

The Public Library: The City's Economic Incubator.

HISTORICAL ROLE OF LIBRARIES.

Libraries have always served as repositories for a wide range of knowledge. From the Greeks of Socrates and Egyptians with their Royal [Ancient] Library of Alexandria come two central ideas: knowledge is worth collecting and retaining; and knowledge is unbound as to subject or discipline. The concept of libraries has a strong early association with museums and research. These two ideas and associations can serve well the economic development of small cities and towns in the 21st century.

The collection and organization of information, enabled by the explosion of information on the internet, is critical to the assemblage of general knowledge and business-specific knowledge. The libraries of our times are, or can become, an incredibly valuable community asset well beyond their historic passive purpose. Public libraries offer the opportunity to build on the tradition of a “public library” as a repository and to aggressively expand access to knowledge by becoming a portal to the vast knowledge base of the world.

Libraries are becoming the portal to the world. Libraries are the bridge over the digital and cultural divide, over the chasm between the “haves and have nots”. They offer a path over the technological threshold that must be crossed for startup and small businesses to participate in the New Economy. Small business owners and entrepreneurs are the beneficiaries of free and abundant information. Small cities and towns can facilitate the connection of local businesses to the global economy.

ACCESS IS THE KEY.

Education, entertainment and cultural enrichment are now available to everyone, anywhere, at any time. Global economies, talent and markets are readily accessible with high speed broadband internet service. Libraries facilitate and enable this access.

Just like air conditioning drew people to the first movie houses, free high speed broadband internet service draws people to technologically outfitted libraries. Small businesses are the beneficiaries.

The Royal Library of Alexandria or Ancient Library of Alexandria in Alexandria, Egypt,

was one of the largest and most significant [libraries of the ancient world](#). It was dedicated to the [Muses](#), the nine goddesses of the arts.^[1] It flourished under the patronage of the [Ptolemaic dynasty](#) and functioned as a major center of scholarship from its construction in the 3rd century BC until the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC, with collections of works, lecture halls, meeting rooms, and gardens.

The library was part of a larger research institution called the [Musaeum of Alexandria](#), where many of the most famous thinkers of the ancient world studied.

Source: Wikipedia

LIBRARIES HAVE NOT BEEN ASLEEP.

Many are expanding their roles. Many are locating in the heart of the city accessible to small businesses. Entrepreneurs can find valuable insights and information; start-up businesses can access information about business formation and finance.

Many appreciate the fact that credentials are the passport to an individual's economic future and many credentials can be obtained through on-line education at the public library. With the exploding cost of a college education, the opportunity exists to obtain a university or trade credential on-line, at little or no cost, using library resources.

The many facets of the community can leverage the resources of the public library to boot-strap themselves into a different and better place; and libraries are responding by providing a place, a connection to the internet and a safe harbor for the ambitious.

The articles summarized below offer a view of the role of libraries consistent with the thought that their role and mission should be broadly defined. The specifics offered by the several authors vary in detail, but the concept is the same: provide traditional library services, plus business service information and technologies that improve educational attainment, job prospects, and civic enrichment.

A holistic library system leverages its assets through partnerships with colleges, universities and public schools. Technology enables a myriad of useful and productive connections.

How public libraries help build healthy communities

Marcela Cabello and Stuart M. Butler, The Brookings Institution, March 30, 2017

They say you can't judge a book by its cover. Increasingly in the United States, you also can't judge a library's value to its community by simply its books. Let us explain.

In a previous blog post, we've noted the importance of "[third places](#)" in strengthening communities – meaning those places that are neither one's home (first place) nor workspace (second place). A range of such third places, from churches to beauty salons, play an important role in community building. Libraries are great "third places".

They are the informal spaces that are often mainstays in a neighborhood, places where both random and intentional in-person relationships are made.

Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/30/how-public-libraries-help-build-healthy-communities/>



St. Cloud FL downtown.

A CONSOLIDATED LIST OF SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM A PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Based on the writings cited herein, the services and facilities now being offered or conceptually being provided are described below. The expanded role of libraries transcends the collection and offering of information by expanding services to include educational lectures, internet access, business incubator resources and visitor guides. The employment of internet connections, blockchain technology and digital decentralization creates a cumulative resource that dramatically accelerates the educational, informational and business developmental power of the community.

- “Amazon”-style customized book/audio/video recommendation schemes that are based on patrons’ prior library behavior
- “Redbox”-style lending machines or kiosks located throughout the community where people can check out books, movies or music without having to go to the library itself
- A quiet, safe place
- Access to technology “petting zoos” to try out new devices
- Apps-based access to library materials and programs
- Books and media
- Business support services:
 - classes, speakers on business topics
 - copy machines, fax machines
 - copying/scanning assistance
 - Ellison machines and die cuts
 - internet access, printers, computers
 - laminating
- Circulation services:
 - lending books
 - lending CDs (or other types of audio material)
 - lending DVD
 - magazines and newspapers to read free
- Collection development
- Computers for public use
- County library cooperative services
- Databases of journal articles
- Email notifications
- Exam proctoring
- GPS-navigation apps to help patrons locate material inside library buildings
- Help applying for government services
- Help finding, applying for a job
- IPAD checkouts
- Items for sale
- Librarian assistance:
 - online research services allowing patrons to pose questions and get answers from librarians
 - reference services
 - research resources
- Magnifiers for the visually impaired
- Meeting & study rooms
 - meeting spaces for library-related groups and qualified community groups
 - meeting spaces for NGOs such as the boy and girl scouts
- Programs for adults
- Programs for youth, providing children's programs
- Study assistance
- Study rooms and space
- Wireless internet access (Wi-Fi)
- Youth services

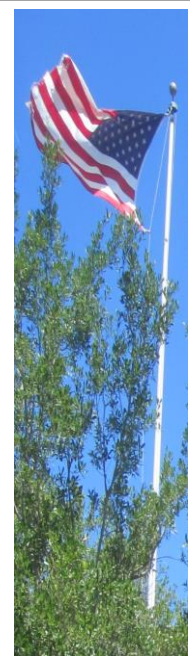
DOWNTOWN LIBRARIES.



Harrodsburg's downtown library at "main and main".



Haines City's downtown library next to City Hall across from the main street park.



THE LIBRARY'S ROLE IN THE CITY [Based on the work of Julie Biando Edwards, et al in the article [below](#)].

Libraries as Community Builders.

- Libraries help revitalize struggling or depressed neighborhoods and downtowns.
- Libraries are important partners in sustainability.
- Libraries' special collections grow out of specific community needs.
- Archives preserve historic artifacts, oral histories, digital history projects, and monographs relevant to the community, including minority groups.
- Libraries are places where people come to know themselves and their communities.
- Libraries serve as catalysts for addressing social problems.
- Libraries, which champion, promote, and reflect important democratic values, are a part of the community's political life.
- Library buildings as architectural structures are culturally relevant.
- Libraries provide important business resources, especially for small local businesses.

Libraries as Community Centers for Diverse Populations.

- Libraries help to ensure that non-English speakers see themselves represented in their communities.
- Libraries provide immigrants with helpful information about, and opportunities to connect with, their new communities.
- Libraries provide information, resources, and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, and questioning (LGBTIQ) patrons.
- Libraries provide information, resources, and support for patrons with disabilities.

Libraries as Centers for the Arts.

- Libraries provide access to non-mainstream points of view and give voice to local artists.
- Libraries provide opportunities for free classes that encourage art appreciation as well as art participation.
- Libraries provide access to the arts for all, not just those who can afford them.

Libraries as Universities.

- Libraries serve as the "people's university."
- Libraries offer opportunities for remote access, making it possible for those who can't get to the library to still access the library's cultural and educational offerings.
- Libraries go beyond providing content; they enable patrons to create their own content: writings, research, publications.
- Libraries promote civil discourse.

Libraries as Champions of Youth.

- Libraries teach teens important life skills.
- Free tutoring, homework help programs, and summer reading programs for kids and teens help bridge the economic divide that impacts students' academic performance.
- Libraries are important partners in child development.

Libraries as Business Incubators.

- *The Atlantic's* Emily Badger says, "Libraries have just about everything a 21st century innovator could need: Internet access, work space, reference materials, professional guidance".
- *Libraries have administrative and legal information for starting new businesses.*
- *Libraries are sources of technical information to support a start-up business or an entrepreneur.*

Libraries as Downtown Public Buildings.

The location, design and function of public buildings are critical in the development of a cohesive city. The location of the public library is most powerful in bringing people downtown when it is on or very accessible to main street.

The design of public buildings such as the public library is important, but there are a couple of choices. Some towns are interested in promoting a common stylistic theme. The buildings do not need to be identical but the materials, heights and style can be coordinated without producing “clones”.

Some towns are interested in excellent architecture and have hired world class architects for each public building. This produces a wide variety of styles, but as Columbus, Indiana has done, it attracts visitors from across the globe to see a collection of modern architectural buildings all within a few blocks of one another. The point is, some thought is required and quality design always rewards the effort.

The location of the downtown library building on the building site is important. Creating a “walkable street” with building fronts is the objective. Ideally, the front door to the library is on main street.

Quality architecture and landscape architecture features are important. An appreciation of good building and landscape design can influence private development and justify standards for private development based on the city’s performance and example.

Multiple Libraries as a System of Libraries.

Every town has a public library, a high school library, a college or university library and perhaps specialty collections in the local history museum, the public garden research center, the city’s art museum and its theater. Progressive communities are using technology to share catalogues, lending policies and access systems to provide a fuller service to the residents and businesses in the community. Technology currently available makes this possible.

Libraries, Museums, Public Galleries, Public Gardens and Community Theaters as a Family.

Even if the several entities have separate owners and trustees, the close cooperation and coordination of activities can pay huge benefits. The city is in an ideal position to champion these connections; not for the sake of efficiency, but for the sake of better programming for residents and visitors, for better quality of facilities and services and for better cohesion throughout the community.

Libraries and Museums as Co-located Cousins.

A local public library and a local history or specialty museum have many of the same needs. Physically they have buildings that need maintenance, they have parking lots that are full at different times, they have common security needs and they have similar administrative systems. They also have a common customer base. With all these commonalities, why would they ever be “siloes”? When co-located, co-managed, co-maintained and co-marketed, each becomes more powerful.

Libraries' are terrific community multi-use assets.

Libraries as Gateways to Global Data Bases.

Local libraries have access to resources around the world, starting with The Library of Congress. There are dwindling impediments to access; anyone in town can have access to any publication or video ever published.

Libraries as Full Service Business Centers.

Perhaps this is a money-making scheme for the library, or perhaps not. The point is to use every asset the city has to support small businesses, to encourage start-ups and to provide entrepreneurs with the resources they need to fully exploit their ideas.

Businesses without extensive resources can rely on the library for information, for access to people and products through the internet, for learning from classes and speakers at the library who have business and technical expertise and for a quiet place to work and meet with people.

CONCLUSIONS.

1. Libraries can serve as entrepreneurial centers to support “new starts” and small businesses.
2. Small cities and towns can use libraries as critical assets in their economic plans.
3. Partnering with the county or college library systems expands capacity and usefulness.
4. Public libraries are a core component in the city’s holistic system of downtown intellectual, cultural and entertainment assets and activities.
5. Library buildings on or near the city’s downtown main street provide a strong image of the city’s values and draw people downtown with enhanced hours of operation.
6. Libraries are going to exist for a long time and require a long-range plan for their location, design, programming and perpetuation within the city.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES WELL USED, PARTNERED, PROGRAMMED AND LOCATED ARE GREAT COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSETS.



The most rural village center finds a place for the library.

THE LITERATURE.

The following articles have been collected to research the subject of holistic library systems and to show the breadth of current thinking on the subject. Some of the articles have been modified as to form in order to fit the space, some have been abbreviated in their detail while preserving the main thoughts. In all cases, the authors have been sourced and a review of the original material is encouraged. You will notice I have drawn extensively from each authors' work thankfully giving full attribution where due.

**The role of Public Libraries in lifelong learning –
A Project under the section of Public Libraries, IFLA**

*Final report of the International Federation of Library Associations and
Institutions (IFLA) project under the Section for Public Libraries:*

Public libraries and lifelong learning

In a society of lifelong learning - whether of a formal or informal nature- public libraries will be nodes connecting the local learning setting with the global resources of information and knowledge. Public libraries must therefore be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of lifelong learning. The development of the information and communication technology has already laid the basis for the creation of information networks, giving users even of small local public libraries access to the world wide sources of information. The public libraries also offer guidance and training in information search and quality rating of information sources. Thus, public libraries are necessary if not sufficient prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society.

Source: <https://www.ifla.org/node/1025>

ALA American Library Association

Social Role of the Library

- Libraries support the literacy of the homeless
- Libraries have value to neighborhoods
- The library facility as a gathering place has value
- Public Library Stakeholders [support]
- Public libraries provide valuable meeting spaces
- Patrons find that public libraries improve quality of life and are a good use of tax revenue
- Public libraries support personal productivity and cultural engagement
- The library as a safe, important, and central public space
- Use of Public Libraries for Community Involvement
- Libraries' increasingly important role as a technology provider

Source: <http://www.ala.org/tools/research/librariesmatter/taxonomy/term/143>

Details omitted to fit space; check out the link for the complete story.

New role for public libraries: small business incubators

Libraries already serve as de facto employment opportunity and training centers. Why not extend these supportive environments to startups and small businesses?

By [Joe McKendrick](#) | February 19, 2013 -- 13:24 GMT (05:24 PST) | Topic: [Innovation](#)

The ultimate coworking space may have already been sitting in the middle of your town or city for decades now -- the public library.

That's the [view](#) *The Atlantic's* Emily Badger puts forth in this proposal that provides an aging institution a new mission that makes really good use of tax dollars, while providing venues that promote startups and entrepreneurship. Libraries "have just about everything a 21st century innovator could need: Internet access, work space, reference materials, professional guidance," she observes.

For the past few years, public libraries have been seeing strong demand to serve as resource centers for unemployed or underemployed job hunters, providing career reference materials and Internet access.

In a survey of 730 library managers I helped conduct in conjunction with [Library Resource Guide](#), we found that many see their institutions as hubs that will help address the gap between unemployment and skills shortages among employers. Seven out of ten report increasing demand for Internet access, and more than one-third say they are seeing more patrons seeking technical information/training or job search/career development information. By extension, if public libraries are operating as de facto employment opportunity and training centers, it's not too much of a stretch to see them providing supportive environments for startups and small businesses.

Some libraries are already [re-inventing themselves as 3D printing centers](#) or hackerspaces. In 2011, the Fayetteville Free Library of Fayetteville, NY assumed a new mission in efforts to serve its constituencies with 3D printing facilities -- the "[FFL Fab Lab](#)" is a space set aside with 3D printing technology, which seeks to encourage innovation and learning of the concept.

Badger says the idea of transforming libraries into small business workspaces will soon be put to practice by Arizona State University, which intends to "roll out a network of co-working business incubators inside public libraries, starting with a pilot in the downtown Civic Center Library in Scottsdale." The plan is ambitious:

"Participating libraries will host dedicated co-working spaces for the program, as well as both formal classes and informal mentoring from the university's start-up resources. The librarians themselves will be trained by the university to help deliver some of the material. The network will offer everything, in short, but seed money."

Source: <http://www.zdnet.com/article/new-role-for-public-libraries-small-business-incubators/>

Released: December 11, 2013

How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities

BY KATHRYN ZICKUHR, LEE

RAINIE, KRISTEN PURCELL AND MAEVE

DUGGAN

Summary of Findings

The importance of public libraries to their communities: Some 90% of Americans ages 16 and older said that the closing of their local public library would have an impact on their community, with 63% saying it would have a “major” impact.

Though many library services are seen as important, there are varying levels of enthusiasm for different services. The Pew Research Center’s Library Services Survey ranks services used:

- Books and media
- Librarian assistance
- Having a quiet, safe place
- Research resources
- Programs for youth
- Internet, printers, computers
- Programs for adults
- Help applying for government services
- Help finding, applying for a job

Most Americans know where their local library is, but many are unfamiliar with all the services they offer. 54% of Americans have used a public library in the past 12 months, and 72% live in a “library household”. Most Americans who have ever used a public library have had positive experiences.

Source: <http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/12/11/libraries-in-communities/>

What is the function of a public library?

[Martha Kirtley](#), works at Public Libraries

- The average public library serves more than 20 functions:
- Lending books
- Lending DVDs (or other type of visual material)
- Lending CDs (or other type of audio material)
- Providing children's programs (my library regularly puts on 300+ programs JUST FOR CHILDREN every year)
- Providing adult programs
- Providing study space
- Providing study assistance
- Providing copying/scanning assistance
- Providing newspapers to read free
- Providing magazines to read
- Providing databases of journal articles
- Providing meeting spaces for library-related groups
- Providing meeting spaces for Boy and Girl Scouts

Do you get the picture? Most of these are free or very low cost. And those are just inside the building. We also provide assistance by phone, by mobile collections, by email and regular mail...

Source: <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-function-of-a-public-library>

Libraries' increasingly serve an important role as a technology provider; as a business incubator.

Public Libraries as Business Incubators

By [Phil Shapiro](#), PCWorld

Jun 2, 2010 6:02 AM

Suppose you have an idea for a new digital services business – a business that delivers some value to others over the Internet. No matter how good your idea might be, getting such a business off the ground requires a given amount of capital. And this business might require business skills that you do not possess. You could check around with friends to see if any of them are interested in joining you in such a venture, but you could spend months finding the right friends who are interested and available. Every business is a jigsaw puzzle that requires just the right pieces to fit together. To help those pieces fit together, the concept of the business incubator was born. The function of a business incubator is to identify promising business ideas and then assist entrepreneurs in supplying the missing pieces to their jigsaw puzzle.

Traditionally, business incubators have existed completely separate from public libraries. In the age of manufacturing, this made a lot of sense, but in the digital age – the age of information – **public libraries are ideally situated to assume the role of business incubator**. Why? Smart people congregate at public libraries to learn and share ideas. Public libraries are where questions are formulated and answers are found. Public libraries are set up to [promote wondering](#). Wonder how libraries could develop greater sustainability? Well, yes, a digital services business that was incubated at a particular library could have a business plan where 20 percent of all proceeds from that business were returned to that library. If a public library were able to spawn just one successful business, that business could bring in a revenue stream lasting the duration of its life. How long do businesses last? Some last three years, some last 30 years, some last longer. And if a public library were able to spawn several small businesses – you get the picture...

By now you might be wondering, “How do new businesses arise?” A business is a solution to a problem. New businesses form when people gain a clear understanding of some social need and see a path to meeting that social need. Some of the best business ideas arise from people trying to figure out how to meet one of their own needs. Once they devise a solution for themselves, they can see a way – a method – for bringing this solution to others. And for some people, they can just imagine the sweet taste of working for themselves. And yet not enough business ventures get off the ground because of the difficulty of assembling just the right pieces at just the right time. Business opportunities are fleeting. If you're not ready to move and act this month, the opportunity might not exist next month.

The most fertile innovation happens when people in a community have a clear idea of each other's talents and interests. Those talents and interests can often be the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Not all talents within a community are accessible for new businesses, but some of those talents are. And it behooves public library staff to start maintaining an inventory of talents within their community and to initiate discussions of emerging new roles for public libraries. Some of those discussions could take place within the library's walls. Figuring out how to have those ideas shared in the most productive way possible is the new challenge for public libraries.

Suppose your local neighborhood library spawns the next Google. Is that a good thing for that library? You tell me. Libraries can be places that statically house ideas or places where ideas [are put into action](#). We've seen a lot of the former. Maybe it's time to see some of the latter.

Source: http://www.pcworld.com/article/197759/Public_Libraries_as_Business_Incubators.html

Layout modified to fit space, no changes to content.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Released: January 22, 2013

Library Services in the Digital Age

Patrons embrace new technologies – and would welcome more. But many still want printed books to hold their central place

By [Kathryn Zickuhr](#), [Lee Rainie](#) and [Kristen Purcell](#)

Summary of findings

The internet has already had a major impact on how people find and access information, and now the rising popularity of e-books is helping transform Americans' reading habits. In this changing landscape, public libraries are trying to adjust their services to these new realities while still serving the needs of patrons who rely on more traditional resources. In a new survey of Americans' attitudes and expectations for public libraries, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project finds that many library patrons are eager to see libraries' digital services expand, yet also feel that print books remain important in the digital age. The availability of free computers and internet access now rivals book lending and reference expertise as a vital service of libraries. In a national survey of Americans ages 16 and older:

- 80% of Americans say borrowing books is a "very important" service libraries provide.
- 80% say reference librarians are a "very important" service of libraries.
- 77% say free access to computers and the internet is a "very important" service of libraries.

Moreover, a notable share of Americans say they would embrace even wider uses of technology at libraries:

- Online research services allowing patrons to pose questions and get answers from librarians
- Apps-based access to library materials and programs
- Access to technology "petting zoos" to try out new devices
- GPS-navigation apps to help patrons locate material inside library buildings
- "Redbox"-style lending machines or kiosks located throughout the community where people can check out books, movies or music without having to go to the library itself
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When Pew Internet asked the library staff members in an online panel about these services, the three that were most popular were classes on e-borrowing, classes on how to use handheld reading devices, and online "ask a librarian" research services. Many librarians said that their libraries were already offering these resources in various forms, due to demand from their communities.

Public priorities for libraries

Asked which services libraries should offer to the public, majorities of Americans are strongly in favor of:

- Coordinating more closely with local schools
- Offering free literacy programs to help young children
- Having more comfortable spaces for reading, working, and relaxing
- Offering a broader selection of e-books

Source: <http://libraries.pewinternet.org/2013/01/22/library-services/>

Content modified to eliminate details under headings to fit space; headings not modified.

winter haven public library

Kathryn L. Smith Memorial

Library Services

Circulation Services

Library Card
(membership;
reciprocal agreement libraries)

Checkouts

Renewals

Fine Policies

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

Collection Development

Computers for Public Use

Copy Machine

Ellison Machine and Die Cuts

Email Notification

Fax Machine

iPad Checkouts

Items for Sale

Laminating

Library Policies

Magnifier for the Visually Impaired

Meeting & Study Rooms

Polk County Library Cooperative Services Chart

Reference Services

Study Rooms

Exam Proctoring

Wireless Internet Access (Wi-Fi)

Youth Services

Chit Chat & Interact

Class Visits

Computers for Children (12 and younger)

Computers for Young Adults (13-17)

Excellence in Reading

Florida Library Youth Program

Homework Computers (18 and younger)

Little Sprouts Story Hour

Outreach

Source:

<http://whpl.mywinterhaven.com/services.html>



Winter Haven's downtown library.

Community Centered: 23 Reasons Why Your Library is the Most Important Place in Town

by Julie Biando Edwards, Melissa S. Rauseo, & Kelley Rae Unger on April 30, 2013

Libraries as Community Builders

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Source: <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2013/04/community-centered-23-reasons-why-your-library-is-the-most-important-place-in-town/>