How Does the Library Serve as Third Place?

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Abstract
Public libraries are found to contribute to local communities by fostering imagination, creativity, and personal developments, and by strengthening local culture and identity, social cohesion, and community empowerment (Aabo & Audson, 2012). The basic idea is that a fundamental feeling of safety and security enables relationships, esteem, and creative potential (Bayliss, 2013).

Through the research conducted, it was determined that libraries must always be changing to accommodate the needs of library users. The research utilized an electronic survey in order to determine what these changes may include. The analysis of the research resulted in findings specific to user needs and preferences within a public library space. Libraries must be able to provide amenities, specialized spaces and a variety of flexible learning environments in order to meet these particular needs. This research demonstrates how the findings can be applied to transform the library as third place.

Methods/Procedure
In order to gain knowledge about how people are using the public library, a quantitative research method was used in the form of an anonymous electronic survey. A survey was chosen so that a diverse audience, with ages of 18 years and older, could be reached. The survey received responses regarding a multitude of libraries across the United States versus one specific library in our area. By distributing a survey, additional information is provided that could not be obtained through the various other methods of research that are available.

This survey was approved by the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). Through information gathering and site visits, common themes were observed. Questions in the survey reflect these themes by asking how often people use the library, what they are doing at the library, what types of services people are using the most, and what furniture best supports specific tasks. The survey questions were created using Qualtrics and distributed through the NDSU student and staff listserve email as well as being posted on social media sites that include Facebook. The survey was available to the public from November 3, 2015 - November 24, 2015, and 397 responses were recorded during this time. Together, the information obtained from this survey will be the driving force in the upcoming design for Pikes Peak Public Library.

Importance of Privacy within the Library

The majority of participants indicated that studying was the most prominent activity done in a library setting. Focus on study rooms in Pikes Peak Public Library will be increased for this reason. The least common was attending organized activities/meetings or reading the newspaper.

Different Amenities and Services Provided in a Library and their Importance to Patrons

Of the amenities/services that are listed, quiet study rooms are the most important with technology and printers also being of high importance. Art galleries and other amenities not listed were of lesser importance to the respondents.

References