Designing Libraries for Customers

William W. Sannwald

"Form follows function" is a saying that has long been used in design. The origin of the phrase is traced back to the American sculptor Horatio Greenough, but it was American architectural giant Louis Sullivan who adopted it and made it famous. For Sullivan, "form follows function" was distilled wisdom, an aesthetic credo, the single "rule that shall permit of no exception."[1] Many new library buildings in the United States reflect this principle as the American public library tries to understand and meet the needs of users today. To do this, libraries use concepts of strategic planning and marketing as they adapt their programs and services to a changing environment.

The Public Library Association (PLA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), has been involved in helping libraries plan for more than twenty years. One of the best books for pubic library planning is Nelson's *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach.*[2] Another that uses the PLA planning process is the esteemed library-building consultant Nolan Lushington's *Libraries Designed for Users, a 21st Century Guide.*[3] Lushington believes that libraries planning new or renovated spaces need to be aware of trends from two areas. Planners first are using research from disciplines such as marketing and retailing; secondly, library architects and planners "need to clearly understand the esthetic grandeur of these architectural spaces and posses a clearer understanding of the functional virtue of the traditional library reading room and the grand book stack."[4] The purpose of this paper is to discuss some trends that are affecting libraries in the United States today, review concepts and best practices from other disciplines, and illustrate how some new and renovated libraries are creating spaces that delight their users.

Based on the author's experience as a library director and consultant, the following are some trends that are affecting the products and services offered by public libraries today, and consequently the design of library buildings.

Changing Demographics

In October, the population of the United States will exceed the 300 million mark.[5] This is an amazing statistic when you consider the United States reached 200 million in 1967, 100 million in 1915, and 50 million in 1880; it is now projected to reach 400 million in 2043.[6] The population growth in this country has triggered construction of many new libraries.

In addition to rapid growth, the mix of the population is also changing. For example, in California there is no longer a "majority" population. The Hispanic, African American, and Asian populations now exceed the former Caucasian majority population, which, by 2040, will be less than 30 percent of the state's population.[7] The implications of these changes are significant for libraries in a number of ways.

For example, the author spent a considerable amount of time planning the Malcolm X Branch Library in San Diego that serves a predominantly African American community. Numerous community meetings and subsequent focus groups with a variety of community members indicated that a branch library was needed to meet the unique needs of the community. The community requested that the library also serve as a performing arts center and have a large computer lab. The library serves as a center for a community that regards the library as common ground for the neighborhoods, where there are fewer in-home computers than in other areas of San Diego.

Some additional changes are also taking place. There is a movement from the interior of the United States to the coasts and to the South, causing great demand for library buildings in entirely new communities. The Riverside County (Calif.) Library System now has twenty-nine branch libraries in an area that was predominantly desert a couple of years ago. In addition, in areas that are not necessarily growing quickly, some populations are relocating. The author presented a building workshop for the Mississippi Library Commission, and the attendees commented that people were moving from the Mississippi Delta to other parts of the state. Thus, some libraries in the Delta no longer served the population for which they were designed, and a need arose for libraries buildings in other parts of the state.

The author was part of the staff of the Detroit Public Library when Clara Stanton Jones was library director. Jones was inaugurated as ALA's first African American president, and she realized that the largely African American population of Detroit was not using the public

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library in traditional ways of checking out books. She established The Information Place (TIP) as a free community information and referral service that helped people find answers to the problems of everyday living, such as emergency food, health care, support groups, and parenting education. The program used existing branches to dispense information in a nontraditional way. TIP required modifications to be made to the physical structure of the buildings by reducing the number of books and increasing the space for community referral.

One of the last new branch buildings that the author worked on at the San Diego Public Library was the Logan Heights Branch Library. The users wanted a community center as well as space for cultural artifacts and collections of books in Spanish. The architect grew up in the community and was receptive to its unique needs. The result is a building that will open in 2007.

Children's Services

It was not until the time of World War I that public libraries in the United States started to have separate programs and spaces for children. The growth of children's services in American public libraries has been a huge success, and the warm feelings that most people have toward the public library have been the result of contact at an early age with a children's librarian who introduced them to books and reading.

General design considerations for children's areas include:

- The space must attract and invite children to visit. For example, in the Point Loma branch of the San Diego Public Library, the entrance to the children's room on the lower level of the two-story library is made through a staircase designed to look like an old sailing ship. When children exit the ship, they see a changing view of the evening sky made possible by fiber-optic lights programmed by a computer. Children are also drawn to a periscope from a decommissioned U.S. nuclear attack submarine that allows them to look out over the surrounding Point Loma Community.
- The interior scale of the children's space must not intimidate or frighten children. At one library, the author had to persuade an architect to scale down thirty-foot-high ceiling levels in a children's area to a space that was more agreeable to young people. Height of book stacks and furniture must be of a scale to attract and accommodate children from newborn to fifth-grade students.
- Lighting levels and fixture types give children a variety of space alternatives, from those that create a cozy atmosphere and encourage reading, to display-type lighting calling out something special in the area. Also, display areas create interest and excitement in

children, and are a great opportunity for the library to merchandise its materials. Many libraries offer children an opportunity to display their own art work in the library.
- Craft areas have become an important area for children of different ages, and many libraries have included art programs for youngsters. This requires furniture and floors that can withstand water and dripping paint, glues, and all of the other tools and materials required by budding artists.
- Parent areas have become quite common in new and renovated children's area. Usually these areas have rocking or oversized chairs to allow parents to put children on their laps for reading stories. Other chairs or benches are required for parents who accompany their children to story hours or special programs.
- Media and electronic workstations are extremely popular in children's areas because kids have a natural affinity to electronic information and media. Many new libraries include separate computer labs and centers for children. The following description from the Los Angeles Public Library illustrates this:

It's business as usual on a Saturday morning at the Chinatown Branch Library on Hill Street, just a block from the heart of the busy shopping district. The tiny parking lot is so full that an attendant is needed to shift cars around. Crowds are pouring in and out of the crisp concrete-metal-and-glass building where inside dozens of preteen kids squeeze shoulder to shoulder, playing video games at a long row of computers, so many kids, in fact, that a librarian steps up to remind them that only two can play together at any single terminal.[8]

Young Adults

During the last ten or fifteen years, public libraries in the United States have made a concentrated effort to be attractive to young adults. Who are young adults, and why has there been a drop-off in library use by this important segment of the population? The age is generally considered from the last two years of elementary school through high school, or from twelve to eighteen years of age. Suggestions as to why there is a dropoff in library use are that teens are busy with school, part-time jobs, and other activities such as sports and social life. It has also been suggested that maybe that the library is no longer "cool," and this is especially true if the children's and the young adult sections do not have a clear separation. Young adults want their own space. They use the library for researching school assignments, access to computers and technology, and to feel good about themselves. They want to be able to work together and also to work independently.

Some of the design considerations that are often requested by young adults include:

- high-tech computers and the most up-to-date media technology;
- computer labs and classrooms for group instruction;
- book, media, and game collections for study and recreational activities;
- displays and art that reflect the interests of teens;
- book shelving and displays that highlight and market the collections;
- moveable furniture for configurations that change to accommodate the varying requirements for collaborative interactions;
- direct access to snacks and drinks, as well as vending machines for paper, pens, and other supplies;
- rooms that allow young adults to be as loud as they wish without disturbing other customers of the library, allowing activities like music and television;
- conference rooms where young adults may work together; and
- individual study areas where young adults may work in quiet solitude.

Joint–Use Libraries

A joint-use library is one in which two or more organizations offer public service at the same location. Due to economic and political pressures, there has been a renewed emphasis on joint-use libraries in the last fifteen years.

Probably the most significant joint-use facility in the United States is the Dr. Martin Lincoln King Jr. Library, a collaboration between the San José (Calif.) Public Library and San José State University.[9] At 475,000 square feet on eleven acres, it is the largest library to be built at one time west of the Mississippi and has eight floors, plus a mezzanine and lower level. Serving more than one million visitors per year, the library is free and open to all—no identification or proof of residency is needed to use or enjoy materials within the library.

Some of the features of the joint public/university library include: a grand reading room, a literacy center, a browsing library, thirty-seven study rooms, an adaptive technology center, eight program and lecture centers, and various public art installations throughout the building. Accommodations for children include an exploration room, a storytelling area, and an electronic discovery

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The Imaginon—A Case Illustrating Youth and Children's Services

A new building (opened in October 2005) that combines state-of-the-art services for both children and young adults is the Imaginon, a collaborative effort of the Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (N.C.) Library and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte. The 107,000-square-foot building integrates classrooms, library spaces for children and teens, theaters to seat 570 and 250 people, and storytelling areas in a two-story building.

The children's 22,100-square-foot (13,600-square-foot public space) library is located on the first floor of the Imaginon. The children's library houses 12,500 books and media for preschoolers through sixth grade, has twelve skill-building computers, and listening posts providing access to informational and recreational programs. It has an indoor garden that allows children to play and explore.

The teen center of the Imaginon is located in a second floor loft far away from the children's library. The Loft consists of a 3,900-square-foot space and illustrates all of the design criteria for young adult areas suggested above. The teen center contains a book collection of six thousand volumes of popular fiction and school support materials, a media collection of one thousand CDs and DVDs (with listening posts), ten computers with skill-building software, and study booths for group study and conversations.

On one side adjacent to the Loft is Studio-i, a 1,225-square-foot space that is the hub for teen programming space. It contains a black-box theater with a blue screen. Five studios on the other side of the Loft provide spaces for drama camps, workshops, art, dance, and technology training for children and teens. There are studios; classrooms of 1,750 and 1,900 square feet for a variety

of teen-related training; a 920-square-foot art center; a dance studio of 800 square feet; and a technology classroom that can accommodate up to fifteen people. Also adjacent to the Loft is the Time-Warner Cable Technology Center, which contains sixty computers and a staff of five for instructional individual and group study.

The Imaginon illustrates not only the latest trends in space for children's and young adult services, but also another trend in libraries—collaboration: the cooperation and collaborative services that are occurring today through joint-use libraries.

area. Additionally, there is a very popular teen center.

When the project was first proposed by the president of San José State University and the mayor of San José, there was opposition from some faculty members. There was also concern that public library users might be a threat to college students. Extensive public involvement and planning eliminated most of the objections, and since the building has opened it has been an unqualified success for both the university and public library.

Another joint-use facility in a major U.S. city is being planned in Boston. The author, as consultant to Pfeiffer Partners Architects, was commissioned to write an operating agreement for a joint public library/high school library and community center for the city of Boston, and to write a conceptual building program to meet the needs of all three organizations. A number of challenges were presented. First, the public library and schools were not consulted on the initial decision to have a joint-use library. The cultures of the two were very different. The Boston Public Library uses the Library of Congress Classification system and the Boston Public Schools use Dewey, and the two libraries used different automated library systems. Also, based on focus-group interviews, public library customers did not like to share space with teenagers. Nevertheless, due to extensive citizen and school involvement, Pfeiffer Partners created a design that satisfied all three joint-use parties. The architect met all the objections and created a space plan that kept the campus secure while allowing full access to the community center and public library.

In general, a number of factors need consideration for a successful joint-use facility:

- A public library is really a retail space with the key being location, location, location. (And the author believes that the best location for a public library branch is on the corner across from Starbucks.) Most public libraries in the United States also require public parking, although a branch of the San Francisco Public Library was located where the city prohibited parking in order to encourage public transportation. School and college libraries are ideally located at the center of the campus, which makes access difficult for the public.
- How will capital costs, operating costs, and maintenance costs be split? An agreement needs to be in place before design begins in order to allocate all costs that will take place in a joint-use facility.
- How will the building be maintained? Usually each organization in a joint-use facility has its own maintenance staff that will be responsible for taking care of the building.
- How will service desks be staffed and where will they be located? The author once consulted on a joint facility where the staff of a joint community college and that of a university library were located at the same desks and did not speak to each other. Some libraries employ service desks staffed by both organizations, and some have desks that are only staffed by librarians from one organization.
- Design of the architecture of the building, as well as the interiors, often become a subject of dispute for organizations that operate joint facilities. This requires that the architect be clever in making institutional spaces unique while having common spaces that flow together well.
- All parties to the joint operation need to decide on hours that the building is open. If the parties follow different schedules, the architecture of the building should enable operation by only one partner. And a decision must be made as to who is the person in charge in case decisions need to be made about the building, or to handle emergencies.

The keys to a successful joint-use building are to have a clear understanding of all of the aforementioned issues, and to have the agreement, preferably in writing, of all of the participants. Because of the political and economic popularity of joint-use facilities, there will probably be more in the future.

Technology

Ask any librarian to name the factor that has changed operations more than any other, and the answer will probably be technology. All library buildings now require computer labs or seminar rooms with electronic workstations, wireless access, electronic white boards, teleconferencing, and ambient conditions conducive to the use of digital devices. The actual spaces allocated to various library programs and materials in libraries have likewise changed. As periodicals and reference collections have digitized, the space given to house them has been reduced. To offset this saving of space, the area required to use an electronic workstation is much more than the seat at a library table. Space required for the storage of electronic media such as CDs and DVDs has increased as well.

Keeping track of customer information, library materials, and loans is easer today because of automated library systems that allow all the items in the library's collection—as well as all the users—to have their own unique bar codes. The eventual adoption of radio frequency identification (RFID) in libraries will entail further changes. RFID is a generic term for technologies that use radio waves to identify people or objects. There are several methods of identification, but the most common is to store a serial number that identifies a person or library media (and perhaps other information) on a microchip that is attached to an antenna. Thus, it will be easier to inventory library collections and to make suggestions for customer use based on previous interests. Online relationships between the public library and customers will be enhanced by digital technology

(although many are concerned about the privacy aspects). The implication for space use in libraries because of RFID is that materials-handling systems may be integrated with RFID to return materials to sections of the library using conveyor belts that reduce the human handling of books and media. All this technology is very expensive and difficult to retrofit into existing library spaces, and not much easier to plan for when designing new buildings.

While access through the library's electronic work stations still occurs, library buildings require wireless access points to allow customers to access library catalogs and databases through handheld devices. Placing of access points is an art and a science and care must be taken so that there are no "dead spots" in the building. Technology will continue to be a disruptive force for libraries, and technology will have a major impact on building planning.

Sustainable Design

The earth has its limits, and buildings need to be environmentally friendly as well as handsome and cost efficient. Many municipalities and states require new library buildings to meet certain sustainable design targets, and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has established standards that buildings must try to attain if they are to be certified for a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating.[10] USGBC is the nation's foremost coalition of leaders from across the building industry working to promote buildings that are environmentally responsible, profitable, and healthy places to live and work. The rating system for LEED is divided in five categories (Site, Water, Energy, Materials, and Indoor Environmental Quality), and points are awarded based on meeting specified design criteria.

The New York Public Library system made a new addition to its branches on January 17, 2006, with the opening of its Bronx Library Center (BLC), a $50 million, 78,000-square-foot facility that demonstrates sustainable building practices.[11] Designed by Manhattan-based Dattner Architects, the soaring, five-story edifice with a boomerang-shaped roof is the first "green" library in the city system. The facility has applied for LEED Gold designation and joins a growing number of ecologically responsible libraries emerging across the country. Dattner and his client adhered to a number of eco-friendly standards in the building, which is situated in a neighborhood where window bars are a more common sight than the new library's towering double-glazed low-E curtain wall. Ninety percent of demolition debris and half the construction waste were recycled. In addition, the architect used only Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood for the library's finishes.

In other locales, the main branch of the Oak Park (Ill.) Public Library, which reopened in 2003, has a grass roof, recycled automobile tires made into flooring, and a computer system that raises and lowers shades based on the movement of the sun. The Lake View Terrace Branch of the Los Angeles Public Library is the first library in the United States to receive a Platinum LEED rating, the highest award possible.[12] This 10,700-square-foot building is designed to have a minimal impact on the environment through the use of recycled materials and features that conserve energy and water.

Sustainable design will become more important as a design element as its value becomes more widely accepted. In order to accommodate the different climate zones and regional variations, USGBC is developing standards for the various regions in the United States.

Library As a Place

People in the United States move a lot for many reasons and the country has seen a shift of population from the East and Midwest to the South and West. Society today does not offer some of the traditional ties that link people into a community, but the public library may serve as a "commons" for people to come together. The author has seen the size and variety of public spaces for community activities increase over the years. Commons areas in libraries may include meeting rooms of various sizes and types, fixed-seat auditoriums, multipurpose rooms, conference areas, and all of the spaces required to support the activities that might occur in these rooms, such as storage, kitchen facilities, washrooms, and other spaces, depending on what the library building program requires.

The Summerlin Library of the Las Vegas–Clark County Public Library, which opened in 1993, has a variety of community spaces.[13] The 40,195-square-foot library has one forty-person conference room, three fourteen-person study rooms, and one room that seats thirty children. The library also has a gallery with 115 linear feet of exhibit space. The most interesting community space is a 291-seat theater that occupies 13,000 square feet of the library. It has all the equipment and lighting that you would find in any first-rate theater. The author asked the library director why a theater like this was part of a community library. The answer was that the community requested it in the planning for the library because many of the area's residents work in show business in Las Vegas clubs, and they wanted a space where they could perform.

In planning the 30,000-square-foot Scripps Ranch Branch of the San Diego Public Library, the author met with community groups who told him they wanted a 300-seat multipurpose room with a grand piano, and a kitchen facility that would rival the finest restaurants in town. The reason for this facility in an upper-middle class community was to have the library be the center of the community offering musical performances, cooking classes, and a variety of cultural programming. Given this information, the author always timed his visits to the branch to coincide with the cooking classes offered by the local community college.

The public library as community commons will continue to grow as people look for association in their lives. The library is neutral ground that belongs to everyone, and library meeting and program rooms have become very popular.

Marketing for Libraries

Ideas from marketing have influenced public library service for years, and two influential thinkers in marketing, B. Joseph Pine II and Paco Underhill, have the potential to impact libraries today.

Pine is the cofounder of Aurora, Ohio–based consultancy Strategic Horizons LLP and coauthor of *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*.[14] Pine predicts that in order to stay competitive, businesses will soon be forced to wrap experiences around their traditional products and services. Those that fail will find their offerings devolving into commodities—undifferentiated by brand or features and yielding little, if any, profit. In fact, Pine maintains that there is already a market for experiences, pointing to the popularity of theme restaurants like the Hard Rock Cafe and the proliferation of experiential retail stores like Nike Town and REI as evidence of this trend.[15]

Pine is an advocate of mass customization, which is a concept that marketers are rediscovering today. The premise is that every customer is unique, has unique wants and needs, and desires special care from the seller. This is the essence of customer relationship management (CRM), which is the process of identifying prospective buyers, understanding them intimately, and developing favorable long-term percepts of the organization and its offerings so that buyers will choose them in the marketplace. Think about what happens when you go to Amazon.com. You are immediately greeted and recognized as an individual, suggestions are given, and you feel that there is someone who knows your needs at Amazon. A number of American libraries are considering converting their catalogs to offer the type of information available through Amazon.

According to Pine, there are four basic kinds of experiences—entertaining, educational, escapist, and aesthetic—but the best ones actually encompass aspects of all four. Entertainment is just one way to engage a customer. An example of this is the Forum Shops in Las Vegas, where all of the stores are laid out on streets that look like an old Roman marketplace. Every hour there is a five- or ten-minute staged production—like a re-creation of the drowning of Atlantis or a parade of Roman centurion guards—to captivate the audience of shoppers. Despite the fact that five or ten minutes of every hour are basically lost, with no shopping done, the Forum Shops earn three or four times higher dollar amounts per square foot than those of the typical mall.[16]

Pine believes that retailers (and libraries are retail spaces) should:

- not open a store, open an experience venue;
- not talk about technology, talk about customers' own experiences;
- not sell products, sell memories;
- not supply graphics, supply theatrical elements; and
- not offer digital capabilities, offer memorabilia machines.

The new Cerritos (Calif.) Library, the culmination of a complete reexamination of library services, collections, and staffing, is an example of applying Pine's ideas to a library. The new $40 million library, designed by Charles Walton and Associates of Glendale, California, attracts notice even before the user enters. Inspired in part by Pine's work, a planning team of city elected officials and library staff, architects, artists, designers, contractors, and consultants redesigned every aspect of the library with the goal of enhancing the user experience. It is the first titanium-clad building in the United States, with a golden skin that changes color with atmospheric conditions. At 88,500 square feet on three levels, the building doubles the size of the former Cerritos library.

Borrowing liberally from other disciplines, the "experience library" offers themed spaces to define its different collections. The Old World Reading Room sports rare first editions, unique collectible books, new and popular titles, wood paneling, and a gothic fireplace, complete with holographic flames. A World Traditions area recognizes the contributions of nonwestern cultures to society with a special collection of print and multimedia resources in languages other than English and in nonroman alphabets.[17]

Other spaces in the building include:

- an entry providing an immediate view of a 15,000-gallon shark-filled saltwater aquarium;
- a Main Street Mall that orients users into the space and provides the same type experience that one has on Main Street in Disneyland;
- a children's room with a full-size model of Stan, a T. rex. dinosaur, with a young adult area that has a "with-it" space, a design that allows individual users to customize the display of electronic resources. The room has collections and a design that appeals to the target users; and
- multimedia learning centers in public areas house two hundred computer workstations and seating with 1,200 laptop ports.

Users of the Cerritos Library were surveyed to determine their perceptions of the new library.[18] Responses related to the physical space were that the atmosphere provided by the building and grounds is an important element

that made a significant contribution to the experiences customers had. Respondents described the atmosphere as beautiful, open, futuristic, sophisticated, awesome, energizing, state-of-the-art, and convenient. Also, customers were amazed at how well the library provides a learning environment for both children and adults. When asked what they valued most about the library, customers put the highest priority on its atmosphere, aquarium, book collection, children's area, computers, comfort level, and wide variety of learning experiences.

The second influential leader, Underhill, describes himself as a retail anthropologist and is the founder of Envirosell.[19] Underhill's firm uses traditional marketing research, anthropological observation techniques, and videotaping to determine what people actually do in a retail space. Using maps and the Envirosell "tracking form," on-site researchers record the movements and activities of visitors as they shop the store. Data collection is unobtrusive and does not interrupt or influence the routine operations of the business day. Several unobtrusive cameras are used concurrently, capturing virtually everything occurring in the area studied during the research day. Finally, after completing their shopping and upon leaving the store, shoppers are intercepted and offered an incentive to complete a questionnaire. All three research techniques—video, interviews of customers, and interviews of sales staff—provide comprehensive information on how customers use a retail space.

Because public libraries are retail operations, much of this work translates well into examining the physical layout of library interiors. For example, Underhill visited a new Apple Store and arrived at these conclusions that may also apply to libraries:

- Establish clear sight lines; make it easy for shoppers to get to the next grazing point.
- People drift to the right when they enter a store, then circulate counterclockwise.
- The longer people spend in a store, the more they buy (or check out). The more open space you provide, the longer people linger.
- Mix the gender of employees to match that of the customers. Maybe this is why more books on cooking are circulated in libraries than books about auto racing.
- Place a visual attraction at the back of the store; it will lure shoppers deep inside.
- Don't ignore the checkout; an easy transaction makes a lasting impression.

Underhill's retail anthropology has important implications for libraries in helping them better serve the needs and wants of their customers.

The Future

In planning new public libraries, design professionals, library boards, and staff need to determine what the library will be. The first step is to undertake a community planning process to determine community wants and needs for library service. Based on that information, libraries determine what is required to meet the community's vision through a plan of service. This plan is translated into a library building program. The words of the program are turned into a three-dimensional building design.

In planning a library today, there are some emerging trends (in addition to those already mentioned) that need to be considered and perhaps incorporated into the program.

- The major issue that public libraries may have to estimate in planning the size and spaces in future libraries is disintermediation, or the removing of layers between the library and final consumer or customer. As described earlier, the replacement of paper copies of reference books and periodicals by electronics has changed the physical allocation of space in libraries. What if public libraries continue to make their holdings—not only reference books and periodicals, but also books and other media—available electronically? Some libraries today allow customers who have been authenticated to access some of their collections and databases from home. If this process continues and grows, it will have an impact on space required for library buildings.
- Electronic games are pervasive among many library users and probably more will engage in gaming in the future. Access to gaming materials is already available in many libraries (such as the Minneapolis Public Library) and gaming centers may be found in libraries in the near future.[20]
- Just as children and teens have been segmented for special library programs, the fast-growing baby boomer generation will probably demand unique programs and services from their public library. Boomer demands will probably require special spaces in the library as well as adaptive equipment to service their declining physical capabilities.
- Materials formats keep changing in libraries. Just as records have been succeeded by audio cassettes, and now CDs, the storage of media will require constant updates by the library.
- Even though the public will continue to access the public library for materials, media, and meetings, there will be a growing use of the public library as a gateway. The public library has paid a lot of money to provide a variety of electronic data bases, transforming itself from a brick-and-mortar service to a brick-and-click service. This may result in a physical reduction in library space.

- The author believes in the role of the public library as a community commons, and that people will continue to use libraries not only for the information contained in the building, but also for the social capital that takes place when people come together for a common cause.

This is an exciting time for public libraries because their mission and services are being scrutinized and revised to meet the changing environment they face. If you could go back twenty years and ask a librarian the impact of the Internet on public library service, you would receive a blank stare. It is interesting to see the changes that have taken place in public libraries in the last few years, but even more exciting to think about the implication for library buildings—and what the public library will be like—in the future.

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