraries depends on the voluntary cooperative relationships between the different administrations.

The Public Libraries of Castilla-La Mancha

The Library policy of Castilla-La Mancha is recent, since this Region only came into existence with the approbation of the Spanish Constitution of 1978. It covers 5 Provinces in the center of Spain, with 2,059,191 inhabitants in 2015, distributed in a mainly disperse mode over an area of 79.409 km². There are a total of 919 municipalities and, of these, 637 have less than 1,000 inhabitants. Only the Provincial Capitals and two other municipalities have more than 50,000 inhabitants. Its Autonomous Statute dates from 1982, and its first Libraries' Law from 1989.

Library activity during this time has been intense and fruitful since, at the beginning of the 90's, the current library structure practically did not exist. It has been one of the Communities that have advanced most, with the approval of two Library Laws, the creation and opening of the Castilla-La Mancha Regional Library in 1996, and its network of Public Libraries. It deals with an existing deeply rooted service in the municipalities, providing services to almost the entire Castilla-La Mancha Region's population with

TABLE 1 Castilla-La Mancha Public Libraries and the populations served.

	TOTALS				INDICATORS		
	2005	2009	2013		2005	2009	2013
Public Libraries open	519	556	506	Inhabitants/Library	3,651	3,715	4,092
Municipalities served	553	758	797	Percentage %	60.2%	82.5%	86.7%
'000 Population served	1,895	2,065	2,071	Percentage %	98.8%	99.2%	98.6%

Library Bus reinforcement for those towns of less than 1,000 inhabitants which do not manage to have their own library. With all of that, 93.5% of its municipalities and 99.71% of its population were reached in 2010.

Its legislative framework includes Law 3/2011 of 24 February of Reading and Libraries of Castilla-La Mancha, Decree 32/2013 of 13 June of the aforesaid organization and functioning of the Ministry of Reading and Libraries of Castilla-La Mancha, that of the Advisory Council of the Public Library Network of Castilla-La Mancha, and Decree 33/2013 of 13 June of the functioning of Technical Commission and of the Provincial Technical Commissions of the Public Library Network of Castilla-La Mancha. According to these norms, the Municipal Public Libraries are services of local responsibility; Municipal, Provincial and Regional administrations of the Autonomous Community distributing among themselves the different responsibilities for providing this service. It is noticeable, however, that this is done without a precise model and without good planning all of which is reflected in the electoral proposals. In spite of considerable library advances, motivated by Regional Government policies (Ruling Body of the Communities of Castilla-La Mancha; in future referred to as JCCM), the reality is that planned library policies have not existed; only a monitoring of the policy of Regional Government assistance, which was interrupted by the Crisis.

In 2015, when the final electoral programs, which are about to be studied, were being prepared, there still remained much to be done; to approve the Library map, to sign agreements with the Municipal Town Halls, to progress in the implementation of the existing Law, to put into progress Internet networks in Municipalities of more than 20,000 inhabitants and, above all, to recover financing lost during the Regional, Provincial and Municipal Crises. Between 2011 and 2015 there had been a setback in Regional Library policy, with a notable financing reduction which had led to the closure of a number of Municipal Libraries, to the dismissal of professionals and an 80% expenditure reduction in documentary acquisitions.

The general statistics of the number of libraries in the region with which the Political Parties have operated before the elections, and in accordance with the Census of the Castilla-La Mancha Network of Public Libraries, are reflected in [Table 1](#).

RESULTS AND PARTY PROPOSALS ABOUT PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA: 2007 AND 2015

Political Parties: Electoral Results 2007 and 2015

Contemporary Political Groupings competing in the 2007 and 2015 Elections of this Region were:

1. The two predominant Parties in the whole of Spain:
 - *Partido Popular* (PP) which conforms to liberal conservative ideologies which in Spain are identified with the Right and Centre Right
 - *Partido Socialista* (PSOE) is Socialist Democrat.
2. Two national groupings of lesser weight:
 - *Izquierda Unida (United Left)*—*Los Verdes* (the Greens): a union of the long-standing Communist Party with the ecologists, presenting themselves in 2015 under the electoral grouping of *Ganemos*, and
 - *Unión, Progreso y Democracia* (Union for Progress and Democracy; UPyD), a centralist Party, currently in decline.
3. Two emergent groupings which did not exist in 2007:
 - *Podemos* (We can), which situates itself to the Left of PSOE in terms of social politics and democratic regeneration
 - *Ciudadanos* (Citizens: Cs) which could be labeled as Central Liberal
4. Two political parties with a token presence; but without Parliamentary representation are:
 - PACMA: an emergent party with an animal and ecology focus
 - Vox: a spin-off from the *Partido Popular* (PP) and to the right of it
5. In some municipalities Parties and Candidates of a strictly local character have presented themselves; but in general have little relevance.

Between 2007 and 2015 there has been a significant change in vote distribution, since two Parties have appeared (*Ciudadanos* and *Podemos*) which are beginning to change Spain's bi-Party model, although that change still may not have reflected itself in the distribution of Castilla-La Mancha candidates.

The results obtained by all candidates presented in both elections are shown in [Table 2](#).

In 2007, as can be seen, the Socialist Party (PSOE) won and governed Castilla-La Mancha. From their arrival into power, it is appropriate to attribute the main responsibility and credit for library development that there had been until that time. In the 2011 elections Spain was already suffering from

TABLE 2 Results of political parties the Castilla-La Mancha Autonomous Region elections of 27 May 2007 and 24 May 2015.

CANDIDATURES	% 2007	Delegates 2007	% 2015	Delegates 2015
Partido Popular (PP)	42.45	21	37.49	16
Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE)	51.92	26	36.11	15
Podemos	—	—	9.75	2
Ciudadanos (Cs)	—	—	8.64	0
Ganemos - Los Verdes - Izquierda Unida (LV-IU)	—	—	3.10	0
Izquierda Unida (IU)	3.42	0	—	—
Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD)	—	—	0.99	0
Partido Animalista (PACMA)	—	—	0.81	0
VOX	—	—	0.48	0
Unión de Ciudadanos Independientes (UCIN)	—	—	0.46	0
Los Verdes - Grupo Verde	0.32	0	0.17	0
Partido Castellano - Unidad Castellana (PCAS-UdCa)	0.11	0	0.14	0
Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España (PCPE)	—	—	0.09	0
Liberales e Independientes de Manzanares (LIM)	—	—	0.03	0
Tierra Comunera (TC)	0.23	0	—	—
La Falange (FE)	0.10	0	—	—
Partido Regionalista de Guadalajara	0.06	0	—	—
Unidad Regional Independiente (URI)	0.05	0	—	—
Partido Humanista (PH)	0.05	0	—	—
Izquierda Republicana (IR)	0.04	0	—	—

the economic Crisis which brought about a political change, and the *Partido Popular's* (PP) arrival in power. The fact is that the conservative party, in the course of carrying out a policy of austerity, also implemented Library budget cuts, and a situation was arrived at which could rebound into proposals that are reflected in programs for the 2015 elections.

Party Proposals for the 2007 Elections

In 2007 we identified 339 proposals related to Library matters, and these would rise to 394 if we include references to the provision of public Internet access in the towns, even though these may not be realized specifically through the Libraries. Table 3 groups these proposals into major categories and quantifies them accordingly among the different Political Parties.

A Pragmatic Analysis of Table 3 and its results would be:

- Proposals (96) relative to the construction of Library buildings stand out. That is due to the fact that in 2007 the creation of new libraries was

TABLE 3 Municipal electoral proposals analyzed by political party–2007.

ELECTORAL PROPOSALS	PSOE	PP	IU	OTHERS	TOTAL
BUILDINGS & INSTALLATIONS	78	10	3	5	96
SERVICES	10	5			15
SCHOOL LIBRARIES	1		1		2
MAJOR INVESTMENTS	3				3
FURNISHING	10	1			11
PERSONNEL	5	1	2		8
COLLECTIONS	26	9	1	1	37
PROMOTION of READING	38	7			45
OPENING HOURS	15	11			26
IT HARDWARE & SOFTWARE	4				4
LIBRARY WEB PORTAL		1			1
PUBLIC ACCESS to INTERNET	70	5	2	6	83
LIBRARY PROMOTION	16	6		1	23
EXTENSIÓN SERVICES		6			6
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	19	1	1	1	22
LOAN SERVICE	3	5			8
USER TRAINING	3				3
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD	1				1
TOTAL PROPOSALS	302	68	10	14	394
TOTAL PROPOSALS (including Internet)					339

demanded in those Municipalities where there were still none (a total of 33 proposals at that time). Of the 314 Municipalities from which electoral programs had been obtained, 69 municipalities still did not have a library. In 25 of them library creation appeared as an electoral proposal even when, in some cases, there was no legal imperative; according to Castilla-La Mancha norms; by reason of having less than 1,000 inhabitants.

- By contrast, in 14 municipalities with a legal obligation to have one, only 7 of them translated that requirement into a demanded measure in the electoral program of one party or another. It also appears as a proposal in 15 of the 55 municipalities of less than 750 inhabitants, which, according to Library Law, would not have the obligation to install such.
- In short, it is a matter of an immediately prior period in which the improved economic situation had led to an assertion and a proposal of costly measures, such as the construction of library buildings in even very small municipalities. Also, perhaps the desire to have, in one's own town, that which was already being enjoyed in neighboring towns, brought about the desire to emulate them.
- The service of public access to Internet is the second policy demand in quantitative terms with 83 proposals related to this question, although only 28 of them specified that it ought to be provided in, and from, the library. That indicates that in 2007 this service was insufficiently available in the towns and it was felt to be a necessity.
- Reading and its encouragement, with 45 proposals, is the third-ranking proposal. There are 28 promotional, motivational or extension measures in

this category. Six make reference to the support, continuation and broadening of Book Clubs, and the 4 remaining are related to measures established at a Regional level such as the Castilla-La Mancha Reading Plan (Dirección General del Libro, Archivos y Bibliotecas, 2005).

- The improvement of the book collections, their broadening and renewal, is another measure highlighted by the Political Parties. Not only do they refer to printed material, but also to electronic media, music, cinema or documentaries. Three proposals are related to a program which the Regional Ministry of Culture put into effect that year dealing with the incorporation of material into the collections for ethnic and cultural minorities.
- There are 36 proposals about opening hours of the Public Libraries, with measures such as the expansion of these, opening on weekends, or at night, so as to service student examination periods.
- There are a total of 51 proposals dealing with the promotion and boosting of libraries in general, of cultural services and library extension.
- Also there are 8 proposals about personnel, with measures such as the improvement of work conditions, expansion of professional staff and the reincorporation of librarians.
- Other proposals made in 11 electoral programs deal with the improvement and increase in furnishings. The amplification of document loans is touched on in 8 programs), those related to a greater investment in libraries; with training of users (3 proposals), school-goer libraries (3 proposals—in spite of it not being a municipal responsibility; but rather an educational administrative one). Finally there is a proposal for the creation of a Library Advisory Board; a measure included in the Regional Library policy; but never implemented).
- In quantitative terms, the Socialist Party (PSOE) is that which made the most proposals and initiatives dealing with Libraries (302 relative to 68 of the *Partido Popular* (PP)), with very few proposals from either the *Izquierda Unida-Verdes* (United Left & Greens) or other minority Parties.

Party Proposals for Libraries in the 2015 Elections

In 2015 some changes were expected in Library proposals. Public Budgetary reductions for Culture affected Libraries especially so from 2011. Said reductions paralyzed expenditure on public equipment, on library collections, and even on personnel who did not have public-servant status. Regional Government economic assistance, which the Municipalities previously had for library personnel, had disappeared and some non-permanent librarians had been laid off. It would be necessary to find proposals which reinstated installations not constructed because of the crisis, the stability of services which had been reduced, etc. Three hundred eighty-nine programs were collected of which the distribution of 372 electoral proposals of the different Political Parties are shown in [Table 4](#).

TABLE 4 Municipal electoral proposals analyzed by political party–2015.

ELECTORAL PROPOSALS	PP	PSOE	Cs	IU	OTHERS	TOTAL
BUILDINGS & EQUIPMENT	13	22	1	7	8	51
CONTINUITY	3	14	1	1	5	24
SERVICES	14	19	0	2	6	41
C-LM UNION CATALOGUE	1	3	0	1	1	6
SCHOOL LIBRARIES	0	1	0	0	0	1
INVESTMENTS	1	4	0	1	1	7
FURNISHINGS	3	0	0	0	0	3
PERSONNEL	0	0	1	3	0	4
COLLECTIONS	12	19	0	5	9	45
READING PROMOTION	20	30	0	6	3	59
OPENING HOURS	10	19	2	7	14	52
IT HARDWARE & SOFTWARE	3	3	0	1	0	7
LIBRARY WEB PORTAL	0	0	0	0	1	1
PUBLIC ACCESS to INTERNET	5	9	0	3	4	21
LIBRARY PROMOTION	1	6	0	0	4	11
CULTURAL ACTIVITIES	12	6	0	3	8	29
LOANS SERVICE	0	2	2	0	1	5
USER TRAINING	1	1	0	0	1	3
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD	0	1	0	0	0	1
ASSOC. of FRIENDS of the LIBRARY	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	99	160	7	40	66	372

From these results in [Table 4](#), it can be noted:

- There remains a continuing relevance of buildings and the creation of new Public Libraries, but reduced to 51 proposals; and in only 10 of those cases for new Libraries, currently there is more consideration (28 electoral proposals) for enlargement or improvements, and in only 13 cases for new buildings. This shows that library infrastructures are one of the main problems that currently concern Public Libraries, and it can be valued positively that Parties are concerned to make these demands.
- Of the 193 municipalities from which electoral programs have been gathered, only six do not have a library; and three of those, because of their small size, do not have a legal right to such.
- Of the remaining three municipalities, two ought to establish a municipal library. In the third case, Guadalajara capital of the Province with 82,291 inhabitants, there ought to be a network of libraries according to the current Castilla-La Mancha Law of Reading and Libraries (Law 3/2011 of 24 February), since it already has more than 20,000 inhabitants. Equally so, it breaches the Law of the Bases of Local Regimes (Law 7/1985 of 2 April), under the pretext that there is a State-owned public library. Its creation is proposed by one of the Parties, the PSOE, but it was something already included in their 2007 program; but not realized.

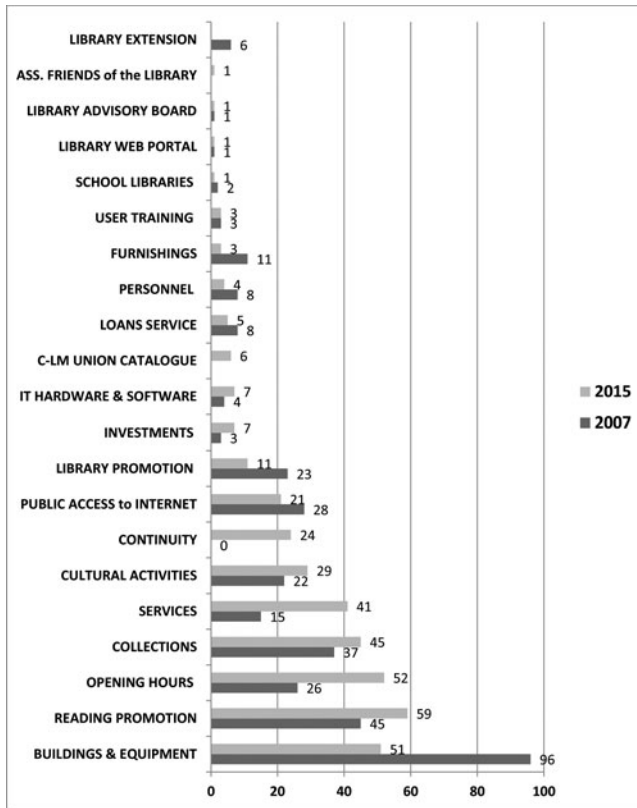


FIGURE 1 Evolution of the 2007–2015 main Electoral Proposals.
 Source: Prepared by the authors.

- One group of 24 proposals features strongly in the 2015 Municipal elections. It is the continuity of library service, where such had been closed or is at risk of closure; mainly in small municipalities.
- Within the scope of service levels 41 proposals were identified: measures orientated to provide service for all sectors of the population; infant’s library, children’s libraries, child-minding and activity rooms, study halls of ample opening hours, library extension services (such as centers which combine libraries and physical or outdoor activity, or library-buses), and there even appear very different proposals such as a delivery service of library items to homes (called tele-loans, or tele-library).
- The matter of a Collective or Union Catalogue of all the Public Libraries of Castilla-La Mancha, which began to be implemented in 2009, has been represented by 6 electoral proposals; on the basis that there are still some Municipalities that have not been integrated, or as a measure to give access to the on-line Catalogue and to its possibilities; principally loans.
- There are 21 proposals about Internet Access from libraries. Because municipalities have free public access to Internet, the concern is rather

significant, since many measures consider the improvement of the service or its installation in those places where it still does not exist or which lack broadband access by reason of being very small Municipalities or distant from large urban centers. In spite of being extended in 2015, it remains relatively dispersed in rural areas.

- The promotion of Reading, with 59 proposals, is a permanent theme. In 43 of these, measures are proposed for readership promotion, drive or extension; 15 make reference to Book Clubs and to their continuation and amplification, although it is surprising that it is considered by the *Partido Popular* (PP) of Azuqueca de Henares to “de-politicise Book Clubs so as to avoid current ideological manipulation.” This presupposes non-neutral activity on the part of the Municipal Library.
- Documentary collections, their expansion and renewal, are also frequent among the measures presented by the Political Parties; as much printed material as electronic, e-books, on whatever specific topics, and of donated documents.
- The question of opening hours, included in 52 proposals, is one of the most common among the electoral programs, above all for their expansion and their adaptation to student examination seasons.
- The promotion and impact of libraries and cultural services, with a total of 40 proposals, generates a degree of interest for the Political Parties as a service relevant for the citizens, and which are politically profitable.
- The personnel theme is present in only four proposals; mainly librarians offering their services.
- Other minor proposals have dealt with the improvement and expansion of furnishings (only in 3 electoral programs); lending (in 5 programs); a major investment in libraries (7 proposals); the training of users (3 proposals); one proposal relates to the impact of the Association of Friends of the Library, one of the creation of a Library Advisory Board is repeated, and there is another supporting School-goer Libraries.
- The *Partido Socialista* (PSOE) remains predominant among the Political Parties for the number of electoral proposals for library improvement in all areas, with 160 measures, compared to 99 of the *Partido Popular* (PP) and 40 of *Podemos*.

DISCUSSION: EVOLUTION OF THE 2007–2015 ELECTORAL PROPOSALS

If in 2007 there were 231 electoral programs with at least one proposal about libraries, readership or Internet access (53.97% of those obtained), in 2015 this figure had fallen to 188 programs (48.32%). This reduction is compensated because in 2015 there was a greater average or density of

proposals in those electoral programs that contained them; specifically 1.7 in 2007 (394 proposals in 231 programs) relative to 2.0 in 2015 (372 proposals in 188 programs). For that reason, we believe that there remains a degree of political interest in libraries, at least in quantitative terms.

Table 5 sets out a comparison of the evolution of quantities and topics of the two elections, and from that table it can be inferred that:

- In the 2007 Municipal Elections the most abundant proposals were about construction of new buildings and the creation of new libraries (28.32% of the total), but in 2015 these types of very costly measures had reduced by half, and are limited to the carrying out of improvements or the enlargement of existing installations. This was so because the economic situation had changed radically relative to 2007, when the Town Halls had some proposals from which great earnings were foreseen and the Political Parties proposed policies of expansion of services and of new installations. In 2015, still in economic crisis, budgets were characterized by austerity, and new investments were not planned. The proposals were to be directed not at construction of new buildings but rather; either the enlargement or the improvement of existing facilities; which will always have a lesser cost.
- The promotion of reading habits, by way of Municipal Reading plans or activities which promote the reading habit, is the second theme with the most proposals in the two elections. From this it can be deduced that it is an ongoing concern, reflected in the proposals of all Parties and with constant appearances. It also indicates that adequate availabilities are not being taken into account since structural measures with medium and long-term plans are not proposed. Rather there are activities for specific occasions, such as Book Fairs, without them being incorporated into the Municipal work or into the planning context
- Library opening hours represents a question present in both elections, but the number of proposals relative to this topic doubled in 2015. This is a reflection on the fact that, after eight years, this aspect has worsened because of the economic cuts: staffing by technical and ancillary personnel who service the libraries has been reduced and that has occasioned the closing of libraries in quite a few cases, and the reduction of opening hours in many others. This is felt directly by the public; affecting the service they receive and which they demand; resulting in this being one of the problems that may have grown most among the library proposals of the 2015 electoral proposals.
- Another matter concerning which proposals have grown in 2015, also directly related with the economic crisis, is that of the updating and renewal of library collections. Budgets directed at library acquisitions have practically disappeared in small municipalities and even in many towns of larger populations. Moreover, assistance from Regional Government (the “Advisory Council of the Public Library Network of Castilla-La Mancha” = JCCM)

TABLE 5 Total of electoral proposals according to issue.

ELECTORAL PROPOSALS	2007	2015
BUILDINGS	96	51
Newly-established Public Library	33	4
Branch Library	1	6
New Building	38	13
Building Extension	14	8
Building improvements	10	20
CONTINUITY	0	24
Re-Opening		1
Library continuity		7
Modernization		1
Library Support		9
Library Analysis		3
Library Promotional Plan		2
Regulations Review		1
SERVICES	14	41
Primary School Student's Library	1	1
Infants' Library	1	1
Child-minding Centre		1
Multimedia library	4	
On-Line Library	2	
Ebook and e-biblio Lending Portal		1
Double Usage of Library (Public and Students)	1	1
Bibliopiscina, Biblioparque (Library service by the pool, park)	1	4
Telebiblioteca, Telepréstamo (Delivery service)	1	3
Naturbiblioteca (Library on environmental issues)	1	
Expansion of Service Range	2	7
Working Group – Meeting Room		1
Students' Hall		18
Local Section dedicated to Local History & Personalities		1
Library Bus Service		2
C-LM UNION CATALOGUE		6
Incorporation into the Collective Catalogue		4
Access to the Catalogue		1
On-line Catalogue Service.		1
SCHOOL LIBRARY	2	1
Collaboration with the Public Library		1
INVESTMENTS	3	7
Assistance from Regional Government		3
Budget		4
FURNISHINGS	11	3
Reading Posts – Expansion		0
Furniture		2
Theft Detector		1
PERSONNEL	8	4
Volunteers		
COLLECTIONS	37	45
Digital Collection		1
Expansion of the Collection	29	35
Specialized Collection (social values, music, multicultural ...)	5	2
Books etc., Collection of Local Relevance	1	2

(Continued on next page)

TABLE 5 Continued

ELECTORAL PROPOSALS	2007	2015
Donations		2
E-books		1
Cataloguing of Un-catalogued books		1
READING	45	59
Reading – general	34	36
Reading Plan	2	3
Program – “A Book under my arm”	1	
Program – “Library Solidarity”		1
Book Club	7	15
Book Fair		3
Regional Reading Centre.	1	
OPENING HOURS	26	52
IT HARDWARE & SOFTWARE	4	7
LIBRARY WEB PORTAL	1	1
PUBLIC ACCESS to INTERNET	28	21
Internet in the Library	28	3
Centers, Halls, Classrooms for Internet		3
Technologies (Research, Availability, Training, Accessibility)		10
Wifi Availability		5
LIBRARY PROMOTION	23	11
Marketing		2
EXTENSION SERVICES	6	
CULTURAL SERVICES	22	29
Activities		22
Dinamization		5
‘María Moliner’ Prize for Reading Promotion		2
LOAN SERVICE	8	5
Expansion & Promotion	1	
Home – Loan, Inter-Library Loans	5	3
Library Reader’s Card	2	2
USER TRAINING	3	3
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD	1	1
ASSOCIATION of FRIENDS of the LIBRARY		1
TOTAL	339	372

for acquiring books, publications, periodicals or audiovisuals disappeared in 2011, and that has discouraged acquisitions by the Municipalities which had to make their own investment so as to preserve economic help from the Regional Government.

- Service improvement is also present in both elections and has doubled in 2015. Many proposals are directed at the expansion of these services and to a great extent at the incorporation of study halls; a proposal which only appeared in the last elections and intensely so. Many measures are directed at trying to satisfy students, and logically, to capture their vote.
- Cultural activities are present in the two elections, and with more proposals in 2015. These have multiplied since, in spite of budget reductions, Municipal Libraries have chosen to program and carry out activities at “zero cost” by lowering activity in other tasks such as technical

processing or the management of economic help. That has resulted in the library staff making themselves available to enlivening libraries through cultural activities, which on many occasions they carry out themselves. Libraries have tried to be more open than ever to the initiatives of individuals and associations. Both of these see in libraries a predisposition and capability for organizing whatever such activities as are not acceptable to other services.

- In summary, themes relative to buildings, opening hours, personnel, library collections, activities and services are present in both elections, because they are crucial aspects of the satisfactory functioning of a library.
- Dealing with the nuances, a clear tendency change is observable in the priorities of 2015 relative to those of 2007; proposals dealing with large investments have reduced considerably (as in the cases of *greenfield* buildings and the creation of new libraries), whereas proposals related to the opening hours of libraries, the continuity of current ones and the expansion of services have doubled.
- As regards Internet access services, proposals reduced, in part because of being satisfied in prior years, but leaving proposals for their improvement in rural areas where they could not be adequately provided; even in 2015. Finally, reading and readership continue being very present, with more proposals in the later elections, through the concern raised by low proportions of readers among the population of thesebrk communities.
- The predominance of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in the quantity and theme-range of library proposals in Castilla-La Mancha is maintained as much in 2007, when it was in power and won the elections, as in 2015 when it was in opposition and returned to win. This could give rise to two interpretations.
 - The first is that often Public Library policies are associated with Parties of the progressive type such as the PSOE, although the remedial phase of the economic crisis factor so alive during the central years of this study and which corresponded with the Liberal-Conservative Regional Government of that time, gives rise to prudence about such assumptions.
 - Moreover, it would not explain the reduced number of proposals on behalf of other parties included within the scope of the political left.
 - Therefore, perhaps the explanation may be that the development of library policies achieved great success during the early stages of Social-Democratic government, which brought about *a positive inertia* which influenced this Party to systematically collect proposals of this type.
 - In this way it profited from public recognition and identified itself with governmental action.

CONCLUSIONS

Public Libraries have an important place in the Regional and Municipal electoral programs of the Political Parties studied, and in which the almost 800 proposals investigated here for the electoral periods have given them a certain and maintained relevance in the political agenda of Castilla-La Mancha. Significantly, that importance was present in the two predominant Parties, PSOE and PP. This demonstrates a public interest for a quality library service, which showed itself in the electoral programs of Castilla-La Mancha.

Of the two major parties mentioned, the Socialist Party realized for Castilla-La Mancha a greater number of library proposals, following on the policies developed during the central years of its government of the Region.

That which both Parties know of the necessities of library services is included in their program frameworks, both Regional and Municipal, as priorities of their political projects, and we have seen proposals in approximately half the programs. However their content is not sufficiently satisfactory since they are not those which will come to resolve current library problems which would rather be structural measures, and for application with the collaboration of all levels of public administration. It appears that the committees of the Political Parties charged with coordinating and directing electoral programs are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the issues that are needed to be resolved in the libraries, and rather focus on less-significant measures.

With regard to the Municipal Town Hall administrations, we have seen that, in general, library services are provided with insufficient guidelines or planning. This is reflected in the somewhat non-systematic character of the electoral proposals of the majority of Parties: cultural and leisure service networks are not projected; nor are there proposals of substantial advances in library services directed towards a coordinated quality, such as improvement of opening hours, new library spaces, adequately-professional staff and sufficient budget to fulfill their functions. On the contrary, measures which are not inter-related, out of context, or too specific, are proposed. There are no strategic plans in municipal administrations directed at these services; and therefore there are no patterns or guidelines to follow.

Proposals are required which reflect stable policies for public libraries, which will solve basic problems through norms that both guarantee access of all citizens to this service and which address those problems related to personnel, infrastructure, library collections, permanent programming of cultural activities, and the encouragement of reading, sufficient budgets, etc. That does not impede one from thinking positively for now about the presence of Public Libraries in electoral programs. The wish is to see some proposals which indicate that they are really going to find their way into the agendas of the Political Parties and are intended to resolve the problems and the needs of Public Libraries.

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