The 21st Century Library Building: Adjust or Wither

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The Effect of New Technologies on Library Design: Building the 21st Century Library

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

vision of what a civic or institutional building is.

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Session 3 - Beyond technology: additional changes in service patterns that affect facilities requirements

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Information Revolution

Throughout the history of the library there has been constant and incremental change in library collections, services, operations and buildings (place).

Some of these changes have been more disruptive than others. Combined, they have shaped the evolution of the library.

In the early 21st Century, rapid and concurrent changes in library collections, services, operations and thus buildings will redefine the library. These changes will be forced upon the library – but the library will be better served and better established for the future by leading this change.

Advances in personal computing in the 1980s established the promise of significant changes in the way individuals and institutions produce, collect, process, exchange, transmit, own, license and control information. Personal (electronic) computers began to appear in the 1950s with small and rudimentary computers marketed primarily to hobbyists. Computers steadily and slowly matured through the mid 1970s, when Apple introduced the Apple 1 in 1976 and mainstream personal computing was born. IBM followed with the IBM PC in 1981. It was the release of Apple's Macintosh operating system in 1984 that liberated computer users from code and freed them to create, store and access their data using a graphic and intuitive interface. The personal computer demonstrated the potential to transform the library by challenging the library's traditional physical connection between its collection and its place.

Developments in personal computing expanded the potential for libraries to extend their reach outside physical boundaries. Librarians began to understand and realize the potential for digitally stored data to expand the reach of their holdings and data sets - and to include uniform access standards. Patrons began to have access to expanded collections and databases that may or may not have resided within the walls of the library and may or may not have been owned by the library. This early adoption of digital information was experimental, developmental, and by today's standards crude. Yet it heralded the transition of the library from only a physical institution to both a physical and a virtual institution.

22%
Visited their public library by computer from home, office or school.

While it is evident respondents are spending time online and engaging in many activities on the Web, they are still reading. Whether online or in print format, respondents read and indicate that they are reading more... Respondents are reading books, magazines and digital content on the Web. More than a quarter of the total general public surveyed (28%) read 11 or more hours a week. More than a third of the general public in Canada and the U.K. read 11 or more hours per week, the highest rates among respondents in the countries surveyed. The majority of the general public in Japan and France spend 10 hours or less a week reading, the lowest rates among respondents in the countries surveyed.

- OCLC Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World, 35.

Information Revolution

By 1990, the concept of the World Wide Web began to take shape. The WWW, as an intermediary for storing and providing access to information, promised to revolutionize the library as a physical place. By 1993, the first web browsers were introduced, use of the web as the data portal exploded, and libraries provided access to information stored all over the world. Use of materials available on the web expanded exponentially, and a generation was born into a world that, for the first time, moved seamlessly between the physical and virtual. Those born in the early 1990s are now reaching adulthood, and their expectations of the library transcend the physical and rely heavily on the digital.

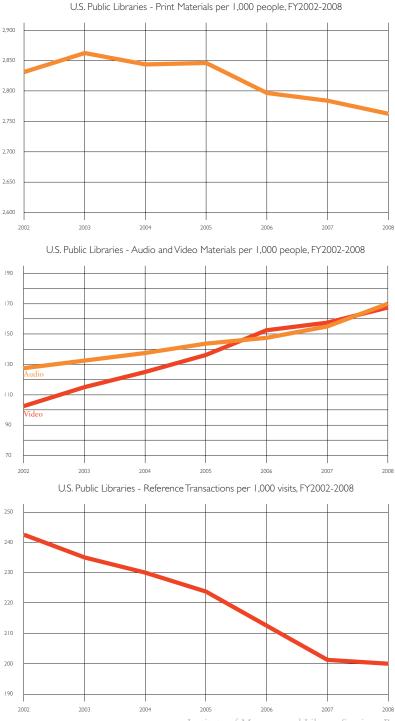
World Internet Usage and Population Statistics, 2011

	Population	Intenet Usage	Penetration (% Population)
Africa	1,037,524,058	118,609,620	11.4%
Asia	3,879,740,877	922,329,554	23.8%
Europe	816,426,346	476,213,935	58.3%
Middle East	216,258,843	68,553,666	31.7%
North America	347,394,870	272,066,000	78.3%
Latin America / Caribbean	597,283,165	215,939,400	36.2%
Oceania / Austria	35,426,995	21,293,830	60.1%
World Total	6,930,055,154	2,095,006,005	30.2%

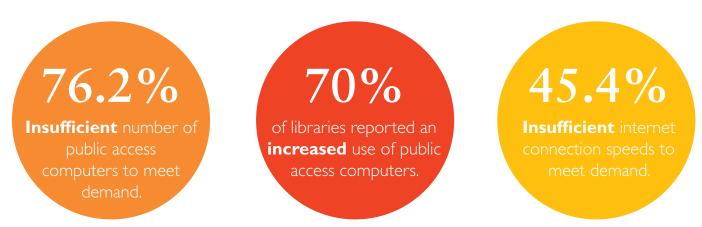
Simultaneous Advances

One of the most significant factors shaping the future of the physical library is the fundamental change occurring simultaneously within collections, library services and library operations.

While statistics show use and/or circulation of physical collection items increasing in some libraries and decreasing in others, consistent among all libraries is the rapidly expanding use of digital information. Current statistics are only beginning to illustrate a profound and rapid shift of library information storage and use to digital and virtual sources. This change is consistent across all library types – public, academic and special libraries – and will be an increasingly significant driver in shaping the future of library services and library buildings. In addition, this virtual shift will begin to erode the inherent and traditional differences between public and academic libraries as libraries continue to evolve into places of interaction and collaboration.



U.S. Public Libraries: Public Access Computer Use & Sufficiency, FY2010



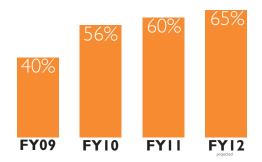
Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study, 2010-2011

Concurrent with the evolution of library collection use from physical to virtual is the related evolution of library services. Traditionally focused on helping patrons navigate the physical collection residing within the library (and, of course, answering reference questions), the librarian's role is quickly evolving to a much broader set of responsibilities. Among the more significant changes in library service (in addition to the traditional role of librarian) are:

- Expectations of immediate service and access to materials.
- Information management from a very wide variety of sources.
- Information advisor.
- Information instructor.
- Program creation.
- Learning Advisor.

Librarians must now be very skilled at understanding various physical and digital resources and have the ability to efficiently interact with their patrons. Most significantly, librarians must be open to accepting change in the both the ways and types of services they offer. These changes are especially startling because the outcomes and redefinition of library service is indeterminate. It is unnerving and can be frightening for the foundation of one's profession to be faced with fundamental changes over a short period of time. Yet the success of the library of the future will depend upon librarians' willingness to not only embrace change but to lead it. It is paramount to survival for this change to happen; and for the physical library to reflect and enable these shifts in service delivery.

Percentage of U.S. Public Libraries Reporting Flat or Decreased Operating Budgets

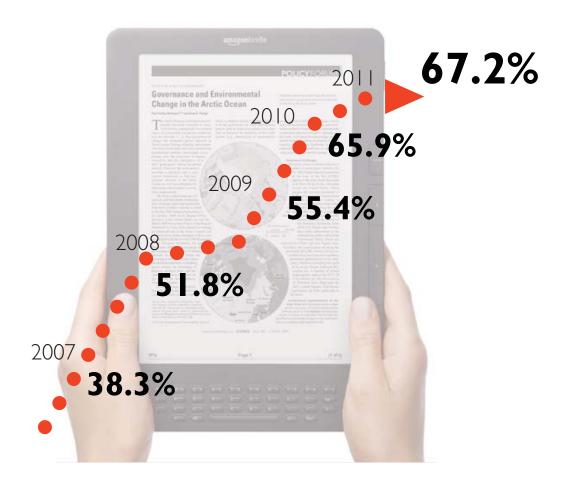


As a result, the operation of the library is beginning to undergo profound change. This change is being driven by rapid advances in collections, licensing, data resources, learning opportunities, and the changing nature of the library to a place of community interaction. It is also being driven by the constant downward pressure on funding sources for libraries of all types. Libraries and librarians are being forced into these significant changes, increasing use of the library and at the same time are being forced to provide new and expanded services on reduced budgets.

Changes Accelerating and Ongoing

There is no doubt that the library is changing now more than at any other time in history. The continual improvement and affordability of e-readers, advances in legal and economic agreements for e-book distribution, continued digitization of existing data, information and books, continued development of search methods, increasing bandwidth speeds, mobile computing and generational evolution of how information is absorbed will hasten the migration to electronic consumption of information. And yet at the same time print collections and physical media collections remain central components of a successful library.

Changes in technology and distribution are placing a tremendous burden on the library and on the librarian. They are forcing the expansion of the role and responsibility of the librarian. They are placing operational and budgetary burdens on the library. And they will shape the future of the library – whether or not the librarians embrace the changes.



Quality Defined by Service

The traditional measure of the quality of a library was often based on the quality of its collection and the skills of its librarians. Collections have traditionally been selected for the particular community that the library serves. Academic libraries, in particular, place great importance in the depth and breadth of their collection – and how well tailored they are to the teaching missions of their respective institutions. Public libraries tailored their collections to the needs and the service demographic of their communities. But with access to information no longer bound by the walls or location of the library, the quality of the library is no longer defined solely by its collection or even the skills of its librarians.

Conversely, the quality of the library now and in the future will be defined by the quality of its service. This service will include the library's access to information, the ease, speed and convenience of access; the ability to access information from outside the physical boundaries of the library; the ability of staff to assist with finding and procuring information; and the resources within the library that allow patrons to use the information they find there.

This change necessitates that staff resources be focused on personal interaction with the patron. This interaction will require the reallocation of staff resources from traditional service functions, such as manual handling of the physical collection, to customer service. This in turn will require both a broader set of interpersonal skills and the traditional skills of information knowledge and searching.



Library for Interaction

Another significant shift in library use is its increasing importance as a place of interaction. Traditional accommodations for people in the library fall far short of expectations for library use today and in the future. Traditional library seating – lounge seating, study tables in open areas and individual study accommodations are in increasing demand.

While the library has been and will continue to be a popular place for individual study, many libraries are experiencing unprecedented use of places for meeting – small groups and large groups in addition to the use of public meeting rooms. This demand is, ironically, moving in direct relationship to the ubiquity of electronic access. The higher demand for fast access to vetted data has not dampened the demand for high quality interactive spaces in the library. From these trends, it is clear that the role of the library as a community living room or institutional meeting place will be a fundamental role for the library in the future.

A number of experts and futurists are currently examining the evolution of the nation's economy from product-based to experience-based, and these conversations are relevant to the future of physical library spaces. In accordance with this concept, the future of bricks-and-mortar libraries will be less about what products a patron obtains at a library and more about the experiences the patron has while visiting.

- American Library Association, Checking Out the Future, 11.

Despite what the media may present about everything being on the Internet and the need for public libraries diminishing, data reported by libraries regarding visits paints a very different picture. Library visits increased about 3.2 percent in FY2003 from FY2002, and about 3.6 percent in FY2007 from FY2006.

- American Library Association, Conditions of U.S. Libraries Trends 1999-2009, 24.



Utility and Necessity of the Library

Many discussions about the future of the library, public, academic or special, include the question of whether or not there is need for the library at all. A common refrain is that universal access to data through the web renders the library of little value. However, most libraries are experiencing an increase, often dramatic, in their use. Changes in the nature of library use are driving change. Use of the library for circulation of printed materials is, in many libraries, declining yet use of the library to access data virtually is rapidly expanding.

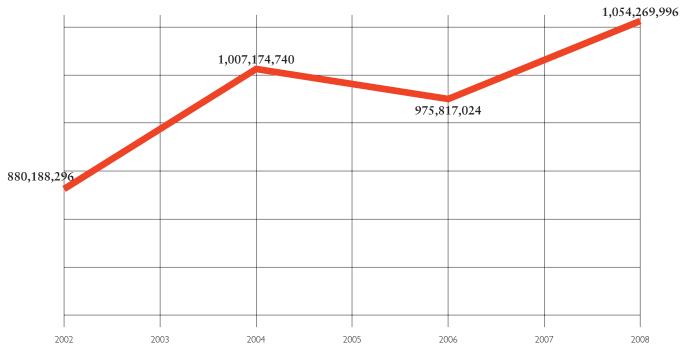
The most significant change in the use of libraries is their rapidly expanding role as a center of interaction. This trend is quickly expanding, and demands on the library, as a place for interaction, will continue to grow.

Objections and challenges to the library will no doubt continue. But to the extent libraries demonstrate their utility and usefulness to a broad cross section of their constituency, these objections will be silenced and support for the library can prevail.

More then 217 million Americans agree or strongly agree that they public library improves the quality of life in their community. More than 222 million Americans agree or strongly agree that because it provides free access to materials and resources, the public library plays an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed. This is an increase from 216.6 million reported in 2006.

- American Library Association, Condition of U.S. Libraries Trends 1999-2009, 4.





The future of the library is dependent upon its ability to adapt. New circumstances are forcing change on the library while at the same time funding for most libraries is diminishing. This trend of library use increasing during periods of economic distress has been consistent over many decades. It is especially complicated now that our society, schools and governments have placed strong dependencies on access to information electronically.

Librarians have adapted to constant change over time, but the change is now accelerated and more foundational than at any time in history. The data and information they provide is coming from rapidly developing and numerous sources. The financial models and legal structures of digital data are complicated and still in flux. Patrons are in need of advanced help in finding and accessing the information the library has to offer, changing the nature of the transaction between librarian and patron. Libraries are being used as centers of interaction in ways and in quantities never before seen. Demand for space within the library for human interaction is high. Public libraries are increasingly a part of addressing local social issues, expanding the reach, relevance and responsibility of the public library. And the activities that take place within the library are rapidly evolving to the use of information to create knowledge.

Libraries will need to remain flexible and adapt to change. In adapting to the changing world around them, libraries will continue to face common questions of the value of their existence and the nature of their service. But it will become increasingly difficult for libraries to maintain the support they have enjoyed for generations. Questions will continue to arise, and become more prevalent, about the utility of the library as a source of information. Questions will continue about the need for the services librarians provide and for library stewardship. Opponents will question the value of the library as a gathering space and a place for interaction. And questions will intensify about the need to fund libraries and library operations.

The fundamental question is:

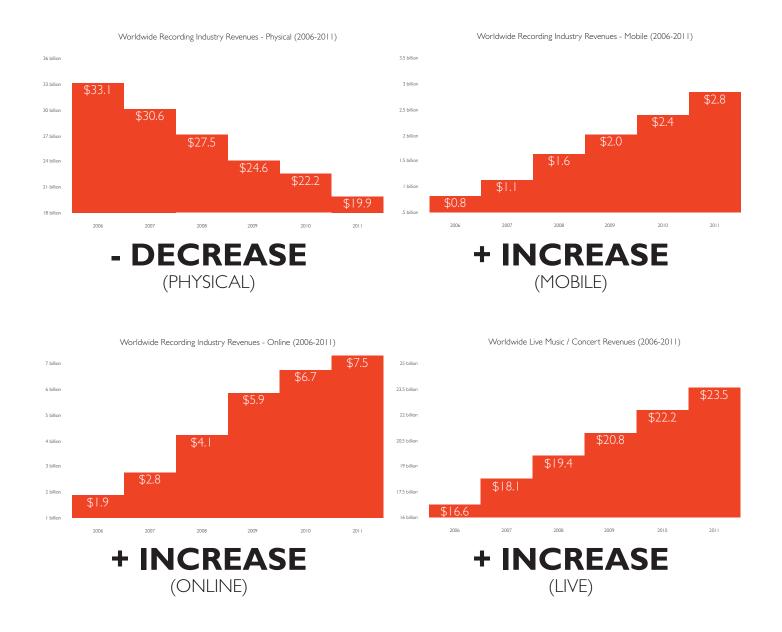
How can the institution of the library remain vital and healthy in an era of rapid change and economic distress?



The most vital institutions and enterprises in the 21st century (such as the music industry, see below diagram) are those that have innovated and led the change that is redefining almost every aspect of society, economics and culture.

To reestablish their importance to the communities and institutions they serve in the 21st century, libraries and librarians should establish leadership in addressing the issues that are reshaping the institution and the profession. Demonstrating and exercising this leadership will be complex and difficult. This is true because change in an institution is a best done through collaborations that balance the competing interests of the institution's mission with the underlying business model. The relevance and importance of the library will be challenged and could diminish if they do not change. To the extent that libraries are able to lead this change, their relevance and importance will be enhanced.

Worldwide Music/Recording Industry Revenue



http://www.grabstats.com/statcategorymain.asp?StatCatID=9

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Digital Revolution

Libraries must lead the revolution in digital information and participate in standardization and adoption of formats and legal issues.

Almost all new data, information and publications are produced and are increasingly available in digital form. Increasingly, past, historic and archived material is being digitized through project such as Google Books, Project Gutenberg, Norway's Bookshelf (Kopinor), and Europe's Europeana. But the existence of information in digital form does not equate to accessibility.

The advent and rapid maturation of tablet computing and e-readers is accelerating the digital consumption of newly published materials. The electronic circulation of digitized books began in the late 1990s and popular titles began circulating electronically in 2003. Adoption and use of e-books and electronic journals developed quickly and a geometric rise in their use was soon evident. However, with the technical advances of e-readers and tablet computers and the concurrent drop in prices of those devices, library patrons are increasingly accessing information digitally and the use of digital library materials will begin to rise exponentially.

Copyright issues have slowed the digitization of previously published and copyrighted works. These issues are being resolved through negotiation and in the courts. The issues being sorted out include the manner by which these works will be made available, who will control the availability, who will have access to the works, and the cost of access. All of these issues must be resolved in order to standardize (to the greatest extent possible) the production and control of digitized information.

The library as an institution and as a profession will be well served to participate (to the greatest extent possible) in this revolution in a leadership role as stewards of the democratization of knowledge.

Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language defines technology as "a method, process, etc. for handling a specific technical problem" and "the system by which a society provides its members with those things needed or desired." The roots of the word some from the Greek technikos, which is derived from techne, meaning art or artifice. Its Indo-European base, tekth-, to weave, build, or join, aptly describes the challenges facing libraries and librarians today when adopting the newest of technologies.

- Crisman, Lisa. Reinventing Libraries: Responding to the Forces of Change, xxiv

For now, respondents feel that eBooks clearly widen the digital divide... In the case of eBooks, many people also fall into "will" and "will not" camps. The 2009 Forrester's North American Technographics Media and Marketing online survey clearly shows nearly 70% of adults say they won't buy an eBook reader that is more than \$100, which may indicate people place low value on single-purpose devises. But most respondents believe libraries have an obligation to provide all emerging information formats, if possible."

- COSLA Report, 9

According to Association of American Publishers data, in 2008 ebook sales accounted for approximately 0.5% of all U.S. book sales; a year later, they accounted for 1.3%. At present, ebooks represent a tiny fraction of all book sales, but they are growing. In fact, between 2002 and 2009, ebook sales had a compound annual growth rate of 71%, the highest of any book category.

- LJ Survey of Ebook Penetration & Use in U.S. Public Libraries, 6

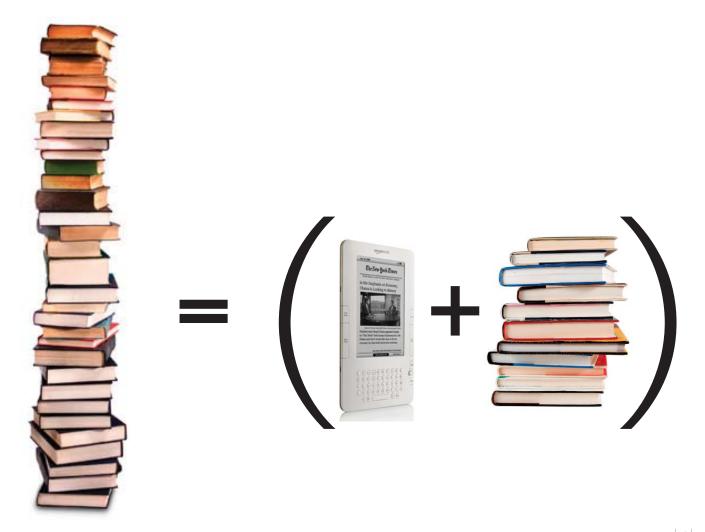
Consolidate Collections

Libraries must work to consolidate collections and work to develop new distribution models for printed materials.

Increased downward pressure on funding for libraries, together with diminishing use of printed material and increasing use of digital information will create a pressure on the reallocation of physical space in the library from the storage of printed material to community learning spaces. The efficiency of the commercial model of delivery of goods ordered on the Internet might be considered for adaptation to the library.

Libraries must begin to explore the opportunities to consolidate the collections of multiple institutions, and in doing so condense collections to house an appropriate (reduced) number of copies of library materials. In doing so, methods must be developed by libraries to allow for the expedient searching of materials, and delivery of those materials to patron's local libraries or homes. Netflix, whose customers receive and return their items by mail, has developed such a model of distribution to great success. And 24symbols has recently begun the subscription deliver of e-books similar to Netflix' online delivery of movies. As these systems are developed, cost models for remote storage and distribution of materials must be weighed against the cost of housing multiple copies of the same items in multiple locations.

To the extent that libraries can develop and implement remote and consolidated collections of printed materials and distribution methods to make those materials available, valuable space within the library can be put to greater use for the purpose of interaction and creation and criticism of the library as an outmoded vessel of unused, printed materials will be muted.



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Consolidate Operations

Libraries must seek ways to consolidate operations.

Current debate at all levels of government regarding fiscal and numerous other issues has its roots in the fundamental question about the size of government. Regardless of the perspective from which this issue is viewed, the budgetary constraints affecting the operations of local governments will increase the need to identify methods of reducing cost. As with the consolidation of physical collections, pressure will build to consolidate library operations and reduce costs accordingly. This pressure will come not only from within – from libraries adapting to new budgetary limitations – but from those who both support and oppose libraries as a way of increasing efficiency and return on investment .

Some circumstances will more naturally and easily allow for consolidation of library operations among currently distinct institutions. In other cases, circumstances will preclude consolidation.

Libraries must begin to explore opportunities to consolidate operations with other libraries to reduce redundancy and improve the efficiency of library funding dollars to deliver services to library patrons. The PLS data also show that libraries have become more expensive to run and more dependent on local funding sources. Per person operating expenditures increased by 15.2 percent from FY1999 to FY2008 and total operating expenditures increased by nearly 30 percent during the same period. The share of operating revenues from local sources increased from 77.7 percent to 82.7 percent from FY1999 to FY2008 while the share of operating revenue from state sources decreased from 12.7 percent to 8.7 percent during the same period.

- Institute of Museum and Library Services June 2010, 32



Service and Place

Service is no longer tied to place – libraries must develop new service models and virtual places for the access of information.

The library's transition from a physical place with a physical collection – to a place with both a physical and a virtual collection, requires a redefinition of place. In defining its presence, the library is no longer confined by its walls. Social, cultural and economic interaction and transaction is being redefined by technology. And while most libraries have an active, virtual interface, the library must embrace and advance electronic interaction as a more primary method of reaching its patrons.

To achieve this, libraries must:

- Develop more interactive and visually rich methods of browsing their collections.
- Create methods of virtual interaction between patron and librarian.
- Create methods of virtual interaction between library patrons.
- Sponsor virtual community-wide interaction a virtual meeting place.
- Enable these methods of interaction to work across multiple technical platforms.

By expanding the boundaries of how the library can interact to include a rich offering of virtual methods of interaction, the library will expand its presence beyond its physical walls and allow the institution to compete with other forms of access to information and other forms of communication, interaction and collaboration.

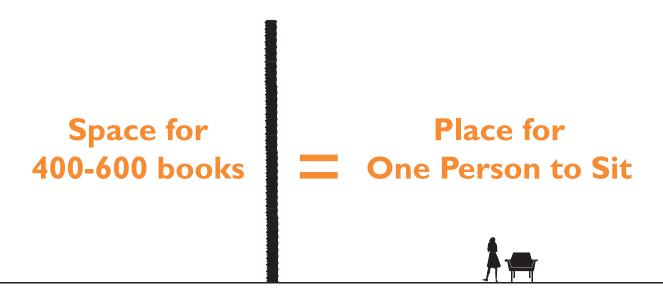


Interaction

Libraries must provide inspiring physical spaces for interaction.

The very definition of the word library is rooted in the idea of a physical place where materials are housed. This singular physical definition of library is quickly evolving and being supplanted by the library acting as both a physical and a virtual place. But libraries will not exist as purely virtual places because of the need of their patrons to use the library as a place to interact with others, and use the data and information provided by the library to create knowledge.

The most important ongoing transformation in the concept of library as a place is the fact that libraries are being used more than ever as places of interaction and not as repositories of materials. Public libraries are serving as community meeting and living rooms. They are being asked to provide a variety of spaces for small group and large group meeting in addition to space for individual study. Academic and other special libraries are the intellectual hearts of their institutions, and as such are facing space demands almost identical to public libraries.



The net effect of this evolution is that the physical place of public and academic libraries will become more alike, and different than they have ever been. While the nature of their collections will remain distinct, their buildings will be used in much the same ways. This change is having a profound effect on library buildings—changing the traditional relationships between and proportion of space for staff, seating and collections to include great percentage of space for individual and group study, programming and focused teaching/learning space. Future libraries will therefore need to increase the allocation of space for study and public meeting space by reducing space for their collections. This is true given the aforementioned pressure to do more with less—as imposed by the serious financial restrictions that are emerging from the current crisis. In this crucial time of transformation, many library buildings are being designed and built without consideration of this shift. The designs are neither of the past or the present—a result of either confusion or anxiety. Parallel to the imperative that the librarians change to the times, so too must architects understand the shifts occurring and plan and design libraries in the next decade that will be to ensure that collection space can be easily adapted to efficient and inspiring place for people.

By allowing for the adaptation of collection space to space for people in the planning of library buildings, libraries will be able to lead their transformation from a place for the storage of a collection to a place for the use of data and information from all over the world.

Active Participants

Libraries must be active participants in addressing local social, cultural, economic and institutional issues.

As the library evolves from a place of the storage to a place of action and creation, the mission, and therefore the form, of the library will evolve as well. The library has become a place for the active and collaborative use of knowledge. Accordingly, the role of the library as an institution must expand to include public participation in addressing local issues and demands.

Social, economic or cultural issues will be as relevant to the public library design as programmatic and functional. Social examples include communities dealing with high rates of illiteracy, poor education and poverty. Economic issues are generally focused on job assistance and small business development. And cultural issues vary widely amongst communities but are often tied to ethnicity. All three of these issues will continue to dynamically shift—a further reason to make sure the library is flexible both functionally and administratively.

Issues relevant to academic and special libraries are primarily related to the institutions they serve, and are in support of the mission of the institution. As the use of data access and community participation continue to shape the public library, academic libraries are starting to incorporate public library trends and service models. This mirroring is a reflection of the customer shaping the institutions—not the institutions "knowing what is best."

In the United States, one of the wealthier developed countries, according to a 2007 study by the U.S. National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, some 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness each year. Children make up 23% of people experiencing homelessness in the United States. In many cities of developing countries, more than half of the population lives in informal settlements, without security of tenure and in conditions that can be described as life and health threatening.

- United Nations

Libraries of all types provide a broad range of resources and services for the community they serve. They preserve our rich and diverse culture and history and transmit it from one generation to the next. They provide social settings for numerous community activities. They support economic development. They provide extraordinary opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. And they serve as a primary social agency for education, providing resources and services that both support and complement agencies of formal education.

- Martin, Robert. Reaching Across Library Boundaries



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Active Participants

Homelessness is also a primary issue facing libraries – big and small; rural and urban. Both public and academic libraries struggle with appropriate solutions for homeless patrons, and responses vary from community to community and vary widely. But regardless of how a library views the accommodation of homeless people, the issue will remain and likely expand in the future. The library is often the only place for the homeless to get access to technology or to be indoors during the day. By actively engaging the homeless community and the social agencies that serve them in the design of the building, a library can proactively provide for space that is appropriate and correctly designed for this unique population. Examples include providing permanent space for agencies; creating seating zones with dedicated technology access; acknowledging that the homeless include children, women and men; and working to educate the public about the importance of the library as a place of refuge and service for all—irrespective of economic circumstance.

Libraries must actively participate in addressing the needs of their community, in a variety of ways. And the library's building must support this participation, and allow for changes in the future.



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Civic Gathering Spaces

Library buildings must be redefined as civic and institutional gathering spaces, not merely storage space.



Maple Grove Library, Minnesota MS&R

In the phrase "public library", the first word is "public". Without people, the public library would cease to exist. The original goal of the public library was not to provide additional information to the wealthy who often had their own well-stocked libraries; rather, its goal was to provide free access to information for all people on an equal basis, regardless of social or economic background.

- Crisman, Lisa. Reinventing Libraries: Responding to the Forces of Change, xxiii.

The traditional library occupied a place in society or within its institution that was marked and defined by the scale and grandeur of its structure. Traditional architectural styles and the proliferation of Carnegie libraries in the early 20th century have left an indelible image of what a library should be. Many people share nostalgia for the traditional library building. These buildings were designed around the storage of the book, sometimes with formal reading areas defined by inflexible rooms. Without significant modification, these older buildings are seldom suitable to house the flexible and changing future library due to structural impediments (structural columns and walls) and low floor-to-floor heights. These buildings can be adapted to an extent but often cannot provide the flexibility and volume required by the library.

The built form of libraries changed in the middle of the last century to correspond to popular, modern, architectural styles of the time. Scores of buildings were constructed around the world in a predominantly straightforward, rectilinear and consistent styles—many with very small windows reflecting the nature of the building as a container of materials. These buildings were also built around book storage as its primary purpose. This resulted, in many cases, in a scarcity of pleasant places for people to use the information housed in the library. Many of these buildings were designed with the scale and distinction to mark the structure as an important civic or institutional building, but many did not. And few actually attained that goal.

Today, smart librarians and skilled library architects are planning and designing buildings that accommodate constant change. As libraries continue to evolve from singularly physical artifacts to places that are both physical and virtual. Those that are successful in the transition are interactive and facilitate change—and are designed with people not books as the primary focus. This fundamental change in the use of library space will alter the character of the library building and force a change in the common perception of what a library building is. It will also change the physical character of the library building to be one of open, light filled spaces.

Librarians and architects must design buildings built around the patron, interaction and collaboration. These buildings must be flexible to accommodate future change. And they must create a new vision of what a civic or institutional building is.

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