



Article

The Life of the Space: Evidence from Nova Scotia Public Libraries

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Abstract

Objectives – To describe aspects of the 21st century role of the public library as a physical space by observing the actual use of a selection of public libraries. This study seeks to reveal how patrons are using and experiencing these institutions as spaces and how patrons and staff characterize the role of public libraries in communities.

Methods – A multiple case study design was used to examine three urban and three small town public libraries within Nova Scotia, Canada. A triangulated set of methods including patron interviews and questionnaires, staff interviews, and seating sweeps was used to develop answers to the research questions.

Results – These public libraries are functioning as successful public places in that they are community spaces used in a multitude of ways and where patrons feel welcome. These libraries play important roles in the lives of respondents and, while respondents were willing to give critical feedback, they generally described the spaces positively. Patron use and experience of these library spaces can be broken into three themes that describe the roles of public libraries in communities. These

include the role of provider of books and information, provider of access to technology and provider of a social space where members of the public are welcome.

Conclusions – Patron experiences in Nova Scotia public libraries show that libraries are vibrant places that are highly valued by their communities. A number of common themes about the use and perception of these spaces emerged, yet when examined individually each library was also revealed to be a unique place, reflecting the particular qualities of the community and the physical space of the library building itself. It is clear that public libraries are complex institutions which play a variety of valuable roles in the community.

Introduction

Libraries' roles evolve in line with their societal contexts, responding to community needs as they develop. This paper explores roles of the public library in the twenty-first century. Ten years ago literature relating to the digital age spoke of libraries without walls, and discussion around the role of public libraries in the digital age continues to the present (for examples see Chowdhury, Poulter & McMenemy, 2006; Waller, 2008; or Wooden, 2006). Throughout their history, public libraries have always been in transition, but the introduction of the web has caused significant changes, including a drop in the intensive ready reference activity at many public libraries. Some fear that the Internet poses a threat to libraries, while others see Net access as an opportunity to expand the roles of public libraries in communities (Waller, 2008, p. 378). During this same period of change, many library leaders have advocated increasing the civic society role for public libraries. Under this rubric, new designs and renovations often include meeting spaces and flexible layouts in order to accommodate local community interests in using the library as a public commons. Thus, it is timely to study what happens within libraries to contribute to the growing body of literature which demonstrates the value of public libraries.

According to Nova Scotia's *Standards for Nova Scotia Regional Public Libraries* (2001), the "core business functions" developed for regional public libraries include several uses that are often dependent on library as place (p. 5). These range from the obvious, "provide

community meeting places and opportunities for citizen participation," to the more subtle, "assist in the integration of new residents into Canadian society" (p. 5). Public libraries can and do support national and local governments in achieving their social and economic goals. Public libraries around the world are helping to provide affordable access to technology (Bertot, Jaeger, Langa & McClure, 2006; Julien & Helliwell, 2001; Werle & Fox, 2007). It may seem somewhat ironic then that, due in part to the digital revolution, some government decision-makers are not convinced of the need to fund public libraries beyond a bare minimum. Public libraries also support governments in achieving societal goals such as assisting new immigrants to settle into communities (Picco, 2008, p. 45), supporting early childhood literacy development, strengthening the knowledge based economy, promoting community equity and inclusion, and empowering citizens to participate in a civic society (Newman, 2004, p. 4-6). Recent studies provide strong evidence of the economic contributions of public libraries using a variety of methods (for examples see Manjarrez, Cigna & Bajaj, 2007; Steffen, Lietzau, Lance, Rybiun, & Molliconi, 2009). In addition, active public libraries have been correlated with successful retail spaces (Blankinship, 2005, p. 44; Singh, 1985, p. 154). It is alarming, therefore, to note that in Nova Scotia's strategic document *Opportunities for Sustainable Prosperity* (2006), libraries are not mentioned. This seems especially disturbing given that education is mentioned frequently, and public libraries in this Canadian province are administered within the Department of Education.

Lamonde, McNally, & Rotundo (2005) note that public libraries are public places and form a part of the culture in Canada (p. 250). There is an increasing awareness that public places are under pressure as aspects of society become more culturally consumerist due to private interests encroaching on some aspects of public life. This results in an erosion of public place (Banerjee, 2001, p. 12; Mitchell, 1995, p. 121; Williamson, 2000, p. 182). Public libraries too are being buffeted between forces that, on the one hand, draw them closer to the marketing principles of the private sector, and alternatively, which value the library as a place of information and community record that supports democracy (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Buschman, 2004, p. 41). Research by Leckie & Hopkins (2002) illustrates that the main threats to the role of public libraries as neutral public spaces are an increasing need for economic justification and the encroachment of private interests (p. 360). In such an environment it is critical for public libraries to preserve and strengthen their roles as public places. A first step in achieving such a goal is to improve our understanding of how users make use of library spaces. In turn, this will help determine whether libraries are functioning successfully as public spaces. The information gathered through this research is also important for assessing the success of the design of library buildings and to inform future design decisions, renovations and service provision. These are all important factors for libraries, especially considering that one of the most highly rated core competencies for librarians is to “create a welcoming, useful, responsive library environment to encourage use and strengthen support of the library by community” (Helmick & Swigger, 2006, p. 63).

Public libraries in Canada fall under the jurisdiction of provincial governments and are usually administered under the department of culture or education. Most funding for public libraries comes primarily from a combination of provincial and municipal sources (Wilson 560-561). The public library system in Canada is well established, with most Canadians having access to services and approximately

two thirds of Canadians holding library cards (Newman, 2004). Despite the important roles that public libraries play in the lives of Canadians, there have been few studies evaluating whether they are functioning successfully as physical public spaces. This is an important issue, considering that the role of library as space is a key factor contributing the perceived value that library patrons place on library services (Ladhari & Morales, 2008). Within this context, this study seeks to explore the public’s actual use of public library spaces in Nova Scotia, Canada, and thereby to describe the community roles played by these spaces. On a practical level this study generates information useful for informing design, renovation, and service provision projects in public libraries. It also contributes to the assessment of the roles public libraries play in the development of sustainable communities.

Literature Review

Public libraries as physical places can play a number of roles in communities. A public library supports the intellectual, social, cultural, and community needs of the local citizenry. It is a physical space where community activities (political, social, educational, and recreational) take place and where all members of the public are welcomed. Some predict that the community roles of public libraries will become even more important in the future (Manjarrez, Cigna, & Bajaj, 2007, p. 24). In addition, the purposes of public libraries remain unchanged with the digital age: to promote democracy, equality, and social justice; to increase access to information, disseminate culture and knowledge; to contribute to meaningful leisure time; and to act as a communal institution and social meeting place, (Aabø, 2005, p. 210). But how do public libraries fulfill these purposes in an era of technological change? Digital technologies are changing the configuration of communities, and public libraries need to consider how they can serve in that new configuration.

One important way that public libraries serve

communities is by providing public places where individuals can meet and interact with each other while participating in their greater community. Public libraries are used as community meeting places in a variety of ways, both formal and informal (Aabø, Audunson, & Varheim, 2010, 25). This role is increasingly significant as factors that tend to isolate sections of community, such as multiculturalism and digitalization, take on added importance. Worldwide mobility has resulted in increasingly multicultural populations in Europe and North America. Cross-cultural communication is, therefore, becoming ever more important to maintaining tolerant and democratic multicultural communities; without it, communities risk becoming fragmented and isolated along cultural lines (Audunson, 2005, p. 432-433). There is a concurrent societal development of the 'information society' by which the digital and the virtual are opening up new ways of communicating while also providing the means for groups to live increasingly segregated from their geographic communities. This development could have important repercussions as democracy and the political realm are anchored geographically and key to successful democracies in those geographic communities (Audunson, 2005, p. 438). Public libraries are meeting places that facilitate interactions across these lines of separation, which can increase communication and tolerance. Aligning the public library's goals to current social needs, such as resisting trends of community fragmentation stemming from multiculturalism and digitalization, will revitalize the mission of the public library and strengthen the role of the physical place of public libraries (Audunson, 2005, p. 430).

Public libraries have been found to be functioning successfully as public places in Canada. Leckie & Hopkins (2002) examined the use of two central public libraries in 1999 to investigate the roles they played as public spaces in Toronto and Vancouver. In part, Leckie & Hopkins (2002) concluded that the libraries were functioning as well used public places, that they performed educational, informational, and social functions in their

cities, and that they provided user space that would be hard to duplicate in other settings (p. 359).

Public libraries function more successfully as public spaces than privately owned publicly accessible facilities. When comparing public libraries and book superstores, McKechnie et al., (2004) concluded that public libraries were functioning more successfully as public spaces due to their higher levels of inclusiveness and more opportunities for user control and participation (McKechnie et al., 2004, p. 50). In that study, socializing occurred at all the libraries, and strangers were observed talking to each other more often than at bookstores. While a diversity of ages and users of both genders were observed at both types of locations, libraries were found to have a higher diversity of visible minorities. It was found that, while people undertake many of the same activities at public libraries as at book superstores, patrons tended to treat libraries more as their own space through activities such as bending the rules, moving furniture to suit their needs, spreading their belongings out, staying for longer periods of time, and engaging strangers in conversation (McKechnie et al., 2004, p. 50). Given that many of the functions of public libraries stem from the public library as a physical space, this study explores the use of public library spaces.

Aims

This study examined the use of six public libraries in Nova Scotia, Canada in the contexts of their local communities. The goals of this study were to assess how library users actually used and experienced the physical space of selected public libraries, and to determine what that use revealed about the roles these spaces played as public spaces. More specific objectives related to these goals included:

- investigating who used these libraries;
- elucidating what activities these users engaged in while in the library; and

- exploring how library users and staff described the roles these libraries play in their respective communities.

This study also investigated whether the answers to these questions differed depending on the unique context of each of the libraries targeted in the study. The study thus aims to contribute new knowledge on the critical subject of public spaces and communities.

Methods

This exploratory study examined three urban and three small town public libraries within Nova Scotia. The design of this study was based on that used by Leckie & Hopkins (2002) to study central public libraries in Toronto and Vancouver. This study expands the focus to include small town and branch libraries to maximize the variability. Although commonalities did emerge when these multiple cases were examined side by side, this study did not aim to discover general patterns that may hold true for all public libraries. Instead, it explored the roles and uses of a small group of public libraries. The case-oriented approach focused on making sense of a small group of cases and was an appropriate method of analysis for this exploratory study (Ragin, 2001, p. 1519).

As with the Leckie & Hopkins (2002) study, answers to the research questions were developed through a triangulated set of methods, including library user interviews and questionnaires, staff interviews, and seating sweeps. Descriptions of library roles and use obtained from these different methods were examined for patterns and contradictions. All methods, including interview and questionnaire questions, were based on those developed by Leckie & Hopkins (copies of which are published with that 2004 report). Seating sweeps are a method used to unobtrusively observe and record use of a physical space (see Given & Leckie, 2003, for a description of this method in libraries). Data collection took place during the spring and summer of 2006. As this research was undertaken for partial fulfillment of a Masters

degree, timing was dictated in part by the academic schedule. Results were analyzed and common themes describing the roles of these spaces in communities were outlined and compared to those obtained by Leckie & Hopkins (2002).

Selection of Study Libraries

The libraries were selected based on their diversity in terms of the communities in which they were located, the physical facilities, the services provided, the population served, and their geographical proximity (Figure 1). The study included four libraries from the Halifax Public Libraries system, three of which are within the urban municipality: Halifax North Memorial, Keshen Goodman, and Spring Garden Memorial. The fourth branch, Tantallon, is located in a small community just outside of Halifax. The other two libraries were New Glasgow Public Library, located approximately 64 kilometers north of Halifax, and Lunenburg Public Library, located approximately 128 kilometers south of Halifax. When examined together, these six libraries give a broad overview of the roles of public libraries as spaces in Nova Scotia communities.

Library User Questionnaires

The library user questionnaire (see Appendix 1) comprised 35 questions and was left for a period of one week on reference and information desks in all six participating libraries for library users to complete voluntarily. Completion of questionnaires was limited to individuals over the age of majority. The location of the four Halifax libraries relative to the home of the researcher allowed for more numerous visits to these libraries. In these cases, in addition to being left at the reference and information desks, questionnaires were also distributed to all library users in these branches over a three hour period in the early afternoon on one day. In total, 271 questionnaires from all six libraries were returned. These methods of questionnaire distribution have several limitations which, to some extent, weaken the

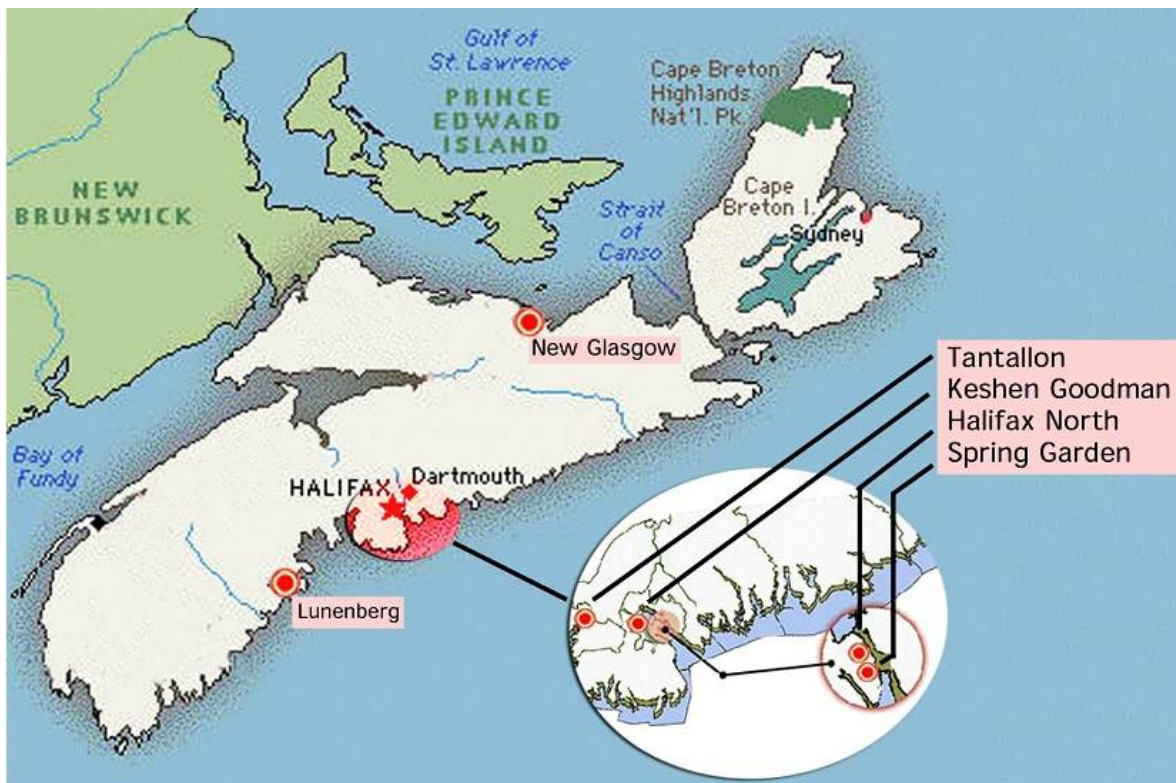


Fig. 1. Map of Library Locations

strength of the results obtained. Respondents were self-selected; in-person distribution of questionnaires took place only at a selection of participating libraries and for a limited period of time (thus potentially missing patrons who used the library at different periods of the day or week); and respondents were not monitored for duplicate responses (i.e., respondents filling out more than one questionnaire).

Library User Interviews

In total, seventeen library users (two from Lunenburg and three each from the remaining five libraries) were interviewed by the researcher during the afternoon of one day at each library. Selected interview candidates alternated between male and female library users, and were selected from different areas of the library. Interviews consisted of eleven questions and were recorded as field notes (see Appendix 2). Interview candidates who had previously completed a library user questionnaire were excluded from interview participation. The respective ages of interviewees were not recorded and only

adults were interviewed. The relatively small number of interviews at each library and the limited timing of the interviews results in a very limited cross-section of patrons interviewed.

Library Staff Interviews

A total of 20 staff members were interviewed by the researcher, ranging from 2–5 staff from each library depending on the number of total staff members at that library (see Appendix 3). Invitations to participate were extended to selected staff members based on recommendations from library management. At all libraries but Spring Garden, management suggested specific employees to be contacted for interviews. In contrast, Spring Garden management suggested a general email be sent to invite volunteers to be interviewed. From that volunteer list a selection of volunteers were selected to represent a range of service areas. Staff members were informed that the interview was entirely voluntary.

Seating Sweeps

Seating sweeps were used to make unobtrusive observations, where possible, of all individuals in the libraries. In crowded areas of the library, unobtrusive observation was not possible. This was an issue particularly in meeting or program rooms and in some children's play areas. In these cases, individuals were counted but no other data were recorded. Data were collected by walking through the library recording observations of library users, including approximate age, sex, possessions (e.g., backpack, laptop, baby carriage, etc.), activities (e.g., reading, talking, eating) and where the user was located in the library at the time of the observation. Sweeps were conducted by the researcher three times, morning, afternoon and evening, on one weekday and two times, morning and afternoon, on a weekend day (all libraries in this study were closed on weekend evenings) at each study library.

Results

About the Libraries

Each of the six libraries is unique in the population it serves and in the qualities and features of the physical space. The three urban public libraries located in Halifax belong to the Halifax Public Libraries system. Halifax North Memorial Public Library (HN) is a recently renovated urban public library located in a lower income, inner-city neighborhood with a high level of unemployment (see Appendix 4 for additional population characteristics for each of the study libraries). The attractive Keshen Goodman Public Library (KG), one of the more recent additions to the Halifax Public Libraries system, is built in an open concept design with high ceilings, and includes a café and many computers. This library serves one of the largest immigrant populations and the smallest proportion of residents who report English as their mother tongue (though English speakers still make up the vast majority) of the library user groups in this study. The final urban public library, Spring

Garden Memorial Public Library (SG), is a central library. The population in the immediate catchment area has the highest average education level and the highest percentage of young adults of all of the populations served by the libraries in this study. In many ways this library has outgrown its building, and its replacement is the number one planning and facilities priority for the Halifax Public Libraries system (Halifax Public Libraries, 2004). An examination of the planning project for the new library gives an idea of the need for a new space. The proposed new library will be approximately 2.5 times the size of the current building, will offer almost twelve times the number of computers, and almost six times the seating (Halifax Public Libraries, 2008).

The three small-town libraries examined are located in different areas of the province and vary greatly in terms of populations served. Located in a newly expanded and renovated space, Lunenburg Public Library (LB) serves the smallest population of the six libraries studied. Lunenburg is a picturesque town designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, and is a popular retirement community with a population that is, on average, older than that of the communities served by the other libraries in this study. New Glasgow Public Library (NG) is a small town library serving a working class community. Though the population served by this library has the lowest unemployment rate of the libraries in this study, it also has one of the lowest income levels and highest rates of lone parent families. Finally, Tantallon Public Library (TT), another one of the newer branches within the Halifax Public Libraries system, serves a small town just outside of the city of Halifax. The highly educated population served by this library has the highest average income, the lowest number of unemployed, and the lowest number of lone parent families of the six libraries.

About the Library Patrons

Patrons at these libraries represent both the diversity and similarities found in their

respective communities. For example, questionnaire respondents varied greatly in their ages and in their levels of educational achievement, but very little in terms of languages spoken. Matching the demographic data fairly closely, library patrons were generally well educated, with 56% holding an undergraduate degree or college diploma or graduate degree (Table 1). Another 21%, mostly representing students, reported having some university or college qualifications. The most common primary occupation reported was that of student (22% of questionnaire respondents), followed by retired persons (16%), those working in social services, education, government service or religion (14%) or homemakers/full-time parents (13%) (Table 2). Questionnaire respondents represented a variety of age groups, and when all responses are taken together, each of the six adult age categories provided on the questionnaire were fairly equally represented. Although an equal number of men and women were observed in the libraries, more women than men filled out questionnaires: 61% of questionnaire respondents were women, 36% were male, and 3% did not respond to the question.

In keeping with the demographic information for these libraries, there was not a high rate of diversity amongst questionnaire respondents in terms of languages spoken. Three quarters of questionnaire respondents reported being unilingual English speakers, sixteen percent

also spoke French and, two percent of respondents indicated that they spoke a language other than French or English. Besides French and English, seventeen different languages were reported as being spoken. Patrons at KG had by far the largest diversity, with twelve different languages reported by questionnaire respondents there, the next highest numbers were at HN and SG each of which had six. Staff recognized the relative diversity of patrons at KG, with one staff member describing the library as “a cultural centre”.

Patron Activities and Locations in the Library

The seating sweeps, questionnaires, and interviews all indicate that patrons were using the libraries for a variety of activities and purposes. When asked in the questionnaires about their primary reason for visiting the library, the most common response by patrons at all branches was to borrow or return materials for themselves. Patrons also frequently reported coming to the library to browse, use the Internet, look for information, or read. When interviewed, library staff indicated that patrons in the library engage in a variety of activities, including accessing the collection, looking for information, socializing, and using the computers. In all of the libraries studied, large and well-used toy collections gave evidence of children using the library as a place to play.

Table 1
Highest Level of Educational Achievement

Educational Achievement	Questionnaire Respondents (%) (N = 271)
Less than a secondary diploma	8
Secondary diploma	11
Some university or college	21
University or college diploma	34
Some post-graduate	7
University post-graduate degree	15
No response	4

Table 2
Primary Occupation

Primary Occupation*†	Questionnaire Respondents (%) (N = 271)
Student	22
Retired	16
Social services, education, government service, religion	14
Homemaker or full-time parent	13
Art, culture, recreation or sport	11
Business, finance, administration	8
Health	8
Unemployed	5
Sales and service	4
Trades, transport, equipment operator	3
Management	2
Processing, manufacturing, utilities	1
Natural and applied science	-
Primary industry	-
Other	11
No response	3

* A number of respondents selected more than one primary occupation.

† Occupation categories are based on the National Occupational Classification list.

When observations of both individuals and groups are taken together, they show the use of computer workstations (which provided Internet, library catalogue, word-processing, and database access) to be by far the most popular patron activity at all libraries, with an average of 32% of patrons engaging in this activity during seating sweeps (Figure 2). Following closely in second and third places, patrons were either physically searching or browsing the library collection (16% of patrons observed), or in conversation (15% of patrons observed). The remaining groups of patrons observed were reading (12%), interacting with staff (10%), or watching/sitting (5%).

When these numbers are broken down by branch some interesting differences emerge. Although the most commonly observed patron activity at all libraries was computer use, the percentage of patrons engaged in that activity at HN was much higher than the overall average (61% of patrons observed compared to the overall average of 32%).

Patrons at this library were also more likely to be observed talking than at other libraries (33% of patrons observed), but less likely to be observed in the stacks or browsing (6% of patrons observed). LB patrons were more likely than patrons at other libraries to be observed interacting with staff (an average of 24% of patrons observed), but were tied with HN for the lowest percentage of patrons observed reading (6% of patrons observed). An examination of the observed locations of patrons in the libraries shows both variations and similarities. As could be predicted based on the observations of patrons activities, the most commonly observed patron location at all libraries was at computer workstations (Figure 3). The children's area was clearly the second most observed patron location at KG. At the other libraries the trend is not so obvious, with most libraries having a variety of second most observed locations. Other popular locations at these libraries include the stacks, staff desks, and worktables.

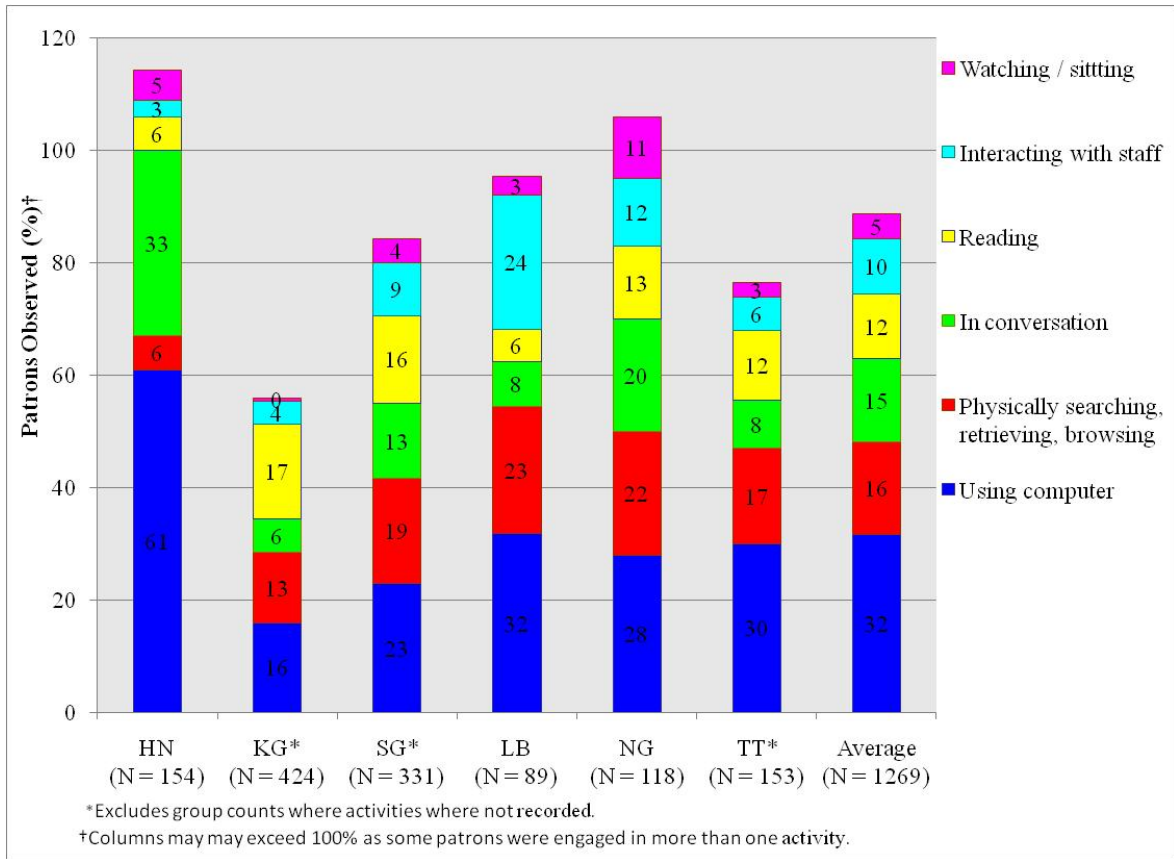


Fig. 2. Seating Sweep – Most Popular Patron Activities by Library

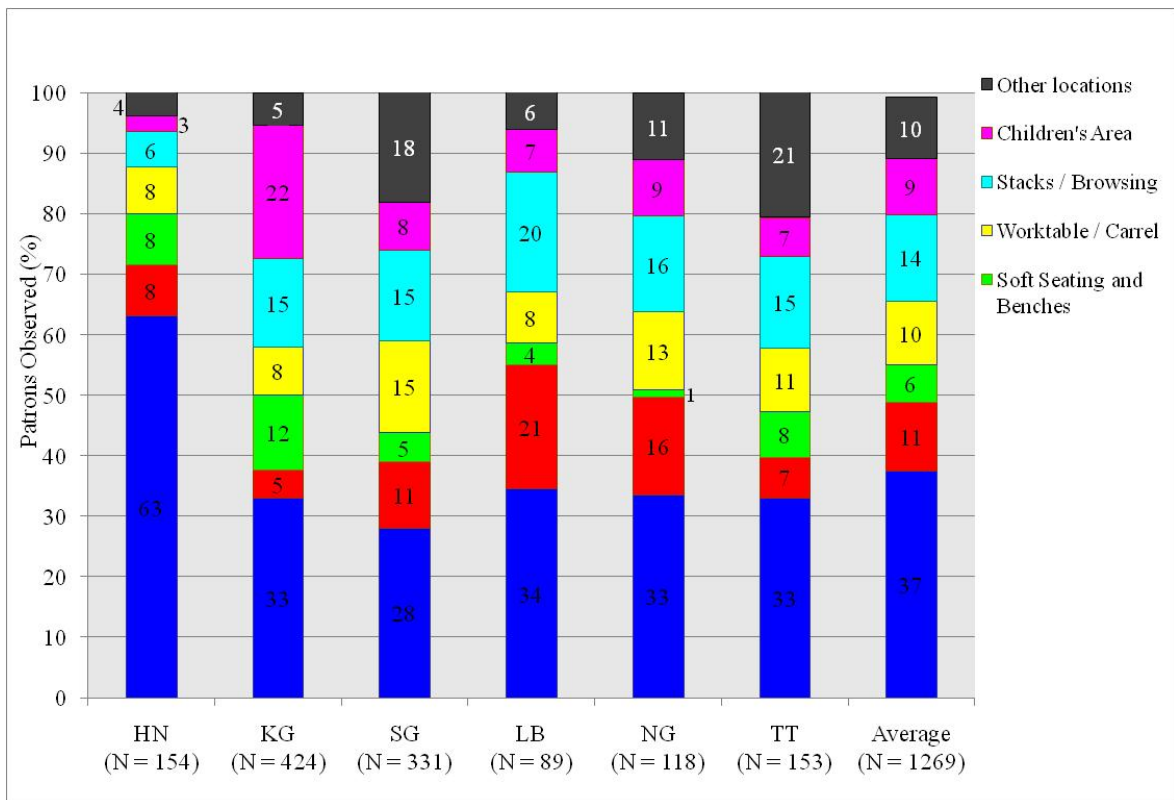


Fig. 3. Seating Sweeps – Most Popular Patron Locations by Library

The number of companions per library user per visit appears to vary by library (Figure 4). While nearly three quarters of questionnaire respondents at SG reported usually coming to the library alone, respondents from KG Goodman are far more likely to be accompanied, with just over 60% having one or more companions during a usual library visit. Questionnaire respondents at HN are split with just under half usually coming to the library with a companion and just over half usually coming alone. In terms of length of stay, questionnaire respondents can be broken into three groups, those who quickly come and go from the library, those who stay between 30 and 60 minutes and those who

stay longer than an hour (Figure 5).

Patron Experiences in Library Spaces

Patrons made many comments about the physical spaces and the general library environment. Positive comments were made about the seating, the general environment, the arrangement, the décor, and other aspects of the libraries. Criticisms were leveled at the furniture, design, lighting, size, and the arrangement or organization of the libraries. Patrons also criticized the noise or the lack of cleanliness, but praised the spaciousness, natural lighting or calm atmosphere.

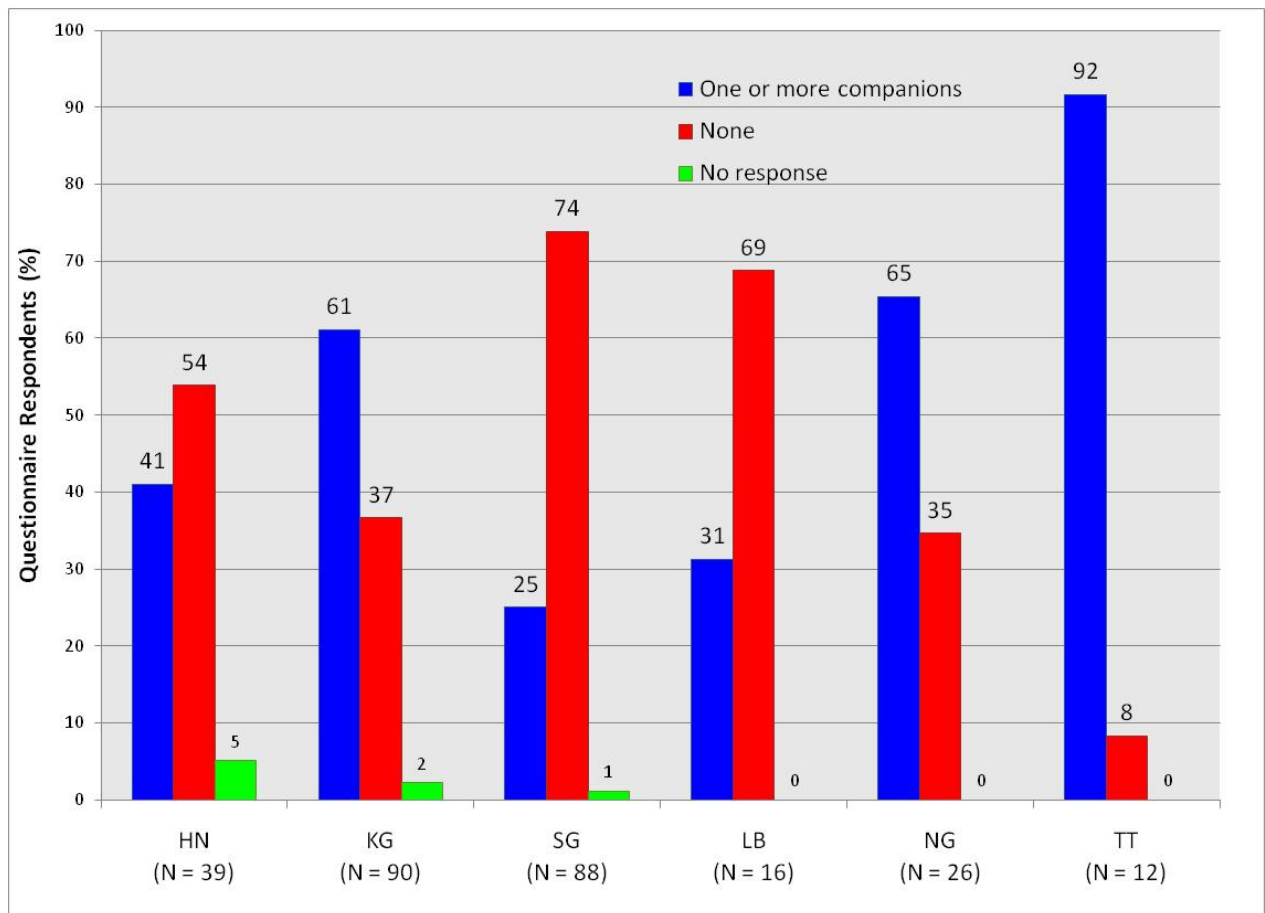


Fig. 4. Patron Questionnaires – Usual Number of Companions During Library Visits

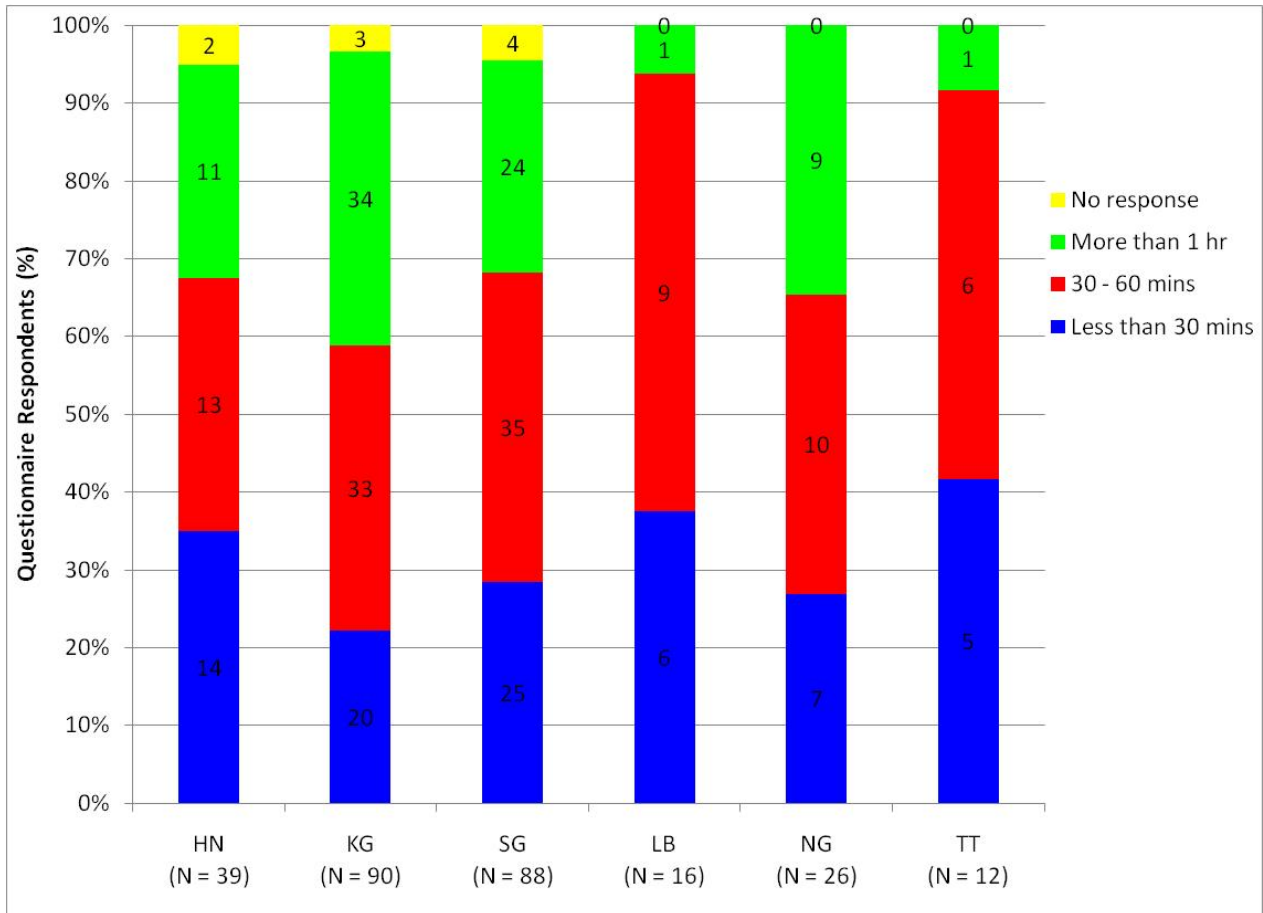


Fig. 5. Patron Questionnaires – Usual Length of Stay During Library Visits

When patrons were asked to describe the best feature of their library, the most common responses related to staff, convenience, the physical space/environment, the collection, or access to technology. Favourite features included “the totally comfortable atmosphere,” the “friendly, helpful staff,” the “self-serve checkout,” and the “computers for children.” Comments on the worst feature of the library fell into some of the same categories, with complaints about the collection, the physical space/environment, the services, and available technology. Others complained about inadequate parking, the limited hours, and noise levels. Patrons complained that “the collection could be better – more current books,” that there “was no place to relax and read before borrowing,” and that there was “not enough staff support to do all the programming they’d like to do.” As might be guessed from their willingness to identify deficient features of the library,

patrons had a clear idea of improvements they would like to see introduced, such as improving collections, improving facilities, introducing new services and programs, and expanding technology. Despite the criticisms and suggestions for improvement, questionnaire respondents generally agreed on the importance of the library: approximately half of respondents at all libraries indicated that it would have a considerable or major impact on their lives if they no longer had access to the library.

Some of the communities use their libraries in unique ways. Patrons at LB have a high degree of social interaction with library staff. One questionnaire respondent reported talking to staff about “books, the world, indigestion,” and another about “anything, girl stuff – hair, clothes, relationships.” Staff at LB confirmed that the library is a place of social interaction. One staff member reported that some people

come to the library “as part of their daily routine” and that the library provides “a social contact with someone who is friendly and approachable.” At HN, staff describe how many of the library’s regular patrons come and go from the library multiple times per day.

Patrons and Staff Describe the Role of Public Libraries in Community

Patrons value the library primarily as a place to access books and information. When asked to choose the most important library service from a list, the top two services selected were the provision of fiction (39% of questionnaire respondents) and non-fiction materials (28% of respondents) (Table 3). This was true for all libraries except LB, where these services were among the top three. Access to technology was the third most frequently mentioned service

(mentioned by 19% of questionnaire respondents). Respondents at LB (13%) and TT (25%) were more likely to value the library as a place to socialize when compared to respondents from other libraries. In comparing SG and KG, the largest libraries in the study and those with the greatest number of questionnaire respondents, some key differences emerge. Respondents at KG place more importance on the library as a place to borrow fiction and as a place to study or socialize, while respondents from SG were more likely to place a higher value on the library as a place to access technology or to read. It is interesting to note that, although seating sweep results indicate computer use to be by far the most common patron activity in the library, this service appears to be significantly less important to questionnaire respondents than the provision of reading material.

Table 3

Most Important Library Services (most common responses only)

	Percentage of Respondents*						Total
	Urban Libraries			Small Town Libraries			
	HN (N = 39)	KG (N = 90)	SG (N = 88)	LB (N = 16)	NG (N = 26)	TT (N = 12)	
A place to borrow fiction / literatures (i.e. recreational reading)	38	47	31	56	38	33	39
A place to borrow non-fiction / informational material	23	24	32	19	27	50	28
Access to technology	13	14	26	31	15	8	19
A place to read	8	10	19	19	12	8	13
A place to use reference materials and information services	10	11	11	13	12	25	12
A place for life-long learning (educational support)	8	13	14	6	4	17	11
A place to study (homework, research, etc.)	8	10	5	6	12	8	8
A place to socialize	0	7	1	13	8	25	5

* Some respondents selected more than one response

Questionnaire respondents were also asked to choose the least important library service that the library provides for them. These results are interesting when compared against library services selected as the most important (Figure 6). In seeing the library as a place to socialize, questionnaire respondents appear to be in general agreement with very few indicating this service as most important but nearly half indicating it as the least important. This is generally in line with seating sweep data which shows conversation to be the third most common patron activity observed (a number that is likely low due to the inability to record activities for patrons who were in larger groups). Other areas where questionnaire

respondents seem to generally agree in terms of the importance of the library as a place: to access fiction; to access non-fiction; and to access reference material and information sources and services. Several services provided by the library appear to be viewed neutrally, with very few individuals indicating them as either the most or the least important library service, including the services the library provides as place for community events and a place to retrieve community information. Technology appears to be a point on which questionnaire respondents are divided, with just under 20% indicating this as the most important service and just fewer than 15% as the least important service.

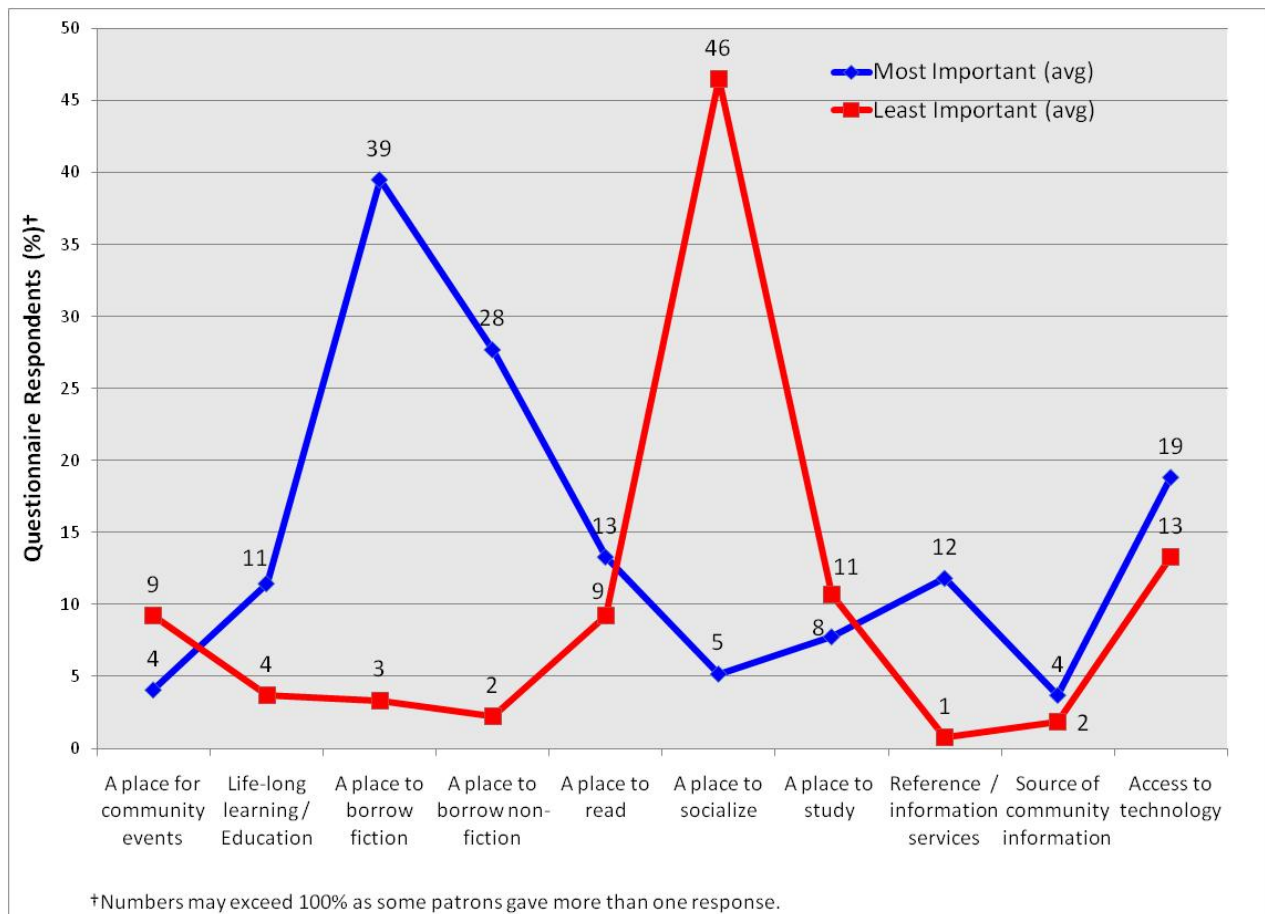


Fig. 6. Patron Questionnaires – Most Important and Least Important Service the Library Provides for You

Although questionnaire respondents appear to place a low rating on the role of the public library as a place to socialize, staff see the library as fulfilling a variety of social functions in the community, including facilitating learning, strengthening the community's social fabric, and providing a safe, shared environment. Staff members mentioned several different groups for whom the public library was especially important as a social space, including seniors, new comers to the community, families, teens and individuals from lower socio-economic categories. Staff described the library as "a meeting place where parents meet up with other parents," where "kids learn skills of playing with other kids," and where "seniors meet for coffee and [chat] about books." Some community members do not have many opportunities for social contact, and library staff also identified this as a role for the library. One staff member commented that the library was a place where newcomers to the community could "develop trust and see how they [could] fit into the community." Staff described libraries as providing a supportive environment for children who are just beginning to explore their place in community, and one staff member pointed out that children in the library are often having their first significant interaction with an adult other than their parents. The importance of the library as a safe space where people can meet and where people who might not have anywhere else to go can feel welcome was also highlighted by staff.

When asked about the main purpose of the library, questionnaire respondents were most likely to describe the main purpose of the library as revolving around the provision of information or research or supporting education and learning. It is therefore surprising that more questionnaire respondents did not indicate these library services as the most important service for them. A number of respondents also mentioned the role of the library as a place to support reading and literacy, to provide access to technology and as resource for leisure activities or entertainment May (2009) is a

good resource for further analysis of questionnaire responses from the three urban public libraries. It was interesting to note that patrons at Halifax North were more likely to mention the role the public library plays in supporting the community and facilitating community building than patrons at other libraries. Patrons commented that "Halifax North is a community library, it is a gathering place, a place to study, a place to rest," and that the purpose of the library is not only "to provide resources for the community but to act as a social and community space for activities."

Similar to questionnaire respondents, staff saw the library as having a variety of purposes. However, they were more likely to describe a broader purpose for public libraries and to see that purpose as something that was not static, but one that evolves with the needs of community. Although library staff frequently mentioned similar utilities to those mentioned by questionnaire respondents, they also saw the purpose of the library more generally as a place that served the community and supported local culture. Some staff members commented that, as places, public libraries were evolving and changing. Pointing to the ways that libraries evolve as they adapt to community needs, one staff member indicated that "libraries are not the quiet sanctuaries they used to be," and another explained that the goal is to make libraries "more welcoming and less intimidating place[s]."

Discussion

There are certain challenges involved with measuring library use, resulting in several limitations to this study. Though patrons were observed using the library computers, no information was recorded concerning the purpose for which they were being used. The seating sweep method has several limitations: though it works best in areas that are not overly crowded, it only records library use that occurs physically in the branch, and excludes the library's considerable online presence. Finally, seating sweeps only capture

use during a select period of time, and is therefore unable to account for the fact that some days of the week in the library may be busier than others, as well as fluctuations from one month to the next. While this study took place mainly during the summer months, other seasons of the years may or may not have the same patterns of use. The supplementary data gathered through questionnaires and interviews helped to mitigate some of these limitations.

Library patrons have different, sometimes contradictory ideas about the role of a public library. An analysis of the topic of library seating illustrates some of the very different roles that library users assign to library spaces. Some patrons stated a preference for seating in central areas of the library, others for soft seating, for seating tucked away in the corner of the library, for seating in or near the stacks, or for seating at tables or study carrels. From these very different preferences it may be concluded that, depending on whom you ask, the library can be a place to observe community and feel a part of it, a place to relax in comfort, a place to find solitude, a place for prolonged browsing, a place to study or a place to work, or a combination of these. Although libraries are generally successful in accommodating this diversity of activities, tensions do arise. The most common complaint made by patrons was in reference to noise levels. A staff member from Halifax North commented that sometimes there were “tension[s] between younger people and adults, each with ideas about what a library is.” Nevertheless, all of the libraries in this study were successful in accommodating a wide range of patron activities.

Library patrons feel strongly about their libraries and exhibit attachment to these spaces by their willingness to share both flattering and critical opinions about library services and features. Similar to patrons at the Vancouver and Toronto central public libraries (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002, p. 350), Nova Scotia patrons, tend to describe the library spaces positively, even while offering suggestions for improvements.

Although the results of this study indicate a great deal of diversity in the use of library spaces, a number of common themes describing the role of public libraries in Nova Scotia did emerge. Libraries are still strongly associated with their traditional roles of providing books and information, but results also indicate that the library’s role as a provider of access to technology is increasingly important. There is also strong evidence that these public libraries are playing an important role as community social spaces, a role that necessarily incorporates many types of activities. Although there are differences in the data collected for each library included in this study, there were no significant differences between the small-town and urban libraries in terms of how patrons were using and experiencing the various libraries as physical spaces.

A Place to Borrow Books and Find Information

Libraries in North American communities are playing an increasing number of roles, moving beyond their traditional roles as information providers and education supporters. Newman (2004) notes that newer functions include providing access to technology, empowering citizens to participate in civic society, and promoting equity and inclusion in community (p. 4-5). Some library staff members described the physical place and overall environment in public libraries as evolving, but this study shows that questionnaire respondents and staff alike continue to value public libraries primarily for their traditional roles of providing reading material and access to information. This is reflected in how respondents and staff describe the primary purpose of the library and in respondents’ reported reasons for visiting the library. A comparison of the results of this study with a study conducted by Leckie & Hopkins (2002) reveals that patrons from both studies have similar beliefs regarding: the main purpose of the library — to provide information and support education; the most important library service — to provide access to information and literature; and the reason for their visit to the library that day — top reasons include to

borrow or return materials and to look for information (p. 351). Indeed, research has found that, in Canada and internationally, libraries continue to be associated primarily with books (Online Computer Library Centre, 2005, p. 3-31) and that in many cases the association of libraries with books and information is one that is positive (p. 3-21).

With this in mind, it is somewhat surprising that observations of the locations and activities of patrons in this study revealed a relatively low proportion of patrons located in the book stacks or engaged in the process of physically browsing or retrieving information (Figures 2 and 3). These numbers may be partially explained by the fact that patrons are able to browse electronically, an activity that does not register on the seating sweeps. There are no comparable numbers for Canada, but research by Griffiths & King (2008) in the United States indicates that though they have not altogether replaced in-person visits, online library visits are a very common way of accessing the library (p. 17).

In an age of increasing pressure on public libraries, it may be valuable for library management to remain aware of the fact that, though users engage in a variety of activities while in the library, many continue to value libraries for their traditional role as providers of books and information. Public libraries can build on the positive association between libraries, books, and information by continuing to improve and develop their services along traditional lines while also supporting a range of other activities.

A Place to Access Technology

Public library computers are extremely popular with patrons. Curry's research data (2002), albeit somewhat dated, reveals that in 2002, when Canadians accessed the Internet at the public library they did so for a wide variety of purposes, with email being the most common (p. 54). Bertot, McClure, & Jaeger (2008) show that free computer access in public libraries brings many benefits to communities, which is perhaps why computer

use appears to have increased considerably in the years since Leckie & Hopkins (2002) collected and published their data (p. 346). In that study, reading was the most common patron activity, whereas slightly fewer than fifteen percent of patrons were located at computer workstations. During the course of the study under discussion an average of thirty seven percent of patrons were observed using computer workstations (Figure 3). It seems contradictory then, that though patrons make heavy use of library computers, computer access is not the library service that they most highly value, nor is it the main service or purpose that draws them to the library. There may be a number of reasons for this apparent dichotomy of opinion and observed use. Library patrons may have access to computers from other sources, and so this function of the library is not seen as critical. It may be that patrons use the computers for purposes that they do not rate as important, such as entertainment, and consequently they do not place a high value on this library service. Finally, it may simply be that, no matter the activities patrons are actually engaging in when in the library, they still conceive of the library in its traditional role as a provider of books and information.

A Social, Community Space

People feel comfortable in public libraries and use them as social spaces. Patrons' frequent, often prolonged visits, the socializing described by patrons and staff, and the descriptions of the library as a safe space, all point towards this conclusion. By allowing their children to play in the library, patrons may also be indicating that they feel comfortable in these spaces and are treating them as their own (McKechnie et al., 2004, p. 46). There is some evidence that newcomers to the community, including immigrants, feel comfortable at public libraries, as reflected by the comments from the staff at KG, one of whom commented that the library was "a place where people develop a lot of trust and see how they can fit into the community." One staff member reflected that when patrons meet at the library it is different than meeting at

other public places such as the grocery store, because patrons feel comfortable to meet for longer and sit down.

Although all libraries under study are social spaces, that social life takes on unique characteristics depending on the individual library branch. LB, for example, is an important place for social interaction, particularly between patrons and staff. Patrons at this library have an unusually high degree of social interaction with library staff, and reported talking to library staff about an astonishing array of topics ranging from library services to personal and world issues. The staff of LB library appear to play a unique role as points of social contact for the community. With its older population, Lunenburg may have a higher number of retired persons seeking social connection, and this library is able to meet this community need due in part to its small size. The HN library too, showed unique social and usage characteristics. Patrons at HN place greater value on the library as a community space, visit longer, and are more likely to engage in conversation or use the computers, but are less likely to read or browse. Based on the data available, it is difficult to completely explain why HN is being used in this unique way. In part, these patrons appear to be using the library as an extension of their living room, similar to findings reported by Leckie & Hopkins (2002, p. 353). Some of these use patterns may also be related to the high rate of unemployment in this community, where going to the library could be replacing going to work for some people.

How Can Public Libraries Use this Information?

Advocate For The Public Library And Publicize The Ways They Contribute To Communities.

Advertising and highlighting the multiple ways that they contribute to community is an important step public libraries can take to ensure that they are valued and understood by their communities as more than providers of books and information. Although some are

becoming more aware of the multiple roles played by libraries in community, Hillenbrand's review of the literature (2005) concludes that most community, government and academic groups are unaware of the social roles played by public libraries (p. 10). Hillenbrand summarizes her arguments by claiming that it is not enough that public libraries are playing these roles in their communities, but that libraries should also make sure everyone knows they are playing them. It is vital that public libraries adopt advocacy as an effective strategy for publicizing the multiple roles they play in community. Linda Cook, Director of Edmonton Public Libraries and former president of the Canadian Library Association, advocates strongly for public libraries in her community, with the result that the Edmonton Public Libraries has since seen a major increase in community support and recognition (Canadian Library Association, 2004).

In an era of uncertain funding, public library management will find it valuable to demonstrate their continuing community relevance and importance by illustrating how their library services meet community needs and support the objectives of partner groups and funding agencies. The Canadian Association of Public Libraries' *Library Advocacy Now!* training document (2009) advises public libraries, in their advocacy campaigns, to market issues as an effective way of influencing a target group (p. 4). Public library advocates can strive to demonstrate to partners and funders how the public library can assist them in achieving their agendas. Public libraries provide communities with affordable Internet access and this study demonstrates that this service remains popular with library patrons. Providing Canadians with equitable access to the Internet is an ongoing concern of Canadian Governments according to the now defunct Connecting Canadians program (as cited in Julien & Helliwell, 2001, p. 115) to the current Government of Canada (n.d.) Broadband Program, part of the governments overall *Economic Action Plan*. The results of this study

also indicate that public libraries may offer assistance to governments in their efforts to provide support to immigrants who are attempting to settle into Canadian communities.

Preserve Traditional Services But Accommodate A Wide Range Of Activities.

Results reported here indicate that public libraries would benefit from continuing to preserve their traditional roles and services, including maintaining quality collections. Even though patrons were observed to be engaged in a wide variety of activities in the library, questionnaire respondents continue to value the library primarily as a place to access books and information. Traditional library services appear to serve a community need and do attract patrons to the library. Yet it is clear that libraries are being used for much more than just books and information, and also that public libraries would benefit from maintaining spaces that accommodate a wide variety of activities. By creating attractive spaces that accommodate multiple uses, public libraries can continue and expand their roles as valued public places in communities.

Use This Information To Inform The Design And Organization Of Library Spaces.

The physical spaces of these public libraries were important to library patrons. Questionnaire respondents who described their likes and dislikes regarding the physical spaces of their libraries often noted favourite areas in the library and commented on the furniture, layout, design, and overall space. Although patrons were unanimous in the importance they placed on physical space, they were not united in what they wanted from that space. Library seating is a case in point, although more seating was a common request made by those who provided responses. Respondents had very different ideas on the kinds of seating which would meet their needs. Library managers should keep this diversity of preference in mind when designing and organizing the physical space of libraries.

Conclusion

Public libraries play a variety of roles in their respective communities. Although, still strongly associated with the traditional role of providing access to books and information, libraries have also adopted the role of provider of access to technology. Beyond access to services and resources, the public library is also important as a public space in itself. Public libraries are central places where members of the community feel welcome, and this role may be particularly important in disadvantaged communities. Public libraries are accommodating spaces that simultaneously meet a variety of patron needs and that adapt to changes in society. In a society where access to information technology is of critical importance and true public spaces are hard to find, Nova Scotia public libraries are responding to important social needs. Although this study was situated in Nova Scotia, the conclusions are likely also applicable to public libraries at an international level as these are issues that face all public libraries.

While exploring some aspects of the roles of public libraries in communities, this study also points the way to new research questions. What roles do libraries serving underprivileged communities play as community spaces? Are the use and value of public library spaces valued differently by communities depending upon community income and employment levels? What roles do small public libraries play in supporting the social needs of the elderly?

To summarize, what are public libraries as places? In the words of patrons, are they just "a place to pick up holds," a place for "people to meet each other," a place that "foster[s] literacy and citizenship," or does their traditional role, "the obvious – booklending," take priority? The library is all of these things, depending on whom you ask. The challenge for libraries lies in the task of creating and maintaining a flexible space, a place that is many things to many people, one which will evolve with the needs and demands of

community and society while continuing to serve its core function as a provider of books and information.

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Appendix 1 : Library User Questionnaire

LIBRARY USER PROFILE

1) Male Female **Sex:**

2) **Age Category:**

Less than 18 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	over 65 years
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3) **Highest level of educational attainment: (Please check one)**

- Elementary School
- Some secondary school
- Secondary school diploma
- Some university or college
- University or college degree / diploma
- Some post-graduate university
- University post-graduate degree

4) **Languages spoken: (Please check all that apply)**

- English French Other(s): Please list

5) **Field of Primary Occupation: (Please check one)**

- Student: Elementar: High School College University Language School
- Homemaker or full-time parent
- Art, Culture, Recreation or Sport (e.g. artist, writer, lifeguard)
- Sales and Service (e.g. restaurant / bar server, cashier)
- Business, Finance, Administration
- Social Services, Education, Government Service, Religion
- Trades, Transport, Equipment Operator
- Management
- Health
- Natural and Applied Science
- Processing, Manufacturing, Utilities
- Primary Industry (e.g. fishing, farming, forestry, mining)
- Retired
- Unemployed
- Other; please specify

ABOUT YOUR LIBRARY VISITS

In what part of Nova Scotia do you live? (e.g. Halifax North, Bedford, Purcell's Cove)

6) **How long does it take you to travel from your home to this library by your usual means of transportation?**

- Under 15 minutes
- 15-30 minutes
- 31-60 minutes
- 1-2 hours
- Over 2 hours

- 7) **How long do you usually stay at this library?**
 Under 30 minutes 30-60 minutes 1-2 hours 2-4 hours 4-6 hours Over 6 hours
- 8) **On average, how often have you visited this library during the past twelve months?**
 Once a week or more Once a month Two to three times a month Once every other month A few times a year Once (today)
- 9) **What day or days of the week do you usually visit this library? (Please circle all that apply)**
 Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday
- 10) **What time of day do you usually enter the library? (Please circle one)**
 Morning (before Noon) Afternoon (Noon - 5:00) Evening (after 5:00) Don't Know
- 11) **What hours do you prefer the library to be open? (Please circle one)**
 Morning (before Noon) Afternoon (Noon - 5:00) Evening (after 5:00) Don't Know
- 12) **How many people usually come with you to this library? (Please circle one)**
 None One other person Two or more other people
- If one or more people usually come with you to the library, are they primarily: (Please circle one)**
 Friends Relatives Co-Workers Others
- 13) **Will you be visiting any stores or services near the library today?**
 Yes No Don't Know

ABOUT YOUR LIBRARY USE

- 14) **Without this library, how would your life be affected? (Please circle one)**
 Not at all Very Little Somewhat Considerably Major Impact
- 15) **Why do you use this library rather than other libraries?**
- 16) **Do you visit other libraries or library branches?
 If yes please list them:**
- 17) **Do you ever talk to the library staff when you come here?
 If yes, what do you talk to them about?**
- 18) **Why did you come to the library today? (Please indicate the most important reason with the number 1 and check any others that apply with a check mark.)**
 Use public meeting room
 Use children's services
 Browse

- Borrow / return materials for myself
- Borrow / return materials for others (e.g. children, family, friends)
- Consume food / drinks
- Use / borrow non-English language materials
- Look for information on a subject
- Meet a friend
- View art work, displays, notice boards
- Obtain help from library staff
- Read
- Study in the library with own materials
- Use photocopiers
- Use microfiche / film
- Use CD ROMs
- Use the on-line catalogue
- Use the internet
- Use the wireless internet
- Use electronic databases
- Use e-mail
- Use the library's outdoor benches or lawn
- Other: Please specify:

19) When you visit this library, how often do you use electronic resources (e.g., the Internet, on-line catalogues, CD ROMs, electronic databases)? (Please circle one)
 Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

20) Please rank the importance to you of the electronic resources in this library (e.g., the Internet, on-line catalogues, CD ROMs, electronic databases)? (Please circle one)
 Vital Very Important Important Unimportant Very Unimportant

21) Do you ever bring a laptop computer with you to use in this library?
 Yes No

22) Do you ever bring in any other electronic equipment with you to this library? (e.g., cell phone, digital scanner)
 Yes No If yes, please specify:

23) How "user friendly" is this library? (Please circle one)
 Very Friendly Friendly Somewhat Friendly Unfriendly

24) What other services or resources would you like to see introduced here?

25) Please select the single *most* important service this library provides for you: (Please select only one)

- Access to technology
- A place to read
- A place to socialize
- A place for community events
- A source for community information
- A place for life-long learning (educational support)
- A place to study (homework, research, etc.)

- A place to borrow non-fiction / informational material
- A place to borrow fiction / literatures (i.e., recreational reading)
- A place to use reference materials and information services
- Other: please specify

26) Please select the single *least* important service this library provides for you: (Please select only one)

- Access to technology
- A place to read
- A place to socialize
- A place for community events
- A source for community information
- A place for life-long learning (educational support)
- A place to study (homework, research, etc.)
- A place to borrow non-fiction / informational material
- A place to borrow fiction / literatures (i.e., recreational reading)
- A place to use reference materials and information services
- Other: please specify

27) Do you ever use this library as a place to meet tutors?

- Yes No

If yes, what kind of tutoring?

- English as a Second Language Secondary / High School Adult Learner Other: Please List

28) Has this library been renovated within the last three years?

- Yes No Don't Know

If Yes, do you use the library differently now?

- Yes No Don't Know

Please explain your response:

29) What is the ONE best feature of this library?

30) What is the ONE worst feature of this library?

31) Where is your favourite location or place in this library?

32) What words you think best describe the physical space of this library? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attractive | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Badly designed | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bright | <input type="checkbox"/> Needing renovation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> Unattractive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crowded | <input type="checkbox"/> Uncomfortable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dark | <input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dirty | <input type="checkbox"/> User friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Well designed |

- Lots of Space Other: Please List:

33) In your opinion, what is the main purpose of this library?

34) Please add any additional comments you wish to make.

35) Please tell us your thoughts about the following features of this library.

Use the following scale to rate the features by circling the most appropriate number.

1 = Very Unsatisfactory 2 = Unsatisfactory 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfactory 5 = Very Satisfactory 0 = Don't Know

Features	Please circle your rating						Reasons for your answer?
	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Outside:							
Parking	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Walkways and other pedestrian space	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Building Entrance	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Signs Outside	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Book Return	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Lawn / Benches (if applicable)	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Inside:							
Lights	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Windows	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Signs Inside	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Colours	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Tables / Study Carels	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Seating	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Children's Area	1	2	3	4	5	0	
Arrangement / organization of the library	1	2	3	4	5	0	

Appendix 2: Library User Interview

Hello, I'm from Dalhousie University's Library and Information Studies program and we are doing a study about this library's use and design. Would you be able to share 5-7 minutes of your time to answer a few questions? Participation is voluntary.

1) What do you think of this library building?

Prompts: well designed, hard to find things in it, bright, dark

2) What do you think of the space around this library?

Prompts: spacious, dirty, unsafe due to traffic, nice place to sit

3) What is the best feature of this library building?

4) What is the worst feature of this library building?

5) Where is your favourite location or place in this library?

6) Is there any other library that you prefer to use?

Yes/No. If Yes, why do you prefer the other library?

7) Why did you come to the library today?

Prompts: to borrow/return materials, to attend a program, to find information

8) What have you used the library for in the past month?

Prompts: to borrow/return materials, to attend a program, to find information

9) What do you think about how people use this library?

Prompts: to socialise, meet friends, study, bring their children

10) How do you think people ought to use this library?

Prompt: to socialise, attend programs, study

11) Have you ever seen the library put to uses (either good or not so good) that have surprised you?

Appendix 3: Library Staff Interview Questions

- 1) Could you please provide a word or two that best describes this library:
- 2) What is the single best feature of this library?
- 3) What is the single worst feature of this library?
- 4) Where is your favourite location or place in this library?
- 5) In your opinion, what is the primary purpose of this library?
- 6) Aside from providing the public with access to information, what do you think are important social functions of this library?
- 7) How do you see public libraries being used socially?
- 8) Please briefly describe your primary job responsibilities.
- 9) Describe the nature of your interaction with the public.
- 10) What are most users doing in this library?
- 11) What are the primary problems you've experienced when dealing with the public in the library?
- 12) How does the physical environment of this library help or hinder your job?
- 13) How does the physical environment of this library help or hinder your interaction with the public?
- 14) In your experience, how do patrons typically behave in the library?
- 15) Have you seen library patrons use the library in ways that have surprised you? Please explain.
- 16) How has computer technology affected your job?
- 17) How has computer technology affected your interaction with the public?
- 18) What proportion of your interactions with the public involves helping them use computer technologies?
- 19) Is there any final comments you would care to make about the design, technology, use, or services of this library?

Appendix 4: Population Characteristics of the Six Public Library Communities

Population Characteristic	HN *	KG *	SG*	LB†	NG†	TT†
<i>Population Served</i>	8,932	48,141	51,684	5,035	12,010	8,062
<i>Age</i> (two largest age categories)	1. 20-34 (32%). 2. 35-49 (20%)	1. 20-34 (27%). 2. 35-49 (23%).	1. 20-34 (33%) 2. 35-49 (21%)	1. 35-54 (25%). 2. 55-64 (17%).	1. 35-54 (30%) 2. 5-19 (17%).	1. 35-54 (38%). 2. 5-19 (22%).
<i>Marital Status</i> (largest population group by marital status)	People never married - 57%	Married people - 47%.	People never married - 49%	Married people - 55%	Married people - 47%	Married people - 66%
<i>Lone Parent Families</i>	39% of families are lone-parent.	16% of families are lone-parent.	15% of families are lone-parent	10% of families are lone-parent.	20% of families are lone-parent.	7% of families are lone parent.
<i>Mother Tongue</i> (top three)	1. English - 90% 2. French - 3% 3. Arabic - 0.6%	1. English - 87% 2. French - 3% 3. Arabic - 3%	1. English - 89% 2. French - 3% 3. Arabic - 2%	1. English - 97% 2. French - 1% 3. Other - 1%	1. English - 98% 2. French - 1% 3. Other - 1%	1. English - 96% 2. French - 2% 3. Other - 2%
<i>Aboriginal Population</i>	2%.	0.2%.	0.30%	0.4%	0.4%	1%
<i>Immigrant Population</i>	8%	11%	10%	8%	3%	5%
<i>Education</i> (Residents with a university or non-university diploma, degree or certificate)	48%	60%	65%	48%	46%	65%
<i>Employment Status</i> (% of persons over 25 who are unemployed)	10%	6%	5%	5%	4%	3%
<i>Average Household Income</i>	\$30,117	\$58,543	\$60,685	50,773	\$47,459	\$75,854

* 2001 census statistics as cited in: Halifax Public Libraries Planning and Development Department. *Halifax Public Libraries Branch Profiles 2004-2005*. [Report], 2006.

† 2006 census statistics as cited in: Province of Nova Scotia. *Community Counts*. 2006. 11 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/default.asp>>