



The Future of Libraries and the Libraries of the Future

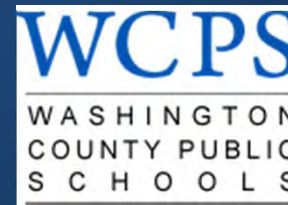
A survey of Librarians and Media Center Specialists regarding the physical form and cultural role of the library as it is influenced by changing information storage and retrieval technologies



Creating Together: Meaningful Architecture and Client Success!

Our Survey Partners

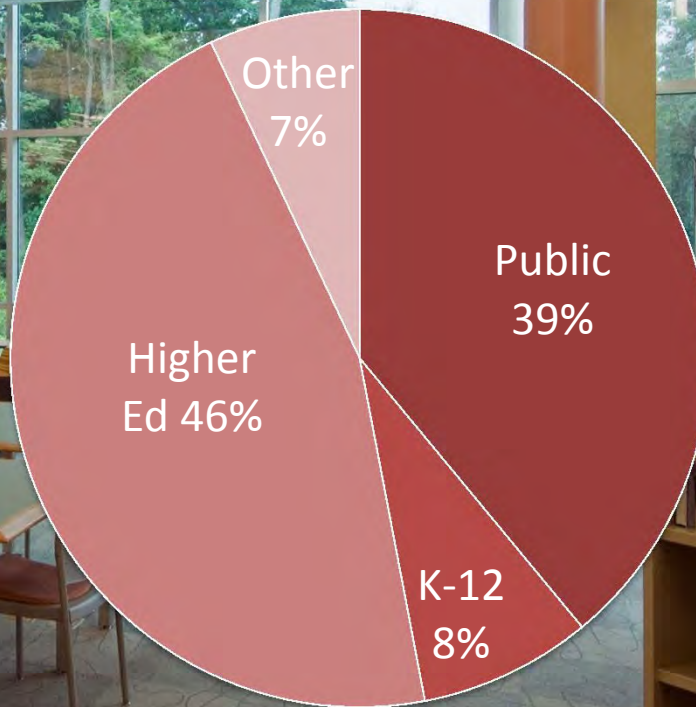
- Virginia Library Association –
Over 700 members including librarians of all types,
plus non-member subscribers
- Williamsburg / James City County Public Schools (VA)
- Washington County Public Schools (MD)
- Our community of clients, past and present



Who participated?

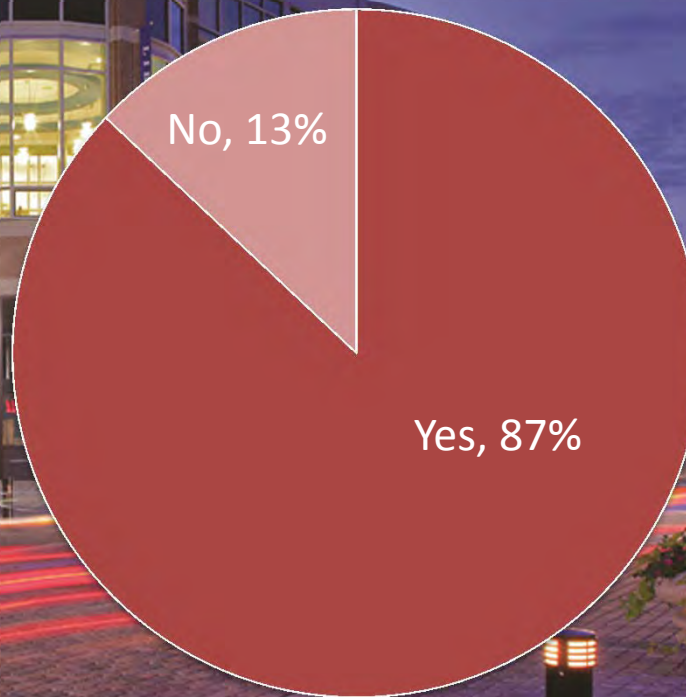
- Librarians and Media Center Specialists from K-12, Higher Education and Public Libraries
- Governmental Librarians
- Art and Academic Museum Librarians
- Law Firm Librarians
- Library Science Students

Over 375 participants from over 16 states, Canada, Israel and Lebanon



The Results

In your opinion, will advances in communications technology and the increasing use of electronic formats for information storage and retrieval fundamentally change the physical form of tomorrow's library?



The Results

...changes in the physical form?

THE “YES” VOTE (87%)

- Reduced Space for General Collections
- Reduced Space for Collection Processing
- Near-Disappearance of Reference Collections
- More Space for Study and Research: Individual and Group
- More Space for Community: meetings, lectures, social gatherings
- More White Boards/Smart Boards/LCD Projectors for group projects
- More fixed computer work stations and power/data locations for laptops
- More space for technology peripherals
- Layouts that make Library Staff more accessible to the public



The Results

...changes in the physical form?

THE “YES” VOTE (87%)

“...the use of electronic devices to access reading materials will expand; libraries need less space for materials and more space for people.”

“...Onsite use of libraries will be more socially-centered, collaborative and creative, with conferencing across distances. Off-site use will be through mobile devices, and electronic communication for research assistance...”

“...technology-enabled classrooms to teach information retrieval and information literacy, ever more important in the onslaught of information on the web...”

“...need to allow our customers to be creative...more study space with white boards or smart boards to allow more synergistic group thinking, more areas where people communicate (Skype), and studios for creation of digital art, music, videos, and audio...”

“...iPhones to access the library catalog (and scan patron barcodes!)...”

“...Areas with in-house e-readers may be a parallel development to computer labs. Staff need mobile devices more than desks ...”



The Results

...changes in the physical form?

THE “NO” VOTE (13%)

“...users crave traditional quiet library spaces complete with book shelves and the like...the atmosphere serves as a marker for serious study and contemplation... Many people request spaces without network hookups, to eliminate temptation for distraction.”

“Library,” could mean something that recalls traditional libraries or something brand new, but a library shouldn't feel like a coffee shop or a Best Buy...”

“...Students still need a vast array of books...and a library MUST accommodate that. Most students bring their own computers so they simply need a wireless connection and a desk. They need a comfortable place to study that allows for quiet reflection. If they want something that looks like a coffee shop, then they will go to a coffee shop...”



The Results

Will these advances in technology fundamentally change the cultural role of tomorrow's library?

No, 50%

Yes, 50%



The Results

...changes in the cultural role of the library?

THE “YES” VOTE (50%)

“...we will be less concerned with being retail outlets for what's wildly popular and more concerned with being a true civic center.”

“...more of a community gathering place, much as the town hall for previous generations.”

“...will increasingly partner with non-profit community services...Arts and cultural interests will play a greater role in diverse communities.”

“As internet access becomes ubiquitous, even among low-income populations, local governments will find it convenient to believe the public library is no longer needed...Some libraries will cease to exist while others will merge into multi-purpose community service centers.”

“...civic life has become less compartmentalized--an open, available space like the library is a part of a community's commercial, recreational and governmental fabric...”



The Results

...changes in the cultural role of the library?

THE “NO” VOTE (50%)

“...linking individuals with the information and cultural resources they need and helping them participate fully in the community--that has been **pretty constant since the Middle Ages...**”

“We will continue to be a place where people learn new things that help them in their lives. **As Andrew Carnegie said, "a place for real and permanent good."**”

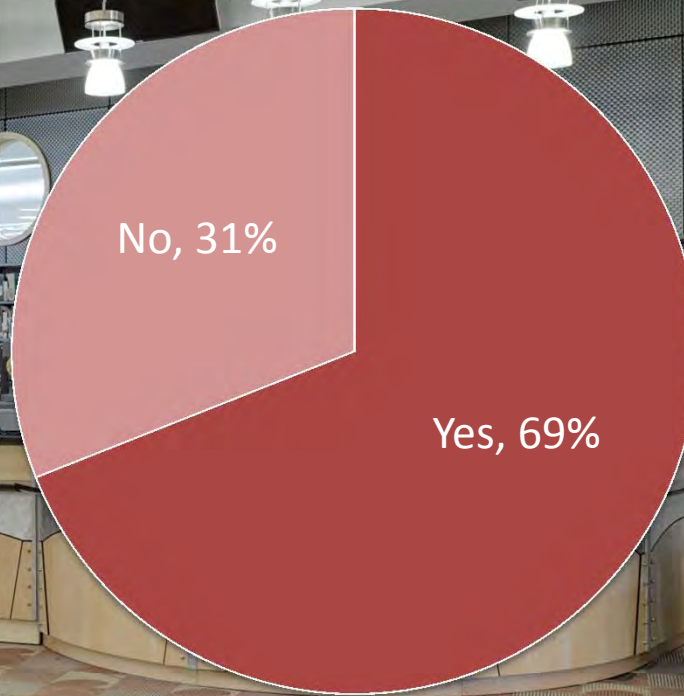
“...**we've always brokered bulk pricing and storage** for people--we'll just bulk price different things. We have always been **the hand holding teacher** for the adult learner. We will continue to be. We have always been **the place to gather to share ideas--we'll still be so.**”

“The library is **a place of education, a repository of cultural objects** for the present and future, a site for exploration, reflection and discovery. **Changing the tools does not change the fundamental reasons libraries exist.**”



The Results

Will these advances in technology fundamentally change the role of tomorrow's librarian?



The Results

...changes in the librarian's role?

THE “YES” VOTE (69%)

“Librarians have had to expand their knowledge to help people use technology...to be program planners for all ages, and conveners of community conversations. The one role that has dropped is answering simple questions, like 'what is the capital of Chile.' Google fills that role now...”

“...law librarians used to manage libraries...Now they are like paralegals--doing online research in Westlaw and Lexis. That is the future of librarianship...”

“...take on the role of consultant and networking specialist...will have to focus on new information literacy skills.”

“...need to do outreach to stay on top of the community wants...to be more proactive and market our services and opportunities more...”

“...technology will always be three steps ahead of the average person. Librarians will need very strong skills in learning technology and need to learn new things constantly.”



The Results

...changes in the librarian's role?

THE “NO” VOTE (31%)

“The fundamental role of librarians has nothing to do with the media by which information is stored and retrieved.”

“Librarians will still need to help patrons navigate the wash of information. Retrieving 1,254,123 hits doesn't help one retrieve the most relevant and suitable ones.”

“The fundamental nature will not change because of computers. Librarians are there to help the common man make sense of all the information that exists.”

“People want of get information as quickly as possible, but the professional materials are still in the hands of publishers, who use different access and searching strategies... (electronic journals, data bases) the librarian is still the mediator between people and the treasures of knowledge.”



The Results

What types of spaces, room configurations, furniture, etc. will be needed in the media centers/libraries of the future?



The Results

...spaces, room configurations, and furniture?

“Automated circulation has cut down on the most critical ingredient in library service: interaction between staff and user. **More opportunities for contact, not fewer, should be reflected in the physical space...**”

“...**Fab Lab space** where people create multimedia productions. **Learning labs** where the community can watch streamed video. **Workforce development space**. Spaces for **GED testing and other test proctoring**.”

“...The **trend toward "information commons"** that combine libraries, computer commons, and tutoring centers **will be reversed** as stakeholders find them loud, hectic and detrimental to student learning...

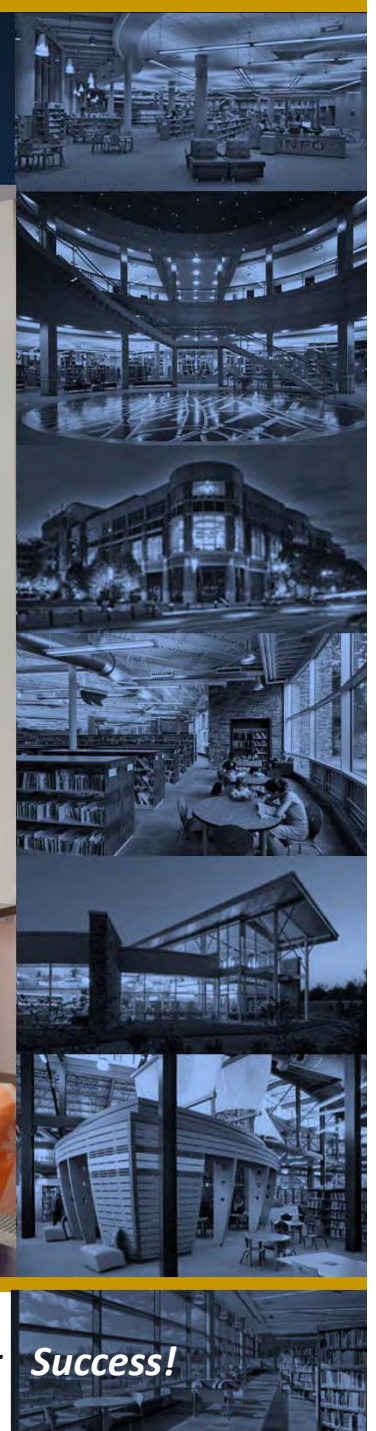
...trend toward in-library cafes will continue as more students "camp" at the library as a main social and learning hub...”

“...**For an aging population, grab bars, Larger cord ends** (arthritis) and **easier-to-see plug faces at eye-level** (rather than on the floor)...”



The Results

If less space is needed for the storage of books, magazines, and other printed materials, do libraries simply become smaller? Or are there opportunities to re-purpose space to better facilitate the role that present/future libraries serve?



The Results

...opportunities to re-purpose space?

“...special purpose areas such as teen rooms, children's areas, early literacy activity centers, etc...creative ways to accommodate large programs with rolling shelving that can be moved to allow for creative programming”

“People in high density areas look for spaces outside their apartments/ condos to work and study and socialize. Will libraries be that place?”

“English Conversation Classes are extremely popular and meeting rooms are packed to the gills with new immigrants wanting to learn English.”

“... to meet evolving community needs including technology access and training, public meeting space, and creativity space, where the community has tools to create digital productions, etc...provision of lifelong learning opportunities starting with birth 0 - 5 activities continue to be a very important role...”

“...meeting spaces for job and/or social networking, book clubs...”



The Results

Americans report sleeping only 6.9 hours per night as compared with 8.9 hours per night 80 years ago. 34% of lunches are eaten "on the go." Multi-tasking--even in its most dangerous forms--is on the rise.

How does the accelerating speed of life impact the form and/or role of the future library and future librarian?



The Results

...the accelerating speed of life?

"Americans demand services that mix "knowledge base" with "instant messaging."

"Inter-library loan (at least in academic libraries) is already taken for granted, so while we sleep a librarian in another time zone/country is filling our request."

"...on-the-go services (drive-thru pick up and return, reserving materials via mobile device), get more/do more in one place (ATM, food bar, meeting rooms)..."

"...integrate ourselves with the multi-tasking mania, and offer an attractive, salutary alternative to it."

"Libraries could become increasingly located in "town centers."

"...Partnerships and collaborative agreements will increase to give users a broader range of resources regardless of ownership and governance."

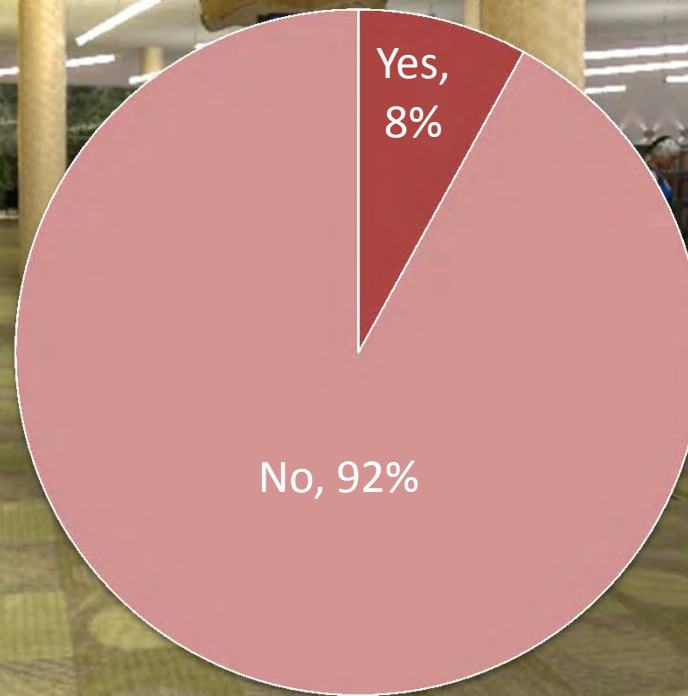
"[longer hours] just mean more opportunities to say 'shhhh.'"



The Results

The ability of computers and handheld devices to communicate verbally is advancing at an extraordinary pace. Some believe the days of the printed word are numbered and the transition to an entirely oral/verbal/visual culture is inevitable. Others have even predicted the total demise of literacy as early as 2050.

Do you agree that reading and writing will one day be obsolete--replaced by entirely oral/verbal or visual modes of communication?



The Results

If so, how will this change the form of the library and the role of the librarian?

"In the post-literate society, **verbal and visual resources will become more valued** sources of information. Libraries will focus their collections in this direction."

"Voice in voice out", especially with better language translation programs, may enable **entire populations in the 3rd world to skip over mass literacy.**"

The oral, visual, performative, and social aspects of culture are alive in libraries today though they may take stronger precedence in the future. Regarding the form of the library, **flexible, programmable spaces** are needed to accommodate changing priorities. Regarding the librarian, I honestly don't know many librarians who fetishize print. What we care deeply about is preserving free access to information. **Print is just one medium. Fortunately, some elevate it to the level of art. Should literacy fade, these objects will still be perceived and utilized as works of art.**"



The Results

Describe your vision of the "Library of Tomorrow."



The Results

...the "Library of Tomorrow."

"More space for people, less for physical materials; Few fixed walls; architecturally inspiring; people come in for the building itself (like Seattle or Salt Lake City)..."

"The public library will be the hub of the community - a physical and virtual space for collaboration, learning, creating, and networking - in which customers will connect with each other and a world of knowledge"

"Much of evolving technology enhances virtual communication while ironically encouraging isolation. Libraries can counter-balance the latter while enhancing the former...it will be our task to advocate for substance in a whirlwind of process."

Busy, bright, comfortable...some quietly reading, others excitedly talking about books...teens planning a promotional event...people using specialized software to work on projects as a librarian assists...a librarian guiding a student through an online database...old folks dozing over the news... people meeting to discuss a local issue...parents reading picture books to young children...a guide dog leading its owner to the recorded books...a librarian organizing information on a website to be used by a citizen group dealing with a local problem...and a device in my hand, I use to access library resources to search and read wherever I am.



