The Rural Public Library as Place in North Florida: A Case Study

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THE RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY AS PLACE IN NORTH FLORIDA:

A CASE STUDY

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I dedicate this study to the citizens of Gadsden County, Florida.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ x
List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ xiii
Abstract ................................................................................................................................... xiv

## 1. OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT ............................................................................. 1

- Statement of the Problem .................................................................................................. 2
- Overview of the Published Literature in LIS ................................................................. 4
- Introduction to Relevant Theoretical Concepts ............................................................ 6
- Purpose Statement and Research Questions ................................................................. 10
- Importance of the Study .................................................................................................. 11
- Overview of Study Design ............................................................................................. 12
- Study Setting ..................................................................................................................... 13
- History and Economy of Gadsden County ................................................................. 13
- Gadsden County at the Start of the 21st Century ....................................................... 14
- Gadsden County Public Library System .................................................................... 16
- A Brief History of Library Service in Florida and in Gadsden County ................. 18
- Chapter Summary ........................................................................................................... 25

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ........................................................................ 26

- Human Geography .......................................................................................................... 26
- Definitions ........................................................................................................................ 26
- Library as Place ............................................................................................................... 28
  - Practitioner Articles ....................................................................................................... 28
  - Keynote Speeches ......................................................................................................... 30
  - Research ........................................................................................................................ 31
- Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................... 34
  - Jürgen Habermas and the Transformation of the Public Sphere ............................ 37
    - Urban public space as an expression of the public sphere .................................... 41
    - Public libraries and the public sphere ................................................................. 44
  - Place Theory in Sociology .......................................................................................... 47
    - Simultaneous perception ............................................................................................ 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third places</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public libraries as third places</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public realm</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public realm and the public library</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Sense of Community</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public libraries and social capital</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public libraries as digital informational places</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Study Design</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Methods in Social Research</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replication</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Setting and Access</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Instruments and Methods</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating sweeps</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library User Surveys</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews of Library Users</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with Library Public Service Staff Members</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Room Reservation Logs</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Time Table</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis Design</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-coder Reliability Testing</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions and Validity</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Disclosure</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................109

4. FINDINGS ...........................................................................................................................111

  Research Question 1 ...........................................................................................................111
    Gender of GCPLS Users .................................................................................................111
    Age of GCPLS Adult Users .........................................................................................112
    Where Do GCPLS Adult Library Users Live? ...............................................................114
    Level of Education .........................................................................................................115
    Languages Spoken ..........................................................................................................115
    Primary Occupation .........................................................................................................116
    Answer to Research Question 1 .....................................................................................117

  Research Question 2 ...........................................................................................................118
    Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 2 ........124
    Answer to Research Question 2 .....................................................................................139

  Research Question 3 ...........................................................................................................141
    Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 3 ........143
    Answer to Research Question 3 .....................................................................................159

  Research Question 4 ...........................................................................................................161
    Seating Sweeps Results .................................................................................................161
    Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 4 ........164
    Answer to Research Question 4 .....................................................................................186

  Research Question 5 ...........................................................................................................188
  ChapterSummary ..................................................................................................................200

5. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSES OF RESEARCH FINDINGS ......................................................201

  Conceptual Framework Review .......................................................................................201
  Chattahoochee Branch Library .........................................................................................202
  Havana Branch Library ....................................................................................................213
  Quincy – The McGill Main Library .....................................................................................221
  Contextualization of GCPLS Libraries .............................................................................231
6. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION .................................................................235

Conclusions ...........................................................................................................235
Contribution of Conceptual Framework .............................................................236
The Public Sphere ................................................................................................236
Third Places .........................................................................................................237
Informational Places ..........................................................................................238
Public Realms ......................................................................................................238
Psychological Sense of Community ..................................................................240
Social Capital .......................................................................................................240
Implications of Inter-coder Reliability Check ....................................................241
Relevance of Urban Place Theories to Rural Libraries .......................................243

Research Methods ..............................................................................................243
Observation ..........................................................................................................243
User Surveys ........................................................................................................245
Public Interviews ................................................................................................246
Staff Interviews ..................................................................................................247
Meeting Room Reservation Sheets .................................................................247
Relevance of Methods to a Small Rural Setting ....................................................247
Limitations of Replication ..................................................................................248

Overall Study Limitations ....................................................................................248
Implications of the Study for Practice ...............................................................250
Future Research Directions .............................................................................252
Reflection .............................................................................................................252

APPENDICES .......................................................................................................254
A. PERMISSIONS FROM SITE DIRECTOR ..........................................................254
B. IRB APPROVAL LETTERS .............................................................................256
C. SEATING SWEEP OBSERVATION FORM .....................................................258
D. LIBRARY FLOOR PLANS ..............................................................................260
E. LIBRARY USER SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT LETTER .......................263
F. LIBRARY USER SURVEY TEXT ....................................................................265
G. LIBRARY USER INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT LETTER ....................277
H. LIBRARY USER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .................................................................279
I. LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT LETTER ........280
J. LIBRARY STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ..........................................................282
K. PARTICIPANT RECRUITING POSTER TEXT AND DESIGN ..............................284
REFERENCES ...........................................................................................................285
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH .......................................................................................303
LIST OF TABLES

1.01  Gadsden County population by municipality with type of library service ..........15
1.02  Gadsden County Public Library System Growth, 2000 – 2007 ..............................17
3.01  Survey questions mapped to research questions ....................................................91
3.02  Library user interview questions mapped to research questions ...........................94
3.03  Interview candidates by age, race, and gender ......................................................96
3.04  Library staff interview questions mapped to research questions ...........................97
3.05  Data collection schedule ......................................................................................99
4.01  Percentage of GCPLS library users by gender ...................................................111
4.02  Percentage of GCPLS library users by age .........................................................112
4.03  Individuals observed during seating sweeps by gender and age ............................113
4.04  Observed race of interview participants ..............................................................113
4.05  Age and gender of interview participants .............................................................113
4.06  Gender of survey respondents .............................................................................113
4.07  Age of survey respondents ..................................................................................114
4.08  Residence of survey respondents ........................................................................114
4.09  Travel time to usual library ..................................................................................115
4.10  Level of education of survey respondents .........................................................115
4.11  Languages spoken by survey respondents ............................................................116
4.12  Primary occupations of survey respondents .......................................................116
4.13  How much would your life change without this library? ......................................124
4.14  Why do you use this library? .................................................................................125
4.15  User-friendliness .................................................................................................126
4.16  Talk to staff ........................................................................................................126
4.17  User-staff member conversation topics ..............................................................127
4.18  Most important library service ..........................................................................127
4.19  Least important library service ...........................................................................129
4.20  Services or resources requested by users ............................................................130
4.21  The primary purpose of the library .....................................................................131
4.22  A word that best describes the library (staff) ........................................................134
LIST OF FIGURES

3.01  Study design map ........................................................................................................... 85
3.02 Three-part organization of conceptual framework ...................................................... 103
4.01 Research participants by gender and branch ............................................................... 112
4.02 Most important library service ................................................................................... 128
4.03 Least important library service ................................................................................... 129
4.04 Library space descriptors ......................................................................................... 147
4.05 Features ranked by feature and library location ....................................................... 150
4.06 Reasons for visiting the library ................................................................................... 170
A-1  Screen print of e-mail from Jane Mock, Director of the Gadsden County Library System granting Linda Most permission to conduct her dissertation study. Received May 12, 2008 ........................................................................ 254
A-2  Screen print of e-mail from Jane Mock, Director of the Gadsden County Library System granting Linda Most permission to review or copy library meeting room schedules. Received December 22, 2008 ........................................................................ 255
C-1  Seating sweeps observation form, actual form fits on one sheet of 8.5 x 14 inch paper ..................................................................................................................... 258
D-1  Floor plan of McGill Library in Quincy ....................................................................... 260
D-2  Floor plan of Havana Library ..................................................................................... 261
D-3  Floor plan of Chattahoochee Library ......................................................................... 262
ABSTRACT

Research into the library as place investigates the role of public library buildings as destinations, physical places where people go for various reasons ranging from making use of the library’s resources and services or seeking to fulfill an information or reading need to less easily identified reasons that may include using the library’s building as a place to make social or business contacts, to build or reinforce community or political ties, or to create or reinforce a personal identity. This study asks: How are one rural U.S. county’s public library buildings functioning as places? The answer is derived from answers to sub-questions about adult library users, user and staff perceptions of library use, and observed use of library facilities. The findings are contextualized using a framework built of theories from human geography, philosophy, sociology, and information studies.

This case study replicates a mixed-methods case study conducted at the main public libraries in Toronto and Vancouver in the late 1990s and first reproduced in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2006. It tests methods used in large urban settings in a rural, small-town environment. This study also expands on its antecedents by using thematic analysis to determine which conceptualizations of the role of the public library as place are most relevant to understanding this community’s use of its public library buildings as places.

The study relies on quantitative and qualitative data collected via surveys and interviews of adult library users, interviews of library public service staff members, structured observations – seating sweeps – of people using the libraries, and analysis of selected documents. The five sets of data are triangulated to answer the research sub-questions. Thematic analysis derived from the conceptual framework finds that public realm theory informs the relationships that develop between library staff members and adult library users over time. The study finds that the libraries serve their communities as informational places and as familiarized locales rather than as third places, and that the libraries support the generation of social capital for their users.
CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

The story of Conrad Cheek, Jr., a regular visitor at the Southeast branch of the Washington D.C. library system (Wee, 2005), gives an example of the range of possible experiences that can happen inside a public library building. On Tuesday evenings, at the request of the children’s librarian, Cheek visits the library to play chess with the children. He is patient and by all reports a good teacher. Children look forward to seeing him. But Conrad Cheek is also homeless, having lost his job, his wife, and his apartment. When he is at the library Cheek is not just another homeless man: he has responsibility and authority, and he feels a sense of accomplishment when the children make progress; at the library people look up to him. They call him “Mr. Conrad.” His experiences at the public library have helped Conrad Cheek maintain his self-esteem in the face of personal hardship. His story is only one of many that validate library buildings as important places in the lives of library users.

Research into the concept of library as place attempts to understand the role of library buildings as destinations, physical places where people go for various reasons ranging from the most obvious -- making use of the library’s resources and services or seeking to fulfill an information need -- to less easily identified reasons that may include using the library’s building as a place to make social or business contacts, to build or reinforce community or political ties, or to create or reinforce a personal identity (Osburn, 2007). Public library leaders refer to their libraries as information institutions and this is how people most typically understand public libraries. In prefaces to their books, authors often include thanks to their local public libraries for providing access to information they needed to complete their books. Statistics show that generations of Americans have used their public libraries for reading materials. During 2005, nationwide, visits to public libraries totaled 1.4 billion, or 4.7 library visits per capita, and those visitors checked out over 2 billion library items (Chute & Kroe, 2007). Statistics do not show how people variously use the places American public libraries provide for their local communities.
Statement of the Problem

From the work of Leckie, Hopkins, and Givens (Givens & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002), and May (2007) LIS researchers know something about how people use larger urban and suburban public libraries as place in Toronto, Vancouver, and Halifax, Canada; ongoing research generated by the Urban Libraries Council has explored public library use in many larger U.S. cities (Urban Libraries Council, 2007). Examples of other explorations of how people use libraries as place include a study of the ways people use the reading rooms of some of Israel’s urban public libraries (Shoham, 2001), and an inquiry into how women use public libraries differently than men (Fidishun, 2007). A recent collection of snapshots of all sizes of public libraries being used as place across the state of Washington is also available (Myall, 1999). A new collection, The Library as Place: History, Community, and Culture (Buschman & Leckie, 2007), presents scholarly papers offering a broad range of examinations into the nature of the library as place in multiple settings. None of the research studies in the new collection address the contemporary role of the rural public library as place. It appears that LIS researchers know less overall about how people use the small rural public libraries, which greatly outnumber large urban main libraries in the U.S. and Canada as place.

According to the American Library Association, “of 9,046 public libraries in the United States, 79% (7,158) serve populations up to 24,999” (ALA Profiles, n.d.). This study will systematically investigate the role of the public library as place in Gadsden County, a small rural, majority African-American county located in north-west Florida along the Florida-Georgia border. The goal of the study is to identify how the Gadsden County Library System’s adult users view and use their public library buildings as place.

Studying the Gadsden County Public Library System as place is important because the role of the public library as place in small towns and in the lives of rural African-American adult library users has not been closely studied. More has been written about the historical role of public libraries in African-American communities and the fight for access to their buildings and collections (Battles, 2009; Hersberger, Sua, & Murray, 2007; Tucker, 1998). Because the Gadsden County Public Library System has three new library buildings, it offers a rare opportunity to expand on LIS research about the contemporary role of the library as place to include rural libraries. This study will
expand on LIS’s understanding of library as place by replicating a tested research design in a population demographic not yet studied in this context. It also offers the opportunity to explore if and how current library architecture and facilities design are meeting the needs of the community’s library users. Additionally, it will attempt to identify the most relevant theoretical explanations of how library buildings function as place in a rural setting by contextualizing its findings within the theoretical literature that informs the concept of the library as place.

As this research project was being planned in early 2008 the people of Florida had just approved a state-wide property tax rollback initiative that would lead to a series of significant cuts in county revenues. Local officials and community leaders began the process of reviewing services that might be cut or consolidated and public libraries were in their sights. Reviewing city and county programs and services vulnerable to cutbacks in the new taxing environment, the Tallahassee Democrat reflected on programs vulnerable to rethinking or cutting in lean funding years: “Then there’s the public library. As important as a decent library system is to a community, substantial cuts wouldn’t result in a public health emergency. [Leon County] Commissioners might have to consider a fee-based system of some sort, with a baseline expenditure that subsidizes a minimum level of ‘free’ service for everyone. Those who desire a higher level would have to pay. . . . ‘When everything is going well in the economy everybody wants a pool at their community center, everybody wants a branch library’,” said the top aide to the Leon County Administrator. “But when the economy goes south those same people are saying ‘what the hell are you doing with my tax dollars?’” (Berlow, 2008, p. 1B).

On the same day and the same page the chairman of the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners promised his county’s residents that commissioners would do their “best to ensure that the essential services and programs we provide on a daily basis are not negatively impacted.” He predicted, however, that “belt-tightening” would be necessary and he called on members of the community to participate in the decision-making process (Dixon, 2008, p. 1B). The Gadsden County Public Library System had just completed an ambitious construction program with the opening of the new Havana Public Library in 2003, the new main library -- Quincy’s William A. “Bill” McGill Library -- in 2006, and the new Chattahoochee Public Library in 2007 (Mock, 2008).
Given the chilly public funding climate just described this is an opportune moment to conduct a detailed study of how Gadsden County’s citizens use their three new public libraries as places.

**Overview of the Published Literature in LIS**

Studying the Gadsden County Public Library System as place requires the author to construct a framework from previously conducted research. Osburn (2007) provides a theoretical and philosophical context for the concept of library as place, situating it in the fields of psychology, neurology, geography, philosophy, and architecture. His constructed definition of *place* is “a setting of any dimension and type in which an individual perceives a special spirit (genius loci) [*sic*] that is generated by the quality of experience related to the values and associations it recalls, and whose significance to the individual captures an extraordinary order and heightens related awareness that becomes an inspiration for imagination and behavior” (p. 63). Osburn’s definition of place contextualizes much of the literature cited in this study and informs the concept of “library as place” as it is developed and explored in *The Library as Place: History, Community, and Culture* (Buschmann & Leckie, 2007). The book’s chapters address libraries as places historical and contemporary, situated in real and imagined settings. As a collection, the chapters illustrate the unexpectedly broad range of uses people make of their library buildings and facilities. Individually they illustrate the unique nature of each individual or group interaction with the physical spaces of a library. As a whole the book suggests the broad scope of the subject and encourages continuing research into the role libraries of all kinds play as places in the lives of their users.

Other than work conducted by the American Library Association’s Office for Literacy and Outreach Services and by the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship (CSRL) at Clarion University there is little scholarly research addressing the ways small rural and suburban libraries function in their communities. In 2004 ALA surveyed rural public, school, and tribal libraries to identify their key areas of concern (Leach, 2004). Survey respondents identified community poverty and lack of library funding as the key problems they faced. The study did not look at any of the positive aspects of small rural libraries for their communities. The ALA website lists no other current research on the
Although the CSRL has published the journal *Rural Libraries* -- covering all aspects of library service to rural communities and rural librarianship -- since 1980, it has yet to publish any research into the role of the rural public library as community place.

Library and information studies (LIS) research has focused more on analyzing large urban public libraries and the roles they play as an essential feature of their cities. Some of the theories cited and the methods used in these studies can be applied to studying small and rural libraries in their towns and counties. Mattern (2007) studied fifteen recent new large urban library construction projects to explore the issues involved in designing large urban downtown library buildings at the start of the 21st century. Her work focuses on the library building designs and how the libraries fit into their cityscapes. She emphasizes the importance of the physical design and furnishings of public libraries but concentrates on large urban landmark library buildings -- not the more numerous smaller suburban or rural libraries. While this study does not examine issues directly related to library architecture and building design it will address library user perceptions of the physical features and furnishings of their library buildings. Some of the principles of library design discussed in Mattern’s study may be helpful in understanding the importance of library architecture, fixtures and furnishings in smaller settings.

Ongoing research conducted by the Urban Libraries Council (2007) is another example of applied research into the role of the library as place. The Urban Libraries Council’s mission focuses on strengthening public libraries as an essential part of urban life through membership activities, research, education, and forecasting. Its research reports feature studies demonstrating the many ways public libraries have contributed to urban society. While the ULC focuses on large city libraries, the questions asked in its research are relevant to public libraries in smaller communities as well.

Van Slyck (1995, 2002) provides a historical perspective that explores how Andrew Carnegie’s interest in funding public library buildings both changed the physical space of public libraries and the intellectual space of the profession of librarianship, an influence that persists today. Her discussion provides background and context for understanding contemporary public library building design and the roles contemporary public libraries play as places in their communities. Carnegie library architecture has

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been instrumental in creating and supporting public perception of what a public library should look like. Van Slyck calls Carnegie libraries “old friends” and describes them as “immediately recognizable” (1995, p. xix).

**Introduction to Relevant Theoretical Concepts**

Place studies is a field of inquiry grounded in geography and in social and cultural studies. Cresswell (2004) offers five concepts to help understand place as a construct: location, locale, sense of place, space, and landscape. *Location* refers to fixed coordinates in space; *locale* refers to the boundaries that define the places within which people conduct their lives as social individuals; *sense of place* explains people’s subjective attachments to locations to which they have attached meaning; *space* is the physical world before people attach meaning to it; and *landscape* is the topography of the spaces around people – the geography they look at rather than the place they live. Places all have significance in the social world and the field of place studies provides a fresh way of looking at the role of libraries in society. Drawing on the framework built in place studies LIS scholars have used several theoretical perspectives to understand libraries as place.

Jurgen Habermas’s (1989) theory of the *public sphere* offers a philosophical grounding from which to interpret one of the roles public libraries play in society. For Habermas the public sphere is a theoretical conceptualization of the part of the social world that sits between the private sphere -- the home -- and the sphere of public authority – the world of government and the state. The public sphere is that part of the social world outside direct control of the state where people can come together regardless of status or income. It often forms in commercial places but has a non-commercial, non-market focused perspective. The public sphere is the place in which public discourse on topics of general interest occurs and in which democracy is nurtured through social interaction. Some scholars use the concept of *civic space* to describe the public sphere (Schudson, 1998).

Buschmann (2003, 2005a, 2005b), Webster (2002), Wiegand (2000, 2003) and Williamson (2000) are among those who interpret the role of public libraries in their communities as an expression of the concept of the public sphere. They suggest that public libraries are among the few remaining places where people can come together
regardless of race, class, gender, or income level. In their view the physical place of public libraries provides a setting in which democratic activity can occur. Habermas’s theory of the public sphere, especially when understood as civic space, may help understand some of the ways people use the Gadsden County Public Library System.

Public and academic libraries have been researched as places where social capital is generated. *Social capital* is a theoretical concept that grows out of economic thinking but is used across many disciplines to describe the results of connections people make through participation in social networks. One of the core ideas of social capital is that social networking has value and that the action of social networking generates a form of capital that an individual can use to enhance personal or group productivity within the social world. Political science scholar Robert Putnam (2000) is among those credited with popularizing the concept of social capital in the United States, but his emphasis is on its influence on the relations between communities and nations rather than between individuals.

Audunson, et al. (2007), Bourke (2005), Cart (2002), Goulding (2004), and Hillenbrand (2005) have successfully used the theory of social capital to explain some of what happens between people who come together in public library buildings. Audunson, et al., have categorized public libraries as low intensive meeting places. Low intensive meeting places are arenas where people can meet or be exposed to others with different interests and values. By contrast high intensive meeting places are the places where people live out the majority of their lives engaged with others who share their interests, projects, or life goals (Audunson, 2005). Audunson, et al. describe the public library as “an arena for informal social interaction, for the creation of weak ties, generalized trust, and bridging social capital” (para. 11). They say that the unique accessibility of public libraries to all members of the community as well as outsiders “should make it extraordinarily well suited for bridge building across diversities” (para. 11). Bourke (2005) also describes public libraries as ideally placed to encourage the networking between different community groups and representatives that is the generating force required to build social capital. The theory of social capital should be useful in understanding some of the reasons people use the Gadsden County Public Library locations.
Warren (1978) says the term \textit{community} implies a group of people who have “something both psychological and geographical” in common (p. 6). It “relates to the shared interests and behavior patterns which people have by virtue of their common locality” (p. 6). McMillan and Chavis (1986) developed the idea of \textit{psychological sense of community}, a theory based on four concepts. \textit{Membership} “is the feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness” (p. 9). \textit{Influence} is defined as “a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members” (p. 9). \textit{Integration and fulfillment of needs} speak to reinforcement, “the feeling that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group” (p. 9). \textit{Shared emotional connection} refers to “the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences” (p. 9). Combining these elements, McMillan and Chavis define \textit{sense of community} as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan, 1976, cited in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Hersberger, et al. (2007) studied the role the Greensboro, North Carolina, Carnegie Negro Library played for its users from 1924 to 1963. They analyzed the library’s community role using McMillan and Chavis’s four concepts. After a thorough analysis of historical documents they found that community members remembered their library not just as a building, “but as a place where all members of the community could be considered as equal” (p. 96). Library users remember the library as being theirs, being situated in their part of town and functioning as a center and meeting place. One member recalled the library as being more than just a place for reading; it was a place for social activities. Hersberger, et al.’s use of the theory of psychological sense of community as a way of interpreting the historical role of the public library for an African American community during the first half of the twentieth century may have relevance for this study’s proposed analysis of the role of a contemporary public library system’s buildings in their communities.

Lofland (1998) divides urban space into three \textit{realms} -- private, parochial, and public. The boundaries of these realms are fluid and their identities can change as
peoples’ relationships change within a given space. The private realm is the space in which family and friendships occur. The parochial realm is the world of neighborhoods and the workplace where people know each other socially or professionally and share a common purpose. The public realm is the world of the street where strangers find themselves face to face. While moving through the public realm people experience a variety of relationships with those they encounter during their daily public activities and the nature of those relationships can change over time. McKenzie et al. (2007) describe public library meeting rooms as neutral physical spaces that may serve variously as public or parochial realms as the relationships between the people using the spaces change. The fluidity built into public realm theory may be useful in understanding how people experience the Gadsden County Public Library locations.

Oldenburg’s (1999) concept of third places has provided a popular framework for scholars to use when analyzing roles public libraries might play as community places (Fisher et al. 2007, C. Harris, 2007; K. Harris, 2003; Lawson, 2004). For Oldenburg home and family make up the first place, work and professional or business relationships happen in the second, and third places are the social sites where people go to experience community when they are at leisure or between home and work. Third places most often: are free or inexpensive; feature food and drinks that, while not essential, are important; are highly accessible, ideally within walking distance; involve regular patrons whom habitués expect to see there; and are unprepossessing but welcoming and comfortable. Oldenburg does not consider public libraries to be third places, but by adding cafes or coffee carts to their services many library directors are attempting to position their institutions as third places.

Fisher, et al. (2007) developed the concept of informational places when they used Oldenburg’s (1999) third place theory as part of the framework for their study of the new Seattle Public Library central library. They asked library users and passers-by about their perceptions of the new building as a physical and social place. Fisher, et al.’s research found that though the library only met three of Oldenburg’s eight characteristics of a third place, one of the key values of the library to its users was as the place to go when they needed to obtain information, read for pleasure, or study and learn. While this is not surprising, Fisher, et al. say the theoretical literature in place studies has not
previously addressed place in relation to information seeking behavior. They developed the concept of an informational place to add information seeking and consumption as a core attribute of place in the theoretical literature. Their characterization of the new Seattle public library as an informational place may be helpful in understanding theoretical aspects of library as place in other communities as well.

The conceptual framework for this study is built on previous research into the role of the library as place and the role of the library in the life of the user. Zweizig (1973) observed that most library research to that time had been conducted from the perspectives of librarians and administrators and suggested that LIS research would be well served by investigating the roles libraries play in the lives of their users -- in other words -- developing a user-centered perspective. Thirty years later Wiegand (2005a) summarized three key roles public libraries play in the lives of their users: making useful information and recreational reading materials available to billions of people and providing “hundreds of thousand of places where users have been able to meet formally as clubs or groups, or informally as citizens and students utilizing a civic institution and cultural agency” (p. 77). This third role public libraries play for their users examined from the perspective of broader theoretical interpretations of the roles of public places in society provides the context for understanding the ways Gadsden County’s library users think about and use their public libraries as place.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore ways that adults who live in a small, rural, majority African-American county use their public libraries as place. The study’s guiding question asks: How are the Gadsden County Library System’s library buildings functioning as places? The question is addressed by answering specific research questions about library user demographics, library user and staff perceptions of library use, and observations of actual use of library facilities:

- **RQ 1:** Who are the users of the Gadsden County library buildings?
- **RQ 2:** How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?
- **RQ 3:** What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?
RQ 4: What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users make of their library buildings?

RQ 5: What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities?

The answers to these questions -- obtained through a mixture of research methods including structured observations of actual library use, a library user survey, interviews of library users and staff members, and review of library meeting room reservations -- provide answers to the guiding question and explain how Gadsden County libraries are functioning as place for the local community. Findings from this study are analyzed within the context of the theoretical literature to deepen understanding of how people use the Gadsden County Library locations as place.

**Importance of the Study**

Findings about the use of Gadsden County’s public libraries as place have several uses. Answers to the study’s research questions can benefit the library system directly by providing community feedback on how successful new building designs are and how useful their facilities are to the community. Answers point out some design issues the library system’s managers may wish to address in future renovations. The findings may also help others interested in understanding the roles public libraries play in the lives of their users. This study advances the field of place studies by demonstrating the applicability of the theories most often used to understand or contextualize larger urban public libraries as place to a small rural library system.

The objective of the study is to provide a current picture of the uses Gadsden County’s adult citizens make of their new libraries. Beyond the local level, detailed data on how members of the Gadsden County community use their public libraries adds to the information Lees (2001) requested in calling for a better understanding of how patrons experience the physical spaces of public libraries. The study’s findings provide examples of how new libraries are serving small rural communities in response to the Project for Public Spaces’ (2007) call for librarians to think about how their libraries serve the needs of their communities. At the same time the findings from this study contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation about the role of library as place by providing new
insights into how the members of a majority African-American rural community use their libraries as place.

This study contributes to the larger ongoing discussion about the role of the library as place in the age of networked information sources, a discussion which has become quite heated in some communities. In San Diego County, California, a discussion of the future of the physical space of public libraries has been going on since 2005 (Brett, 2005; Levy, 2005; Trageser, 2005, 2007), triggered by the construction of a new $20 million library building. The mayor expressed his misgivings about the role of the new library in the computer age; “it will be more of an intellectual coffeeshop than a library,” he said (Kaye, 2007). At the same time the American Library Association recently reported that the number of visits to public libraries in the United States increased 61% between 1994 and 2004 with nearly two billion visits to U.S. libraries in 2004 (“New Data Shows,” 2007). People are apparently still finding reasons to visit their public libraries in ever increasing numbers. This study helps uncover why.

**Overview of Study Design**

This study follows Leckie and Hopkins’ (2002) and Givens and Leckie’s (2003) mixed methods, triangulation case study design for their research at the Toronto and Vancouver main libraries as replicated by May (2007) for her study of public libraries as place in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The design triangulates data collected from observations of library users, library user surveys, library and staff member interviews, and library meeting room reservation logs. The study instruments replicate those May used and so have been pretested. Data collection began with a series of structured unobtrusive observations known as “seating sweeps” (Given & Leckie, 2003) to record what people appeared to be doing while in the library. The second step in the data collection used May’s survey to collect quantitative and qualitative data that describe adult library user demographics, indicate which features of the library system they use or do not use, and report their perceptions of the physical spaces of the library locations. Conducted concurrently with the survey, qualitative interviews of adult library users and library staff members further explored different perceptions of how people use the libraries and how they feel about their library as place at each of the library system’s locations. Analysis of library meeting room reservation sheets corroborated anecdotal descriptions of the ways people
use the meeting rooms. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using different methods facilitated comparing the dual perspectives of adult library users and library staff members to create a fuller picture of the role of library as place in Gadsden County, Florida.

**Study Setting**

Census figures released August 9, 2007 show that in one of every ten U.S. counties, non-Hispanic whites are the minority (Dart, 2007). Located in the Florida Panhandle along the Florida-Georgia border and just 20 miles from the state capital, Gadsden County, Florida, is one of the United States’ 300 majority minority counties – counties in which members of minority groups make up the majority of the population (Abbady, 2007). While Gadsden County is small, ranking 42nd of 67 counties in Florida in overall population, it is second only to large, urban Miami-Dade County in percentage overall minority population. It has the highest percentage of African-American residents -- 56.8% -- and the highest percentage of female heads of household -- 26.9% -- in Florida (Dart, 2007; BEBR, 2007a, p. 1, p.3).

**History and Economy of Gadsden County**

Gadsden County was established in 1823 and quickly chosen as the site of Florida’s state capital. When Gadsden County was divided in 1824 the area containing the new state capital became Leon County, leaving the Gadsden residents to establish the town of Quincy as the county seat in 1825 (Womack, 1976). Gadsden’s early slave-driven plantation economy focused on cotton and tobacco (Womack, 1976). The nineteenth century’s Civil War and Reconstruction periods ended the plantation system and farmers next focused on lower-maintenance crops, though they returned to tobacco farming in the 1880s in the search for a viable money crop. Farmers also successfully grew sugar cane into the twentieth century (Womack, 1976).

In the early 20th century a land-owning tobacco farmer could prosper if he managed his crop and his finances carefully. The farmers received their operating capital from two sources, the tobacco packing houses and the local banks. The local bankers were known to understand farm financing and to be supportive of shade tobacco (Pando,

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2 According to the 2000 census Miami-Dade County’s minority population is 87.6% overall, but 57.3% Hispanic and 20.3% black or African-American. [http://factfinder.census.gov/](http://factfinder.census.gov/).
2002). In Quincy, M. W. “Pat” Monroe was president and principal shareholder of the Quincy State Bank from 1892 to 1939 (Womack, 1976). Monroe, known as “Mr. Pat,” was also an early investor in the Coca-Cola Company, becoming one of the principal shareholders when the company was sold by its founders in 1919 at $40 per share (“Quincy, Coca-Cola & Mr. Pat,” 1968; Lindstrom, 1986). Interviews with eye-witnesses and their descendants repeatedly confirm that Mr. Pat advised his farmer-clients to diversify their holdings and to buy and hold Coca-Cola stock as a sound investment (Quincy, Coca-Cola & Mr. Pat,” 1968; Womack, 1976; Lindstrom, 1986a; “Heritage,” 1988; Pando 2002). Mr. Pat’s advice led to approximately twenty Quincy families becoming very wealthy from their investments, an opportunity not shared by the majority of Gadsden’s agricultural workers (Lindstrom, 1986a; Nordheimer, 1987). Though tobacco is no longer grown in Gadsden County, agricultural research is a continuing by-product of the shade tobacco industry (Gadsden County Tourist Development Council, n.d.).

**Gadsden County at the Start of the 21st Century**

Though Gadsden County appears to be a rural county and its history is dominated by agriculture and the extraction industry, the county is now classified as a metropolitan county in a small metropolitan area of less than one million people (Gadsden County Tourist Development Council, n.d.; USDA ERS, 2003b). Gadsden County is currently included in the Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area (OMB, 2007, p. 50). It was added in 1983 in preparation for the 1990 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 1981; U.S. Census Bureau, 1983; Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department 2006, note on p. 16). The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service classifies Gadsden County’s economy as Federal or State Government Dependent, meaning 15% or more of average annual labor and proprietor earnings were derived from the Federal or State government during 1998 – 2000 (USDA ERS, 2003a). The county is classified as experiencing housing stress, meaning “30 percent or more of households had one or more of these housing conditions in 2000: lacked complete plumbing, lacked complete kitchen, paid 30 percent or more of income for owner costs or rent, or had more than 1 person per room” (USDA ERS, 2003a).
Because of its plantation history, agricultural economy, and some of its residents’ investments in Coca-Cola stock, Gadsden County today is a study in contrasts. According to certain key statistical indicators Gadsden is the poorest county in the state, with the highest percentage statewide of single female householders (26.9%), and the highest percentage of students eligible for the free/reduced price lunch program (Proctor, 2001; Center for Public Education, 2008; BEBR, 2007a, p. 3, p. 6). These statistics tie directly to the high percentage of African-Americans in the county’s population (Proctor, 2001). Yet the presence of the Coca-Cola families implies deep pockets of wealth in and around Quincy. While Gadsden County is part of the Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area rather than a micropolitan\(^3\) area in its own right, except for Quincy its town populations are each under 5,000 people and its public library system serves people living in both small towns and unincorporated areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Library Service</th>
<th>New building opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>3,833</td>
<td>Branch</td>
<td>April 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>Bookmobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gretna</td>
<td>1,741</td>
<td>Bookmobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>Branch</td>
<td>July 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midway</td>
<td>1,683</td>
<td>Bookmobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>7,300</td>
<td>Main Library</td>
<td>June 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated</td>
<td>31,222</td>
<td>Bookmobile and deposit collections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total County Population | 48,195 (BEBR, 2007b, p. 5) | |

In the introduction to its undated website the Center for Small and Rural Libraries (CSRL) observes that, “As places, previously recognized as rural, are converted to shopping centers, housing plans, etc., it becomes increasingly difficult to determine the demarcation lines between rural and urban.” They conclude, “Because of the various models of rural [non-metropolitan communities] -- farming, ranch, retirement, tourist, college town, mining, industrial, bedroom, etc., the CSRL feels that it is useful to also

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\(^3\) A metro area contains a core urban area of 50,000 or more population, and a micro area contains an urban core of at least 10,000 (but less than 50,000) population. Each metro or micro area consists of one or more counties and includes the counties containing the core urban area, as well as any adjacent counties that have a high degree of social and economic integration (as measured by commuting to work) with the urban core (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).
consider rural and small to be synonymous concepts. In this relationship, most of the public libraries in the United States are located in either rural or small towns” (CSRL, “Defining” n.d.).

**Gadsden County Public Library System**

Notwithstanding its location within the Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area, the Gadsden County Public Library System today describes itself as “a 25 year old library system located in rural North Florida” (Gadsden County Public Library blog, n.d.). Though the county library system as a unit of county government is 25 years old, Gadsden County has a history of municipal and subscription public library service dating back to the early 20th century. Today the county library system consists of a main library, two branches, and a bookmobile (State Library and Archives of Florida, 2006, Table 1). The library system has three new library buildings. The Havana Public Library branch building, opened in 2003 after previously occupying rented quarters. The new William A. “Bill” McGill main library in Quincy opened in June 2006. The new Chattahoochee Branch Library opened in April 2007 (Mock, 2008). A bookmobile serves the outlying communities of the county (Gadsden County Public Library blog, n.d.).

The Gadsden County Library System provides a series of outreach services, “taking the library out to day care centers, schools, camps, the senior center, and the community events. This position is essential because of the County’s rural nature, the lack of transportation and the high adult illiteracy rate which combines to create roadblocks for people receiving a library experience” (“Welcome to Gadsden County,” 2005).

1992 statistics reported by the Florida Literacy Coalition indicate that in Gadsden County 40% of adults function at the lowest level of literacy, second only to Dade County [now Miami-Dade County] where 42% of adults function at the lowest level of literacy4. The Florida Literacy Coalition’s Statistical guide defines the lowest level of

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4 The Florida Literacy Coalition’s Statistical Reference Guide ([http://www.floridaliteracy.org/about_literacy__facts_and_statistics__data.html](http://www.floridaliteracy.org/about_literacy__facts_and_statistics__data.html)) links to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy’s (NAAL) 1992 Local Area Estimates of Literacy ([www.floridaliteracy.org/refguide/assessment.pdf](http://www.floridaliteracy.org/refguide/assessment.pdf)) and specifies that the 2003 Local Area Estimates of adult literacy were not available at the time of access, August 7, 2008.
adult prose literacy as “Below Basic: no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills” (p.1)\(^5\).

The Gadsden County Public Library System has grown steadily since 2000 as shown in Table 1.01. As each new building opened library visits and materials circulation have increased.

Table 1.02: Gadsden County Public Library System Growth, 2000 – 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data year</th>
<th>Service area population</th>
<th>Visits per year</th>
<th>Visits per Capita</th>
<th>Adult circulation</th>
<th>Circulation per borrower</th>
<th>Circulation per capita</th>
<th>Square feet of service space</th>
<th>Square feet per capita</th>
<th>Service hours per week</th>
<th>Report date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>49,398</td>
<td>237,016</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>155,152</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>28,680*</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>48,195</td>
<td>215,956</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>120,505</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>26,254**</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>70 **</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>47,713</td>
<td>142,272</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>114,090</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>19,799</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>46,857</td>
<td>135,564</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>109,472</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>19,799</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>46,491</td>
<td>115,029</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>89,245</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>19,799***</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>45,911</td>
<td>113,620</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>92,758</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>45,284</td>
<td>107,276</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>83,190</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Table 1, Table 9, Table 30, Table 8, Table 27, Table 1, Table 13, Table 1

* Chattahoochee branch opened during 2006-07 report year

\(^5\) NAAL uses three categories to define English-language literacy: prose, document and quantitative. Prose literacy includes the skills needed to understand continuous text, such as newspaper articles. Document literacy is the ability to understand the content and structure of documents such as prescription drug labels. Quantitative literacy involves using numbers in text, such as computing and comparing the cost per ounce of food items.

NAAL reports literacy in each category using a 0-500 scale score. Scores are then grouped in four literacy levels: Below Basic, Basic, Intermediate and Proficient. Below Basic is the lowest level and indicates having “no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills.” Those who can perform “complex and challenging” tasks are considered at the Proficient level.

In 2006-2007, the last year for which statistics are available, GCPLS reported an overall collection of 121,681 print volumes (5.47 volumes per capita); 34,218 borrowers (69% of the county population - all county residents); and an average circulation of 5.47 items per borrower (State Library & Archives of Florida, 2008, Tables 7, 8, & 29). The library system counted 237,016 library visits in 2006-07 or 4.8 visits per capita (State Library & Archives of Florida, 2008, Table 9). The State Library and Archives of Florida rank Florida’s public libraries in descending order by size of the legal service population but do not provide comparative ranking of public libraries by any of the statistics they collect. The Gadsden County Public Library System ranks 51st out of 74 in relative size of legal service population of public library entities reporting their statistics to the State Library (State Library & Archives of Florida, Introduction).

A Brief History of Library Service in Florida and in Gadsden County

Although the history of library service in Gadsden County follows the pattern of development in other Florida public libraries, its pattern is somewhat unique because of the county’s small population and rural character. Public library service in Florida developed more slowly than in the other southeastern states because of Florida’s history and geography (Stelle, 1937). Florida became a state in 1845 with the majority of its population located either in the northern panhandle region or Key West. The state functioned very much as the U.S. southern frontier until the turn of the century (Tebeau, 1971). Its people held on to the traditions of their homes, whether they were from Georgia, the other southern states, the northern states, or overseas. During the Civil War Florida played a supporting role by supplying provisions for the Confederate Army and also supporting blockade running. The war brought hard times to the farmers and loyalties were divided within the population. Reconstruction brought Florida the chance to start over after having had its agricultural and industrial development destroyed (Shofner, 1996).

Modern library service in Florida formally began with the authorization of the Legislative Library in 1845 in Tallahassee but public library service did not begin until after the Civil War (Stelle, 1937). Kruse (1948) provides a brief synopsis of early Florida
book collections and access to reading materials beginning with a description of
seventeenth century parish and parochial school libraries in St. Augustine. He cites
references to three rental libraries located in the West Florida territory in 1821, to a
Pensacola bookstore and rental library reported in 1822, and to a circulating library run
by a Tallahassee newspaperman in 1829. By 1825 Kruse reports two public reading
rooms in operation -- located in Pensacola and in St. Augustine. He also describes an
early school library established in West Florida sometime after 1840 by John Newton, a
teacher from Massachusetts. The 1830 Federal Census recorded Florida’s population at
37,730 (Stelle, 1937).

The best concise report on the history and status of libraries in Florida to the time
was published in 1937. Under the impetus of the American Library Association’s
southeastern initiative, led by its regional field agent Tommie Dora Barker (Barker, 1936;
Anders, 1958), Helen Virginia Stelle, the librarian of the Tampa Public Library,
conducted a statewide survey of library service in Florida in 1935. She introduces her
findings by recapping the history of public library service in Florida beginning with a
reference to the oldest public library, located in St. Augustine and established in 1874.
She offers an intriguing description of the Florida territory in relation to libraries.

Early in the history of the territory Congress appropriated money for the
St. Augustine road, which extended from Pensacola to St. Augustine.
Along this road or adjacent to its course grew up several towns in the early
days of the territory – Quincy, Monticello, Marianna, Apalachicola.
While some of the oldest libraries are in these towns, none have libraries
dating to the early days of their existence. Tallahassee was chosen as the
capital in 1824 but the present [social] library was not established until
1884 (Stelle, 1937, p. 6).

Stelle (1937) identifies Florida’s first public library as the one established in St.
Augustine in 1874. Anders (1958) identifies the first incorporated subscription library in
Florida as the Jacksonville Library Association, dated 1873. Stelle (1937) reports that
library service began in 1878 in Jacksonville through the Jacksonville Library and
Literary Association, which became the Jacksonville Library Association in 1883.
Jacksonville’s original library property was completely destroyed by fire in 1901. Its
voters accepted a Carnegie library gift in 1902 and their new building opened in 1905. Jacksonville’s was the first municipally supported free public library in the state (Anders, p. 51). By the end of the 19th century Stelle lists libraries in fourteen communities (including Tallahassee) and describes all except Jacksonville’s as “small” (p. 7). These libraries appear to have been created through subscription support either from Women’s Clubs or Library Associations (Stelle, 1937; Mason, 1968). In addition to Jacksonville, by 1920 nine communities in south and central Florida had received grants to build Carnegie libraries (Bobinski, 1969; Davis & Stone, 1993).

Stelle attempted to reach all the libraries in the state with her 1935 survey. She reports responses from 49 free public libraries and includes the Quincy Public Library in her results. She reports the population for Quincy from the 1935 census as 4,064, though she does not indicate whether this is the municipal or the county population. In response to the survey the Quincy Public Library reported holding 2,464 volumes with 791 registered borrowers. It had three employees and reported its source of income as a combination of municipal and subscription funds. Its total income for the year was $741.02 and it reported expenses of $698.35. No other libraries in Gadsden County were listed in Stelle’s report, but the 1937 W.P.A. Directory of Florida Libraries (Hawes) prepared by the Florida State Library lists the Women’s Club Library in Chattahoochee in addition to the Quincy Public Library.

As was typical in the small towns of the segregated south, neither the Quincy nor the Chattahoochee libraries provided service to African-Americans (Stelle, 1937). Stelle’s survey reports branch libraries dedicated to serving African-Americans in Jacksonville, Orlando, Eustis, Lakeland, Ormond, Palatka, St. Petersburg, and Tampa. She reports the total African-American population for those cities at 92,090, leaving 339,738 other Florida African- Americans without library service, saying “their only access to free books is through the schools” (p. 10).

In 1947 the Florida Library Association conducted and published a second statewide survey of library service as part of the Tennessee Valley Authority Library Council’s regional study of library problems. The authors note that Florida was considered part of the Southeast but was experiencing very different growth patterns from its neighbor states. Florida’s population was growing more rapidly than that of the region
as a whole but was still less than six of the other states. Within Florida, distinctions between the northern panhandle of the state and the peninsula continued to be strong. The authors observe, “The peninsula part of the state thrusts completely out of the region, not only physically but culturally. Whereas the people and way of life in North Florida belong to the South, the life and people in South Florida are very much of the North. Intermingled with these two sectional outlooks on life is a third that stems from the Latin American peoples even further to the south” (Florida Library Association, 1947, p. 1).

By the 1947 survey Florida had experienced multiple boom and bust cycles resulting in pockets of urban growth, and tourism had become the largest industry in the state. Mormino’s (2005) review of growth and urbanization patterns in 20th century Florida supports the observations the authors of the 1947 survey made. He comments that Florida’s connection to the South was loosening visibly as the 1940s ended and notes that by 1950 almost two-thirds of Floridians lived in cities compared to the Southern States’ average of 48.6% urban residents. The authors of the 1947 study, who lived the population increase, compare Florida to the other southeastern states and note that in many ways it was more like the border states of the southwestern region, Texas and Louisiana, than its southeastern neighbors because of its long history of Spanish influence and its subtropical climate. Even so, the authors conclude that Florida belonged in a survey of the southeastern states because it “is still more closely related to the other Southeastern states than to any other recognized regional group. One crosses the line from Georgia or Alabama scarcely aware that one has entered Florida” (p. 2). Mormino reports that population growth occurred unevenly across Florida and that the heavy increases in the central and southern parts of the state did not occur in North Florida’s rural counties. Their cities remained quiet southern towns that slowly lost population into the 1970s.

The 1947 survey found that Florida provided library opportunities for less than half its people, stating that 59% of the people in the state received no public library service. The survey reports that 76% of the state’s students received no school library service. In urban areas 39% of people had no public library service but in the rural communities only nine communities with populations under 2,500 offered any kind of library service, leaving 99% of rural residents with no access to library facilities. No
county libraries existed in the state, and ten counties reported no library service of any kind. Thirty-six counties reported no municipal libraries and thirteen reported no school libraries. Quincy reported a population of 5,346 -- placing it just above the rural category -- but it had the least financial support and the lowest circulation figures of municipal libraries in cities with populations from 5,000 – 10,000. Gadsden County had one elementary and two high school libraries. The Quincy Public Library continued to function as a municipal library sponsored by the Woman’s Club, and the Chattahoochee library reported being supported by its area Woman’s Club. African-Americans in Gadsden County had no library service. The 1947 survey comments that, except for those living in towns with higher education facilities dedicated to educating African-Americans -- specifically Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach and Florida A. & M. College then under construction in Tallahassee -- “the Negro’s library opportunities are almost non-extant” (p. 31). The survey does not discuss public library service to African-Americans.

Women’s Clubs played an important part in the development of public library service in Florida and nationwide. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was formed in 1890 from the confederation of individual women’s clubs and claims to be “the oldest and largest nondenominational, nonpartisan volunteer service organization of women in the world” (Stone & Preer, 1989, p. 296). The clubs have a long history of commitment to libraries -- as early as 1898 Library Journal noted their importance to libraries nationwide. In the south “these clubs have been almost the only means of library extension” (Stone & Preer, p. 297). The individual Southeastern state federations of women’s clubs originally sponsored traveling libraries, considered to be the most effective way to reach the most residents. Anders (1958) found that “in every state, except Virginia, the federation [of Women’s Clubs] conducted a system prior to provision of such a service by the state. As soon as legislation provided for the inauguration of state traveling library systems, the federation discontinued its work and

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6 Paula D. Watson’s 1994 study, “Founding Mothers: The Contribution of Women’s Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States” Library Quarterly, 64(3): 233-269, examines in detail the work of women’s voluntary associations in support of free public libraries throughout the U.S. She places her findings in the context of general historical writing on libraries and suggests that the efforts of the women’s organizations to provide library services need more detailed attention than has been given in library historical scholarship.
turned its collection over to the state agency,” (p. 57). Florida’s women’s clubs were the last to establish a traveling library system, doing so sometime between 1906 and 1908, and the last to turn their collection over to the state library board -- when it was activated in 1927 (Anders, p.58, p. 174). Anders quoted the 1935 – 1937 report of the Florida State Library Board as paying tribute “to the ‘invaluable missionary work [of women’s clubs] in getting libraries established’ in the state” (p. 67). In the 1947 Florida Library Association survey 35 of the respondents reported support by Woman’s Clubs and 21 of the Florida libraries reporting municipal support carried “Woman’s Club” in their names. The Quincy Woman’s Club continued its support of subscription public library service in Gadsden County until 1980 when the county library system was created (Waters, 1987).

Throughout the Southeast, library service to African-Americans increased slowly but steadily. Anders (1958, p. 220) provides the following overall percentage figures for African-American access to library services in Florida: 1926 – 17%; 1935 – 20%; 1939 – 27%; 1947 – 28%. In 1941 Eliza Atkins Gleason’s landmark study, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library*, reported library service in Florida to 55.93 percent of urban African-American residents and none to rural residents (p. 95). She found that a total of over 900,000 African-Americans in Florida did not receive library service of any kind (p. 95), but does not give any percentage comparable to those given by Anders.

By the 1954 landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision “Brown v. Board of Education” ruling segregation to be illegal in schools, free tax-supported public library service in Florida was available to 50.1 % of white residents and 37.2% of African-Americans, over half of whom lived in urban environments (McNeal, 1961; Musmann, 1998). Only 3.5% of African-Americans living in rural settings had access to public library service. A small survey conducted by the Southern Regional Council in 1953 reported full library service to African-Americans at the Miami and Miami Beach main libraries (McNeal, 1961). Limited services were available at the main public libraries in Daytona Beach, Lakeland, Orlando, Pensacola, Key West, and St. Petersburg (McNeal, 1961). By 1961 Jacksonville’s and Tallahassee’s main libraries had expanded their service to African-Americans but McNeal does not make clear whether their services were fully or partially desegregated or whether library services were delivered at the branches or by using a bookmobile.
In Gadsden County in the 1960s and 1970s subscription public library service was provided by the Woman’s Club in Quincy and by a small city library in Chattahoochee. In Quincy the Woman’s Club library continued to be housed in the Quincy Academy building, where it had been moved in 1935 ("Quincy Library History," n.d.). By 1976 the library occupied the entire Academy building and held thirty thousand volumes. The following narrative is taken from the first five year plan prepared for the Gadsden County library system in 1987 (Waters) and from notes provided by the current library director, Jane Mock. The five-year plan begins with a brief history of the development of unified county library service, starting in 1979 when the Board of County Commissioners voted to create a public library system.

Once the Gadsden County library system was established in 1979, the Quincy Woman’s Club donated its library to the county and leased the Academy building to the county to facilitate continued housing for the library. In February, 1980, after some renovation, the Academy building reopened as the main library for the county. In Chattahoochee the city and the county signed an interlocal agreement transferring operations of the city’s public library to the county. After renovations “funded by the City of Chattahoochee, Gadsden County, and concerned citizens, and with labor and other services provided by the Appalachee Correctional Institute, the River Junction Correctional Institute and the Florida State Hospital” (Mock, 2008), the Chattahoochee library reopened as a branch of the county library system. In Havana the county leased a small storefront and with the help of volunteers opened the new branch in April, 1980. The library system reported steady growth over the next five years with annual increases in patron registration figures, library visits, and materials circulation at all three locations. The county also developed a county-wide bookmobile system and experimented with deposit collections in Greensboro and Gretna (Mock, 2008; Waters, 1987).

In 1987 the Quincy library moved from the Academy into a downtown facility it would share with the local branch of the Tallahassee Community College (TCC). The library served as both the public library for Quincy and as the community college’s branch library. When TCC moved out of the building the public library continued, next sharing the space with the Sheriff’s Office and the County Justice Complex. The main library remained in the same building until the new McGill Library opened in 2006. In
1990 the Havana library moved to a larger rented storefront and remained there until the Town of Havana built a new library building in 2003. The Havana building belongs to the town, but the Board of County Commissioners runs the library as part of the Gadsden County Public Library System. The Chattahoochee branch was renovated in 1998 and continued in the original location until the new building opened in 2007 (Mock, 2008). The citizens of Gadsden County can now visit one of three new library buildings or obtain library services from the bookmobile.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced the research problem underlying this study. It provided a context for the research and a definition of *place* within the study context. It provided an introduction to the literature about *library as place* and to the conceptual framework within which this study is positioned. It introduced the actual research questions and research methodology and explained the importance of the study’s findings locally and for the scholarly community. The chapter next described the study setting, including the library system, and the county; and it offered a brief historical overview of library development in Florida and in Gadsden County. The next chapter presents the conceptual framework that informs this study.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Human Geography

Human Geography offers many ways to understand how people create and respond to the places in which they find themselves. Influenced by the environmental movement, Tuan (1974) developed the concept of _topophilia_ or _place love_ to explain the human predisposition to care so much about the places in which people find themselves that their environments become objects of attachment and even love. For critical geographers the concept of place has become a social construction as they observe that social issues of class, gender, and race do not occur without context. Social conflicts happen in physical space and time, and the places in which they occur both contribute to and take meaning from the social activities they frame (Cresswell, 2004). Phenomenologically identifying or distinguishing particular places and social forces is less important than understanding that “the essence of human existence is one that is necessarily and importantly ‘in-place’” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 51).

Definitions

To cultural geographers space and place are not the same. _Place_ is a more complicated term with multiple levels of meaning. The word is used in daily conversation and has several common-sense meanings, but its everyday usage obscures its difference from space. “Space is more abstract than place” Tuan (1977) suggests. “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value . . . The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition” (p. 6). Cresswell (2004) explains that “space is a more abstract concept than place” (p.8). Space has more objective connotations. It has little or no emotional resonance. Places mean something to people; they collect associations and have emotional significance. Cresswell explains “Places have space between them” (p. 8). Understanding the relationship between space and place is also a way of understanding the world in which people find themselves. “Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power” (Cresswell, 2004, 12). There is constant slippage in the use of the terms _space_ and _place_ in the literature. Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. Sometimes _space_ is
used to imply objectivity or distance from the emotional resonance a place has acquired. Inconsistencies in use of these two terms will be evident throughout this chapter.

Because this study is restricted to looking at the role of public libraries as place it is important to define *public*. Akkar (2005) summarizes dictionary definitions of *public* and uses them to define *public space* as “space concerning the people as a whole, open to all, accessible to or shared by all members of the community, and provided by the public authorities for the use of people in general” (p. 76). However, he notes that dictionary definitions are not “sufficient to describe the qualities of an urban place” (Akkar, 2005, p. 76). Thus he turns to Benn and Gauss (1983, pp. 3-27) who have identified three factors that inform and determine the relative publicness or privateness of a public space. *Access* refers to having admittance to something such as a place or an event. *Agency* is concerned with who controls access, and whether that person is acting in her own interests or representing some unit of the social world. For example, a public official acts by virtue of the power of the office she holds. A private individual acts in her own interests and on her own authority. *Interest* addresses who is affected as a result of action taken by the agent. The public-private relationship can be dichotomous or relative and the two concepts can function normatively or in relation to specific situations.

Akkar (2005) comments that the urban environment is not composed of spaces that are absolutely public or absolutely private. Most urban space exists on a continuum of degrees of publicness to privateness. Applying Benn and Gauss’s (1983) concepts, Akkar says the extent of publicness of a space “will depend on three indices: the degree to which the public space and its resources -- as well as the activities occurring in it and information about it -- are available to all; the degree to which it is managed and controlled by public actors and used by the public; and the degree to which it serves the public interest” (p. 76). These concepts cannot be applied without looking at the state of publicness or privateness of an urban space in the context of its community.

Public libraries fit along the spectrum of Akkar’s degrees of publicness in that they are available to all, are managed for public use, and dedicated to serving certain aspects of the public interest. Chute & Kroe (2007) define the public library as “an entity that is established under state enabling laws or regulations to serve a community, district, or region, and that provides at least the following: (1) an organized collection of
printed or other library materials, or a combination thereof; (2) paid staff; (3) an established schedule in which services of the staff are available to the public; (4) the facilities necessary to support such a collection, staff, and schedule; and (5) that is supported in whole or in part with public funds.”

**Library as Place**

When studying public library topics Library and Information Studies (LIS) research has traditionally focused on the library and not on its users. Zweizig’s (1973) call to study libraries from the users’ perspective encouraged LIS scholars to refocus their work. Wiegand (1999) cited Zweizig when he asked library and information studies scholars to shift their research perspective from studying the roles of the user in the life of the library and to include more about “the role libraries have played in the everyday lives of women, children, African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans, and working class people” (1999, p.23). Wiegand suggests that understanding the roles of the library in the life of the user can be enhanced by looking at libraries as institutions of reading and as places where community is formed (1999, 2003a, 2003b). Wiegand also calls for the new research to adopt theoretical perspectives from other disciplines, especially American Studies and print culture history (Wiegand 2000, 2003a).

After Wiegand’s 1999 challenge, the phrase “library as place” began to appear in the scholarly and professional Library and Information Studies (LIS) literature. Practitioner reports, keynote speeches, and feature articles predominate in this literature. Reports of actual research are less common. Samples from each category follow to introduce the variety of current approaches to library as place in the LIS literature.

**Practitioner Articles**

The editor of *Alki*, the Washington State Library Association journal, asks: “in a world that is increasingly ‘virtual’ is the library’s role as a special physical place still important?” (Myall, 1999, p. 4). Articles in the issue answer affirmatively, citing examples from practice featuring the physical places of public libraries from around their state. The President of the Washington Library Association notes: “we still need book shelves, magazine and newspaper browsing areas, and a separate space for kids’ books and activities – space to support library activities that have been around since the turn of this century” (Cunningham, 1999, p. 2).
“We support the premise that in the face of nearly any technological changes that occur, people will still seek out a physical space to meet and exchange points of view,” the architect said describing a recently completed public library building in Columbia County, Washington. The branch manager says, “As Internet activity and e-mail correspondence have moved from novelty to becoming a common part of life, the need for social interaction and the desirability of the library as a physical destination has only grown stronger for most of us” (Soneda, 1999, p. 12). A reference librarian notes “the new library is a better fit with patrons’ expectations, instead of forcing the patron to conform to library expectations” (Soneda, 1999, p. 13). Positive library patron comments complement the beautiful new building, saying how much nicer it is than the old one and how many more books it has than before.

In Library Administration & Management (2002), Ranseen asks the often repeated, typically overstated question, “Why would people visit a library when they can get everything they need from the Internet?” (p. 203). She cautions against measuring the library’s success solely through circulation figures and, though she never actually answers her question, suggests that libraries should focus on providing access to world news, providing activity spaces, allowing for news as theater, allowing space for meditation, supporting connections to the virtual world, and at the same time functioning as a community center as ways to attract visitors to the buildings. Ramseen’s paper does not suggest asking members of the community what they want their library to be.

In the Texas Library Journal Westmoreland (2003) stresses the importance of maintaining the library’s physical spaces in the face of steadily increasing emphasis on technological innovation. She cites a library construction boom, increased usage in newly constructed libraries when measured by door counts rather than circulation counts, and notes that “physical libraries are still important, especially in a bad economy; and most assuredly, libraries are important to populations that have been labeled as minority, underserved, immigrant, or non-English speaking. For many of these people, there would be no Internet access without libraries” (p. 140). She says, “We need to refocus the value of the physical library on its traditional mission . . . . As long as we remain advocates for our users and as long as humans learn in the same manner (and not through physical
osmosis or molecular chips inserted at birth),” and concludes, “The buildings we know as libraries will and should remain” (p. 142).

Montgomery County, Texas, public library director Williams (2003) reports that her community’s members supported the library as place by voting for a bond issue to build three new branches. By “meshing both in-house resources and services with electronic access” Williams says her library system will continue to focus on customers’ information needs. “In a technology-oriented world, individuals still want and need personal contact. Library activities can fill the need for positive interactions. Without a doubt, I see ongoing importance in the role of ‘the library as place’” (p. 140).

**Keynote Speeches**

In 2000, historian of architecture Abigail Van Slyck addressed University of Texas School of Library and Information Science graduates on why place matters in relation to libraries. She said “public librarianship has always been intertwined with the library as a physical space. Indeed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was impossible to discuss the profession without also discussing the place. This was in part because librarians understood that without the authority to determine the library’s spatial arrangements their aspirations to professional status were doomed” (Van Slyck, 2001, p. 519). “Look to your library building to see what it says about your philosophy of service,” she concludes, “Who is actively welcomed? Which activities are encouraged? Which are merely allowed? Change the library building if it fails to support your goals . . . Finally, let the kids cavort among the columns” (p. 523).

Academic libraries are also examining the roles of their physical spaces. In a Medical Library Association keynote speech Weise (2004) demonstrates the value of the library as place by asking the same questions asked by those studying public libraries as place. “The Web and the Internet have not made public physical spaces obsolete for people” she notes, “people need and want contact and interaction; otherwise we wouldn’t be here today! What we must do to fill this need is to design our libraries to merge virtual space and physical space; to create a ‘convergent architecture’ that uniquely matches form to the functions of our future libraries” (p. 11). Weise recommends that librarians advocate for library roles beyond ‘‘storage facility’ and even the ‘access facility,’ and focus attention on the many other place-centered activities and services that
the library can support.” She says, “The integration of technology into the very fabric of
the library is of paramount importance and while librarians cannot predict changes in
technology better than any others, we can develop a civilized relationship between
humans and technology” (p. 12). Weise concludes “my purpose here is not to
recommend specific design ideas for libraries, but to examine the value of the library as
place. Imperfect as they may be, libraries are cultural institutions and, as such, reflect the
values not only of our profession, but of our institutions and our society. We should
work hard to design libraries to fulfill the overarching vision of our free society” (p. 12).

In a 2005 keynote address to the North Carolina Library Association Wiegand
explores the multiple theoretical perspectives that contribute to understanding library as
place. He proposes that no one theory can completely explain how the library functions
as place in the life of the user and suggests observing “the totality of uses and experiences
that occur in this place we call library, and then let users tell their stories” (p. 80). He
acknowledges that libraries cannot be all things to all people but that keeping library as
place as a central concept and goal when making decisions about library programs,
planning, and policy will help connect libraries more closely to their host communities.
“Libraries are indeed important places to be,” Wiegand concludes, “but public
sphere/civic space theory and research suggests they are important for many more
reasons than we currently realize” (p. 81).

Research
A 1997 study conducted in urban Israeli public library reference departments (Shoham,
2001) asks who uses the libraries’ reading rooms, why they come to the library, and what
services they use. Shoham’s study finds that high-school students make up the largest
group of reading room users. Reflecting their role as students, most came to the library to
study; 56% had at least a high school education or were currently enrolled in high school;
42% had post secondary education. The study also found that 63% of the people using
the reading rooms were not members of the library (defined in the article as not
subscribing to the library’s lending services). Thus, Israeli public library reading rooms
were being used primarily by people with education who were there to study or consult
with a librarian.
Fidishun’s (2007) qualitative study of adult public library patrons analyzes differences in how males and females use public library physical spaces as well as print and online information. Responses describe the library as “a place of solitude, of discovery, and of enrichment” (p. 341). Fidishun finds differences in library use according to gender, saying “It was interesting that although women did appreciate the library as a place and used it to find time for themselves, to socialize, to read magazines and newspapers, or to study, men mentioned this trend more often” (p. 341). The librarians noted “men tend to come to the library to socialize or to find time for themselves, whereas women usually come in, do what they need to do, and leave” (p. 341). Overall, the women who responded to the study find the library as a place to be “somewhere they can find solitude from busy lives, connect socially, or give back to their community” (p. 342). For the survey participants Fidishun reports, “The library is still an important institution even in an ever expanding world of information” (p. 342). One respondent says “The library is my sanctuary – place of calm -- knowledge -- imagination. It’s the source of all info – so, all good!” (p. 341).

Burke and Martin (2004) also draw on Zweizig’s (1976) suggestion to study the role of the library in the life of the user, choosing a legal perspective. They examine a body of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona state case law from 1900 to 2002 to see how public and academic libraries were treated. They identify four categories of library use beginning with library affiliation being used as a testament to one’s character or to community standards. “Individuals form opinions about others or attempt to influence others’ opinions of them by linking themselves with libraries” (p. 415). The second and largest use of libraries in their study (33% of the cases) is as information and community centers. “This is a major component of the mission statement of most libraries and is at the heart of what public librarianship has evolved into over the last century or more” (p. 416). Though many patrons’ purposes in libraries fall within the realm of expected uses of the library facilities, materials, and services, in many cases, library use falls “outside of the expected, such as the use of the library to commit crimes” (p. 419). Third, Burke and Martin group libraries’ roles as physical community structures and political entities. This category of use appears throughout the case law in taxing and construction disputes occurring from 1906 into the 1990s. Finally, Burke and Martin find that the library
locations often serve as geographical reference points in disputes otherwise peripheral to the purpose of libraries. Their work with case law supports their interpretation of libraries as being “intricately intertwined with the greater social patterns of society as a whole and of the communities in which they are situated,” and they conclude that libraries are very much places that play important community roles, noting, “Social issues do not just happen outside of libraries they happen inside of libraries as well,” (2004, p. 422).

Leckie’s (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) study of public use of the main libraries in Toronto and Vancouver and the buildings’ social roles as important community places is central in the scholarly research about library as place and provides the foundation for this dissertation. Her study examines public use of the Toronto and Vancouver main libraries through a series of structured observations, library user surveys, library user interviews, and staff interviews. She and her colleagues report that the libraries are “highly successful as public spaces” (2002, p. 359), and attract a large and diverse user population. They “fulfill extremely important educational, informational, and social functions within their respective cities, providing community gathering, work, and study places that would be difficult to duplicate in any other manner” (2002, p. 359). Their findings also indicate “important symbolic, cultural, and socioeconomic roles” for libraries in their cities and that the rise of information technology has only expanded the libraries’ role by adding another tool the public can use. The most serious threat to the continued success of the downtown public library as an important community place “is the ongoing ideological shift within libraries away from their neutral status as public institutions toward that of an active agent for private interests in the market economy” (2002, p. 360). They see a danger in the ongoing commercialization of library services and facilities through corporate sponsorships and underwriting because commercial influence “has the real potential to transform the fundamental nature of libraries” and change the public library’s fundamental cultural mission to one that that is no longer entirely public (p. 360).

May (2007) uses Leckie’s (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) study as the basis of her masters thesis. She uses Leckie’s overall design and instruments to study patterns of use in six small and medium sized libraries in Nova Scotia. Her study
asks whether the libraries are functioning successfully as public places and how people use and experience the libraries as physical spaces. She finds that each library is flourishing as a public place and that people are using them “to engage in a wide variety of activities from using computers to socializing, reading, and interacting with staff” (p. xi). She concludes that the libraries she studied “are vibrant community spaces that are used in a multitude of ways and where the public feels welcome” (p. xi). May’s study provides the model for the methodology and instruments employed in this study. Her work is addressed in detail in the next chapter.

In 2004 journal editors Wiegand and Bertot (2007) -- convinced of the need for continuing research into library as place in LIS scholarship -- proposed a special issue of The Library Quarterly on the theme and asked Leckie (2004; Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) and Buschman (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) to serve as guest editors. “While we were hoping for six good papers, submissions soon numbered over thirty. Obviously ‘library as place’ was on the research agenda of more LIS scholars than we anticipated” (Wiegand & Bertot, 2007, p. vii). Leckie and Bushman responded by publishing a separately issued monograph – The Library as Place: History, Community, and Culture (2007) -- featuring fourteen research articles that together “demonstrate convincingly that for their users libraries are indeed important places to be, and they also suggest that libraries are important as places for many more reasons than we currently realize” (Wiegand & Bertot, p. viii). The book’s chapter authors draw on various theoretical, historical, and sociological concepts to inform their research and the balance of this chapter will introduce several of the theoretical perspectives featured in the book that contribute to understanding the public library as place.

Theoretical Framework

Leckie (2004) discusses three theoretical perspectives that inform her work on libraries as public space in a follow-up article to her study of the Toronto and Vancouver main libraries (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). With the early 20th century wave of public library construction funded by Andrew Carnegie, she says “there was no question that what we were building were spaces in the public realm” -- “spaces that would both nourish our intellectual lives as individuals and citizens and foster a sense of community in whatever locale or institution those library spaces were being created” (p.
She says that by the mid-twentieth century with the rise of suburbanization and increases in the number of highways, cars, and malls, people had lost sight of the library as a vital public space. Public libraries could not compete with the attractiveness of the new community center -- the mall. According to Leckie the rise of personal computing and the growth of public access to the Internet in the late 1980s and early 1990s exacerbated the isolation of public libraries. She describes public libraries as falling out of fashion, no longer places people chose to visit. She notes that perspectives on public libraries started changing around 1999 and finds evidence in the library construction boom “as hundreds of public and academic libraries are either being built or substantially refurbished” (p. 233). She says that along with the new library construction “we are also reclaiming the conception of the library as an important and vital public space, a place that is worth every bit of our collective attention” (p. 233).

For Leckie (2004), the key factors that make public libraries into public spaces that serve the needs of their users start with the library’s physical presence, including its architectural design and its location in the community. How libraries become successful public spaces depends on “a complex interplay of the actions and beliefs, of library users and library staff, library governance, particular ideologies, political maneuvers, power relations, and a number of other factors” (p. 234). Leckie identifies academic conversations about “the nature of the public sphere, the crisis in civil society, and the meaning of the library to its users” (p. 234) as especially helpful to understanding the role of the library as a meaningful public space, and offers a short introduction to each of these three key theoretical concepts.

Briefly, the public sphere is a conceptual arena in which people can participate in the public, civic aspects of their lives not played out at home (the private sphere) or under direct control of government (the sphere of the state). The public sphere coalesces when people come together voluntarily to discuss important civic issues. Philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1974, 1991) is most closely associated with developing and exploring the concept of the public sphere and his work is often cited in discussions of the role of the public library in society. Habermas’s concept of the public sphere will be introduced in detail in the next section of this chapter. Referring to Habermas, Leckie reviews the discussion about whether the library is functioning successfully as an expression of the
public sphere (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Webster, 2002; Buschman, 2004) or whether its increasing emphasis on marketing and entertainment are “resulting in a civic space that does not allow for public assembly and discourse but has been downgraded into a place only for leisure” (Leckie, 2004, p. 234).

The crisis in civil society, according to political scientist Robert Putnam, (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b, 2000) refers to a steady decline in civic participation, volunteer work, and philanthropy in the United States since World War II. Putnam attributes this decline to a steady decrease in the production of social capital, the intangible glue that underpins social institutions and holds society together. Leckie (2004) responds that Putnam and other scholars have often overlooked the library as a key community institution and she cites former American Library Association president Nancy Kranich (2001), who points out the public library is a key community place where social capital is generated. The relationship between public libraries and social capital will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Leckie completes her theoretical framework by discussing the meaning of the library to its users, referring to Zweizig’s (1973, 1976) argument that LIS scholarship should be thinking about the library in the life of the user rather than the user in the life of the library. Citing her own research (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) she supports Wiegand’s (2003) contention that libraries should be celebrating and encouraging reading as a public activity. Her research finds “that the majority of patrons in the library at any given time were engaged in reading and the number one reason for visiting [the libraries] was to use the large and complete collection of books and periodicals” (Leckie, 2004, p. 235).

Other aspects of “the library in the life of the user” that Leckie says have been overlooked include “the relationship patrons develop to the library as a physical space” (2004, p. 235). She finds that patrons make the library “fit into their lives as a public space” in many positive ways, and says, “there is currently no other public space quite like the public library, where citizens can engage in quiet reflection and study, able to pursue their own intellectual projects and personal growth free of the commercial pressures and ideological positions that permeate almost every other aspect of life” (p. 236). For Leckie the threat to public libraries is not the seduction of digital and communication technologies, tools that bring access to global knowledge and
communication to personal computers, but rather that the ideology of library as business (Buschman, 2004) will undermine the library’s position as an expression of the Habermasian public sphere.

Buschman’s (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) theoretical research identifies the U.S. public library as a quintessential expression of the Habermasian public sphere. Library collections, he says, represent and preserve “the variety of arguments over the public’s issues and democratic culture over time, implicitly refuting notions of once-and-for-all solutions” and embody “the turbulent course of a democracy and its culture” (2005a, p. 11). “By building diverse voices, perspectives, and arguments into our collections and services” he says, “we keep alive the means of realizing true democracy – by transcending our nation’s historical shortcomings of exclusion and discrimination, and our profession’s similar shortcomings, through the struggle to include censored works and underserved groups” (2004, p. 40).

Jürgen Habermas and the Transformation of the Public Sphere

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas defines the bourgeois public sphere as a realm of the social world situated between the privacy of the home and the authority of the government in which citizens can participate in civic dialogue as a means of contributing to civic life. His book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* shaped the political consciousness of the European New Left in the 1960s (Hohendahl, 1974). Since appearing it has influenced thinking across many disciplines and has contributed significantly to understanding the role of media in public life and the ways people come together for civic purposes outside the official structures of government.

For Habermas, the public sphere is a construct of the middle class world. He conceives it “as the sphere of private people come together as a public” (1989, p. 27). Habermas says the public sphere rose out of seventeenth century social changes -- especially in France, England, and Germany -- as professional men created a new civil society by coming together in non-governmental public places and forming voluntary associations (Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1992). Habermas describes the bourgeois public sphere as the result of a new emphasis on communicating ideas and information between members of a social world. It is: “The sphere of private individuals assembled into a
public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated ‘intellectual newspapers’ for use against the public authority itself. In those newspapers, and in moralistic and critical journals, they debated that public authority on the general rules of social intercourse in their fundamentally privatized yet publically relevant sphere of labor and commodity exchange” (Habermas, 1974, p. 52).

Habermas also describes how over time the bourgeois public sphere transforms under the pressure of social change. He demonstrates this change by citing the transformation of newspapers from “a journalism of conviction to one of commerce” beginning in the 1830s in England, France, and the United States (1974, p. 53). Other transforming forces include a blurring of the distinction between the state and the social world (Calhoun, 1992).

Boyte (1992) identifies multiple elements of eighteenth century social, economic, and cultural life that together formed the background from which the public sphere emerged. The era’s new urban culture provided physical spaces, including “lecture halls, museums, public parks, theaters, meeting houses, opera houses, coffee shops, and the like” (p. 342). New social information sources became available as new institutions emerged, including the press, publishing houses, lending libraries, and literary societies. The explosive rise of voluntary associations contributed a sense of public service and gave the public an identity independent of its individual members.

Calhoun (1992) provides additional historical background for the rise of the public sphere. Increases in long-distance trade and the commercial sector supported the new social forms because larger scale commerce provided tradesmen and farmers with access to new groups of people and encouraged the possibility of new non-governmental political alliances. The expanding market facilitated access to news from further away as well as facilitating access to a wider array of goods. The growing middle class social, intellectual, and commercial world supported a new kind of rational conversation in which professional and business men could claim social or political leadership based on knowledge and expertise, and in which older hierarchical patterns of deference gave way to conversations among equals to determine the public good. The new public discussion was based on “faith in the possibility of arriving at consensus,” (Johnson, 1991, p. 219) which came out of a shared sense of values and common goals rather than from
hierarchical position and privilege. Private individuals could come together to discuss rather than to confront, to listen and learn, to persuade and be open to being persuaded by the strength of another’s position.

In England and the colonies the men of the community would come together in commercial coffee shops or printers’ reading rooms to read the latest newspapers and journals – newly politicized -- and discuss the implications of the news of the day (Karvonen, 2004). The newspapers were printed in limited quantities, passed around, and their news discussed while being read. As local community members publicly read and talked, they participated in a larger dialogue of which they were usually unaware. Through their multiple parallel conversations they were unconsciously creating new regional and national communities composed of people with like goals and ideals who were reading and discussing common issues across communities. Anderson (1991) called the outcomes of these conversations and individual acts of reading the same documents *imagined communities*.

Schudson (1992) argues that in North America the public sphere appeared only weakly as the male colonists developed civic structures and non-governmental public spaces focused in and around the market-place, and as newspapers evolved from collections of notices to vehicles supporting public dialogue and shaping public opinion. Schudson says that “there is not much to indicate even very general interest, let alone participation, in public affairs” among American men in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but Anderson (1991) finds evidence of cultural formations reflective of Habermas’ public sphere in the forging of national bonds through the community-building inherent in the act of shared reading. Whether strong or weak, the concept of a public sphere in which cultural and civic dialogue and direction could happen shaped the social world of the time in both Europe and North America.

Habermas’s critics have identified several weaknesses in the structure of his argument. Eley (1992) critiques Habermas’s bourgeois public sphere as “an extremely idealized abstraction from the political cultures that actually took shape at the end of the eighteenth and the start of the nineteenth century” (p. 307). Keane (1995) argues that the idea of a unified public sphere is obsolete. He distinguishes among multiple public spheres active at local, national, and global levels, all mediated by different scales of
communication vehicles. Calhoun (1992) focuses on Habermas’s “tendency to dichotomize public and private” and to miss the possibility of multiple public spheres that allow for national, cultural, religious, and gender differences (p. 37). Fraser (1992) proposes multiple public spheres -- especially a feminist public sphere -- she calls “counterpublic spheres.” She sees these as oppositional groups that were historically excluded from the dominant modes of discourse and power (Asen & Brouwer, 2001).

Habermas (1995) acknowledges this weakness in his theory by addressing issues rising out of increasing immigration from the Middle East into Northern Europe. He has recently proposed a neutral public sphere which recognizes and accommodates cultural differences while supporting a universally shared civic culture.

Recent scholarship intended to help understand North America’s unique racial history proposes alternative histories of the Habermasian public sphere (“Alternative Histories,” 2005). Brooks (2005) documents the emergence in North America of a distinctly black public sphere built around a “black tradition of publication informed by black experiences of slavery and postslavery, premised on principles of self-determination and structured by black criticisms of white political and economic dominance” (para. 2). Complicated relationships existed among settlers and Native Americans and with enslaved Africans in the new country. African Americans were seen as “other,” and just as Fraser (1992) identified feminist counterpublics, Jacobs (1999) suggests that a print-based black counterpublic sphere began in 1827 as the first black newspapers appeared. Jacobs builds on Fraser’s concept of the feminist counterpublic sphere and uses the term “subaltern counterpublics” (Fraser, 1992, p. 123) to explain the activities marginalized groups pursued when developing alternative public spheres. The new black news media provided structure for a counterpublic sphere in which African-Americans were central and from which they could engage with other public spheres. According to Jacobs, the black press protected cultural autonomy while providing a vehicle from which public engagement could take place. Jacobs points out that the black press’s editors and contributors understood and nurtured its multiple roles. The contemporary black press still serves the same function and according to Jacobs is often the only public forum in which African-Americans can recount versions of events in which they are involved. During periods of racial crisis the circulation of black
newspapers increased as “African-Americans sought out the ‘black perspective’, compared it with the stories they were reading in newspapers like the New York Times, and then proceeded to have conversations” (Jacobs, 1999 p. 368).

In spite of these shortcomings and other critiques, Habermas’s theory provides a normative ideal and a lens through which observers can gain insight into patterns of public life and social activity. “The public sphere – public press, public forums, public schools, public libraries, and other means of free discourse about social information” (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008, para. 9) is the essential expression of modern democracy, but many of its embodiments are under threat.

**Urban public space as an expression of the public sphere.** Mitchell’s (1995) examination of the 1991 struggle over access to People’s Park, a piece of undeveloped land owned by the University of California at Berkeley, offers a detailed analysis of conflicting visions of the role of public spaces in cities. Activists and homeless people saw the park as “an unconstrained space within which political movements can organize and expand into wider areas” (p. 115). The University’s representatives envisioned “open space for recreation and entertainment, subject to usage by an appropriate public that is allowed in” (p. 115, italics in original). Mitchell discerns a conflict between a vision of public space as a politicized environment in which risks of political confrontation and disorder are central to its function, and a vision of a planned, orderly, safe public space in which users are made to feel comfortable. Mitchell uses Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptualization of the relationship between representational space (Lefebvre, p. 39), which he defines as appropriated, lived-in space or space-in-use (p. 115), and representations of space (Lefebvre, p. 38), defined as planned, controlled, or ordered space. Mitchell believes the modern idea of “public space is the product of competing ideas about what constitutes that space – order and control or free, and perhaps dangerous, interaction – and who constitutes ‘the public’” (p.115). He says that this conflict is at the heart of the normative ideals that inform political activity “and the nature of the space we call ‘public’ in democratic societies” (p. 116).

Mitchell argues the normative ideal of the public sphere -- “the suite of institutions and activities that mediate the relations between society and the state,” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 116) and the reality of public space -- are inherently in conflict. He
bases his argument in Habermas’s conception of the public sphere as one in which all participants in social formations “should find access to the structures of power within a society” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 116, author italics). Mitchell says distinguishing between the ideal of the public sphere and the reality of public space is crucial to understanding the conflicts played out in People’s Park, and implicit in disagreements over access to urban spaces existing along the continuum from public to private space. “The public sphere in Habermas’s sense is a universal abstract in which democracy occurs. The materiality of this sphere is, so to speak, immaterial to its functioning” he concludes, “public space, meanwhile is material. It constitutes an actual site, a ground within and from which political activity flows” (Mitchell, 1995, p.117). As Mitchell (1995) observes, the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere and the physical reality of public space are intrinsically in conflict.

Zukin (1991), Sorkin (1992) and Wilson (1992) all have discussed the disneyfication of North American public space -- the process of “creating landscapes in which every interaction is carefully planned” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 119). Idiosyncratic and extemporaneous interactions between people engaged in common goals are displaced by interactions shaped by market and design considerations. “The ‘disneyfication’ of space consequently implies increasing alienation of people from the possibility of unmediated social interaction and increasing control by powerful economic and social actors over the production and use of space” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 119 – 120). Lefebvre “suggests this is no accident” (1991, p. 375; cited in Mitchell, 1995, p. 120). He claims urban and corporate planners work to separate and prohibit contacts between the classes of people other than that of the group in power by distributing them across the available territory and replacing real contact with “signs (or images) of contact . . . The whole of space is increasingly modeled after private enterprise, private property, and the family” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 375 - 376). Lefebvre’s signs or representations of the public indicate the representative nature of democracy and Habermas’s public sphere. Mitchell calls this “symbolic politics” and demonstrates how it stands in contrast to the democratic ideal of “direct, less-mediated, social interaction in public spaces” (p. 120). The result of all this, according to Mitchell, is public space as theater. Because these public spaces are strictly governed and exclude undesirable members of the public like the homeless and political
activists, Mitchell argues, their legitimacy is thrown into question. The privatization of public space, according to Mitchell, is leading to a new, restricted, definition of the public which excludes groups of people not able or willing to follow corporate restrictions on activities suitable for public spaces. The forces Mitchell identifies as threatening urban public spaces are also touching public libraries. While corporate sponsorship of a youth summer reading program or an adult book club is not in itself threatening, it does offer corporations access to previously neutral public space.

Banerjee (2001) asks about the future of public space in the U.S. and suggests “that the decline of the public realm is paralleled by a corresponding decline in public spirit, which resides in the very core of our collective intuitions of civil society” (para. 21). He identifies causes for the decline of the public realm as including declines in social capital, a rise in public incivilities, and loss of territorial control. Privatization of existing public spaces is a continuing trend and corporate open spaces are minimally used. By contrast shopping malls have become the most frequently visited non-family, non-work places but they usually exclude public activities typical of the traditional downtown public spaces – “distribution of leaflets, political discussions and speeches, solicitation for funds or signatures, sale of homebaked cookies, voter registration, and the like” (para. 24). When those exclusions have been challenged, shopping centers and corporate plazas have not been determined to be public forums. Banerjee (2001) comments that shopping malls create the illusion of public space while isolating visitors from the risks and uncertainties of everyday life. He, too, discusses the attractiveness of disneyfied experiences, citing Moore (1965), who observed that Disneyland and other privatized public experiences offer clean, efficient, and predictable environments with no raw edges showing and that the public is willing to pay for these assurances. The broader effect of disneyfiction is public expectation of the same clean, efficient, and predictable environment in public settings.

Banerjee (2001) identifies another version of public life based on “relaxation, social contact, entertainment, leisure, and simply having a good time” (para. 30). He notes that the setting for this kind of public life is not necessarily public space. Consumer culture informs this vision of public relaxation and it takes place in a series of “third places” -- private enterprises situated between the first place, home, and the second place,
work (Oldenburg, 1989). The nature of third places is culture-dependent and in the late 20th and early 21st century they seem to coalesce in commercial coffee shops, bookstores, health clubs and other community-level retail and service establishments.

Peattie (1998, cited in Banerjee, 2001) suggests that public spaces be planned to support conviviality, and that social pleasures can occur during purposeful activities. She includes “small group rituals, and social bonding in serious collective action, from barn raisings and neighborhood cleanups to civil disobedience that blocks the street or invades the missile site” (Peattie, 1998, p. 246). Banerjee (2001) observes that many of these activities happen in existing public spaces including public buildings like schools and community centers, places that embody the public sphere. But he wonders if this ideal of public action in public space is becoming a relic of the past and will lose out to the rise of commercial third places and marketplaces.

The increase in both large scale and local activism offers another sign of hope for idealized democratic conviviality (Banerjee, 2001). As Mitchell (1995) demonstrated large scale activism takes place in physical space and real time. At the local level recent immigrants to inner cities in many countries have revived the culture of street life in their new communities; the patterns of use appear to be driven by age, gender, and socio-cultural background (Zukin, 1995; Ortiz et al, 2004). Recent studies of women’s use of public spaces show that immigration-driven public culture revival follows traditional patterns in which the men of the community typically claim the public spaces along the streets and in the parks (Ortiz, et al, 2004, Day 2000). When the men of the community are present, women and children often feel the public spaces are unsafe or unwelcoming, or if they find the spaces comfortable they don’t have time to relax due to their daily family and job responsibilities. The only time the communities’ women tend to gather and linger in public is when supervising children. For the most part revived urban public spaces serve as transit areas rather than meeting points for women (Ortiz, et al, 2004, p. 224).

Public libraries and the public sphere. In contrast to the privatization of public spaces described by Mitchell and Banerjee, public libraries today still function close to the public sphere ideal. Alstad and Curry (2003) summarize many of the arguments advocating on behalf of public space and contextualize them to include public libraries as
“an ideal physical and psychological space for public discourse” (abstract). Reviewing public library mission statements they note that “most exclude any reference to the traditional goal of the public library: a commitment to advancing democracy through an informed citizenry.” For Alstad and Curry, “this omission contradicts the expressed wish of many library organizations and professionals to revive the democratic ideal” (section 1, para. 2). Asking “how will the public intellectual realm be sustained and developed if there are no physical spaces to support it” (section 1, para. 3), they trace the decline of access to public space in contemporary western society and remind their readers that the public library can be a place for public discourse. Alstad and Curry worry that as public libraries shift their focus from public enlightenment to public recreation and entertainment, they appear to have drifted away from their original mission in support of democracy. They offer several examples of public library social impacts that support the public sphere rather than economically measurable goals saying public libraries are “entry points into the wider culture:”

- they are among the few institutions that welcome children and young people -- other than schools or homes -- by allowing them a place where “they are neither threatened nor perceived as a threat”;
- they provide free access to news and information thereby providing “the means for individuals to take part in political and social debate”;
- they serve as symbols of positive activity and growth;
- they provide a place where people do not have to act as consumers, but can just sit quietly to read or reflect;
- they welcome new immigrants and offer them a place to learn English in ways that are impossible in other public spaces” (section 5, para. 8).

Alstad and Curry (2003) note that these positive qualities are very hard to measure and are often left out of formal assessments of library services. They conclude by recommending that public librarians who wish to support the public sphere and democratic action consider taking the following actions:

- re-examine their institutions’ mission statements;
- promote their libraries as places of public discussion that include all citizens in the public sphere;
enforce the publicness of their facilities by guaranteeing access, diversity, cleanliness, safety, social interaction, and age and race diversity;

be aware of the possibility of discrimination in their library policies; resist colonization by commercial entities;

and treat patrons as citizens not customers.

Buschman (2005a) identifies a series of trends in public librarianship that “represent a diminution – or dismantling – of the democratic public sphere” (p. 11). He says a key danger lies in following the market-oriented, entrepreneurial practices that inform current public policy thinking, thereby creating a sort of “information capitalism” (p. 9) that transforms library users into customers. Buschman says public libraries have assumed “an entrepreneurial approach to funding shortages and library practices” (p. 9) by following this trend. He feels that this new approach encourages an economic bias toward networked resources and other cost-driven approaches to library management that has led libraries to adopt a new economics-focused public philosophy at odds with the philosophy of the democratic public sphere.

Buschman (2003) counters the current influence of the economic model of library service with a vision of a library “democratically connected to its community” (p. 180). He suggests that library boards of trustees and sponsoring institutions “need to be reminded that the value of and effects of a library – like good teaching – are extraordinarily difficult to quantify (monetarily or in terms of quality). Their efforts may be profound but latent for many years” (2003, p. 180). Because of the intangible long-term nature of the influence of the library in the lives of its users Buschman (2005b) suggests that any form of cost-based measurement will necessarily fall short of describing the impact of the public library as an expression of the public sphere.

Findings from a recent national study of public libraries (Long Overdue, 2006; Wooden, 2006) demonstrate the public sphere challenges to public libraries Buschman (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) identified. Researchers from Public Agenda interviewed public, business, and community members who responded to their questions in financial and economic terms. The final report highlights Domini Funds’ Chief Financial Officer Steve Lydenberg’s response. He says, “[From a business perspective,] the difficult question is how do you account for those things that a library does that nobody else can
do, that don’t translate into an immediate economic value? You want to find a way to talk about these things in ways that make it possible to compete for tax dollars…the library’s business is to create social capital, and there are ways of talking about that.” (Long Overdue, p. 37). The Public Agenda researchers who prepared the report summarize:

Many of the business leaders we spoke to said that . . . libraries need to begin to think of themselves more as businesses and to change their management approach accordingly. The implication here is that librarians may think of libraries as universally valued institutions that require little ongoing justification. But with the rise of Google, Amazon.com and the megabookstores, libraries must make the case for their continuing relevance. In addition to maintaining valued traditional services, these leaders believe that a more business-minded approach to services and governance might help libraries position themselves as more vital public institutions (p. 39).

The Long Overdue study findings make very clear the reasons public libraries may be choosing to follow the economic models Buschman sees as so threatening to their embodiment of the democratic ideal.

**Place Theory in Sociology**

The normative ideal of the Habermasian public sphere informs the civic nature of the public library as place, but people use the public space the library provides for many social and personal purposes as well. Sociologists and political scientists often investigate the physical characteristics of the places in which different types of social interactions occur and their various approaches provide a different perspective on the social nature of place. Taken together the different perspectives can help provide a fuller understanding of what library as place means to library users.

**Simultaneous perception.** In The Experience of Place, Hiss (1990) deconstructs how people both consciously and unconsciously experience the places in which they lead their lives. He says that the places where people spend their time have an impact on who they are and what they become, and that people’s relationships with the places they know inform who they are and what they think. Quiet, pleasant places like parks offer people the opportunity to shift their focus and they become aware of the subtleties of their
surroundings. Bustling attractive places can be energizing and refreshing, and also relaxing at the same time if they are well and appropriately designed. The key to the positive experience of both parks and train stations is the quality of the places themselves. Diminished experiences occur if spectacular, essential, or well-liked components of a setting are taken away. If inappropriate elements are added, if the place is not well tended, or if the experience is knocked out of balance by signals that are so strong or raucous, they block perception of the other aspects of the place.

Hiss (1990) cites Toni Sachs Pfeiffer, who identifies two basic needs that must be met to enhance people’s experiences of public places. First, “people’s sense of security in a public space is ‘spatially anchored’: Each user has to be able to find some place within that place – a little niche where he or she can stand or sit without being bothered by other people and without getting in anyone’s way” (Hiss, 1990, p. 87). Second, “people [also] need reasons for going to a place, and the more reasons they have, the more secure they’ll feel and the more time they’ll spend there; they’ll visit more often, and they’ll make longer visits” (Hiss, 1990, p. 87 – 88). Additionally Pfeiffer finds that people have two reasons for spending time in public places: “passive reasons, like standing and looking around at people, or sitting and reading and eating a sandwich; and active reasons, like talking to people, or asking for information, or buying a book or a sandwich or a drink, or taking a photograph, or meeting a friend” (Hiss, 1990, p. 88).

Third places. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg’s popular contribution to a contemporary understanding of place is the concept of third places. In The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community (1999) he identifies the lack of an informal public life in the American middle class such that people alternate between home, the first place, and work, the second place, with few options available between home and work, options in which social relaxation can take place. Missing from society are “the core settings of informal public life,” which Oldenburg calls third places (p. 15). They are made up of “a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work” (p. 16).

Third places have a very specific set of shared characteristics that distinguish them from the other settings of daily life (1999). They provide neutral ground where
people can come and go as they please, where all are welcome, and no one is required to play host (p. 22). They also serve as social levelers, places where class distinctions are less important than one’s personal characteristics and where participants check their status symbols at the door (pp. 23-26). People are valued for themselves and for what they can contribute to the sociability of the moment and the quality of the conversation. Third places are cheerful places. Along with status symbols, personal problems and bad moods must be set aside when entering. Lively, sparkling, engrossing conversation is the main activity of third places (pp. 26-31) and all are expected to participate graciously and amusingly. Oldenburg says, “The game is conversation and the third place is its home court” (p. 31).

The best third places are accessible and accommodating (Oldenburg, 1999, p. 32). They must be open when people can visit -- often before or after work -- and easy to get to. If a third place is too far away from home or work it is less appealing because it takes too long to get there and patrons are unlikely to find someone they know when they drop in. Key to the lure of a good third place is the group of regulars, the fellow customers one can count on seeing often (pp. 33-36). At the same time good third places are more accepting of newcomers than they can appear. It takes more than one or two visits for a new customer to become a regular, but with time, steady attendance and pleasant conversation all are welcome. Comparing the atmosphere in a city or suburban bar where people sit alone with that of the neighborhood tavern, pub or coffee shop where people know each other and where a pleasant newcomer can find a conversation or a game of pool or darts best indicates the importance of regulars to the success of a third place. Stopping by one’s familiar third place on the way home from work for a beer and some conversation is much more refreshing than stopping for a solitary drink in a dark bar in front of television news.

For Oldenburg (1999) the physical structure of third places is usually plain and unimpressive. They have a low profile and some are worn around the edges or even seedy in appearance. This “protective coloration” (p. 36) discourages strangers or transient customers, but the low profile makes it easy for a third place to become part of an ordinary daily or weekly routine. Unimpressive first impressions belie the pleasant company and clean, pleasant environment found behind the building façade. In fact,
according to Oldenburg, the persistent mood of third places is warm and playful (p.37-38). They are happy places people want to come back to and at their best they become a home away from home (pp. 38-41). The regulars often feel a sense of ownership of their third places, and in time many earn privileges denied transients such that they feel at home and can use the telephone or run a tab.

Habitués of third places experience a unique set of benefits as a result of the social patterns they share with the other regulars. Novelty, a change in perspective, a quick lift of the spirits, and friendly group interactions are all hard to find in the mundane activities of daily life outside of third places (Oldenburg, 1999, pp.43-65). Third place regulars are a diverse group and they appreciate the mix of opinions and perspectives they hear from the others in the group. The regulars respect each others’ differences and look forward to unpredictable events that might unfold as a result of those differences. Conversational topics change as people come and go and everyone hopes for a good laugh if the possibility arises.

The different perspectives participants bring to their gatherings help third place regulars recalibrate their feelings and opinions against those of the group by providing pleasant associations and a counterbalance to the irritations of modern life. The collective wisdom of the members can be a touchstone because it is sympathetic yet disinterested. The humor and laughter generated during the conversations is supportive and people leave to continue their day refreshed and often more in balance than when they arrived, making the day better for all who participated.

A key characteristic of third places Wiegand (2005) noted is their empowerment of individuals to decide whether to participate or observe the community-building activities from the sidelines. Third places are also places “where the right of free assembly is constantly on public display” (Wiegand, 2005, p. 78). The associations are informal rather than organized but they are strong and reliable and have a long history in the U.S. In third places, though payments do change hands, people are treated as individuals, not customers; at the same time however the power of the group is important because group norms suggest acceptable social behavior and encourage micro-level civic responsibility on the part of individuals who wish to affiliate.
Annie Cheatham, proprietor of Annie’s Place in Amherst, Massachusetts, summarized the characteristics of Oldenburg’s great good places -- his more recent term for third places -- when developing her goals for her business: “Great good places unite the community, serve the elderly, bring adults and children together in a relaxed setting, foster democracy, provide places for people to have fun. All of these qualities enhance and encourage friendship, understanding and tolerance” (Oldenburg, 2001, 16 – 17).

Even though by nature third places benefit their communities they have limits that grow out of their limited service areas and clientele. Third places are often race specific. Oldenburg (1999) retells the story of Jelly’s, a “black ghetto bar” and liquor store located on Chicago’s south side (p. 78). A true third place, it offered a home away from home for the men of the neighborhood, all black. Though the bar was not held in high regard even in the neighborhood, the regulars set standards and in order “to gain admittance to its inner circle one had to be regularly employed, treat other people ‘right,’ be of strong character, be of ‘some ’count’ (rather than ‘no ’count’ like a pusher), and be worthwhile to have around. Virtue counted for most where outsiders would have least suspected” (p. 78).

Third places are heavily gender-specific. Though Oldenburg is careful to conceptualize them in a gender-neutral way he acknowledges that “the joys of third places are largely those of same-sex association, and their effect has been to maintain separate men’s and women’s worlds more than to promote a unisex one” (p. 230). He traces this to the historical facts of human life, the separation of the sexes due to the nature of their tasks -- child-raising vs. providing for the family, managing the home vs. working in the public world -- and to the continuing need for same-sex company outside of one’s life partnership in order to bring new energy and new ideas into the conversation at home.

Oldenburg finds that regular involvement with a third place and its set of habitués leads an individual to enriching group friendships that are very different from and differently rewarding than individual relationships. “The fragmented world becomes more whole and the broader contact with life, thus gained, adds to one’s wisdom and self-assurance. . . . Third place settings are really no more than a physical manifestation of people’s desire to associate with those in an area once they get to know them” (p. 290).
Public libraries as third places. Kevin Harris’s (2003) feature article analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of British public libraries as third places. He tests them against Oldenburg’s criteria and asserts their importance as local places in which certain types of community connections can be established or reinforced. He identifies public libraries as places “to which people can go without obligation, threat, or constraining expectations,” saying they fall at “the less interactive end of the third place spectrum, but they have an under-appreciated role in providing local support and generating trust” (p. 26). Harris cites Lieberg’s (1995) work distinguishing between places of retreat and places of interaction and implying the need for both types of third places in communities. When people use a public space they typically have expectations of either meeting other regular frequenters of the place or of maintaining their anonymity and their privacy, sharing the space as anonymous co-presence. Harris questions whether public libraries offer community space or public space and asks which types of social interactions people can reasonably expect at a library. The challenge for public libraries, neutral places according to Harris, is “to accommodate expectations of civicness, and at the same time to accommodate informality and the casual …essential components in appropriate third places” (p. 28). Finally Harris identifies libraries as a kind of third place that “meets local needs” for the local public while at the same time offering a gateway to the wider world. He says a key attribute of public libraries is their ability to contextualize the local in the global and “the availability of such a public context is fundamental to quality of life” (p. 28).

Karen Lawson (2004) also attributes certain aspects of the third place to public libraries saying third places “nourish relationships and a diversity of human contact by helping to create a ‘sense of place’ and a community” (p. 125). For Lawson, third places “often invoke a sense of civic pride while providing opportunities for serendipity, companionship, and relaxation after a long day at work or school: they make life more colorful” (p.125). “Third places,” she concludes, “in their highest form, enrich public life and democracy” (p. 125). Lawson agrees with Oldenburg that post World War II suburbanization and the rise of the automobile culture have put third places in jeopardy and suggests that public libraries responded to suburbanization by building branch libraries and investing in bookmobiles. Lawson refers to twentieth century public
libraries by using Oldenburg’s alternate phrase, “great good places” and says they are excellent examples of the concept because they “welcome members of their particular communities regardless of age and economic status and provide them with access to information, services, and a responsive, usually safe, environment” (pp 126 – 127). She goes on to note that “traditional libraries provide human contact and social experience and strive to foster service, social equality, and the appreciation of human individuality.” She next proposes using the concept of third place as a guiding principle in the digital environment and concludes by suggesting that public libraries develop their internet presence in ways that “extend their sense of public ‘place’ and ‘face’ online” (p. 129). She says, “much about connection and community can be learned from the concept of third places and their importance in real life and cyberspace. The traditions inherent in libraries as physical third places provide predictions, projections, and inspirations for continued good service in the online presence of libraries.” (p. 129).

A key feature of Oldenburg’s third places is access to coffee or other food and beverage while enjoying the company of others. Cathryn Harris (2007) describes Australian public libraries as “in a unique position to become the next great good places [third places] where people can freely gather and interact” and suggests “coffee shops will play a vital role in helping libraries to build communities and create the new third place” (p. 145). She attributes the increasing number of coffee shops in libraries to the influence of book superstores like Borders and Barnes & Noble where “refreshments are now considered part of the book browsing experience” (p. 145). Harris positions public libraries as “increasingly becoming places for social interaction, with areas set aside as meeting spaces, training rooms and art galleries” and describes these features and their activities as adding to the attraction of the library as a destination (2007, p. 146). She does not mention that meeting rooms and other social spaces were important features of the original early twentieth century Carnegie library buildings in the US (Van Slyck, 1995). Harris notes that contemporary US libraries have become destinations in themselves, have the “opportunity to act as catalysts in cultural tourism and economic development,” and are being included in urban revitalization projects.

According to C. Harris (2007), the biggest challenges to libraries as third places are consumer retail stores like Borders, Starbucks and McDonalds. These retailers are
positioning themselves as places to go between work and home – third places. She says, “Libraries are, however, placed perfectly to become the next third place, but the challenge is to create a consumer mindset.” To do this, Harris says library administrators must brand and market themselves to the local community. “Third places are not just about coffee, and they are not simply about branding. They offer much more” (p. 150).

As part of their core purpose libraries are places where “members of the community gather to obtain information in a sociable atmosphere. The goal of any good library manager should be to use this existing social environment to expand on her library’s influence in the community” (p. 150-151).

McKechnie, et al. (2004) ask what libraries can learn about the use of space and place from book superstores. To answer their research question they observed people in public libraries and compared their behavior with that of people in book superstores -- observed during a previous study (Dixon, McKechnie, Miller & Rothbauer, 2001) – to see if their behavior differed according to the setting. They found that library users understand “the library as a truly public place, a place where they are free to both participate in and shape the services offered” (p. 50). They describe the public nature of the public library in their study as a “main square, a community destination where people gather to read, to share information, and interact with one another, without the constraints imposed by other quasi-public North American spaces, such as the commercial settings of a mall or super bookstore” (p. 50).

Fisher, Saxon, Edwards, and Mai (2007) use Cresswell’s (2004) and Oldenburg’s (1999) conceptualizations to frame their recent inquiry into the roles of the new downtown Seattle main library as place. Their study attempts to identify characteristics of the new library’s roles as physical place, social place, and informational place (p. 141). They were especially interested in Oldenburg’s third place framework because it offers a way of looking at the social aspects of library as place. Through their interviews with library users and with passers-by they conclude that though the Seattle Public Library Central Building “may be a third place in spirit, it fully meets few of Oldenburg’s criteria” (p. 152). In fact they find that the new library building meets only three of eight criteria – (1) it occurs on neutral ground, (2) serves as a leveler in that it was an inclusive place accessible to the general public, and (3) functions as a home away from home.
Contrary to Oldenburg’s criteria for third places, the library does not feature conversation as the main activity; does not guarantee one will meet an acquaintance; does not have regulars who reach out to newcomers; is a large and imposing landmark building as opposed to being an unimpressive physical structure; and does not maintain a “persistent, playful playground sort of mood” (p. 152). In fact, respondents “clearly indicated the serious nature of the work . . . [and] the mood was one of productivity, study, and reflection” (p. 152).

Given these findings Fisher, et al. (2007) ask whether the third place framework might better account for the nature of a library branch because the smaller scale and tighter cohesiveness of a branch library might “more fully reflect the attributes of a third place” much as Oldenburg says bookstores do. They find that neither Oldenburg’s nor Cresswell’s frameworks accommodate “the concept of information as it figures in the broader notion of place” (p. 153). The authors suggest adding an informational component to the place-based characteristics offered by Cresswell (2004) and Oldenburg (1999). They “suggest that an ‘informational place’ can be operationalized as comprising all themes regarding information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment” (p. 153). Evidence from Fisher, et al.’s study and other examples supporting the concept of libraries as informational places will be discussed further later this chapter.

The public realm. Sociologist Lyn Lofland also explores the nature of the space that informs public places. She focuses on urban space and in The Public Realm: Exploring the City’s Quintessential Social Territory (1999) she proposes three realms: the private, the parochial, and the public. “Realms are not geographically or physically rooted pieces of space” she says, “they are social, not physical territories” (p. 11). The realms are not place bound, they are mobile and “their boundaries are fluid” (p. 15). Lofland conceptualizes the private realm as the world of intimate relationships among family members, extended families, and friends; the parochial realm is the world of the neighborhood and the workplace, the world where people know each other socially and professionally and share a common purpose; and the public realm is the world of strangers and the street where people are usually biological and often even cultural strangers to each other.
As a social territory the public realm operates under a set of normative behavior principles including 1) cooperative motility, 2) civil inattention, 3) audience role prominence, 4) restrained helpfulness, and 5) civility toward diversity (Lofland, 1999, p. 30). These behaviors guide interpersonal conduct amongst strangers in the city and allow each person cooperatively to maintain her own privacy. People who do not know each other use these norms to establish the relationships indigenous to the public realm. In the public realm fleeting relationships occur when looking for a seat on a bus or asking the time (p. 53). Routinized relationships are standardized relationships based on the roles people play like bus driver, cabby, grocery clerk, shopper, etc. They result from a specific interaction and end when the interaction ends, or they transform into another level of urban relationship (p. 54). Quasi-primary and intimate-secondary relationships develop when positive or negative emotion infuses a public relationship (pp. 55-56). Quasi-primary relationships appear to end when the interaction ends. Intimate-secondary relationships endure. They occur among people who connect to each other in some public way and place and who begin to build upon that connection, whether formed on the commuter bus or train, or among those that one shares a public interest with, be it at a park, a hairdresser, a retail store, or other public space. They last a long time and feel good, are meaningful, yet not necessarily intimate.

In addition to person-to-person public realm relationships, person-to-place relationships also form. Significant places become memorialized locales, small spaces that take on an aura because of something that happened there (Lofland, 1999, p. 65). Familiarized locales become part of people’s daily routines (p. 66). The corner store, the newsstand, and the branch library are examples of familiarized locales that, for their habitués, become very important to ordinary public life. Finally, home territories may be public or private spaces where “regular participants have a relative freedom of behavior and a sense of intimacy and control over the area” (Lyman & Scott, 1967; cited in Lofland, 1999, p. 69).

The public realm, Wiegand comments, “is a social territory that can sustain and support a variety of cultures in many ways” (2005, p. 79). However, it is often judged harshly when viewed through the dominant group’s moral lenses. Lofland (1999) traces a long tradition of Anglo-American anti-urbanism in which the public realm is often
judged morally lacking as the home of “the unholy and the unwashed” (p. 116). It is “a social territory in which many different kinds or categories of people are mixed up together [author italics]” (p. 118). It supports “the sacrilegious frivolity of uncontrolled play” (p. 121) and this behavior challenges or even ignores social virtues like sobriety, industry, and diligence. As an example Lofland recalls the moral criticism Coney Island, NY, experienced at the height of its popularity. Outsiders have similarly critiqued the French Quarter of New Orleans. Finally, political activity that devolves into “political anarchy” (p. 124) is always a threat in the public realm. Due to its accessibility the public realm provides a natural stage. Spectators are often present, so unpopular politics can easily find an audience to the fear and dismay of self-established moral authorities.

In spite of the “dominant rhetoric of antiurbanism” (Lofland, 1999, p. 229) that favors the rural and the suburban and privileges the private and the parochial realms over the public realm, Lofland identifies several examples of the public realm’s persistent positive social value and utility. First, the public realm provides “an environment for learning,” (p. 232) not formal classroom learning but the everyday life lessons children and adults need to learn to function in the social world, to interact successfully with people unrelated to them and from different cultures. The public realm provides “respite and refreshment” (p. 233), functioning as a positive play environment for children and adults who benefit from the experience of play. She cites Oldenburg’s (1999) documentation of the psychic refreshment individuals experience in their third places as an example of the respite and refreshment obtainable in the locales of the public realm. The sociability of aspects of the public realm provides informal communication centers (p. 233-4) for a variety of people and groups. Public communication enables the “practice” of politics (p. 234) in an informal sense in which people of different backgrounds and opinions learn to act together. Out of those informal political patterns people learn to come together when formal actions are needed.

“Finally,” as Wiegand (2005, p. 79) summarizes, “the public realm facilitates cosmopolitanism.” Lofland (1999) says the public realm uniquely has the capacity to teach its residents about tolerance and civility. It is “one of the very few kinds of social territories that, on a recurring basis, provide the opportunity for individuals to experience limited, segmental, episodic, distanced links between self and other. The public realm is,
in fact, probably the locus for a significant portion of all noncommunal, nonintimate relationships that humans form with each other” (p. 242). In spite of its unique qualities, Lofland says, the public realm in North America is under threat from technology, tourism and personal timidity. Increasing privatization keeps people from experiencing the unique qualities of the public realm and threatens its continuing vitality.

**The public realm and the public library.** McKenzie, et al. (2007) use Lofland’s (1998) conceptualization of private, parochial, and public realms to interpret how two groups of people use an Ontario public library’s meeting room space. They observe that “the same physical spaces may be used in a variety of different ways by different patrons, possibly at the same time, and may function variously as public, parochial, or private realm spaces” (p. 119). Their study finds that the members of the library’s weekly knitting group and those in the young children’s/caregivers story hour regularly transform the public space of a library meeting or program room into semiprivate or private realms. McKenzie et al. find that “when physically arranged for and occupied by the knitting group, the generic public space of the program room is transformed into a community space where knitting and female identity are intertwined” (p. 126). The authors apply Lofland’s (1998) analysis to identify the relationships forming within the two groups as intimate secondary relationships. They also find several enactments of private family relationships, especially with regard to the physical care of the children participating in the story hour. Changing diapers and feeding children their snacks are activities that technically violate the library’s policy but are permitted in relation to story hour. Following Lofland’s theory, the researchers demonstrate that “urbanites with more intimate knowledge of the public space may gain the acquiescence or even the overt assistance of those in control of the space to make uses that might otherwise be unauthorized” (p. 129).

The researchers also observed the members of the two groups fulfilling Lofland’s (1998) theory that “quasi-primary and intimate-secondary relationships promote the informal exchange of information” (McKenzie et al., 2007, p. 130). Conversation topics ranged from the immediate focus on knitting and childcare into an “extremely wide variety of other topics” (p. 130). They conclude that though the public library is considered a public space and a part of the world of strangers, those people using the
public meeting room are transforming it into a world apart from the public realm. They propose that public libraries should be understood as sites that “support a variety of relationships and host a variety of realms” (p. 131).

Psychological sense of community. Social science scholarship has explored the concept of community since the late 19th century (Leckie & Buschman, 2007). When scholars use community as a synonym for place it can be problematic. Leckie and Buschman provide a brief list of some of the concepts into which community breaks down: “a place of residence, a way of life, a moral code, a symbolic movement, even a set of social relations that may be place-based (such as a local neighborhood association), place-less (from a generic African-American community to a particular online community), or simultaneously place-based and place-less (as in a local reading group which meets both face-to-face and for online discussions)” (2007, p. 13). Even given the complicated nature of the concept of community, the relationship between community and place helps understand the role of library as place.

McMillan and Chavis (1986) originally identified four concepts that together combine to create a sense of community. Membership “is the feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal relatedness” (p. 9). Influence is defined as “a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members” (p. 9). Integration and fulfillment of needs speak to reinforcement, “the feeling that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group” (p. 9). Shared emotional connection refers to “the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences” (p. 9). Combining these elements McMillan and Chavis define sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan, 1976, cited in McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Sense of community contributes to society in both positive and negative ways. While it can influence neighbors to act as a group and work together to improve their neighborhood based on common goals and values, sense of community can also bond together groups of alienated individuals (youth gangs or Ku Klux Klan members).
McMillan and Chavis conclude that the force inherent in sense of community serves to bring people together and to polarize and separate subgroups of people, and that sense of community can contribute to social conflict as much as social cohesion. They call for people to try to “build communities based on faith, hope, and tolerance, rather than on fear, hatred, and rigidity” (1986, p. 20).

McMillan (1996) has recently reframed his theory. He has reconceptualized the component pieces of sense of community as spirit, trust, trade, and art, and recast his understanding of sense of community as “a spirit of belonging together, a feeling that there is an authority structure that can be trusted, an awareness that trade, and mutual benefit come from being together, and a spirit that comes from shared experiences that are preserved as art” (p. 315). Lorion and Newbrough (1996) contextualize McMillan’s understanding of community as referring to “one’s sense of place, its people, their interrelationships, their shared caring for each other, and their sense of belonging” (p. 312).

Research interviews conducted in Great Britain to explore sense of community and community identity have uncovered an intuitive, emotional aspect to the concept. Participants describe a sense of “emotional belonging and loyalty to generalized areas, rather than to localities or neighborhoods” (Puddifoot, 1996, p. 330). They appear to create different types of maps of their communities, both conceptual and social; they know how others perceive their communities, and they feel “bound to it by cultural and linguistic similarities, referring at times to traditional affiliations and local rivalries” (p. 330). Two key elements of community identity “relate to the perceived distinctiveness of the community and the strength of identification with that community by its members” (p. 332). Individual members have different degrees of personal investment in the community, different levels of attraction and different senses of their future in it, their emotional safety, and their degree of involvement with as compared to alienation from their communities. Miller (1999) discusses community as both “nurturing and stultifying” (p. 390). The sense of belonging community members feel can develop to the point of “encouraging a rigid moralism that condemns difference,” (p. 390). While community membership is usually seen as positive, it is important to consider how the desire for community membership is actually expressed.
Some recent research (Pooley, Cohen & Pike, 2005) examines the theoretical relationship between sense of community and social capital, arguing that psychological sense of community is a theoretical construct that functions as a correlate of social capital. A detailed discussion of social capital and selected interpretations and applications follows.

**Social capital.** Broadly understood, social capital “refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. . . Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together” (World Bank, cited in Office for National Statistics 2001, p. 9). Pierre Bourdieu is credited with the first contemporary systematic analysis of social capital in the English translation of his early work on the topic (Bourdieu, 1985; Portes, 1998). He defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1985, pp. 248 -9). For Bourdieu social capital has two elements: “first, the social relationship itself that allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates, and second, the amount and quality of those resources” (Portes, 1998 p. 4). Connections among the members of a group facilitate using the capital as credits. For Bourdieu social capital is a collective asset that is refreshed as the group’s members continue to invest in intergroup relationships (Lin, 2001).

Coleman (1988) defines social capital according to function. “It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). For Coleman “social capital is the resources, real or potential, gained from relationships” (Lin, 2001, p. 23). Lin (2001) summarizes Bourdieu’s (1985) and Coleman’s (1988) interpretations as privileging “dense or closed networks as the means by which collective capital can be maintained and reproduction of the group can be achieved” (p. 23). Thus, for Bourdieu
and Coleman, who view social capital as a collective asset, it can be understood as either a process or a public good. Social capital represents the ability of actors to “secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6).

Granovetter’s analysis of the strength of weak ties (1973) provides a key early contribution to understanding another aspect of social capital. In sociology ties refer to interpersonal relationships, and they are maintained at different intensities depending on how familiar people are with each other. Interpersonal ties can be strong, weak, or absent. Strong ties exist within close social and family circles. Weak ties are those that extend outside closed social circles to people who belong to other circles. Among people with strong ties to each other – members of one social circle -- knowledge and resources tend to be narrow yet deep and strong. Within a social circle it is hard for members to obtain fresh information with which to generate new ideas or to access new resources. Individuals who need new information or resources are more likely to find it outside their social circle, but they need a way to connect with other social circles to access the needed new information. These intergroup ties will necessarily be weaker than those holding a group together because they are built on a less substantial collection of shared experiences. They are, however, important because their existence, even if built on a weak connection, provides a bridge to a new collection of assets. Weak ties contribute to information and resource flow between groups and allow groups to reinvigorate their internal knowledge with infusions of new ideas and assets from outside. Ultimately the weakest ties between members of different groups provide access to the broadest array of new information and new contacts and thereby help reinvigorate a group’s social capital (Lin, 2001). Public libraries provide a setting where people can find people from different social circles with whom they can interact to create or reinforce weak ties.

Sociologists understand social capital as being based in the relationships between individuals to individuals and individuals to groups (Portes, 1998). Political Science equates social capital with the level of “civicness” in communities (Portes, 1998 p. 18). Political Science scholar Robert Putnam is a leading proponent of using social capital to reinvigorate civic life in the United States. He defines social capital as “features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more
effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995b, p. 664; 1996a, p. 35) Putnam makes the collective aspect of this definition explicit in an earlier (1993) version saying, “social capital refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Social capital enhances the benefits of investment in physical and human capital. Working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital” (p. 35-36).

Putnam identifies social capital as important to furthering America’s domestic agenda but notes its “strange disappearance” in a series of much discussed and debated articles (1995a, 1995b, 1996a). He cites one statistic that inspired the catchphrase for his thesis: “more Americans are bowling today than ever before but bowling in organized leagues has plummeted in the last decade or so” (1995a, p. 70). The image of the solo bowler, featured in Putnam’s article title “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” (1995a) captured the national attention. Putnam continued to study the reasons why social capital was declining in American society and published a book-length study (2000) that rekindled the national discussion across popular and academic communities and internationally (Boggs, 2002). Putnam identifies and distinguishes between two types of social capital, bridging and bonding. He suggests that bonding social capital is good for reinforcing existing dense networks and mobilizing existing groups (2000, p. 22). Bridging social capital is an articulation of Granovetter’s (1973) theory of weak ties in action. Bridging social capital generates and reinforces links to outside groups and external resources. Putnam says “bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves” (2000, p. 23). Both types of social capital contribute to civic engagement but neither is truly measurable. Putnam blames generational change for as much as 50% of the overall decline of social capital in the US. The effect of electronic entertainment accounts for about 25%; suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl account for an additional 10%; and time and financial pressure especially as experienced by two-career families accounts for an additional 10% (2000, p. 282).

Putnam followed Bowling Alone (2000) with Better Together: Restoring the American Community (2003). He and his colleagues collected a series of narratives describing efforts to build social capital across the United States. The book includes
stories of efforts by small communities such as local groups of UPS workers, branch librarians in Chicago – discussed in the next section -- members of the Saddleback megachurch, unionized clerical workers at Harvard, and participants in craigslist.org to accomplish various goals. Each example is different from the others and each stresses different outcomes, from building community, to encouraging spiritual enlightenment, to improving corporate profitability, and to creating better working conditions.

DeFilippis (2004) questions whether social capital as a concept has any real meaning if each of these examples and methods is presented as generating more social capital. He also notes Putnam’s continuing unwillingness to address issues of corporate power and political structural constraints identified by critics of Bowling Alone. In contrast to political science, economists and economic development researchers find social capital scholarship very useful to understand human issues pertinent to economic development.

Halpern’s (2005) work builds on and expands Putnam’s understanding of social capital and its role in social life. Halpern adds an international viewpoint to the discussion and says his British perspective gives him a different view than Putnam’s interpretation of U.S. events. Halpern interprets the American social capital narrative as one of transformation rather than agreeing with Putnam’s narrative of decline “as more generalized social norms come to replace the informal understandings of traditional communities” (p. ix). Halpern identifies three basic components to social capital, “a network; a cluster of norms, values and expectations that are shared by group members; and sanctions – punishments and rewards – that help maintain the norms and network” (p. 10). He also extends Putnam’s analysis by articulating three levels of social capital relationships: macro-, meso-, and micro-. Finally, he identifies three types or functions of social capital, bonding and bridging as previously described, and linking. He offers a preliminary approximate measure of the amount of social capital present in a group or community by using the concept of social trust, defined as: “the extent to which most people in a given community, region, or nation trust each other” (p. 33). He feels that the range of disciplines currently involved in studying social capital is indicative of its importance and concludes his study saying “social capital matters for our personal well-being, our economies and our society because we are deeply social beings. It’s in our
flesh and blood. Policy and debate that fail to address it are doomed to be shallow and unconvincing. Social capital is surely here to stay, both as a concept and as an everyday reality” (p. 324).

Public libraries and social capital. Following the publication of *Bowling Alone* Putnam was invited to speak at the 2001 annual meeting of the American Library Association (ALA breaks attendance records, 2001). ALA President Nancy Kranich described him as “taken aback when he discovered the extraordinary level of social capital resident in the room” (2001, para. 2). U.S. library leaders grabbed their opportunity to demonstrate the many ways libraries build social capital and to chide Putnam for missing libraries in *Bowling Alone* (Kranich, 2001; Preer, 2001). Kranich (2001) said “the primary way libraries build social capital is by providing that public space where citizens can work together on personal and community problems” (para. 16). Calling the library’s public space a “civic commons” Kranich describes it as a place where people can “speak freely, share concerns, and pursue their interests and what they see as community interests.” She continues, “the resulting discourse among informed citizens assures civil society, the social capital necessary to sovereignty” (para. 11).

Preer (2001) responded to Putnam’s ALA conference presentation by demonstrating ways libraries can serve as both indicators and facilitators for creating of social capital. According to Preer, libraries create an informed citizenry and have done so throughout their existence. Preer noted that in the face of steadily increasing privatization of previously public institutions public libraries “remain public, open, and based in neighborhoods” (p. 61). Public libraries facilitate creating community. They also foster tolerance, being open to all citizens and all ideas. As an example, Preer cites the American Library Association’s continuing efforts to provide materials and services that reflect the diversity of the American population.

Putnam’s research correlates a high level of community involvement with high participation in membership organizations like clubs and churches and a high likelihood of reading the newspaper and voting regularly. Preer (2001) cites public libraries as supporting civic involvement by encouraging volunteerism and offering training in civic advocacy and participatory processes. Preer reports that at the end of Putnam’s presentation he suggested several ways to promote a more engaged civic and community
life. She responds with ways libraries can and do support each of Putnam’s proposed initiatives by:

- providing services to children and young adults that offer “myriad ways” (p. 62) to stimulate their civic engagement;
- using programming to “promote a broader worldview among users of all ages;”
- offering venues for participation in artistic and cultural activities;
- providing the information and public meeting spaces required to help create an informed citizenry;
- and serving citizens across the generations.

Putnam’s appearance at the American Library Association meeting brought public libraries to his attention as places where social capital is generated. In *Better Together* (2003) Putnam and his co-authors visited the Chicago Public Library’s Near North Branch. They describe it as “an active and responsive part of the community and an agent of change” (p. 35). There they experienced first hand the many ways one branch library contributes to its neighborhoods. Recent immigrants can learn English at the library, school children from the low income Cabrini Green neighborhood on one side of the library can get help with their homework from retired volunteers who live in the wealthier Gold Coast neighborhood on the other side of the library. Everyone can use the library’s computers. The library has become a successful meeting place and neighborhood center where people can build bridges between their communities.

Chicago Public Library Commissioner Mary Dempsey tells Putnam that finding the right location for the branch was one of her biggest challenges. Dempsey says that the library system has been instrumental in reinforcing networks between neighborhoods and that the libraries have benefited from the already-existing networks. One of the ironies of Near North is that its success has facilitated gentrification from the Gold Coast westward. As the housing projects have been knocked down and the neighborhoods have become more attractive prices have risen and the original residents are being displaced, no longer able to afford to live in their own neighborhoods.

Cart (2002) also wonders why Putnam missed the contributions public libraries make to building social capital in their communities. He calls on library leaders to get out into their communities, to be visible, active participants in community life, and to
pursue opportunities to bring community activities into the libraries by making auditoriums and meeting rooms available to community organizations and by hosting artistic and cultural activities. He warns that “there is a never-ending struggle to insure that they [libraries] are not taken for granted, that they are not allowed to suffer from benign neglect” (Cart, 2002, p. 16). Recalling the reopening of the restored and expanded Los Angeles Central Library after a fire, Cart found that Los Angeles residents saw their new downtown library as a “visible source of civic activity, spirit, and pride” (p. 16). Public libraries also provide a venue and a mission through which volunteers can come together in support of a community good. Cart likens their physical buildings and intellectual resources to America’s front porch, “a front porch large enough for all Americans, a front porch free to all, a front porch where all can congregate, commune, and discover a common humanity” (p. 20).

The British, Canadian, and Australian public library communities have embraced the concept of building social capital as a key function of public libraries. In an editorial in Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services Bundy (2003) comments on the importance of integrating the social capital value and role of public libraries into their missions. He cites Bryson, Usherwood, and Proctor (2003) on the importance of appropriately designed and situated library buildings. Their state-funded study of British public libraries is intended to “assess the impact of a new library building on local communities, questioning the institution as a physical space and the role it plays in the wider community” (p. 7). Bryson et al. identify five keys to building successful new libraries – planning, partnerships, design, marketing and social capital; and say a successful public library can be “a tool for building social capital,” functioning simultaneously as “a meeting place, a learning resource, and a comfortable and relaxing public space. The buildings that are well designed and managed offer an array of resources that enable people and groups to establish relationships, carry on conversations, exchange ideas and engage in the life of the mind” (p. 57).

Goulding’s 2004 editorial in the British Journal of Librarianship and Information Science also draws on Bryson, Underwood, and Proctor’s (2003) findings. She highlights the difference between British and U.S. governmental policy perspectives regarding the importance of social capital as a public good, saying “in the UK policy makers and
academic commentators believe that the state and its institutions can create the conditions through which social capital can be generated” (p.4). She feels that “the more optimistic British view is perhaps the result of evidence suggesting that associational life and civic participation in the UK is still strong in contrast to, for example, the United States (as documented by Putnam)” (p. 4). She continues by demonstrating that formal mechanisms for citizen participation in their communities still exist, noting that these mechanisms “play an important part in engaging local people and helping them work together for the benefit of their neighborhoods” (p. 4) but notes the increasing privatization of formerly public facilities and the resulting effect of “people being pulled apart from one another and their communities” (p. 4).

In the United Kingdom governmental research has identified five measures of a community’s social capital: degree of social engagement, neighborliness, social networks, social support, and perceptions of the local area (Coultard, Walker & Morgan, 2002; cited in Goulding, 2004, p. 3). For Goulding, characteristic features of public libraries that support this definition of social capital include “being one of the few public places where both old and young are welcome and encounter one another on a regular basis” (p. 4). Similarly, public libraries remain one of the few places where women of all ages can go alone to spend time without worry or harassment. Public libraries serve the full range of community members including “the retired, students, the unemployed and homeless.” They provide materials in a range of formats and languages, and offer group meeting spaces where people are likely to encounter those outside their usual social circles. All of these characteristics contribute to the public library’s identity as a place and a force for increasing social capital within their communities. Libraries also support civic participation by providing access to all kinds of formal and informal civic and governmental information -- “the kind of information that helps individuals and groups play a more effective part in their community and in the democratic process” (p. 5). Goulding explicitly links people getting information at public libraries with the libraries’ role as the Habermasian public forum in which to explore ideas.

Goulding (2004) identifies several challenges to the libraries’ role in building social capital, including the potential conflict between newer electronic information resources and traditional face to face public library services as they impact the use of
library space. She cites the clatter of keyboards and conflict over use of computers for
competing purposes and says the homogeneity of traditional library users may discourage
other community members from entering the library. “A white, middle-class academic
culture can alienate disadvantaged people and those of ethnic origin” (p. 5). Behavioral
expectations can also alienate certain groups of potential library users, especially young
people. In spite of these challenges, Goulding finds great opportunities for public
libraries to contribute to civic renewal and community building and to emphasize their
role in building social capital. “The very success of democratic public space lies in its
embrace of conflict and plurality and libraries need to consider how to address any
tensions inherent in their use whilst still ensuring that their capacity to help promote
social capital is maintained” (p. 5).

In Australia researchers and practitioners have conducted significant empirical
work on the role of the public library in creating social capital. Cox (2000) led a state
funded study of ten public libraries in and around suburban Sydney and rural New South
Wales “to investigate how municipal libraries can, and do, contribute to the production of
social capital in the communities in which they are located.” (Hillenbrand, 2005a, p.10).
She reports that “libraries function to enhance social interaction and trust, and that they
foster equal access and a sense of equity within the community within which they are
placed, which in turn contributes to social capital” (Cox, 2000, p. 10). Public libraries
contribute to a local sense of community by providing a physical structure, “a place
which signifies easy access to other users, spaces for reading, and the opportunity to ask
for assistance” (p. 4). When people come together at public libraries to share the physical
space and the library’s resources, they meet people from outside their normal circles “and
recognize both commonalities and differences in familiar surroundings which are seen as
safe space” (p. 4). Cox says that the existence of municipal and other governmentally
sponsored public libraries “is a public statement of governmental community
commitment” (p. 4). Cox and her colleagues stress that it is important to continue to
value the physical space of public libraries during the online era. Their study provides a
detailed methodology for conducting a social capital audit of public libraries.

For her masters’ thesis Hillenbrand (2005a, 2005b) followed Cox’s model and
conducted a detailed social capital audit of her local public library. In her literature
review (2005a) she finds that “there is widespread agreement across the literatures that the primary way libraries build social capital is by providing a shared, public space for a variety of different groups within the community, accommodating diverse needs and enhancing social interaction and trust” (p. 9). She notes that US public library literature “refers to this idea of a public space that brings together people from diverse backgrounds to interact, share concerns and work together as the ‘commons’” and she reports how an Australian public library leader “described the library as the new village green” in the sense of being a place where, in addition to borrowing books, people meet to discuss what they read, “to hear authors speak and to connect to the world of ideas” (p. 9). The commons and the village green both suggest images of people voluntarily gathering for compatible purposes in a publicly owned place.

For her study Hillenbrand (2005b) collected the views of library members, library staff, and key stakeholders from the library’s partner educational institution and the local government. She conducted observations and collected quantitative and qualitative data to find out “how the library is used, how staff members feel about the library, and how the community experience[s] the library” (p. 56). She found that “management of the library is committed to extending its reach beyond books to embrace a social and community development model for the library” (p. 56). By contrast, “the majority of library members still perceive the role, benefit and value of the library as a place to come to borrow books, to find information, to browse and read, and increasingly, to use the computers. Many also highly value the library as a quiet and peaceful place” (p.56).

Hillenbrand’s (2005b) study also identifies new roles for public libraries that fill a social role “over and above the function of lending books and other resources” (p. 56). Social and community benefits of the library experience include functioning as “a community meeting place and information centre” where people come “to be entertained, to meet people, and to socialize with friends and family, and to make new connections” (p. 57). Also important and valuable to library members is “the helpfulness of the staff, the quality of the service they receive, and the aesthetics and comfort of the library building itself” (p. 57). The library contributes significantly to the sense of health and well-being of many members of the community especially “the lonely, the isolated and the elderly” (p. 57) in spite of its location at the edge of the community on an education
campus far from the town center. On the whole Hillenbrand found that the library contributes not only to the social capital of its community but that its staff has successfully adopted “initiatives which address social exclusion and involve community capacity building” (p. 57) so that the public library is actively contributing to achieving the goals and objectives of both its state and local governments.

The Norwegian government has recently funded a major research study titled *PLACE: Public Libraries – Arenas for Citizenship: An investigation of the public library as a community meeting place fostering social capital in a digital and multicultural context* (Audunson, 2007b). In her preliminary research co-principle investigator to the PLACE study Aabo (2005) focuses on changing roles of public libraries in the digital era. She finds that they help meet the digital age’s challenges because of their potential and actual roles as public spaces that provide social and physical meeting places. The purpose “generally accepted for public libraries worldwide has not been changed by the ICT [information communication technology] revolution,” she says, “The purpose of public libraries is still to further democracy, equality and social justice, increase access to information, disseminate culture and knowledge, contribute to a meaningful and informative leisure time, and act as a communal institution and a social meeting place” (p. 210). Aabo says the public library’s purpose is under threat from the “widening of the digital gap and a weakening of social participation and involvement” (p.210). Public libraries can counter this threat by strengthening their democratic role “by furthering social inclusiveness and citizenship” (p. 210). She concludes by emphasizing library managers’ responsibility to document the value of public libraries in monetary terms and to demonstrate their economic importance to decision-makers.

As part of the PLACE study, Varheim (2007) calls for deeper ongoing research into the relationship of libraries and social capital. After reviewing many of the sources cited in the literature Varheim concludes “people mainly use the library for document-related activities. However, many find it a place they just want to be: a third place for informal low-intensive meetings.” At the same time, Norwegian public library users “prioritize the equity of access for all and consider library buildings a symbol of government commitment” (p. 425). Varheim warns that outreach activities intended to bring in new library users must be “grounded in a library services perspective.” He says
that “if libraries turned into local community centers, merely functioning as hubs and recruiting areas for voluntary associations, there would be little evidence of their social capital-building properties” (p. 425). In contrast to Putnam’s (2000) firmly held belief in the importance of voluntary associations, Varheim says, “there is scant evidence that voluntary associations create social capital, regardless of their other positive effects” (p. 425).

Varheim (2007) predicts public libraries will have three main institutional effects in creating social capital: providing universal services built around the core purpose of access to documents and information; functioning as a public space that provides universal access for all on an equal footing; and as an informational institution, “bringing people together for knowledge and reflection” (p. 426). Varheim suggests that universal service and universal access without means testing are key features of public libraries that support social capital generation, but that “the library has a vital role in maintaining the public sphere in times of commercial and physical threats to the free formation of the public opinion” (p. 426) and therefore has a role in supporting “both the social and the political fabric of society and government” (p. 426). Varheim’s and Aabo’s (2005) conclusions about the role of public libraries in Norway reflect the split in the U.S. public library community between emphasizing the public library’s role as the locus of the public sphere against library decision makers’ need to document the economic value of public library services (Buschman 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b).

Audunson (2005; 2007a; 2007b; Audunson, et al., 2007) is the principle investigator for the Norwegian PLACE study. He is developing a theory of low-intensive meeting places that provide communities with “public spaces and meeting places filling different functions -- for example, meeting places contributing to an undistorted communication in the Habermasian sense, meeting places with a potential of creating a minimum degree of community identity and meeting places promoting social contact, making people go ‘bowling together’” (2007b, section 3.1, para. 8). Audunson postulates that high-intensity meetings are those between people who share their major interests and engagements and thus generate bonding social capital, and low-intensity meetings are those where people with different interests and values come together and generate bridging social capital. He and his colleagues have identified public libraries as an ideal
site to support and encourage low-intensity meetings because of their ability to promote social inclusion and to create integrated and vital local communities (2005). He calls the public library “one of the few remaining cross-cultural meeting places” in an increasingly fragmented social world (2005, p. 437). He also identifies the public library as an institution that while firmly embedded in the local community provides a bridge to the digital, virtual world. “In the library we are citizens of the geographically defined local community and the digital world simultaneously” (2005, p. 439).

As part of the PLACE study Audunson, et al. (2007) report preliminary results of their survey of three Oslo communities. The survey was designed to identify how the people use their public libraries as meeting places that support social capital generation. “Understanding public libraries as low-intensive meeting places makes it possible to see the library as an arena for informal social interaction,” he says, “for the creation of weak ties, generalized trust and bridging social capital” (2007a, para. 12). Results of the survey indicate that public libraries serve as important meeting places in several ways. The libraries function, most importantly according to respondents, as a “public square in the community where you meet friends and neighbours, enter into conversations with friends and neighbours but also, to a very considerable degree, with strangers” (para. 25).

The authors call the finding “striking and important,” that “such a high percentage in all communities . . . state that the library is a meeting place where they encounter, observe and learn about people different from themselves.” They say their findings “underline the library’s potential partly as a multicultural and physical meeting place, partly as a bridge between the geographically defined community and the world wide web” (para. 27).

Audunson, et al. (2007a,) find that a wide range of types of meetings take place in public libraries, “informal meetings with friends, unplanned encounters, participation in virtual arenas, organized meetings with politicians and authors, etc.” Their findings “indicate that libraries are arenas permitting its [sic] users to move more or less without friction between different kinds of meetings and different life spheres” (Conclusion section, para. 1). Audunson, et al. conclude that “the concept of low intensive meeting places where people become aware of each other across cultural heritages, and across differences in values and perspectives seems to be fruitful” (Conclusion section, para. 3).
The PLACE Study’s contribution of the concept of low intensity meeting places offers an additional way to understand how public libraries function as places well suited to supporting social capital generating activities.

**Public libraries as digital informational places.** Varheim (2007) describes public libraries as informational institutions functioning as both virtual and physical places where people come together around both document-driven and social activities. Audunson (2005) identifies public libraries as being simultaneously grounded in the geographically defined, local community while providing a bridge to the digital virtual world. Fisher, et al. (2007) propose adding the concept of information seeking and consumption to Cresswell’s (2004) and Oldenburg’s (1999) frameworks for understanding libraries as place. Fisher, et al. suggest that “an ‘informational place’ can be operationalized as comprising all themes regarding information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment” (p. 153). These descriptions of new public library roles that combine digital and physical services, along with other reminders of the traditional and continuing roles of public libraries as places people go when they need information, are reinforced by Burke and Martin’s (2004) findings.

D’Elia, Jörgensen, Woelfel and Rodger (2002) conducted a national telephone study to begin to identify systematically the “relationship between people’s use of the Internet and use of the library” (p. 803). While not explicitly articulated in terms of the library as place, the study surveyed over 3,000 adults by telephone to identify a variety of factors in people’s decisions as to whether to use the Internet or the library for various reasons. Implicit in the structure of their study is the idea that use of the library means physically going to the library building for any number of reasons. They found that, at the time of the study, use of the Internet and use of the library were complementary and that the rise of the Internet “does not appear to have affected the reasons why people use the library” (p. 818) but they caution that consumer choices can change and that repeating the study over time will help identify changing trends in people’s use of the library and the Internet.

By 2006 98.9% of public libraries offered public access Internet services. Beginning in 1994 Bertot, McClure, and others (Bertot et al. 1998, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a,
2006b; McClure, Bertot & Zweizig, 1994) conducted a series of studies of public libraries and the Internet. Although like D’Elia et al. (2002), these studies are not explicitly framed in terms of the role of library as place in the lives of library users, they provide an essential ongoing look at how the rise of the Internet as a digital information gateway has affected public libraries services to their users. In parallel with the rise of digital information technology federal, state, and local governments have migrated more and more of their services to electronic-only applications -- e-government -- without providing access points, rather referring individuals without other Internet access to their public libraries for access and assistance (Bertot, et al., 2006a, 2006b).

As public libraries have become known as the place to go for access to e-government services, they have also become the first stop in times of emergencies. After the disastrous Gulf Coast hurricane seasons of 2004 and 2005, local people turned to the nearest open public library as a resource for information and communication access (Oder, 2006). In the months after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, as libraries reopened they offered people access to Internet-enabled computers to use to complete FEMA and other insurance applications, conduct job searches, locate health information, and communicate with scattered family members and friends. Branches with wireless Internet access proved especially popular to people with personal laptop computers but no other source of access to the Internet.

Florida experienced eight hurricanes and two tropical storms during the same period and, in affected communities, people turned to their public libraries for access to the Internet. The State Library of Florida asked the libraries to describe their roles in coping with the hurricanes and shared their responses with Bertot, et al. (2006a, 2006b). The libraries reported that they supported “critical communications operations, assisted in the staffing and support of community emergency, rebuilding, and relief services; provided expanded Internet access to emergency service providers and their communities; provided physical shelter; and maintained traditional library services” (Bertot, et al. 2006a).

Conducted at approximately the same time as the most recent Public Libraries and the Internet study (Bertot, et al. 2006a, 2006b), Long Overdue: A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century (Public Agenda,
2006) talked directly with library users about their perceptions of public libraries. In line with findings from the *Public Libraries and the Internet* studies, *Long Overdue* found that library users view libraries as “key players in our digitized future” (Wooden, p. 4). Other *Long Overdue* findings indicate opportunities for public libraries to:

- develop better programming and services for teens,
- address illiteracy and poor reading skills among adults,
- offer ready access to information about government services (including making public documents and forms quickly and easily available),
- permit much greater access to computers for all (Wooden, 2006).

Again, while not explicitly framed as studying library as place, implicit in *Long Overdue* is a conception of the library as the physical place where these opportunities can be met. The library users surveyed have not changed their expectations of public library programs and services from those of previous generations, just added their need for libraries to provide digital services in addition to their traditional roles.

*The Economist* (April 12, 2008) recently reported “wireless communication is changing the way people work, live, love and relate to places—and each other” (“Nomads at last,” p.3). Public libraries are becoming a preferred place for digital nomads to connect to the Internet because they offer reliable access to the Internet, and more and more frequently reliable wireless access. Digital nomads are people who rely on mobile telecommunication technologies to keep them connected to their work no matter where they may be physically located. Rather than relying on paper, or even laptops, in the age of BlackBerries, iPhones, and other smart phone technology they rely on connectivity. Their documents are typically stored in a central accessible digital file system like Google Docs, and if they need to do any major writing “they sit down in front of the nearest available computer anywhere in the world, open its web browser and access all their documents online” (p. 4). According to Manuel Castells their goal is permanent connectivity, not motion, (“Nomads at last,” p. 4), and permanent connectivity is making the twentieth century model of the modern corporate office culture obsolete. Knowledge workers now “spend less than a third of their time working in traditional corporate offices, about a third in their home offices and the remaining third working from ‘third places’ such as cafés, public libraries, or parks” (p. 6).
James Katz, communications professor at Rutgers, questions whether the new digital oases are actually functioning as third places or whether they are being hollowed out by people “more engaged with their e-mail in-box than with the people touching their elbows” (“Nomads at last,” p. 10). Katz describes these third places as “physically inhabited but psychologically evacuated,” leaving people feeling “more isolated than they would be if the café were merely empty” (p. 10). Katz’s work combined with K. Harris’s (2003), and Fisher, et al.’s (2007) research attributing public libraries with the low-interactive characteristics of third places implies that public libraries that provide reliable wireless high-speed Internet access may be very attractive places for digital nomads to work in. The American Library Association’s 2008 report on the state of America’s libraries supports this conclusion but warns “growing patron enthusiasm for the computer and Internet services offered by public libraries has stretched existing Internet bandwidth, computer availability, and building infrastructure to capacity. Budgets have not kept up with demand, and many libraries cannot provide enough computers or fast-enough connection speeds to meet patron needs” (American Library Association, 2008, p. ii).

Advances in digital communication technology and the proliferation of Internet-only resources are combining to add a new level of demand on top of other place-based public library programs and services. ALA’s current findings imply that it is crucial for public libraries to recognize their strengths and weaknesses as community places and make some decisions about which of their roles they will emphasize and how they will use scarce resources to support them. This chapter has shown that it is also crucial that public library decision makers listen to their library users about what they want from their libraries and plan accordingly.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of prior research into the role of libraries as place and introduces the theoretical literature that makes up the conceptual framework informing this study. It also provides an overview of previous research and editorial opinions of how each of these theories applies to public libraries by citing published work in which public libraries are interpreted according to each theory. Theoretical perspectives on the role of the public library as place include:

- serving as an expression of the Habermasian democratic public sphere;
• providing an island of public, civic space in an increasingly privatized, disneyfied social world;
• offering a third place between home and work where people can go to relax, refresh, and connect;
• providing perceived neutral public realm space people can customize to create congenial semi-private places for periods of time;
• providing a community center around which identity and a sense of belonging can coalesce;
• supporting networking and bridge-building between social groups that supports increases in social capital for individuals and groups.

This chapter also reports a new theoretical conceptualization of the public library as an informational place featuring some characteristics of third places but stressing the public library’s role as the place people go when they seek digital as well as print informational materials.
CHAPTER 3
STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

Research Questions
The guiding question driving this study asks: How are the Gadsden County Library System library buildings functioning as places?

This question is operationalized by asking specific research questions about adult library user demographics, adult library user and staff perceptions of library use, and observations of adults using library facilities:
RQ 1. Who are the users of the Gadsden County library buildings?
RQ 2. How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?
RQ 3. What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?
RQ 4. What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users make of their library buildings?
RQ 5. What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities?

Overall Study Design
To answer these research questions I conducted a mixed-methods case study of Gadsden County’s public library system to look at how each of its three new library buildings functions as place. Because this study focuses on understanding the way people use library buildings, the library system’s bookmobile was not included in this study even though it is a place and would be another example of library as place.

This study replicates the mixed-methods case study designed and used by Leckie, Hopkins, and Given (Given & Leckie 2003, Leckie & Hopkins 2002) at the main public libraries in Toronto and Vancouver in the late 1990s and replicated by May (2007) at six smaller public library branches in and around Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 2006 to explore the role of library as place in a community. The study design features a single case – the Gadsden County Public Library System -- with three embedded units of analysis—the three library branches (Yin, 2003). The methodology employs a triangulated design that draws on three methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from two groups
of people associated with the libraries: surveys and interviews of adult library users, interviews of library public service staff members, and structured observations – seating sweeps – of the people using the libraries. The data analysis follows a triangulation or convergence design in which the findings from each data collection method confirm or disconfirm the findings of the other data collection methods and then are combined to answer the research questions posed in the study. The study design is efficient and has demonstrated face and content validity in previous iterations.

May (2007) provides a detailed description of her version of this study design and execution in the body of her master’s thesis. To facilitate eventual cross-case comparisons I replicated the instruments and methods developed by Leckie, Hopkins, and Given (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) as used by May as closely as possible while at the same time customizing the questions used to suit the demographic profile of the population of the current study site. For example, where the Canadian questionnaires asked which languages participants spoke -- and included French but not Spanish as a choice -- this study includes Spanish but not French as a choice based on available demographic data about this study site’s population.

May (2007) expanded Leckie, Hopkins, and Given’s (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) original study design by incorporating an additional instrument designed by Curry et al. (2004) in order to solicit public opinions about the design of recently constructed branch library buildings. Because Gadsden County’s library buildings are newly constructed – they opened to the public in 2003, 2006, and 2007-- it was appropriate to include concepts from Curry’s library user survey as part of the current library user survey -- as May integrated it into her study -- to ask how the libraries’ users feel about specific features of their new library buildings.

After completing my data collection I uncovered the need to expand on both prior study designs by including a review of the library meeting room reservation documents as part of the data collection plan. During the library user and staff interviews discussed below many respondents described having observed or participated in a variety of meeting room uses. To confirm their observations I requested permission from the university’s institutional review board to modify my original study design to include requesting the meeting room reservation sheets from the libraries. I received permission
to request the documents and the library director agreed that they could be used in the study.

Mixed Methods in Social Research

Researchers who study complex social phenomena such as how people use the physical spaces of public libraries need methods flexible enough to allow them to explore the variety of uses people make of their libraries, and to capture their thoughts about the buildings and how they use them. Mixed methods research designs allow researchers to use multiple data collection and analysis techniques to capture both quantitative and qualitative data to compare, contrast, and integrate their findings in order to develop a complete picture of the phenomena under consideration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Mixed methods research designs support the premise that combining qualitative and quantitative approaches compensates for weaknesses that may be present when only one research method is followed (Jick, 1979).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) summarize the complementary relationships possible with mixed methods study designs. They begin by noting that quantitative research methods are weak at getting at the context or setting of the people being studied and that quantitative methods do not recognize researcher bias. Qualitative research methods make up for these weaknesses because they rely on the researcher’s personal interpretations of settings and observed behaviors and accept the researcher bias inherent in the personal perspective. In a qualitative research study it is difficult to generalize the findings to a larger group. Mixed methods research designs provide for collecting more comprehensive evidence than either quantitative or qualitative methods alone. They help answer complicated research questions by encouraging the use of multiple perspectives.

Mixed methods study designs facilitate a pragmatic worldview or research paradigm in which the research question is of primary importance and the research methods chosen are those that best facilitate answering the question (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Research designs informed by pragmatism encourage use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. “The combination of qualitative and quantitative data,” Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) note, “provides a more complete picture by noting trends and generalizations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives” (p. 33). Creswell and Plano Clark offer four major types of
mixed methods study designs: triangulation, embedded, exploratory, and explanatory. These four types differ in which research method is emphasized, in what order the methods are used, and how the data are analyzed, integrated, and presented.

Triangulation designs are the most common and well-known approach to mixing methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Maxwell, 1998; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). They allow researchers to collect different but complementary data on the same topic and facilitate comparing and contrasting quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings, or to use the qualitative findings to validate or expand the quantitative results. They are single phase studies in which the researcher conducts both quantitative and qualitative data collection in the same timeframe and weights the findings equally as compared to study designs in which the data are collected sequentially or in which one set of findings has more importance than the other. When using a triangulated study design researchers often follow the convergence model, in which the results of the different data gathering methods are analyzed separately and then converged during the interpretation by comparing and contrasting the different results. The goal of the convergence model of a triangulated study is to “end up with valid and well-substantiated conclusions about a single phenomenon” (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, p. 65).

Erzberger and Kelle (2003) refer to this model as one of mutual validation and say that it can yield useful results. They also suggest paying attention to the “complementarity” of different methods that may relate to different aspects of the domain in question (p. 484). They suggest that each set of data collected by a certain method can supplement data previously collected by other methods, and that if the data are correctly put together they can provide a fuller picture of the domain under consideration. Yin (2003) strongly recommends using multiple sources of data and multiple data collection methods in case study research for the same reasons, saying that findings or conclusions drawn from a case study are “likely to be much more convincing and accurate” (p. 98) if they are drawn from different sources, collected and analyzed using different methods, and triangulated on the same set of research questions.

Strengths of the triangulation design include efficiency, because both types of data are collected concurrently or in immediate sequence. At the same time each type of data can be collected and analyzed independently using the techniques traditionally
Challenges to using the triangulation design include the need for the researcher to have expertise in multiple methods because of concurrent data collection and equal weighting of the results. Researchers can also find it challenging to reconcile the study results if the quantitative and qualitative findings do not agree or support each other. Conflicting results can require reanalyzing the data, additional data collection, or a careful, critical analysis of the data collection instruments to find possible weaknesses. In addressing the reality of results that do not support each other, Schwandt (2007) makes the point that triangulated results may not necessarily converge and the triangulation process may highlight important and illuminating differences between different sets of data that point to the complicated nature of social interaction.

When considering the convergence model of triangulation design, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) warn that researchers need to consider the consequences of having different samples and different sample sizes. They also note that it can be challenging to integrate two sets of findings in a meaningful way but suggest that combining the results can be facilitated by making sure that the qualitative and quantitative data address the same concepts. Bryman (2007) interviewed 20 British mixed methods practitioners to identify the barriers to successfully integrating mixed methods findings. He suggests that researchers need to be aware of their possible biases toward either quantitative or qualitative research methods and to go beyond testing the results obtained from their various methods against each other to develop “an overall or negotiated account of the findings that brings together both components of the conversation or debate” (p. 21). Bryman suggests that “the written document should be more than the sum of the parts” and that the various types of findings should be “mutually illuminating” (p. 21). In the end, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) demonstrate that triangulation design studies make sense intuitively. They have been discussed extensively in the literature since Jick (1979) first described them and are the most commonly considered design when discussing mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Maxwell (2005) suggests making a less rigid distinction between the quantitative and qualitative elements of mixed methods study designs and creating a design map to provide an overview of the various components of the study focusing on the purpose, the conceptual framework, the research questions, the methods and the validity of the
findings with attention paid to how each of the components of the study interacts with the others. For Maxwell, the study’s purpose is informed by perceived problems, the researcher’s personal goals, participant concerns, availability of funding and funders’ goals, and ethical standards. The study’s conceptual framework comes from the researcher’s personal experience, existing theory and prior research, exploratory and pilot research, thought experiments, and preliminary data and conclusions. The methods with which to conduct the study come from the researcher’s ethical standards, the research setting, the researcher’s skills and preferred style of research, and the chosen research paradigm. The research questions sit at the center of these inputs and, in turn, determine how these inputs will be utilized. The validity of the study and its findings are determined from the research questions and the methods. I developed a study design map following Maxwell’s model to facilitate organizing my study. It is presented in Figure 3.1.

**Replication**

The concept of replicating research studies is well established and respected in quantitative social science research (Babbie, 2004; Schutt, 1999; Singleton, Straits, and Straits, 1993). Schutt says “replications of a study are essential to establish its generalizability to other situations [and] an ongoing line of research stemming from a particular research question should include a series of studies” (p. 59). Singleton, et al., comment that one of the best ways to increase “confidence in a particular finding is to repeat a study” (p. 402). They note that replications are never exactly the same as the original study because each “is conducted at a different time, and generally will involve a different sample of cases” (p. 403). For this reason they identify replications as being inherently dissimilar to the original study but find this to be a strength because “the more dissimilar they are . . . the greater the confidence that the findings support the research hypothesis rather than being an artifact of particular research conditions” (p. 403). While larger social research studies are seldom replicated simply to verify a finding because of the costs associated with them, Singleton, et al. suggest that replicating small scale experimental studies has value because in each repetition of the study certain features can be varied to see what impacts they have on the hypotheses under consideration.
Purpose of the study:
LIS scholars understand something about the role of the public library as place in large urban environments. This study will investigate how public libraries function as place in a small, rural, minority community.

Conceptual framework:
- Previous research into library as place
- Theoretical Perspectives:
  • The Public Sphere
  • Sense of place
  • Public Realm theory
  • Psychological Sense of Community
  • Third Places
  • Social Capital Theory
  • Informational Places

Research Question: How are the GCPLS locations functioning as places?

Demographics:
Who are the users of the Gadsden County libraries?

User perspectives:
• How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?
• What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the design elements of their local and main library buildings?
• Actual use: What use do they make of the library buildings?
• User and Staff perspectives: What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library as place in their communities?

Methods: Replicate previous study designs in a case study of the Gadsden County Public Library System using:
• Observations
• Survey
• Patron interviews
• Staff interviews

Validity:
• Triangulation
• Content Validity
• Face Validity
• Interpretive Validity
• Disconfirming Evidence

Figure 3.01: Study design map.
Replication also has an important place in qualitative research designs. Krathwohl (1998) says that “the more numerous the qualitative replications under different circumstances, the greater the credibility; the more varied the replications, the greater the generality” (p. 627). The use of multiple case studies that address the same research questions in different settings is a common example of replication in qualitative research described by Krathwohl (p. 627). This study fits Krathwohl’s pattern of replication because it uses an existing study design and instruments to study a population demographic not previously studied in the context of the research questions.

Case Studies
Creswell (2005) defines a case study as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (p. 439). Krathwohl (1998) adds that case studies, by “vividly and precisely conveying the characteristics of a single individual, situation, or problem … are used to illuminate a generic problem” (p. 332). Babbie (2004) adds that the chief purpose of case studies may be descriptive but that “an in-depth study of a particular case can yield explanatory insights” (p. 293). Bogdan and Biklin (2003) identify several types of case studies relevant to education research including historical organization case studies, observational case studies, and life histories (pp. 55-57). Yin (2005) defines the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Yin means that the context of the study is highly significant to the phenomenon under consideration. In this study I followed Yin’s model of a single case design with three embedded units of analysis -- the case is the Gadsden County Public Library System and the units of analysis are the library system’s three library locations. The study focuses on the way adults use the physical spaces and facilities of public library buildings. This study’s intent is descriptive but because it replicates the research questions and design of the two studies on which it is based to examine a very different group of adults, the study’s findings allow the possibility of cross-case comparisons that could indicate differences or similarities in the use of public libraries as place in different types of communities and across different populations.
Study Setting and Access

This study was conducted in the three libraries – Quincy, Havana, and Chattahoochee -- that make up the Gadsden County Public Library System (GCPLS). GCPLS is a small rural county public library system in North Florida serving approximately 48,000 residents, the majority of whom are African-American. Access to the study sites was granted by Ms. Jane Mock, Executive Director of the Gadsden County library system, on May 12, 2008. A copy of Mock’s e-mail message approving the study is included in Appendix A.

Participants

The study focused on two principal groups of library users. First, all library users age 18 or over and present in the libraries during the period of the study were eligible to actively participate in the study by completing self-administered questionnaires or by agreeing to be interviewed. Second, after consultation with the library managers, all library staff members who work with the public were invited to participate in the staff interview portion of the study. Children and teens under 18 years old were counted but otherwise excluded from actively participating in this study because the study investigates adult perceptions of public libraries as place, consistent with the design of the two previous studies. Those under age 18 were considered to be passive participants and their locations and activities were noted during the library user seating sweep observations. They were not interviewed or asked to complete the survey questionnaire. Finally, those adult library users who declined to actively participate in the study activities were counted during the seating sweeps and their locations and activities were noted during the seating sweeps.

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) did not indicate age restrictions in their study but they report only 3% of their 864 Toronto respondents and 1% of their 1,077 Vancouver respondents to have been under age 18. May (2007) distributed her survey questionnaires to “all patrons who were teenage and older” (p. 31). She states that she specifically excluded pre-teens from her study but does not explain how she determined the ages of those she asked to participate or why she chose the group she chose. She indicates that 3% of her 271 respondents across the six libraries she studied were under age 18 (p. 46).
Because the current study addresses the role of the library buildings as physical places where adults go for various reasons, those under age 18, those who request information by telephone or by e-mail, those who use the library’s bookmobile and outreach services, and those who use the library system’s distributed (non-place based) electronic resources (e.g. those who access the library’s on-line catalog or website from remote locations) were not included in this study. This study’s population was limited to the subset of adult library users who physically come to the library buildings to use the library’s physical and intellectual facilities and resources based within the buildings -- those who use the library as place.

**Study Instruments and Methods**

This five-part study used the instruments and methods designed by Leckie and her colleagues (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) and Curry et al. (2004) as modified and employed by May (2007) and including the additional step of reviewing library meeting room reservation sheets. The five parts of the study are:

1. Seating sweeps of each library building
2. Library adult user survey at each building
3. Library adult user interviews at each building
4. Library staff interviews at each building
5. Review of library meeting room reservation sheets.

**Seating Sweeps**

The seating sweeps were the first activity conducted at each site. Seating sweeps are a way of structuring unobtrusive observations to determine how people are actually using the library at any specific time (Given & Leckie, 2003). Baker (2006) credits Given and Leckie with being among the few LIS researchers who have chosen to use unobtrusive observation in conjunction with other data collection techniques and finds that their method has value when used in this fashion. She supports her position by citing Gold (1958) who noted that while the role of the complete observer in field research is used as a subordinate role “it may be an important starting point for future observations and interactions when the researcher assumes other roles” (Baker, 2006, p. 175), as is the case in this study.
Given and Leckie (2003) derived their seating sweeps methodology from other studies of social activity space and the “larger context of social science research on social activity and public spaces” (p. 366). Among the sources they drew upon were Brown, Sijpkes, and Maclean (1986) whose work on the community role of public indoor space used unobtrusive observations including sweeps and bench studies to record the personal characteristics and behaviors of sedentary adults in large urban indoor multi-purpose public places including atriums and shopping malls in Montreal. They describe seating sweeps as observations “during which the personal characteristics and behavior of sedentary individuals in a complex were recorded at a particular point in time” (p. 166). Bench studies record the sequence of behavior on an individual bench over an extended period of time. They were not used in this project.

Given and Leckie (2003) and their two research assistants conducted observational walks through their libraries three times each day (10:15-11:30 a.m., 2:00-3:00 p.m., and 6:00-7:30 p.m.) for six days. Their seating sweeps generated so much data that they ultimately chose to work with a three day sample from each site, choosing Monday as the busiest day of the week, Wednesday as a typical weekday, and Saturday as representative of weekend use because their libraries were closed on Sundays. May (2007) conducted her seating sweeps over two days at each of her six libraries. On her mid-week day (not specified) she ‘swept’ the library three times – morning, afternoon, and evening – and on her weekend day she ‘swept’ the library in the morning and in the afternoon.

I conducted seating sweeps at each study site during the week before the survey questionnaires were distributed or the interviews begun to attempt to capture the most typical undisturbed picture of library use possible. Participants were not asked for their consent because such a request might alter their behavior. Data were collected by walking through the library at scheduled times, stopping to sit at a table or in an arm chair, and first noting the location of the person under observation by sequential number on a copy of the library floor plan. I then used a form to record the estimated age, gender, race, possessions (i.e. backpack, tote-bag, handbag, computer, baby carriage, music player, cell-phone, etc.), activities (reading, using computer by type, studying, talking, eating, participating in a program), and where the person was located in the library at the
time of the observation for each person in the public areas of the library. For consistency the categories of activity recorded were based on those used by May (2007) in her study but modified to suit the specifics of the Gadsden County library locations.

Seating sweep data collection forms were modeled after May’s seating sweeps data collection form and the same form was used at each location. A sample seating sweeps form is attached in the appendices. I requested and received floor plans of each library and photocopied them to use as maps on which I marked the location of each individual observed during the seating sweep with a consecutive number. Copies of the floor plans are included in the appendices. Each data collection form could track fifteen people and I used the numbers assigned to each person on the map to label the corresponding columns on the forms. I used one map and as many data collection forms as needed to account for all the people observed during each seating sweep.

The populations served by the Nova Scotia libraries May (2007) studied ranged from 2,568 to 51,684. Leckie and Given studied large urban downtown main libraries. Because May’s study sites were more closely related to the libraries examined in this study I followed her seating sweeps pattern. Following May’s model, I conducted five seating sweeps per location covering all the time periods during which each library location was open, including one weekday morning, one afternoon after school was dismissed for the day, and one evening; and once or twice – morning or afternoon -- on a weekend day depending on the library location’s weekend operating hours. I observed 174 individuals at the main library, 72 at the Havana branch, and 40 at the Chattahoochee branch.

Library User Surveys
The copy of the user survey questionnaire is attached as Appendix F. It replicates the survey May (2007) used and was modified only to accommodate the current study population. The first change was of places of residence mentioned from those in Nova Scotia to those in Gadsden County. Second, in the Library User profile section of the questionnaire May asked what languages people spoke and offered English, French, and other as choices. In this study the featured languages are English, Spanish, and other, to reflect the demographic profile of Gadsden County. Third, one question was changed to reflect the fact that GCPLS has three new buildings. May asked “Has this library been
renovated within the last three years?” and her follow-up question asked “If yes, do you use the library differently now” (p. 131). My study asked, “Before this library was built did you use the old library?” followed with “If you answered yes to the previous question, do you use this library differently from the old library?” Finally, in the question asking for the respondent’s primary occupation my study used the more general descriptions of employment categories originally used by Leckie and Hopkins (2002) while May used categories taken directly from the Canadian census. Table 3.01 maps the survey questions to the research questions guiding this study.

Table 3.01: Survey questions mapped to research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: Who are the users of the Gadsden County library buildings</td>
<td>Q1. residence; Q2. commute; Q33. gender; Q34. age; Q35. education; Q36. languages; Q37. occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2: How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?</td>
<td>Q10. effect on life; Q11; why this library Q19. user friendly; Q20. talk to staff; Q21. most important service; Q22. least important service; Q25. desired services/resources; Q31. primary purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3: What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?</td>
<td>Q26. used old library; Q27. best feature; Q28. worst feature; Q29. physical space; Q30. favorite space; Q32. feature ratings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4: What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users actually make of these library buildings?</td>
<td>Q3. length of visit; Q4. visits per year; Q5. day of visit; Q6. time of visit; Q7. preferred hours; Q8. number in group; Q9. grouped with errands; Q12&amp;13. use of other libraries; Q14. current purpose; Q15&amp;16. electronic resources; Q17. personal laptop; Q18. other personal electronics; Q23. non-English materials; Q24. work with tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5: What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities?</td>
<td>Q11. why this library; Q20. talk to staff; Q25. desired services/resources; Q27. best feature; Q28. worst feature; Q30. favorite space; Q31. primary purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Posters announcing the study and asking adult library users to participate in the survey or an interview were placed at each location during the weeks the study was under way. A sample poster is included as Appendix K. The posters mentioned the survey contest gift-card drawing – an incentive to participate -- held when each branch’s survey and public interviews were completed. Library users were eligible to enter the gift-card drawing by completing a survey questionnaire or participating in an interview.
The study design proposal called for 200 questionnaires to be distributed to adults at the main entrance of each of the study sites for two hours three times during the week (morning, afternoon, and evening of different days) and twice during the weekend of the study week. Additional questionnaires were left at the information desks next to the questionnaire return box for the period during which the survey was being conducted. The first page of the survey was the informed consent document. As an incentive to complete the questionnaires the last page was a different colored entry form for the gift-card drawing featuring a $25 Wal-Mart gift card. One gift card was awarded at each study site. Participants were asked to separate the gift card entry forms from the questionnaires and to complete and place them in the Survey Contest box next to the questionnaire return box.

Leckie, Hopkins, and Givens (Givens & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) and their research associates distributed a total of 1,880 surveys in Toronto and 1,850 in Vancouver over a day and a half at each library. They received 864 usable surveys from the Toronto patrons and 1,077 from those in Vancouver. Fidishun (2007) recently conducted a library user survey at the Chester County Library in Exton, Pennsylvania -- population 4,267 in 2000 (http://factfinder.census.gov). She distributed 465 surveys during different time periods over four days and received 329 in return. May (2007) does not indicate how many surveys she distributed across the six libraries she studied but she reports receiving 271 in return and says this greatly exceeded her anticipated return rate. From the three libraries she categorized as small town -- those serving respectively 2,568, 11,966, and 15,682 residents -- she received 16, 26, and 12, or 54 total completed surveys.

Neither of the studies on which my study was based specified the sampling plan used to select study participants. The previous studies imply that the researchers sought to reach representative selections of library users during selected time periods and did so by distributing their survey questionnaires at different times of the day throughout the weeks of their studies. The sampling pattern apparent in their work and used for this study is a common version of a convenience sample, one in which the researcher selects participants because they are available and willing to participate (Creswell, 2005; Fink,
The limitations to this sampling method that were apparent during this study included:

- Missing those library visitors who did not speak English well enough to complete the survey;
- Missing those who speak English but only read or write at the lowest level of literacy and may not have been able to successfully complete the survey – their thoughts were solicited via the interview data collection method;
- Missing those who did not have time to complete the survey while it was being distributed;
- Missing regular library users who may not have been present at the selected times;
- Missing children, young adults, and those over age 65; and
- Being unable to generalize from the findings to any larger population.

Based on the population of Gadsden County and the number of library card holders identified in Chapter 1 I planned to distribute 200 surveys over one week at each library location to be consistent with the design of the earlier studies. I was able to distribute 143 surveys across all three libraries according to the study schedule and I collected 37 at the Quincy main library, 31 at the Havana branch, and 41 at the Chattahoochee branch for a total of 109 usable completed questionnaires, thus reflecting a 76% overall return rate. While this number was far below the 200 surveys per library I planned to distribute it reflects a higher number of completed surveys than May was able to obtain from the three smaller libraries in her study whose service populations are comparable to those of the Gadsden County library locations.

I distributed surveys and pencils by standing at the inner lobby door of each library and asking every adult whose eye I could catch if they would be willing to help with a research project currently under way by completing a survey questionnaire. Most of the adults I spoke with agreed to take a survey form and either complete it while at the library or take it with them to complete and return during their next visit. I followed the same protocol but experienced slightly different response patterns at each of the locations. At the main library the survey received more attention once word of the gift card drawing spread among the library users. When people found out they could enter to
win a Wal-Mart gift-card some who had ignored me previously came back to say that they would fill out a form. At the branch libraries one of the managers offered to help distribute surveys to regular patrons she knew would be coming in when I would not be at the library. During the survey distribution periods, in each location I left a study poster, copies of the survey, pencils, and the survey and gift-card drop boxes near the circulation desk so people could participate if they wished. I collected any completed surveys and gift card entry forms after each visit.

**Interviews of Library Users**

The library user interview guide replicates the interview guide May (2007) used (a copy is attached in the appendices). Table 3.02 maps the library user interview questions to the research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>User Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: Who are the users of the Gadsden County library buildings</td>
<td>Gender and age observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2: How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?</td>
<td>Q6. use other library; Q7. why this library visit; Q8. why past visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3: What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?</td>
<td>Q1. opinion of building; Q2. opinion of surroundings; Q3. best feature; Q4. worst feature; Q5. favorite location or place;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4: What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users actually make of these library buildings?</td>
<td>Q7. why this library visit; Q8. why past visits; Q9. how others use library; Q10. surprising uses of library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5: What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities?</td>
<td>Q7. why this visit; Q8. why past visits; Q9. how others use library; Q10. surprising uses of library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview guide uses the “standard open-ended” model (Johnson & Turner, 2003) in which the same wording and the same sequence of questions is used for each interview but the open-ended questions allow the interviewer room to probe for more details as appropriate. Leckie and her colleagues conducted 100 patron interviews at each of their study sites for a total of 200 library user interviews (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). They selected their interviewees by chance, convenience, and gender from those
present at a specific time. The researchers on their team conducted 25 interviews each on their assigned library floors, writing the responses on the question sheets. May (2007) interviewed three randomly chosen library users at each of her six study sites for a total of 18 interviews. She did not indicate how she chose her participants or how she recorded their answers.

Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) discuss the problems involved in determining the appropriate number of interviews needed in order to reach theoretical data saturation. They conducted a thorough literature review of guidelines for qualitative research in the health sciences and found that while all the studies commented on the need to reach a saturation point there were no published guidelines or published tests for estimating the sample size needed to reach data saturation. They found recommendations ranging from 6 to 50 interviews depending on the details and goals of the studies. In an attempt to determine an appropriate size for a purposeful sample they turned to a qualitative research study they had previously conducted in which they interviewed 60 women in two West African countries. They revisited their original dataset of semi-structured interview transcripts to analyze it in terms of when data saturation was reached. They found that “data saturation had for the most part occurred by the time we had analyzed twelve interviews” (p.74). Their codebook was relatively stable after the first twelve interviews and it remained so even as they incorporated data from the 30 interviews they had conducted in the second country. They recommend that if the aim of the research “is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, twelve interviews should suffice” (p. 79).

My study proposal called for 20 interviews per library location for a total of 60 user interviews. Twelve interviews per site was the minimum goal. The interviews were anticipated to take less than ten minutes each. I recruited adult interview subjects during time slots (including the weekends) when I was not actively distributing the survey questionnaire in order expand the range of library users involved in the study. I sat on the benches in the lobbies of the libraries and selected the people I asked to participate using purposive sampling. I attempted to select representatives of the 12 most likely adult demographic groups to use the library (by approximate age group, apparent race, gender) and who spoke English well enough to participate in an interview.
Any library users who appeared to belong to a different adult demographic group (e.g. of Asian or Hispanic origin) were specifically asked to participate. Adults who agreed to participate were explained their rights according to the script approved by the university’s Institutional Review Board and asked to sign a form letter giving their informed consent. Those who completed an interview were offered a chance to enter the gift-card drawing described in the previous section. Each received a copy of the same contest entry form attached to the surveys. I was able to complete 19 interviews at the main library, 12 at the Havana branch, and 10 at the Chattahoochee branch for a total of 41 public interviews. I realized I was reaching population saturation when people entering the library while I was interviewing acknowledged my presence by telling me they’d already completed a survey form earlier in the study period.

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) indicated that they recorded their library user interviews by hand on the paper interview guides and that they recorded their staff interviews on audio tape for later transcription. May (2007) does not indicate whether she recorded either her library user or staff interview responses on paper or on audio media. I used an Olympus digital audio recorder with flash memory to capture the interviews and transcribed the recordings manually into Microsoft Word for subsequent analysis. I followed the interview data preparation and transcription protocol suggested by Kvale (1996), and McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003). I noted an interview identification number and basic demographic information about each interview subject on a paper interview log when the participant agreed to be interviewed and gave informed consent to participate. Each interview was identified by location and interview number at the start of the audio recording. The identities of the interview participants were kept confidential and the identity key was retained only as long as needed to verify that informed consent was obtained from each interviewee.
Interviews with Library Public Service Staff Members

The staff member interview guide replicates the interview guide used by May (2007); a copy is attached in the appendices. Table 3.04 maps the staff interview questions to the research questions.

Table 3.04: Library staff interview questions mapped to research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Staff Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: Who are the users of the Gadsden County library buildings?</td>
<td>N. A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2: How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?</td>
<td>Q1. describe library; Q2. best feature; Q3. worst feature; Q4. favorite location; Q5. primary purpose; Q17. effect of computers on job; Q18. effect of computers on public interaction; Q19. percentage of computer driven interactions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3: What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?</td>
<td>Q2. best feature; Q3. worst feature; Q4. favorite location; Q12. help or hinder job; Q13. help or hinder with public; Q20. final comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4: What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users actually make of these library buildings?</td>
<td>Q8. staff job responsibilities; Q9. public interactions; Q10. public uses; Q11. public problems; Q14. patron behavior; Q15. unacceptable behavior; Q16. frequency of unacceptable behavior; Q20. final comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5: What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities?</td>
<td>Q5. primary purpose; Q6. social functions; Q7. social uses; Q10. public uses; Q11. public problems; Q14. patron behavior; Q15. unacceptable behavior; Q16. frequency of unacceptable behavior; Q18. effect of computers on public interaction; Q20. final comments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The library system’s managers were asked to allow the interviews to take place during the participants’ scheduled work hours and all public service staff members were invited to participate. They were told that the interviews were voluntary, and that they were not required to participate if they did not wish to do so. Ten staff members -- all female -- across the three locations agreed to participate and gave their informed consent to participate before their interviews. Two were African-American and eight were non-Hispanic white. They were offered the opportunity to review the questions in advance so that they could think through their responses. The goal of this phase of the study was to secure participation from at least two public service staff members per library location, possibly including the location manager. Six main library staff members, one from
Havana and three from Chattahoochee, participated. I used a digital audio recorder to capture the interviews and transcribed the recordings manually into Microsoft Word as previously described. Many of the responses were location specific and although it was often impossible to mask the location without losing the specificity of the response, every attempt was made to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The identity key for these interviews was retained only as long as needed to verify that informed consent was obtained from each interviewee.

**Meeting Room Reservation Logs**

Throughout the interviews participants referred to having seen people using the library public meeting rooms in a variety of ways or of themselves having participated in activities held in the meeting rooms. It became apparent that the meeting rooms make an important contribution to the role of the library as place in the lives of Gadsden County’s library users. After discussing the possibility of seeing the libraries’ meeting room reservation sheets with the library director I returned to the university’s institutional review board (IRB) and asked for permission to modify the original study design to include review of the reservation sheets in ways that would protect the confidentiality of those using the meeting rooms. After receiving IRB approval for the design modification, I formally requested permission to see the meeting room logs and the library director reviewed my request with her supervisors and gave me permission to use the reservation logs for the months during which the study was underway. I used Microsoft Excel to make a spreadsheet recording meeting room usage for the three libraries. I removed information identifying individual meeting room users and organized the data by type of meeting room use.

**Data Collection Time Table**

I visited the library director in April 2008 to describe the study and request permission to conduct it in the GCPLS locations. I received approval from the library system on May 12, 2008, and from the university institutional review board on June 30, 2008. The target data collection period for this study was autumn 2008, after public school had begun for the year but before Thanksgiving and winter holiday activities affected people’s schedules. Data collection began on September 10, 2008, and continued through November 24, 2008, with breaks between sites to accommodate a personal travel
commitment in late September and early voting for the 2008 presidential election at the libraries during the last two weeks of October. After the data collection was finished at each library I conducted the gift-card drawing by having a library staff member select the winning entry form from the drop-box. I called the winners to inform them and request a mailing address so I could send the gift-card. I even received a thank you note from one of the winners. As I finished at each library I delivered a thank you gift basket of food to the staff members. Table 3.05 presents the data collection schedule for this study.

Table 3.05: Data collection schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>2:30-3:00</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>10:20-10:30</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>6:45-7:10</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>10:15-11:30</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>2:00-2:30</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4:00-6:30</td>
<td>Survey distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>4:30-6:30</td>
<td>Survey distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>9:15-11:30</td>
<td>Staff Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-Sep-08</td>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>collect surveys, deliver gift basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4:30-4:45</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>6:15-6:40</td>
<td>Seating Sweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>11:15-11:40</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>11:00-11:25</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>Staff Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>Survey distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct-08</td>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>collect surveys, deliver gift basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1:00-1:15, afternoon</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>3:10, afternoon</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9:00-12:00</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>4:00 - 7:00</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2:00 - 4:00</td>
<td>Seating Sweep and Staff Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>11:00 - 3:00</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>public interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Nov-08</td>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
<td>collect surveys, deliver gift basket</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis Design

The data analysis plan used in this study follows Creswell and Plano Clark’s (2007) model of how to analyze data collected using the triangulation, data convergence model of mixed methods study design. Yin (2005) refers to this analysis model as convergence of evidence and stresses the importance of triangulating the data obtained from all the lines of inquiry in the study to arrive at convincing and accurate conclusions that can be corroborated in the data. I conducted concurrent data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) by analyzing the quantitative and qualitative datasets separately and then converged them to answer my research questions by triangulating the findings. I used textual data from the interviews and the results of the seating sweeps to enhance the findings from the survey results, and used the survey results to test findings from the interviews. I used the meeting room reservations data to support the interviewees’ observations.

Fidel (1984) and Maxwell (2005) suggest that data analysis should begin as soon as data collection begins, but Yin (2003) suggests waiting until all the data has been collected to begin so that the researcher has a sense of the big picture before looking at the small details. There was not enough time in this study’s data collection window to permit beginning any but the most brief data analysis during data collection period so I followed Yin’s guidelines and began formal data analysis after all the data was collected, organized, and transcribed. I took field notes throughout the data collection period and used them to keep track of events surrounding the data points.

Yin (2005) suggests establishing and maintaining a case study database to organize and track the raw data and to facilitate complete data analysis. I managed the seating sweeps and survey data using Microsoft Excel because the spreadsheet program has a flexible structure in which both quantitative and textual data can be recorded, manipulated, analyzed and presented (Niglas, 2007). I used Audacity and Express Scribe recording and transcription software to capture and save the interviews. I made backup copies of the interview recordings on the university’s remote storage server and on recordable compact discs. I transcribed the interviews into Microsoft Word by hand using Express Scribe software and a dictation/transcription foot pedal to facilitate intensive repeated listening to obtain as accurate a transcription as possible.
Quantitative Data Analysis
The quantitative data collected in this study came from the seating sweeps, the closed questions on the surveys, and the meeting room reservation sheets. I entered the seating sweeps data into a series of Excel spreadsheets and used Excel to order and total the data to generate descriptive statistics to find out who was using the library and in what ways at what times of the day. The results – presented in the following chapter -- are presented in tables and charts consistent with the results of both previous studies (Given & Leckie, 2003; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002; and May, 2007) to facilitate any cross-case comparisons that may be appropriate.

The library user survey asked open-ended and forced choice questions (Fink, 2006) to capture library user demographics and opinions about the libraries’ services and facilities. The forced choice questions used formats including yes/no/why questions, scales of agreement questions, and a series of questions asking respondents to rank several sets of answers by various criteria. I entered the data from the completed surveys into a series of Excel spreadsheets and used the software to organize the demographic data and to facilitate determining the answers to the forced choice questions. I used Excel to present the answers to some of the questions graphically when I thought graphical presentation would help communicate the answers more strongly than tables. I entered the answers to the open-ended questions on the main survey spreadsheet and then transferred them to Microsoft Word for qualitative coding and analysis. The meeting room reservations were kept on calendar pages at each branch. I sorted and tabulated the data and totaled the hours of meeting room use by category and location. After completing the quantitative data analysis I began qualitative analysis of the open-ended survey questions and the interview transcripts.

Qualitative Data Analysis
I conducted a descriptive analysis of the textual data collected from the open-ended survey questions using each answer as a unit of analysis. If an answer presented multiple concepts I separated the components of the answer and coded each concept individually. Before beginning my analysis I reviewed the descriptive codes May (2007) presented in the body of her work -- her codebook was not included in her study. While I had intended to follow the prior-research-driven code development process (Boyatzis, 1998)
and use May’s codes as the basis for my analysis I found that as I became more deeply involved with my data I stopped referring to May’s work and allowed the themes and patterns relevant to the story my data were telling to emerge. I ultimately conducted my first level coding by coding the manifest content of the interviews – verbatim words and phrases -- following the general tenets of in vivo coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) or verbatim coding (Saldana, 2009). I then ranked the frequency of the codes to organize the answers to each question thematically. Most of the answers to the open-ended survey questions were quite brief, ranging from one to ten words. In these cases the data analysis consisted of identifying, grouping and counting similar answers to determine the scope and frequency of answers to the question. For example, survey question 27 asked respondents what they thought was the best feature of the library; 87 respondents provided an answer and I was able to sort and group the answers into eight categories into which multiple responses would fit. I was also able to identify seven unduplicated responses.

When I finished the quantitative and first level qualitative analyses of the surveys I began the qualitative analysis of the library user interviews using Microsoft Word. I sorted the interview transcripts to group all the answers to each question into separate documents and then coded each set of answers again following the general tenets of in vivo (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) or verbatim coding (Saldana, 2009). As before I kept the terms used by the respondents as my codes and after coding the individual answers to a question I grouped them by category or theme to find out what library users thought. After I finished analyzing the library user interviews I repeated the process to analyze the data collected during the staff member interviews. I checked my work—intra-coder testing -- by revisiting and recoding excerpts from the data coded at the beginning of the analysis process after I finished coding the data collected at all three sites. When I uncovered new concepts in later transcripts I circled back to previously coded transcripts to see if the new concepts were apparent. If so, I recoded the already coded transcripts appropriately. When I completed the descriptive coding of my qualitative data I began the second round of analysis by merging the quantitative and qualitative data sets to answer the study’s five research questions. The resulting findings from this study -- organized by research question -- are presented in the next chapter.
Once I answered the study’s five research questions I was able to begin to answer the study’s principle question by revisiting and reanalyzing the qualitative data theoretically according to the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2. The second round of analysis was intended to determine whether evidence of any of the previously identified theoretical roles public libraries play as place could be seen in the Gadsden County Public Library System’s locations. I also hoped to use the theoretical analysis to begin to develop a broader understanding of how public libraries are used as place in smaller rural communities. As I contemplated the process of making sense of my findings from a theoretical perspective I struggled to understand how the conceptual framework’s component theories related to each other. After fruitful discussion with one of my dissertation advisors I developed a graphical presentation of the relationships I see between the conceptual framework’s component theories. The relationships between the groups of theories are presented in Figure 3.02.

The Rural Public Library as Place: Three-part conceptual framework

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.02:** Three-part organization of conceptual framework.
I organized my thematic analysis accordingly and used a deductively generated coding scheme based on the main concepts of each of the theories presented in the conceptual framework. I built my codebook using labels and categories taken directly from the theoretical literature as presented in Chapter Two. I revisited the original qualitative data -- this time working with the interview transcripts in their entirety rather than individual question answers-- and began my second round of coding. After I completed the theoretical analysis I checked my coding by testing it for intercoder reliability (Miles and Huberman, 1994) by asking two colleagues – recent Ph.D. graduates familiar with qualitative data analysis methods -- to code a sample of the data using my codebook.

**Inter-coder Reliability Testing**

Each co-coder received the same sub-set of the study data -- the answers to one open-ended survey question, the answers to two staff interview questions, and six public interview transcripts. The data were formatted in the same manner as when I analyzed it. The co-coders also received copies of the code-book I developed and used for this study which outlined the six main theories that informed my analysis:

- The Public Sphere
- Public Realms or social territories
- Third Places
- Informational Places
- Psychological Sense of Community
- Social Capital.

The code book began with an abstract of the study and a general instruction page. For each of the six theoretical categories I provided the codes I had extracted from the relevant primary and secondary literature as presented in Chapter Two. The codes themselves consisted of two- or three-word phrases presented in bold-faced type and defined in paragraph form using language directly from the literature whenever possible or else using a synopsis of the original definitions. I asked the co-coders to read through the code book and then to read the data looking for instances that seemed to them to reflect concepts and codes presented in the code book. Because the public interview transcripts were quite short, typically only one or two pages, I followed Kurasaki’s model
(2000) of textual coding by using free-flowing interview texts rather than asking the co-coders to code pre-determined text units such as individual sentences or clauses. The short open-ended survey question answers fell naturally into text units and I asked the co-coders to apply as many codes as they felt might be relevant to each answer. Staff member interview answers to any given question often included multiple concepts and I treated each answer as a data unit, keeping it intact as a block of free-flowing text rather than presenting the individual sentences or clauses for separate coding. I asked the co-coders to apply as many codes as they felt relevant to each unit of text and reassured them that not every piece of data needed to be coded -- only the units that seemed to relate to the research questions and to support the theoretical analysis. (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest calculating inter-coder reliability by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements to get a percentage -- typically around 70% on the first round of co-coding. I compared the co-coded data sets with my work and found 70% agreement in the units we all identified as worth coding. The co-coders had 90% agreement with each other on the data units they both chose to code. One co-coder typically coded larger chunks of data than the other but the codes they applied within the same data units agreed with each other 90% of the time. I attribute the discrepancy between the researcher to co-coder agreement rates and the co-coder agreement rates to different levels of understanding and different approaches to applying the theoretical codes. Neither co-coder had worked or observed in a public library. One co-coder had greater familiarity with public sphere theory than the other, and neither was familiar with the other theories presented in the code book prior to agreeing to help with the intercoder reliability check.

The greatest area of discrepancy between the co-coders and the researcher involved data units they coded as home away from home (indicating evidence of third place theory) that I coded as indicating evidence of routinized or familiarized locales (from public realm theory). I will discuss the significance of the discrepancy in identifying characteristics that provide evidence of third places and familiarized locales in Chapter 6. All the coders were in overall agreement about applying codes that
indicated the libraries facilitated the formation of the public sphere and provided access to information and recreational materials.

During data analysis evidence of the social nature of reading as practiced at the public libraries became more and more apparent and I realized I needed to address it in the study but I did not actively code for it or create a section for it in the codebook, nor did I ask the co-coders to look for evidence of the social nature of reading during their check coding. The theoretical literature addressing the social nature of reading was not included in my study’s conceptual framework and, while I could not ignore the findings indicating that these public libraries support the social nature of reading (Fister, 2006; Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer, 2006; and Wiegand, 2005b), I did not have room to address this finding other than acknowledging it as one of the many functions of the library as place. Implications of the discrepancy in the intercoder reliability check and other limitations of the study design will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Assumptions and Validity

Certain assumptions informed this study. I assumed that the library users and staff members would be truthful when completing the survey forms and when answering questions during the interviews. I recognized that staff members might dwell on what is good about the libraries or vent about problem areas – they did both -- while library users might take the opportunity to praise library services and facilities extravagantly or vent about aspects of the library they disapproved of – again, they did both. I assume that the findings from the study are representative of library usage during the year of the study.

The survey questionnaire demonstrated content validity because it was used previously and was published in a leading peer reviewed journal in the field by Leckie and Hopkins (2002) as part of their report of the original study. It was then modified and used to collect data as part of a masters’ thesis supervised by Fiona Black, a leading scholar in the field (May, 2007). To ensure content validity specific to the proposed study site, I modified key demographic questions on the survey instrument from previous iterations to reflect characteristics of the current population as previously discussed in the section on study design. After using the questionnaire during this study I found that it has aged and will need further modification if used again. However, face validity of the questionnaire was still present: the questions looked like what they were asking about,
they reflected the community they were investigating and the environment in which they were being asked.

Using a mixed methods study design with multiple data collection methods and triangulating the findings from all the data collection methods was a key assurance of the interpretive validity of the study design. Triangulating data collected in multiple ways, on multiple days, at multiple sites to answer a set of research questions also helped increase the reliability of the findings. The different methods of data collection each contributed strengths that offset any weaknesses inherent in the other methods. Comparing the results from the questionnaires, interviews, and seating sweeps generated a fuller picture of what was going on in the libraries than could have been obtained by relying on just one form of data collection.

Results of the questionnaires were compared with results from the interviews to see if the answers were consistent or if people said different things when being interviewed than when filling out a questionnaire. Most responses to similar questions were consistent across both data collection methods. Seating sweeps observations both supported and contradicted the answers given on the questionnaires. For example, May (2007) found that while her observations indicated that people were bringing and using laptop computers in one of her study sites, no laptop usage was reported in the questionnaires completed at that site. During my study I only observed one laptop computer in a library building. Library staff members explained in their interviews that people do bring laptops and work on them but that the libraries do not offer wireless internet access and they feel this discourages extensive use of laptops in the library. A library user also mentioned the lack of wireless internet access at the library and described it as a shortcoming during his interview.

The example of different perspectives on use of laptop computers in small public libraries and the fact that it occurred in both the current and a previous study reinforce the importance of using multiple research methods to develop as full a picture of library use as possible. At May’s study site her structured observations made up for a weakness in the questionnaire distribution and contributed to a fuller, more valid picture of laptop usage at the library in question. At the Gadsden County study site the staff interviews helped create a more accurate picture of laptop use than did the observations or survey
questionnaires. Staff and library user interview responses provided a good picture of the need for the libraries to provide wireless internet access and anecdotal evidence of the reasons they may have chosen not to do so. These and other examples of confirming and disconfirming evidence uncovered while triangulating the findings from the different components of the study help indicate the validity of the study because human behavior is never perfectly consistent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

**Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent**

The study followed all Florida State University’s Office of Research protocols and guidelines. The Human Subjects Application for Full IRB and Expedited or Exempt Review was submitted in June, determined to qualify for expedited review and was approved on June 29, 2008. The addendum to the IRB protocol to add the meeting room data was approved on December 1, 2008. Following the protocols I obtained informed consent to participate in the study from all active participants according to the guidelines established by the Florida State University Office of Research’s Human Subjects Consent Process Guidelines (Florida State University, 2008). A copy of the approval e-mails and all the informed consent documents are included in Appendices B, E, G, and I.

Briefly, participation in this project appeared to pose only the slightest emotional risk to those involved, like the slight emotional stress that may sometimes occur when people are asked to do something outside of the normal scope of their planned activities, such as being asked to complete a survey questionnaire or participate in an interview. Some library user participants may have felt embarrassed if their reading and writing skills were not sufficient to complete the questionnaire successfully. I included an information letter at the beginning of the library user survey questionnaires explaining the study and that consent was given by completing the form.

Some library staff members may have found it stressful to talk about their workplace and their perceptions of the library users to an outsider. Two staff members who were invited to participate declined out of apparent shyness. I explained the study, its risks and benefits to library users and staff who agreed to participate in an interview and I also presented them with a consent form to sign. I assured library users who agreed to be interviewed that their responses would be treated confidentially and asked them to
sign an informed consent letter before the interviews. All participants had the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time.

Because this study investigated a small library system with a small number of employees, I tried to strip identifying material from the staff interview analyses. However, interview participants often made comments reflecting circumstances specific to one location such that those having inside knowledge of the library system might be able to identify the speaker.

Informed consent was not sought from those counted during the seating sweeps. Seating sweeps are a form of unobtrusive observation, and asking for subjects’ consent may alter their behavior. The seating sweeps were conducted before the interactive aspects of the study -- survey and interviews -- began. Copies of all the approved research instruments and informed consent documents are included in the appendices.

Financial Disclosure
Library user participants in the study were not compensated, but incentives to participate were offered in the form of the opportunity to enter a drawing for a Wal-Mart gift card, with one gift card awarded at each location. Library staff participants were not compensated but a food basket was delivered to each branch as a thank you gift at the end of the study. The researcher was not compensated to conduct this study, but funding was sought from the researcher’s home institution and relevant regional and national professional and research support organizations. This study was partially funded by a 2009 Beta Phi Mu Eugene Garfield Dissertation Research Fellowship.

Chapter Summary
This chapter presented a description of the methods used in this study. The chapter began with a presentation of the question guiding the study and the research questions the study has attempted to answer. The chapter addressed the overall study design with a discussion of why a mixed methods research design is appropriate for this study. It included a one page study map to help visualize how the pieces of the study relate to each other. The chapter next addressed the specific features of the study, including a discussion of the reasons for replicating previous research. Case studies were defined and the chapter explained that this study is a case study. Details of the case study -- including the setting, participants, access, study instruments and methods -- were
addressed. The data collection time table was presented with a discussion of how the data was managed. The next section of the chapter addressed the data analysis process distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. It also focused on the qualitative data coding used to support two levels of qualitative data analysis – descriptive and thematic. The final sections of the chapter addressed the ethical considerations made in this study and included a description of the informed consent procedures and approval for the study obtained from the Institutional Review Board. The next chapter presents the study’s findings.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Research Question 1

This study proposed using observations of library users combined with survey and interview responses and a review of selected documents to provide a picture of the adults using the Gadsden County library buildings during fall 2008. Findings provide answers to the five research questions that structure this study. Research question 1 asks: who uses the Gadsden County Public Library System (GCPLS) libraries? Observations and answers to the relevant survey and interview questions are grouped by theme: gender, age, race, language spoken, education, employment, place of residence, and average length of trip to visit the library. Analyzed as a group these data offer a basic profile of the adult library users who visit the library buildings.

Gender of GCPLS Users

Female library users outnumbered males across all the data collection methods used and in all the age groups described in the study. The difference was greatest among those who actively participated in either the interviews or the surveys. Seating sweeps observations counted 42% male and 58% female. Interview respondents were 27% male and 73% female. Survey respondents were 22% male and 78% female.

Table 4.01: Percentage of GCPLS library users by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender by Branch</th>
<th>Observed M</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Interviewed M</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
<th>Surveyed M</th>
<th>Surveyed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data compiled from all three study methods. Observations n=255, Interviews n= 41, Survey responses to question 33: n= 94 (109 – 15 did not respond to question).
Age of GCPLS Adult Users

The study included 337 participants who appeared to be, or self-categorized as over age 18; 32% were between ages 18-30, 41% between ages 30-60, and 17% were over age 60. Table 4.2 presents a compilation of age group information taken from observations, interview categories, and responses to survey question 34 to determine the percentage by age of the 337 adult library users across the study. The age categories presented in survey question 34 covered ten year intervals. They were collapsed to fit with observed ages and interviewee age responses which were tracked less tightly.

Table 4.02: Percentage of GCPLS library users by age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age by Branch</th>
<th>Age 18-30</th>
<th>Age 30-60</th>
<th>Age &gt;60</th>
<th>Age &gt;60 observed only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatt.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data compiled from all three study methods. Observations n=255: age categories 18-30, 30-60, over 60. Interviews n= 41: age categories 18-30, 30-60, over 60. Survey responses to question 34: n= 94 (109 – 15 did not respond to question) collected in ten year intervals but aggregated to align with interview and observation age categories.
Table 4.03: Individuals observed during seating sweeps by gender and age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library User Profile: observed number of individuals by library by age and gender</th>
<th>QM</th>
<th>QF</th>
<th>HM</th>
<th>HF</th>
<th>CM</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 – 18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 60</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. QM = Quincy male library users, QF = Quincy female library users; Quincy, n=174
HM = Havana male library users, HF= Havana female library users; Havana, n=72
CM = Chattahoochee male library users, and CF Chattahoochee female library users, n=40

Table 4.04: Observed race of interview participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RACE</th>
<th>QM</th>
<th>QF</th>
<th>HM</th>
<th>HF</th>
<th>CM</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Quincy, n=19, Havana, n=12, Chattahoochee, n=10

Table 4.05: Age and gender of interview participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>QM</th>
<th>QF</th>
<th>HM</th>
<th>HF</th>
<th>CM</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Quincy, n=19, Havana, n=12, Chattahoochee, n=10

Interview participants were asked which age group was appropriate to use to describe them: 24% described themselves as under age 30, 53% described themselves as between ages 30-60, and 21% described themselves as over age 60.

Table 4.06: Gender of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data collected from survey question 33, respondents could check either ‘male’ or ‘female’.
Table 4.07: Age of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Quincy N=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QM</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QF</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals by gender: 8 QM, 21 QF, 5 HM, 20 HF, 8 CM, 32 CF, 94 total, 13%

Note. Data collected from survey question 34, respondents were asked to circle the appropriate age group. Data are sorted by gender as specified in survey question 33.

Where Do GCPLS Adult Library Users Live?

Responding to survey question 1 -- presented in table 4.08 -- 81% of respondents indicated they live in the same town as the library branch they visit and 12% live in another county or state from the library branch they visit. Residential locations cited include Sneads in Jackson County, Florida -- across the river from Chattahoochee; Bainbridge and Calvary, Georgia; and Tallahassee and Crawfordville, Florida.

Responding to survey question 2 -- presented in table 4.09 -- 80% of library users report that it takes them less than 15 minutes to get to the library from home, and 16% travel less than 30 minutes from home to get to their preferred library branch location. Three people -- 3% -- reported traveling more than one hour to get to the library branch they use and one of these respondents indicated that the Havana library was close to her husband’s place of work. Survey question 11 asked why people used the library in question rather than any other library location; 65% indicated that it was close to home and 13% indicated that it was convenient to them.

Table 4.08: Residence of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greensboro</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midway</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bainbridge, GA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvary, GA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawfordville, FL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

114
Table 4.08, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tallahassee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson County</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneads, FL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 1: Where do you live? (Please circle one)

Table 4.09: Travel time to usual library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel time</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 15 minutes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 30 minutes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 60 minutes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 2 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 2: How long does it take you to travel from your home to this library by your usual means of transportation? (Please circle one)

Level of Education

The majority of GCPLS’s adult library users -- 62% -- reported having a high school diploma or having taken some university or college courses; 31% reported having a university or college diploma, some post-graduate study, or a post-graduate degree.

Table 4.10: Level of education of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some high school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school diploma</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some university or college</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university or college degree/diploma</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some post-graduate study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post-graduate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 35: Highest level of educational attainment (please circle one)

Languages Spoken

Most of the survey respondents -- 88% -- reported that they spoke English as their only language; 11% reported that they spoke English and some other language. Because the
study was conducted in English it is possible that many library users who speak Spanish as their first language were not included.

Table 4.11: Languages spoken by survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages spoken</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 36: languages spoken (Please check all that apply). Respondents also indicated they spoke Japanese – 2, American Sign Language -1, German – 4, French-1, Spanish-1, Latin-1, Telugu (Indian, related to Sanskrit) -1.

Primary Occupation

GCPLS users reported a variety of occupations and professions in response to survey question 37. The most commonly reported primary occupation was other. When respondents selected other as their primary occupation they then listed specific job titles. They did not generalize from the title of their individual jobs to the categories listed on the questionnaire. Positions listed included, nanny, state worker, pharmacy technician, truck driver, nurse, buffet cook, and others. After other the next most common category of primary occupation reported was professional and the third most common response to the question was unemployed.

Table 4.12: Primary occupations of survey respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Occupation</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>other: please specify</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional - lawyer, accountant, psychologist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: college</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.12, continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Occupation</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=97</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clerical/retail - secretary, salesperson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unskilled labor - food server, cashier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management/administrative - store or office manager</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled labor - carpenter, hairstylist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technical - electrician, computer repair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: high school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student: other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic/literacy - writer, journalist</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data obtained from survey question 37: Primary Occupation and sorted by frequency of response.*

**Answer to Research Question 1**

“Who are the adult users of the Gadsden County Public Library System buildings?” The adult users of the Gadsden County Public Library System libraries are primarily female, between ages 30-60, and live within 15 minutes of their preferred library locations. They choose the library location they visit because it is convenient or close to home. Most library users have at least a high school diploma and many have pursued college or university study or earned an undergraduate or graduate degree. Most adult library users who participated in this study speak English, and some speak second or third languages. Library users reported having a variety of occupations but some did not consider themselves as employed because they are homemakers, or have retired, and some reported being unemployed.
Research Question 2

Research question 2 asks how Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities. The following discussion triangulates responses from the survey and interviews to provide a narrative picture of library user perceptions of their local libraries’ services and amenities. The data points on which this narrative is based are presented following the discussion. Library users generally indicated that their libraries’ services and amenities are important to them. Most of the library users who completed survey questionnaires said that they used the specific library in which they were present because it was convenient and/or close to home. Interview respondents also identified convenience as a major reason for choosing the library they visit. Some interview respondents also indicated an awareness of the small size of their libraries compared to others they had visited in other cities but emphasized that to them the GCPLS libraries are appropriate for their communities and their purpose.

Seventy-five percent of survey respondents indicated that their lives would change from somewhat to significantly without the libraries; 75% of survey respondents also report the libraries to be very or extremely user-friendly as they define user-friendliness. Over 80% of survey respondents reported that they talk with the staff while they are at the library and the conversations range from “exchanging friendly greetings” (survey 138) to asking for help with library-related concerns, to social “chit-chat” (surveys 202 and 207), to conversations that indicate long-standing public social relationships.

Survey respondents indicated the three most important resources the libraries provide are access to technology - 37%, fiction/literature for recreational reading - 21%, and facilities to support personal study (homework, research, etc.) - 19%. The least important service the libraries provide is a place to socialize (as the respondents themselves understand socialize -- the term was not defined for them in the survey) according to 53% of survey respondents but these are the same people who indicated they talk with the staff whenever they use the library in their responses to survey questions 20 and 22.
Interview respondents indicated that they visit the libraries for a variety of reasons, including to use computers for job hunting, for school work, and for recreational purposes, or to use the libraries’ book and video collections. Some interview respondents placed special value on the libraries’ student enrichment programs. When reflecting on their library use over the previous month interview respondents prioritized using computers, checking out books, and studying or other school related activities as the reasons they visited their libraries. One GCPLS library user is actually a Jacksonville resident who travels through Chattahoochee regularly as part of his job. He stays overnight at the inn downtown and walks to and from the library every time he is in town. He walks to the library to get some exercise and describes the library as his living room away from home. He relies on the library’s internet services to check his e-mail and uses the newspaper and magazine collection for what he referred to as recreational reading.

When asked what other services they would like to see at the libraries only 36 of 109 survey participants responded. Most of those who answered suggested more cultural and enrichment programs for children and adults, a larger and more current collection of materials, newer computers, and wireless Internet access.

Asked about the primary purpose of the library survey respondents provided multiple answers. The two most common categories of answers were to serve as a community resource and to support education or provide information. Social and recreational purposes were seldom specified but they were implied as part of the definition of community resource. Interview respondents prioritized using the computer and borrowing library materials as the most common reasons they visit the libraries.

Staff perceptions of how library users react to the libraries were apparent throughout the interviews. When asked to choose a word or two that best describes the library where they work, staff member answers corresponded with public perceptions describing the libraries variously as a central hub, a community asset and a community place. Staff members described the library atmosphere as busy, helpful, and friendly or user-friendly.

Ten staff members, all female, agreed to be interviewed for the study. Three are African-Americans, two between ages 25 and 35 and one over 40. Seven non-Hispanic white staff members ranging in age from approximately 30 to 55 also participated in the
study. When asked “what is the single best feature of this library” the ten staff members overwhelmingly indicated that they thought that providing public access to computers and the Internet was the single most important feature of the libraries. Other features they highlighted included the children’s book collection in Chattahoochee, and the library services and assistance provided generally. Individual staff members also specified the atmosphere of the main library in Quincy and the location of the Havana branch - facing the city park and Veterans’ Memorial - as key assets.

Staff question 3 asked: “what is the single worst feature of this library?” The staff members’ responses focused on a small materials budget that restricts collection development initiatives, on the physical limitations of the individual buildings, and on the location of the main library. Again, staff members concurred with library users who described the collections as being limited and not up to date, and the parking as challenging. Study participants at all three locations complained about inadequate or poorly designed parking.

The main library in Quincy is located on a four-lane highway next to the main post-office and entering and exiting the library’s parking lot can be difficult during periods of high traffic because there is only one driveway in and out. Additionally, during busy periods the main library parking lots can fill up completely leaving people to park at the post office and walk along the sidewalk to the library. In Havana the library is situated at one end of a large city park and a Veterans’ memorial is right in front of the library. There are very few parking spaces available in front of the building and two small parking lots, one along the side and one in the back. On-street parking is also available. In Chattahoochee the library building sits in a hollow below street level and there is one sloping driveway up to the street. There are no parking spaces directly in front of the library. The closest spaces are on the slope of the hill leading up to the road and are difficult for some to negotiate. The handicapped parking spaces are along the side of the building away from the entrance and study participants identified them as being unacceptably far from the door.

Staff question 4 asked “what is your favorite place in the library?” Staff members showed a strong preference for the public service areas of the libraries that featured the book collection and the places within the libraries that privileged reading over computer
use. Several staff members reported that their favorite areas of the libraries were the soft seating located next to the magazines, newspapers, and new books, and one said simply “anywhere out in the books” (CS 3). One Quincy staff member singled out the small conference room at the main library, indicating that it houses the library’s “old books and treasures… antiques, and the most comfortable chairs in the library” (QS 6). One staff member prefers the work room away from the public service places because she appreciates the quiet and the ability to accomplish some of her other tasks while working in the back rooms.

Asked about the primary purpose of the library in staff question 5, participants’ answers reinforced the community members’ perceptions, identifying similar priorities for the libraries, especially: providing computer and internet access, serving as an information and research resource, providing educational support, and serving as a community resource that is responsive to community needs.

Library users perceive computers and internet access as a major component of the library system’s resources and expected services. Staff question 17 asked “How has computer technology affected your job?” Responses indicate that offering computerized services and Internet access in the local libraries has affected most aspects of staff responsibilities as well as staff member attitudes toward their jobs and their library users. Staff member responses to question 17 were organized into three categories and their responses reflect library user attitudes about computers. The three categories are presented in table 4.27. Staff members perceive the public service computers and Internet access as providing an additional resource to library users. The computers are seen to function as a learning resource, to provide access to government programs and services, and to facilitate and broaden access to all kinds of information. One staff member feels that as library users become more comfortable reading on a computer screen they may become more comfortable reading print media.

Staff members perceive the computers as a source of increased expectations on the part of library users. Increased expectations lead to frustration when library users are disappointed with staff members’ inability to help them due to lack of training or familiarity with specific applications. A long, emphatic answer from one staff member outlines some of the expectations and frustrations library users experience:
They come in wanting to know things; of course we are not up to date on near about any of the programs. I mean, yes we can get them into the Internet, yes we can, you know, but they want to come in [for] like the food access program, food stamps. The state program, which we have in our computers but we have not been trained in it -- we don’t know -- but people come in and expect us to be able to do these things and you know, it’s very flustering [sic] to them and then to us because then you know, ‘oh what are you here for’ and they, they get told they can come to the library and do these things. Well they can, but they got to know how to do it. You know, we don’t know how so it’s kind of, that has been frustrating (QS 2).

Staff members also highlighted the ways computer technology has made their job responsibilities easier by facilitating interlibrary loan transactions, increasing productivity, and increasing access to professional resources. Unfortunately the other face of computer-enhanced administrative processes is the loss of productivity experienced when automated library systems do not work correctly. One staff member at a branch expressed frustration with an ongoing problem with lag time in the circulation system. She said that it shouldn’t take 40 to 60 seconds to process each item because when a family with three or four children checks out ten books per child processing those 30 or 40 items can take up to half an hour if the system isn’t working at the speed it is supposed to provide.

Staff question 18 asked how computer technology affected staff members’ interactions with the public. Library staff members report that the addition of public service computers has complicated their relationships with library users in both positive and negative ways. Table 4.28 presents staff member responses by category. Some staff members describe computers and Internet access as one more service the library can offer and another way to help people. Those staff members seem comfortable helping users with computer and Internet-related questions, but for other staff members the public service computers negatively complicate their relationships with their library users. Users come to the library needing to access government and legal websites and staff members commented several times that they have to be careful of library users’ privacy. They noted repeatedly that helping people with computers exposes them to personal
information and privacy issues. One staff member said “you know, there’s personal information -- you can’t -- so it’s not your part to look at it” (QS 1). The libraries used to offer introductory computer courses but the funding ran out and one staff member reported “we’re just waiting on a grant now to see if we can get that back up and running” (QS 3). The computer and Internet service is perceived as a powerful public service tool but it brings challenges and frustration to staff members and the public even as it provides new opportunities to help people get access to the information they need and want.

Continuing the conversation about the impact of computer technologies on library public services, staff question 19 asked: “What proportion of your interactions with the public involves helping them use computer technologies?” Answers ranged from 5% to 60% of staff public service time depending on the staff member’s individual job responsibilities. Answers to question 19 are organized by category and presented in table 4.28. As with the previous two questions staff members’ attitudes toward the time they spent providing help with Internet and computer-related questions depended on their personal comfort levels with computers and on restrictions on the degree of involvement with personal information library system policies allow. One staff member explained, “People want you to help with their taxes, people want you to help do – and I just can’t help, I don’t have that much interest or knowledge” (QS 4). Other staff members indicated that they were restrained by policy from helping as much as people ask, saying “technically… we are not supposed to help them if they are putting in their personal information” (CS 2), and “we are limited based on the rules of the library as far as what we can do to help somebody” (CS 3). Those limitations can be a major source of tension because one of the most common reasons people come to the GCPLS libraries is to use the Internet -- 53% listed use the Internet as the reason they came to the library in survey question 14. Library computer users sense the limits under which the staff members operate and the resistance certain staff members have to getting involved with requests for help with computer-related questions. One survey respondent answering question 28 described the worst feature of the library as “need[ing] someone to go around and see if people need help on computers” (survey 161).

**Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 2**

123
Survey questions relevant to research question 2 are 10, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, and 31. This section presents the data supporting the discussion of library users’ perceptions of their local libraries’ services and amenities just presented. The theoretical implications of these data are discussed in Chapter 5.

Survey question 10 asked, “Without this library how would your life change?” Table 4.13 shows that only 23% of respondents indicated there would be little to no change in their lives without the library. 75% of library users indicated how important the library was to them by saying there would be some degree of impact to major impact on their lives without the library.

Table 4.13: How much would your life change without this library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would your life change</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses, n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerably</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Impact</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 10, percentages based on number of responses to the question.

Survey question 11 is an open-ended question that asked “Why do you use this library rather than other libraries? Please answer in your own words.” Most respondents use the library because it is close to home or work and convenient. It is described variously as a nice place, close, free, and friendly. One Chattahoochee respondent wrote “it is home and the librarians are nice, friendly and cooperate with assisting the people that visit” (survey 198). One Quincy respondent (survey 122) wrote, “Because this library is a major asset to our community. It provides internet access, reference books, and videos. [It is a] community workshop that is essential to personal and professional growth.”

The actual number of responses to the question is greater than 109 (total n of surveys) because some people gave more than one reason in their answer. Other significant answers to this question include:
From Quincy: “closer to home, knowledge is highly accessible, friendly environment” (survey 105).

From Quincy: “convenience (located in my home town), the services provided, the friendly staff, and the opportunity to use the meeting rooms” (survey 130).

From Havana: “Convenience – strong believer in public libraries for access to all community members” (survey 153).

From Havana: “close to home, help my child with projects because I don’t have a computer. Convenience for pickup after school bus drop-off, to check out movies when you cannot afford to buy” (survey 157).

From Chattahoochee: “it’s close, well stocked, good working computers, friendly staff, PERFECT for our homeschooling family” (survey 179).

From Chattahoochee: “because I love the people that work here and they have become my friends” (survey 199).

Categories derived from the open text answers to survey question 11 and their frequencies of occurrence are presented in table 4.14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Great staff</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Homeschooling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nice environment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>For work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nice place</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Community resource</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Only one in town</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use computer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Community place</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Passing through</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can get help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use computer for online class</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check out books</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Check out movies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Use meeting room</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for job</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from public interview question 11.

Survey question 19 asked “How user-friendly is this library?” Table 4.15 shows that only 6% of survey respondents found the libraries to be less than user-friendly as they themselves define user-friendliness. 77% found them to be very or extremely user friendly.
### Table 4.15: User-friendliness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User-friendliness</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses, n=99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-friendly</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a little bit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not user-friendly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data obtained from survey question 19: How user-friendly is this library? (Please circle one).*

Survey question 20 asked, “Do you ever talk to the library staff when you come here? If yes, what do you talk to them about?” Table 4.16 shows that 83% of respondents indicated they talk with staff members when visiting the library.

### Table 4.16: Talk to staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talk to staff</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses, n=106</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data obtained from survey question 20: Do you ever talk to the library staff when you come here?*  

Those who talked with staff members indicated a range of conversational topics including from Quincy: “upcoming events at the library, casual conversations, and questions about resources” (survey 130).  
From Quincy: “small talk” (survey 108).  
From Quincy: “how to find books, being friendly” (survey 114).  
From Havana: “location of books, dvds, and movies, just because I enjoy talking with employees and getting to know them” (survey 154).  
From Havana: “general info about the computers and everyday life” (survey 145).  
From Havana: “everything, they are a real good staff” (survey 156).  
From Havana: “their day and the equipment” (survey 166).  
From Chattahoochee: “new books, where to find books, using the Internet” (survey 172).
From Chattahoochee: “where to find items, local events, best deals in town” (survey 179).

From Chattahoochee: “social stuff” (survey 196).

Table 4.17 presents categories of public – staff member conversations derived from the answers to question 20 and their frequencies of occurrence.

Table 4.17: User-staff member conversation topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Conversation topic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information needs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Library policy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local events</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Directional</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anything library related</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Computer help</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book location</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from answers to part 2 of survey question 20: If yes, what do you talk to them [staff] about?

Survey question 21 asked library users to “please circle the single MOST important service this library provides (please circle only one).” Respondents chose from nine categories or filled in a personal response on a blank line to indicate other services not mentioned in the question.

Table 4.18: Most important library service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST Important service</th>
<th>Quincy n=41</th>
<th>Havana n=77</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=69</th>
<th>Total terms N=187</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=109</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. access to technology</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. provides fiction/literature (for recreational reading)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Personal study (homework, research, etc.)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. reference and information services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. a place to read</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Life-long learning (educational support)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. community information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. community events</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. a place to socialize</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 21: Please circle the most important service this library provides.
Some respondents selected more than one concept as the most important service. Table 4.18 shows library services respondents selected as the most important sorted by frequency of selection. Figure 4.2 shows the selections in the order presented to respondents.

**Q. 21 Most Important Service**

![Bar chart showing the frequency of selection for different library services in Quincy, Havana, and Chattahoochee.]

Figure 4.02: Most important library service.

*Note.* Data obtained from survey question 21.

Survey question 22 asked library users to “please circle the single LEAST important service this library provides (please circle only one).” Some respondents selected more than one service as the least important. Table 4.19 is sorted by frequency of selection. Those respondents selecting *other* uniformly stated that everything in the library is, or all services are, important. Figure 4.03 presents selections in the order presented to respondents.
Table 4.19: Least important library service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAST important service</th>
<th>Quincy N=42</th>
<th>Havana N=30</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=30</th>
<th>Total terms N=102</th>
<th>Percent of terms 109 surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. a place to socialize</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. access to technology</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. community information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. a place to read</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. community events</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Personal study</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. reference and information services</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. provides fiction/literature (for recreational reading)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Life-long learning (educational support)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data obtained from survey question 22: Please circle the single LEAST important service this library provides.

Q. 22 Least Important Service

Figure 4.03: Least important library service.

Note. Data obtained from survey question 22.

Survey question 25 is an open ended question that asked library users “what other services or resources would you like to see introduced here?” 48 respondents answered.
the question. Their answers were coded and grouped according to the following categories. The category of Programs includes requests for children’s stories and movies, and adult lectures and activities. The category of Adult education includes GED classes and foreign languages. Tutoring referred specifically to services to help high school or younger students with school work. Computer programs requested include Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint. The category of Extended Hours refers to requests that the branches open on Saturday afternoons. They currently close at noon on Saturday and all day Sunday. Categories derived from the answers and their frequencies of occurrence are presented in table 4.20.

Table 4.20: Services or resources requested by users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requested Services</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Requested Services</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Blood pressure reader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add to collection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>College classes on site</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Computer programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More computers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daycare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment info</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Extended hours</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fax machine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless internet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Save old periodicals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 25: What other services or resources would you like to see introduced here?

Survey question 31 is an open text question asking library users “in your opinion, what is the PRIMARY purpose of this library?” 89 library users responded to this question often providing multiple answers. All the concepts presented in each answer were individually coded so the number of answers – 120 – exceeds the number of surveys collected. Respondents described the primary purpose of the library variously as:

From Havana: “to afford the community access to technology and other resources not readily available unless they travel to Tallahassee or Quincy” (survey 159).

From Chattahoochee: “to provide materials for reading, study, videos, and the Internet” (survey 187).

From Havana: “it is a place to encourage the pleasures of reading both for entertainment and educating oneself” (survey 153).

From Chattahoochee: “to provide materials for reading, study, videos, and the Internet” (survey 207).
From Chattahoochee: “to provide educational, tutoring, and recreational opportunities to the public” (survey 207).

From Quincy: “to help students and adults find a quiet place to study and research” (survey 101).

From Havana: “to help people improve themselves and enjoy themselves without great cost” (survey 155).

The frequency of answers to question 31 by category is shown in table 4.21.

Table 4.21: The primary purpose of the library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Primary Purpose</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community resource</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Access to technology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Community educational resource</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Encourage reading</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Opportunities for children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Peace of mind</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information access</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Serve the public</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tax burden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 31: In your opinion, what is the PRIMARY purpose of this library? Respondents defined these terms for themselves. No definitions were provided.

User interview questions 6, 7, and 8 echo and reinforce the survey results and contribute richness to the answers to research question 2, “how do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?”

User interview question 6 asked: is there another library you prefer to use? Most respondents said no, that typically they used this library – the one they were visiting that day. Convenience is a key feature of the libraries for most of the interview respondents. A Quincy user (QI 19) said, “This [library] is the most convenient, even though I live in Tallahassee it is still more convenient for me to come here.” Other respondents referred to the main library in Tallahassee being bigger but that the local library does a good job and is easier to reach (QI 18). Havana interviewee 6 moved to the area from Miami and
described being accustomed to a large library. She said “for this area [Havana] this is ok - - for up here -- but I’m used to much more, a much larger library, more materials, more to choose from.”

A Canadian winter resident in Chattahoochee (CI 1) noted that wherever she is she uses the local library. When she was asked if there is another library she preferred to use she said, “Oh yes! I use Miami, I use in Marianna, the big one; and Canada, of course.” Probing, I asked “so wherever you go you use the library?” and she responded, “absolutely.” When I restated her answer and asked her, “When you are in Gadsden County you mostly use this one [Chattahoochee branch]?” she replied, “[Chattahoochee’s] is the only GOOD one, is not – in Sneads is not good.” Sneads is the closest town to Chattahoochee, in the next county to the west, across the river.

One Quincy library user (QI 14) distinguished between using the local public library and using Florida State University’s Strozier library for research. She noted: “the only other library I use here in town is the Strozier library, that’s because of research stuff. So it’s not necessarily that kind of thing.” She responded to a probing follow-up question by agreeing that the libraries have two different purposes.

User interview question 7 asked “Why did you come to the library today?” Answers to this question -- while not directly describing users’ perceptions of the libraries’ services and amenities -- indicate what people value in their libraries and what programs and services draw them into the libraries. Most responses emphasized using the libraries’ computers for job hunting, for school work, and for recreational purposes, or using the libraries’ book and video collections. Some library users value the libraries’ student enrichment programs. In Quincy two interviewees indicated they were present for an after-school children’s enrichment program: Miss Kris’s Art Club (Quincy respondents 5 and 6). Quincy respondent 6 is a self-identified grandfather who said “I actually brought my granddaughter here today because they have art, yeah, Miss Kris has -- you know – programs: art programs and speakers and that kind of thing, it’s an enrichment program and we take advantage of it and my granddaughter loves it.”

A Havana male library user (HI 12) laughingly responded that he was at the library to use the Internet to set up his fantasy football team and needed to do so in time for the weekend.
A Chattahoochee couple (CI 5 and CI 6) indicated that they were at the library to donate several bags of books to the branch: “this is not our first donation; we’ve donated lots of things to the library, that’s probably about our third load this year, just this year.” The overall theme of their interview was that the new library is an important community resource that they worked to make possible and are proud to support. Another Chattahoochee library user (CI 10) described himself as being from Jacksonville but staying regularly in Chattahoochee for his job. He characterized his library visit as an important part of each stay. He said he visited the library “just to browse my e-mail from home and to get the exercise of walking down the hill and back [from his regular hotel].”

Answering interview question 8, “what have you used the library for in the past month,” he referred to his previous answer, “just to browse my e-mail from home and to get the exercise of walking down the hill and back,” then I asked “this is your living room?” and he responded “Yeah, this is my living room when I’m away from home.”

User interview question 8 asked, “What have you used the library for in the past month?” Respondents echoed the answers given in the surveys, reporting that they came to the library regularly to use the computers for a range of purposes, to check out books and movies, to do schoolwork -- usually on the computer -- or to attend library programs or other activities. Quincy user 11 said, “Well, I’ve used it for movies, for books, and for computer services.” Quincy user 19 uses the library for “job search and for the kids to come and study for the F-CAT.” Havana user 7 said “I came in to use the computer a couple of times to access an account I have and, you know, check out a few books, and you know, read the newspaper.” Havana user 11 said, “Oh, at least once a week I come to get books, I read at least three a week, sometimes more. My eyes are starting to get bad, but I’ve been known to read as high as five and six books a week.” Chattahoochee library interview subjects come to the library to “return books and check out more books” (CI 1); “to access the Internet. I’ve used it [the library] to obtain books about music, actual music books [for] guitar and piano, gardening information and video entertainment” (CI 9). One Chattahoochee user (CI 4) has been coming to the library “taking tests on line, all academics” implying that she uses the library’s computers to access her online classes.
Library public service staff members who agreed to be interviewed were asked their opinions about the physical space of the libraries, the roles the libraries play in the communities and the uses they see the public making of the libraries’ public spaces. Staff interview questions relevant to research question 2 are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, and 19. The following tables present the staff members’ answers by category and support the discussion provided earlier in this section.

Staff interview question 1 asked: “would you please provide a word or two that best describes this library?” Table 4.22 presents key terms from the staff answers sorted into four categories addressing: who the library serves, what roles it plays in the community, what atmospheres it projects, and why people visit the buildings.

Table 4.22: A word that best describes the library (staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>Central hub</td>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>Patrons come for computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth-oriented</td>
<td>Brand new building</td>
<td>Helpful, friendly</td>
<td>People come for movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public oriented</td>
<td>Community asset</td>
<td>User-friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People oriented</td>
<td>Community place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data compiled from staff interview question 1.

Staff interview question 2 asked: “what is the single best feature of this library?” The ten staff members who participated in the interviews overwhelmingly indicated that providing public access to computers and the Internet was the single most important feature of the library. Table 4.23 presents all the services mentioned including the children’s book collection in Chattahoochee and the library services and assistance provided generally. Two staff members indicated that the library users were the best feature of the library for them. The atmosphere of the main library in Quincy and the location of the Havana branch facing the city park and Veterans’ Memorial were also mentioned.
Staff interview question 3 asked: “what is the single worst feature of this library?”
The staff members’ responses were focused on a small materials budget that restricts
collection development initiatives, and on physical limitations of the individual buildings
and the location of the main library. Table 4.24 presents responses to question 3 sorted by
category of response.

Table 4.24: Worst feature of the library (staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Physical features</th>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Public perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources for materials (budget)</td>
<td>Front doors are not handicapped accessible (all locations)</td>
<td>No tech support for computers</td>
<td>Can’t think of any</td>
<td>Reference section is underutilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough books</td>
<td>Location of main library due to traffic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small materials budget</td>
<td>No back or side access or service road for main lib.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to get new materials</td>
<td>Parking lot in Chattahoochee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to get new materials</td>
<td>Circ desk in Chattahoochee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 3.

Staff interview question 4 asked: “Where is your favorite place or location in this
library?” All except one staff member selected a public service area of the library. Table
4.25 presents staff member answers sorted by category. Most chose either a section of
the collection or a public area such as the soft seating or the small conference room at the main library. One staff member prefers the work room away from the public because she appreciates the quiet and the ability to accomplish some of her other tasks while working in the back.

Table 4.25: Favorite place in the library (staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Non-public space</th>
<th>Public space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy books section</td>
<td>Back office</td>
<td>Soft seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s area</td>
<td></td>
<td>Soft seating by magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fiction section</td>
<td></td>
<td>Small conference room – Quincy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anywhere with books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from staff interview question 4.

Staff interview question 5 asked: “In your opinion what is the primary purpose of this library?” Staff answers presented by category in table 4.26 supported community members’ responses and identified similar priorities for the libraries including: providing computer and internet access, serving as an information and research resource, providing educational support, and serving as a community resource that provides whatever is needed.

Table 4.26: Primary purpose of the library (staff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computer and internet access</th>
<th>Information and research resource</th>
<th>Educational support</th>
<th>Community resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer access</td>
<td>Information hub</td>
<td>Educational support</td>
<td>Enjoyment Entertainment Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free internet</td>
<td>Research assistance</td>
<td>Learning support</td>
<td>Whatever is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public internet access</td>
<td>Help with public assistance type things [e-government?]</td>
<td>Education support</td>
<td>More than helping with books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer access</td>
<td>Information source</td>
<td>Reading assistance</td>
<td>Serve the public [community resource]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>Information resource</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer services</td>
<td>Information access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from staff interview question 5.
Staff interview question 17 asked “How has computer technology affected your job?” Responses presented in table 4.27 indicate that computer technology in public libraries has affected most aspects of staff responsibilities and their attitudes toward their jobs. Table 4.27 organizes staff member responses into three categories: 1) Public service computers provide an additional resource for library users; 2) public service computers are a source of increased expectations and frustrations; 3) staff access to computer technology facilitates administrative tasks and helps increase productivity.

Table 4.27: Effect of technology on job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional resource for users</th>
<th>Source of increased expectations and frustrations</th>
<th>Benefits to job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning resource</td>
<td>Public expectations are high of staff and selves</td>
<td>Impacts all aspects of work flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to e-government</td>
<td>Public frustration</td>
<td>Changes in work methods and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruct and assist the public using computers</td>
<td>Staff frustration</td>
<td>Change over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadens access to information</td>
<td>Lack of staff training in applications and sources</td>
<td>It’s a pretty good thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases access to resources</td>
<td>Increased public expectations of staff</td>
<td>Speeds up processing and transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases access, services and resources available to the public</td>
<td>Increased public expectations of services</td>
<td>Increases work productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps library users be more self-sufficient</td>
<td>Public doesn’t understand</td>
<td>Couldn’t do my work without it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates access to information</td>
<td>More work for staff – frustrating</td>
<td>Staff work tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to reading books</td>
<td>Slow circulation system at remote site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages reading</td>
<td>Slows service response time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from staff interview question 17.

Staff interview question 18 asked how computer technology affected staff members’ interactions with the public. Table 4.28 organizes staff responses into five categories. The categories presented in this table reflect the variety of interactions staff members have with the public that involve computers and computer related questions.
Table 4.28: Effect of technology on interactions with the public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand for e-government services</th>
<th>Source of frustration for staff and users</th>
<th>Complicates public/staff relationship</th>
<th>Staff are limited in what they can do</th>
<th>Part of the job One more service we can offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People want to take drivers' tests here</td>
<td>They get frustrated We get frustrated</td>
<td>Involves personal information</td>
<td>Help them get started but they have to do it themselves</td>
<td>Not all that new Just part of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply for food stamps</td>
<td>People have high expectations People get disappointed</td>
<td>Involves personal information we shouldn’t look at</td>
<td>Show them where the site is but cannot instruct</td>
<td>I’m more knowledgeable I know the sites I can show them what to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a legal matter done</td>
<td>Challenging to provide help to older patrons</td>
<td>The privacy act is all over us</td>
<td>We are limited We can suggest</td>
<td>We help people more now than before because of computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to have an e-mail address</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complicates it</td>
<td>We can help but not do for</td>
<td>Facilitates providing services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show them where the site is but cannot instruct</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Used to offer computer courses waiting for funding to start again</td>
<td>Just part of the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We help if we can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 18.

Staff interview question 19 asked what proportion of staff interactions with the public involves helping them use computer technology. Answers were very straightforward and table 4.29 organizes the responses into three categories: time spent, tasks requested or self-initiated, and staff attitudes toward helping the public use computers and the Internet.

4.29: Percent of public service staff time spent helping users with computers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not a lot, Maybe 5% Doesn’t have public service desk time</td>
<td>Uses desktop publishing program, projectors, scanners</td>
<td>Using computer technologies to support programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 30% of public service time</td>
<td>helping with internet computers</td>
<td>I just can’t help because I don’t have that much interest or knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Unblocking the filter</td>
<td>Not supposed to help them if they are putting in personal information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.29, continued:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time spent</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-25%</td>
<td>Finding a website</td>
<td>We are limited in what we are allowed to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10% of public service time</td>
<td>Show people how to do things on the computers</td>
<td>I'm limited in what I can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% of public service time</td>
<td>Sometimes just do it for them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Ranges from unblocking the filter, helping with printing, to finding a site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 19.

Answer to Research Question 2

“How do Gadsden County’s adult library users describe their perceptions of their local library’s services and amenities?” Library services and amenities are important to the libraries users. Many indicate that their lives would change without access to the libraries. Most library users say the convenience of the library locations is important to them. Many respondents consider that access to computer technology is the most important service the libraries provide and providing this service has complicated relations between library staff members and library users. The libraries are used for many other purposes in addition to computer and Internet access. Key services include providing materials for recreational reading and entertainment, and providing facilities to support educational and personal study and research. One group of library users appreciates the enrichment programs the libraries provide for children. Several other library users suggested that additional cultural and enrichment programs would be well received. Library users indicate that they regularly talk with staff members at the library yet they do not describe the libraries as places to socialize according to their personal understanding of socializing. I interpret these responses to indicate that, for most library users, the term socializing indicates participating a peer-to-peer relationship and relations with staff members are seen differently. I will discuss the nature of these relationships further in Chapter Five.

When asked what they think is the primary purpose of the libraries the most common answers given by participants in the study are: to serve as a community resource
and to support formal or self-initiated educational goals. Staff members agree with library users about the primary purposes of the libraries: serving as a community resource, providing educational support and providing computer and Internet access. Staff members also recognize that there are limits to how well they can meet public expectations -- especially for support of computer and Internet access -- and that these limits can be a source of library user frustration.
**Research Question 3**

Research question 3 asked what the Gadsden County Public Library System’s adult library users think of the building design elements, layouts and furnishings of the three libraries. Library users were overwhelmingly positive in their response to the new buildings, but noted that the buildings are not perfect and that each has specific flaws. Staff members agreed with library users about most of the strengths and weaknesses of the buildings, but diverged in certain specific areas. The discussion in this section triangulates areas of agreement and divergence between library users and library staff members regarding the physical features of the library buildings. The data points on which this narrative is based are presented following the discussion. The theoretical implications of these findings are presented in chapter 5.

All the study’s participants largely agreed about the best and worst features of the libraries, though most respondents talked about library services rather than physical features of the buildings unless specifically asked to comment on physical features as in the survey. Respondents across the study agreed that computer access is the best feature of the libraries. When asked to identify the worst feature of the libraries library users were reluctant to say anything bad about their new libraries; when pressed they identified as shortcomings limited operating hours at the branches, small collections, and not enough computers. Some library survey respondents commented negatively about the parking lots at all three locations and a small number of survey respondents identified high noise levels as a problem, especially in Chattahoochee. Staff members were more willing to identify limitations of the libraries. When asked what was the worst feature of the libraries staff responses featured the small materials budget that limits the size and scope of the book and movie collections in all formats. Staff members also commented on the shortcomings of the parking lots.

User interview question 1 asked for a general opinion of the library building. User interview question 2 asked for specific opinions of the space around the libraries and the locations. Interview participants responded very positively to the library buildings generally and to the location and the spaces around the buildings positively except for the parking areas. Interview participants described the libraries with either a generic
response like “it’s nice” or a building specific response such as “terrific building.” Those who provided a specific positive attribute most often identified the buildings as comfortable, convenient, and clean. Interview respondents described the locations of the libraries positively and most indicated that the grounds are attractive or well kept. The only features interview respondents described negatively when answering this question were the parking lots.

Survey question 29 and the features ranking exercise following survey question 32 forced survey respondents to evaluate specific physical characteristics of the library buildings. Survey respondents were reluctant to select any negative adjectives as descriptors relevant to the new library buildings, though main library users responded slightly more negatively than did those who use the branches. They most often selected loud and crowded from the list provided. Survey respondents ranked parking the lowest across all the libraries.

Staff interview questions 12 and 13 asked about physical library features that helped or hindered their jobs and helped or hindered their public interactions. Staff members responded very positively about the improvements to services and interactions made possible by the new buildings but criticized specific library features more than members of the public did. Staff members were more willing to be specific about library facility shortcomings or physical problems as would be expected of people who spend their working lives in these places. Staff members agreed with library users about the parking problems and high noise levels. They identified specific design flaws at each building, including the lack of handicapped accessible entrances, blocked sight lines and poorly designed or poorly placed reference desks at the Quincy main library and at the Chattahoochee branch. At the same time, most of the staff members agreed that the new buildings made their interactions with the public more positive and that the new buildings were more comfortable and more welcoming than the old ones.

When asked about their favorite location or place in the libraries, public and staff responses diverged. Library survey respondents offered a range of responses to this topic: 33 survey respondents favored sitting at the computers, 18 favored specific sections of the collections, 14 preferred the soft seating and 7 preferred the study areas the libraries offer. A smaller number of survey respondents favored other areas of the
libraries. Library user interview respondents’ answers followed a similar pattern. More interviewees highlighted the computers as their favorite places and some interviewees highlighted areas of the print collection. Six interview respondents provided another perspective on attitudes about the library buildings, saying they didn’t have a favorite place because they didn’t stay in the library – they only came in to return and checkout books or other items. In contrast to the public responses privileging the computers, staff members uniformly preferred the public service areas of the libraries that privilege books and reading.

When staff members were asked at the end of their interviews if they had anything else they’d like to say about the design, technology, use, or services of the libraries, their responses were both specific and general. They provided detailed critiques of specific elements of the library buildings while offering generally positive responses about the impact of the new buildings on their communities. Staff members again singled out the parking areas at each of the buildings as inadequate or badly designed. Staff members at the main library had previously identified short-comings of the central service desk as being too big and not oriented to the children’s area. Even so, they pointed out, it is more accessible than the desk at the old library had been. Staff members in Chattahoochee were uniformly critical of the poor sight lines from their service desk. Other than critiquing specific shortcomings of their libraries, staff members concluded their interviews with broad positive statements about the new libraries as being vastly improved and more heavily used than the old libraries. Table 1.01 in Chapter 1 corroborates staff members’ reports that library visits and circulation have increased steadily as the new library buildings have opened. Responses to survey question 26 also demonstrate increased use of the new buildings as 33% of survey respondents indicated that they had not used the old libraries but now use the new ones.

**Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 3**

Library user survey questions relevant to research question 3 are: 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and the Features Ranking table included in Question 32. Complete answers to the questions cited in the previous discussion are provided in this section.

Survey question 26 asked “Before this library was built did you use the old library (please check ‘yes’ or ‘no’)?” The second part of the question asked “If you answered
yes, do you use this library differently than the old library?” Question 26 did not ask users to explain the differences in their use of the libraries. Table 4.30 shows that 70 respondents or 67% of current library users previously used the old libraries and table 4.31 shows that for 45% of those 70 there was no difference in their use of the new library from their use of the old one. The interpretation of user responses to this question relevant to research question 3 is that the new libraries have attracted more users than the old ones but those people who already used the old libraries are using the new ones in much the same ways they used the old ones.

Table 4.30: Before this library was built did you use the old library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used old library</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from first part of survey question 26.

Table 4.31: Do you use the new library differently than the old library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use this library differently</th>
<th>Quincy N=23</th>
<th>Havana n=17</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=30</th>
<th>Total n=70 who answered yes above</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from second part of survey question 26.

Survey question 27 is an open-ended question. It asks: “What is the one BEST feature of this library?” Respondents were free to define feature as they wished. Answers ranged from broad and inclusive praise of the library buildings, programs, and services to those that singled out specific elements as the best feature. The most commonly identified best features were: the computers, the staff, and the buildings. Examples of answers given include:
From Quincy: “lots more computers!” (survey 130).
From Quincy: “I like the spaciousness and openness of the new building. The old library was so crowded and dark” (survey 129).

From Havana: “the one best feature of this library is the people who run and maintain it” (survey 145).

From Havana: “modern computers (NOT everyone has one)” (survey 151).

From Havana, about the new building: “better organized and more spacious” (survey 155).

From Chattahoochee: “expanded computers, more tapes, modern vs. old-style, a wonderful place for my kids to meet and be with others” (survey 179).

From Chattahoochee, about the new building: “user friendly, clean, orderly” (survey 181).

From Chattahoochee: “cordial staff who are very helpful” (survey 202).

Table 4.32 includes categories derived from the open text answers to survey question 27 and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Best feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>New Building – space</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New building</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Grounds</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection – children’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>New building – organization</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New building – clean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Building name</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Programming – children’s</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 27.

Survey question 28 is an open-ended question that asked library users: “What is the ONE WORST feature of this library?” Gadsden County library users are very supportive of their new libraries as evidenced by the large number of respondents - 35 individuals - who stated that there was no worst feature of their library or that the question was not applicable. A Havana respondent said: “I can’t think of one, this library is very user friendly and well run” (survey 151). A Quincy respondent said: “none at all, everything is very nice here” (survey 118). Those who did answer most often identified the branch libraries’ short amount of open hours as the worst feature. Comments featured
requests for more weekend and evening hours from respondents at both branches. For example, a Chattahoochee respondent complained “that it closes at 6:00 pm Tues - Fri, and Saturday [hours] should be extended” (survey 186). Complaints about the collection focused on its size, age, and scope. One user at the main library referred several times in his responses to the policy of not keeping print back issues of periodicals. A Havana respondent said: “there is just not a real big selection of materials. It's bigger than the old one but still on the small side” (survey 138). Complaints about computers focused on needing more terminals, their arrangement in the buildings, their speed, and the time limits on their use. Chattahoochee respondents complained about the noise level, referring to the staff at the service desk as being very loud. A Chattahoochee user said the worst feature was: “loud talking at the desk” (survey 187). The service desk is located next to the computers and the staff members do not have an office or workroom. All telephone calls are answered and conversations are held at the desk. Table 4.33 includes categories of answers derived from the open text answers to this question and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Worst feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Climate control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Furnishings – arrangement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Parking – handicapped</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Referrals needed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Staff attitude</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 28.

Survey question 29 presented respondents with an array of adjectives listed in alphabetical order and asked: “What words do you think best describe the physical space of this library? (Please circle all that apply).” Respondents could select as many adjectives as they wished and the selections were counted and sorted by overall frequency of selection. The three most commonly selected words across all three libraries were clean - 88, comfortable - 82, and friendly - 69. Attractive was chosen 68 times, but Quincy users chose bright more often than attractive or friendly. A small
group of users of the main library in Quincy chose negative characteristics not selected by any branch library users. Main library users less frequently chose well designed as a characteristic than those who use the branches. No library users selected the words dark, unattractive, or uncomfortable in relation to any of the libraries. Only one user selected unfriendly and that person may have experienced problems with library staff members in one location.

Figure 4.04: Library space descriptors.
Note. Data taken from survey question 29.

Figure 4.04 presents the adjectives and the frequency of selection in the order they appeared to respondents. Looking at the figure it becomes apparent that Chattahoochee branch users selected many more positive terms in relation to their library than did users of the other two locations. This may be due to the newness of the branch and the extreme change in style, location, features and services from the small, old, overcrowded original Chattahoochee library.
Table 4.34: Descriptions of the physical spaces by frequency of selection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 29: Adjectives</th>
<th>Quincy</th>
<th>Havana</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Friendly</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Designed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lots of Space</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badly Designed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Renovation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattractive</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from survey question 29.*

Survey question 30 is an open-text question that asked library users, “What is your favorite location or place in this library?” Answers range from one or two words, like “computers” or “computer room,” to specifics like the following comment from a Havana library user: “pretty much all over but I visit the non-fiction and the religious section a lot” (survey 138). One Chattahoochee respondent preferred “the tables where I can do my individual reading/studying” (survey 202). Many respondents said a specific subject area of the collection was their favorite place and these answers were grouped in Table 4.34 under stacks. One Havana reader identified a favorite section as: “mystery, fiction, and paperbacks” (survey 142), another specified “books and DVD sections” (survey 154). Table 4.35 presents categories of favorite places derived from the open text answers to this question and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

Table 4.35: Favorite location or place (public).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorite Place</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Favorite Place</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacks</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft seating</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s area</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Entrance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study table</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Service desk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from survey question 30.*
Table 4.36 and Figure 4.05 present the results of the features ranking exercise presented on page 9 of the survey questionnaire following survey question 32.
Respondents were asked to rate a list of exterior and interior features of the libraries according to a scale of 0 – 5 where 0 = don’t know, 1 = very unsatisfactory, 2 = unsatisfactory, 3 = neutral, 4 = satisfactory, 5 = excellent. Exterior features rated included: parking, walkways and other pedestrian spaces, building entrance, signs outside, book return. Interior features rated were: lights, windows, signs inside, colors, tables/study carrels, seating, children’s area, and arrangement/organization of the library.

Table 4.36: Features ranked, sorted by total points per feature across all locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features, ranked 1 – 5 per feature</th>
<th>Quincy</th>
<th>Havana</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Entrance</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement/organization of the library</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkways and other pedestrian space [exterior]</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables/Study Carrels</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Return [exterior]</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs Outside</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping/Lawn/Benches (If appropriate)</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs Inside</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Area</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey page 9.

All of the features scored very well, the parking areas and the children’s areas received the lowest scores. The children’s areas received more scores of 0 = don’t know than any other features and several respondents commented that they did not use the children’s area so could not evaluate it. Figure 4.05 presents the list of features in the order they appeared on the survey. Again, the features of the Chattahoochee branch received the highest point totals reflecting both the higher number of surveys completed by Chattahoochee library users as well as the comparatively recent opening date of the new branch building and the newness of the building to its users.
User interview questions: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 provide indications of library users’ opinions of the physical features of the library buildings. User interview question 1 asked, “What do you think of this library building?” All 41 of the interview participants answered question 1. Collectively they provided 73 individual positive descriptors of the libraries after their compound responses were deconstructed. Table 4.36 presents user responses to the question grouped into four categories. The categories are:

- **Community asset**: this category groups answers like “much better than the previous facility” (QI 18), “a hip thing to have” (QI 12), “nicer than it used to be” (QI 3), “one of the greatest things that’s happened to Chattahoochee” (CI 5), “positive feature for our community” (HI 12), “a good option for the students” (QI 15).
A generic positive response: “it’s nice” (QI 6), or “it’s very nice” (QI 16), or “it’s fine” (QI 4).

A building-oriented positive response: “built really nice” (QI 3), or “nice facility” (QI 11), or “beautiful building” (QI 5).

Privileging a specific positive attribute – “clean” (QI 1), “convenient” (HI 1), or “comfortable” (QI 10).

There were no negative responses to this question though the word “quaint” (HI 8) was used once with implications of smallness and preciousness. The answers to this question agree with the answers to several of the survey questions previously discussed, especially questions 27, 29, and the ranking exercise in question 32.

Table 4.37: opinions of the library buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Asset:</strong> (multiple phrases)</td>
<td>Positive Community feature or asset</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generic Positive Response:</strong></td>
<td>Nice, really nice, very nice.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building-oriented positive response:</strong> (physical attributes assigned to the buildings)</td>
<td>Building or facility is: Well designed, beautiful, pretty good building, terrific building, attractive, great, nice building</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific positive attributes:</strong></td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Just right</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gorgeous</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicely lit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quaint</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from library user interview question 1.

Library user interview question 2 has two parts. It asked library users “what do you think of the space around the library and the location?” Most opinions of the space around the main library in Quincy were generically positive, expressed with words like *attractive, great, and nice.* Table 4.38 presents responses sorted by category and location. Two Havana respondents had non-specific positive comments, as did three Chattahoochee respondents. Respondents across all three libraries singled out the parking areas for specific comment. At the main library most people feel there is
adequate parking, but sometimes entering and exiting the parking areas can be dangerous because the only access is directly onto the main highway into town (QI 10). In Havana the general consensus is that the parking area is inadequate and one respondent (HI 4) indicated as much. Chattahoochee has adequate parking but the access to the road is tricky (CI 5). Survey respondents indicated problems with the handicapped parking spaces in Chattahoochee being too far from the entrance, but none of the interviewees mentioned this as a problem. Five Quincy respondents commented positively about the grounds around the main library, describing the property as well kept, clean, and presentable. One Havana respondent noted “at least they have flowers” (HI 9).

Table 4.38: opinions of the spaces around the libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPACE around the buildings – categories</th>
<th>Quincy</th>
<th>Havana</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic comments</td>
<td>13 positive</td>
<td>2 positive</td>
<td>3 positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>3 positive, 1 negative</td>
<td>2 negative</td>
<td>3 positive, 1 negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds maintenance</td>
<td>5 positive</td>
<td>1 comment on presence of flowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from library user interview question 2.

The second part of user interview question 2 asked respondents’ opinions about the location of the libraries. Quincy interviewees used the same language survey respondents used in survey question 11, citing convenience and centrality as positive aspects of the location of the main library. Other phrases Quincy library users mentioned included “easy to get to” (QI 18), “fine for me” (QI 4), “probably central to the county” (QI 6), though one respondent cited the traffic around the main library as making the library “difficult to get to” (QI 10). Havana respondents all cited the library’s location adjacent to the Veterans’ Memorial and the city park as a positive except for one person, who called the location “an interruption with the park” (HI 3). Most Havana comments talked about the convenience of the library being co-located with the park because people could bring children and let them play in the park, and adults could exercise in the park and then go to the library without having to drive there. Chattahoochee respondents were still nostalgic for the old downtown library – “liked downtown but this is fine” (CI 8) --
but noted that the new location is convenient to the elementary school and easy to get to. One called the new location “acceptable” (CI 5).

Like survey question 27, user interview question 3 asked: “What is the best feature of this building?” Interviewees responded comparably to survey respondents by citing computer access, the collections and resources, the locations, the helpfulness or friendliness of the staff, and the atmosphere of the libraries variously as the best features. As a group, interview respondents did not single out physical features of the library buildings as best features, though some mentioned the layout of the libraries and some used generic adjectives like “comfortable” (CI 6). A Chattahoochee respondent said, “well it’s nice and airy. It’s easy to see what you want when you walk in. The different areas are easily accessible, with the children’s area and the audiovisuals and the computers -- I guess maybe the layout” (CI 7). A Quincy library user responded similarly, saying “well, it’s comfortable . . . easy to get access to books and the computers, and you know, whatever features the library has you get easy access to” (QI 6). Table 4.39 presents categories of best features derived from the responses to this question and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

Table 4.39: Best feature, user interview responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Best feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Children’s services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Online catalog</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Copy machine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Main library sign</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout of library</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from library user interview question 3.*

User interview question 4 asked “what is the worst feature of this library building?” As with survey question 28, most of the respondents indicated that there were no bad features or nothing wrong with the building. Five respondents in Quincy and Chattahoochee wished for more computers. In Quincy respondents pointed out that the computer room fills up and gets crowded and sometimes computer access is restricted if a class is in session because the class has priority. Chattahoochee has a small number of computers that are often fully occupied. One person in Quincy and one in Chattahoochee
each thought their libraries could be larger. One person in Chattahoochee complained about the acoustics because the library is too noisy and one said the library could have been better designed, “it’s just not very pretty, it could have been better designed aesthetically” (CI 9) Five respondents from all three libraries commented on the limited size of the collections or that the collections are dated, especially in the movies and DVDs. Again, these responses reflect the same opinions as the responses to survey question 28. Table 4.40 presents categories of worst features derived from the interviewee responses and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

Table 4.40: Worst feature, user interview responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs more computers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building features</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive county policies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copier too expensive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from library user interview question 4.*

User interview question 5 asked “What is your favorite location or place in the library?” This question is the same as survey question 30 and the answers were similar. The interviewees’ answers also confirmed some behaviors noted during the seating sweeps. A portion of the library users at each location were observed to come into the library to select materials and leave immediately upon checking out their books and audio/visual items without spending any additional time using the libraries’ materials and resources inside the buildings. One Havana interviewee explained, “the only thing I do usually, when I come to the library, is to get books to check out and read” (HI 1) Another said, “well I usually just come in, check out a book, and leave so it’s just a matter of finding what I need and taking it with me” (HI 4)

Like survey respondents, several interviewees across the three libraries identified one subject area in the collection as their favorite place, saying “fiction” (QI 10), or “over there with the new books” (CI 1). Some of these people indicated that the soft seating near the magazines and new books at each library location was their favorite place. Respondents associated the soft seating with quiet, browsing, and reading (CI 6, QI 19).
Three of the respondents, all adults, indicated that they liked to sit or study in the children’s area. One said she did not like to go into the adult section unless she had to.

The majority of interview participants reported the computers, the computer room, or the computer area as their favorite place. One said “I like the computers, I like to sit at the computers” (HI 3), implying that he was using them. The study tables and the meeting room were singled out by individual respondents (HI 9, CI 4, and CI 6) as their favorite places in the library. Table 4.41 presents categories of favorite places derived from the responses and the number of times an answer in each category was given.

Table 4.41: Favorite places, user interview responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorite place</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer area</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print collection</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None - Don’t stay</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft seating</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting room</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from library user interview question 5.

Staff interview questions 2, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 20 are questions similar to those the library users answered and staff members responded in much the same way as did the library users. Staff members were first asked about the best feature, the worst feature, and their favorite place in the library in which they work.

Staff question 2 asked: “what is the single best feature of this library?” The ten staff members who responded overwhelmingly indicated that providing public access to computers and the Internet was the best feature of the library, mentioning these features eight times. One response highlighted the speed of the Internet access provided at the library. Other features staff members mentioned included the children’s book collection in Chattahoochee, and the library services and assistance provided generally. Two staff members indicated that the library users were the best feature of the library. The atmosphere of the main library in Quincy and the location of the Havana branch facing the city park and Veterans’ Memorial were also mentioned.
Staff question 3 asked: “what is the single worst feature of this library?” While many members of the public insisted there were no bad features to the libraries, the staff members’ responses recognized limits to the resources and services the library system can provide. Staff members repeatedly mentioned a small materials budget that restricts collection development initiatives; library users indicated an awareness of this problem when they said that the collection is small or dated in response to interview question 4 and survey question 28. Staff members also identified physical limitations of the individual buildings and the location of the main library; and as the library users did, they found fault with the parking areas at the branches. Staff member specifications of the worst features of the libraries can be grouped into two main categories: lack of funding for collections and materials – mentioned four times out of ten -- and specific problematic physical features of the buildings. Specific physical problems mentioned were the front doors not being handicapped accessible (QS 4), the location of the main library because of periods of heavy traffic that limit access (QS 6), the design of the parking lot and the circulation desk in Chattahoochee. One branch staff member indicated that it was difficult to get technical support for the branch’s computers.

Like user interview question 5 and survey question 30, staff question 4 asked: “Where is your favorite place or location in this library”. All except one staff member selected a public service area of the library over any other area, and those staff members consistently selected the book collections and the soft seating where someone could read comfortably rather than the computer areas -- in contrast to the majority of library users. One staff member prefers the work room away from the public because she appreciates the quiet and the ability to accomplish some of her other tasks while working in the back.

Revisiting the discussion of the building itself, Staff Question Twelve asked “How does the physical environment of the library help or hinder your job?” Staff members identified very specific helps and hindrances generated by the new buildings as well as providing generic positive comments. The most common hindrances across all three buildings were broken sight lines and high noise levels. The most common helps were the increased amount of space in the new buildings. Table 4.42 lists the helps and hindrances to their jobs that staff members described as well as other comments they offered in response to this question.
Table 4.42: Helps and hindrances in the buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical hindrances</th>
<th>Physical Helps</th>
<th>Other comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No reference desk in youth services (Q)</td>
<td>Well lit</td>
<td>A great improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good ventilation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable (Q)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight lines are blocked -- hard to see kids to help them (Q)</td>
<td>Encourages interaction with public (Q)</td>
<td>The previous buildings were old, moldy, needed work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one entrance</td>
<td>Enabled more computers and more books but still not enough (Q)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden corners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad sightlines (Q)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise carries (Q)</td>
<td>Bigger so more room for more people (Q)</td>
<td>It has that new car smell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is accused of being too noisy (Ch)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrons are too loud on cellphones (Q, C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms are out of sight so cannot easily supervise (H)</td>
<td>Meeting room is accessible from outside so can function after hours (H)</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee parking lot is poorly designed, on a hill, difficult for elderly -- staff carry books to cars for them</td>
<td>Great location improved circulation statistics (C)</td>
<td>Walls are undecorated (Q, C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad sight lines (C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from staff interview question 12.

Staff interview question 13 asked “How does the physical environment of this library help or hinder your interaction with the public?” Answers were mostly positive or neutral. One Quincy staff member commented at length on the design of the main circulation and reference desk being a help. She said, “It makes it easier, like when they come to the counter -- the counter at the old library was quite high, probably four feet high and the poor little children, you know, couldn’t see -- and now we have a combination and it’s a lower counter plus we have one area that’s quite low so children can see what we’re doing and put their little books up there and stuff” (QI 4) Another staff member said the library users “feel good about coming in because it’s a nice brand new building -- it’s -- the air conditioner works, nice bathrooms, quiet place to be” (QI 6). Chattahoochee staff members uniformly said the physical environment of the library had no impact on their interactions with the public. One noted, “You could do the same thing no matter how the layout was arranged” (CI 3). Table 4.43 presents categories of helps and hindrances to their interactions with the public derived from the open text answers to this question and the number of times an answer in each category was given.
Table 4.43: Helps and hindrances to public service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical hindrances</th>
<th>Physical helps</th>
<th>no difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No ref desk in children’s area so hard to interact</td>
<td>More comfortable more open space more room to work with people</td>
<td>Not really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for a children’s desk but the interior designers bought the furniture</td>
<td>Easier to monitor people to see what they need</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes it easier, main library desk is better designed, More room for materials so more materials available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New, fresh, comfortable, people feel good about coming in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 13.

Staff interview question 20 asked for “any final comment you would care to make about the design, technology, use, or service of this library?” Excerpts from staff member answers that are relevant to research question 3 include expressions of worry about people damaging or destroying “those kinds of [good] things we put in the building” (QI 3) and worries about food and drink being brought into public service areas of the library where they are not allowed.

The features of the new Chattahoochee branch especially invoked strong comments from the staff. The Chattahoochee parking lot was described as hideous and the front desk was singled out here and in responses to other questions as being poorly designed and positioned. The staff members cannot see the front door of the library from the desk and have cameras and monitors positioned to compensate for the broken sight lines.

At the same time Chattahoochee staff members insist that circulation figures and computer usage statistics for the Chattahoochee library have increased the most significantly of all the libraries since the new building opened (only aggregate figures for the library system are available, see table 1.02). Staff members at all the libraries commented that people are proud of their new libraries and have a sense of ownership about the one in their community. Table 4.44 presents positive and negative comments in response to staff question 20 that are relevant to research question 3.
Table 4.44: Staff comments about the new library buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Comments Negative</th>
<th>Staff comments positive</th>
<th>Other information from staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worried people will try to destroy the good things we put in the buildings (Quincy)</td>
<td>Vast improvement</td>
<td>The county commissioner found the land for the Chattahoochee library but it was down in a hole. It needed 500 loads of fill to bring it up to code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking lot is awfully small and when multiple events are underway people complain about lack of parking (Quincy)</td>
<td>People are proud of the library and have ownership of it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink are allowed in the meeting rooms but not the main parts of the library but people bring food into the computer room (Quincy)</td>
<td>Circulation has increased since the new Chattahoochee building was built. Chattahoochee had the most significant increase in circulation in county.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The design of the Chattahoochee library is wonderful except for the front desk.</td>
<td>Computer usage has increased since new Chattahoochee building was built.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The design of the Chattahoochee parking lot is hideous.</td>
<td>New Chattahoochee library is being used more than old one</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 20.

Answer to Research Question 3
“What do Gadsden County’s adult library users think of the buildings, design elements, layouts and furnishings of their three libraries?” As a group the county’s library users are very pleased with the new library buildings and furnishings. Library users identified specific shortcomings and problem areas in the new libraries but said the problems were much less important than the overall success of the new libraries. Library users do not easily distinguish between physical design features of the libraries and the services the libraries offer. Many consider the best feature of the libraries to be the computers and the Internet access they provide. Others consider the collections as the best feature of the libraries. Library users were reluctant to identify shortcomings to the buildings but when pressed said there were problems with the parking lots at all the locations and that the noise level in the buildings, especially Chattahoochee, could get too high.

As a group the staff members are happy to have the new buildings because the new buildings make possible greater levels of service to the community. Staff members agree with the public’s overall positive perceptions of the buildings but were more willing to identify specific design shortcomings and problems with the furnishings. Staff members pointed out the lack of handicapped accessible entrance doors at any of the new
buildings as well as shortcomings in the design of the staff desks in the main library and the Chattahoochee branch. In the Havana branch the rest rooms are out of sight of the desk toward the back of the library adjacent to the meeting room and are difficult to supervise. In the other two libraries the rest rooms and meeting rooms are located in the entry lobbies.
Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked what use Gadsden County’s adult library users make of the library buildings. The answer to this research question draws from the results of all the methods employed in this study: seating sweeps, survey responses, public and staff interview responses, and review of the meeting room reservation sheets. Triangulating the relevant results provides a rich picture of what adults do while visiting the library.

Gadsden County’s adult library users appear to use all the resources their libraries offer. They often visit the library more than once a week, and some visit daily. Over half the library’s users stay for at least an hour when they visit and some stay longer. Some visit the libraries alone and some visit in a group with family members or friends. Some include the library visit with other errands, and for some the library is their sole destination. Library users often have multiple reasons for visiting the library, including using a computer, borrowing or returning library materials, bringing children to an activity or to borrow or return materials, and attending a program or activity themselves. Most library users feel the libraries are used appropriately by community members but many commented about unsupervised children who misbehave while visiting the libraries. Library staff members agree that the libraries are very heavily used and their comments provide additional insights on the ways community members use the libraries. Triangulating survey and interview responses with meeting room use data and observations of library use made during the seating sweeps provides a vivid picture of the way people use the Gadsden County Public Library System’s new buildings.

Seating Sweeps Results

Structured observations identified instances of various activities and behaviors at the libraries. The most common activity in which library users engaged was computer use; 45% of all the adults observed during the study period were sitting at a computer using it in some way. The next two most common activities -- interacting with staff, and physically searching for or retrieving library materials -- occupied 17% and 12% of observed adults during the study period. In many cases interacting with staff was a precursor or follow up to computer use or searching for or retrieving materials from the collection. The observed split between computer use and looking for library materials is
supported in the responses to survey question 14, discussed below. Tables 4.45 and 4.46 present observed activities by gender and by age group across all the libraries.

Table 4.45: Observed activities by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVED ACTIVITIES BY GENDER</th>
<th>Quincy M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Havana M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Chattahoochee M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Percent, all libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using library computer by type of computer</td>
<td>41 (19%)</td>
<td>56 (25%)</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
<td>19 (18%)</td>
<td>15 (37.5%)</td>
<td>19 (47.5%)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with staff</td>
<td>10 (4.5%)</td>
<td>15 (7%)</td>
<td>10 (9%)</td>
<td>23 (21%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (10%)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically searching, retrieving library materials</td>
<td>15 (7%)</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (4.5%)</td>
<td>5 (4.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching another person</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>11 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (1.9%)</td>
<td>11 (10%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - list on back of sheet</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>10 (9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
<td>8 (3.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
<td>5 (2%)</td>
<td>2 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just watching/sitting</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (1.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>1 (1.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using other library technology, copier, etc. (specify on back)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using telephone/cell phone</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (.45)</td>
<td>1 (.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.5%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening (I-pod, walkman, etc)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>93 (43%)</td>
<td>125 (57%)</td>
<td>39 (36%)</td>
<td>68 (64%)</td>
<td>17 (42.5%)</td>
<td>23 (57.5%)</td>
<td>365</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data compiled from seating sweeps at three study sites.

The category of *touching another person* typically referred to a woman carrying or holding an infant or tending a small child. Occasionally I saw couples sharing a computer or otherwise interacting while at the library by sitting on the same chair or sitting in two chairs at one computer. I did not observe any couples displaying signs of affection like kissing in the stacks. I used the category of activities labeled *other* to track observations of scheduled non-library activities taking place in the meeting room of the Havana branch. The activity category labeled *listening* is restricted to tracking those using a personal listening device such as a personal music player of some variety. I did not observe many instances of people listening to personal music devices. The libraries provide computer headphones on request for use with library computers. Most listening
appears to be done using the libraries’ headphones and these instances were not noted apart from the activity of using library computers.

Table 4.46: Observed Activities by age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVED ACTIVITIES BY AGE</th>
<th>Quincy</th>
<th>Havana</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-18</td>
<td>&lt;30</td>
<td>30-60</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>8-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using library computer by type of computer</td>
<td>31 16</td>
<td>28 15</td>
<td>19 10</td>
<td>1 .5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with staff</td>
<td>5 2.5</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td>8 4</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically searching, retrieving library materials</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>17 9</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching another person</td>
<td>5 2.5</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>1 .5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>9 8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just watching or sitting</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1 .5</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using other library technology, copier, etc.</td>
<td>1 .5</td>
<td>1 .5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using telephone/cell phone</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>3 1.6</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening (i- pod, walkman, etc)</td>
<td>4 2</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>61 32</td>
<td>58 31</td>
<td>60 31.5</td>
<td>8 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data compiled from seating sweeps at three study sites.*

I did not observe much cell-phone use in the libraries. While survey respondents indicated that about half have a cell-phone with them most indicated that they turned it off or kept it set on vibrate in case of emergency calls. I did not see many adults sitting and *reading* in the libraries during the observation periods. I observed reading less often than *writing*. I saw people *writing* while sitting at a computer terminal. They appeared to
be taking notes or responding to something seen on the computer monitor. Adults sitting and reading books or other print material made up 2% of all adults observed during the seating sweeps. By contrast 12% of the adults I observed were searching or retrieving library materials (printed books, videos, DVDs, or audio recordings) -- the third most common activity observed across all but the oldest age group. For the group of library users over 60 years old I most often saw them searching and retrieving library materials and interacting with staff. I saw very few people sitting in a chair without doing something. Just sitting appears to occur when people are waiting for their turns on the Internet computers but most people who are waiting occupy themselves with magazines or some other pastime. I did not see any instances of eating, drinking, or sleeping so those categories, though included on the data collection sheets, are not reported in the findings.

Answers to Survey and Interview Questions Relevant to Research Question 4

Library user survey questions 3-9, 12-18, 23, and 24 all asked about the many ways people use libraries. Questions 3-9 help determine basic patterns of library visits and use in Gadsden County. Their answers are presented in Tables 4.47 – 4.54.

Table 4.47: Length of library visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visit length</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 30 minutes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 60 minutes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 4 hours</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 6 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 3: How long do you typically stay at the library? (Please circle one).

Almost 75% of library users stay at the library between 30 minutes and two hours. Almost half of the library users visit at least once a week and many indicated visiting several times each week. 75% of library users visit at least two or three times in a month.
Table 4.48: Frequency of library visits over twelve months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visit frequency</th>
<th>Quincy N=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=107</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once (today)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every other month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or three times a month</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week or more</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Data taken from survey question 4: How often have you visited this library during the past twelve months? (Please circle one)

Table 4.49: Day of usual visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual day of visit</th>
<th>Quincy N=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=103</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple days**</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Data taken from survey question 5: What day or days of the week do you usually visit this library? (Please circle all that apply)
*only the Quincy main library is open on Sundays
**Multiple days was used when respondents circled more than one answer, whether they chose two different days or six different days.

Table 4.50: Time of usual visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual time of visit*</th>
<th>Quincy N=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=106</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Data taken from survey question 6: What time of day do you usually visit the library? (Please circle one).
*Only the Quincy main library is open every evening, and all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoons. The branches are only open on Monday and Tuesday evenings, Wednesday – Friday from 11:00 – 6:00, and only on Saturday mornings from 9:00 – 12:00.

Table 4.51: Preferred hours of operation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferred hours</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=103</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data taken from survey question 7: What hours do you prefer the library to be open? (Please circle one).

Table 4.52: Number of companions during visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of companions</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=103</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None, go to question 9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 8a: how many people usually come with you to this library? (Please circle one).

Table 4.53: Identity of companions during visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity of companions</th>
<th>Quincy n=24</th>
<th>Havana n=18</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=22</th>
<th>Total n=64</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response*</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data taken from survey question 8b: If one or more people come with you to the library are they primarily friends, relatives, co-workers, or other? (Please circle all that apply).

*No response to this question indicates either that the respondent comes to the library alone, as indicated in 8a, or that the respondent did not answer this question.
Table 4.54: Visiting stores or services before or after library visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visiting stores or services</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from survey question 9: Will you be visiting any stores or services near the library today?

The next set of survey questions was intended to explore library users’ borrowing patterns but many answers to these questions indicate that respondents were confused by the questions or misunderstood them.

Table 4.55: Borrow materials from other GCPLS locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borrow from other GCPLS locations</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from survey question 12: do you borrow materials from other Gadsden County Library System libraries?

Table 4.56: Borrow materials from other library systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borrow from other library systems</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total N=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from survey question 13: Do you borrow materials from libraries other than Gadsden County Library System locations?

Answers to survey question 12 -- shown in table 4.55 -- indicate some confusion because eight of the eleven Quincy respondents who replied yes indicated that they borrowed from the Quincy library. This may mean that they understood the question to be asking whether they borrowed materials from the library at all or whether they used the library for other purposes like using the computers or attending programs. Two respondents in
Chattahoochee who replied yes indicated that they borrowed from the Chattahoochee location. One Chattahoochee borrower indicated requesting items from all the library system’s other locations to be delivered to Chattahoochee, not visiting the other locations personally. Those who replied yes to survey question 13 -- shown in table 4.56 -- mentioned locations within 50 miles of their libraries including the Leon County Public Library System, the Wakulla County Public Library, Tallahassee Community College Library, Leon County Schools, Marianna Public Library, Blountstown, and Florida State Hospital. One Havana borrower indicates borrowing materials from around the state.

The next section of survey questions asked more generally about what people do while they are at the libraries. Overall their responses indicate heavy reliance on the library system’s computers and electronic resources, especially access to the Internet. Library users also use the collections very heavily. They do not often use the library to meet friends and they do not report consuming food or drinks in the libraries. Library users who participated in or were observed during this study did not use personal laptop computers while at the libraries. Very few library visitors said they bring any electronic equipment other than a cellular telephone with them to the libraries; only two respondents mentioned even bringing portable file storage devices (jump drive, flash drive) with them. Respondents indicated that the libraries’ electronic resources were heavily used and very important to library users.

The bar graph of answers to question 14 -- Figure 4.06 -- presents the reasons for coming to the library in the order respondents received them on their questionnaires. Table 4.55 presents respondents’ selections in rank order. The table is sorted by most to least frequent total number of mentions across all returned surveys. Respondents did not typically indicate one reason for visiting the library as more important than any other; they checked or circled all relevant reasons without distinguishing amongst them for a total of 275 reasons why respondents visited the libraries. The percentage is of the number of times 109 respondents selected the term. Respondents typically selected more than one reason for visiting the library on that day. By far the most common reason respondents reported for visiting the libraries was to use a computer – 53%. The next two most common reasons for visiting the libraries were to borrow or return library materials – 35% - or to look for information on a topic – 31%. Again, it is important to
note that these activities are not exclusive. Many survey respondents indicated multiple reasons for visiting the libraries in their answers.

Table 4.57: Reasons for visiting the libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS</th>
<th>Quincy N=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total surveys n=109 total terms = 275</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=109 surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q. Use the Internet</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Borrow/return materials for myself</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Look for information on a subject</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Browse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Read</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. Use e-mail</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Borrow/return materials for others (children, family, friends)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t. Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Use children’s services</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Study in library with own materials</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Use photocopiers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Obtain help from library staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p. Use the on-line catalog</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Use public meeting room</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Meet a friend</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. View art work, displays, bulletin boards</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o. Use CD ROMs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r. Use electronic databases</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Use microfiche/film</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Consume food/drinks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Data taken from survey question 14: Why did you come to this library today? (Please circle the most important reason and check any others that may apply with a check mark):
Q.14 Reason For Visiting

Figure 4.06: Reasons for visiting the library. 
*Note.* Data taken from survey question 14.

Table 4.58: Use electronic resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use electronic resources</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=104</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from survey question 15: When you visit this library how often do you use electronic resources (e.g., the internet, on-line catalog, CD-roms, electronic databases)?

Over 70% of respondents indicated they use the libraries’ electronic resources at least sometimes.
Table 4.59: Importance of electronic resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of electronic resources</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=101</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crucial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 15: When you visit this library how often do you use electronic resources (e.g., the internet, on-line catalog, CD-roms, electronic databases)?

Over 80% of respondents rank the libraries’ electronic resources as at least important. Over 25% ranked them as crucial.

Table 4.60: Bring a laptop computer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bring a laptop computer</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=103</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 15: When you visit this library how often do you use electronic resources (e.g., the internet, on-line catalog, CD-roms, electronic databases)?

I only saw one person with a laptop computer during the study. An elementary school student was carefully carrying one out the front door accompanied by his mother. Staff members commented that people work on personal laptops but that the libraries do not provide wireless internet so laptop use is limited to working on documents or reports.

Table 4.61: Bring other electronic equipment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bring other electronics</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana N=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee N=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell-phone</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 18: Do you ever bring in any other electronic equipment with you in this library (e.g., cell phone, digital scanner)? If yes, please specify.
Again, survey question 18, reported in table 4.61, was not clear to respondents and many wrote in the term “cell-phone” without checking yes but the answer is assumed to be yes if they filled in a term. Totals for each column are greater than n because of the double counts between yes and cell-phone. Other than cell-phones, library users mentioned the following devices once each: Blackberry, cd player, mp3 player, jump drive, and thumb drive.

Table 4.62: Use non-English language materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use non-English materials</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data is taken from survey question 23: Do you ever use this library’s non-English language materials?

Because the survey was presented in English it drew responses from only those people comfortable with written English. It is likely that the foreign language materials would be used by people who might not be comfortable responding to the survey and so their use would not show up on this survey. One Chattahoochee interview respondent (CI 2) reported seeking out foreign language children’s books for her college-age son who was trying to improve his Spanish language comprehension.

Table 4.63: Meet tutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meet tutors</th>
<th>Quincy n=37</th>
<th>Havana n=31</th>
<th>Chattahoochee n=41</th>
<th>Total n=109</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=105</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from survey question 24a: Do you ever use this library as a place to meet tutors?

Question 24b asked if people met tutors at the library, what kind of tutoring were they using? Responses are shown in table 4.64. This question only received 9 responses. The
meeting room logs – discussed later in this section – indicate that many hours of tutoring take place at the main library. Most tutoring is probably of elementary, middle, or high school students under age 18 who did not take the survey. GED courses are offered at the Chattahoochee library on an ongoing basis. Again, those taking the GED course were not in the library during the hours the survey was being distributed.

Table 4.64: Type of tutoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of tutoring</th>
<th>Quincy</th>
<th>Havana</th>
<th>Chattahoochee</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent of responses n=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework help</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New reader – literacy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In Chattahoochee “other” referred to Computer Classes/Workshops held at the branch.

User interview questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 are the most relevant to determining how the GCPLS library buildings are used by adult library visitors. Interview questions 7 and 8 were first discussed in the answer to research question 2. Portions of those answers relevant to the research question currently under discussion are presented in this section. User interview question 7 asked library users “Why did you come to the library today?” Responses were evenly divided with 17 people saying they came to go online for specific or general purposes and 17 people who said they were borrowing or returning items from the collection. Seven library users reported other place-based activities including using the photocopier, bringing children to participate in library programming, and using the library as a recreational destination and a place to pass time. One Quincy library user said she came to the library “to do some research on the computer and also to bring my daughter, ‘cause she loves coming here” (QP 12). Another Quincy user came to the library, “because I gotta finish my science project and I need to do research papers” (QP 15). One Quincy user was “trying to pay a bill online but it didn’t work” (QP 16). A Chattahoochee user was at the library “to finish my studying, I’m going to college on line so I had to take a few tests” (CP 4). Another Chattahoochee user said she “came to get some books on CD because I travel a lot and I listen to them while I ride” (CP 8).
Interview respondents more frequently – 41% - said they were at the library to borrow or return library materials than did survey respondents – 35% - to question 14. This may be because the people who come to return or check out materials are in the library for a shorter amount of time, and so were more likely to be moving through the doors of the library where interview participants were being solicited.

Computer users were more likely to stay in one place for a longer time while at the library so were less likely to get up and move through the lobby where the interviews were taking place. Library computer users were more amenable to being asked to complete a survey questionnaire than to stop and sit for an interview. Nonetheless 41% of interview respondents reported that they were at the library to use a computer and 41% reported they were there to borrow or return library materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why are you at the library today?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online job hunting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online schoolwork or study</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online use, nonspecific</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrow or return collection items</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place-based services or activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from library user interview question 7.*

User interview question 8 asked library users, “What have you used the library for in the past month?” Respondents provided a variety of answers with many indicating multiple uses, while others were very specific about having only one reason for visiting the library. Half the interview respondents indicated multiple reasons for visiting including using both computers and collection resources, while about one third of respondents only borrow items from the collection. Only five respondents indicated that they come to the library only to use the computers. Most computer users also use other library services and resources. A Quincy user said “the past month? I come and check my e-mail, or like I say check books out, and just maybe relaxation, just read the newspaper, it’s a quiet atmosphere” (QS 5). Another Quincy user reported “job research, just look things up on the computer and bring her [daughter] over here most of the time [she does homework] and she likes to play games on the computer” (QP 12). Two
Havana users reported “just to check out books” (HP 4) and “to get books to read” (HP 8). Chattahoochee user 5 reported having come to the library for a meeting during the previous month. Other Chattahoochee users reported a similar mixture of coming to the library to use the computers and to borrow library materials.

Table 4.66: Reasons for library visits in past month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use over past month</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple reasons</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only computer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only materials from collection</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or work</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation or children’s activities</td>
<td>(6 mentioned as part of multiple reasons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from library user interview question 8.

User interview question 9 asked respondents “What do you think about how people use this library?” Interview participants typically gave two-part answers. Respondents reported what they observed or knew people were doing in the library and many also expressed an opinion -- typically positive -- of how other people used the library. One Quincy main library user said, “It’s very pleasing to come in and see the whole community in here using all -- it seems like every part of it is being used with the books and the mass media, movies, and also the computers” (QP 11). Another Quincy user said, “I think it’s just been a good response -- like today there’s quite a few people using the computer -- so I think that we all really appreciate having a good library” (QP 16).

A Havana library user said, “Well I have had friends who have taken computer classes and I think that’s wonderful to have that type of thing provided at the library for, you know, a small town like ours” (HP 4). Another Havana library user said, “Well, from what I’ve seen, what I see is some students come in and they do their homework when I’ve been in, and I also see others come in and look up jobs” (HP 12).

In Chattahoochee, one library user expressed mixed feelings along with her observation, saying “I’ve seen that most people use the library to get on the computer. And that I’m an English teacher, and that’s sad to me, I mean if you aren’t opening and touching it you are not reading it” (CP 2). Another Chattahoochee user had a more
positive response, saying “a lot of people are using the computers and I think that’s just wonderful because so many people don’t have them available for their personal use so I think it’s really good” (CP 7). Another Chattahoochee user said “A lot of people come and use the computers. I see many people checking out videos and DVDs and I see people getting books. It seems like everything is getting used” (CP 9). Table 4.67 summarizes what respondents said they saw others doing and table 4.68 summarizes what respondents said they felt about how the library is used.

Table 4.67: Observed library use – interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed uses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework, studying, job hunting</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computers and the internet</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings, classes, or group activities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check out books</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s reading and programs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation or entertainment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from library user interview question 9.

Table 4.68: Opinions of library use – interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions about how the libraries are used by others</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valuable, appreciated, well used</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used by the whole community (it is a collective good)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything is used</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s services are important</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers are important because not everybody has one</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How people use it is their personal choice, not my business</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from library user interview question 9.

User interview question 10 asked participants “can you describe any ways you’ve seen people use this library – either good or not so good – that surprised you?” and 28 respondents said that they hadn’t seen anything that surprised them, that things were all pretty much what they expected for a public library. Respondents used phrases like “pretty normal,” and “nothing much surprising.” Twelve respondents reported being surprised positively or negatively, or just surprised in a neutral way. The phenomena most commonly reported as surprising were the number of children in the libraries overall and the number who were misbehaving; the amount and types of meeting-room
use including after school non-library sponsored activities, sorority meetings, union meetings, and voting; and the high amount of computer use and the non-serious ways the computers are often used. A Chattahoochee library user summed up attitudes about the volume of computer use at the libraries saying, “There seems to be a lot of people who come to use and access the Internet and I guess maybe that surprised me because I think probably a lot less people have access at home than one would think” (CP 9). A Quincy library user reported, “there was one time I got surprised because . . . they were like looking at My Pagina -- kind of like MySpace in Spanish -- and using the time for that and other people maybe they want to use the computer and they using it for doing something else” (QP 15).

A Quincy user responded, “I see that they have meetings here, all different kinds of meetings like sorority meetings, we had a cheerleading meeting here. . . . they have arts and crafts here in the classroom -- it surprises me -- a well known literature writer, children’s book writer, and uh, he came to the library and that was pretty nice” (QP 9). Another Quincy library user described, “Just last week, apparently some people from Bainbridge [Georgia] were using it to hold a meeting of some kind. It sounded like a union meeting so they didn’t want to be – that’s just a guess – but it sounds like they didn’t want to be seen in Bainbridge. I’d never seen the parking lot that crowded” (QP 18). One Havana library user was surprised by the early voting, saying “actually, I didn’t realize that you can use the library to vote, that’s good! They provide spacing for people who have events, to help people out so I think that’s very good” (HP 3). Details from the meeting room reservation logs support perceptions of the meeting room use and are discussed later in this section.

User interview question 11 was an added, open-ended question that gave interview participants a chance to talk about the library from their own perspectives. I asked: “Is there anything I should know about how people use this library that we haven’t talked about yet?” Answers to interview question 11 that are relevant to research question 4 – observed use of the library buildings – are summarized here. As with previous questions, respondents answered their final question at various levels. Some continued to stress specific programs or services they saw people using or used themselves while others spoke more generally about the library as a community asset.
Respondents continued to identify using computers, job hunting, doing school work, reading, library programming, community use of the meeting rooms and services for children and young people as ways people use the library. Some wrapped up the interview with a concluding phrase stressing how well used the library is and how important it is to family or community. A Quincy respondent concluded: “Well, I think the residents here are really using it for what it was put here for” (QP 11). In Havana one respondent said, “I think that the building itself is very put to use. I don’t think there is a time when you can come in when it’s not being used” (HP 6). One Chattahoochee library user explained: “It’s much needed, well appreciated, and well used” (CH 6). Another concluded, “The library is very, very important to me and my family and my community” (CP 9).

Staff member answers to interview questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 20 have relevance to research question 4. Staff members interact with and help library users throughout the workday so the staff members’ responses present their perceptions of the ways people use the libraries. The majority of the library system’s staff members do most of their work in the public areas of the library or at the main reference/circulation desks. Staff members at the main library have more complex responsibilities than those who work in the branches and the professional staff members often work out of public view or off site. Main library administrative and public service staff members do not work in the back offices unless performing a specific set of tasks like book preparation and repair, or preparing payroll documents or other complex reporting tasks. At the main library two administrative workstations are located in the open area behind the public service desk and the staff members who sit in these areas back up the public service staff working at the front desk. Branch staff members spend most of their work-day performing their tasks while seated at the public service desk or in the public service areas of the library. In Chattahoochee the branch manager does not have a private office. She performs all her administrative duties from a small desk behind the public service desk. The Havana branch manager has a glassed-in work area behind the public service desk where she can see what is going on and become involved as needed but she, too, does most of her work at the main public service desk.
 Relevant answers to staff question 8, “please briefly describe your job responsibilities,” include the response from a Chattahoochee staff member (CS 1) detailing many of the ways in which she works with library users. She reports, we help people locate books, we help people locate the reference material, we help them with the computer, the only thing that we can’t do on the computer, of course, is we can’t do anything where we would have to have access to a password or anything for them, but we have a lot of people that come in to fill out applications for food stamps or unemployment, all kinds of things like that. . . . A lot of these people will be elderly people who’ve never even looked at a computer screen. We spend quite a bit of time helping those people… and then we pull and shelve movies and we look up all variety and manner of things for people on the computer either through the card catalog [colloquial reference to the online catalog] or just by the internet.

Staff question 9 asked staff members to describe the nature of their interactions with the public. Staff answers to this question provide an idea of the library services and resources with which library users ask for help or advice, thus indicating which library resources and services users seek when coming to the library. The following quotations from the staff member interview transcripts indicate some of the ways people use the library. One of the professional librarians at the main library explained, “I do, you know, consultations sometimes when people need some extra help” (QS 3). Her answer indicates that people contact the library when they need help with something they can’t resolve for themselves. Another main library staff member described a regularly occurring social aspect of her work with the public, saying, “they come in, I say hello, if I know them they ask how I’m doing, I ask how they’re doing -- its just a nice little -- it’s like my store, they come in, it’s either repeat customers or new ones” (QS 6). Her description indicates that often social interaction is part of a library user’s visit to the library. Finally, one of the Chattahoochee staff members explained that there are limits on what the library staff can do for library users, “We’re limited to what we can do on the computer but we always try to help. Helping them find information, suggesting a new author to them, helping them find a book” (CS 3). Her response confirms that library
users sometimes have service requests or expectations of the library that the staff members are not able to meet but that staff members usually do whatever they can to help meet user needs.

Staff question 10 asked “what are most users doing in this library?” Answers indicated that library visitors use all the libraries’ services and that different library users have different needs. More than one staff member replied with an answer similar to this: “I find that there’s kind of different categories [of library users]. There’s some that strictly come in here to just get on the computer, and then we have our dedicated avid readers that come in with fifteen or twenty books and take out fifteen or twenty books, and then you have the children that need assistance with their school work, so they’re here trying to get help with that as well as being on the computer” (QS 3). One staff member was very specific in her answer to the question, saying “Most people are on the computers and most of them are playing games, listening to music, e-mailing, some IMing, two-thirds [of the people] are using the computers for entertainment and maybe a third or even less are actually doing research” (QS 4). Table 4.69 presents staff member answers to question 10 by type of use and the number of times that usage was reported among the ten staff members who responded.

Table 4.69: Library use as reported by staff members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of times reported by ten staff members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using computers (children and adults)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School work or study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avid readers or regular readers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowing movies or DVDs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data taken from staff interview question 10.*

Staff interview question 11 asked: “what are the primary problems you’ve experienced when dealing with the public in the library?” Most answers indicated that there weren’t many problems any more, and that disruptive behaviors on the part of library users had been worse in the old buildings. Most of the staff members recognized the behaviors they categorized as negative as that of library users expressing frustration with information and computer-related challenges they could not meet due to inexperience or unfamiliarity with computer technology or Internet and web-page
conventions. The other big problem staff members identified stems from a type of user behavior -- that of adults who come to the library to use a computer, often bringing young children with them, but who do not appear to supervise the children after getting involved in computer searches.

The library has had great success with its grant-funded computer classes, but staff members report that the grant ran out and that the library system is currently seeking additional funding so they can resume offering the classes. A Quincy staff member reported:

there are a lot of people that just plain don’t know how to work a computer and that has been eased somewhat -- we’ve had some wonderful computer classes. . . the public loves them, they’ve responded really well and we’ve had a whole group of elderly people who knew nothing about computers when they started and when they came back for several classes they're much better, and in fact we have one lady who actually published a book on the shade tobacco industry here in Gadsden County, something that she had been working on and working on and she became so proficient and so comfortable with the computer that she ended up doing her book on the computer (QS 04).

Her response indicates that people are willing to come to the library for classes and to learn new skills, especially those related to computers, the Internet, and information technology.

Staff question 14 asked: “in your experience, how do patrons typically behave in the library?” Again, the staff members’ answers can provide insight into what people seem to be doing when they come to the library. In their answers staff members returned to the theme of adults bringing children to the library and not supervising them. Staff members as a group insist that parents don’t pay attention to their children once the families arrive at the libraries and the parents begin their sessions on the computers. Several told stories of unsupervised children at their libraries: One Quincy staff member (QS 2) felt the problem wasn’t too bad, reporting “typically they’re good, it’s just -- I think the parents tend to get sidetracked and not watch the children.” Another Quincy staff member reacted more strongly.
Kids come in that door and they run [in] both directions, and we have not had any bad accidents so far but we have some very frail elderly people who come here and I just shudder at the thought of one of them stepping out in front of one of these kids, and I think because it is sort of a fun place for people to be that sometimes they just get too loud and too boisterous (QS 4).

A Chattahoochee staff member indicates that unsupervised children are present in all the libraries, “There was a bus stop right near the library so there was [sic] parents that thought we were a free baby-sitting service . . . here the elementary school is across the street but they have an afterschool program” (CS 2).

Staff interview questions 15 and 16 asked staff members to comment specifically about types and frequency of unacceptable patron behavior they saw at the libraries. Frequency is addressed first because it sets the tone for this subject. Seven of ten respondents to question 16 said “not that often” or “not very common,” in reference to the frequency of unacceptable behavior in the libraries while three respondents indicated unacceptable behavior occurred from three times a week to every day. Two staff members described rambunctious or unsupervised children as the main source of unacceptable behavior.

Staff question 15 asked for an example of unacceptable patron behavior staff members had seen at their library and the most frequent examples offered were of unsupervised children behaving disruptively and, at the main library -- which has a separate computer room with a door -- inappropriate use of cell-phones in the computer room and of people in the computer room being disturbed by other computer users. One main library staff member explained: “Well, mostly what it is, it’s boisterous talking in the computer room or talking on the cell phone in the computer room. You have patrons that come out and complain, you have, let’s see, it’s just . . . I think misunderstandings as far as, you know, and that’s about it” (QS 2). Another main library staff member said, “honestly, I don’t want to sit with a bunch of people either, you know. Maybe, I don’t know if it’s mostly, I don’t know – ‘cause its -- you’re in a room with you know thirty other people, and I can understand that” (QS 1). Another main library staff member provided more details.
I’ve had one patron, I think he was very close to being in a fistfight with a couple of others because in the room where the 21 computers are, you know, if somebody’s talking on a cell phone or talking to their neighbor it can get kind of loud, and I have had patrons come up and request a set of headphones not because they’re listening to anything on the computer but just to block out the noise around them because it gets pretty bad, and we had a patron in there who does not like using those computers but will if these are not available and he told me one day, he said, ‘we were about to have a little tussle in there because I asked people politely to talk more quietly and they would not,’ so we do have occasional problems (QS 4).

Staff members from all three libraries offered examples of unsupervised children behaving disruptively. At the main library one of the staff members explained “pretty much it gets down to kids, they’re going try you and they’re going to try you no matter where you are – kids -- if you’re in a position to tell them yes or no, whether you’re a parent or not, you know a person in a responsible position, that’s pretty much the only thing I think we ever have a problem with” (QS 6). At one branch a staff member commented on an infant that had been very fussy.

I know babies are going to be babies, but teenagers sometimes with the young ones have to see, and being a mom, when you approach them and let them know: we want you in the library but you have to be conscious of other people too, that you don’t have the right to let your child or my child interrupt or just scream or disturb the whole atmosphere of the library. . .

I’ve had to deal with that (HS 1).

At the Chattahoochee branch a staff member reported, “a parent will come in and get on a computer with a small child, let’s say two or three years old, and not pay attention and let the child run around the library and act out and scream and run and act totally inappropriately in the library and the parent will be so focused on what they’re [sic] doing on the computer that they pay no attention to the child” (CS 1).

The last question of the staff interviews asked for any final comment staff members cared to make about the design, technology, use, or service of their library. Recalling the opening of the new main library in Quincy one staff member said,
What is so interesting to me is like, our first patrons in this building were a woman that [sic] wanted a cookbook, and the other wanted a thing on webpage design -- they’re both African-American women and . . . there’s a lot of women single heads of household here and you know, there’s a lot of women that are using the library to you know, get their first e-mail address . . . and so I think this library is really serving, you know, some of the people that need the services so much (QS 1).

The staff member described a use of the library that is not often considered. “People with more money, or the white population, see the library as more of a charity organization” (QS 1). Another staff member at the main library talked about the people who come to the library looking for books. She reported,

quite a few of them that come in looking for books we don’t have, but you know, a library can’t have every book that is out there, but we do have interlibrary loans so we can get books in and we do that, we do quite a bit of that . . . there’s not a lot. . . but now the ones that we do have that come in to check out materials or have been patrons for a long time, they usually come in and they check out as many as ten books at a time which -- that is the limit -- ten, but we also have VHS and DVDs which are checked out very religiously, we have a lot of that being checked out. But our patrons that come in to get books are very faithful. . . I mean you can count on them every two weeks being here (QS 2).

People use all the libraries’ meeting spaces regularly. As reported above, library users commented often on ways they’d seen other people use the meeting rooms. Community groups who used the meeting rooms during the study period included The Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Cancer Society, The Boys and Girls Clubs, a local homeowners association, Toastmasters, the Democratic Black Caucus, and a Caregivers respite group. Tutoring at the main library is not a library- or county-sponsored activity. Private tutors – typically retired teachers according to the staff – reserve time and meet their students at the library. In Chattahoochee all tutoring is in the form of GED classes. County meetings are sometimes held at the libraries, census worker training was held at two locations on one day, and the branches served as early
voting locations for the 2008 presidential election. Two different sororities meet regularly at the main library. Two class reunion groups and one family reunion meeting were held at the main library, and the Friends of the library met at the main library during the study period. The meeting room reservation sheets are summarized in table 4.70.

Table 4.70: Meeting room use in GCPLS locations, October – November 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting room use</th>
<th>Quincy meeting room - hours used</th>
<th>Quincy Conference Room - hours used</th>
<th>Havana - Hours used</th>
<th>Chattahoochee - Hours used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-- only children’s programming</td>
<td>Nov. – 35</td>
<td>Nov. – 5</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Nov. – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov. - 26.5</td>
<td>Nov. - 29.5</td>
<td>Nov. - 2</td>
<td>Nov. - 22 GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County meetings</td>
<td>Oct. - 9</td>
<td>Oct. - 2</td>
<td>Early voting 12 days</td>
<td>Early voting 12 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and other</td>
<td>Nov. – 15</td>
<td>Nov. - 5 Census training</td>
<td>Early voting – 1 day</td>
<td>Election 1 day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sororities</td>
<td>Oct. – 7</td>
<td>Oct. - 6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groups</td>
<td>Nov. – 5</td>
<td>Nov. – 14</td>
<td>Nov. – 10</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Oct. - 6.5</td>
<td>Oct. – 12</td>
<td>Oct. - 5</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reservations</td>
<td>Nov. – 2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Nov. - 11</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reunions</td>
<td>Nov. – 3</td>
<td>Nov. – 4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the</td>
<td>Nov. – 1</td>
<td>Oct. - 2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data compiled from library meeting room reservation logs for October and November 2008.

One of the main library staff members described a less typical use of the meeting room, recalling, “we had a wedding here, did you hear that?” It was held on a Saturday morning and the staff opened the library early to accommodate the wedding party, but “just before [the wedding] started, of course, the groomsmen and the bridesmaids were
all lined up there and by that time the library was open and people couldn’t get in! There were these – they [library users] came to the door and here were all these people in tuxedos and gowns.” The staff member reported, “some of us commented that we didn’t really think it [the library] was an appropriate place for a wedding and afterwards, after we told her [the library director] what-all had transpired, she said, ‘well, there won’t be any more’” (QS 4).

Another use people make of the libraries is as a place to donate books. A staff member described the service as allowing people to feel good about donating, while the staff members feel good about accepting the donated books and disposing of them appropriately if they are in poor condition. A Havana branch staff member (HS 1) described another aspect of the book donation service for library users, “People donate them [books] to [the library] sometimes, people come in and say ‘rather than me taking it to recycle do you have something?’ and I say ‘well I have a free shelf out there if you would like to …” She described the service as being something people in the community had done for a long time.

It’s something they’ve always done here... It was here when I came, they probably did it in the old building and it was up to me whether I wanted to keep it and I chose to keep it. It’s working, and I was amazed how teachers, students, it is used quite well, a lady from the school came, she said ‘can I take about 15 or 20 magazines cause they’re doing a project and they want to cut out some pictures’ and so it works out real well.

People from outside the county also use the branch library as a book resource. The library hosts a more formal book exchange than the drop-off just described. The staff member reported, “We have people -- since we’re so close to the Georgia-Florida line a lot of Georgia residents they choose not to do the five dollars [non-resident borrowing fee], they can take those books back there” (HS 1).

**Answer to Research Question 4**

Research question 4 asked “What use do Gadsden County’s adult library users make of these library buildings?” Library users visit the libraries frequently and often stay for over an hour per visit. They report that they use all the resources the library system provides heavily. They often bring children to attend supervised library programs, but
they also allow their children to behave freely while at the library. Library users have
been creative in their use of the library public meeting rooms, using them to hold an off-
site union meeting and a wedding. Library users say they come to the libraries to work
toward personal goals and to accomplish tasks or projects. Adult students use the
libraries to facilitate taking online classes, and to do research or study for school. Library
staff members report that the library system’s computer classes were very popular and
very successful but that no funds are currently available to continue the classes. Staff
members also report that library users come to the libraries when they need help finding
information or help using computers to meet a personal need. Staff members also report
that some of the library system’s less traditional services are very popular, especially
community book drop off and exchange programs that function outside the library’s
circulation system. Library users and staff members agree that the new library buildings
are heavily used and very popular.
Research Question 5

Research question 5 asks what insights Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff can provide about the role of the public library in their communities. Library user survey questions relevant to this research question are 11, 20, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, and relevant additional comments made in response to survey question 32. Library user interview questions that can help answer this research question are 7, 8, 9, and 10. Library staff member interview questions relevant to this research question are 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 20. Most of these questions have been presented and analyzed in previous sections of this chapter. In this section only portions of the answers relevant to research question 5 will be discussed.

User survey question 11 asked why people use the library in which they were present rather than other libraries and requested that respondents answer in their own words. Key reasons given most often were closeness to home, convenience of the location, the library’s collection, the friendliness of the library staff, and the access the library provided to computers and the Internet.

User survey question 20 asked if respondents ever talked to the library staff when they visited the library and, if yes, what they talked about; 83% of respondents indicated that they talked with the staff members and the subjects of their conversations ranged from requests for help with library services to general conversations to what users described as “chit chat” and “social stuff.” Social conversations, conversations about books and about users’ information needs were the most frequently mentioned topics in the responses to question 20.

User survey question 25 asked library visitors what other services or resources they would like to see introduced at the libraries. Respondents asked most frequently for more services such as expanded cultural programming for adults and children, access to adult education including GED classes and classes in foreign languages, and tutoring for school students. They also requested extended operating hours at the branches. Respondents requested additional resources including expanded collections, more computers, and more computer programs such as Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint.
Individual respondents requested community services including employment information, a blood-pressure monitor, and day-care services – presumably for children.

User survey question 27 asked respondents what they thought was the one best feature of this library. The most frequently mentioned best features in order of frequency of mention were the computers, the staff, the new buildings, and the library collection.

Survey question 28 asked respondents what they thought was the worst feature of the library. As discussed in the answer to research question 3 respondents were reluctant to identify disappointing aspects of their libraries and many said they couldn’t think of any. Those who responded identified limited branch operating hours, the size and scope of the collections, and the need for more and faster computers and wireless Internet services. Some respondents indicated that the libraries were noisy, especially in the main library computer room and in the Chattahoochee branch.

Survey question 30 asked respondents what their favorite location or place was in the library. Answers to this question varied depending on what the respondents valued most about the library. Favorite places mentioned ranged from the most frequently given answer -- the computers or sitting at the computer or in the computer room, to specific areas of the libraries’ collections, to the soft seating near the magazines and newspapers, and the children’s area. Study tables and meeting rooms were mentioned less frequently but are considered as favorite places by a small number of respondents.

Survey question 31 asked respondents what they identified as the primary purpose of the library. Respondents to this question often provided multiple answers. They most frequently mentioned serving as a community resource, supporting educational efforts, and helping people meet their information needs.

Survey question 32 asked respondents to add any additional comments they wished to make about the library and 18 of 109 survey respondents wrote an additional comment. The comments are almost all positive and they show a strong awareness of the many roles the libraries play as community places. They also show how people respond to the place-based aspects of their libraries. Quincy respondents described the library as “a wonderful place to experience and grow” (survey 105), and as “a nice modern library” (survey 114). Another Quincy respondent said “it gladdens my heart to see the library put to use as it should be” (survey 129). A Havana respondent described the branch
library as “very accommodating” given the size of the community, and she said she anticipated that the library would grow with time (survey 138). Another Havana respondent described the branch simply as “a great public service” (survey 155). Chattahoochee residents responded very strongly to their new branch. One said “without this library I would have a hard time working and attending college” (survey 175) and another described it simply as “my favorite place” and “a very nice facility” (survey 177). One Quincy respondent wished the main library could be bigger (survey 130), and a Chattahoochee respondent took the opportunity to complain that sometimes the staff were too familiar and too willing to carry on their personal lives at the library.

Library user interview questions that can help answer this research question are 7, 8, 9, and 10. Each was previously discussed in relation to research question 2 and/or research question 4. Portions of the answers relevant to research question 5 are now discussed.

User interview question 7 asked participants why they had come to the library that day. Answers included bringing a grandchild to attend a library program; using a computer to do homework, research, or job hunting; using the library as an alternate family destination on a Sunday when the church wasn’t open, and bringing several bags of books to donate to the library.

User interview question 8 asked participants what they had used the library for in the past month. Answers included doing personal research, participating in the book exchange, checking out library books, keeping up to date with changes in the job market, reading with a child, and using the library for general recreational purposes. As previously discussed one Chattahoochee library user is from Jacksonville and describes the library as his “living room” when he is away from home.

User interview question 9 asked what participants thought about how other people use the library, and answers were mostly positive and approving. Respondents seemed very aware that others used the library extensively and for multiple purposes. A Quincy respondent described the library as being highly valued, noting that people use it for job hunting and studying as well as for recreational purposes. Another Quincy respondent ranked how people use the library -- approving of people who come in to do homework but speaking less approvingly of people who “get on the Internet and play games . . . and
listen to music and stuff like that” (QP 7). A Havana respondent described the branch library as a community place and spoke approvingly of seeing students using the library’s computers. A Chattahoochoe respondent was somewhat surprised that he saw so few people using the library recreationally and said it seemed to be used mostly for research and studying.

Responding to user interview question 10, “Can you describe any ways you’ve seen people use this library (either good or not so good) that have surprised you?” most participants said that for the most part people use the libraries in expected ways. They reported most people as being well behaved, that most people have a reason for being at the library and know what they want to do. Others reported the libraries being heavily and well used and suggested that usage figures had increased significantly since the new libraries were opened.

Library staff member interview questions relevant to this research question are 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 20. Staff interview question 5 asked what staff members thought was the primary purpose of the libraries. As discussed in the answer to research question 2 staff members identified a number of roles for the libraries, including providing computer and Internet access, serving as an information and research resource, providing educational support, and serving as a community resource in any way possible. Samples of staff members’ responses give a good sense of the roles the staff members see the library playing in their communities. A Quincy staff member explained, “Well, first and foremost, educational purposes, but I guess, kind of being outreach because we do so much more than just provide books. A lot of people come for help for various different things and you have people that need help with getting jobs and need help with doing public assistance type things so we kind of do more than just help people with books” (QS 3). Another Quincy staff member talked about the variety of purposes the libraries fulfill saying they are there “to help people find enjoyment either in books or movies or just coming to read the daily newspaper, and provide free internet access to people who don’t have it or need a quick run at the computer – here we are” (QS 6). The Chattahoochoe staff members also identified multiple purposes for their branch. One felt that she has seen a change in the purpose of the library over time saying, “I don’t think it any more is just a place for books, it’s more of a – the primary purpose really is to
provide information through the internet, through the computers. We provide more of a service with the computers than we do with written material” (CS 1). She does not seem to be aware that circulation figures at all the libraries have increased over previous years since 2000 (see table 1.02). Another Chattahoochee staff member stated her understanding of the purpose very simply, “To serve the public of Chattahoochee whether it be reading, whether it be Internet…” (CS 2).

Staff question 6 asked staff members what they think are important social functions of the libraries. Answers addressed formal and informal social activities and staff member perceptions of the role of the library as a neutral entity in a historically segregated county. Table 4.71 summarizes the various social roles staff members assigned to the library buildings. Quotations from the interviews illustrating the staff members’ understanding of the roles of the library in their communities follow the table.

Table 4.71: Social roles of GCPLS buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal meeting place</th>
<th>Informal meeting place</th>
<th>Neutral location (historical and present day)</th>
<th>Nothing besides this library (for local entertainment or enrichment) no movies [in the county]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public meeting place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable place Place to meet friends, air-conditioned Clean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts range of public programs</td>
<td>Meet people with similar interests</td>
<td>Community meeting place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts meetings and study groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community meeting space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community meeting spaces available</td>
<td>Family outing and after school destination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosts afterhours community meetings and workshops (civic and governmental)</td>
<td>Perceived as safe for children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s programs – they make friendships that continue into school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED classes, civic and governmental workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data taken from staff interview question 6.

Quotations from staff responses to question 6 offer insight into their perceptions of the social functions of their libraries. One staff member provided a historical perspective on the role of the main library in the community.

It’s a neutral location because [this] was a segregated county up until the early 70s and the public library is one social environment that is completely neutral that is not something like revolved around, you know,
where you have to go there, like a courthouse or where you’re going to buy clothes or going to buy something. This is like, you come here, it’s free but it’s neutral. It’s all races together.’

Interviewer: ‘do you think part of that is because it’s a new building or was it like that before?’

Staff member: ‘no it was like that before’ (QS 1).

All three libraries provide community groups with access to the library program rooms, conference rooms, or small meeting rooms (depending on the building) for community, civic, and governmental non-library use. One branch manager described the usage: “this library sometimes is used after hours for people with different groups to meet, like several types of homeowners associations, so it gives the people, when they don’t have a place to meet, a place where they can meet. Sometimes studying but most times it’s stuff like workshops like we had for [the local] police” (HS 1). The other branch manager described similar usage, this time stressing that her library provides space for GED classes on a regular basis: “We have GED classes taught here which I think is very important in our community. We have actually had six graduates from the program. The police department uses the facility to teach self-defense classes, and fraud information classes and that sort of thing” (CS 2).

Other staff members who work at all three locations described the importance of library-initiated programs and activities to the community. A Quincy staff member explained the importance of library programming.

Maybe the range of programs that we put on [is important], we try to do some, I know especially with the children’s department they do more than just literary stuff, for instance they’re having like a poetry troop come up and some of that type of stuff is good because you have people that, you know, they don’t get any further than this area, they can’t, even though Tallahassee’s twenty-two miles away they don’t have transportation to get there and so we serve a big social function for people who can’t go anywhere, like there’s really nothing besides the library (laughing deeply) There’s no movies, no, no (QS 3).
The library buildings also serve as informal meeting places and destinations for social activity. Another main library staff member explained some of the uses. Well, it’s a comfortable place to come and visit with your friends, sometimes they get a little bit loud but I think a lot of the people around here just appreciate the air conditioning and I’m not sure that that’s available in all the homes around here. It’s clean, a lot of people think it’s a safe place, I don’t know that it’s really a safe place for little children but a lot of people in the community seem to think it’s safer for the kids to be here than anywhere else in the community (QS 4).

Another staff member also described the importance of the library as a destination, “I think it gives a place for, [it’s] still a place for families to come as a family outing and a place for kids to come after school and a place for older people to come sometimes to get out and go do something” (CS 3).

Staff interview question 7 asked participants to explain how they see the library being used socially, trying to identify observed uses of the libraries in comparison to the previous question which asked about their understanding of the libraries’ social functions. While all three libraries are used socially, there are subtle distinctions in ways of use that separate the three libraries according to their individual communities’ needs. The main library functions as a non-commercial civic space that is not allied with any religious or political entity or mission. It is heavily used by members of the community for informational and social purposes. The Havana branch is heavily used for meetings and as an informal social meeting place that focuses around the local reading culture – the formal book exchange, the book donation and drop-off services, as well as the circulating materials collections. The Chattahoochee branch sees less after school activity than in prior years but now serves as landmark, rendezvous point, and communications and information center for people who stay in the three large campgrounds – two state and one municipal -- just outside of town. Summaries of the staff members’ observations of library use are presented in table 4.72. Examples featuring quotations from the interviews follow the table. The staff members’ observations will be interpreted according to the study’s conceptual framework in the next chapter.
Table 4.72: Observed social functions by library location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library location</th>
<th>Social function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Religious and politically neutral space, allow all political and religious groups to use the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shelter from the weather, come in and socialize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hang out, chat with friends while on computer, work or socialize in small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting rooms are used frequently -- People visit with each other while sitting in the easy chairs and reading magazines and newspapers -- Community center and crossroads -- avoiding ex-husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someplace quiet to get away from home or distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someplace to go with a friend, or for kids to do homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Hosts book club and local author programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattahoochee</td>
<td>Informal conversations on the sidewalk that go on and on. --- Geophysical landmark in town. --- Reference point, meeting place, and information resource for people staying at state parks and campgrounds in area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social hangout but less so than before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Still a social hangout, provides communication facilities for people staying at area campgrounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data taken from staff interview question 7.

A Quincy staff member explained, “You know people come in here whether it’s to get in out of the rain or out of the hot, out of the cold. They do use it to come in and socialize” (QS 2). Another Quincy staff member noted,

Frequently people come in to use the computers and they see somebody they haven’t seen in a long time and there are a lot of informal sort of things that go on. I had one lady who came in -- we have computers in two different areas, these are mainly for children, the ones in the room we try to save for adults. But an adult can use any of them (laughs) -- one lady came in one time and she looked in the computer room to pick out her computer then she came up to the front desk and said, ‘can I use one of those over there’ and I said ‘sure’ and she said ‘my ex-husband’s in there (whispers) I don’t want to be in there’ and I said ‘that’s fine’” (QS 4).

A Chattahoochee staff member explained very clearly how important the library has become as a landmark and resource for people staying in the campgrounds in Florida and Georgia along both sides of the Chattahoochee River.
The library is used as a landmark quite often and also we have a lot of people – we’re unique here, we have the campsite out at the edge, the state campground out at the edge of Georgia, and the city has a campground and there’s Three Rivers State Park just across the river in Sneads -- so we get a lot of campers and they, the campers use the library as their primary information source whether it be through the computers or written resources, or through us the librarians to find out even something as simple as to where to go to buy groceries or where’s a good restaurant to go eat. And also they will meet other campers here like the ones from Three Rivers -- they’ll tell them if you want to meet the campers that are camping at the west bank which is the one out at the edge of Georgia the library in Chattahoochee’s the best place to go do it (CS 1).

Staff interview question 10 asked what most users were doing in the libraries. It was first discussed as part of the answer to research question 4. Answers addressed specific activities and also offered indications of the roles the libraries play in their communities. The following two quotations from staff members at the main library in Quincy illustrate the role of the library in the community as an educational resource. One staff member explained, “People doing college work, we’re far enough away from Tallahassee where the universities are and colleges are that they can come here and quietly or maybe possibly be able to find a book that they need for homework or that kind of thing [and] movies, we have access to some movies for people and that’s free” (QS 6). Her colleague at the main library told the following story about how much people value the library’s services and how they’ll spread the word about any new services or activities to their friends and neighbors:

We had a lady -- we just recently, I guess about three or four months ago, added Ancestry.com, the library edition [a genealogy research subscription website], and we have had some people who have discovered it. There’s an icon on the computers but there’s been no advertising about that. And I do think that’s kind of a negative but one lady did discover some ancestors from way back that she, a connection she’s been working on for years and she was able to make it through the Ancestry.com and she went to the
local newspaper and told them what a wonderful asset this was, and the
next day, and this is just a little weekly newspaper, and the NEXT week I
had two different people come in and say ‘I read in the paper about
Ancestry.com’ I was shocked -- ‘cause I had looked at the paper and I
could not find the little article but they had heard about it via the
newspaper and they came in and sure enough, sat down and worked on it
(QS 4).

Staff interview question 11 asked about the primary problems staff members had
when dealing with the public and they offered two main themes in the answers to this
question. The first theme described challenges staff members experienced when dealing
with unattended or unsupervised children. A staff member from the main library in
Quincy explained “the biggest problem we have is unattended children while the parents
are on the computer [not paying attention] to their SMALL children, probably two and
three years old. They’ll tell them just to go over and sit in the children’s section and
watch a book, and they’ll be running up and down the aisles and climbing on the tables”
(QS 2). This theme has come up several times in answer to different staff interview
questions. The comments quoted throughout this chapter imply that parents consider the
libraries a safe place for their children.

The second theme that appeared in response to staff interview question 11
centered on problems staff members experienced when working with people who were
unfamiliar with computers but had computer or Internet-dependent information needs.
This theme appeared throughout the staff member interviews. For example, when the
staff members were asked “how has computer technology affected your interactions with
the public” in staff interview question 18 they provided examples of the computer-related
services library users have come to expect from their libraries and the limitations on the
library staff members’ ability to meet those expectations. One Quincy staff member said,
“It can be challenging to try to help people especially with the older patrons who are not
really into technology and they don’t understand you know like ‘why do I do this, why is
the computer doing this and how come they can’t do this or do that,’ but we do offer, well
we did offer computer courses. We’re just waiting on a grant now to see if we can get
that back up and running” (QS 3). Another staff member explained, “I think it’s
complicated it [computers have complicated staff interactions with the public] because there’s more that you can do here at the library. I mean, I’ve had people having to take drivers’ tests here or somebody applying for food stamps or somebody trying to get like a legal matter done, so it’s like, you’re involved in so much personal information” (QS 1). Several other examples of the way the public looks to the libraries as Internet access points have been given in response to previous interview questions. The libraries have become important sources of Internet access and staff members are caught between trying to provide the help community members request without infringing on people’s privacy.

Staff interview questions 14, 15, and 16 asked staff members to describe their thoughts about library user behaviors and the frequency of unacceptable behaviors in the libraries. A Quincy staff member said, “it’s mostly like little kids running around, or we might have people in the computer room arguing but it’s not that bad” (QS 5) And, as previously discussed in response to question 16 all the staff members indicated that unacceptable behavior, other than rambunctious behavior by children, is uncommon and infrequent. One of the staff members puts the responsibility for the children’s and teens’ unacceptable behavior partially onto the libraries saying “we don’t do a very good job sometimes of enforcing the few rules that we have.” She explains, “For instance, no child under the age of thirteen is supposed to be here without any parent and yet, and yet, there have been a lot of instances where kids are dropped off and either we are unable to reach the parents or – just -- it’s kind of frustrating. We have a rule about no children being in here when school’s in session and yet ….. You know, a kid who was suspended for three days was in here every day he was suspended” (QS 4).

As the staff member interviews concluded, participants were asked for any final comments they might wish to make about the design, technology, use, or services of their libraries. Answers from three of the staff members provide additional clues about the role of the public library in their communities. A Quincy staff member mused, I think that libraries -- like in areas like this where there’s not a lot of county services besides like law enforcement and court system -- it provides like, an unusual and wonderful place, a brand for the county. Its like – what a great selling point for county services. And the library we had before was in a basement of a building and people that knew where it
was could get there, people would try it, but having a new building and having something that is very neutral again, you know is just vibrant, its – you can see that it really serves the public, but I think it’s the best brand for the county because it’s . . . There’s just no other place like it in the county, you know, that’s free, you’re not coming under duress where it’s like you’re having to pay a bill and you can actually sit and you know, meet somebody that you don’t really normally meet. It is neat. It’s a good thing to get behind I think [in] southern rural areas -- public libraries -- because I think they are good meeting places for the diverse populations (QS 1).

Later the same staff member (QS 1) continued, “for me, the uniqueness of it is just providing that bridge for people to each other . . . we’re very low on services and money for material, things like that, but it’s still a place where people can come, and the thing is that we may be low on material but the Internet provides a lot of material, that’s why I think it’s very important, because you don’t have a lot of resources . . .” She concluded by saying, “[the library] can be a place where everybody gets the information and there’s a little bit of awe on information, things that they haven’t seen or experienced before, libraries can be that.”

Another Quincy staff member who used to work at the old library observed: “People keep coming back, they keep coming back, and I feel like we keep getting a bit bigger circulation going, whether it’s computers or books, once you get them in here -- even if it’s just for computers -- they’re going to say ‘oh my, I’ve never been in here before, you have all kinds of things’ and we have a new patron.” The staff member concluded her interview with this final thought, “I think the people are really, really proud of the fact that they have this library -- that this is THEIR library and that’s what it’s all about. It’s a public library and they I think they feel that way” (QS 6).

A Chattahoochee staff member’s final interview responses discussed how important the most basic library services can be in a small rural community. She said “the library is still a place that is vital to the community, especially in a small town there’s no other choice for entertainment. We provide movies, books, the Internet, books
on cd and tape, we’re the only choice of entertainment in the entire town of Chattahoochee” (CS 1).

**Chapter Summary**

What insights can Gadsden County’s adult library users and staff provide about the role of the public library in their communities? Most importantly for library users and staff members alike, the libraries function as modern public libraries. They serve members of the communities of all ages and races. They provide access to information, support formal education and lifelong learning, and offer access to recreational reading and viewing materials. The new libraries are sources of community pride. People feel like the libraries have improved their communities and are filling a need for modern, comfortable, non-commercial public places that are a locus for information-related activities, reading, community-supported activities, educational projects, and personal growth and development.

The next chapter will take the findings from the research presented in this chapter and contextualize them according to the theoretical framework proposed in chapter 2. Theoretical analysis of the findings presented in this chapter should help answer the guiding question driving this study, How are the Gadsden County Public Library System buildings functioning as places?
As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this study is to explore ways that adults who live in a small, rural, predominantly African-American county use their public libraries as place. The study’s guiding question asks: How are the Gadsden County Library System’s library buildings functioning as places? Thus far, this question has been addressed by answering specific research questions about library user demographics, library user and staff perceptions of library use, and observations of people using library facilities. The previous chapter analyzed the data collected during the study to answer five specific research questions. The current chapter will analyze the data collected during the study from the perspective of the conceptual framework presented in chapters 1 and 2. This analysis will suggest answers to the study’s guiding question expressed according to the theories that make up the conceptual framework. The conceptual analysis will also help determine whether these theories – most of which originated in the context of understanding urban environments and activities -- can broaden understanding of how people use small town and rural public libraries as place.

**Conceptual Framework Review**

The theories presented in chapters 1 and 2 can be organized in three groups to contextualize: 1) the qualities of the public library as a place or setting, 2) the relationships that people who visit the public libraries experience while at the libraries, and 3) the results of the activities people pursue while at the libraries. These theories are not mutually exclusive and no one theory is sufficient to fully contextualize the study’s findings. Understanding all three groups of theories is necessary to begin to answer the question of how people use their public libraries as place. When discussing the setting Jurgen Habermas’s theory of the public sphere (1974, 1991) and Ray Oldenburg’s conceptualization of third places (1999), along with Karen Fisher’s (Fisher, et al., 2007) developing theory of informational places provide three sets of concepts that can be used to interpret the role of the library as an environment that encourages and reinforces a set of interactions and relationships that facilitate a range of outcomes. Tony Hiss’s (1990) conceptualization of how people respond to the environments in which they find
themselves may also help to understand Gadsden County library users’ varying responses to their new library buildings. The relationships people experience while visiting their public libraries can be analyzed using the spectrum of public realm relationships Lyn Lofland (1998) describes. Public realm relationships contribute to peoples’ sense of being members of a community formed among those who share interests, institutions, and perspective and who live in the same geographic area (Warren, 1978). People’s shared sense of belonging to a community can also be understood as a cognate of the benefits of increased social capital -- the bonds and connections that hold a society together (Halpern, 2005; Puddifoot, 1996; and Putnam, 2000). In other words, the activities in which people participate while visiting their libraries appear to generate new or increased amounts of bridging, bonding, or linking social capital depending on the relationship between the people participating in the activities.

To facilitate the theoretical analysis data from each of the three Gadsden County library locations will be analyzed separately in terms of the three theoretical categories – setting, relationships, and activities – because each of the libraries has unique characteristics and its own group of library users. The results of the three analyses will be combined to generate an answer to the study’s guiding question. The data most relevant to conceptual analysis are drawn from: 1) selected library user interviews; 2) selected answers to open-ended library user survey questions (11, 20a and 20b, 25, 27 & 28, 30, 31, and 32, and 3) selected answers to staff interview questions 1 – 20.

**Chattahoochee Branch Library**

The Chattahoochee branch library is the most recently completed and opened of the three new buildings that house the Gadsden County Public Library System. It opened to the public in April 2007 (Mock, 2008). The civic pride the new library generates is an expression of the library’s role in supporting Habermas’s public sphere, a universal abstract that informs places in which democracy and democratic activity can occur. Public libraries provide non-commercial space in which people can engage in civic, social, and personal relationships and activities. In Chattahoochee the new library has a meeting room people can use for library and non-library related functions. Chattahoochee Interviewees 5 and 6 are husband and wife. They are very active with the
library and talked about the importance of the meeting room to the community. They recounted,

    CP 06: I like that little meeting room -- that [sic] serves a big purpose.
    Interviewer: what kinds of things have you seen happen in the meeting room?
    CP 06: well, I, we, we work with friends of the Chattahoochee Library and
    I’m on the board of the Friends of the Gadsden County Library so those
    types of meetings, and – it’s got to be kind of civic I guess --
    CP 05: the education programs they’ve offered for the kids, the
    presentations they’ve had, we have grandchildren that have benefitted.

Other examples of civic and community-oriented meeting room use at the Chattahoochee branch include serving as a location where people can take G.E.D. classes, hosting community programming, and providing a place where early voting was held for the 2008 presidential election. The branch manager confirmed, “we have G.E.D. classes taught here which I think is very important in our community. We have actually had six graduates from the program. The police department uses the facility to teach self-defense classes and fraud information classes and that sort of thing. . . . [Different kinds of groups can use it] as long as it’s for the public.” The branch manager reported that G.E.D. classes meet three nights per week, the library provides after school programs every Thursday, and the community-sponsored programs usually are held on Friday in the early evening hours. All the meeting room activities were suspended or relocated during the two weeks of early voting in October prior to the 2008 presidential election.

There are some limits to the Chattahoochee meeting room’s use as civic space. Interviewees 5 and 6 report a certain level of governmental control over the way the local community can have an impact on the library. CP 06 reported, “I know that the county just -- I mean you can’t put a picture on the wall that they don’t -- or a plaque on the wall that they don’t have to come in and approve it or a trashcan outside, and I just think that’s a little restrictive and unnecessary.” Her husband continued, “I guess what she’s saying is that the community doesn’t seem to have the leeway to do things that we think would benefit the library and the community and the users of the library as a whole without permission from Gadsden County Library -- which we get most of the time -- it’s just
inconvenient . . . they have to approve the benches put outside, and we’re spending our money – as friends – not county money.”

Another limit on the role the library plays as an expression of the public sphere is apparent in a perception among some library users that the county government is controlling how people access information at the public library. Later in the joint interview respondent 5 described a limit of the library’s services he sees, saying

I think we need wireless access here and I’ve talked to my county commissioner and they’re just concerned that people can get on and look at stuff they’re not supposed to be looking at, but two things: first of all, I think you can eliminate that too, or regulate that; and second thing: it’s going to be their own private computer, it’s not going to be there. I know a lot of people -- I work at the hospital too and have a lot of professional psychologists and psychiatrists and all -- that have asked me about that [wireless access].

A library survey respondent (survey 200) also indicated a desire for wireless internet in the library’s meeting room.

In spite of the lack of wireless internet access the Chattahoochee library users most often describe their library as an informational place as defined by Fisher, et al. (2007). Briefly, Fisher, et al. define informational places as a subset of Oldenburg’s (1999) third places. Like third places, informational places also occur on neutral ground and are social levelers, but they encourage a mood of “productivity, study, and reflection” (Fisher, et al. p. 152) as compared to Oldenburg’s persistently jovial atmosphere; and they provide an environment where information finding and seeking, reading, lifelong learning, and support for formal educational activities can flourish. Third places are unassuming locations that people go to between home and work to relax, socialize, find congenial conversation and generally enjoy a warm and playful atmosphere.

Chattahoochee library users uniformly endorsed their library’s role as an informational place. Interviewee 4 is using the library’s Internet computers to attend college on line. When asked why she was at the library on the day of her interview she responded, “To finish my studying, I’m going to college on line so I had to take a few tests.” She also described seeing and encouraging extensive use of the library’s computers by younger
students, “I bring my children to do learning activities on the computer. I’ve seen school age children, mostly listening to music on the computer. I’ve seen a lot of study groups, teenage children take a table and form a study group -- I’ve seen that also.”

Chattahoochee survey respondent 175 holds the same perspective: “without this library I would have a hard time working and attending college.”

Chattahoochee interviewee 8 has a different perspective on the library’s role as an informational place. She sees a need for much more computerized information access and support for e-government applications than the library currently provides. She said:

I’d like to see them have more computers, I don’t use them myself, but I do work with adult protective investigations and unfortunately there aren’t enough places for people in rural Florida to apply for benefits, old people, poor people, people who don’t have computers, and one of the reasons that they closed down some of the service sites in rural Florida counties is they insist that people can use these other public sites and there aren’t enough of ‘em.

She reports using the library herself to check out books on CD and -- once in a while -- traditional books but said she mostly buys paperbacks. Chattahoochee survey respondents 171, 179, and 188 also expressed a need for more computers at the library.

Chattahoochee’s library users are very proud of their new building, but they are still getting used to its design, location, and the enhanced resources it supports. Presented in terms of Lofland’s public realm relationships and locales, the new building is not yet a “familiarized locale” (p. 66) in that there was some resistance to change and the new building is just beginning to become part of people’s daily routines. The old library was very definitely a familiarized locale and had been very important to its users.

Chattahoochee interviewee 9 explained, “Well, I [have] come to the library for 25 years and in a way I miss the quaint little one that we had -- but that’s an era bygone I guess -- but I suppose this one is bigger and there’s a lot more room.” Chattahoochee interviewee 7 discussed the new location saying, “I would have preferred it to have been a little closer into town because our little town is just dying so I think it would have been a nice addition there, but it’s just a beautiful location, it’s easy to get to, great parking, it’s good.” Respondent 8 agreed saying, “We always liked downtown but this is fine.”
Interviewee 6 explained, “Originally when they were going to build the building the Friends of The Chattahoochee Library had a different site in mind and some of the members of that group weren’t -- But I think this is a great location.” Respondent 2 was very forthcoming on the shortcomings of the new library as compared to the old one. She expressed her resistance to the change, saying

in the old library, right up here, I don’t know if you ever saw it, it was a darling little place on, it’s called Main Street, but its how you get off of I-10 and come into Chattahoochee, it’s a little white building and there were always things going on in that library; the Rotary Club met there, you know, on the other side. I, I don’t know, there was just more like Chattahoochee people, I mean old-timer Chattahoochee people. I don’t -- you know it’s only maybe a mile away but this is -- seems much more further out -- for just a segment who just comes in and gets on the computer.

Not all the responses to the new building express nostalgia for the old one. Other community members express civic pride in their new library. Following Lofland’s (1998) analysis of the public realm’s persistent positive social value and utility, the new library facilitates a small town version of a sense of cosmopolitanism (Wiegand, 2005) by welcoming visitors to the community including those who use the campgrounds and recreational areas on both sides of the Georgia - Florida border just west of town along the Chattahoochee River. Chattahoochee interviewee 5 explained,

I think it’s used well by the community and by visitors who come through here -- we have campgrounds close by. I know we have a motor home and we go camping, we use other libraries and they do here too, --- not every library will do that . . . I found some out on our camping trips that wouldn’t let you use it, but I think it’s really good for the community and visitors as a whole.

The staff members are also proud of the library’s role as a landmark and resource for out of town visitors. CS 01 explained, “yes, the library is used as a landmark quite often. . . . The campers use the library as their primary information source -- whether it be through the computer or through us the librarians -- to find out even something as simple
as where to go buy groceries or where there’s a good restaurant to go eat.” Her colleague
(CS 03) explained “our campers come through and they use the computer for e-mail to
keep in touch with their family.”

Chattahoochee interviewee 10 is a different type of community visitor. He is a
railroad engineer who is required by law to spend a certain number of hours off duty
before he boards his next train. As a result he spends every other night of his work week
in Chattahoochee. He visits the library regularly and describes the new building and his
use of it as

Very nice and very convenient for me, I’m an out-of-towner, I live in
Jacksonville and I stay at the hotel every other night- I use the computers
and I browse the paperback books. [Today I came to the library] just to
browse my e-mail from home and to get the exercise of walking down the
hill and back… this is my living room when I’m away from home.

When interviewee 10 refers to the library as his living room his description can be used to
test the relevance of Oldenburg’s (1999) third place theory to the Chattahoochee branch
library. Respondent 10’s use of the library as a place other than home – his hotel in town
– or work indicates that for him the library has characteristics of a third place but he does
not indicate engaging in conversation or enjoying a playful atmosphere when he walks to
the library. On the contrary, he pursues solitary reading and information-related
activities, browsing the books and checking his e-mail. He also noted later in his
interview that he was surprised that the library doesn’t seem used for relaxation by the
local community. He explained:

[It] seems like they do a lot of research -- there seems to be a lot of young
people doing school research and there’s a little bit -- there doesn’t seem
to be as much leisure time and I don’t know what could be done to attract
more leisure interest. But there does seem to be -- it does seem to be kind
of -- I don’t know if you’d call it business or professional orientation more
so than the leisure. You know my use of it as a leisure time is simply
because of proximity to the hotel and you know I’m away from home and
like I say, it’s my living room, but the locals seem to use it strictly for
school research and that sort of thing. There doesn’t seem to be much relaxing.

Chattahoochee survey respondents agreed with Interviewee 10 when they described the primary purpose of the library as being “to aid in reading fundamentals, help students research, and provide a safe environment for children” (survey 175), to provide “service to the community to upgrade education and learning opportunities” (survey 179), “to give the people a resource place” (survey 182), and “to provide needed resources in various areas to the community” (survey 194), and “to provide educational, tutoring, and recreational opportunities to the public” (survey 207).

The branch manager (CS 02) recalled negative examples of the ways the old library building -- located downtown in a residential neighborhood -- had been used as a third place. She recalled that the building was broken into three times, that she had a gun pulled on her twice, and that a fire was set in the men’s room urinal. She explained, “I think a lot of it was because it was the location. It was close to the railroad tracks and I had people come in that told me they were bums and they hopped trains and they could tell me how to hop a train if I wanted to.” She feels the new location has solved most of the site-based problems because the library is more visible to passers-by at the intersection of Highway 90 and Maple Street.

Other Chattahoochee interview respondents described coming to the library primarily to check out and return books (CP 01, 02, 04). One of the staff members (CS 01) perceives a balance in use of the library’s various resources saying, “It’s evenly split between checking out books and computer use, but checking out books definitely does not edge out computer use. Computer use might edge out the book use.” Table 1.01 indicates, by contrast, that circulation figures have increased steadily across all the libraries since 2000. Fisher, et al. (2007) describe informational places as environments that support reading and book-related activities as well as being places where people go to solve their information needs but Fisher does not address the ways libraries support or encourage the social nature of reading in her theory.

Fister (2006); Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer (2006); and Wiegand (2005b) have called attention to the social nature of reading and the persistence of people using public libraries to support their recreational and social reading activities. Social and
recreational reading-related uses of public libraries as place have continued through the twentieth century into the present. It is important to acknowledge the role of the public library as a place that supports the social nature of reading. However, close analysis of activities to understand the social nature of reading as practiced at the Gadsden County public libraries is beyond the scope of this study, even though evidence of the social nature of reading is apparent in many of the interview and survey responses collected throughout this study. As an example, Chattahoochee interviewee 7 described reading as a social act when she recounted coming to the library and bringing her granddaughter with her sometimes. Referring to her granddaughter she said, “I do [bring her], she’s two and a half, almost three, and she loves books, we read all the time. So I bring her here.”

One important aspect of the social nature of reading that falls within the limits of the current study is the abundance of public realm relationships (Lofland, 1998) that have coalesced around the library’s collections and services -- especially the books and movies. As library users become regular borrowers of library materials they become participants in ongoing relationships with staff members and other borrowers. They exchange greetings with the staff members and participate in conversations that may at first be limited to requests for help finding books and movies but soon go far beyond the original topics. These relationships appear to be important to both the library visitors and the staff members. Survey question 20 asked library users if they talked with staff members and if “yes,” about what? Chattahoochee survey respondents who answered the questions -- 22 people or 62% -- said they talked with the staff when they visit the library. They reported talking about “anything we feel like talking about” (survey 175), or “new books, where to find books, using the Internet” (survey 172), or “where to find items, local events, best deals in town” (survey 179), or simply “friendly conversation” (survey 190) or “social stuff” (survey 196). Interview respondents also mentioned the staff members positively. When asked what she thought was the best feature of the library, Interviewee 2 answered, “[name], she’s the head librarian.” These responses are strong examples of Lofland’s (1998) conceptualization of intimate secondary relationships -- relationships that form among people who connect to each other in some public context and build on that connection. According to Lofland the relationships last a long time, feel good, and are meaningful without necessarily being intimate.
While library users participate in the library-centered intimate secondary relationships, seem to enjoy them, and say they make a point of talking with staff members, they do not classify these relationships as social according to their personal definitions of social relationships. When asked in survey question 21—see Table 4.17—to identify the single MOST important service the library provides only three Chattahoochee respondents selected “a place to socialize.” When asked in survey question 22—see Table 4.18—what was the LEAST important service the libraries provide, by a large margin survey respondents selected “a place to socialize” as their answer. Because the word socialize was not defined for respondents they answered according to their personal understanding of what it means to socialize. It appears that respondents do not consider the public realm intimate secondary relationships just described to be a form of socializing, yet most respondents indicate they talk to staff members when they visit the library and many reported that they regularly discuss topics beyond the library’s services and resources. For library respondents socializing may refer to peer-to-peer relationships rather than their relationships with people performing their workplace roles.

Library staff members were asked how they saw the library being used socially. Chattahoochee staff member CS 01 said, “we notice that a lot of people will meet up out on the sidewalk and just stand and talk and talk but other than that and the social networking they do through the computer, I guess not.” The branch manager (CS 02) says the library “is a social hangout to some extent. I’ve seen teenagers that come in to meet here, [and] we have campers that meet here so it is used as a social center to some.”

An increase in personal and group social capital is an important outcome of the relationships people form at the public library. Social capital can be understood as the glue that holds social institutions together. It is the ability of participants to “secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998, p. 6). It grows out of beneficial relationships that develop among members of social networks who trust each other. Social capital can be bonding, bridging, or linking (Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 2000) depending on whether people are interacting within or between social networks. There is subtle but persistent evidence of increases in social capital as a result of relationships formed around the library as place. Some people use
the library as a charitable outlet, donating books to be added to the collection or placed on the book exchange shelves. CP 05 and 06 – the married couple -- explained that they had come to the library on the day they were interviewed to donate their third lot of books for the year and that they had donated similar amounts in prior years. Other interview respondents commented outside their interviews that the staff members who know their reading preferences will often pull a book out of a donation and hold it for a specific library user. Book donations and exchanges play a large role in the Havana branch library’s operations and will be discussed as generators of social capital in the next section of this chapter.

It is still early in the new Chattahoochee library’s lifecycle for it to be fully established as a place where social capital is generated, but several interviewees confirmed the role the old library played as a community setting in which social capital could grow. Interviewee 2 described the old library, saying “there was always something going on in that library; the Rotary club met there.” There is evidence that the new library is assuming this role. People can use the computers to take classes or access e-government resources, thereby improving their personal situations and possibly increasing their social status or how they are perceived in the community. The library staff members are extremely well liked and are in positions to help people in any way needed. Later in her interview Respondent 2 reported, “I know that the staff, whether it be [the branch manager] or the other people are always just incredibly helpful. . . I mean just amazingly helpful.” The staff members understand their roles to be all encompassing and seem to be proud of their work. CS 03 described her responsibilities as “Anything that has to be done: from taking the trash out to helping patrons to watering the plants!”

The new library’s meeting room is beginning to support social capital-generating activities. Chattahoochee Interviewee 6 described having recently participated in a meeting held there saying, “A local citizen donated his services to do the landscaping and we were planning a little reception to honor him.” The act of donating time, labor, and possibly materials to the community enhances the donor’s standing. The people planning to recognize his gift are endorsing his community service and adding to their own stocks of social capital by giving the reception in the donor’s honor. At the end of the event the library will have been attractively landscaped, and the donor landscaper will have
contributed to a public good and enhanced his standing in the community. Those recognizing his work will add to the donor’s stock of social capital and to their own as well by recognizing his. Old bonds will be reinforced and new bridges may be built across different social groups as a result of the various ways people participated in the project, including the opportunities to chat and build or reinforce networks during the reception. The new social capital will be generated as a result of activities focused around making the new Chattahoochee branch public library a more attractive welcoming community asset.

Most of the Chattahoochee library’s users and staff members consider the library to be a social good – a symbol that their town is still alive and vital, a site where positive activities happen, an important informational and recreational resource and a locale that supports and reinforces their sense of community. Interviewee 2 explained: “It’s just amazing for little Chattahoochee to have this.” Interviewee 5 described the library as “a wonderful commodity to have in the community.” Staff member CS 01 reported that since the new building opened circulation has increased by 10,000 volumes over the past year and computer usage has also increased. Circulation statistics for the 2007-2008 year were not available at the time of the study but library statistics for prior years show an increase in circulation when each of the other two library buildings opened (Table 1.01). The staff member described the new library as “still a place that is vital to the community, especially in a small town [where] there’s no other choice for entertainment. We provide movies, books, the Internet, books on CD and tape – we’re the only source of entertainment in the entire town of Chattahoochee.” The branch manager agreed, “We actually were the only library in the county that had a great increase in our circulation for this past year.” CS 03, the other branch staff member, expressed a personal opinion about how people use the library, “I wish we could see more people getting back into books, but that’s just a personal thing.” She acknowledged that people -- including elementary and high school students -- do still use the library’s book collection. She noted that parents may be pushing what she saw as students’ resurgent interest in books saying, “I think the economy has woken up a lot of parents into the ‘well, what can we do for a cheap entertainment?’ You can take them to the library and check out books. I think we’re going back into that a little bit.”
In conclusion, the Chattahoochee branch demonstrates some public sphere characteristics but operates within system-wide limits imposed by county government and the library administration. The first limit -- the lack of wireless Internet access -- restricts some potential library users’ access to information except through controlled, filtered library computers. The second limit – decisions about plaques, wall décor, and other extra furnishings like benches and trash cans are made by the library administrators -- requires local members of the Friends of the Library to submit all their plans to the system administrators for review and approval.

The new Chattahoochee branch does not appear to be used as a third place by community members in the same ways they used the old library building. There is little evidence of recreational or informal social use of the building – either positive or destructive -- though the collections offer recreational and entertainment materials for library users to borrow and enjoy elsewhere. The intimate secondary relationships formed between staff members and library users at the old building appear to be continuing at the new building and their intimate secondary nature is confirmed because library users do not categorize these relationships as social. The new building appears to function as an informational place and landmark for the community and visitors. Library users and staff are very proud of their new library building. It provides a focal point for activities that generate social capital. It supports ongoing public intimate secondary relationships focused around book and movie lending and other library-related services. It serves as a beneficiary of community members’ charitable energy and it offers opportunities for people to enhance their access to social capital through formal and informal networking. It supports personal growth and development by hosting community and library sponsored programs in the meeting room and by facilitating formal educational opportunities and informal life-long learning initiatives.

**Havana Branch Library**

The Havana Branch Library is housed in the oldest of the three new library buildings in Gadsden County. The new Havana library opened to the public in 2003 (Mock, 2008) after having been housed in a downtown storefront. The building is located at one end of the city park adjacent to the Veterans’ Memorial and the location is a source of great pleasure to many library users. When asked what they thought about the location of the
library, several interview respondents cited its proximity to the park as an asset. HP 05 noted, “Well I can come to the library, walk around the park, and get some exercise – pretty much all at the same time.” HP 06 responded similarly, saying “[It is a] very good location because I use the park a lot, so a lot of times I come from the park to the library or from the library to the park.” HP 08 said, “I think it’s nice that it’s close to the park.” HP 10 said of the location, “I love it, that little park over there; I’m two minutes from here.”

HP 03 provided a more complicated response to the location of the library that hints at her experience of Hiss’s (1990) sense of simultaneous perception. She said she believes the library can grow more and that it will in time, but she noted “I kind of think that [any future expansion] could be an interruption with the park, because people love the park as much as they love the library, so I believe that they [should] expand it in the opposite direction, or probably on the side of the library instead of trying to mess with the park area.” She seems to want to protect the sight lines between the park, the memorial, and the library and not lose any of the parkland to library expansion. Library users’ affection for the building and its location as expressed above are also indications that the library branch functions as a familiarized locale (Loftland, 1998) that has become a part of people’s daily routines and is important to their public lives.

Havana library users did not directly articulate a strong sense of the branch library as an expression of the Habermasian public sphere as did some of the Chattahoochee branch users. Havana library users did so indirectly by mentioning certain public library social impacts that support the public sphere including welcoming children and young people, providing free access to news and information, and providing a place where people do not have to act as consumers but can sit quietly to read and reflect (Alstad and Curry, 2003). HP 01 described the library as “a community place where they have meetings and things.” HP 02 commented about the library welcoming children saying she’d seen “kids off in the little kids’ area, kids reading the books the last couple of times I’ve come.” HP 03 said she “didn’t realize that you can use the library to vote, that’s good! They provide spacing for people who have events to help people out so I think that’s very good.” HP 07 noted that “everybody can come in, they come in either to use computers, read a book, or just sit back and relax and everything.”
Havana interview respondents differed in their indications as to whether or not the Havana branch library functions as a third place for its users. HP 11 said “people that use the library generally know what they want to do, they don’t – it’s not a hang-out place or anything like that.” HP 08 noted, “I think some people like to just come in and sit down and read in a quiet setting.” HP 07 noted a mix of ways people use the library that indicate some characteristics of the library as a third place but with very few of the social interactions Oldenburg (1999) describes as typical of third places. HP 07 observed “mostly just seeing – you know – people like to come in here just to sit back and read, meet some of their friends, go over homework and stuff, and – you know – get on the computer, just basically come in and just have I guess some downtime for theirselves [sic].” Having seen the librarian ask students who were doing more socializing than studying to go outside, HP 06 explained “I have seen a couple of students doing assignments, coming in, like using it for a gathering, like to meet for social, but it wasn’t a lot -- I mean the librarian explained that they would have to take it outside and they went outside without any problem.”

All the Havana library interviewees described their branch as having the limited third place characteristics of an informational place – it occurs on neutral ground, serves as a social leveler in that it is inclusive and accessible to the general public, and functions as a home away from home that does not feature conversation or socializing as the main activities (Fisher, et al., 2007). The Havana library supports all types of information-seeking activities as well as individual and social reading practices. It provides computers to use for communications, social networking, recreational Internet surfing, and formal research to support education, as well as books and movies in all formats for people to borrow. Interview respondent HP 01 said “the only thing I do, usually when I come to the library, is to get books to check out and read,” but later in her interview she said “I see – usually when I’m in here I see people -- or students -- using the computers. I haven’t used them myself but I do see people in here every time I come -- usually using the computers.” HP 03 said that when she’s used the library it has been for “surfing the net, like e-mailing my family whenever they e-mail me, or looking up different things that’s going on in Tallahassee that I can get involved in.” HP 05 said she came to the library to do research: “I’m pursuing a masters in public administration -- so homework.”
Others who said they came in to return or check out books (HP 07, 08, 09, 10, and 11) talked about seeing other people using computers or learning to use computers or attend meetings. Library staff members also see the library as an informational place. Asked to identify the primary purpose of the library, Havana staff member 01 said “The primary purpose is as a resource so that people can get information.”

Havana library users report strong ongoing intimate secondary relationships (Lofland, 1998) with the library staff members, just as did the Chattahoochee library users. HP 06 was emphatic about the helpfulness of the staff members, saying “I think the people who work here are very caring and friendly people who go out of their way to make sure you are comfortable -- make sure you get what you want. If you need extra help they are always here. I’ve never been in here a time when help was refused or it seemed as if they didn’t want to help.” HP 10 described the staff similarly, recalling “I’ve watched them help out a little old lady one time, she had a bunch of magazines or something and they came out and helped her. I just thought it was really – they’re very nice here.”

Library survey respondents from Havana reported all kinds of brief social conversations indicative of public realm intimate secondary relationships in their answers to Survey Question Twenty. Answers to the question – what do you talk to the staff about? --ranged from “social amenities” (survey 137), “how they are doing” (survey 141), “general info about the computer and everyday life” (survey 145), “family, good books to read, similar reading habits” (survey 153), “location of books, dvds, and movies, just because I enjoy talking with employees and getting to know them” (survey 154), to “whatever is going on in town” (survey 164). All of these survey answers indicate ongoing public realm relationships that appear to be important to the participants even though 20 of the 31 Havana survey respondents ranked a place to socialize as the least important service the library provided in their answer to survey question 22 (Table 4.18) - and none ranked it as the most important service the library provides (Table 4.17).

The staff members seem to reciprocate their users’ enjoyment of the intimate secondary relationships engendered by the library. The branch manager reported consistently positive feelings about library users. When asked to describe the best feature of the library, HS 01 responded, “I would say the patrons, I mean, as a whole, the
patrons.” She went on to describe her attitude toward library users and her interactions with them as overwhelmingly positive:

Oh I -- I interact with the public quite a bit because I check in -- whatever problems they may have -- on a day to day basis I – ‘cause I love interacting with the patrons, ‘cause if you don’t feel that you’re -- everybody’s important. Let me put it that way. I don’t care [about], what your social background [is] but [about] what everybody should feel. I make it a purpose to make no distinction, to make everybody feel that they are welcome and they are appreciated.

Later in her interview HS 01 described taking a motherly role with some of the library users -- advising young mothers that they and their babies are always welcome but that they have to tend to their children while in the library.

Havana library users and staff stressed the importance of books and book-related activities that reflect the social nature of reading in response to questions about why they had come to the library on the day of the interview and why they had visited the library in the month previous to their interview. The book and reading-related activities they described provide opportunities for networking and facilitate production of social capital for Havana library users. Interview respondent HP 12 mentioned that the library “facilitates a book club. They have a book club that comes in at various times in the evening which I think is great.” HP 11 describes himself as an avid reader who has used libraries all his life. “At least once a week I come in to get books, I read at least three a week, sometimes more. My eyes are starting to get bad but I’ve been known to read as high as five and six books a week.” While he was very supportive of the Havana library (“It’s beautiful, they needed it BAD”) he still borrows books from the Tallahassee library as well because he says it has a better selection. He has maintained his membership in both counties’ libraries and even though he now lives in Havana he is willing to be critical.

Well I’ve noticed that Gadsden County doesn’t buy as many newer books -- probably budget -- but they don’t keep up with the new books from new authors. Like one author I read a lot and have read all of his books – the last book they’ve got of his is in 1990 and he’s wrote two or three since
then, so that, that is the only thing -- I go to Leon [County Public Library in Tallahassee] and get newer books. . . I’m still in my late seventies and I still love to read.

The few other survey respondents from Havana who were willing to identify any shortcoming of their library mentioned the small collection as a weakness. One respondent wrote “there is just not a real big selection of materials. It is bigger than the old [library] but [is] still on the small side” (survey 138). Another said the worst feature of the library was “[the] lack of my favored fiction subjects due to its small size” (survey 142).

The Havana branch manager (HS 01) described several book related services the library sponsors that support the social nature of reading and generate increased social capital for all the participants. All the Gadsden County library locations provide space for a formal book exchange that operates outside the libraries’ circulation system. People without library cards can come in and take a book off the exchange shelf understanding that they are expected to eventually return it or provide another book in its place. During her interview she explained how the book exchange works:

   Interviewer: so the book exchange -- they’re supposed to take one and bring another one in-
   HS 01: - well if they don’t have one we don’t – but that’s the policy, yes, take one leave one, take one leave one
   Interviewer: - and that’s not as formal as checking out a book because they can keep it for six months or pass it on
   HS 01: - or if they don’t have a library card or you know, the policy is, if you’re not a Gadsden County resident. – we have people, since we’re so close to the Georgia-Florida line a lot of Georgia residents they choose not to do the five dollars, they can take those books back there.
   Interviewer: so it’s five dollars [non-resident borrowing fee] if you don’t live in the county?
   HS 01: if you don’t have property or you don’t live here, but if you have property we can give you -- you don’t have to be a resident.
Beyond the library-system endorsed book exchange the Havana branch houses an even more loosely structured free materials shelf. Here people can donate books or magazines they no longer want and anyone who wishes can come in and take whatever they like from the shelf in any quantity they wish without any suggestion that they should donate something back in exchange. The branch manager explained the service:

We don’t have a book sale but we have books that are donated that people just put up there – encyclopedias -- they don’t have it at the other locations -- the other branches -- but that has been real helpful here. Because whether or not it’s magazines or old encyclopedias, peoples sometimes -- I remember a lady she -- she said, ‘when you get another set of encyclopedias, when you put them out on the free shelf,’ because a lot of people don’t have them. They’re not the newest but the old ones you know -- rather than discarding them -- if somebody wants them. . . . It was in the small scale when I got here and I chose to keep it on, so it’s something they’ve always done here in Havana. It was here when I came, they probably did it in the old building and it was up to me whether I wanted to keep it and I chose to keep it. It’s working, and I was amazed how teachers – students -- it is used quite well, a lady from the school came, she said ‘can I take about 15 or 20 magazines ‘cause they’re doing a project and they want to cut out some pictures’ and so it works out real well.

Interviewer: so that brings people into the library that might not come otherwise?

HS 01: yes, they want to see what you have as far as the magazines and books or whatever. A couple of students last year from FSU came a got a lot of the free books that was over on the shelf.

These donation opportunities generate a lot of good will toward the library on the part of the book donors. They feel a stronger sense of belonging and contributing to their community and their sense that they are doing something positive for the community may increase their stocks of linking social capital. Participants in the various book donation programs may develop a sense of partnership with the library and a sense that by
donating their old books and magazines they are providing a resource others in the community can use rather than throwing away something that may still have value. Those that take a book from either the book exchange or the free shelf are benefiting from the library’s willingness to host services that are not counted in their circulation statistics. They may perceive the library as an asset for the entire community -- not just for those with library cards -- thus increasing the library’s stock of social capital in the eyes of the community at large.

The meeting room in the Havana branch library – as in Chattahoochee -- was designed to operate independently of the main library. It can be locked off from the library and accessed directly when the library is closed. The branch manager (HS 01) explained, “They can use the meeting room after hours so there isn’t a conflict and I can lock it off from the main library and I don’t have to stay. I have an officer come in and set an alarm.” Groups including Toastmasters, homeowners associations, and a legal services society use the room regularly. Independent tutors use the library to work with students. Library sponsored programs held in the meeting room include weekly story hours for pre-school children and regularly scheduled activities to support home-schooled students. During the two weeks preceding the 2008 presidential election all meeting room activities were suspended so the space could be used for early voting. All these types of activities facilitate participants’ ability to increase their stocks of social capital and position the library as a valuable resource that provides a place where social capital can be generated.

In conclusion, the Havana branch of the Gadsden County Public Library System functions as a community resource on many levels. It is an important familiarized locale that engenders feelings of affection and is part of many residents’ daily or weekly routines. Being adjacent to the park enhances the library’s status and value for many of its users. The Havana branch library is a non-commercial place where people can access information and recreational materials in electronic or print form, study, read, and relax. It functions as an informational place (Fisher, et al., 2007) providing all members of the community with access to computers and the Internet, and reading materials, and many of its programs and services support the social aspects of reading. The library building supports ongoing public intimate secondary relationships between library users and staff.
members, and library users seem to value these relationships even without recognizing them as social relationships. Like the Chattahoochee branch, the Havana library benefits from community members’ charitable impulses and in turn makes their donations available to others who can benefit from them. It provides opportunities for people to increase their stocks of social capital through self-improvement, through participation in library-sponsored activities and by providing a place where community-sponsored activities can occur.

**Quincy – The McGill Main Library**

The William A. “Bill” McGill Library -- the main library in Quincy -- opened to the public in June 2006 (Mock, 2008). It is the largest of the three Gadsden County library buildings and houses the administrative management and professional staff for the library system as well as those who work in the main library’s public service positions. Additionally, many of the administrative staff members work with the public regularly throughout the week. Quincy library users are proud of their new library and report that from their perspectives all the resources and services it offers are well used. QP 11 said, “It is very pleasing to come in here and see the whole community in here using all – it seems like every part of it is being used with the books, and the mass media, movies, and also the computers.” Several interview respondents (QP 03, 06, 14) observed that the library is still not big enough to serve the community and that it needs more current items in the collection and more computers for public use.

Library users offer little direct evidence of the main library functioning as an expression of the Habermasian public sphere, though some of the staff members are very aware and supportive of the library building’s role as a facilitator of public interaction. During her interview one library user commented approvingly on the controls the library system has put in place over certain levels of information access – a limit to the library’s ability to facilitate the formation of the public sphere – when she described the library’s use of filters on the Internet computers. She said, “Like on the computer they have everything blocked off so you can’t get into bad things – even my e-mail – I can’t read my e-mail ‘cause they have, I guess its spam or something – so that’s a good thing, especially for the children.” Another library user (QP 15) seemed to expect strong controls on the types of information accessible when she reported being surprised that
people were able to access the website Mi Pagina – the Spanish language version of MySpace. She felt that the computers should be kept available for other presumably more important uses, “there was this one time I got surprised because they were like looking at My Pagina -- kind of like MySpace in Spanish, and using the time for that – and other people, maybe they want to use the computer and they’re using it for doing something else.” These observations seem to demonstrate citizens’ acceptance of certain limitations on the library’s role in facilitating the formation of the public sphere. By contrast QP 17 said that people are free to use the library as they wish, “like it’s their personal choice, whatever reason they use it for it’s their personal choice.” QP 18 also observed the library facilitating the formation of the public sphere by providing a place where people can come together to freely discuss relevant issues. He described a meeting he had observed being held at the library saying, “just last week [September 2008] apparently some people from Bainbridge [Georgia] were using it to hold a meeting of some kind. It sounded like a union meeting so they didn’t want to be – it’s just a guess – but it sounds like they didn’t want to be seen in Bainbridge. I’d never seen the parking lot that crowded.”

Alstad and Curry (2003) describe characteristics that encourage the public sphere to coalesce, including 1) guaranteeing access to people of all ages and races in a clean, safe environment; 2) resisting colonization by commercial entities; and 3) treating visitors as citizens, not customers. One of the Gadsden County library system’s staff members (QS 01) endorses an analysis of the main library as a place where the public sphere can form when she describes it using the same concepts as Alstad and Curry. The staff member describes one of the library’s key functions as providing neutral or non-commercial space for all types of use: “It’s a neutral location because it was a segregated county up until the early 70s and the public library is one social environment that is completely neutral, that is not something like revolved around – you know – where you have to go there, like a courthouse or where you’re going to buy clothes or buy something. This is like – you come here, it’s free but it’s neutral. It’s all races together.” She continued to stress the neutrality of the library saying that it is different from the churches: “it’s not a church – you know, where like a support group – if somebody is Baptist and they don’t want to go to the Catholic church they can meet here because it’s a
– it allows some neutrality. It’s not one group’s place.” As do the branch libraries, the main library supports the formation of the public sphere within the limits imposed by local authorities. While the Internet access computers default to filtered status, unfiltered Internet access is available to adults if they ask to have the filters lifted. Staff members report doing so regularly. QS 04 explained that as part of her regular public service duties “[We] have to unblock websites [so] a staff member has to put in a code.” The meeting rooms are available to all members of the community for any non-commercial use within the scope of the library system’s policies, and the library system welcomes both residents and visitors to all its locations with no conditions for entry imposed.

There is mixed evidence as to whether the main library’s adult users think their library functions as a third place. One interview respondent commented specifically, “it’s a quiet place and everyone comes here to do what they came to do, so they don’t come here just to socialize or hang around” (QP 01). Another reported, “I see a lot of people strictly studying and [using it for] business purposes” (QP 02). Some describe using the library as a place to relax and read the newspaper because of the quiet atmosphere (QP 05). One respondent did note the different ways people use the library saying, “a lot of people come here to actually – like myself – to do a lot of homework, but you’ve got a lot of other people that come and get on the Internet and play games – I’m not just talking about children, I’m talking about older people listening to music and stuff like that” (QP 07). Other respondents commented that people use the library for what they considered to be the expected purposes, saying they “come to study, because it’s a quiet place to study and same old thing – using the computers whether it’s for personal or school reasons” (QP 13). One main library staff member, QS 05, provided a similar perspective on the way the library is used, saying “I see it being used as a place to come and do schoolwork or to get away from home, and [as] somewhere quiet to stay and get away from distractions.”

James Katz, a professor who studies communication technologies at Rutgers University, questions whether the places where people go to access the Internet – using either wired or wireless technology – can fill the social role of third places. He describes cyber-cafes as hollowed out because people interact socially through the computers rather than with the people who are in the same room. The same phenomenon is apparent
around library public service Internet computers. Katz says these places are “physically inhabited but psychologically evacuated” (Nomads at last, April 12, 2008, p. 10). They are not functioning as third places where people go for refreshment, social interactions and a playful atmosphere (Oldenburg, 1999), but as communication centers where adults go to make contact with others in different geographic locations and don’t pay any attention to the people with whom they are sharing the place where the computers are located.

Library staff members reported evidence of a corollary of Katz’s analysis when they described parents or other caregivers who bring their children with them to the libraries but become engrossed in whatever they are doing on the computers and lose track of their children. The result of their lack of involvement with any of the people in the library – let alone their children -- in favor of computer-mediated interactions is that the unsupervised children start behaving in ways other adults consider inappropriate for a library and become a disruptive element. At the main library staff member QS 04 recounted, “The parents tend to come in, parents tend to go in that room down there [computer room], put the kids on these computers [children’s area] and then they just kind of forget the kids are here and the kids go wild . . . we try to keep the parents and the children together but there are a lot of parents who just don’t seem to pay any attention at all to their children.” Her colleague, QS 03 described, “a lot of people having children that come just run around, run amok and the parents are engrossed in the computers and not paying attention to their two and three-year-olds who are just going everywhere terrorizing the place.”

The main library seems to be serving more of its users as an informational place and familiarized locale than as a third place (Fisher, et al., 2007; Lofland, 1998). One main library respondent -- interviewed on a Sunday afternoon -- explained that she and her family came to the library because the church they usually go to wasn’t open that day. She described her family’s use of the library as focusing on the books and the Internet. She has used the library to “job search, and for the kids to come and study for the F-CAT” (QP 19). Her whole family uses it regularly for information access, recreational reading, and studying. Interview respondent QP 01 describes the library’s resources – specifically the Internet computers -- as its best feature. She visits the library to “use the
computer, check out books, videos and dvds, and make copies.” QP 03 reported coming to the library because he “had to do some work for school.” He said he used the library for “looking for jobs [and] doing schoolwork.” QP 07 said she has a computer at home but she uses the library for “homework, job-hunting, personal [use]. . . . I don’t check out books but maybe – I’ve looked at some of ‘em and haven’t found anything that interests me.” QP 14 is a long-time Quincy library user who used the library in its previous locations and now uses the new building. She says the new library is a great improvement over the old ones but that it still needs more computers because, “as you know there are a lot of children who are in school, they’re using the computers more now than they did . . . . when I was a kid, so sometimes – certain times of day when you come here you can’t really use the computer because all of them are full.”

Other regular main library users appreciate the library’s support of their educational efforts. As at the branches, people taking online classes are allowed to use a library computer as long as needed. Interview respondent QP 09 recounted,

You can use the computer if you want to go to school. There’s some people that actually go to school on line on the computers here – they come to the library every day to take classes and they’re really nice about it behind the circulation desk. They’re really considerate, they understand about how – you know – that people really need to do work and they don’t rush you off or anything like that.

For many of the main library interview respondents -- as with those who use the library branches -- the new library has become a familiarized locale (Lofland, 1998) that is an important part of their ordinary daily or weekly routines. Most of the ways respondents say they use the main library and the ways they report having seen others use the library seem to fit more closely within the model of Fisher, et al.’s (2007) informational places than they do with Oldenburg’s (1999) description of third places. Most of the main library interview respondents indicated they use their library as a place they visit often where they can address needs and interests related to information finding and seeking, recreational reading, formal study and life-long learning. By contrast, one interview respondent spoke positively of the ways teens use the library as a third place:
I think [the way people use the library] is good, especially for the young people – teenagers. When they come in here they basically use the computers, and for one thing, it keeps them off the street. It keeps them busy. So, you know, they get to use the computer and play games on it, and I like that – listen to their music – and then also there’s a lot of resources around so they can learn new things on the computer as well as play games (QP 09).

The distinction this respondent makes between how adults and young people use the library for recreational purposes may be significant. Attitudes toward young people coming to the library in groups to use the computers for social purposes may be different than those toward adults coming to the library to use the computers for recreational purposes. While discussion of the ways children and teenagers use their public libraries as place is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning the possible roles of public libraries as third places for teens. Large urban and suburban libraries with enough space in their buildings have dedicated entire rooms to teen use. Library programming for teens features interactive and recreational activities during after school hours.7

Not all the main library interview respondents came to the library to use the computers. Two study participants reported bringing children or grandchildren to check out books and attend a children’s enrichment program offered by the library. Every Friday evening the outreach librarian hosts the children’s Art Club. Respondent QP 05 says she brings her daughter to Art Club every week. She and her daughter also look at children’s books together or use a computer together. QP 06 regularly brings his granddaughter to participate in Art Club and says she loves attending it. She also uses the children’s area of the library and she and her parents check out books. QP 10 reports coming to the library strictly to check out books and videos. He said he uses the library mainly for entertainment reading. QP 12 brings a daughter who does homework and plays computer games while QP 12 is using the computer. These uses seem to demonstrate some ways the main library supports the social nature of reading and

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7 The Detroit Public Library’s H.Y.P.E. Center (www.detroit.lib.mi.us) and the Enoch Pratt Free Library Student Express center (www.prattlibrary.org) in Baltimore are two examples. In each case the library building is big enough for administrators to be able to dedicate a room to teens for their use.
functions as a familiarized locale that serves an important purpose in their daily or weekly lives.

Some Quincy library users see the library as an object of charity -- a place where they can donate books and videos to benefit the community. QP 18 currently borrows from the library’s video collection almost every day. He says the videos are the only entertainment that keeps his father – who has Alzheimer’s disease – calm and entertained. He is very appreciative of the library’s video collection and says he intends to donate his father’s video collection back to the library when the time is right. QP 06 says he used to use the library’s book exchange collection. He considers it a community asset and says he has donated books from his personal collection when he finishes with them. One aspect of the way the main library handles certain book donations is different from how donations at the branches are handled. Staff member QS 04 explained:

We get a lot of donations and some of them are just -- they’ve obviously been stored outside for years …. I think that is a service to the community [to accept ruined books] because it’s hard to part with books -- you know, Grandma’s favorite romance novels and stuff -- but they can bring them to us. It’s like taking things to Goodwill because you think somebody else is going to be using them. Whether they do or not is immaterial, you think that you’ve done the right thing by donating so you feel good about donating and we feel really good about putting them in the trash if they’re not good for anything else. So that’s a service to the community.

As at the branch libraries, the main library’s various book donation programs encourage people to feel good about contributing to the library, thus enhancing their personal stocks of social capital by helping to make the library stronger for those who will keep using it.

Interview respondents at the main library did not mention their relationships with library staff members as frequently as did respondents at the branches. However -- as at the branches -- most of their references to main library staff members were positive. Main library interview respondent 05 said, “The people that work here are very helpful and very nice and they’re pleasant. They always have such a welcoming spirit when I come to the library.” Main library interview respondent 08 agreed, “The people in front, they’re really nice.” Main library survey respondents who answered survey question 20
indicated that they did not talk with the staff members at the library as often as survey respondents did at the branches. Table 4.15 shows that 59% of main library survey respondents talked with the staff when they visited the library as compared to 83% at the Havana branch and 97% at the Chattahoochee branch. Those main library survey respondents who did talk with the staff reported conversations similar to those held at the branches. They said they talked about “anything” (survey 100), “small talk” (survey 108), “how to find books, being friendly” (survey 114), “new books, personal conversation” (survey 129), and “social amenities” (survey 137). These comments indicate that some main library users participate in intimate secondary relationships (Lofland, 1998) when they visit the library but not to the same extent as those who use the library’s branches.

Main library staff members described some social use of the library, with most of those social activities focused around the library’s resources, programs, and services. One staff member reported observing social activities that indicate some third place characteristics of the library. QS 02 said, “You know people come in here whether it’s to get in out of the rain or out of the hot, out of the cold. They do use [the library] to come in and socialize.” QS 03 said, “I see lots of people come here, they hang out and get on the – you know – computers – and chat with each other, group up in certain areas of the library and have little discussions and stuff.” QS 04 described, “frequently people come in to use the computers and they see somebody they haven’t seen in a long time and there are a lot of informal sort of things that go on.” QS 06 suggested different scenarios in response to being asked how the library is used socially that indicate the social nature of reading. She offered, “Socially? ‘meet you at the library after work’ – you know – ‘lets go find some books at lunch, see if they have that book we’ve been wanting to read.’ Kids: ‘Mom, are you going to pick me up at the library, I have to do my homework’ – so those kinds of things I guess.” While the staff members report these types of social activities in the main library, the activities staff members described are focused around books, reading, study, and computer use. They do not have the third place characteristics of recreational time passing – hanging out -- and social contact as their objectives.

During the period of this study community members regularly used the main library meeting room and small conference room, and library users indicated an
awareness of the meeting rooms as a community resource. QP 06 said he knows “they have meetings of the different kinds of groups which is a nice feature too. I don’t know how many groups take advantage of it or what sort of arrangements you have to make and so on but I know some groups use the library that way. And they also have a lot of announcements that – you know – help the public.” In addition to the union meeting and the children’s art programs previously described, the main library’s meeting rooms are heavily used in a variety of ways that may help generate fresh social capital for participants (Table 4.68). During the study period the meeting room housed library programming for children on multiple days each week. Two local sororities met weekly and the Veterans of Foreign Wars held their monthly meetings in the meeting room or the conference room. Two groups held multiple meetings at the library to plan their upcoming family and class reunions. Small groups from community and county organizations also use the library’s conference room regularly for their meetings. A caregivers respite group, a census worker training class, and a juvenile justice association meeting were held in the conference room during the study period. The Friends of the Library board met in the conference room every month during the study period. Many of these uses are congruent with the neutral quality of the library as place as previously described by library staff member QS 01. These uses also support and encourage the development of bridging and bonding social capital at the community level as community members are able to come together to work towards their group goals.

Most main library interview respondents were proud of the new library building and described it as badly needed and an important resource for the community. One respondent had a very personal reaction to the new building. QP 05 said,

I think it’s very timely that they did build a new building and I’m glad that they did name it after Mr. McGill because he’s from my Mom’s hometown which is Midway Florida. . . . I guess the building has like a – it’s a part of me. I think it is a part of my mother’s heritage because she is from Midway. It’s very good for our community to have a beautiful building like this and for the kids especially.

Interview Respondent QP 12 expressed a similar opinion saying, “It’s a hip thing to have, it’s good for the children of Gadsden County and it’s good for also the grown-ups. Like I
come in, look for jobs, research, so it’s a good thing to have in Quincy.” QP 14 has used the Gadsden County public libraries all her life. She said,

I grew up here and I’ve been going to the library for a very long time here in Gadsden County so it’s much better than it was when it was located at TCC [Tallahassee Community College’s Gadsden County campus] and even better than when it was located at that smaller building they had. . . .
I think it’s really beautiful. I was very surprised when I first saw it built . . . I was in and out of Quincy for a while, so it looks really nice. I’m pretty proud of it actually.

QP 17 agreed, saying “It’s a nice facility, better than the old one we had.” QP 18 said basically the same thing, describing it as “much better than the previous facility.”

Survey respondents at the main library agreed with interviewees about the library as a positive asset for the community. When asked what they felt was the best feature of the library, Respondent 122 described it as “spacious and modernized to suit the community’s needs;” and “a major asset to our community. It provides Internet access, reference books, and videos. [It is a] community workshop that is essential to personal and professional growth.” Staff members are also very proud of the new building. QS 04 explained, “The building is brand new, which is a blessing. We had a very bad facility before so it’s a brand new building. Two years we’ve been here and it’s been great. The public has enjoyed it, our numbers increased, everybody enjoys it.”

In conclusion the new main library in Quincy appears to be functioning in ways similar to the Chattahoochee branch as a source of civic pride and a symbol of the county’s investment in the local communities. It is a focal point for activities that generate social capital at the individual, community, and county levels. The main library is functioning as an informational place (Fisher, et al., 2007) and familiarized locale (Lofland, 1989) for many of its regular users but the relationships between the library’s users and staff members appear to be less significant to the main library’s users than they are to those who use the library branches. There is also less evidence in the main library interviews and surveys of people coming to the main library to experience the social nature of reading as compared to survey and interview responses from the branches in
which people spoke strongly about the importance of the book collections to their reading needs.

**Contextualization of GCPLS Libraries**

Fisher, et al. (2007) speculate that in Seattle the library system branches may fit more closely with Oldenburg’s (1999) third place framework than does the main library in terms of encouraging tighter social cohesion and providing more support for recreational activities – patterns of use at the Gadsden County library locations seem to encourage but not fully support the speculation. Interview and survey respondents from the main library indicate subtle differences in the atmosphere and use patterns of the main library as compared to those from the branches, but none of the responses go so far as to indicate that the branches function as third places except possibly for teens. People did not say they visit any of the Gadsden County library locations for what they or Oldenburg (1999) would consider to be social purposes. Study participants did not indicate that they were visiting the libraries to seek out friends or colleagues; nor are they visiting looking for a persistent, playful mood (Oldenburg, p. 83). As Fisher, et al. found in Seattle, this study found that the mood and interests of adults when using all three Gadsden County libraries was closer to one of study, productivity, and individual reading and recreation than one of playfulness or levity.

Some study participants who are long-time Gadsden County library users hinted that the old library buildings may have had more characteristics typical of third places than do the new buildings. While this study did not go deeply enough into the question of whether people use the new libraries differently than they did the old ones (survey question 26), portions of responses to other questions -- especially from the Chattahoochee interviews – imply that people who used the old buildings may have experienced them as being closer to third places than they do the new buildings. But third places and familiarized locales may have many characteristics in common. This study did not explore how people used the old library buildings so it cannot provide an answer to the question of the role of the old buildings as place for their users.

though derived from research conducted at a large urban public library -- may be the strongest theoretical explanation of the role of the Gadsden County Public Library System’s buildings as place, it is not sufficient. The library locations also need to be understood in the context of Lofland’s (1998) discussion of the public realm. Lofland’s work focuses on urban public space but is relevant to the current study because even small towns have commercial centers and include “a social territory in which many different kinds or categories of people are mixed up together [author italics]” (p. 118).

Lofland describes a series of public realm-based relationships between people and public places and one of those relationships -- in which public places become familiarized locales for those who frequent them regularly (p. 66) – seems to explain many of the ways Gadsden County library users respond to their libraries. Respondents in Chattahoochee indicated that their new library building has not yet become a familiarized locale as the old library was, but they are using the new building regularly to access library services in some of the ways they used the old building. The intimate secondary relationships with the library staff that were established through use of the old Chattahoochee library appear to have transferred to the new location. In Havana, the oldest of the new buildings, library users indicated that the branch has become very important to their lives as a familiar stop in their daily or weekly public routines. The Havana branch appears to function as a familiarized locale for many of its users. At the main library in Quincy the building has become a familiarized locale for many of its users. Main library users come regularly for many reasons and indicate that visiting the library is an anticipated part of their or their children’s weekly routines. All three libraries are comfortable, attractive, welcoming places that are used for informational and reading-related activities. The library buildings house community-endorsed activities that benefit the participants both individually and as community members.

Another of the categories of the public realm relationships Lofland (1998) describes is a group of relationships that form between strangers who share a social territory and play specific roles in that world. Many people who regularly use the Gadsden County libraries have developed intimate secondary relationships – ongoing emotionally infused public relationships -- with library staff members and they indicate that they value those relationships though they do not categorize the relationships as
social. Library staff members in their turn also value the relationships they have formed with their library users and do what they can to make their libraries welcoming places for their users.

Because the libraries are familiar places that people visit regularly for purposes important to them, they support the generation of bridging and bonding social capital at both the individual and community levels. As Fisher, et al. (2007) found in Seattle, and Putnam and Feldstein (2003) found at the Chicago Public Library’s Near North branch, bonding social capital is generated when groups of like minded people meet at the library to further their goals. Bridging social capital is generated when different types of people come together for a library-sponsored or community function held at the library. The Gadsden County libraries welcome all residents and visitors to use their facilities and encourage all groups whose purposes fall within the scope of the library system’s meeting room use policy to meet in their buildings. The libraries also use their meeting rooms to offer library sponsored programs and activities in which people from all across the community may come together to participate in an event hosted by the Friends of the Library, a book club meeting, or a children’s or family cultural or enrichment activity.

Audunson, et al.’s (2007) research into the role of Norwegian public libraries as facilitators of the production of social capital can be helpful to understanding how the Gadsden County libraries fill the same role for their communities. Their theory of low-intensive meeting places suggests that communities need non-commercial places that follow Habermas’s model of supporting the public sphere to promote informal social contact and provide an environment that helps create a minimum level of community identity. Oslo survey respondents identified their public libraries as important meeting places where people can meet and chat not only with their friends and neighbors but also as places where they have a great possibility of meeting people very different from themselves. Audunson, et al. have described suburban Oslo’s public library buildings as sites that promote social inclusion and help create vital local communities thereby supporting the creation of weak ties, generalized trust, and bridging social capital.

Because Gadsden County’s libraries serve much smaller and less cosmopolitan communities than the libraries just cited, there are fewer opportunities for people at the GCPLS libraries to informally encounter people very different from themselves, even
though all are welcome to use the libraries and attend the library programs. In Chattahoochee the library welcomes tourists who use the federal and state campgrounds along the river. At the main library people of all ages and races come together for library programs like the Friday evening children’s art club – the respondents quoted earlier in this chapter who described accompanying young children to art club were a white grandfather and a black mother. At the Havana branch the book clubs are very popular and the manager invites local and regional authors to speak, drawing large audiences for their programs. As one of the library system’s staff members (QS 01) explains, “There’s no other place like [the library] in the county – you know – that’s free. You’re not coming under duress where it’s like you’re having to pay a bill and you can actually sit and – you know – meet somebody that you don’t really normally meet. It’s a good thing to get behind I think . . . [in] southern rural areas – public libraries – because I think they are good meeting places for the diverse populations.” Though the Gadsden County libraries function on a much smaller scale than those in Oslo, Seattle, and Chicago, it appears that they share social roles that transcend community size and that theory used to interpret the roles large urban public libraries play in their cities is relevant to understanding the role of small rural public libraries as community places.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study asks how the adults in a rural North Florida county use their newly built public library buildings as places. The answer to this question is drawn from the answers to five research questions. Adult library users described the primary purposes of their libraries as serving as community resources, providing educational support to students and lifelong learners, and providing access to informational and recreational materials via the Internet, print, audio, and video formats. They also described the libraries as meeting the communities’ needs for modern, comfortable, non-commercial places that support information-related activities, reading, community-supported activities, educational projects, personal growth and development, and community-led discourse. Individual library users said they most often used the library for one or more but not all of the purposes they described.

Conclusions

When the study’s findings are contextualized according to theoretical frameworks, the libraries can be understood collectively to function as informational places (Fisher, et al. 2007) and, to varying degrees, as familiarized locales (Lofland, 1998) that support the generation of social capital. As community members are getting used to their new library buildings the new buildings are becoming locales people value as places where parts of their daily or weekly public lives occur. The buildings also support the development of intimate secondary public realm relationships between library users and library staff members. Over time those relationships -- many were established at the old buildings -- become important parts of library users’ lives and may add another dimension to their visits to their public libraries as they stop to chat with someone they care about before and after pursuing the purpose of their visits. Because the libraries are non-commercial, non-religiously affiliated county-sponsored public places, they provide a more neutral environment than any other public places available in the county. As such they support conditions that encourage the formation of the democratic public sphere in the Habermasian (1974, 1991) sense of the concept. The new libraries encourage a sense of belonging and of community for many of their users and facilitate creation of bridging,
bonding, and linking social capital (Halpern, 2005) by providing places where people can come together in pursuit of common goals and participate in community-oriented activities. The new libraries are among the very few places in the county where library users can encounter visitors, guest speakers, and other people different from themselves. As such they bring a touch of cosmopolitanism to their small towns. The libraries provide a basic but reliable level of Internet connectivity that is very important to many library users. An unknown number of people who come to the library to use the computers to access the Internet do not have computers or Internet access in their homes; the libraries are their primary source of Internet connectivity.

**Contribution of Conceptual Framework**

The multipart conceptual framework this study uses to attempt to understand the role of the GCPLS libraries as place makes possible a multifaceted interpretation of the way the libraries function as places. This study contends that no single social theory is broad enough or deep enough to encompass all the ways people use public libraries. It suggests that using multiple theories helps to understand generally the many aspects of a public library as place, and in particular how this community’s public libraries function as places. People experience public libraries in different ways and using multiple theories facilitates: a) contextualizing the qualities of the libraries as physical places or settings, b) explaining the public relationships people experience when visiting the libraries, and c) understanding the results of the activities people pursue while at the libraries. Several theories from philosophy and sociology are shown to be relevant to understanding how Gadsden County’s public libraries function as community places.

**The Public Sphere**

Habermas’s theory of the public sphere (1974, 1991) provides one piece of the philosophical foundation that supports the concept of *public* in public libraries. The public sphere is the conceptual arena in which people can experience the public or civic aspects of their lives, aspects that are not played out at home (the private sphere) or under direct control of government (the sphere of the state). The public sphere forms when people come together to discuss civic issues. Some critics have questioned whether public libraries still serve as civic places that allow for public assembly and discourse or whether they have been downgraded into places that only support leisure and
entertainment (Buschman, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Alstad and Curry (2003) are among those who identify the public library as one of the few remaining institutions that provides physical and psychological space for public discourse. While they worry that public libraries have shifted their focus from public enlightenment to public recreation and entertainment Alstad and Curry offer several examples of public library social impacts that support the public sphere, including: welcoming children and young adults and not perceiving them as threats; providing free access to news and information that allows individuals to take part in political and social debate; serving as symbols of positive activity and growth; offering a place where people do not have to act as consumers but can sit quietly, read, and reflect; and welcoming new immigrants and offering them unique opportunities to learn English. Habermas’s philosophical explanation of the role of the public sphere in society along with Alstad and Curry’s grounding of public libraries within the framework of the public sphere have provided a context for understanding the philosophical position of the Gadsden County public libraries in their communities. The libraries’ identities as non-commercial, public places underscore and set boundaries for the way they serve as places for the community.

**Third Places**

Oldenburg (1999) describes the core settings of informal public life as third places. They fill the spaces in people’s lives between home (first places) and work (second places). They are defined by eight characteristics and one of their key values is that over time they provide their habitués with enriching relationships that come from participation in informal group relationships that are very different from individual friendships people may treasure. Third places are grounded in the commercial world of pubs and coffee shops. Many public libraries have tried to position themselves as third places for their communities. Fisher, et al. (2007) tested the new Seattle Public Library for third place characteristics and found that it met only three of Oldenburg’s eight characteristics of third places.

Understanding the roles third places play in society and the characteristics that make those roles possible is important because most public libraries are not well situated to serve as third places or support third place-dependent group relationships. The one exception to these limits may be in the area of teen services. Gadsden County’s teens
have attempted to use the libraries as their after school gathering places, but appear to have been discouraged from pursuing interactive and recreational behaviors in favor of studying. If public libraries can carve out space in their buildings to dedicate to teen services, those dedicated rooms may become third places for their users. Otherwise the most important contribution of third place theory to understanding Gadsden County’s public libraries is that it provides the intellectual framework to support the emerging theory of informational places as a distinct category of place.

**Informational Places**

The emerging theory of informational places comes from Fisher, et al.’s (2007) test of whether the new downtown Seattle Public Library could be understood as a third place. They concluded that the new library met only three of the eight criteria that define third places and they proposed the idea of informational places to explain the new library’s role in the city. They define informational places as those that support and encompass information finding and seeking, reading, and lifelong learning, learning resources, and the learning environment. The emerging theory of informational places provides a useful framework for understanding many of the roles the Gadsden County libraries play as place and provides a large part of the answer to this study’s guiding question. Fisher, et al. also suggests that there may be differences in the roles of branch public libraries and main public libraries for the communities they serve. They ask whether branch libraries might more closely reflect the attributes of third places because they function on a smaller scale and their users and staff members may show a tighter cohesiveness. There were differences in the ways the Gadsden County main library and the branches functioned as place but those differences were not great enough to suggest characterizing the branches as third places. This study finds that the key differences between the way people use the branches and the main library is in the greater number of branch library users who indicated participating in ongoing public realm relationships with library staff members, and the greater number of people indicating they came to the branch libraries for reading materials and reading-related activities.

**Public Realms**

Public Realm theory provides a structure for understanding how people relate to the urban public places through which they move and the people they encounter in the public
settings in which their lives take place. People form several types of relationships in the public realm including person-to-place and person-to-person relationships. Lofland’s (1998) concept of public realm person-to-place relationships provides a useful way to conceptualize much of what people reported about how they experience the Gadsden County public libraries. The concept of places functioning as familiarized locales that are important parts of peoples’ weekly, and even daily, public routines explains much about the way participants in this study generally seem to experience the roles their public libraries play in their lives, even with respect to those in Chattahoochee who are still getting used to their new library building. Understanding public libraries as familiarized locales better explains the way the study’s population members use their libraries than does trying to position these libraries as third places for their users.

The public realm operates through a series of indigenous person-to-person relationships that grow out of principles of normative behavior that govern urban living. People who regularly encounter people they do not know respond in typical ways. Fleeting relationships and routinized relationships end when an interaction ends or they transform into the next levels of public relationships – quasi-primary and intimate-secondary relationships. These develop as positive or negative emotions become parts of public relationships. Intimate-secondary relationships are those that occur among people who connect with each other in some public way and who build on that connection. They can last a long time, be positive and meaningful, and yet never become intimate primary relationships. This study shows that the concept of intimate-secondary relationships is useful in explaining the relationships library users often develop with library staff members. It contextualizes most of the conversations that library users and staff members described, and explains much about the nature of the social relationships that support people’s public reading-related activities.

This study has shown that many positive and utilitarian characteristics of the public realm that are most often found in urban settings are relevant to understanding the roles of small town libraries in the lives of their users. These characteristics include providing an environment for informal social learning, providing informal communication centers for those who visit, supporting the practice of politics in the informal sense of people of different backgrounds coming together and learning to act
together, and facilitating cosmopolitanism as residents learn about tolerance and civility by sharing spaces with people different from themselves. McKenzie, et al. (2007) applied public realm theory as a way of understanding how two groups of people used the public library meeting rooms in their communities and concluded that the libraries they studied functioned as places that “support a variety of relationships and host a variety of realms” (p. 131). In Gadsden County the public libraries collectively appear to serve most frequently as public realm familiarized locales and to support ongoing emotionally rich intimate-secondary public realm relationships that participants themselves do not consider to be social relationships.

**Psychological Sense of Community**

While Gadsden County library users spoke strongly and repeatedly about their new libraries as community assets there was little evidence that library users experienced a psychological sense of community (McMillan and Chavis, 1986) in the sense of feeling they were members of a group or feeling that their needs would be met through any type of group membership. They did not indicate strong evidence of a shared emotional connection with other library users. When study participants spoke of the libraries as community assets they seemed to use *community* to refer to a group of people who live in physical proximity to each other and share social structures and social institutions that sustain or improve their collective quality of life (Warren, 1978). When *community* is understood geographically and socially rather than psychologically the concept of the new libraries being community assets makes sense intuitively and intellectually.

**Social Capital**

Social capital is the glue that holds social institutions and relationships together. The concept refers collectively to the non-tangible assets that belong to individuals and members of communities, and to communities themselves. Bonding social capital increases the strength of existing connections, bridging social capital facilitates links to outside groups and external resources on the same social levels, and linking social capital is a type of bridging social capital that crosses social classes and provides access to powerful individuals and organizations. Social capital is an asset that can be depleted and regenerated. It can be measured in terms of social trust, or how much “people in a given community, region or nation trust each other (Halpern, 2005, p. 33).
Public libraries build social capital by providing public places where people can come together to work toward personal or community goals. They provide resources that enable people and groups to establish and nurture relationships, and they also facilitate people from different groups and perspectives coming together in pursuit of common goals. Public libraries provide access to information that helps people participate in community life and in the democratic process, and they do all this without any means tests or entry fees. Gadsden County’s library users agree that the new library buildings function in many ways that encourage the generation of social capital. The libraries welcome all members of the community and visitors, they support both formal education and lifelong learning, they help people empower themselves by providing access to information and recreational materials. They also provide non-commercial meeting rooms where groups can come together to work toward their goals and they provide programs in which people can participate, thereby making new connections. The theory of social capital helps explain how Gadsden County’s public libraries enhance quality of life for library users.

Implications of Inter-coder Reliability Check

Multiple theoretical interpretations allow different ways of understanding people’s use of the libraries as places but also create the potential for disagreement in the theoretical analysis of their roles. What one interpreter sees as evidence that the libraries demonstrate characteristics of third places (Oldenburg, 1999), another may see as evidence the libraries are informational places (Fisher, et al., 2007) or have become familiarized locales that are part of the users’ daily or weekly public lives (Lofland, 1998). Multiple interpretations of the roles libraries play in the lives of their users are evident in this study and in the larger research into public libraries in general -- as expressed in the vogue for trying to position libraries as third places for their communities (K. Harris, 2003; Lawson, 2004; C. Harris, 2007).

Fisher, et al.’s (2007) study of the new downtown Seattle Public Library effectively demonstrated that the new library met only three of eight third place characteristics and differed from third places in important ways, leading their team to develop the concept of an informational place -- a concept that “incorporates information seeking and consumption as a core aspect of place” (p. 153) and that embraces and
reflects all the ways people use libraries and their expectations of libraries. Fisher et al. (2007, p. 152) identified three key characteristics of third place theory as being characteristics of informational places. They both occur on neutral ground, both are social levelers, and both are a home away from home because of the psychological comfort and support they extend. Because the characteristics of informational places come from a subset of the characteristics of third places, it is easy to confuse the two.

Third places can also be confused with familiarized locales because both are public places people visit regularly and value, but for subtly different reasons. Third places are typically commercial entities and offer companionship, relaxation, congenial conversation, and consumption of light refreshments – usually alcoholic or caffeinated. Familiarized locales are public places of all types that feature in people’s daily or weekly public routines. They can include the local market, a newspaper stand, a public library, or any other places people visit regularly in the course of their ordinary public life. Familiarized locales are typically staffed by longtime employees and those people -- by virtue of their roles -- become parts of the visitors’ public social world. Public relationships that begin based on simple social courtesies – “good morning”, “how are you today”, “thank you” – can and often do grow over time into relationships with depth and texture as those brief social conversations expand to cover broader topics and the participants develop a shared history. These relationships grow without any conversation or interaction necessarily ever taking place outside the setting in which the relationship is based.

Third place theory frequently has been misapplied to public libraries because it is a popular and accessible theory with easily understandable components; public realm theory appears to be more relevant to understanding the role of Gadsden County’s public libraries as places in the social world. The libraries’ collective basic character is defined by their public sphere characteristics and their fundamental roles as providers of informational and recreational reading, listening, and viewing materials; but they function on multiple levels. The most common collective roles they play for their regular users are as informational places and familiarized locales that are important to adults’ daily or weekly public routines - not as third places. Though these small town public libraries may appear to demonstrate the third place trait of being a home away from home that
people frequent for recreation, relaxation, and social contact, this study shows that they function as a *home away from home* in the sense that Fisher, et al. (2007) use *home away from home* -- as a characteristic of informational places. In addition to functioning as informational places they also become familiarized locales for their habitués by virtue of repeated use.

The biggest disagreement in the intercoder reliability test described in chapter 3 was between the co-coders’ assignment of the third place code *home away from home* to data units to which I had assigned the code of *informational place* or *familiarized locale*. This coding discrepancy could be resolved by more fully developing the concept of *informational places* as it was presented in the study’s codebook and by a deeper reading of third place theory, public realm theory, and the emerging theory of informational places on the part of the co-coders. Clarifying the codebook and making sure the co-coders were more familiar with the theories on which this study draws would have resulted in a more reliable intercoder check.

**Relevance of Urban Place Theories to Rural Libraries**
This study has shown that theories developed to explain social behaviors in urban settings are relevant to small town and rural downtown settings as well. For the most part, this study found that differences in the way social activities and interactions play out in small rural and large urban or suburban public libraries are differences of scale, not content. This study shows that theories generated through the study of urban experiences are relevant to contextualizing the roles public libraries play in small towns and rural communities.

**Research Methods**
As discussed in chapter 3, mixed methods study designs provide built-in compensation mechanisms for weaknesses that might be characteristic of one of the methods used in a mixed methods study. This section evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, and contributions of each of the study’s methods to the study as a whole.

**Observation**
Unobtrusive observation is an important first step in the process of understanding how people make use of a place. Leckie and Given’s (2003) method of structured observations – seating sweeps – is a useful tool for helping to counteract possible
observational biases on the part of the researchers who are making unstructured observations and for keeping track of large numbers of people who are not moving around very much. Even so, seating sweeps are not a perfect method and interpreting human behavior can never be a completely objective process. Seating sweeps are good at providing a snapshot photo of how people are using a place at any given moment. They help insure consistent data collection because they rely on a uniform combination of a locator map and a data collection sheet to track each individual’s location and characteristics. However, the data collection sheet used in these studies is a complicated form divided into four sections and it was very easy for an observer to skip a section on the form or to miss collecting part of the data -- as happened during this study’s data collection period.

The end result of a seating sweep as described by Leckie and Given (2003) is a snapshot of where people are located and what they appear to be doing at a certain moment in time. In a study with a large pool of observable people -- such as those set in large urban public libraries -- incomplete or inaccurate observations would tend to be balanced out by the large number of individual observations. Leckie and Given collected data on so many people that they limited the number of observations they chose to work with to those of approximately 1000 people in each of their study sites. Any individual data collection errors of omission or of mis-marking a data collection form would not affect the findings of the observation period as a whole. In a smaller setting with fewer observable participants, data collection errors or omissions have a greater effect on the eventual data analysis. This study seems to indicate that the strength or weakness of the seating sweeps method is directly related to the size of the study population. The snapshot of a moment in time produced by a seating sweep is more accurate when it shows the location and activities of a large group of people than when trying to understand how a smaller group of people is using a place.

This study found that a snapshot of a small group of people does not accurately reflect all of the components of a library visit. A time-lapse photograph would be a better metaphor for an observation method that would provide a more realistic picture of what people do while at the library. For example, a snapshot of people at the Chattahoochee library on a busy Saturday morning showed twelve people using computers, one person at
the new book shelf, and one or two people in the stacks browsing the shelves, and possibly a parent browsing or reading with one or two small children in the children’s area. If the timing of the snapshot was right, one person might be returning or checking out books at the circulation desk and talking with the staff member on duty. The snapshot did not show that most of the people currently in the library had stopped on arrival to talk briefly with the staff members at the desk, whether to say hello or to return books, or to sign up for a computer, or to ask for help with an information need. A time lapse observation -- perhaps expressed as a line graph that showed each of the stops or interactions a person made while in the library -- would be a more accurate representation of the many phases of one person’s library visit to a small library.

**User Surveys**

Surveys are an excellent method of collecting demographic information and asking people “to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, feelings, values, and behavior” (Fink, 2006, p.1). Using an established survey that has been successfully deployed in a similar setting is a way to strengthen the reliability and validity of the survey results. However, using an established survey has limitations. The relevance of the survey questions can degrade over time. For example, in this study the questions about how people used computers and internet technology in libraries – written approximately ten years ago -- did not accurately reflect the way the libraries provided access to computers, digital information resources, and the Internet. If this survey instrument is to be used in future studies of how people use libraries as places it will need to be revised to reflect the specifics of the sites in which it will next be administered.

Beyond having dated content, many of the survey questions were not presented in an optimal format for eventual analysis. Questions people answered by selecting how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a statement were not presented consistently -- in some cases the answer scales were reversed from one question to the next. Several of the questions were presented in two parts and they would have been easier to answer and to score if they had been broken into individual questions. In spite of its age-related weaknesses and structural flaws the survey generated relevant data that provided a reliable profile of library user demographics and patterns of use. It also generated useful data categorizing people’s opinions about the new buildings and their purposes.
In order to collect enough completed surveys for a reliable study it was necessary to actively distribute the questionnaire to library users. People did not voluntarily stop to pick up and complete a survey questionnaire. At each library I stood near the entrance and caught people’s eyes as they entered the building. I asked individuals if they would take a survey and complete it during their library visit. Most people agreed to do so and either returned the survey to me directly or placed it in the drop box at the circulation desk. Some people agreed to take the survey with them to complete at home and those who took a survey form with them actually did take the time to complete and return it. At one branch the manager offered to keep questionnaires at the desk and distribute them to people she knew would be willing to answer them.

**Public Interviews**

The length of the interviews was appropriate -- the questions took between five and ten minutes for people to answer and most participants did not seem to mind answering the questions. It quickly became apparent that the ten planned questions did not address everything people wanted to say about their libraries, so after the first public interview I added an eleventh and final open question that asked people if there was anything I should know about how people use this library that we hadn’t yet talked about. Three-fourths of respondents – 30 of 40 -- had more to say in response to the last question, and several raised points that were not elicited by the scripted questions.

The original plan to conduct the interviews in the library meeting rooms did not work. People were reluctant to go into an unused room and I was not able to keep an eye on lobby traffic while conducting an interview in a meeting room. Each of the libraries in this study has a bench in the main entry lobby and on interview days at the first two sites I spent two or three hours on the benches in the lobbies. People could see what I was doing when they arrived and were willing to talk with me in their turn when they left at the end of their visits. In two of the libraries I sat on the bench with the interview prospects and they seemed to be comfortable stopping to talk for five to ten minutes on their way out the door. In the third location the lobby acoustics and the position of the bench made it impossible to interview people successfully; I had to stand inside the library near the inner door to ask people if I could interview them. Those who agreed sat down to talk with me at a low table in the children’s area next to the entrance. People did
not seem to mind sitting at the children’s table and seemed willing to speak freely because the table was across the room and out of easy hearing range from the circulation desk and other high use areas but still not out of sight or away from the library’s exit.

**Staff Interviews**

The staff interviews went smoothly and resulted in useful data. The staff members were interested in my project and supportive of my work. They seemed pleased that their new libraries were getting attention from someone outside the local community. Ten of the twelve employees asked to participate agreed to do so and most seemed very willing to talk freely about the libraries and the library users. The content of their interviews provided context and background for public perceptions of the local libraries as places. Adding staff interviews into the project provided a pool of rich data that represented a complementary perspective to library users’ opinions about the libraries as places.

**Meeting Room Reservation Sheets**

Mixed methods study designs offer the opportunity to work in an iterative fashion, circling back to revisit parts of the study or to revise or add an additional method if the interim findings indicate the need to do so. In this study the interview participants repeatedly mentioned that they saw community members using the library meeting rooms in many ways. The flexibility inherent in mixed methods study designs and the nature of case studies – in depth exploration of a bounded system (Creswell, 2005) – allowed me to modify the study’s design to include analyzing the meeting room reservation sheets for the months during which the study was under way as an additional data source. The university’s institutional review board approved the revisions to the study’s protocol and with IRB approval in place the library director allowed me to use the meeting room reservation sheets. The data collected from the reservation sheets supported observations staff and public interview participants had made and added richness to the emerging picture of the way people use the Gadsden County public libraries.

**Relevance of Methods to a Small Rural Setting**

Surveys and interviews of library users are research methods that work very well in most library communities. The size of the study population is smaller in smaller communities but the methods’ effectiveness are not impacted by the community’s size. The survey responses may be more representative of the community’s opinions because the survey
distribution conceivably covers a larger percentage of the people who come to the library buildings. Seating sweeps as a method of unobtrusive observation provide a less realistic representation of how people use smaller libraries because the number of observations they record is small enough that not all library behaviors or uses will be apparent during an observation period. In a larger setting with many more people present it is more likely that a set of seating sweeps will record a representative set of group behaviors. In a small setting where fewer people are present at any one time some type of incremental observation method whereby the individuals are followed on paper as they move through the library would capture a better representation of the way people use smaller libraries.

Limitations of Replication

Replicating prior research is one way to increase the credibility of studies, and a new study in which existing research questions are asked in different settings or of different populations can add to the body of knowledge that informs the research questions. The study instruments should be carefully evaluated for evidence of decay and for continuing relevance to the research questions in the new setting. In this study the survey instrument -- while still generally relevant -- did show some evidence of decay in the questions relating to Internet and computer use in public libraries. Additionally rigid replication of the methods used in the studies on which this study was based would have precluded adding the meeting room reservation documents to the current study’s body of data sources. Replicating prior studies provided this study with a framework on which to build and helped insure the reliability of the study methods, but replication needs to be approached with an awareness of the possibility of decay over time in the study instruments and the need to edit the study instruments and methods to suit the parameters of the current study site.

Overall Study Limitations

This was a single case study restricted to analyzing the opinions of the adults who were physically present at the three locations that make up one small rural public library system in North Florida. The findings from this study are not generalizable to other public libraries, but they can provide useful examples of how people use public libraries for other institutions with similar profiles. The findings from this study have generated
further questions about the ways people use public library buildings that are worth exploring in future research.

Measuring people’s use of a public library has several problems. Library use is not consistent across days, weeks, months, or the course of a year, but patterns of use are often evident in library user statistics. The amount of library usage indicated by the data collected at this library system over a period of ten weeks was dependent on the time of year in which the study was conducted. Because the branch libraries in the study served as early voting locations during the 2008 presidential election, data collection was suspended during what might have been a period of very atypical library use.

May (2007) found that library programs can impact seating sweeps observations by generating crowds that make it difficult to obtain the detailed data collected during a seating sweep -- gender, activities, possessions, and estimated ages of the people in the library during the observation period. This was apparent in the current study as well. The pre-school story hour at one of the branches was heavily attended by adults who typically brought more than one child with them. The speed at which they arrived and the quickness with which they moved around the library on their way to the meeting room resulted in only an approximate count of adult participants and the number of children participating in the program.

Because this study replicated previous work and used an existing study design and instruments, limitations in the study instruments were evident. May (2007) discussed the limitations of the questionnaire she had uncovered, noting that it asks library visitors about their use of electronic library resources without defining the term. During the unobtrusive observation period -- the seating sweeps -- people using library computers were noted but they were not asked what use -- research, communication, games, social networking, or other recreational uses-- they were making of the computers. Any system restrictions placed on specific computers were noted on the floor plan -- specifically computers used only to look up materials in the OPAC and computers in the children’s area that did not have internet access. People at these computers were counted by type of computer being used but the study design did not allow for enough specificity to determine what people were doing while using library computers.
Given and Leckie (2003) note that observations made during seating sweeps are limited to what people are doing at a given moment. They do not explain why people are behaving as observed. Any understanding of why people are doing what they do at the library is only possible through triangulation of the results of all the data collection methods. As previously discussed seating sweeps appear to be more reliable when used in larger settings. For this study some kind of time lapse observation that traced library users’ movements through the library may have given a better representation of library use than that provided by the seating sweeps.

Finally, this study does not provide a comprehensive profile of how Gadsden County’s adult citizens use their libraries. It does not address or track use of library resources outside the physical library locations. This study focused on the public, physical, social spaces of Gadsden County’s new public library buildings and only recorded and analyzed the activities of adults physically in the libraries. The study did not address the ways people under age 18 use the library as place except as noted during the seating sweeps portion of the study and obliquely through the observations adult library users offered during their interviews.

**Implications of the Study for Practice**

This study demonstrates that many adult public library users value their libraries as familiarized locales that are an important part of their daily or weekly routines. Adult library users also value their relationships with library public service staff members, but they don’t see these relationships as social according to their personal definitions of social relationships. These relationships appear to fit the pattern of intimate secondary relationships (Lofland, 1998) and the concept seems to have strong relevance when applied to public libraries— it appears to provide a context for understanding library user to staff relationships that are grounded in the interpersonal exchanges that inform people’s many reasons for visiting public libraries. Reading, borrowing books and videos, and questions related to computer use are often the subjects of the conversations, but many social pleasantries are exchanged at the same time. Informal information exchanges also take place during these conversations. More people reported talking to staff members at the branches than did at the main library and some of the terms people used frequently to describe the staff included friendly and helpful. The relationships
library users build with library staff members over time appear to be equally as important
to the users as the features of the new buildings, but the relationships are not the main
reasons people visit the libraries.

The Gadsden County public libraries are not third places for their adult users. Gadsden County’s adult library users value their public libraries as community resources and places that support all types of educational goals, including both formal education and lifelong learning. The libraries function equally as informational places and communication centers that provide Internet access, as much as they are places that provide access to entertainment materials and support all types of book and reading-related activities. They are places where people come to get out of the weather and to relax but they are not places people come for what the people themselves consider to be social activities.

Study participants reported that the Internet service these libraries provide is the only Internet access available to some community members. As one study participant said, “Not everybody has a computer at home.” Internet access at the public libraries has allowed community members who would not otherwise be able to attend college to take online classes, and the libraries accommodate their needs by providing extended Internet access time during their class sessions. Providing public Internet access is crucial to community members but the behavior patterns some library users exhibit when accessing the Internet is very different than that of people who use other library resources. Their intense focus on the screen in front of them can lead to the hollowing out of the place where they are physically located. The Internet users’ deep focus on the world to which they are connected via computers can change the library’s ambience from one that encourages public social interaction and sense of community to one where some of the people are physically present but “psychologically evacuated” (Nomads at last, April 12, 2008, p. 10).

Gadsden County’s public libraries bring a touch of cosmopolitanism and provide enrichment to their small communities in several ways: through library programming that features authors and speakers from the region or the state; by welcoming visitors from outside the county; and by providing access to the larger world through computers, books, videos, and programs. Library users as a group seem supportive of the
opportunities the library programming provides. They are also supportive of the way the libraries’ public meeting rooms are used by other community members.

The Gadsden County public libraries may be the only places county residents and visitors of different backgrounds, religious beliefs, race, or educational level can come together without being on one or another group’s turf. As one staff member explained, a member of a Baptist church might not want to attend a caregiver’s respite group meeting held in a Catholic church, but would be very willing to attend the same meeting with the same people if it was being held on neutral ground at the public library. The library meeting rooms add an important dimension to the way this county perceives the libraries as place.

**Future Research Directions**

Findings indicate that the library users in this study considered their ongoing library-based public realm intimate secondary relationships with library staff members as important aspects of their library visits. Further investigation into the nature and intensity of the relationships between library users and library staff members and their importance to library users in other sizes of public libraries would contribute much to understanding how people use public libraries as place and what they value about their library visits.

This study supports Fisher, et al.’s (2007) emerging concept of public libraries as informational places where people come when they have an information-related need or want to find an environment with an atmosphere that supports fulfilling information-related needs whether for educational, business, or recreational purposes. It encourages further research to test Fisher, et al.’s conceptualization of informational places as “comprising all themes regarding information finding and seeking, reading, life-long learning, learning resources, and learning environment” (p. 153) to expand and validate the concept.

**Reflection**

Despite the limitations uncovered in this study’s design the study produced good data and reliable conclusions. Gadsden County’s library users identified their libraries as important community resources and sources of pride. The new libraries meet many important community needs and facilitate community members’ quests to achieve personal and professional goals and help satisfy their needs for recreational and
entertainment materials in a county with very few other informational or recreational resources.

Using a multipart conceptual framework of theories drawn from other intellectual disciplines offered many rich resources with which to work when attempting to identify how Gadsden County’s adult residents use their public libraries as place. Each of the theories contributed to the overall analysis and the combined results indicate the real danger of attempting to explain how people use public libraries by relying on just one theory. While there may be disagreement as to which theory is most relevant to contextualizing certain data units, drawing on multiple theories permits a richer, more multi-layered analysis and interpretation.

This study has shown that these small town public libraries are very important places in the lives of their users. The new libraries are symbols of life and growth in places where change comes very slowly, if at all. They are manifestations of residents’ belief in their communities and in a strong future for their citizens. They provide non-commercial public places where people can pursue their personal goals and meet their recreational and informational needs. They are both portals and landmarks and the communities they serve are stronger in many ways because of their new public libraries.
APPENDIX A
PERMISSIONS FROM SITE DIRECTOR

Figure A-1: Screen print of e-mail from Jane Mock, Director of the Gadsden County Library System granting Linda Most permission to conduct her dissertation study. Received May 12, 2008.
Figure A-2: Screen print of e-mail from Jane Mock, Director of the Gadsden County Library System granting Linda Most permission to review or copy library meeting room schedules. Received December 22, 2008.
APPENDIX B
IRB APPROVAL LETTERS

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 6/30/2008

To: Linda Most
Address: MC 2100
Dept.: INFORMATION STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
The Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Public Library System

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 6/29/2009 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The
APPROVAL MEMORANDUM (for change in research protocol)

Date: 12/1/2008

To: Linda Most

Address: MC 2100
Dept.: INFORMATION STUDIES

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research (Approval for Change in Protocol)
Project entitled: new title requested: "The Rural Public Library as Place in North Florida: A Case Study" Old title: The Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Public Library System

The form that you submitted to this office in regard to the requested change/amendment to your research protocol for the above-referenced project has been reviewed and approved.

Please be reminded that if the project has not been completed by 6/29/2009, you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Wayne Wiegand, Advisor
HSC No. 2008.2090
### APPENDIX C
### SEATING SWEEP OBSERVATION FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time and Date:</th>
<th>Library:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library user #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corresponds to map indicating patron location by library area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### LOCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult computer workstation - by type on map</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s computer workstation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacks, book, magazine display rack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff desk (Info, circ, ref, children’s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worktables, carrels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft seating, by area on map</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s area excluding computers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: meeting rooms, outdoor areas as indicated on maps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age estimate: 8 – 18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age estimate: under 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age estimate: 30 – 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age estimate: over 60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### POSSESSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessions</th>
<th>Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books, magazines, newspapers other reading materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing materials: notebooks, paper, pens, pencils</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefcase, portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpack, tote-bag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laptop computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellular telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-pod, walkman, other music player</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, drink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking aid (cane, walker, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby/young child under 8: By # accompanying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other possessions - List on back by user number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

258
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physically searching, retrieving library materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using laptop computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using library computer by type of computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using other library technology, copier, etc. (specify on back)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using telephone/cell phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening (I-pod, walkman, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just watching/sitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing/paying fee or fine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching another person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other - list on back of sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual library user locations will be indicated on the branch floor plan to create a visual display of library use.

Figure C-1: Seating sweeps observation form, actual form fits on one sheet of 8.5 x 14 inch paper.
Figure D-1: Floor plan of McGill Library in Quincy.
Figure D-2: Floor plan of Havana Library.
Figure D-3: Floor plan of Chattahoochee Library.
Study Title: **Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Public Library System**

Researcher: Linda R. Most, Doctoral Candidate, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775. [lmost@fsu.edu](mailto:lmost@fsu.edu)

Supervisor: Professor Wayne A. Wiegand, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100, Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-8123, [wwiegand@fsu.edu](mailto:wwiegand@fsu.edu)

Contact Person: Linda Most, College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775. [lmost@fsu.edu](mailto:lmost@fsu.edu)

Dear Library Patron,

You are invited to fill out this survey as part of a research study being conducted by Linda Most, who is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University in the College of Information. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. The purpose of this study is to learn more about how people in Gadsden County use the public library as a community place. This survey asks questions about how you use the public library and your opinions about its features and services. The findings from this study should provide information that will be helpful to the design or renovation of other public libraries and should indicate how the local public libraries are functioning as community places.

The survey should take about 15-20 minutes to complete. If you complete the survey you may choose to enter to win a gift card from a local merchant by completing the colored entry form at the end of the survey and dropping it in the gift card box at the information desk.

There is minimal expected risk to you and no immediate benefit to you for your participation. Participating in this study is your choice. This survey is anonymous so the only information it asks about you is your age group, your gender, and your race. Your name will not be recorded and you will not be individually identified in any way. All the data obtained from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at FSU and only the researcher, Linda Most, and her supervising professor, Wayne A. Wiegand will have access to it. The data will be analyzed and stored on a password protected computer and backed up to a password protected computer file at FSU and copied to a CD-Rom that will be stored in the same locked file cabinet at FSU. Three years after the study is completed the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at FSU at 850-644-1688 or by e-mail to lmost@fsu.edu. You may contact my supervising professor, Dr. Wayne Wiegand at 850-644-8123 or by e-mail to [wwiegand@fsu.edu](mailto:wwiegand@fsu.edu)
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the FSU Institutional Review Board at 850-644-8633 or Ms. Julie Cooper at jjcooper@admin.fsu.edu.

You give your consent to participate in this study by completing and returning the survey. Please keep this cover sheet for your records.
Hello, Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this survey. Please answer each question to the best of your knowledge. Please try to answer all the questions but if you would like to skip a question you may. Please return your completed survey to the survey return box at the information desk.

Part I. About Your Library Visits

1) Where do you live? (Please circle one)

Chattahoochee

Greensboro

Gretna

Havana

Midway

Quincy

Other: please specify __________________

2) How long does it take you to travel from your home to this library by your usual means of transportation? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under 15 minutes</th>
<th>15 – 30 minutes</th>
<th>30 – 60 minutes</th>
<th>1 – 2 hours</th>
<th>more than 2 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3) How long do you typically stay at this library? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under 30 minutes</th>
<th>30 – 60 minutes</th>
<th>1 – 2 Hours</th>
<th>2 – 4 hours</th>
<th>4 – 6 hours</th>
<th>Over 6 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4) On average, how often have you visited this library during the past twelve months? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Once a week or more</th>
<th>Two or three times a month</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Once every other month</th>
<th>A few times a year</th>
<th>Once (today)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
5) What day or days of the week do you usually visit this library? (Please circle all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) What time of day do you usually visit the library? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning (before noon)</th>
<th>Afternoon (Noon – 5:00)</th>
<th>Evening (After 5:00)</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7) What hours do you prefer the library to be open? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning (before noon)</th>
<th>Afternoon (Noon – 5:00)</th>
<th>Evening (After 5:00)</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8) How many people usually come with you to this library? (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None: go to question 9</th>
<th>One other person</th>
<th>Two or more people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If one or more other people usually come with you to the library, are they primarily: (please circle all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Friends</th>
<th>b. Relatives</th>
<th>c. Co-workers</th>
<th>d. Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9) Will you be visiting any stores or services near the library today?

___ Yes

___ No

___ Don’t know

PART II. How You Use This Library

10) Without this library, how would your life change? (Please circle one answer)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Very Little</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Considerably</td>
<td>Major impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11) Why do you use this library rather than other libraries? Please explain in your own words:
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
(You may continue on the back of this page if you need more room.)

12) Do you borrow materials from other Gadsden County Library locations?
    ___ yes    ___ no

If yes, which locations? Please specify: _____________________________________

13) Do you borrow materials from libraries other than Gadsden County Library System libraries?
    ___ yes    ___ no

If yes, which libraries? Please specify: _____________________________________

14) Why did you come to this library today?
    (Please circle the most important reason and check any others that may apply with a check mark):
    ___a. Use public meeting room
    ___b. Use children’s services
    ___c. Browse
    ___d. Borrow/return materials for myself
    ___e. Borrow/return materials for others (children, family, friends)
    ___f. Consume food/drinks
    ___g. Look for information on a subject
    ___h. Meet a friend
____i. View art work, displays, bulletin boards
____j. Obtain help from library staff
____k. Read
____l. Study in library with own materials
____m. Use photocopiers
____n. Use microfiche/film
____o. Use CD ROMs
____p. Use the on-line catalog
____q. Use the Internet
____r. Use electronic databases
____s. Use e-mail
____t. Other: Please explain here: _____________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

15) When you visit this library, how often do you use electronic resources (e.g., the Internet, on-line catalog, CD-roms, electronic databases)? Please circle one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16) Please rank the importance to you of electronic resources in this library (e.g., the Internet, on-line catalog, CD Roms, electronic databases). Please circle one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>Extremely Important – Crucial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17) Do you ever bring a laptop computer with you to use in this library?

___ Yes   ___ No

18) Do you ever bring in any other electronic equipment with you in this library (e.g., cell phone, digital scanner)
___ Yes   ___ No
If yes, please specify: __________________________________________________

19) How user-friendly is this library?  (Please circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely user-friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very user-friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User-friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a little bit user-friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not user-friendly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20) Do you ever talk to the library staff when you come here?

___ Yes   ___ No
If yes, what do you talk to them about? ________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

21) Please circle the single MOST important service this library provides:
    (Please circle only one)

   a. Access to technology
   b. A place to read
   c. A place to socialize
   d. Community events
   e. Community information
   f. Life-long learning (educational support)
   g. Personal study (homework, research, etc)
   h. Provides fiction/literature (for recreational reading)
   i. Reference and information services
   j. Other: please specify ________________________________

22) Please circle the single LEAST important service this library provides:
    (Please circle only one)

   a. Access to technology
b. A place to read

c. A place to socialize

d. Community events

e. Community information

f. Life-long learning (educational support)

g. Personal study (homework, research, etc)

h. Provides fiction/literature (for recreational reading)

i. Reference and information services

j. Other: please specify ______________________________________________________________________

23) Do you ever use this library’s non-English language materials?
   ___ Yes  ___ No

24) Do you ever use this library as a place to meet tutors?
   ___ Yes  ___ No

If yes, what kind of tutoring?
   ___ English as a second language
   ___ Homework help
   ___ New reader/Literacy
   ___ Other, please explain:__________________________________________________________________

25) What other services or resources would you like to see introduced here: ___________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
   (you may continue on the back of this page if you need more room)
26) Before this library was built did you use the old library?

___ Yes, ___ No

If you answered yes, do you use this library differently than the old library?

___Yes, ___ No, ____ Don’t know

27) What is the ONE BEST feature of this library: _______________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

28) What is the ONE WORST feature of this library: _____________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

29) What words do you think best describe the physical space of this library?
(Please circle all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attractive</th>
<th>Modern</th>
<th>OTHER WORDS YOU THINK DESCRIBE THIS LIBRARY: please write in this column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Badly Designed</td>
<td>Needs Renovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean</td>
<td>Unattractive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>User Friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dirty</td>
<td>Well Designed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Loud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30) What is your favorite location or place in this library: _______________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

31) In your opinion, what is the PRIMARY purpose of this library: ________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

32) Please add any additional comments you wish to make (you may write on the back of
    this form if you need more space)
Please tell us your thoughts about the following features of this library.

Use the following scale to rate the features by circling the best number for each feature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features: circle one number for each feature</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = very unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2 = unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 = Neutral</td>
<td>4 = Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 = Excellent</td>
<td>0 = Don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for your answer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTSIDE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkways and other pedestrian space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs Outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping/Lawn/Benches (If appropriate)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSIDE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs Inside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables/Study Carrels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement/organization of the library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please use the back of this page to write more about any of these library features.
PART III: Library User Profile

33) Sex:
   ____ Male          ____ Female

34) Age Category (please circle one):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 – 24</th>
<th>25 – 34</th>
<th>35 – 44</th>
<th>45 – 54</th>
<th>55 – 65</th>
<th>Over 65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

35) Highest level of educational attainment: (Please circle one)
   a. Elementary school
   b. Some high school
   c. High school diploma
   d. Some university or college
   e. University or college degree/diploma
   f. Some post-graduate university study
   g. University post-graduate degree

36) Languages spoken (Please check all that apply)
   ____ English
   ____ Spanish
   ____ Other(s): List here
37) Primary Occupation (please circle one):

a. Student:  High School  College  University  Other: please explain___________

b. Unemployed

c. Retired

d. Homemaker

e. Professional (e.g., lawyer, accountant, psychologist)

f. Management/Administrative (e.g., store or office manager)

g. Artistic/Literacy (e.g., writer, journalist)

h. Clerical/Retail (e.g. secretary, sales person)

i. Technical (e.g. electrician, computer repair)

j. Unskilled Labor (e.g., food server, cashier)

k. Skilled Labor (e.g. carpenter, hairstylist)

l. Other: Please specify ______________________

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Please deposit your completed survey form in the survey box at the Information Desk.

If you wish to enter to win a $25 Wal-Mart gift card please fill out the last page and return it in the “Survey Contest” box at the Information Desk.

Please submit only one survey!
OPTIONAL Gift Certificate Drawing Entry Form

If you choose, you may leave your name and telephone number to enter to win a $25 gift card for Wal-Mart.

Name: __________________________________________

Telephone Number: ____________________________

Please detach this page from your survey, fold it in half, and put it in the Survey Contest box at the Information Desk.

Thank you very much again for completing the survey.
APPENDIX G
LIBRARY USER INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Study Title: The Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Public Library System

Researcher: Linda R. Most, Doctoral Candidate, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775, lmmost@fsu.edu

Supervisor: Professor Wayne A. Wiegand, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100, Tallahassee FL 32306-2100 850-644-8123, wwiegand@fsu.edu

Contact Person: Linda Most, College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775, lmmost@fsu.edu

Dear Library Patron,

You are invited to participate in a brief interview as part of a research study being conducted by Linda Most, who is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University in the College of Information. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. The purpose of this study is to learn more about how people in Gadsden County use the public library as a community place. This interview asks questions about how you use the public library and your opinions about its features and services. The findings from this study should provide information that will be helpful to the design or renovation of other public libraries and should indicate how the local public libraries are functioning as community places.

The interview should take about ten minutes to complete and will be recorded as an audio file. You may request that the interview not be recorded and I will write down your answers to the questions. If you complete the interview you may choose to enter to win a gift card from a local merchant by completing a colored entry form I will give you at the end of the interview and dropping it in the gift card box at the information desk.

There is minimal expected risk to you and no immediate benefit to you for your participation. Participating in this study is your choice. This interview is confidential and the only information it asks about you is your age group, your gender, and your race. Your name will only be linked to the interview by number to indicate that you gave your informed consent to be interviewed and you will not be individually identified in the research project in any way. All the data obtained from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at FSU and only the researcher, Linda Most, and her supervising professor, Wayne A. Wiegand will have access to it. The data will be analyzed and stored on a password protected computer and backed up to a password protected
computer file at FSU and copied to a CD-Rom that will be stored in the same locked file cabinet at FSU. Three years after the study is completed the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at FSU at 850-644-1688 or by e-mail to lmost@fsu.edu. You may contact my supervising professor, Dr. Wayne Wiegand at 850-644-8123 or by e-mail to wwiegand@fsu.edu

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the FSU Institutional Review Board at 850-644-8633 or Ms. Julie Cooper at jjcooper@admin.fsu.edu.
Please keep the first page of this letter for your records.

You give your consent to participate in this study by signing this letter as indicated below.

Your Consent: I have read the explanation of this study, titled “Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Library System.” I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study however I realize my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Participant Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX H
LIBRARY USER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sex:  Male    Female

Age:  under 30   30 – 60   Over 60

1) What do you think of this library building?
   Prompts: well designed, hard to find things, bright, dark, comfortable

2) What do you think of the space around the library and the location?
   Prompts: attractive, dirty, easy to find, too much traffic

3) What is the best feature of this library building?

4) What is the worst feature of this library building?

5) Where is your favorite location or place in this library?

6) Is there another library you prefer to use?
   Yes/No, If yes: Why do you prefer the other library?

7) Why did you come to the library today?
   Prompts: to borrow/return materials, read, study, attend a program, find information, use the computer

8) What have you used the library for in the past month?
   Prompts: to borrow/return materials, study, read, attend a program, find information, use the computer

9) What do you think about how people use this library?
   Prompts: to socialize, meet friends, study, bring children

10) Can you describe any ways you’ve seen people use this library (either good or not so good) that have surprised you?

   Thank you very much for your participation!

Here is an entry form for the drawing for a Wal-Mart gift card as a thank you for participating in this interview. If you would like to enter the drawing please complete this form and place it in the gift-card box at the front desk.
APPENDIX I

LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Study Title: **Library as Place in Rural North Florida: a study of the Gadsden County Public Library System**

Researcher: Linda R. Most, Doctoral Candidate, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775. [lmost@fsu.edu](mailto:lmost@fsu.edu)

Supervisor: Professor Wayne A. Wiegand, The College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100, Tallahassee FL 32306-2100 850-644-8123, [wwiegand@fsu.edu](mailto:wwiegand@fsu.edu)

Contact Person: Linda Most, College of Information, Florida State University, 142 Collegiate Loop, P.O. Box 3062100 Tallahassee FL 32306-2100, 850-644-5775. [lmost@fsu.edu](mailto:lmost@fsu.edu)

Dear Library Staff Member,

You are invited to participate in a brief interview as part of a research study being conducted by Linda Most, who is a doctoral candidate at Florida State University in the College of Information. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. The purpose of this study is to learn more about how people in Gadsden County use the public library as a community place. This interview asks questions about how you see the library’s clients using the public library and how you think the library’s features and services meet the needs of the library users. The findings from this study should provide information that will be helpful to the design or renovation of other public libraries and should indicate how the local public libraries are functioning as community places.

The interview should take about 20-30 minutes to complete and will be recorded as an audio file. You may request that the interview not be recorded and I will write down your answers to the questions. You will not benefit directly from participating in this research but your participation will help public library managers improve public library facilities and services over time. You will not be paid for participating in this research study.

Participating in this interview offers only the slightest risk to you by asking you to think about how the library functions as a public place for its users. You may realize you are uncomfortable about talking about some of the features of the library and you may be a little bit uncomfortable about saying so because this is your workplace but your supervisors have given me permission to ask you and other public service staff members.
to participate and your responses will be kept confidential. There is no immediate benefit to you for your participation.

Participating in this study is your choice. This interview is confidential and the only information it asks about you is your age group, your gender, and your race. Your name will only be linked to the interview by number to indicate that you gave your informed consent to be interviewed and you will not be individually identified in the research project in any way. All the data obtained from this study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at FSU and only the researcher, Linda Most, and her supervising professor, Wayne A. Wiegand will have access to it. The data will be analyzed and stored on a password protected computer and backed up to a password protected computer file at FSU and copied to a CD-Rom that will be stored in the same locked file cabinet at FSU. Three years after the study is completed the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at FSU at 850-644-1688 or by e-mail to lmost@fsu.edu. You may contact my supervising professor, Dr. Wayne Wiegand at 850-644-8123 or by e-mail to wwiegand@fsu.edu

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the FSU Institutional Review Board at 850-644-8633 or Ms. Julie Cooper at jjcooper@admin.fsu.edu.

You give your consent to participate in this study by signing this letter as indicated below.

Your Consent: I have read the explanation of this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in this study however I realize my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Participant Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________
APPENDIX J
LIBRARY STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Would you please provide a word or two that best describes this library?

2) What is the single best feature of this library?

3) What is the single worst feature of this library?

4) Where is your favorite location or place in this library?

5) In your opinion, what is the primary purpose of this library?

6) Aside from providing the public with access to information, what do you think are important social functions of this library?

7) How do you see this library being used socially?

8) Please briefly describe your job responsibilities?

9) Please describe the nature of your interactions with the public.

10) What are most users doing at this library?

11) What are the primary problems you’ve experienced when dealing with the public in the library?

12) How does the physical environment of the library help or hinder your job?

13) How does the physical environment of this library help or hinder your interaction with the public?

14) In your experience, how do patrons typically behave in the library?

15) Could you provide an example of unacceptable patron behavior you’ve seen in this library?

16) How common is unacceptable behavior in this library?

17) How has computer technology affected your job?

18) How has computer technology affected your interactions with the public?

19) What proportion of your interactions with the public involves helping them use computer technologies?
20) Is there any final comment you would care to make about the design, technology, use, or service of this library?  

*Thank you very much for your time.*
Please help with an FSU study currently underway in this public library. The goal of this study is to find out how people use the library’s physical spaces and resources.

What is this study about?
The purpose of this study is to learn three things:

- what adult library users and staff members think about the new library designs, furnishings, resources and services;
- how adults actually use the physical spaces in the libraries;
- how the Gadsden County libraries function as community places.

Why is this study important?
The answers from this study should help demonstrate how successful the new libraries are as community places for the people of Gadsden County. The answers from this study may help the library system with fundraising and getting other support. This information also may be of help to other library systems who are planning new buildings or renovations of their own.

What do I have to do if I agree to participate in this study?
If you agree to participate you will be asked to fill out a survey or to participate in a short interview. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your answers will be kept private. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

The Survey:
- Distributed to all adults entering the library during a given time
- Asks about your opinions and how you use this library
- Takes about 15 – 20 minutes to complete

Short Interviews:
- Some people will be asked for an interview during this week
- Questions are about your use of the library and your opinions
- Interviews take about ten minutes

Please give 20 minutes of your time to tell us your thoughts and opinions about your library. Thank you very much in advance. We are grateful for your help!
REFERENCES


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296


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Linda Most received her Bachelors degree in English from Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland. She holds the Master of Science in Library and Information Studies from Florida State University and the Master of Arts in History from Florida Atlantic University. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies she worked as a reference librarian at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland, and as the Business Reference Librarian for the Palm Beach County Library System in Florida.