

Dear Readers,

As I write this, it seems as though spring has finally arrived. How did you spend your free time this past long winter? Curled up with a good book, or e-book? Surfing the Internet for recreation? Streaming videos on your computer or television? Did you go to the library to take out a book or other materials? Use one of the library's computers? Attend a lecture, concert, or club meeting at the library? If you said yes to any of these, this special issue of *Maine Policy Review* on libraries and information gives much food for thought.

As they used to say about Oldsmobiles, the libraries of today are “not your father’s library.” The way we acquire and use information has been transformed, and libraries are part of that transformation. Guest editors Linda Silka and Joyce Rumery begin the issue by asking the provocative question: Are libraries obsolete? (I’ll give you a preview. As documented in many of the articles here, the answer is a resounding NO.) Then Melora Norman provides a history of Maine libraries from the earliest private collections to today’s high-speed Internet-connected institutions. In the “Access and Connectivity” section, articles describe successes and challenges faced by both consumers and libraries in the new digital environment, where access to a high-speed Internet connection is all-important for individuals and businesses, and where the rise of e-books is proving problematic for libraries and publishers. Maine is a small state with a history of scarce resources, and Mainers have long valued mutual assistance. As discussed in the “Partnerships and Collaboration” section, the state’s libraries are a prime example of what can be achieved to maximize resources through working together. Collaborative efforts of Maine libraries have led to successes that often are unique in the U.S. The “Libraries in the Community” section includes a range of articles. Some focus on various types of libraries in Maine; others describe the multifaceted roles libraries play in their communities, covering topics ranging from Portland’s new bookmobile, lawyers in libraries, and local history to the use of libraries by the immigrant community, homeschoolers, and young children and their parents. Articles in the final section consider “Challenges and Opportunities” facing libraries. Challenges covered include digital literacy, libraries and First Amendment rights, library governance and funding, and potential disasters. Several articles present exciting opportunities related to new technologies and the “digital revolution.”

The widespread adoption of digital technologies is changing both individual lives and the libraries that have long been at the heart of our communities. We hope that after reading this issue you will see libraries are more necessary than ever and need our continued support to fulfill their traditional and new roles.

Best,

