
Planning for a Branch Library: An Annotated Bibliography

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Has your community experienced rapid growth in population? Does a local politician feel that his side of town deserves a branch library? Have new housing developments created new communities in your city? If so, you may be considering building a new branch library. How does the library administrator determine when, where, and what kind of a branch should be built in his/her library service area?

The Public Library Development Committee recognizes that the development of branch libraries is one of the most important issues facing library administrators today. The members of the Development Committee conducted a literature search on the location, design, and the optimum time to build a new branch library in a given community. The Committee soon realized that the existing literature is fragmented and inconclusive.

We did not find a definitive work that offers a formula for when, where, and what type of a branch should be introduced to a community. Considering the various demographic, geographic, and political variables, it is doubtful such a formula could be developed.

The Public Library Development Committee found several articles that did address at least some of the issues involved in the consideration of branch library planning. This annotated bibliography includes articles written within the past twenty years. It concerns only the planning and design of original branch libraries. Many of the articles include bibliographies that direct the reader to older studies and related topics.

Adams, Stanley E. "Bibliography on Some Recent Materials on Buildings and Construction" *Illinois Libraries* 69 (November 1988): 648-650.

A useful bibliography of twenty-nine books and articles, with one to two sentence annotations for each entry. It is aimed specifically at an Illinois

audience, but most titles would be helpful in North Carolina as well.

American Library Association. *A Planning Process for Public Libraries—Small Public Libraries and the Planning Process*. ALA Proceedings of the Public Library Association, Small and Medium Libraries. Annual Conference, 1981.

The authors describe the essentials of a planning process and tell why small libraries should plan. They tell how planning makes a difference, suggest how to begin using a planning process, and suggest identifying the constituency and determining how the library should serve it specifically in the areas of selection, building design, and collection development.

Bachus, Edward J. "Studying a Branch Library Service Area." *Library Journal* 103 (January 15, 1978): 144-145.

This brief essay offers a method for determining the effectiveness of a branch library in a given location. The article does not instruct the reader as to where a branch library should be located, but offers a model for demographic analysis. This model also provides help in determining if existing branches are effective in their present locations. Note is made of how shifting demographic characteristics of a community often mean some libraries may lose their effectiveness, while other areas of the community that are experiencing growth are not served by any branch.

Baker, Janet. "Rural Library Focus on Mission." *Public Libraries* (Summer 1987): 58-59.

A grassroots committee, Options for Small Libraries, with support of LSCA funds from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, was formed to examine the service options open to small public libraries in that state. Working with a library consultant, this committee advised rural librarians to define their role as it relates to community needs. The financial implications of fulfilling their defined roles must be considered. The

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committee further concluded that all libraries, regardless of size, must by some means be an interlibrary access point and also a recreational reading and viewing center for patrons of all ages.

Brown, Eleanor F. *Modern Branch Libraries and Libraries in Systems*. New York: Scarecrow, 1970.

Focused on the role of branch libraries in a changing society, this book describes the need for planning by first presenting factors indicating the need for a branch; then suggesting how to tailor the branch to the community and how to choose the site. The author addresses building the branch—what size is needed, including minimum space requirements—and then illustrates with some award-winning branches. The author addresses current trends in building and what research is needed during the planning phase. She offers both a prospectus on a short program for building and a detailed building program. Though it does contain some dated information on pricing materials, this volume is overall a practical guide to determining community needs and all facets of branch establishment.

Dahlgren, Anders C. "Alternative to Library Building Standards" *Illinois Libraries* 67 (November 1985): 772-777.

The author, a consultant for public library construction and planning for the Wisconsin division for library services, refers to six high quality works that deal with library construction and planning. Dahlgren focuses on using local specific needs in combination with professionally established library building standards. He uses examples of per capita measures of floor space, but also mentions PLA's *A Planning Process for Public Libraries* which urges development of community based standards and goals, a move away from using only quantitative measures. The bibliography includes ALA publications and other sources published in the past decade.

Dahlgren, Anders C. "Designing the Flexible Small Public Library." *Library HiTech* 5 (Winter 1987): 78-82.

Dahlgren introduces and discusses several of the current trends in library space planning to accommodate technology and relates them to the reality of a small library. He presents a pragmatic approach to fitting needed spaces into a modest space. He also discusses how flexible new small libraries need to be to deal with whatever may be

happening in libraries twenty to fifty years from now.

Dahlgren, Anders C. *Planning the Small Public Library Building*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1985.

This brief publication is intended to provide an overview of the facility planning process for the construction of small public libraries. The focus is very adaptable to branch library planning. Content is reasonably current and concise. Strong emphasis is placed on space requirements and space planning. Sections on three special areas of current concern—computerization, energy efficiency, and access for the handicapped—provide thoughtful insight for today's planners. As an introduction to trustees, government officials, fundraisers and even architects, this publication can be valuable. For librarians, it should serve as both a checklist and a basic guide in library facility planning.

Friedman, Ann M. "Opening Day Collections" *Public Libraries* 27 (Summer 1988): 99-100.

This article details the systematic way one library system acquired a comprehensive opening day collection of approximately thirty-five thousand volumes for a new branch in only nine months. Sources consulted include the system's facilities plan, new branch's Community Profile, library's book stock report, Dewey Decimal schedule, specialized journals, and redevelopment lists. Books were taken from other branch collections as well as purchased. The branch opened as scheduled with a substantial reference and circulating collection for adults and children.

HBW Associates, Inc. "Planning Aids for a New Library Building." *Illinois Libraries* 67 (November 1985): 794-809.

HBW Associates, library planners and consultants based in Dallas, Texas, offers a series of planning aids designed for librarians as they begin a building project. Helpful not only for the beginner, but also for those seeking an outcome better than or different from the last building project, the aids include key elements—lighting and energy conservation, general space planning, floor loading (weight considerations), site selection, and architect selection. The guidelines also offer a project sequence and list of components of a library building program, as well as a checklist for barrier-free access. It concludes with a lengthy and generally current bibliography.

Holt, Raymond M. "Trends in Public Library Buildings." *Library Trends* (Fall 1987): 267-85.

The trends in public library buildings reported in this article are based on the author's experiences and are not the result of data collection and scientific analysis. The author finds that shopping centers with easy access, high visibility, and convenient parking make excellent locations for public libraries. The trend is toward larger buildings to accommodate growing collections, public computers, automated systems, more seating room, and auditoriums. The author suggests the trends indicate a standard or size of .75 - 1.00 square foot per capita. The trend is now to use a minimum of walls within a building to offer flexibility in changing floor layouts. Today's library patron expects a branch to be "full service" with meeting rooms, full reference service, and audio-visual services available.

Inglewood Public Library. *Branch Library Service*. Inglewood, N.J.: Inglewood Public Library, 1977.

This publication is one of a series of reports published by the Inglewood Public Library "to explain existing policies and procedures . . . It includes a combination of specific information for the benefit of Inglewood librarians and also some sections of wider interest. The most valuable chapter is "The Branch Library Building," which describes the space and services of an Inglewood branch that "has proved so successful as a functional building" that it is suggested as an example for others.

Michaels, Andrea. "Design Today." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 62 (January 1987): 50-51.

Michaels has several useful short articles in various issues of *Wilson Library Bulletin* under the title "Design Today." This one is a checklist for use on a site visit to other libraries prior to building one's own. The list is wide ranging and includes site, access, design, and construction issues such as electrical/data/communication cabling, and an interesting section called "Things to Avoid."

Palmer, E. Susan. "The Effect of Distance on Public Library Use: A Literature Survey." *Library Research* 3 (Winter 1981): 315-354.

Palmer reviews one hundred years of library literature on the effect of distance on public library use and finds that in almost every study distance had an impact on a library's success, especially in urban and suburban communities. The article

includes tables to project a library's potential success based on the distance between the library and the potential user and, through its numerous charts, shows how distance affects usage by demographic variables such as age, sex, education, profession, and marital status. The article can benefit library administrators developing long-range plans for their library systems.

Paynter, David M. "Branch Library Use in North Carolina Metropolitan Areas." *North Carolina Libraries* 42 (Fall 1984): 136-139.

This article reports the results of a survey that was sent to several North Carolina library systems. Location, square footage, and ownership of the facility were examined to find factors that correlated to levels of activity. One purpose of the study was to determine proper levels of staffing. The author acknowledged that the small sampling of this survey did not produce definitive data, but did offer some insights into productivity of branch libraries. Some observations include: residential locations seemed more popular than shopping centers or other commercial zones, size of library did not correlate to circulation activity, and leased facilities were busier than facilities owned by the library system.

Rohlf, Robert H. "New Factor in Planning Public Library Buildings." *Public Libraries* (Summer 1987): 52-53.

The premise of Rohlf's article is that "the days of planning future buildings based on local population estimates and projections are, in most cases, over. With the existence of systems, networks, and reciprocal use, library planners must plan for service areas, not necessarily local jurisdiction populations." The author presents four examples of ways to plan for the impact of a nonresident population.

Schott, Virginia O. "Site Selection for Rural Public Libraries." *Rural Libraries* 7 (1987): 27-59.

This article is one of only a few recent ones that discusses in depth how to find the right location for small town libraries. Schott brings together the ideas of earlier notable library planners with the results of a survey she conducted and adds her own experienced opinion. She covers choosing the right site, cost, neighborhood, building orientation to prevailing weather, the lot (foundation and slope) and easy access for pedestrians and cars. She reviews as well the pros and cons of constructing a new building versus renovating

existing space. She includes a bibliography which notes a number of older but still valuable works.

Smith, Lester K., ed. *Planning Library Buildings: From Decision to Design*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1986.

Smith has edited a very useful reference work that offers specific guidelines for needs assessment to identify the library requirements of a community. Functional diagrams, a unique feature, analyze the work flow in all departments and traffic flow in public service areas. The author discusses retaining an architect and explains contract documents and conceptual drawings. Also described are the essentials of lighting and ventilation.

"What Works—What Doesn't." *American Libraries* 18 (February, 1987): 110-115.

A trio of short articles describes visits to and evaluations of recently constructed, award-winning library facilities of three types. The public library representative is not a branch but is of a size—13,800 sq. ft. and small user population—which could qualify it as a branch in urban and suburban areas. The evaluation is done by the library's

director, who was also involved in the construction. While the pros and cons listed are interesting, their value is as points of consideration in the planning process.

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