Smart voting starts @your library.
Dear Colleagues:

Over the past three decades, we have seen a decline in voter turnout, smaller attendance at political rallies, fewer people engaging in politics in government and a reduced involvement in civic organizations. And as countries overseas seek to establish democratic institutions, we seem to have experienced a deepening cynicism about public affairs in the United States. Fortunately, this cynicism has sparked a renewed interest in civic involvement and reinvigorating American democracy.

So how can we meet the challenge of strengthening and maintaining a vigorous democracy? A good part of the answer lies at our very doorstep—the library.

The library provides a civic space where the public can find all sorts of voting information, speak freely, share similar interests and concerns and pursue what they believe is in their interest. The library is the one institution whose sole function is to provide for the free exchange of information and ideas. As such, the library is one of the few places where citizenship can come to life. As librarians, we have a unique opportunity to share our knowledge, expertise and commitment to creating an informed citizenry by making the library a central player in the electoral process.

Libraries are also at the center of many of today's most challenging public policy issues. Intellectual freedom, the digital divide, copyright, privacy, filtering and telecommunications are just a few. The election season provides us with a wonderful opportunity to educate the public, candidates and the media about these issues and to gather support.

This tipsheet from the American Library Association provides ideas for how your library can be an electoral resource for your community and how libraries can use the election season to promote their own issues. It also includes a broad list of suggested resources for information on the upcoming elections and American democracy and great examples of what some libraries in different parts of the country are doing to facilitate the electoral process.

We hope that you will share this information with your colleagues and encourage library users to take advantage of all the important resources your library has to offer to ensure broad public participation during this upcoming election season and in future elections. You can find an online version of this tipsheet that you are welcome to reproduce and distribute at www.ala.org/kranich/librariesandelections/.

Libraries are the cornerstone of democracy. I urge you to take an active role in promoting more citizen participation in the electoral process in your community. Please send comments, suggestions and additional sites and anecdotes to the ALA Public Information Office. Thank you for your support. I look forward to working with you on these and other important issues during the year ahead.

Nancy C. Kranich
President 2000–2001
American Library Association
Democracy in action.

In March 2000, the Democratic Party of the state of Arizona pioneered a new frontier in America's oldest ritual. Over four days, members of the party cast ballots for their party's presidential candidate, many of them doing so via the Internet. Total voter turnout increased from 13,000 in the 1996 primary to 89,000 in 2000, where 40% of voters cast Internet ballots. And while many experienced the novelty of voting from their own homes, a significant number utilized one of America's oldest institutions—the public library.

A thriving democracy requires an informed citizenry. America's libraries stand at the heart of our democracy as they are among the few public spaces left in civic life that stand outside of the marketplace. Libraries exist to ensure the free flow of information for all people. They provide the resources the public needs to be well informed and to participate fully and actively in every aspect of our society. In doing so, libraries play a critical role in revitalizing civic spirit.

Librarians, long dedicated to the free exchange of opinions and ideas, have a unique opportunity to put this spirit into action. One of the best ways that librarians can help to keep this spirit alive is by encouraging public participation in the electoral process. Libraries are the ideal place for people to get the information they need to make wise decisions about issues and events affecting their lives. Libraries are the perfect forums for town hall meetings, candidate debates, lectures and presentations where local citizens can actively engage in open and vigorous dialogue on all issues that are important to them.

For years, the public has registered to vote and cast ballots at our nation's libraries. Users can gather information and monitor the work of both elected and appointed officials through reports housed in library depositories of government information. Libraries provide voter guides and other relevant information about elections and referenda. They also provide a venue for authors who write about political issues.

Libraries provide information in a variety of formats, from books and magazines to videos, audio recordings and electronic resources, that inform the public about the political process. They provide deadlines for voter registration and the location of polling places, political speeches, statistics, media coverage, political party information and more.

Libraries offer their communities new opportunities to revitalize civic discourse by utilizing new technology such as the Internet to promote and deliberate on issues and challenges facing them. Librarians link citizens to all sorts of quality electoral information in print and online. No doubt, future electoral efforts will include online polling and voting throughout the country, building upon the success of the Arizona experience. Libraries will be key to bridging the electoral digital divide and encouraging broad participation by citizens in determining their political futures.

"Libraries have always been places where everyone in a community can find common ground, so it is logical that libraries would be places where people without computers could come to vote."

—GladysAnn Wells, Arizona State Librarian
Great ideas

- Create a voter information area in your public, school or college/university library and publicize its availability to the community. Your display might include books, videos, CD-ROMs, flyers, issue guides and resource lists, citizen group literature, voter registration deadlines and nonpartisan information on candidates. If your library’s policy permits, provide candidate statements and arguments on ballots. Provide ballots and voter guides, partnering with organizations such as the League of Women Voters.

- Create a voter information area on your library’s Web site. Include links to useful election-related Web sites and publish a user guide pointing out resources relevant to local electoral issues. Be sure to include links for students. Bookmark Web sites of candidates important to your community and publish a list of these sites.

- Send out a press release about all the useful election information available at your library.

- Sponsor a debate or forum between a community group leader working on an issue relevant to local or national elections and a leader supporting opposing policies (e.g., a healthcare reform advocate and an insurance company spokesperson). Publicize the event through newsletters, campus newspapers, flyers, local media and your library’s Web site.

- Host a candidate’s debate on key library issues at an upcoming library-related conference or other public meeting.

- Invite a teacher, professor or other authority to give a talk about voting, the election process or other related issues. Follow with a question-and-answer session.

- Host an event for your community to watch a campaign debate on TV and follow with a discussion of the issues addressed.

- Highlight materials that describe the duties of elected officials, the wording of ballot measures and contact information for candidates and ballot-issue committees.

- Maintain a community bulletin board on your computer system where people can discuss issues. Make sure there is an actual bulletin board that points people to the computer page.

- Write a letter to the editor or opinion column for your campus, community or school newspaper about how important libraries are to a functioning democracy. Emphasize that libraries provide a forum for the public to exercise its right to know.

- Offer interviews to community or campus radio and TV stations about the importance of having access to government and other information about social and political issues and the library’s role in making and keeping this information accessible.

- Sponsor forums on local and national issues with local leaders of community organizations.

- Contact publishers to get authors of books on the 2000 election to speak at your library. Invite a candidate or community group leader opposed to the book’s arguments to debate the author.

- Host a movie night in your college or university library, showing a film about American politics, followed by a discussion. Invite a professor to moderate the discussion.
“The library is central to our free society. It is a critical element in the free exchange of information at the heart of our democracy.”
—Vartan Gregorian

- Build partnerships with organizations promoting voter education such as the League of Women Voters or Project Vote Smart. (See Selected resources.)

- Sponsor debates of local candidates on local issues, followed by a question-and-answer session. If in a college or academic setting, work with your campus newspaper or the Political Science department to co-sponsor a debate geared toward college students. Hold the debate in the college library, in the student union or in a class during its scheduled meeting time.

- Ask local businesses, YMCA’s, schools, museums and other community organizations to help you publicize the library as a site for voter information.

- Invite college students to help with projects that educate voters.

- Work with teachers to integrate lessons about voting and elections into the curriculum. Provide information and research about voting, women’s suffrage, the election process or other issues in which students might be interested.

- Work with teachers to host a mock debate with two students representing two candidates’ views. Follow with a mock election.

- Make your school library a one-stop shop for information about local elections and candidates for teachers and other school professionals. Be sure to highlight issues and positions impacting school libraries. Bookmark related Web sites on the school library’s computers.

- Make voting and election information available in the school library during Back-to-School nights.

- Work with your local PTA to distribute election information to parents. Send home flyers with school children or provide literature at PTA meetings.

- Work with volunteer groups on campus to send e-mail, distribute flyers or stuff student mailboxes with voter registration deadlines and absentee ballot information. Remind students that they can pick up more information at the campus library.

Smart voting starts @ your library.
Library issues in elections

It's important that candidates know that the library is at the center of many important public policy debates—and that when they get elected, they'll be able to influence library funding and other important issues impacting our nation's libraries. Here's what you can do:

Highlight library issues

- Contact the sponsors of any candidate debates in your area—local, state or national—and ask if you can get one or two library/information questions on the debate agenda.

- Invite the cable TV franchise in your community to join with you to sponsor and broadcast a candidate forum. Focus on library, technology and information policy issues.

- Develop two or three questions on library and information issues and send them to each candidate for office. Even if they don’t all respond, they will have a new awareness that libraries are important to voters. Publicly thank those who respond and publicize the most favorable responses widely—on flyers, in news releases, etc.

Sample candidate questions

(For local candidates—city council, county commission)
Our library is largely funded through local tax dollars. Nationally, most people believe that the library is one of the most valuable public services and would support an increase in local taxes to strengthen library services. Can you comment on library funding?

(For all candidates)
Libraries are shown to be key community-building institutions, the one place that people of all opinions and backgrounds can gather, learn and discover. Please tell us a little about your own beliefs on government support for libraries as community centers.

Libraries are one of the most important institutions educating our youngsters. Research shows that time spent with books in library programs helps children succeed in school and in life. Would you support an increase in funding for youth services and school libraries?

Good school libraries improve student performance. Yet, the last time there was dedicated federal funding for school libraries was during the 1960's and 1970's with the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Since then, school libraries have not had a consistent source of funding. What will you do to ensure that school libraries continue to get the support they desperately need to improve student learning in the 21st century?

(For state candidates)
Our state government allocates $ per capita per year (check with your state library agency; listing available at www.cosla.org, for amounts) to our public libraries. While this state aid is a small fraction of our total operating expenses, it is crucial to our operations. Will you support continued (increased) funding for public libraries from the state treasury?

(For national candidates)
The Library Services and Technology Act provides a small amount of federal funding for libraries, allocated mostly on a per capita basis to the states. Last year, our state received $ (amount available at www.imls.gov). Will you support increased funding in the coming year for LSTA and a reauthorization of the act when it comes up in 2002?
The development of new information technologies has complicated many issues that our public policy-makers face every day. Can you share with us your thinking on some of these issues? (Look at ALA's Washington Office Web page at www.ala.org/washoff/keyissues.html for synopses of current key issues.)

**Influence the process**

- For public libraries, let all your candidates know the number and power of your trustees, advisory group and/or Friends. Provide candidates with Friends’ names, addresses and amount of funds raised.

- Encourage parents, college students, colleagues, trustees or Friends to send letters to the editor of your local paper, commenting on candidates’ positions related to libraries. Offer to draft language, facts and figures.

- Host an "Information Issues Night" at your public, school or college/university library. Invite candidates, as well as panelists such as lawyers, scholars, telecommunications/computer professionals, reporters and community leaders, to join a state or national library leader to discuss issues. Ask a locally known journalist to moderate the discussion.

- Issue a press release to local media that expresses your library's commitment to educating voters.

- Take your board chair, key member of your Friends group, a member of the PTA, students or college administrators to a meeting with the local or campus newspaper's editorial board. Discuss library issues and ask for editorial support for any library issues that are coming up in the election. Let the editors know the candidates' stands on library issues.

- Encourage students, staff, your board and Friends to get involved in the political process—volunteering at the polls, helping with voter registration drives, distributing information about the election.

- Have fact sheets or bookmarks available for the public to show the total percentage or per capita amount of local, state and federal funds that come to your public, school or college/university library. Also list key library policy matters that elected officials influence.

- Develop a list of local library facts and figures that are influenced by government decisions (funding, number of people who attend your library’s programs, number of library visits and the impact of federal, state or locally funded programs on students and/or families). Print the list as a flyer or post on your library's Web site. Make sure your staff, board and Friends have the information so they can talk about the library's needs and its contributions to the community.

- Keep a list of all the candidates and their biographies and positions handy for your board, staff, Friends, teachers and colleagues so that they have information at their fingertips to share with library users and the media.

- Work with local community organizations that are involved in getting voters to register and vote—such as the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Urban League, student groups and the local election commission—and be sure they are aware of library issues.

- Share information about your election season activities on your state or regional library e-lists. Solicit ideas and reports from colleagues and adapt them for your library for future election seasons. Sponsor programs on libraries and the electoral process at upcoming library-related conferences.
What works

- Jefferson County (Colo.) Public Library has voter information tables in the lobbies of all their libraries (except those used as polling places). Candidates and campaigners drop their literature there regularly. In addition, the ballot proposal analyses by the League of Women Voters and those required by Colorado’s TABOR (Taxpayers Bill of Rights) law are placed on those tables. Contact: Kay Pride, Director of Public Information Phone: 303-275-2203 Fax: 303-275-2202 E-mail: kaypride@jefferson.lib.co.us Web site: www.jefferson.lib.co.us

- The Government/Social Sciences Information Service at U.C. Berkeley’s Doe Library creates an exhibit for state and national elections that includes lists of sources from the collection, Web addresses for voting/election sites, etc., plus handouts such as the League of Women Voters handbook. A special binder, kept at the reference desk, is also put together with local newspaper articles, flyers, and other materials that focus on candidates, issues and campaign finances, as well as background materials on small, local elections. Voter registration information is also available. Contact: Susana Hinojosa Phone: 510-643-9347 Fax: 510-642-6830 E-mail: shinojos@lib.berkeley.edu Web site: www.lib.berkeley.edu

- At Harmon Middle School in Aurora, Ohio, eighth graders become senators and representatives for a day and submit bills in committees, debate in their respective legislative bodies and conclude the day with a joint session. The library has a research page for mock congress bill writing at http://aurora.portage.k12.oh.us/libraries/MockCongress/mock_congress.htm Contact: Mary Ann Balbach, Social Science Department Chair Phone: 330-562-3375 Fax: n/a E-mail: mab2ar@aurora.portage.k12.oh.us Web site: www.aurora.portage.k12.oh.us/libraries/harmonm2y.htm

- Des Plaines (Ill.) Public Library registers voters, posts deadlines for voter registration, publicizes polling locations, provides mail-in voter registration forms for people who are not mobile, checks on voter registration status for patrons, answers reference questions on legislators (at all levels of government) and how to contact them and gives dates of primary and regular elections. Contact: Leslie Steiner, Public Information Officer Phone: 847-827-5551 Fax: n/a E-mail: lsteiner@desplaines.lib.il.us Web site: www.desplaines.lib.il.us

- The Wadsworth (Ohio) Public Library has sponsored a Candidates’ Forum since 1992. Those candidates running in contested races for city and/or county government posts are invited to make an opening two-minute address, and then answer questions from the audience. The program is carried live by the local cable station and is re-run repeatedly during the weeks prior to the election. Contact: Janet Welch, Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator Phone: 330-334-5761 Fax: 330-334-6605 E-mail: janet.welch@wadsworth.lib.oh.us Web site: www.wadsworth.lib.oh.us
“There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the earth as the Free Public Library, this republic of letters, where neither rank, office, nor wealth receives the slightest consideration.”
—Andrew Carnegie

- The Blue Valley (Kan.) School District participates in the Kids Voting Kansas project, which is part of Kids Voting USA, begun in Arizona in the late 1980's to promote student knowledge of the electoral process and create lifetime voters. Each school has a teacher resource handbook of activities and lessons for every grade level, along with background information. A plan is under development to integrate these activities into library lessons taught in conjunction with the grade-level curricula.

  Contact: Ann Trotter
  Phone: 913-681-7158 Fax: 913-681-7159
  E-mail: atrotter@hotmail.com
  District Web site: www.bluevalleyk12.org

- Jackson County (Ore.) librarians had success with an innovative program called Pony Express 2000. The library system was facing a bond measure election that required a double majority voter turnout to pass (50% of registered voters must cast a ballot, 50% + 1 must be “yes” votes). The library got the local League of Women Voters and American Association of University Women to sponsor a voter pledge drive and involved Girl Scouts, local school classrooms, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and 4-H members to run the drive. The library measure passed with 53% voter turnout and 57% yes votes. As a result, the library will be building or remodeling 15 libraries in Jackson County over the next six years, including a new 78,000-square-foot headquarters facility.

  Contact: Meghan O'Flaherty, Headquarters
  Library Manager, Jackson County Library Services
  Phone: 541-774-6403 Fax: 541-774-6748
  E-mail: oflahemc@jacksoncounty.org
  Web site: www.jcls.org

- The Gilroy (Calif.) Public Library teams up with other local organizations and offers: a community information/handouts area; voter registration form/mailer; materials from candidates and opposing viewpoints on measures/propositions; Easy Reading Voter Guide in several different languages (see California State Library on next page); Internet links; adult ready reference: clippings, articles and other information related to upcoming and past elections; and public forums on key local issues. The library works closely with groups like the American Association of University Women and the League of Women Voters when they present Meet the Candidates forums or issues programs.

  Contact: Lani Yoshimura, Community Librarian
  Phone: 408-842-8208, ext. 3435
  Fax: 408-842-0489
  E-mail: lyoshimu@scinet.co.santa-clara.ca.us
  Web site: www.santaclaracountylib.org
North Bend (Ore.) High School Library sends or gives out voter registration forms, complete with postage, to students on their 18th birthday as a way to encourage students to vote.

Contact: Ann Magill
Phone: 541-756-8328 Fax: 541-756-6945
E-mail: amagill@nbhs.nbend.k12.or.us
Web site: n/a

The Mobile (Ala.) Public Library has held candidate forums for the past 10 years. The library works with the League of Women Voters to develop forums and a set of questions based on issues of concern to the community. The forums are for candidates running in contested races for city, county and local legislative offices. Each candidate gives brief opening comments and then is asked questions. The Probate Court, which handles Mobile elections, sends the library sample ballots, which are then made available through library displays. The Court announces in its election news release that ballots are available at the library.

Contact: Christina Bowersox,
Information Services Officer
Phone: 334-208-7902 Fax: 334-208-5865
E-mail: cbowerso@acan.net
Web site: www.mpionline.org

The California State Library, working with local public libraries, produces a voter information pamphlet called Easy Reading Voter Guide for low-literacy level adults. The project began through a local grant to a literacy program and is now distributed to libraries statewide for everyone's use, including students. The guide is developed each time by a team of library adult literacy students. It is printed in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and a Chinese dialect. It is also printed in some local newspapers. See www.easyvoter.org for the latest issue.

Contact: Al Bennett,
Library Programs Consultant
Phone: 916-653-7743 Fax: 916-653-8443
E-mail: abennett@library.ca.gov
Web site: www.library.ca.gov

Waunakee (Wis.) Public Library registers voters and publicizes polling locations. The library director is an election official who visits nursing homes and assisted-living facilities to register voters as well as set up absentee ballot stations, explains the ballot, assists residents with reading them and then returns completed ballots to the village election office.

Contact: Louise Bauer, Library Director
Phone: 608-849-4217 Fax: 608-849-7817
E-mail: lbauer@scls.lib.wi.us
Web site: www.scls.lib.wi.us/waunakee

The Chicago (Ill.) Public Library System partnered with the League of Women Voters of Illinois Education Fund to help educate citizens about candidates and voting information for upcoming elections. The collaboration helped publicize the Democracy Network (DNet), the League-sponsored Internet-based voter's guide. The League provided materials explaining how to use the DNet Web site as well as publicity materials. The main library informed branch staff about DNet, linked its home page to the DNet Web site (www.dnet.org/il) and displayed that link as an icon on the main menu of its home page. In 2000, the League will recruit volunteers to demonstrate DNet at selected library branch locations, coordinating with local librarians.

Contact: Amy Eshleman, Director of Development and Outreach
Phone: 312-747-4092 Fax: 312-747-4968
E-mail: eshleman@chipublib.org
Web site: www.chipublib.org
Selected resources

Web Sites

University
University Web sites maintained by subject specialists provide links to numerous other sites and lists of valuable references. Browse these sites and check out what's available. They may prove very helpful when selecting your own sites to follow candidates' records on issues important to your community. Particularly noteworthy are:

www.igs.berkeley.edu:8880/library/gallery-us.html
Broad site on American government and public policy with pages on Election 2000 and links to:
- Academic and research sites
- Indexes to government information
- Media sources
- Political parties
- Public advocacy groups (broken down by issue)
- Resources for state and local law and policy
- Links to statistical resources

www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/pSusp.html
Extremely comprehensive guide including:
- Web sites concerning political history
- Images from American political history
- Internet guides to political science resources
- Database on past elections (results, speeches, etc.)
- Links to political search engines
- Links to campaign finance information
- Links to lobbying and advocacy groups
- Links to information on minority politicians
- Guide to media resources covering elections

Commercial

www.freedomchannel.com
Nonpartisan commercial venue that provides 90-second video clips of statements from presidential, gubernatorial and congressional candidates.

www.politicalwag.com
Free online message boards for users to voice opinions on major issues and carry out debates with others.

www.publicagenda.com
Thorough coverage of national issues with background, debates and opinion polls presented in a newsmagazine style. Links to sites to find local candidates. Also links to a series of inexpensive books (by a New York Times reporter) called National Issues Forums Guides covering such topics as schools, Internet policy, unemployment, drug policy, environmental protection, the justice system and more.

www.selectsmart.com
Users fill in questionnaires to find candidates whose policy statements approximate their views.

www.usademocracy.com
Review of the legislative process. Biographies of president and legislators. Information available on current and past legislative initiatives with a helpful search frame.

www.washingtonpost.com
Latest news stories on political races. Links to candidates' Web sites. Provides maps of races state-by-state, broken down by district. Links to state government Web sites.

www.yahoo.com
News features on the elections on the Yahoo home page that lead to "Election 2000" page. Links users to major news sources, live chat rooms and bulletin boards, audio and video excerpts from candidates, magazine articles, candidate Web sites and more. Very comprehensive.

Not-for-profit

www.aarp.org/election2000/
Page on the site of the American Association of Retired People. Includes a newsletter, primary schedules, video clips on election issues, suggested questions for candidates and information on health issues. Also information on registering to vote (in Spanish too).

www.bettercampaigns.org
Site of the Alliance for Better Campaigns, a group founded and directed by an ex-Washington Post reporter. The honorary chairs are former Presidents Carter and Ford and Walter Cronkite. The group seeks to promote political campaigns free of negative attack ads and sound bites. The site includes briefs on campaigns and links to civic and reform groups.

www.calvoter.org
A good example of a state-level group. This California guide provides voters with information on elections and state propositions. Also includes links to campaign sites.

www.cdi.org
Site of the Center for Defense Information, an organization founded by ex-military people dedicated to educating the public about America's weapon production. There is a page dedicated to elections and how each candidate stands on defense issues.

Smart voting starts at your library.
**Selected resources**

**www.commoncause.org**
Site of Common Cause, a nonprofit, nonpartisan citizens lobbying organization that works on campaign finance reform, ethics reform, limiting the influence of PACs and making government more accountable, which features reports on candidates’ donors with amounts and also charts campaign expenditures.

**www.cspan.org/campaign2000/search/**
Contains searchable video archives of candidate statements.

**www.dnet.org**
Site sponsored by the League of Women Voters Fund and the Center for Governmental Studies. Users may enter their zip codes to find candidates in their district. Includes links to other public interest group sites and a thorough list of deadlines for voter registration and registration information. Links to sites of major and minor national and local political parties.

**www.e-democracy.org**
Democracies Online, an organization that “promotes civic participation and democracy efforts around the world through information exchange, experience sharing, outreach and education.” Focuses on politics in Minnesota. This site features forums, an online magazine, candidate debates, etc. The site also promotes international exchange of ideas and experiences about democracy.

**www.lwv.org**
Site of the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization that encourages voter participation.

Site contains a detailed map of the organization, issues under discussion, voter registration information and links to local branches of the organization. The League is sponsoring a “Take a friend to vote” campaign to encourage voter registration. For more information, see www.lwv.org/voter/govote/takeafriend.html.

**www.netelection.org**
A project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, in cooperation with the Center for Governmental Studies and the Center for Public Integrity, this site features information about the role of the Internet in American political campaigns. Features magazine-style reports about various campaigns and a substantive bibliography of scholarly material on the Internet and politics.

**www.nvri.org**
Site of the National Voting Rights Institute, a non-profit that challenges the constitutionality of current campaign finance through litigation and public education. Site contains legal briefs from past and present projects, news items and links to state organizations working on similar issues.

**www.publicagenda.org**
Nonpartisan, non-profit site that features excellent coverage of national issues, offers a page to aid users in finding local candidates and links to foundations that give money to public policy groups.

**www.vote-smart.org**
Site of Project Vote Smart, an organization that partners with the American Library Association, where users can find candidates by entering their zip codes. Also included is information on where to vote, voter registration details and national and state candidate profiles, including positions and voting records.

*Libraries can register with Project Vote Smart to receive a free resource book, a Web site guide, a reporter’s source book and a toll-free service that puts them in touch with a researcher. To register, see the Project Vote Smart Web site or contact the organization at Project Vote Smart, One Common Ground, Philipsburg, MT 59858. Telephone: 406-859-8683. E-mail: libraries@vote-smart.org.*

**Government**

**www.elections.state.ny.us/**
An example of a state-run site, this one from New York contains, among other things:
- Registration and voter information
- Campaign finance information
- Election results
- Election law
- Rules on running for office
- District maps

"Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation."

—Walter Cronkite
CD-ROMs

All About Elections
(Grade 4 to adult). Describes who can vote, how candidates are selected and how elections are conducted. Defines concepts like political party, voter registration, primary elections, party conventions, nominations, campaign strategies, debates, polls and ballots, referenda and the electoral college. Requires Windows 95 or MAC OS. See www.libraryvideo.com.

Decisions, Decisions 5.0: On the Campaign Trail
(Grades 5 to 12). Covers presidential elections, party politics, liberal vs. conservative policies and the democratic process. Students role-play a third-party presidential candidate where they are pressed for their positions on issues ranging from the economy and defense spending to health care and crime. See www.libraryvideo.com.

Videos

The Best Campaign Money Can Buy

Campaigning for the Presidency

Congress: The History and Promise of Representative Government

Through historical photographs and newsreels, evocative live footage and interviews with David Broder, Alistar Cooke, Cokie Roberts, Charles McDowell and others, the film chronicles the personalities, events and issues of the first 200 years of Congress. Directed by Ken Burns. See www.libraryvideo.com.

Crisis of Democracy
(Films for the Humanities and Sciences: Princeton, 1996). Bill Moyers moderates a discussion with prominent political thinkers about the democratic process.

C-Span
The cable television network provides 24-hour coverage of congressional hearings, debates, campaigns and more.

Democracy in a Different Voice: Lani Guinier

E lecting the President: An American Government Series

Election Day
(Grades K to 4). Explains activities that precede Election Day and reviews different levels of public office elections along with constitutional amendments that gave all groups of Americans the right to vote. Children also explore the history of voting and examine the attributes of a good leader by watching as a group of middle school students elect their class president. See www.libraryvideo.com.

A Third Choice
Reference Books

The Almanac of American Politics
Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, with Richard E. Cohen and Charles E. Cook, Jr. (New York: E.P. Dutton, annual). Published by National Journal Group, Inc., a for-profit Washington, D.C., publisher. The authors are political journalists and political consultants.
- State-by-state breakdown of members of Congress, with career biographies and broad histories of corresponding districts
- Ratings of members’ voting records by left to right interest groups
- Thorough appendix of House and Senate committees, with contact information and lists of members and their districts

Campaign and Election Reform: A Reference Handbook
Glenn H. Utter and Ruth Ann Strickland (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1997). Two professors of political science guide readers to print and non-print resources on the history and current activity of election and campaign reform.

Campaign Finance Reform: A Sourcebook


How Congress Works, 3rd Edition

Political Market Place U.S.
George Thomas Kurian and Jeffrey Schultz (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999). A reference book that includes information about local party headquarters, including “third” parties; political associations, left to right; political action committees; political science research institutes; think tanks; and federal and state election commissions.

Presidential Campaigns: Revised Edition
Paul F. Boller, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). A history of presidential campaigns, focusing on the idea that nasty, negative campaigning is nothing new.

Restoration: Congress, Term Limits and the Recovery of Deliberative Democracy

Election the People’s House,
1998: A Collection of Statistical and Written Analyses

If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates

How Congress Gets Elected

The Little Book of Campaign Etiquette

A New Kind of Party Animal: How the Young are Redefining Politics As Usual

The Web of Politics:
The Internet’s Impact on the American Political System
Richard Davis (New York: Oxford, 1999)

Why Americans Don’t Vote
Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988)

Popular Books

Democracy in America

Democracy on Trial

For Children

Web Sites

www.bensguide.gov
U.S. government site, sponsored by the U.S. Government Printing Office, which is dedicated to educating children about the workings of government. Breaks down information for different age groups.
www.headbone.com/derby/polls
"Iz and Auggie Go to the Polls." Students learn the fundamentals of Internet research and apply their knowledge of key aspects of American government. The Iz and Auggie storyline is presented in comic strip format, with a research puzzle at the end of each episode. The site has been designed around the National Content Standards for Social Studies. A Teacher's Guide includes suggestions for use with each grade level (4–8) and provides age-appropriate classroom extensions and related off-line activities.

www.kidsvotingusa.org
A non-profit organization, Kids Voting USA seeks to promote participation of youngsters in the electoral process. The site has pages dedicated to voter education, links for social studies teachers and ideas on how to engage children in the political process.

www.rockthevote.org
Site of nonprofit organization founded by members of the recording industry, geared toward the younger voter. Links include youth activist organizations and magazine-like coverage of issues. The site features bulletin boards to air one's views.

www.virginia-beach.va.us/dept/vbor/vbrKidsCorner.html
From the Virginia Beach, Va., Voter Registration and Elections Office. "Kids Corner" page offers activities for children designed to increase awareness of the importance of voting and the role that government plays in our lives.

www.sos.state.mi.us/kidspage/elections.html
The Michigan Secretary of State's Office uses a Cyber Seal to inform Michigan children about voting and the election process. Part of the Kids Discover Michigan Web site.

Books

Elections
Janet Majure (San Diego: Lucent Books "Overview" series, 1996)
History of the U.S. electoral process, relation and influence of media and big money financial backers and alternatives to the two-party system. For young adults.

Elections A to Z
Congressional Quarterly's ready reference encyclopedia of American government. A good reference tool, particularly for teens and young voters.

Landslide: A Kid's Guide to the U.S. Elections
Dan Cutman (New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, to be published June 2000)
Describes what it takes to get elected to Congress and the White House. A little history, some fascinating facts and modern election campaign practices. For ages 12+.

www.rockthevote.org
A non-profit organization, Kids Voting USA seeks to promote participation of youngsters in the electoral process. The site has pages dedicated to voter education, links for social studies teachers and ideas on how to engage children in the political process.

Presidental Elections and Other Cool Facts
Syl Sobel (Hauppauge, NY: Barrons Juveniles, 2000)
Presidential trivia and basic facts on the electoral process as spelled out in the Constitution, including the rules and practices related to campaigning. For grades 4–7.

Teen Power Politics: Make Yourself Heard
Sarah Jane Boyers (Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press, 2000)
An in-your-face, issue-oriented book for teens on political and civic advocacy. Includes the history of voting, election information, media literacy issues and civic participation ideas to get teens more involved in democracy.

The Vote: Making Your Voice Heard
Linda Scher (Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993)
Written for children, the book explains who is eligible to vote, when and where voting takes place (local to national levels), why some citizens don't exercise their voting rights and how to become a wise voter.

Voting Behavior
(San Diego: Greenhaven Press "At Issue" series, 1996)
Examines the electoral process, its history and changes; includes discussion on the impact of media, third party candidates and voter turnouts. For young adults.

"If information is the currency of democracy, then libraries are its banks."
—Senator Wendall H. Ford
This tipsheet was prepared by Nancy C. Kranich, president of the American Library Association 2000–2001, Paul Abruzzo, a research assistant and library school student, and the ALA Public Information Office.

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