Seattle Public Library as Place:

Reconceptualizing Space, Community, and Information

at the Central Library[1]

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Abstract: This field study applies two primary frameworks for understanding libraries as place, Oldenburg's "third place" concept and Cresswell's five facets of place, to analyze responses from 226 participants regarding the social, political, cultural, and economic meaning of the newly constructed and internationally renowned Seattle Public Central Library. Emergent themes are discussed in terms of the library as a physical place, a social place, and an informational place. While these two frameworks help explain how libraries as "places" provide social and economic benefits and foster the growth of social capital within a community, neither framework adequately addresses the concept of information as it figures in the broader notion of place. Thus, this study contributes "information" to the repertoire of place, comprising themes regarding information finding and seeking, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment.

Introduction

"Place" as a research phenomenon has occupied scholars in such fields as sociology, anthropology, and geography—especially human and cultural geography for decades. Of late, it has also proven a useful concept for understanding the multiplex dimensions of libraries, how they are perceived and used by different stakeholders but most specifically, library users. Difficulties lie, however, in how "place" is understood and operationalized by different researchers. Such confounding inhibits our knowledge of libraries' roles in society. In this paper we address two primary frameworks for understanding libraries as "place" by drawing upon findings from a field study of the newly constructed central building of the Seattle Public Library.

Early approaches to understanding "place" tended to focus on describing its characteristics. Geographer Fred Lukermann, for example, in the 1960s—as highlighted by Relph [1, p.3] in his history dissertation on the nature of place—characterized "place" as being where:

1. Location is fundamental

2. Nature and culture are involved

3. Spaces are unique but interconnected and part of a framework of circulation

4. Spaces are localized

5. Spaces are emerging or becoming, and have a historical component

While this framework is potentially useful for an elementary understanding of place, it nonetheless adds the complexity of understanding the related notion of "space" and does not address the myriad ways in which one may interpret place such as physical place (a lakeshore), activity (e.g., place of worship) and figure of speech ("she was put in her place"). "Place" can also be explored in a cultural sense, as was the recent focus of Feld and Basso's Senses of Place, which contains ethnographies of what "place" means to such different populations as the Apache of Arizona and the Kaluli people of New Guinea in terms of expressing and knowing [2]. Lippard in Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society similarly discusses "place" by blending history, geography, cultural/social studies, and contemporary art [3].

In the library and information science (LIS) literature, similar treatments of place have occurred. Many of these published accounts resemble thought-pieces, polemics, or focus heavily on user satisfaction in addition to focusing on library as a place of social, political, cultural, and physical dimensions, i.e., physical arrangement of materials. For example, Curry, Dunbar, George, and Marshall (2004) conducted a survey of over 500 library users across four branch libraries locations built from 2002-2004 in British Columbia, Canada [4]. In these surveys, the researchers asked library users about satisfaction with individual features/components of the building and facilities; the most highly ranked features across all settings were windows and lighting, particularly natural lighting. Numerous works thus abound, especially in the professional literature, of how libraries design diverse services and engage physical space and objects to

address users' needs beyond those of such time-tested sources as monographs and serials. Allen and Watstein [5], Ginsbug [6], Albanese [7], Shill and Tonner [8], and Engel and Antell [9], for example, discusses the college campus library context; Weise [10] focuses on health library settings; Wagner [11], Gosling [12], St. Lifer [13], Demas and Scherer [14], McKinney [15], Ranseen [16], Saanwald [17], Alstad and Curry [18], Bryson, Usherwood and London [19], Bundy [20], Wood [21], and Worpole [22] address public libraries; Crumpacker [23] suggests ways that school libraries can be more inviting while the entire 1999 issue of the regional journal Alki was devoted to professional renderings on "the library as place [24]."

In a cognate vein, in introducing an issue of American Studies devoted to the theme of "The American Library as an Agency of Culture," Augst proposes that libraries function as place in three ways: as social enterprises, as part of the physical/public infrastructure, and as sites of collective memory [25]. Thomas, in her 1996 dissertation, employs a social constructionist approach to discursively view academic, public and school library practices architecturally [26]. A different interesting twist emerged from Marylaine Block's interviews with two non-LIS staff from the nonprofit "Project for Public Spaces (pps.org)" in the article "How to Become a Great Public Space [27]." According to her experts, while libraries have the stature for being anchors of community life, their staunch internal-focus relegates them to "community living room[s], at best" as opposed to the community front porch—a place to launch activities and contacts with other people, instead. Four qualities cited as intrinsic for great public spaces include:

access and linkages (easy to get to, connected to surrounding community); comfort and image (safe, clean and attractive); uses and activities (as many a things to do); and, sociability (place to meet other people). Libraries that exhibit these criteria were the New York Public Library, Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon, and the Beaches Toronto Branch Library.

While these articles tend not to focus in-depth on conceptualizing "place" theoretically, at the same time in-depth explorations of the ways in which individuals, families, neighborhood and communities benefit from libraries have tended not to frame their findings in terms of place. For example, Durrance and Fisher [28] in their monograph How Libraries and Librarians Help discuss ranges of library outcomes as does Nancy Kranich similarly in her edited work Libraries and Democracy: The Cornerstones of Liberty [29, pp. 49-59] and Molz and Dain [30] in Civic Space/Cyberspace: The American Public Library in the Information Age. None of these works, however, employ "place" as a theoretical framework. Fisher, Durrance and Hinton [31], albeit, use Fisher's related notion of information grounds [32] to interpret findings from their study of Queens Borough Public Library system and its immigrant users. Consequently, LIS does not have a robust framework for analyzing the roles of libraries in terms of "place"—a problem noted eloquently by Wiegand who laments the "cost to LIS of ignoring 'place' and 'reading'" [33], and by Gorman in emphasizing the wide-ranging values that the public attributes to libraries and yet is little systematically documented [34].

Perhaps the closest that the LIS field has come to implementing an in-depth "place"-based framework was carried out by Leckie and Hopkins, who examined the public place of the Toronto and Vancouver central libraries by conducting over 1900 user surveys, 100 user interviews, staff interviews, and observational seating sweeps to gather individuals' perceptions and common usage patterns of library materials and facilities [35]. As part of critiquing an interdisciplinary literature on the nature of "public space" in contemporary society, especially in terms of public rights, privacy and access, they highlight Ray Oldenburg's assertion that "highly successful public places"—of which libraries should number and which Oldenburg refers to as "third places'—comprise eight key characteristics [36]. While Leckie and Hopkins discussed their findings along three major strands, they did not revisit Oldenburg's framework. In brief, they reported that (1) central libraries are unique, necessary and heavily utilized places, (2) new information technologies augment as opposed to diminish the role of these places, and (3) the encroachment of private interests (e.g., ongoing commercialization) is threatening to "transform the fundamental nature of libraries" [35, p. 360] as public places. Relatedly, the notion of "sense of place (SoP) in the context of regionalism" was perceptively highlighted by Kathleen de la Pena McCook in her text Introduction to Public Librarianship [37]. Also connecting with Oldenburg's third place work, she holistically defined sense of place as "the sum total of all perceptions—aesthetic, emotional, historical, supernal—that a physical location, and the activities and emotional responses associated with that location, invoke in people" and further asserted that public

libraries, having exemplary sense of place to its constituents, can help communities keep their distinct characters [37, p. 294]. Libraries, she remarked, are continuously challenged with balancing their mandate of preserving their communities' "sense of place" with the need of providing service beyond their predetermined geographic borders.

Conceptualizing Place

In our journey to understand library as place we encountered two frameworks that we perceive as potentially useful for guiding empirical investigation: Oldenburg's [36] notion of the third place, and Creswell's [38] extended five-part definition of place. These frameworks are particularly useful because they illuminate the research problem by making core terms (e.g., place and space) explicit and operationalizable.

In his widely popularized book The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community, Oldenburg introduced the phrase "The third place" and hence affected the title of many community-oriented businesses such as Seattle's "Third Place Books." According to Oldenburg, public places such as cafes and hair salons function as our "third place," i.e., where people can be found when they are not at home or work. A veritable and necessary social good, Oldenburg describes several third places and conceptualizes on their nature, which as neighborhood locales must exhibit the following eight characteristics to be successful and attract people:

1. Occur on neutral ground where "individuals may come and go as they please, in which none are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable" [36, p. 22];

2. Be levelers, inclusive places that are "accessible to the general public and does not set formal criteria of membership and exclusion" and thus promote the expansion of social networks where people interact with others who do no comprise their nearest and dearest [36, p. 24];

3. Have conversation as the main activity—as Oldenburg explains, "nothing more clearly indicates a third place than that the talk is good; that it is lively, scintillating, colorful, and engaging" [36, p. 26], moreover, "it is more spirited than elsewhere, less inhibited and more eagerly pursued" [36, p. 29];

4. Are accessible and accommodating: the best third places are those to which one may go alone at most anytime and be assured of finding an acquaintance [36, p. 32];

5. Have "regulars" or "fellow customers" as it is these, not the "seating capacity, variety of beverages served, availability of parking, prices, or other features" that draw people in, "who feel at home in a place and set the tone of conviviality" while nurturing trust with newcomers [36, pp. 33-35];

6. Keep a low profile as a physical structure, meaning they are "typically plain," unimpressive looking from the outside and not elegant, which "serves to discourage pretension among those gather there" and meld into its customers' daily routine [36, p. 37];

7. Have a persistent playful, playground sort of mood: As Oldenburg explains, "those who would keep a conversation serious for more than a minute are almost certainly doomed to failure. Every topic and speaker is a potential trapeze for the exercise and display of wit" [36, p. 37];

8. Are a home away from home, the places where people can be likely found when not at home or at work, "though a radically different kind of setting from home, the third place is remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that it extends" [36, p. 42].

Oldenburg further espouses third places in terms of their personal benefits, which include novelty, perspective, spiritual tonic, and friendship; societal good in terms of their political role, habit of association, role as an agency for control and force for good, recreational spirit, and importance "in securing the public domain for the use and enjoyment of decent people" [36, p. 83]—in addition to the negative or down-side of third places such as segregation, isolation and hostility. In many ways, Oldenburg's work suggests that third places build social capital,

popularized by Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein as the "making connections among people, establishing bonds of trust and understanding, and building community [39, p. 1]." Oldenburg, however, omits libraries as a potential third place, including from his 2002 edited work of 19 third place examples from across the country that include coffee shops, a bookstore, a gym and urban streetscape [40]. Putnam, on the other hand, acknowledges the pivotal role of public libraries in building and maintaining social capital in his case study of the Chicago Public Library's Near North Branch Library [39].[3]

Oldenburg's strict focus on the public or social dimensions of place alerts one to the need for addressing other nuances. In this respect we turn to Cresswell, a professor of social and cultural geography at the University of Wales who crafted Place: A Short Introduction. He asserts that place can be defined in five ways, the first three of which he borrows from political geographer John Agnew [43]:

1. Location – the fixed objective position or coordinates [38, p. 6];

2. Locale – 'the material setting for social relations—the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives as individuals" [38, p. 7];

3. Sense of Place – "the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place" [38, p. 7];

To these Cresswell adds two other definitions:

4.   Space – a more abstract concept than "place," space separates places and is "a realm without meaning" [38, p. 10];

5.   Landscape – "the material topography," whether natural or human made; people do not lives in landscapes, they look at them [38, p. 11].

In terms of libraries, both Oldenburg's and Cresswell's frameworks offer insightful orientations for understanding the roles of libraries within society. Whereas Cresswell provides an encompassing overview of five distinct facets of place, Oldenburg focuses more specifically on the social side, which would equate more or less with Cresswell's definitions of locale and sense of place. Noticeably absent from both frameworks if applied to a library setting, however, is the concept of information as it figures in the broader notion of place, although information may be loosely equated with Oldenburg's third concept of conversation and books may be regarded as part of Cresswell's locale, i.e., the material setting, neither framework explicitly incorporates information seeking and consumption as a core aspect of place. Thus the current study may contribute to the foregoing frameworks by adding "information" to the repertoire of place.

The Current Study

On Sunday, May 23, 2004, the newly-constructed, 152 million dollar Central Library building of the Seattle Public Library (SPL) was unveiled to the public. This event garnered both local and national media attention. The

construction project was an innovative experiment in library architecture and services. As an object of study, the new SPL Central Library building is intriguing in several respects: the design choices regarding allocation of functional and social space, the revision of the staffing model to accommodate a new mix of service points, and the reorganization of the nonfiction collection as a "book spiral", i.e., an unbroken, concentric run of materials arranged by Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) that ascends four floors. The building has two street-level public entrances and an elevator connecting to the underground parking garage (Figure 1).[4] From the first entrance, 4th Avenue, users have immediate access to the checkout desk, the book return, a colorful Children's Center, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) materials and a 425-seat auditorium. The 2nd street-level entrance, 5th Avenue, users enter a high-ceilinged atrium filled with natural light that leads to the fiction collection, young adult resources, the SPL Foundation gift shop, and an espresso stand. Stairways lead to the 4th floor meeting rooms; escalators to the 5th level arrive at the "Mixing Chamber," which has over 100 public access computers and the reference collection where librarians freely move about using GPS-enabled Vocera wireless communication devices. Levels 6 through 9 contain the book spiral; the 10th level features a 12,000-square foot reading room; the 11th level houses the administrative offices.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

In the art journal Metropolis, the rationale behind the building design was explained as:

The firm [OMA] divided the [SPL's] program into two categories—stable areas, which hold a range of predictable activities, and unstable areas, whose future uses are unpredictable. By combing through the board's program, OMA discovered five stable functions: the headquarters (administrative offices); a spiral-shaped book-storage system, along which the library's collection could expand or contract (rather than dividing the collection room by room); the meeting areas (anything larger than a conference room); the staff areas (where books are ordered, repaired, and sorted); and the parking garage. The design treats each of these five programmatic areas—called "boxes"—as independent buildings with their own mechanical and structural systems [44, p. 141].

To better understand the perceptions of Seattle's denizens towards the new SPL central building, considered perhaps the world's most avant garde, we drew upon the earlier frameworks of "place" to derive the following primary research question:

What does the SPL Central Library mean—socially, politically, culturally, and economically—to library users and passers-by?

Additionally we were interested in the impact of the book spiral. Some of its presumed advantages were ease of access, especially for disabled users, and ease of maintenance for library staff.[5] Thus a secondary research question comprised:

How does the book spiral affect users' understanding of how the collection is organized?

Methodology

To address our research questions we interviewed three groups of informants: (1) people in the book spiral, (2) people in other parts of the library, and (3) people walking by outside (passers-by), who could potentially also be non-users. We targeted individuals in the book spiral as they might have the most to say about the structure of the spiral and the use of this architectural feature as an organizing tool. This tripartite pool enabled us to collect a diverse range of responses from different segments of the Central Library's service population, including frequenters of downtown Seattle, both residents and workers, and visitors.

Library users were asked 30 open and closed questions (Appendix A); passers-by were asked 17 of the same (Appendix B). Questions reflected three categories of people's perceptions of the SPL as a:

- *physical place* (i.e., what they liked or disliked about the structure and its surroundings);
- *social place* (i.e., how they interacted with other people, sense of community); and
- *informational place* (i.e., perceptions of library materials and specifically the design and structure of the book spiral).

Following questions about visit frequency to the downtown area and the Central Library, participants were asked about the building and the role of SPL in their daily lives, followed by a free association exercise to discover the concepts that they associated with eight basic terms: architecture, books, community, free speech, learning, librarians, reading, and technology. While participants were encouraged to respond with a phrase, the sequencing of the terms varied across interviews to control response bias. Rooted in early experiments by Galton in the 1880s, free association is a popular social science research method but has been rarely used in LIS. In one of the earliest descriptions of the free association method, Wheat said that difficulty lay with selecting words that could be understood in the same way by all people, especially as ethnicity, regionalism and English-as-a-second language can affect word interpretation [46]. He also noted that word types can make a difference in responses as nouns result in more common responses while verbs, prepositions and conjunctions cause more abstract and less common answers. More recently, Nelson, McEvoy and Dennis assert that people who have similar experiences and come from similar social units are likely to have shared associations between stimulus and response words that should not be expected from others [47].[6] After the free association terms, the interviews concluded with demographic questions to determine how well the sample resembled a cross-section of the Seattle population in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, income, education, and occupation.

The interviewers were graduate students at the Information School of the University of Washington. Following a two-hour training session involving role-

play scenarios, interviewers engaged in a one-week pilot study for additional

hands-on experience and to pretest the instruments. Subsequent debriefing led to

several revisions to improve the clarity of the instruments.[7] Data collection was

randomly scheduled during the mornings, afternoons and evenings to reflect

SPL's opening hours over three weeks (October 8, 2004 - November 7, 2004).

This time period was considered typical as schools and colleges were in session

and no federal holidays occurred (no data were collected on October 31st). Rather

than attempting to draw a proportionately representative sample, we sought to

obtain a diverse sample to maximize the number of different perspectives

available and thus utilized a non-random sampling technique. Interviewers varied

who they approached by alternating between sexes, ages, styles of dress, and

apparent ethnicity. As an incentive to participate, respondents received a

Starbucks espresso coupon. Two uncontrollable factors, however, may have

affected people's perceptions of civic institutions, needs for information, and

sense of community, namely the co-occurrence of (1) the U.S. presidential

election, which may have resulted in greater awareness and interest in political

issues (e.g., the term "free speech" during the free association exercise), and (2)

controversial U.S. military operations in Iraq—the perceptions and attitudes of the

Seattle population toward government may have been more personally affected

given the numerous military installations in the surrounding counties.

 Interviewers recorded responses as phrases and key words using the

informant's own words rather then rephrasing. Interviewers would later

transcribe these responses and their field notes (operational, methodological,

theoretical) into electronic form using QSR NUD*IST 5 (qualitative data management software). Content analysis was performed to identify themes that reflected our theoretical frameworks as well as emergent themes, counter examples and anomalies. Following an overview of our respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, we address their perceptions of SPL as a physical, social and informational space in downtown Seattle to determine what, if any, symbolic or practical meaning they attribute to the library.

The SPL Central Library: Its Users and Passers-by

We conducted 226 interviews over a three week period. During this period, 259 individuals who were approached decline to participate, indicating a response rate of 46.6%, which is approximately twice the response rate for a typical survey. Approximately two-thirds of the interviews occurred with users inside the building (151 interviews), and one third occurred with passers-by (75 interviews). Among the users, the sample included both frequent and infrequent visitors to the library. While 44.4% reported visiting the library on weekly or daily basis, 20.5% stated that this was their first ever visit to the Central Library. About one third of the users had been visiting the Central Library site for over five years, while almost half had only visited after the new building was completed. Among the passers-by, 64.0% reported walking by the Central Library building more than once per week, and 73.3% said they had used the Central Library at some point.

Almost 4 out of 5 members of the sample (78.8%) reported having a valid library card for the Seattle Public Library system, indicating that the sample largely comprised library users, and almost all were residents of Seattle or King County (85.4%). The sample was evenly split between men (51.7%) and women (48.3%). The overwhelming majority of participants were White (67.3%), and spoke English as the primary language in the home (86.7%). Asian (12.4%), Black or African American (7.5%), and multiracial (6.1%) self-identifications were the most predominant of the remaining reported ethnicities, however those reporting a non-English language spoken at home comprised less than 3% of the sample. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 82, indicating that sample included individuals from diverse stages of life.

Educational attainment among the participants was consistent with that of the available data for the city of Seattle: 96.0% had at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and 56.2% had a Bachelor's degree or graduate degree. In the 2003 American Community Survey, the U.S. Census Bureau reports associated figures of 93.4% and 51.6% for Seattle [57]. Participants had broad ranging occupations though many were students (14.1%), unemployed (11.5%), or retired individuals (9.7%). Income distribution was skewed toward lower annual income categories; 41.1% of respondents earned less than $30,000, 29.6% earned between $30,001 and $75,000, and 22.6% earned more than $75,000.

We further conducted interviews with 75 passers-by, and the participation rate within this group was slightly lower (39.1%) than calculated for the entire sample. 64.0% of the passers-by in our sample reported walking by the Central

Library building more than once per week, and 73.3% reported that they had used the Central Library at some point.

In the remainder of our paper we discuss our findings regarding "SPL as Place" along three main themes: SPL as physical place in structural and architectural terms; SPL as social place; and, SPL as informational place. We conclude by revisiting our two theoretical frameworks and sharing suggestions for future research.

SPL as Physical Place: Structure and Architecture

I'm a warm and cozy person, so when I first saw it, it seemed cold. But now that we're here, we've made it our own place.

The preceding quote best typifies the reaction expressed by many regarding the theme of SPL as physical place. The architecture of the central library is modern, challenging in terms of being unlike any other place in Seattle, and presents an environment that cannot be assimilated all at once. Even after a dozen visits to the site, we found new features, rooms, and spaces of which we were previously unaware. The great majority of all users and passers-by expressed strong feelings about the new building, regardless of whether they "loved it" or "hated it." In their responses, participants frequently used superlatives (e.g. greatest, ugliest, most exciting, coldest, loveliest, etc.) to describe their feelings and reactions to the physical structure. However, regardless of whether they

initially admired or despised the structure, most expressed a sense of ownership of the space and recognized that this was "their" library.

One of the most common emergent themes was that of civic pride and the role of the central library building as a symbol of modernity and forward thinking. Such comments were more common from passers-by, those who live and work in the vicinity of the structure, but were also echoed by those within the building. While perhaps such comments may initially sound cliché—such as one might hear from a city "booster"—they were nonetheless the exact terms and sentiments expressed by most informants. Far from being labeled as an archaic institution in the age of the Internet or being associated with a pre-digital past, the library was identified as "new," "modern," "vibrant," "exciting," "innovative," and visionary," as explained by the following respondent:

> Sometimes we get stuck in notions of how things ought to be— what's appropriate and what's not. This gives us an opportunity to go out of the mode of what we think of as urban structures. Not a lot of embellished finishes. Things are open and exposed. Don't have to have all that to make it a great space.

The informants also recognized the structure as a "spotlight," "showcase," "attraction," "landmark," and "icon." Following the Space Needle as a city icon, SPL has captured the public's imagination as a unique element of the city's landscape and a point of interest for locals and visitors alike. As a respondent

observed, "This is one of the greatest additions to Seattle that I've seen in a long time. Sometimes, I purposely walk by just to pass it." Another echoed these thoughts with, "It's a change from how people think of libraries. I keep coming back. Sometimes, I walk through just to walk through the library."

Focusing on the interior of the structure, another popular theme to emerge is the sense of light and spaciousness throughout the structure. Glass walls provide a sense of openness on all floors. Even within the stacks of the book spiral, a glance to right or left will provide a vista of the streetscape and neighboring towers. Many observed that this had an inspirational effect, using terms such as "inspiring," "bright," "airy," "never crowded," and "open" to describe the atmosphere. One stated, "I like the transparency between the inside and the outside. Still feels like it's part of the city even though it's a huge building." Far from the idea of a library as a place of separation or seclusion, the structure gives the reader a feeling of greater connection with the surrounding city.

The visitor is presented with balconies and open views to the main floor at a number of places, resulting in mixed responses of delight and uneasiness, as expressed in the following observations. One expressed, "You can go up 9 to 10 levels and look down over rail. The rail comes up to my hip. You know how you get that stomach feeling, when it lurches? I love that!" while another had a negative reaction, stating, "I was immediately taken by the suicide platform at the top." While agoraphobics may seek out spaces towards the interior of the building

that are less exposed, most informants expressed pleasure with the spacious views and grand open spaces within the structure.

The minority of informants who disliked the structure almost exclusively referred to a sense of coldness or bleak quality in the modern style. They used terms such as "cold," "uncomfortable," "unfinished," "austere," "intimidating," and "grey" to describe their perceptions. The predominance of "concrete" and lack of carpeting contributed to this feeling. The building was likened to a "warehouse" and a "minimal security prison." Several of these respondents sought to soften their criticism by suggesting that they didn't "care for modern architecture" regardless of purpose or setting, and went on to make many complimentary statements about how important the library was to them. This distinction between the library as a structure and the library as a service organization indicates a depth of thought and reflection on the purpose of library in the community. One observed, "The building isn't worth it, but the library is."

During the word association exercise, both positive and negative responses to the term Architecture were consistent across both users and passers-by alike (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The last theme to emerge is the identification of the new library as an improvement over the old. Subjects described the old facility as "tired," "crowded," "worn," "deplorable," and "falling apart." Such criticisms of the old building are probably vocalized more frequently now as users make mental comparisons to the new structure. Beyond the aesthetic considerations of the

architecture itself, informants recognized the new facility as providing more

technology, more space, and more resources than the previous facility. The

building draws new users, as one indicated, "I know more people who have come

to this library than the old one. They're excited about this library." Whether the

impressions regarding the size of collections are justified or not, users expressed a

sense the new building has more books, more magazines, and more CDs to offer

than the old facility. Despite the ease with which materials can be shipped to any

branch, several informants noted their primary motivation to visit the downtown

library is to review sources that are not available at their local branch, indicating

that they value "seeing" items all in one physical space. Informants also

reaffirmed the downtown location as a "convenient" site for the library in that it

provides access to both public transport and local freeways. The library has been

located on this specific block in Seattle for over a century, and the residents

continue to value its central location in the prime commercial heart of the city.

At the end of the interview, users were asked if they had anything else

they wanted to say to the City Librarian or Board of Trustees. One subject noted,

"I congratulate them for having the courage to make this happen," and another

said, "It means a lot for Seattle to support something that was so controversial and

to move on through it… It is a testament to accomplishing things and realizing the

public sector deserves the best that we can give them." Several echoed this

sentiment of courage as reflected with the decision to go with a modern

architectural style and to build such a grand structure for a public institution in the

face of a weakening economy. The building becomes a statement about the values

and priorities of the city's residents, and the determination and strength it requires to make those priorities real in a physical sense.

SPL as Social Place

> I will bring a friend next week for the very special purpose of seeing the building and each other. It's a destination, a very special building.

> To come here is a kind of a social event for me. People are checking it out, which is good but it's not like I come here to find dates. Not yet, at least.

While public library mission statements have long focused upon educating the masses, librarians have been well aware of the social functions that libraries play, from the toddler who learns to share books at baby story times to the teenager who meets rambunctiously with peers in the computer room, and from the homeless who seek nooks for rest to the seniors whose only public outing may be the weekly book club meetings. Aside from a few key works (e.g., Durrance and Fisher [28], McKechnie and McKenzie [58]) however, little basic research has systematically addressed the social role that the public library plays in the lives of its users. The new SPL building was designed with an express purpose of bringing people together via its meeting rooms, collaborative work spaces, coffee

stand, atria, use of color, lighting and furniture. Indeed, the third floor of SPL is called the "Living Room." But how effective are these efforts?

Our survey comprised several questions regarding the social effects of the new SPL. First were interested in whether people came to SPL with other people, meaning was there a social aspect in the simple act of visiting SPL? Of the users, 76.2% said that they had come alone that day while 23.8% had been accompanied by someone else. However, when asked if they ever come with others, over half (53.6%) replied "yes." Analysis of these companions were invariably strong ties comprising family and friends. Others to make the trip included roommates, elderly neighbors, co-workers (en route to or from work), paid caregivers and out of town visitors. The heartening finding thus here is that SPL serves as a connector, it provides social opportunities for people to interact across the generations. As shown in Table 2, responses regarding why people come to SPL together ran the gamut: from using services and obtaining materials to sharing an experience to the pragmatic of saving parking fees. These themes were typified by users who said: "I came with visitors from out of town; they read about the library in the newspapers and wanted to see it," "I visit with friends at the library," "I come with my children and husband for schoolwork. We take turns watching the kids and using the library," and "I come with my wife and the other members of the genealogy club."

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Respondents were further asked "Do you ever come to do things for other people?" Of the 32.5% who said "yes," the recipients of their generosity included

family members, friends, roommates and neighbors as well as students and members of groups such as the Sci-Fi Museum, book clubs and community based organizations.   Activities that users perform on behalf of others ranged from borrowing and returning materials (books, movies, CDs), doing research using the collection, using the computers to search the Web, check email, write and print documents, and working on school projects. Most representatively and memorably we were told:

- "I look at Arab books for my woman"

- "Sometimes I compare financial news for friends"

- "My sister's in jail because of her manic depression condition. I want to help her get treatment and want to learn about what it's like for her"

- "I used the computers to produce a newsletter for a volunteer position I hold"

- "I have an invalid friend and I sometimes get CDs for her"

- "I come to do things for my son because he has a very busy schedule and my parents because they are home bound"

Like many libraries, SPL features regular presentations for the public on an array of topics. Of our respondents, however, only 9.4% had ever come to one in the new building—which was not surprising given how recently the building had opening. The types of presentations they attended included children's storytime, the Opening Day Welcoming Ceremony, Chinese dancing, music concerts, the Warsaw Uprising 60th Anniversary and the September Project.

One third of users indicated that they used SPL for work. While the most frequent reason was to find a job, other responses included for research, to print documents, use the computer, get materials, write documents and presentations. Our examples show that people who work in varied positions rely on SPL to get the job done, especially teachers who use it to get materials for their lessons ("I'm a teacher, I look for children's book on various subjects"), chefs ("I'm looking for recipes of Thai food to cook in the restaurant where I work" and "for work, I'm checking on specialized cooking for Italian or French cooking"), and business owners ("My business is container gardening so I look for books on this subject"). Other respondents described their work-related uses as "I looked up stuff about the Americans with Disabilities act and ASL—American Sign Language," "I [used the computer] to get an application for a professional exam," "I'm here to get educational material, technical information related to my job," and "I research patents, children's book ideas on bees, and textile resources." Two separate authors said that they use SPL as a place "to write" and to meet with editors.

Thus far we have addressed the more obvious social aspects of SPL such as with whom people visit and why. Deeper understanding of SPL's social dimensions, however, lurks in the undercurrents of people's views of SPL and community, its architecture, its books and librarians, and the relationship between SPL and freedom of speech. Results from the word association method using the term "community" were rich and mainly positive. As shown in Table 3, users and passers-by alike replied that together "SPL and community" largely signified an important melding of varied people in a warm environment. Illustrative remarks

ranged from the basic: "Everybody gets together here," "It's good for the community to have a library," "This is a good service to the community," "It brings everybody together, you feel like you're part of something," "it's a building that brings different populations together," "it feels like a place where people come together," and "lends itself to community; good informal public spaces," to the more analytic, such as:

> Buildings always represent community. This is a community that is really out there and willing to test the waters. Many communities would never have let this happen. [SPL] is forward looking.

And,

> I think of the library when I think of the city….it's a major component. I'm trying to learn to use it better.

The few negative observations were along the line of the following: "This library is trying to be conducive to building community, but there's a lack of information about the events here. They have the right idea, but they don't market it very well. I see advertisements about what's going on at Kane Hall [auditorium at the University of Washington] but not here. I don't know what's coming, " and "[It's] forced. They're trying to create a sense of community, but forgetting some groups of people. I think this building represents a narrow-minded sense of community."

[Insert Table 3 about here]

While architecture and the trappings of physical comfort à la furniture, open space, greenery, lighting and refreshments can do wonders for the heightening of a building and its inhabitants' sociability—as discussed earlier under "architecture," to people who truly know book and librarians the latter are also intrinsic elements in the social life of a library. While responses to the word association method regarding "books" are shared in our discussion of physical place, they also bear mentioning here because of the pervasive ways in which both users and passers-by spoken frequently of books as their "friends"—friends that you could meet at the library or friends that could accompany you home or elsewhere, courtesy of the library. Moreover, respondents spoke about books using such as terms as "love," "exciting," "needed" and "take you away." As a 37 year old female library user gushed, "anything you want is in a book except human contact, and even then if you're engrossed in the story that is a form of contact."

Users' and passers-bys' views of librarians were somewhat similar if in a less openly emotive way. As shown in Table 4, as a social type librarians were invariably cast as nice, kind, friendly, helpful, educated, knowledgeable, and yet quiet women, who wear glasses and provide people with advice and aid in searching. While the users provided more comments on "librarians" than their passer-by counterparts, their tenor was similar. A more colorful remark "They know everything! If I say, "I read this book once and it had this girl in it," they're like "I know that book, it's right over there." General melee over who exactly a librarian is from amongst all a library's staff, however, still exists in the minds of

at least some users, which results in negative comments. For instance, one passer-by said "They don't know how to use the equipment, a lot of them haven't been trained," while a user sniped "Too overzealous. Every time I go to have a smoke I have to hide books or they stash them in a back room for a couple of days." Another theme was that respondents felt that they did not see or interact enough with librarians. Responses along these lines included: "Librarians are very talented… I wish there was more opportunity for us to have one-on-one contact with librarians," "Haven't met one in this library but I admire librarians," "[Librarians are] concentrated on the 5th floor. I wonder how visible they are," "They've been nice to me but I don't have much contact with them," and "unlike many of the public places that I go where I know people's names and addresses, I haven't yet gotten to know any of these librarians or their names." On the one hand, this suggests that the public is savvy: it knows that the person behind the circulation desk or providing security is not a librarian; on the other hand, it further suggests that perhaps librarians have become invisible, that the few who haven't been replaced by technicians or paraprofessionals are mainly behind the scenes, and that a lack of name badges or other prominent signage is keeping them from being easily identified. Whatever the reasons, the public—at least those of SPL—admires their librarians, knows their worth and wants to see and interact with more of them.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

The final element in our analysis of the social dimensions of "SPL as Place" relate to the notion of free speech. Long considered a "library" hallmark,

at least by librarians and film director and author Michael Moore whose work "Stupid White Men" was only published due to efforts of librarians, freedom of expression is a nebulous concept that we were unsure that the public might connect with libraries. Results from the word analysis method indicated that this was somewhat the case in that many comments pertained to the notion of free speech itself and not in connection to free speech in terms of SPL. Moreover, due to the overlap in timing of our study with the national election, several responses reflected anti-Bush and anti-Republican fervor in the predominantly Democrat stronghold of Seattle. However, many respondents did have lengthy remarks that clearly illustrated an understanding of the relationship between freedom of expression and libraries. On the negative side, one user said that "You're not allowed to talk in the library," while another asserted that free speech was "ignored" and added "a display on the first floor is very offensive to the President, the Republicans and our participation in the war. I have complained about it. I also asked for a typewriter to be available but never heard from anyone." On the positive side of the relationship between SPL and freedom speech, many comments were made, from the basic that's "What libraries are for," "ask questions, they'll freely help you here. Very helpful in there, " "No problems with free speech at the library," "relates to library policy of non-discrimination," and "[they have] literature of different opinions," "Definitely, [SPL] is a public space, at least on the first floor. You can talk freely there," and "It's pretty good, I liked the September project, the painting," other responses centered around SPL's practice of not divulging borrowers' records, for example: "I think it's

terrific they don't give out patrons' records. Who's that guy? Ashcroft? I think

he's a Nazi," and "it's good, [the library is] protected, records are destroyed."

Perhaps the most illustrative if not oddest came the use who said:

> I yelled at a librarian the other day. Actually he was a technician.
>
> I couldn't get logged in and he said that the computer was
>
> reserved. I said I only wanted it for 5 minutes and he said "okay,"
>
> but by that time someone else had taken it and there were no others
>
> for me. So I yelled at him. I didn't get kicked out, so I guess
>
> that's free speech.

SPL as Informational Place

Informants readily identified the Central Library as a place for obtaining

information and for learning. While this observation is not surprising, the

comments of those interviewed indicate a deep recognition of the importance of

information and education in their lives and also illustrate a high social value

placed on learning both for themselves and for the community as a whole.

Coupled with this recognition, the concept of free access was also highly valued

and frequently mentioned by those surveyed. While they did not use a term such

as "digital divide," users and passers-by alike identified the communal social

benefit to providing access to the Internet and access to computers to all segments

of the population regardless of ability to pay.

One of the most common terms used by all subjects was "find," regardless of what it was being sought. Informants were highly aware of the library as a place to "find," "seek," "locate," "get," "explore," "discover," or gain "access" to information, or as one informant worded it, "things you need." They used terms such as "gateway" and "catalyst" to describe the library's function. As one user commented, "It's like a treasure for me. I can get anything I want if I have time." Another stated "There are more computer terminals than I've seen anywhere else. It's a real tool." These quotes reflect two important characteristics. First, the library is perceived as an endless source of information, a thought echoed by another informant who used the term "no boundaries." to describe what the library meant to them. Second, the informant recognized the library as a place where they must commit something of themselves, in this instance "time," or use a "tool" in order to gain benefit.

One evident difference between the perceptions of users and passers-by appeared in how both groups characterized what people wanted to find. Passers-by tended to define the search in terms of objects. They described the library as a place to find "books," "newspapers," or "CDs." In contrast, users more frequently spoke of "information," "research," or "knowledge." This difference may indicate deeper reflection on the part of the users, or perhaps a problem-solving perspective that is not necessarily shared by non-users. While passers-by placed a value on the library as a warehouse of materials, users tended to focus on what they gain from these materials. One commented, "At this point in my life,

it's a place for seeking and understanding." This thought illustrates that the library is associated with the process of thinking and not only obtaining information.

Many of those interviewed also described the role of librarians and staff in helping them find information. Almost all statements were favorable (informants who felt free to criticize the building may have been less willing to criticize individuals) and many expressed gratitude for the assistance they have received. While past studies reveal that responses about libraries and librarians may be influenced by a halo effect, numerous participants gave concrete explanations of why they were pleased with assistance. One typical comment was, ""Librarians deserve whatever break they can get. The go out of their way to be helpful." The librarian is perceived as doing more than expected in terms of finding information. Another shared perception was that librarians are patient and tolerant of those who don't know "simple" things as explained by the following respondent:

> I'm sure they are asked many simple questions like how to find
> this [he holds up a piece of paper with a call number on it] and
> they never seem to mind answering. I've never had problems
> getting help.

Such observations are in direct contrast to the stereotype of the librarian that permeates popular culture as an impersonal, condescending, and rule-bound individual.

In addition to finding and seeking, participants frequently discussed themes related to life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment. Users were far more likely than passers-by to discuss the library as a place for learning. While both groups commented on the nature of learning as a "lifelong" process, users were more likely to describe learning as something that is "constant" or occurring "each day." One user commented it was the "main reason I come to the library." An analysis of responses to the term "learning" during the word association exercise indicates that the library as a place supports learning by providing resources and creating a conducive place for learning (Table 5). Both users and passers-by noted the importance of collections as sources for study, but users were more likely to comment on the environment within the building. As one stated, "The most important aspect of the library for me is that it is a playful place. It redefines libraries and it links libraries to exploration." The connection between place learning is clearly recognized by the library's users.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

A second emergent theme pertaining to learning involves the concept of education as a public social good and the importance of providing the opportunities for learning to the community. Respondents used terms such as "necessary," "fundamental," "progressive," "growing," and "empowering" to describe the library's contribution to learning. One noted, "I think it provides the opportunity for everyone in the city to attain individual growth." Special emphasis was placed on the importance of the library as a learning place for children, as typified by one who stated, "For me and my children, it represents a learning tool

to give my children an opportunity for higher education. We couldn't live without it. They love school now." In this quote, the notion of library as "tool" is again illustrated. The concept of place for learning is closely tied to the concept of a place for free access. One commented that the library provides "The opportunity to improve yourself at no charge. A free public education."

Informants were highly vocal in how they emphasized the need for "free" access. When asked whether the library building was worth the cost, the overwhelming majority responded affirmatively and used terms such as "bargain," "opportunity," and "free" to explain their reasoning. As one participant concisely stated, "It is less than the cost of buying books each year." Reasons for justifying cost fell into three categories: assisting people with low income, personal savings, and cost effectiveness for the community. First, many observed the importance of free access promoting equity in the community, especially for the economically disadvantaged. Statement such as "Poor people can use the Internet," and "Everyone can have a membership," exemplify this concern. Another responded to questions about cost by saying, "A society without public libraries is going nowhere." Social good, above and beyond personal benefit, is perceived as a core value in favor of spending on libraries. Others voiced a second, more pragmatic rationale explaining that the library saved them much more than it cost in terms of purchasing books and movies. As one person observed, "Books and movies are expensive," and users and passers-by alike identified the trade-off of borrowing versus purchasing items for oneself. This was recognized most clearly by those who also expressed a large appetite, as one

who stated, "I like to read fiction, but if I bought all the new romances, it would burn a hole in my pocket…I'm very grateful that membership at the library is free." A third argument was voiced by those who suggested the cost was "cheap" in comparison other public expenditures, such as the amount spent on a sports stadium or the proposed monorail project aimed to improve public transportation. Others noted that they "spend more on lattes" each week than the estimated per person annual cost of building the new library.

The most common criticism related to cost pertained to hours of operation. Rather than decrease the quality of service or reduce levels of staffing, the Seattle Public Library has addressed past cuts in the operating budget by closing all facilities for two weeks each year (once in winter and once in spring). A small number of informants suggested that the library should have increased hours rather than build a new facility. These observations may be naïve given that the cost of construction came from bond funds rather than operating funds, but such comments do indicate that the closures have the desirable effect of making budget cuts visible to a public who keenly desires more services and access, and feels the temporary loss.

Discussion

At the outset of this paper we introduced two frameworks for understanding libraries—SPL specifically—as "place": Oldenburg's notion of the third place and Creswell's five component lens. Conceptually we found that that both frameworks served their primary purpose of orienting us towards our

research phenomenon, meaning they helped us understand nuances among different cognate terms such as "place," "space" and "landscape." Along this vein, they also provided initial insights into how data analysis might be approached. We now return to these frameworks to discuss how well they served in these capacities and how we potentially enriched them in the course of this research.

Oldenburg's third place framework, which, as noted, has been cited severally by LIS researchers but not applied in-depth, was of primary interest for its focus on the social aspects of libraries as place. While we heartedly agree that libraries are a veritable and necessary social good, our data did not support all of Oldenburg's eight propositions in establishing libraries, at least SPL, as a third place. Thus, in answer to the broad question "is the SPL Central Building a third place?" results from our study suggest that while it may be a third place in spirit, it fully meets few of Oldenburg's criteria. For example, while our data supports the following assertions:

- Occurs on neutral ground where "individuals may come and go as they please, in which none are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable;"

- Be levelers, inclusive places that are "accessible to the general public and does not set formal criteria of membership and exclusion" and thus

promote the expansion of social networks where people interact with others who do no comprise their nearest and dearest;

- Are a home away from home, the places where people can be likely found when not at home or at work, "though a radically different kind of setting from home, the third place is remarkably similar to a good home in the psychological comfort and support that it extends;"

the following criteria or propositions were not born out (or partially at best) by our analysis:

- Have conversation as the main activity—while conversation occurs freely, it is not the central activity featured at SPL notwithstanding the library's efforts at facilitating conversation via its 3rd floor living room and other communal areas;

- One may go alone and be assured of finding an acquaintance – while groups may meet at the library, visitors cannot always expect to find a friend or acquaintance, especially given the sheer size and complexity of the building;

- Have "regulars" or "fellow customers" who nurture conviviality and trust with newcomers – Persons may frequent the library and get to know others

who regularly visit at the same time, but little or no special outreach is made to the new visitor.

- Keep a low, unimpressive profile as a physical structure – Koolhaus, the architect, intended to make a bold statement with the design of the structure, and the visitor is meant to experience the physical nature of the building and as well as use the library's resources;

- Have a persistent playful, playground sort of mood – users clearly indicated the serious nature of the work and learning they performed in the library, and while some commented that the place was fun or playful, the mood was one of productivity, study, and reflectin.

While our analysis of the SPL Central Building does not support the third place propositions, it is consistent with other third place characteristics that Oldenburg notes as offering such personal benefits as novelty, perspective, spiritual tonic, and friendship via its collection, staff, services and clientele. Additionally SPL was highly viewed by our respondents as a societal good in terms of its political role, habit of association, recreational spirit, and importance "in securing the public domain for the use and enjoyment of decent people" [36, p. 83]. We found little evidence, other than the odd respondent who felt that the homeless should be barred from the library, that SPL harbors such negative third place characteristics as s segregation, isolation or hostility. In this sense, our analysis also supports

Putnam and Feldstein's [39] observation that libraries foster social capital, meaning they facilitate human relationships via trust and understanding and hence nurture community. More significantly, we found that SPL supports two distinct forms of social capital: bonding and bridging because in addition to linking together people of similar ilk they also promote diversity by assembling people of different types—themes that echo Putnam and Feldstein's observations of the Chicago Public Library's Near North Branch. Given the misfit between Oldenburg's framework and the SPL central building, we ask to what degree might the framework better account for the nature of a library branch? In other words, might the smaller scale and tighter cohesiveness of a branch library make it more fully reflect the attributes of a third place? According to Oldenburg, bookstores fit the bill as a third place [40], so why not a branch library?

Our second framework, Cresswell's five-part definition of "place" was useful for helping clarify the differences among overlapping terms. Using this framework, responses can be classified as follows:

Location – This concept was of particular interest given the history of the site being used for the downtown Central Library for over the century. Respondents confirmed the importance of the location in terms of ease of accessibility and prominence in the heart of the city. The site is well situated for low income residents who were recognized as primary beneficiaries of the services, collections, and technology.

Locale – The variety of the settings within the structure accommodate a range of user's needs and purposes, including interacting with others or individual efforts. Users frequently commented on material features (plants, lights, furniture, coffee stand, colors, etc.) as they related to the activities they were conducting.

Sense of Place – Respondents expressed a range of feelings and emotions that they associated with the building, specific structural features, collections, and the importance of the library in their own lives.

Space – Cresswell's discussion of space helped differentiate our understanding of place, but does not apply to the analysis of individual responses concerning the Central Library as a single place.

Landscape – Respondents shared their thoughts and feelings regarding how the Central Library fits into the greater topography of the city and the downtown area.

Both Cresswell's framework, like Oldenburg's, is a useful lens for understanding the roles of libraries within society. Neither, however, adequately addresses the concept of information as it figures in the broader notion of place. While information may be loosely equated with "conversation" in Oldenburg's framework and "books" may be regarded as part of "locale" or material setting in Cresswell's terms, neither framework explicitly incorporates information seeking and consumption as a core aspect of place. Thus the current study may contribute

to the foregoing frameworks by adding "information" to the repertoire of place since we operationalized "informational place" as comprising all themes regarding information finding and seeking, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment.

Beyond extending past research on the roles that libraries play in people's lives and the values ascribed to them by employing a strong place-based framework, our study was timed to occur a few months after the opening of the new SPL Central Building (an unprecedented effort in library design and hence unique opportunity for field research), and it examined the perceptions of both users and passer-bys in addition employing the free association—a population and method rarely included in past studies. In a forthcoming paper we share our findings from an in-depth analysis of our knowledge organization data, particularly regarding the book spiral. Notwithstanding the usefulness of several past analyses of library buildings, we did not uncover published studies that address the effectiveness of the <u>physical arrangement</u> of materials in libraries. Given the unique characteristics of the internal space at the SPL Central Library, exploring the effectiveness of shelving nonfiction materials using a continuous run of call numbers as a means of organizing knowledge may shed new light upon patterns of library use. In future research we will expand our study by interviewing SPL staff about their thoughts and feelings towards the new SPL building as place; we may also apply our study design to understanding the views of various stakeholders towards new SPL branch libraries. This would be of

particular interest for determining whether branches exhibit more third place

characteristics as hypothesized from the results of the current study.

Appendix A: Interview Schedule for Library Users

"Seattle Public Library as Place" Research Study

[Interview script for LIBRARY USERS]

The Information School, University of Washington

Interviewer: _____   Date: _____

Tally the number of individuals who declined to participate at this location: _____

Location (mark one):   Day (circle one):

                                        Su   Mo   Tu   We   Th   Fr   Sa

◘ Fiction (3rd floor)

◘ Children's Room (1st floor)   Start Time:_____

◘ World Languages (1st floor)

◘ Mixing Chamber (5th floor)   End Time: _____

◘ Book Spiral

                                        Sex (circle one):   Male   Female

Hello! My name is {xxxxx}. I'm from the University of Washington. I'm asking people what they think about the new library building. I have a few questions that will take about 10-15 minutes as explained in this information sheet, which includes the names of contacts in case you have any future questions about this project. All questions are optional. As thanks, you will get a coupon for a free Latte at Starbucks. Would you like to participate?

1. How long have you been visiting the Central Library, either the new or the old building? {years or months}

2. How often do you visit this library? {Record verbatim response; code AFTER interview}

◘ Daily ◘ 2-3 times per month ◘ First time

◘ 2-6 times per week ◘ Once per month

◘ Once per week ◘ Less than once per month

[Questions 3-5 were included in the interview guide per the request of Seattle Public Library and were directed toward service use and patron satisfaction. They are excluded here to conserve space.]

6. Is this building your local branch? {Yes / No}

[if NO] Was your main reason for coming downtown to visit the Central Library?

7. What do you think of the new building? {Open-ended response}

8. How do you feel this building fits with downtown Seattle? {Open-ended response}

9. What do you like the most about this building? {Open-ended response}

10. What do you like least about this building? {Open-ended response}

11. Do you usually come by yourself? {Yes / No}

[if NO, skip to second prompt associated with question 12]

12. Do you ever come with other people? {Yes / No}

[if YES] Who do you come with? For any particular reason? {Open-ended response}

13. Do you ever come to do things for other people? {Yes / No}

[if YES] Who have you done this for? What have you done for them? Why? {Open-ended response}

14. Have you ever come to a public presentation at this building? {Yes / No}

[if YES] Which ones? {Open-ended response}

15. Have you ever used this library to do something for work? {Yes / No}

[if YES] What sorts of things have you done for work? {Open-ended response}

16. How would you find a book without asking a librarian or using the computer? {Open-ended response}

17. In general, libraries arrange their books in several ways. Can you describe

how the books are physically arranged and organized in this library?

{Open-ended response}

18. In this new building, some books are organized in a spiral. Do you think this

helps you locate what you need? How? {Open-ended response}

19. I'm going to read you a list of words related to this library. Please say the first

thoughts that enter your mind. {Open-ended responses}

a) Reading   e) Technology

b) Free Speech   f) Librarians

c) Learning   g) Books

d) Community   h) Architecture

20. In summary, what does this library mean to you? {Open-ended response}

21. For this building, 152 million dollars of the cost was financed by a 25 year

municipal bond. This makes the cost of the building about $10 per person

a year for the people of Seattle. Do you feel this building was worth the

cost? Why or why not?

22. Is there anything you would like the City Librarian or Board of Trustees to

know about the services or design of the new Central Library? {Open-

ended response}

Now I'd like to ask you a few quick questions about yourself.

23. What is your age? {Open-ended response}

24. What is your occupation? {Open-ended response}

25. Did you go to college? {Yes / No}

> [if NO] Are you a high school graduate? {Yes / No}

> [if YES] What is your highest degree attained? {Open-ended response}

26. What is your ethnicity? {Open-ended response}

27. What is the primary language spoken in the home? {Open-ended response}

28. Is your household income above or below $50,000? {Above / Below}

> [if NO] Is it above or below $30,000? {Above / Below}

> [if YES] Is it above or below $75,000? {Above / Below}

29. Do you live in Seattle? {Yes / No}

> [if NO] Do you live in King County? {Yes / No}

30. Do you have a Seattle Public Library card? {Yes / No}

[At this point, the participant was handed a printed satisfaction survey created by Seattle Public Library staff.]

Thank you for answering my questions. Here is a coupon for your free Latte.

Thanks again!

Appendix B: Interview Schedule for Passers-by

"Seattle Public Library as Place" Research Study

[Interview script for PASSERS-BY]

The Information School, University of Washington

Interviewer: _____   Date: _____

Tally the number of individuals who declined to participate at this location: _____

Location (mark one):   Day (circle one):

                                        Su   Mo   Tu   We   Th   Fr   Sa

◘ NE corner

◘ SE corner   Start Time:_____

◘ SW corner

◘ NW corner   End Time: _____

                                        Sex (circle one):   Male   Female

Hello! My name is {xxxxx}. I'm from the University of Washington. I'm asking people what they think about the new library building. I have a few questions that will take about 10-15 minutes as explained in this information sheet, which includes the names of contacts in case you have any future questions about this project. All questions are optional. As thanks, you will get a coupon for a free Latte at Starbucks. Would you like to participate?

1. How often do you walk by this building?

    ◘ Daily   ◘ 2-3 times per month   ◘ First time

    ◘ 2-6 times per week   ◘ Once per month

    ◘ Once per week   ◘ Less than once per month

2. What do you think of this new building? {Open-ended response}

3. How do you feel this building fits with downtown Seattle? {Open-ended response}

4. What do you like most about this building? {Open-ended response}

5. What do you like least about this building? {Open-ended response}

6. I'm going to read you a list of words related to this library. Please say the first thoughts that enter your mind. {Open-ended responses}

    a) Reading   e) Technology

    b) Free Speech   f) Librarians

    c) Learning   g) Books

    d) Community   h) Architecture

7. In summary, what does this library mean to you? {Open-ended response}

8. For this building, 152 million dollars of the cost was financed by a 25 year municipal bond. This makes the cost of the building about $10 per person a year for the people of Seattle. Do you feel this building was worth the cost? Why or why not?

9. Do you have any other comments about the library? {Open-ended response}

10. Have you ever used this library? {Yes / No}

    [if YES] What have you used it for? {Open-ended response}

To finish, I have a few quick questions.

11. What is your age? {Open-ended response}

12. What is your occupation? {Open-ended response}

13. Did you go to college? {Yes / No}

    [if NO] Are you a high school graduate? {Yes / No}

    [if YES] What is your highest degree attained? {Open-ended response}

14. What is your ethnicity? {Open-ended response}

15. What is the primary language spoken in the home? {Open-ended response}

16. Is your household income above or below $50,000? {Above / Below}

     [if NO] Is it above or below $30,000? {Above / Below}

     [if YES] Is it above or below $75,000? {Above / Below}

17. Do you have a Seattle Public Library card? {Yes / No}

[At this point, the participant was handed a printed satisfaction survey created by Seattle Public Library staff.]

Thank you for answering my questions. Here is a coupon for your free Latte.

Thanks again!

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[2] The Information School, University of Washington, Box 352840, Seattle, WA 98105-2840.

[3] As Jean Preer astutely lamented [41], Putnam omitted libraries from his 2000 popular monograph Bowling Alone: Collapse and Revival of American Community [42] —an oversight he corrected after discussion with library professionals at the 2001 annual ALA meeting by including the Chicago Public Library as a case study in his 2003 book with Feldstein [39] in which he discusses the importance of branch libraries in bringing people together and enabling access to electronic information across the digital divide.

[4] Extensive illustrations and photographs of the new SPL Central Library are provided in the October 2004 issue of Metropolis.

[5] The majority of the nonfiction collection—75 percent of the entire collection—is located on the Book Spiral. This allows the nonfiction collection to be housed in one continuous run, and avoids the problem of having to move books into other rooms or floors when various subject areas expand. The spiral is an architectural organization that allows all patrons—including people with disabilities—the freedom to move throughout the entire collection without depending on stairs, escalators and elevators. Book shelves are not filled to capacity, so there is room for the collection to grow. … Escalator and elevator stops are labeled with Dewey Decimal System numbers corresponding to materials on each floor. In addition, floor mats throughout the Books Spiral highlight Dewey Decimal numbers that match nearby books stacks [45].

[6] Numerous other works such as Crosland [48]; Siipola, Walker and Kolb [49]; Bilodeau and Howell [50]; Cramer [51]; Gerow [52]; Szalay and Deese [53]; Mefferd [54]; Silverstein and Harros [55]; and Craighead and Memeroff [56] also provide guidance in the selection and analysis of free association terms.

[7] The term "sponsorship" was eliminated from the free association exercise because participants had difficulties formulating responses.

Table 1: Sample of Reponses from Word Association – Architecture

	USERS	PASSERS-BY
Positive	Adventuresome	Amazing
	Amazing	Beautiful
	Artistic	Creative
	Beautiful	Cutting edge
	Brilliant	Daring
	Crazy (good)	Discovering
	Delightful	Exciting
	Funky! It's free spirited	Eye catching
	Futuristic	Fantastic
	Inviting	Fascinating
	It fits in	Form of art
	Liberating	Functional
	Modern	Hope
	Outstanding	Inspiring
	Spectacular	Stimulating
	Tripping	Striking
	Unique	Superb
	Very sharp	Unique
	Wonderful	World class
Negative	Brutalism	A freak
	Funny looking	Atrocious

	Futuristic	Dangerous
	Ingenuous	Egotistic
	Overblown	Expensive
	Striking	Imposing
	Ugly	
	Unfinished	

Table 2: Reasons that People Come to SPL with Other People

Reasons that People Come to SPL with Other People
• Part of looking after children who are not in school • To use the computers/Internet • To look for books, magazines, movies (kids have a bigger selection than at branches) • To read to children • To go to an activity such as baby story time • So kids can work on school projects • Friends come together to work on projects, do research (e.g., genealogy) • For "transportation practice" • To date or to study • To visit/socialize • To have lunch together, run errands • Part of site seeing • Parking is easier • To translate for someone who speaks/reads English poorly

Table 3: Sample of Reponses from Word Association – Community

USERS	PASSERS-BY
Bookmobile—old people need it	Belonging
Caring	Comforting
Comforting	Diverse
Cooperation	Essential
Diversified	Everybody meets here
Easy to be included	Excellent
Essential	Falls short
Extended family	Family
Friendship	Fits the need
Fun	Good, clean environment
Gathering spot	Heterogeneous
Getting involved	Improvement
Good for it	Involvement
Important	Meeting place
It's free	Networking
Keep the homeless out	Not conducive
More than the old building	Perfect
Not enough of it—just moved here	Reaching out
Reflects it well	Togetherness
Service oriented	Uniting
	Village

Table 4: Sample of Reponses from Word Association – Librarian

USERS	PASSERS-BY
Accessible	1st floor
Advice	Aid searching
Available	Conservative
Concierge	Courteous
Distanced	Cute
Don't know any	Fabulous
Don't see them much	Friendly
Educated	Geeky
Enjoy their job	Glasses
Family	Helpful
Friendly	I don't deal with them
Fun, enthusiastic	Indispensable
Glasses	Invisible
Good vocation	Ladies
Helpful	Mentor
I don't talk to them	My wife's one! Lovely people
I have no contact	Nice
Intelligent	Old
Keep abreast	Open
Knowledge	Paperwork
Nancy Pearl	Proud

Nice/Kind	Reference
Not enough	Smart
Not strolling	Very important
Patron oriented	Very knowledgeable
Person behind the desk	Wonderful
Pleasant, polite	
Police	
Quiet	
Resourceful	
Scarce, hiding, don't see them	
Searching	
Smart	
Square	
Stuffy	
Teacher	
They all have the microphones	
Women	
Wonderful	

Table 5: Sample of Reponses from Word Association – Learning

	USERS	PASSERS-BY
Life-long Learning	All the time Can't stop Continuation Non-stop Constant Each day Endless I learn something new every day	Always Continuous Growing Lifelong Fundamental Progressive
Learning Resources	Books Computers Storing information The technology helps Abundant Reading Study	Books Computers are excellent Hands-on Research Lots of avenues for it
Learning Environment	Environment Efficient Facilitated Ideal situation	Accessibility Encouraged Inviting Easy

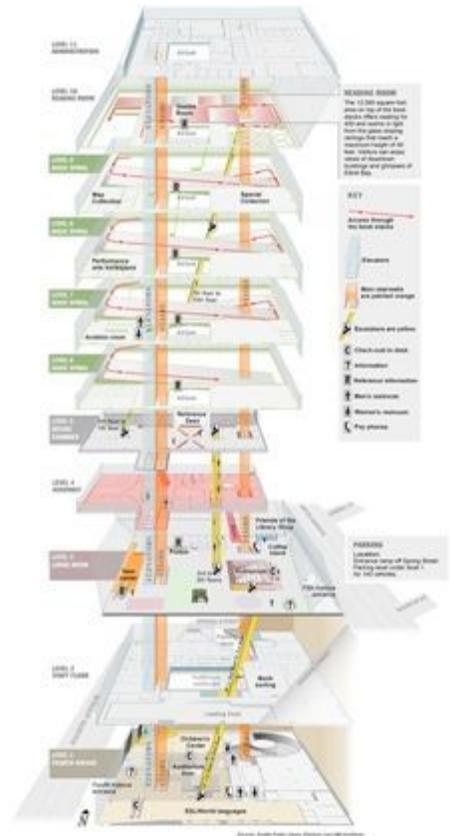|		
	It's conducive to learning That's why I come Very useful place Quietness What libraries are for	

Figure 1: Seattle Public Library

Figure 1 Seattle Public Library