THE GREATEST GOOD PLACE

The role of the public library in the development of successful cities,
and the relationship between public library contributions and planning policy

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the changing role of the public library, and determines its impacts on communities and cities. It also examines the relationship between libraries and planning policies, and the extent to which they inform the success of public libraries. The analysis centres on the design of modern public libraries, and the community and economic contributions they provide. Through analyses of the Vancouver Public Library, the Seattle Public Library, and the Toronto Public Library, it is evident that public libraries provide significant contributions within the communities they serve. Well-designed library buildings provide an important public space, and provide people with access to information and technology needed to participate in the knowledge economy, in turn producing significant economic gains for the city. This research finds that planning policy alone is unable to ensure the success of a city's public library system. Support from the public and municipal leaders, combined with strong policy directives, is needed for a city's public library system to succeed.

Key words: public libraries; planning policy; design; community building; economic development

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*“The health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about
the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can
all be tested by how well we support our libraries”*
- Carl Sagan

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The public library is a key institution in the public life of cities across North America. The importance of the public library throughout history is demonstrated by the fact that it has been a publicly funded institution for over 150 years (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). As a stakeholder in the communities they serve, public libraries provide significant contributions for the creation of strong and vibrant communities. Such contributions include providing access to information and learning, encouraging social inclusion and equity, cultivating civic engagement, and promoting economic vitality (Hill, 2009). In recent decades, the relevance of library buildings in North American cities, including Vancouver, Seattle, San Francisco, and Chicago, has been underpinned by a relative boom in the construction and revitalization of a number of central libraries (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002; Mattern, 2007). These new and revitalized library buildings represent a shift that has taken place over the last twenty-five years to redefine the role of the public library in urban society in light of technological advancements and the impacts stemming from globalization. Programmatic and spatial changes have helped to reassert the continued relevance of the public library in the 21st century. Modern public libraries respond to the changing social, technological, and economic aspects of the digital age, while maintaining the values that have placed them at the forefront of civic life. The public library remains “a material expression of shared meanings and values of public life”, and makes visible “a symbolic statement about knowledge in society” (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002, p. 327).

This research explores the role played by public libraries in the creation of vibrant and healthy cities, with the analysis focused on the design, community, and economic impacts that are generated by the urban public library. These impacts are the focus of this paper because they are prevalent themes that often emerge within discussions about public libraries, and they are also a central focus in the domain of urban planning and development. This research stems from a gap in the academic literature related to the relationship between public libraries and urban planning and development. Much of the literature focuses on the impacts of public libraries, and there is a lack of understanding about the policy context from which these benefits stem. There is no indication of the extent to which planning policies and

tools impact the success of a city's public library system. Because of this gap in the literature around the relationship between planning and public libraries, this research also explores the relationship between the design, community, and economic impacts and the success of the public library as a whole, and a city's planning and development processes, policies, and tools. The following research questions provide a foundation for this analysis: What contributions do public libraries provide to communities and cities? What is the relationship between a city's planning process and its public library system? Are public libraries dealt with sufficiently in the planning process?

The structure of the paper is as follows: Chapter Two presents a literature review that examines the relationships between public libraries and public space, community development, and economic vitality, while Chapter Three presents the methodology utilized for this analysis. Chapter Four presents case study analyses that examine the Seattle Public Library, the Vancouver Public Library, and the Toronto Public Library. The case studies focus on the design, community, and economic aspects of each library system, as well as a brief examination of the planning context within each city. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the outcomes and learning garnered from a comparison of the three case studies, with connections being made to the existing academic literature. The learning from both the literature review and the case studies will be used to address the research questions at the centre of this discussion. Finally, Chapter Six provides some concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Through a synthesis of several academic journal articles and books, as well as a number of government and consultant reports, this literature review provides a foundation for this research by providing a greater understanding of the issues that underpin the central research questions. The literature review examines academic literature related to the role played by public libraries with respect to public space, library building design and location, community development, and economic development.

Public Libraries as Public Space

Public spaces can be understood by the activities that take place within them, and the social and cultural functions associated with them. Public life is produced and reproduced within a city's public spaces. As such, the health of public culture is highly dependent on the success of a city's public spaces (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). Well-designed and inclusive public spaces that cater to the diverse needs of a city's population are needed to encourage meaningful and inclusive social interaction, and to encourage better integration within the social and political life of the city (Fraser, 1990; Schmidt & Nemeth, 2010).

Schmidt and Nemeth (2010) discuss the various functions and meanings served by public space and the way in which it is incorporated into various planning processes and economic development strategies. Underlying the discussion is the acknowledgement that public space and the meaning attached to it is a significant component in the creation of a safe, healthy and sustainable city. Madanipour (1999) argues that public spaces are collections of objects and people – their significance is generated by human agreement, which renders them meaningful. "It is the collective intentionality, the capacity of humans to assign functions, to symbolize these objects beyond their basic presence that makes them part of the social reality" (p. 880). This argument is grounded in the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), who argued that space is not merely a physical space wherein activity takes place; it is an entity that is actively produced by people and other social forces. As such, all space is social and provides a foundation for the social life of cities. Zukin (1995) echoes this sentiment by arguing that public space is socially constructed through the various social encounters that take place within the public realm, and

because public space is a social construct, it is an urban framework that is constantly changing. Schmidt and Nemeth argue that a greater understanding of how economic and political shifts impact the production of public space is needed to determine how certain public spaces elicit social or political meaning within a community. This is particularly important as the form and function of public space continues to evolve as a result of changes to the social, political and economic conditions within urban environments. Schmidt and Nemeth contend that “the conception of public space is no longer limited to physical places”, as the increasing prevalence of web-based social networks and mobile technology is changing how we interact within traditional public spaces, including public libraries (2010, p. 457).

The analyses provided by both Schmidt and Nemeth and Madanipour draw on the work of Kevin Lynch (1960), who argues that no component of a city “is experienced by itself, but in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences” (p. 1). According to Lynch, the city can be understood through an analysis of a number of elements, including its nodes and landmarks. Nodes are primary centres of activity, while landmarks are physical elements that act as points of reference within an urban setting. These nodes and landmarks help people navigate their city and help to inform the design of lively and active public spaces. The social and political significance attached to these nodes and landmarks help to create what Madanipour calls ‘infrastructure for social life’ within cities (1999, p. 882). However, Madanipour argues that because of technological changes, public spaces are becoming less significant as nodes of social integration (1999). Similarly, Leckie and Hopkins (2002) argue that in addition to advancements in technology, the shift from an industrial-capitalist economy to a consumer driven, postindustrial knowledge economy has created significant changes in the spatial organization of North American cities and the nature of public spaces, which is impacting how people interact with one another. The ease by which information is transmitted is rendering location irrelevant, and cities are becoming increasingly decentralized and fragmented. As well, because many public institutions are dealing with insufficient funding, municipal governments are turning to the private sector to provide additional funding. These processes have undermined the ‘publicness’ of shared urban spaces. While Madanipour argues that it is technological advancements that are threatening public space, Leckie and Hopkins argue that it is the influence of private interests that undermines the principles of

public institutions and poses the greatest threat to the role that public space plays in contemporary urban life. This shift is of particular concern for public libraries. Black and Pepper (2012) argue that while all buildings “communicate with us and we with them”, and reflect the planned and unplanned human behaviour that makes up civic life, the function of library buildings as a primary medium of communication and knowledge transfer render them the most meaningful and powerful institution within a city, as they “reflect society and its aspirations, needs, and values” (2012, p. 440).

Design and Location of Public Libraries

Mattern (2007) discusses how changing demographics and technological shifts are impacting the relevance and utility of public libraries in 21st century cities. She contends that while the primary function of libraries as public spaces that allow for the exchange of information has not changed, the way in which information is gathered, organized, and shared with the public has evolved over the last few decades. Innovations in information science, communication technology, consumer capitalism, and globalization have necessitated new design and architectural considerations for library buildings across North America. Mattern refers to this process as “authoring the building” (2010, p. viii). As library buildings are redesigned and the exterior representation of the institution changes, there is a subsequent shift in the function, identity and values associated with the public library. She makes the case that the process of reevaluating the values and purpose of the public library allows for planners and architects to consider how these values and functions can be incorporated and embodied into the design of the library building in order to “assert their continued relevance in an era in which their obituary has already been written by a myopic few” (Mattern, 2007, p. viii). According to Boaden (2005), technological shifts have resulted in ‘learning laboratories’ being integrated into public libraries. These learning laboratories enhance the role played by libraries in providing access to information technology, and also reinforce the role of the library as an important educational resource.

Public libraries serve as a central hub of activity in many communities. Senville (2009) argues that libraries are making a comeback as key anchors for North American towns and cities. Public library buildings that reflect high design standards can help cities establish a sense of place and identity, and

give communities something to admire. Imholz (2008) contends that a library building should reflect its history, as well as its future. If the design of a library building is special, people will view it as such. Mattern's research shows that many cities have retained high-profile architects in an attempt to make their public libraries a downtown destination – one that draws tourists to the library, while also revitalizing downtown neighbourhoods and building a national reputation (2007). Several new and renovated libraries have become key public institutions in cities across the US, including Denver, San Antonio, Des Moines, Indianapolis, Salt Lake City, Chicago, San Francisco, and Phoenix. Senville makes the case that these new and renovated library buildings are “bringing us full circle” with the 19th and 20th centuries, which saw the construction of prominent library buildings in cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia (Imholz, 2009, p. 98).

According to Imholz, many cities have begun to think like real estate developers by adopting a comprehensive view of where to situate library buildings in relation to other key services within the city to create partnership opportunities, and to reinforce compatible functions and services. Library buildings are generally versatile and fit with a variety of public and private sector developments, which allows for the successful integration of library resources and services with other community amenities. City officials and private developers are beginning to realize the advantages of incorporating libraries into mixed use, retail, and residential areas (Senville, 2009; Imholz, 2008). Boaden (2005) argues that the co-location of libraries with other facilities creates an opportunity for communities to achieve economies of scale and provide a more complete community. Co-location is not a new practice. During the 20th century, many of the original Carnegie libraries were situated at the ‘intersection of social life’ on Main Streets, next to town halls and post offices. Imholz's research reveals that we are now seeing a shift back to such practices. California is becoming a leader in the co-location of library buildings with schools, while several other cities have begun to incorporate exhibition space, cafes, and bookstores (among other services) to increase library visits. As well, a new downtown library in Las Vegas incorporates a museum within the same building (Imholz, 2008). Boaden suggests that the integration of libraries with other services, such as gallery or exhibition space, children's activity centres, and learning facilities enhances their role in a community's cultural development (2005).

Research by Senville (2009) demonstrates that in addition to cultural gains, co-location of library buildings can help to revitalize communities. He highlights the construction of a new library in the Chicago suburb of Des Plaines, which utilized the co-location principle. The library was built adjacent to a stop along a commuter rail line, and is the central feature of a 6.2-acre redevelopment that also includes retail and residential uses. The library and surrounding uses have created a new centre of activity for this suburban community, with the library serving as the traffic anchor. The library as a focal point serves an important role in the creation of a complete community, which is particularly important for suburban development, as livable communities hinge on a strong mix of housing, jobs, amenities, and services. In Saint Paul, Minnesota, a large library was constructed on the ground floor of a mixed income housing building. The project stemmed from a desire within the community to redevelop a site that previously housed an adult entertainment theatre, which was an eyesore to residents within the community. The integration of a new public library within a mixed use building was determined to be the best fit for the property, as the city was intent on providing more affordable housing, and the existing neighbourhood public library had outgrown its building (Senville, 2009).

Mattern (2007) refers to these mixed-use public spaces as large 'urban rooms' that are able to accommodate a variety of events. She argues, "the urban room is emblematic of what public libraries have become or, more accurately, what they have been since the days of Carnegie" (p. 88). The inclusion of libraries into these mixed-use public spaces creates an important community gathering space and public forum. The library should function as a community place that promotes socialization. It should be a "neutral meeting place" that provides visitors with choice between various activities. The practice of combining libraries with other uses and activities has resulted in the design of library buildings that are extroverted and inviting. These partnerships reinforce the function of the library as a space that promotes free public access and help to create a reciprocal and collaborative relationship between public and private interests. Private interests are not seen as competition for the library; rather, they enhance the library experience for visitors to the space. Commercial uses draw people in regardless of the presence of a library, and when visiting a mixed-use space containing a library, visitors may be drawn inside to take advantage of the library's offerings. However, some view the integration of public libraries with commerce

as being problematic. They fear that libraries are overextending and overdiversifying, which can lead to confusion about the identity of the institution for both the library and the public. Furthermore, as libraries are transformed into entertainment destinations, they lose their sense of purpose. These arguments reinforce Madanipour's contention that private interests pose a significant threat to public libraries. Mattern acknowledges that some libraries have diversified to the point that they lose core purpose, but she argues that not all mixed-use libraries are "clumsily tacked on to other uses". Many of the libraries that have been integrated with other cultural and commercial uses have done so carefully and appropriately, staying in line with the ideological function of the library as a public institution. For many cities, the diversification of their library buildings is essential because of economic pressures. The library must grow and change in order to remain economically viable (2007, p. 91).

Innovation in library design is not a trend that is exclusive to North America. Research undertaken by Black and Pepper (2012) that explores the design of public libraries in Britain from the 19th century to the present reveals that "none of the transformations experienced by the public library in its history have been more intense than the one it has experienced in recent years" (p. 461). Black and Pepper divide the design history of British public libraries into five periods, with each era giving rise to a different type of library design. The 'civic' period (1850-1883) ushered in pioneer library buildings; the 'endowed' era (1883-1919) saw the emergence of the library as a planned institution, with building design the result of a highly democratic process, wherein local architects and engineers carried out the design work; the 'national network' period (1939-1979) gave rise to protomodernist library design; the 'Fordist' era (1939-1979) was characterized by architectural modernism; and lastly, the current era has given rise to postmodern and unpredictable library designs that conform to cultural, social, and technological shifts in the public life of Britain (2012, p. 441). Regardless of the design era, Black and Pepper argue that the importance of the public library building has remained constant throughout Britain's history. They continue to be viewed as places of civic importance, reflecting the social and material progress of British cities (2012).

The public library has become (and will remain) a significant institution within the urban public realm. It is a space that facilitates public communication, subsequently shaping the public culture of cities.

As well, public libraries, particularly central library branches, act as a physical embodiment of civic culture and knowledge in 21st century society (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). They act as a neutral and inclusive meeting ground within communities, and demonstrate the value we place on the exchange of information and knowledge within society. As Leckie and Hopkins argue, “the acts of conversation; of reading, writing, and learning; of viewing; of socializing; of playing and working in the presence of others are the active practice of our technologies, values, ideals, and public culture. The underlying ideology of central public libraries is thus inherently democratic, neutral, educational, and inclusive” (p. 332-333).

Public Libraries and Community Building

There is a significant body of literature that draws connections between public libraries and community building. Marcum (1996) makes the case that the library is a public good that every community should have. She describes the library as being a symbolic centre of a community – a neutral space that is accessible to all, regardless of age and socioeconomic status. The library is one of very few civic institutions that provide all residents with accessible community space. Scott (2011) echoes this sentiment by referring to the public library as a “democratic equalizer” (p. 191). Putnam and Feldstein (2003) describe the library as a ‘bridge’ for building social connections. While some places provide likeminded people an opportunity for bonding, the library has a broader capacity to bridge together people from different backgrounds, which encourages the development of new social networks within a community. According to Scott (2011), libraries can help people who feel isolated and disengaged within their community by providing them with an improved sense of well-being. Libraries provide the capacity for individuals to connect with one another and the community as a whole, as they provide a stable and accessible forum for public dialogue (Goulding, 2009; Scott, 2011; Young, 2012). Scott suggests that the equitable access offered by public libraries often leads to a heightened sense of community ownership. Furthermore, Meegan and Mitchell (2001) argue that this sense of ownership stemming from the neighbourhood library is of particular importance to certain groups, including the elderly, immigrants, the unemployed, women, and children, as they are provided with access to services and resources that they

may not be able to get elsewhere. Matarasso (1998) explains that involvement in library activities generates higher levels of confidence, which ultimately leads to a greater sense of empowerment.

The public library conforms to Oldenburg's (1991) notion of the "third place", which is a communal space wherein community building and placemaking is carried out. Third places are neither home nor work. Places like coffee shops, bookstores and public libraries, which all allow for lively conversation and provide a place where people can meet informally "comprise the heart of a community's social vitality" (Scott, 2011, p. 206). Oldenburg argues that the prominence of the third place varies depending on cultural setting and historical era. In ancient civilizations, the third space exhibited great prominence, and was seen as a necessary component of civic life. The ancient Greek agora (the main public square) was the primary centre of economic, political, social, and cultural activities. It was the hub of the community (Oldenburg, 1991; Madanipour, 1999; Scott, 2011). Oldenburg contends that in recent decades, American planners and developers have failed to provide sufficient gathering places within urban neighbourhoods. He states, "the planners and developers continue to add to the rows of regimented loneliness in neighbourhoods so sterile as to cry out for something as modest as a central mail drop or a little coffee counter at which those in the area might discover one another" (1991, p. 18). While some academics view the public library as a third place, Aabø and Audunson (2012) view the library as an extension of the home or school and work (first and second places). They make the case that for those in "difficult or transitory life situations", the library becomes an alternative to the second place (work or school), and provides a space that acts as a sort of workplace. Furthermore, for families who use the library as an extension of the home for such activities as homework or family bonding, the library is more reflective of the first place (home). Regardless of how it is viewed, the public library is one of few community spaces that provide an inclusive community meeting place.

Senville (2009), who argues that the relationship between libraries and community is "inseparable", reinforces the notion that the public library is an important public good (p. 102). As a community hub, the 21st century library has a role to fill that goes beyond the distribution of books and reference material. The public library is "no longer a passive repository of books and information or an outpost of culture, quiet and decorum in a noisy world, the new library is an active and responsive part of

the community and an agent for change (Kretzmann & Rans, 2005). As urban communities continue to grow, and the needs of the community expand, the public library has responded by providing a broader range of programming, resources, and communal space. Libraries have become highly valuable community centres that provide services not offered elsewhere (Senville, 2009; Scott, 2011). Kretzmann and Rans (2005) argue that in addition to free community space and resources, public libraries provide connections to the local economy, as well as a sense of community ownership and community trust. The aggregation of these assets allows libraries to connect to all parts of a community, and supports the development of relationships and networks that make up a community's social infrastructure. This is reinforced by Goulding's (2008) argument that libraries have always had a community focus, but recent trends have seen library managers and policy makers emphasizing the role of the public library as a catalyst for civic engagement, capacity building, and social cohesion. Furthermore, Goulding argues that the co-location of public libraries with other local government services, such as housing or social services has provided communities with a number of financial, strategic, and community engagement benefits.

Another relationship that has been explored within academic literature is the extent to which public libraries contribute to social capital, which is defined by the World Bank as the "institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions" (The World Bank, 2011). Social capital is often linked to a number of positive externalities, including better health, higher employment rates, and improved social interaction (Putnam, 2007; Mohan & Mohan, 2002). Putnam (2000) argues that because of suburbanization and changes in work, family structure, technology, and demographics, North America's social capital has declined significantly. However, Johnson (2010) makes the case that the neutral and inclusive space offered by libraries makes them a significant producer of social capital, and she suggests that this may be the library's most important role. Aabø (2005) echoes this sentiment by arguing that the public library has "an enhanced role and value as a public room and a social and physical meeting place in the digitized age" (p. 206). Vårheim (2007) suggests that public libraries contribute to the development of social capital by connecting people to voluntary associations and community activities, by offering people an informal meeting place, and by offering universal services to the public. Furthermore, Stevens and Campbell (2006) make a connection

between the opportunity for lifelong learning offered by public libraries and the development of social capital. They argue that the 'productive relationship' between lifelong learning and the generation of social capital is the central role of libraries.

Vårheim (2011) distinguishes between two main theoretical perspectives relating to social capital. The societal perspective views social capital as being formed through civil society, volunteering, and informal interactions between people, while the institutional perspective suggests that social capital is formed through political institutions, social service institutions, and public services, which include public libraries. Public institutions that are characterized by universality and neutrality create trust and encourage the development of social capital. Public libraries are included in this category of public institutions. As well, because they provide a communal space that allows for informal contact between people of all social classes and age groups, libraries have the potential to generate both societal and institutional social capital (Vårheim, 2011).

While many authors have made the link between libraries and social capital, Ferguson (2012), argues that more research is needed to determine whether there is a causal relationship between library use and social capital; however, he does concede that "public libraries can contribute to the stock of social capital by virtue of being impartial and trusted public institutions" (p. 31). Although current research is unable to demonstrate a causal relationship, some form of relationship between library use and social capital does exist (Johnson, 2010; Ferguson, 2012). The existence of this relationship is particularly important for low-income earners and recent immigrants, whose library use has been found to be "proportionally overrepresented compared with the overall Canadian population" (Julien & Hoffman, 2008, p. 75). Research by Putnam (2007) shows that many immigrant populations have low levels of social capital. Immigrants generally leave behind stable social networks, and the familiarity of language and cultural customs when they migrate to a new country, where everything is unfamiliar. As such, migration results in an upheaval of social capital, with new social networks having to be built from the ground up (Audunson, Essmat & Aabå, 2011). Vårheim (2011) argues that if social capital can be increased through public policy, policies that are directed towards immigrants have the greatest potential for garnering success.

Audunson, Essmat, and Aabå (2011) suggest that some of the most significant political challenges that have arisen in Western societies in recent decades are related to the successful integration of nonwestern immigrants. However, public libraries provide immigrants with the opportunity to maintain cultural or literary connections to their country of origin, as well as access to information needed to adjust to life in their new country. The public library provides a meeting place that allows for communication and community building. Because of these assets, Audunson, Essmat, and Aabå argue that libraries “seem to have a potential for helping society meet the challenges of multiculturalism and migration” (p. 220). Their research on public libraries as a meeting place for immigrant women reveals a positive correlation between library use and the feeling of being a newcomer in a foreign culture. Many immigrant women use the library to cope with feelings of isolation, loneliness, and general emotional stress. Their use of the library contributes to the development of social capital and helps to promote feelings of inclusion and trust. Because the library provides a place to establish contacts with other community members, and access services that help with integration, such as language classes, it plays an important role in the process of integration (Audunson et al., 2011).

Research conducted by Ashton and Milam (2008) also provides evidence that “urban public libraries are in the forefront of the effort to make their cities stronger by welcoming and integrating new residents from all over the world” (p. 4). They argue that libraries are able to support the successful integration of immigrant populations through five strategies. First, libraries gain an understanding of local immigration dynamics through the collection, analysis, and tracking of demographic data, and become familiar with the neighbourhood within which the library is located. Second, because libraries are generally familiar with who is using their services, they are able to bring cultural and language sensitivity to service delivery. Third, many public libraries offer language classes and learning materials, which helps to remove the language barriers that some immigrants face when migrating to a new country. Fourth, libraries provide an important connection to local institutions, such as workforce and business development services, health services, and education services. Lastly, public libraries encourage civic engagement by expanding community awareness and understanding of immigrant issues, and by encouraging newcomers to participate in a variety of civic activities (Ashton & Milam, 2008).

According to Scott, some city planners and public officials have begun to recognize the importance of the role played by public libraries in the process of community building. She uses the example of former Chicago mayor, Richard M. Daley, who is quoted as saying: “to redevelop a neighbourhood or community you need a fire station, library and grocery store”. During his time as mayor, Daley used libraries as a key component of neighbourhood redevelopment efforts. Scott also draws on a statement made by an elected official in the United Kingdom, who argued, “the library is certainly part of the cement in the social fabric. It’s a way that people come together, meet, interact, share common interests...it’s part of the things that hold a community together” (2011, p. 196). Despite the recognition from public officials and city planners, many citizens do not recognize the civic role played by the public library in the development of a community (Scott, 2011). Boaden (2005) believes that this issue can be overcome through effective cultural planning. By making strategic connections between the functions of the public library that provide community benefits and influence a community’s sense of place, library managers and public officials can strengthen the relationship between the library and its public. According to Boaden, a cultural plan that allows the public library to play an active role in community consultation and community engagement strategies encourages better integration between a community and its cultural needs, and can establish a new audience for the library. Scott makes the case that libraries that are able to build strong communities are those that recognize their users and the unique characteristics of the community within which the library is situated (2011). Cultural planning provides a mechanism through which policy makers can take into consideration the local situation, specifically the needs and desires of the community, in order to create a local cultural plan that outlines the future directions of the library, as well as any issues and opportunities that require action (Boaden, 2005).

Economic Development

In a knowledge-based economy, a city’s economic value and competitive success are dependent on its ability to foster human intelligence, knowledge, and creativity. There is currently very little academic research centred on the relationship between public libraries and local economic development, but the literature that does exist reveals that such a relationship does exist. Research suggests that cities that

leverage the potential of their public libraries to support knowledge-intensive industries like digital media provide themselves with greater capacity to stimulate economic development (Florida, 2002; Brender, Cappe & Golden, 2007; Newman, 2008). Milam (2008) explains that traditional local economic development strategies, which are centred on attracting outside industries and investment in manufacturing and distribution, are being replaced by strategies that promote the development of local assets that are needed to compete in the knowledge economy. Such assets include: “a focus on education outcomes, skills and pipelines for information-era jobs and workforce, a diverse and thriving small business sector that has regional and global reach, infrastructure for rapid and current information and data exchange, and investment in civic spaces that promote the interchange of ideas and cultures” (p. 11). Milam argues that public libraries across Canada and the United States have made changes to their programs, services, and resources in order to support the human, social, and physical assets needed to build strong local economies. New initiatives and local partnerships are creating a significant role for public libraries in local economic development approaches. Public libraries can play a particularly significant role in economic development initiatives that are centred on people and quality of life. They have the capacity to improve a community’s economic activity and resilience through the broad range of information services and support they provide (Milam, 2008; Urban Libraries Council, 2007). A study conducted by Marvin Shaffer & Associates Ltd. that assesses the value of the Vancouver Public Library presents two components in determining the value of the public library – the direct user benefit and indirect community benefits. The direct user benefit is the market value of the services provided by the library for free, while the indirect benefits stem from the literacy, learning, community building, and other positive impacts generated by public libraries (2011).

Research conducted by the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) (2007) – an association of large metropolitan libraries – highlights four areas in which public libraries and local governments are working together to enhance local economic development. First, the early literacy and child education services offered within libraries are contributing to long-term economic success. According to the ULC, “these services are the first link in a chain of investments needed to build the educated workforce that ensures local competitiveness in the knowledge economy” (p. 3). In recent decades, public libraries have

broadened their reach in early childhood education by gaining a better understanding of child development, improving community outreach programs, and adding more parenting and family programs and services. Milam suggests that the addition of these services stems from an increased awareness of the growing gap between local education outcomes and the educational requirements associated with employment in the knowledge economy. Research also suggests that the financial returns associated with early education are more substantial than those stemming from government funded economic development projects (2008). Second, collaborative initiatives between public libraries and public agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector that support workforce training programs and career resources are allowing for “a stronger community network for job readiness and worker ‘retooling’” (Urban Libraries Council, 2007, p. 3). These collaborative initiatives allow individual communities to cater to specific education and employment needs, and effectively draw on the strengths of their local labour market. Third, public libraries have begun to provide greater support to entrepreneurs and small businesses, which have become a significant component of local economies, accounting for over three quarters of new local jobs. According to the ULC, one of the biggest barriers to small business has traditionally been “access to current and comprehensive business product, supplier, and financing data” (p. 3). Many libraries have begun to work with local partners to support small businesses through innovative planning and development workshops and seminars. As well, in communities where libraries have partnered with other local business agencies, there has been an increase in resources to support the small business sector. Because of this support, public libraries help to reduce market-entry barriers and costs for entrepreneurs and small businesses, and help to forge connections between prospective entrepreneurs and existing enterprises, which helps to build a strong local economy. Fourth, public library buildings are catalysts for physical development. They are among the most heavily used buildings in many cities, and are often associated with stability, safety, and quality of life. Private sector developers have begun to recognize the versatility of library buildings, as well as their ability to generate heavy foot traffic without competition for sales. Local businesses enjoy a spin-off benefit from this foot traffic. As well, libraries provide developers with a long-term tenant, and because of their versatility, they complement a number of retail and cultural destinations. Because of these factors, many cities have sited libraries as

anchor tenants for commercial projects (Urban Libraries Council, 2007; Milam, 2008). Partnerships between libraries and non-library entities can improve visibility and access to the library and allow both the library and its partner to serve a greater function within the community, and ensure the library remains a vital public institution. Furthermore, these partnerships can serve as a model for other public/private or public/public partnerships that can be used within a community to promote economic vitality (Massis, 2013). “Local governments are missing an incredibly valuable resource if they aren’t working directly and regularly with the public library regardless of the official structure” (Urban Libraries Council, 2007).

Research by Liu (2004) explores the relationship between literacy, public libraries, and economic productivity at the national level. His findings reveal that public libraries contribute to increased literacy rates, which in turn contribute to greater national economic productivity. Liu draws on work done by economists and educationalists, who have long been studying the connection between educational institutions and economic development. These scholars draw on the human capital theory to explain how education and literacy contribute to the success of a nation’s economy. Human capital in the form of education and training helps to improve productivity, and in turn, promote economic growth and development. Investment in human capital produces similar economic returns than those stemming from investment in physical capital. Liu’s analysis is informed by Schultz’s (1961) influential paper that examines investment in human capital. Schultz argues, “the most distinctive feature of our economic system is the growth in human capital. Without it there would be only hard, manual work and poverty except for those who have income from property” (p. 16). Literacy programs offered within public libraries can contribute to the development of greater human capital, which can contribute to a country’s (or city’s) overall economic productivity. The existence of this relationship has a number of policy implications for all three levels of government. Liu argues that it is essential that public officials have an understanding of how public libraries influence economic growth to prevent public library funding to be cut “as a result of short-term and near-sighted policies” (p. 440).

Missing from the literature is an understanding of the relationship between urban public libraries and planning policies. Further research is needed to determine how municipal planning policies and tools impact the urban public library, and the social, economic, and design-oriented benefits derived from its

presence within a community or city. This gap in the academic literature is where this research departs from.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative case study research, and relies solely on an analysis of secondary data. This method has been chosen because of the exploratory nature of the research questions. According to Yin (2009), case studies are often used in social science disciplines, and the more that a study's research questions "seek to explain some present circumstance, the more that the case study method will be relevant. The method also is relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon" (p. 4). As well, case studies are often used to draw out operational links between social elements being studied, rather than simply determining frequencies or incidences of them. As Yin points out, the use of case study research allows for an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon "within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (2009, p. 18). Because this research seeks to explore the relationship between public libraries and a city's planning processes and tools, as well as the impacts and benefits stemming from the placement of a library in a community, case study research can help to determine the operational links between these elements.

This research uses a comparative case study approach to provide multiple perspectives in answering the research questions posed within this discussion. The case studies being examined include the Seattle Public Library, the Vancouver Public Library, and the Toronto Public Library. These three public library systems were chosen because each of them is identified within academic literature as being examples of successful public libraries (Mattern, 2007; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). As well, the number of visits to the Toronto Public Library and the Seattle Public Library each year are comparable, while the Toronto Public Library and the Vancouver Public Library are the two largest public library systems in Canada. Each case study outlines the impacts of the public library with respect to urban design and public space, community development, and economic development. The case studies provide specific examples of how each of these library systems performs in each area, as well as an examination of the planning policies that guide planning and development in each city. A comparative analysis of these three case

studies will help to determine emerging themes to be analyzed and reviewed, and will provide a basis upon which the research questions underlying this study can be answered.

The development of each of these case studies relies on the collection of data from a number of different sources, including archived data, consultant reports, newspaper articles, municipal government websites and information sources, academic literature, and municipal and regional planning policies and reports. These data sources have been used to develop a thorough understanding of the relationship between public library services and each city's planning process and policies.

CHAPTER FOUR: CASE STUDIES

The following case study analyses examine the social, economic, and public realm impacts associated with the public library systems in Vancouver, Seattle, and Toronto. The discussion centres on a number of design, community building, and economic development considerations related to each library system. The analyses also focus on each city's planning tools and policies, and their relationship to each public library system. An examination of the policy context that guides planning in each city provides a basis upon which to garner a better understanding of the relationship between public libraries and the planning process, as well as the extent to which planning policies and processes inform the success of each city's public library system.

VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY - Vancouver, British Columbia

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) is the third-largest public library system in Canada, serving 350,000 active members every year, across 22 locations. In 2013, VPL had over 6.3 million visits and loaned close to 10 million items. The mission of VPL is to provide “a free place for everyone to discover, create, and share ideas and information” to create “an informed, engaged, and connected city” (Vancouver Public Library, 2014a).

Design

In 1990, Vancouver residents voted to endorse capital funds for a new central library after the previous Central Library on Burrard Street was unable to meet the needs of its users after becoming increasingly outdated and overcrowded. A referendum ballot addressed the question of whether or not the city needed a new Central Library, and sixty-nine percent of the population voted in favour to support the building program. The Vancouver Central Library is the largest branch in the Vancouver Public Library system, occupying an entire city block in the eastern portion of the Vancouver Central Business District.

The Vancouver Central Library occupies a full city block and is bounded by Homer, Hamilton, Robson and Georgia Streets. (Map Source: Tourism Vancouver, 2014).

The location of this branch is known as Library Square, and houses the public library, a Federal office tower, as well as retail and service facilities. At the time of construction, Library Square was the largest capital project undertaken by the City of Vancouver. Completed in 1995, the Central Library is an important hub of activity in downtown Vancouver (Pound, 2005; Vancouver Public Library, 2014b). City Council wanted a building that would act as a new downtown landmark, and after acquiring the building site on West Georgia Street from the Federal government, the City hosted a public design competition to generate ideas for the design of the building and to allow residents to have a say in the development of the city's new Central Library. The architects were tasked with creating an "Expression of Vision" for Library Square. Moshe Safdie, a well-known Canadian architect and urban designer, won the competition with his design, which bears a striking resemblance to the Roman Colosseum (Mattern, 2007). The groundbreaking ceremony took place on February 1, 1993 and Library Square was officially opened in May 1995 (Vancouver Public Library, 2014b). The site contains a nine-story rectangular building containing the library's stacks and services, and a freestanding elliptical wall featuring reading and study areas. On the east side of the site, a second elliptical wall serves as an entry foyer to the library, and a lively public space with shops and cafes. This concourse is lined with glass, allowing for natural light to come into the building, and creates an open and welcoming space for visitors. As well, the first floors of the library are exposed to the outside to allow the public to see the workings of Safdie's "complex

machine for literacy” (Mattern, 2007, p. 87). As part of the land acquisition deal with the federal government, an office tower was to be included in the design of the building to help pay for the project, and as such, a twenty-two-story office building is attached to the library. Both the federal and provincial governments have long-term leases in the high-rise portion of the building. These leases, along with the retail concourse helped to pay for the construction of the library, which cost over \$150 million to build (Pound, 2005; Vancouver Public Library, 2014b).

Vancouver Central Library – Exterior & Retail Concourse
(Photo Sources: DA Architects + Planners, 2014; Safdie Architects, 2014)

According to Andrew Gruft, an architectural historian, Safdie’s design won the competition because it was the most ‘imagistic’. Safdie understood that the competition was going to be judged by the public and not just a panel of design experts, so he sought to design a building with a simple but dramatic image, one that is easily read and easy to understand. His design garnered significant support from the public, but it was not well received by critics, including Gruft, who described the new library as “a decent building dressed up in drag” (CBC Digital Archives, 1995). Despite this criticism, Safdie’s building joins a number of other “theme” buildings in Vancouver, including the Convention Centre, which looks like a ship with five sails, the Science Centre, which resembles a giant golf ball, and the Museum of Vancouver, which resembles a native Haida hat. Gruft argues that the character of Vancouver can be made up of these imagistic, landmark buildings. As such, although not admired by many critics, the Central Library fits into the urban character of the city (CBC Digital Archives, 1995).

The City's desire to have a prominent architecture firm design the new Central Library reinforces Mattern's (2007) argument that choosing a high-profile architect is one way to turn the library into a downtown destination. Library buildings that are designed by renowned designers draw both residents and tourists to the area and help raise the city's national and international reputation. Safdie appears repeatedly on libraries' short lists, and after completing the much-celebrated Library Square in Vancouver, he designed a new central library for both Salt Lake City and Philadelphia. The success of the Vancouver's Library Square was influential in Salt Lake City's decision to retain Safdie as the architect for its library project. Prior to selecting Safdie as architect for the project, two library board members and a member of the architect selection advisory board from Salt Lake City visited the Vancouver Central Library and admired how busy and animated the building was. One critic called the Vancouver library "the best recent library on the continent, in large part because of its unmatched ability to attract people" (Mattern, 2007, p. 87). Board members from Salt Lake City were particularly fond of Vancouver's version of an "urban room", which provides "a new public role" for the library. Safdie's aim with his design for the Vancouver Central Library was to redefine the library as a vibrant public space that combines commerce and culture. According to *Competitions* magazine, a publication devoted to architecture and urban planning, "in Safdie's hands, the library becomes a convocation point, an activated public space, a mixed-use development with civic, cultural, and retail functions" (Mattern, 2007, p. 87).

Community Building

The policies of the Vancouver Public Library acknowledge the importance of the Library's public space and its contribution to community building and life-long learning, as well as the importance of involving community members in ongoing service planning and delivery to ensure the Library remains inclusive and meets the interests and needs of the city's diverse and ever-changing communities. One program in particular that has put the Vancouver Public Library at the forefront of community building is the Working Together Project. In 2004, the Vancouver Public Library – along with the Regina Public Library, Toronto Public Library, and the Halifax Public Libraries – entered into a funding agreement with HRSDC to launch the Working Together Project. The aim of the Project was to develop an approach for

libraries to work with low-income communities to help build connections and relationships within these communities. With the Vancouver Public Library as the lead library, the Working Together Project was initiated because of concerns that libraries in Vancouver and across Canada were not serving low-income and socially excluded groups. Research suggests that government institutions, including public libraries, schools, and hospitals, primarily serve the middle class, which leads those who are socially excluded to feel alienated. The Working Together Project sought to determine the barriers that exist for these groups, and find ways to provide equitable service to everyone within a community. The goal was to bridge a connection between library services and the self-identified needs of the community (Campbell, 2008).

The Vancouver Public Library worked with the Mount Pleasant community through the Mount Pleasant Branch during the course of the Project. Mount Pleasant was chosen as a priority community because at the time of the Project's initiation, the neighbourhood was characterized as a low-income and culturally diverse area, but was also experiencing significant changes as a result of gentrification. A Community Development Librarian (CDL) was placed in the community to determine how residents perceived the public library. They learned that many residents felt unwelcome at the library. As well, library rules, as well as charges and fines, were seen as a barrier for some residents. Through conversations with community members, community mapping, relationship building, partnerships between the library and other community service providers, and community-led program planning, the Project gradually determined that the culture and environment of the library, as well as library policies that work against socially excluded individuals, were to blame for these feelings. Brian Campbell, the Founding Director of the Program explains, "As a bureaucratic institution, the library develops policies and procedures that simplify and ease the efforts required to maintain a stable organization, not the least of which is the comfort and convenience of the staff and administration, as well as the interest of its mainstream socio-economically advantaged users" (Campbell, 2008, p. 6). The overall findings of the Working Together Program indicated that meeting the needs of socially excluded groups requires more than a reorganization of services and programs. The Program's conclusion was, "Transforming staff roles to work with socially excluded communities means changing the way we look at planning, customer service, and policy. It means moving toward a model in which every user is viewed as a complex

individual, with history and community, requiring human contact to fully meet their needs” (Campbell, 2008, p. 6). The legacy of the Program, which ended in 2008, is a Community-Led Service Planning Model and Toolkit that can be used in libraries across the country to ensure public libraries are able to effectively respond to the unique and diverse needs of their communities of users (and non-users) (Campbell, 2008).

Economic Benefits

Unlike in the United States where several cities have undertaken studies to determine the economic value of their public library systems, these studies have not been undertaken to any great extent across Canada. However, in 2011, a consultant’s report was released that outlines the value of the Vancouver Public Library in relation to its operating costs (Marvin Shaffer & Associates Ltd., 2011). The report identifies two components that determine the value of a public library: the direct user benefit and the community net benefit. A market value approach was used to determine the relative value of the Library to both individuals and the community (based on the value of services if not available from the library). The 2009 estimate of the direct user benefit of the Vancouver Public Library’s services, which are based on the cost of these services if they were not available for free at the library, was close to \$55 million, while the annual operating cost in 2009 was \$43 million. The estimated value of the community net benefit for 2009 was over \$200 per person, which is two and a half times greater than the actual amount (\$80) each adult resident pays in taxes to support the Library. What these values suggest is that the economic benefits far exceed the costs of supporting and operating the Vancouver Public Library (Marvin Shaffer & Associates Ltd., 2011).

While the market value approach is practical and straightforward, it does not take into consideration the services that cannot be assigned an actual value, such as reading, research, and program participation. The Library supports the development of Vancouver’s human capital and social infrastructure, and it provides residents with services and learning tools that enhance social integration and provide economic opportunities, all of which has inherent economic value for the city and its residents (Marvin Shaffer & Associates Ltd., 2011).

Planning Context

Planning in Vancouver is guided by a number of distinct community plans that provide a framework for guiding change and development in the city's neighbourhoods over a period of 20 to 30 years. Each community plan provides guidance for such things as land use and urban design, housing, transportation, and community facilities. They take into consideration the short-term and long-term needs and goals of specific communities, while conforming to the broader objectives for the city and region. Ultimately, the community plans aim to recognize the parts of the community that are valued by residents, and seek to address outstanding issues and develop initiatives to help create more livable and sustainable communities (City of Vancouver, 2014a).

Local area planning began in the mid 1970s, when the city approved the creation of the Local Area Planning (LAP) program as a response to a number of growth and development pressures across Vancouver. The local plans were undertaken from some neighbourhoods, but not all, and the last LAP project was completed in the early 1990s. Following the LAP program, a comprehensive city-wide planning initiative called CityPlan was developed, and although it was a city-wide plan, it acknowledged Vancouver as a "city of neighbourhoods" and it was determined that the effectiveness of the plan was contingent on it being scaled down to the neighbourhood level. The foundation of CityPlan rests on a number of directions for Vancouver's future growth and development, including:

- Strengthen neighbourhood centres
- Improve safety and ensure appropriate community services
- Define neighbourhood character
- Diversity of parks and public spaces
- Involve people in the decisions that affect their neighbourhood

In 1997, an additional local area planning initiative came into effect. The Community Visions Program targeted neighbourhoods that were not previously included in the LAP program. Future plans for these neighbourhoods were developed based on community needs and goals in addition to the directives outlined in the CityPlan (City of Vancouver, 2014a).

In terms of the city's public libraries, the neighbourhood level planning that characterizes Vancouver's planning and development process means that public libraries are dealt with at the local level, rather than at a broader citywide level. Each community plan addresses the various community

services within its jurisdiction, including public libraries. A citywide library renewal process is currently underway and will continue for the next 20 years. Within this process, the Library Board and the City review the location, size, and service area of neighbourhood libraries. To ensure the needs of the community are met, the community planning process provides a directive that the needs for recreational and library services are to be reviewed every ten years to determine if additional services are warranted. The community plans also aim to provide functional integration across various community services and programs to enhance the service delivery model of these public benefits (City of Vancouver, 2014a).

To help fund new or expanded community facilities, the City of Vancouver uses Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), which are in-kind or cash contributions that are provided by property developers in exchange for increased development rights granted through rezoning. These CACs help to lessen the impacts of new development on communities within Vancouver that lead to an increased use of facilities because of new residents and employees in the area. CACs are used to build and expand a number of community facilities, including park space, libraries, cultural facilities, community centres, and transportation services (City of Vancouver, 2014b). The guidelines that govern the use of CACs require that they be located on the site being developed or within the surrounding area. The amenities must also be “growth-related, or meet past deficiencies or other community priorities” (Vancouver Community Services, 2011, p. 3). City staff often predetermines how the CACs are to be allocated before any negotiations with developers are undertaken (Moore, 2013). There is no indication that CACs have been used to help fund the construction or redevelopment of any of Vancouver’s 22 library branches.

An examination of Vancouver’s planning policies demonstrates a lack of strong language that aims to provide protection for the city’s public libraries, as well as a lack of policy statements expressing the importance of the public library to the city. However, the neighbourhood level approach to planning helps to ensure the unique needs of each community are properly examined, and services and community facilities provided accordingly. Individual community plans provide planners with a better understanding of each community, and with effective collaboration between the Library Board and community planners, standards for library service remain high and improvements to infrastructure and service delivery are directed appropriately.

SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY - Seattle, Washington

The Seattle Public Library is made up of the Central Library and 26 neighbourhood branches, and has a collection of close to 2.5 million items. In 2012, over 13.5 million people visited the library, and nearly 2 million of those visits were to the Central Library alone. The mission of the Seattle Public Library is to provide a place that “brings people, information and ideas together to enrich lives and build community” to ensure Seattle is “a city where imagination and opportunity thrive” (Seattle Public Library, 2014a).

Design

Located in the same downtown location on Fourth Avenue for more than a century, the Seattle Central Library has become a key public institution within the city, and has provided the city with

substantial economic returns. The library has undergone two rebuilds since it opened in 1906. The most recent building opened in 2004 and has provided the city with a dynamic new public space in the heart of the city’s downtown.

The Seattle Central Library is located in the city’s Downtown, between Spring and Madison Streets and Fourth and Fifth Avenues.
(Map source: Seattle Public Library, 2014)

Construction of the new library cost close to \$165 million, and was funded through a fundraising campaign and publicly approved bond measures, including the *Libraries for All* program, which is a \$290.7 million bond measure that has allowed for the transformation of library branches across the city. The new Central Library is 362,987 square feet, and is both contemporary and innovative in its form and function. Rem Koolhaas, a Dutch architect, and Joshua Prince-Ramus, Principal of REX architects in New

York City, designed the building, which has been hailed as “a masterpiece of contemporary culture”. Their aim was to create a highly functional building, and to maximize the library’s role as an information resource and important public space (TED, 2006; Seattle Public Library, 2014b; Berk & Associates, 2005).

Seattle Central Library – Exterior & ‘Living Room’ (Photo Source: Arup, 2013; Herrera, 2009)

The building is composed of five blocks stacked unevenly on top of one another. The exterior is composed of a diagonal grid system made of steel and glass, and is designed to withstand lateral forces caused by wind or earthquakes. The design is a product of Koolhaas’ belief that the public library needs to be reinvented both functionally and architecturally because “the legitimacy of the library is under question” (Matter, 2007, p. 70). The design by Koolhaas and Prince-Ramus has changed the way Seattle’s Central Library operates. When designing the building they examined the operations of the institution and worked to find a way to consolidate all of the required elements into a well-functioning physical space. They said of the process:

“By combining like with like, we have identified five platforms, each a programmatic cluster that is architecturally defined and equipped for maximum, dedicated performance. Because each platform is designed for a unique purpose, they are different in size, density, and opacity. The in-between spaces are like trading floors where librarians inform and stimulate, where the interface between the different platforms is organized – spaces for work, interaction, and play (and reading)” (Mattern, 2007, p. 71).

(Source: ArchDaily, 2009)

Not only does the design support the operational function of the library, it is also visually interesting. The design of the building distinguishes itself from the other “characterless, generic” office towers and bank buildings surrounding it. According to Koolhaas, the building is designed specifically for Seattle, as it is a building designed “for drizzle, for mist, for greyness”. The glass façade allows for an interesting exchange with the weather, and the treated glass regulates the light flow into the building, and reduces glare. In the Living Room, the library’s quintessential public space, unfiltered light is welcomed into the building, but in the more private spaces, such as the stacks and workspaces, direct sunlight is filtered out. The glass façade also provides users of the space with views of Elliott Bay and Mount Rainier. *Architecture* magazine argues, “What designers Rem Koolhaas and Joshua Ramus have done here is nothing less than reinvent the public library on at least three fronts – form, function, and spirit. And it’s that last quality, spirit, that is the most resounding achievement” (Mattern, 2007, p. 72-77).

While the Central Library receives the most attention, Seattle’s other public library branches are well-designed buildings that help to maximize their benefit to the public. Over one third of these branches adhere to the co-location principle that has been identified within academic literature relating to library design. Most of the library branches within the Seattle Public Library system were rebuilt or redesigned as a result of the *Libraries for All* program, which demonstrates the city’s understanding of the importance of public library buildings within a community (Seattle Public Library, 2008).

Community Building

In the wake of the economic recession that began in 2008, the Seattle Public Library faced significant budget cuts. Over a four-year period, the book budget was cut by 13 percent, the majority of branches were closed two days a week, and the entire system had to be closed for an entire week to save money. In 2012, sixty-two percent of Seattle voters approved a seven-year, \$122 million property-tax levy to supplement city funding to increase library hours, and to allow for the purchase of new materials and technology. The public support of this levy demonstrates the importance of the public library in the lives of the city’s residents. As the President of the Seattle Public Library Board states, “The people of Seattle understand libraries provide access to lifelong learning and economic, social and cultural

benefits for all. Libraries are the safety net for our residents. They are where people show up for opportunity. They are where students get homework help, unemployed residents come for job resources and those without access to technology learn how to use computers” (Seattle Public Library, 2012). The importance of the public library for Seattle residents runs deep. In 1998, close to 70 percent of voters passed the \$290.7 million *Libraries for All* levy to expand, renovate, or build new branches in every neighbourhood within the city. Since 2011, over 39,000 residents have assisted with the creation of a strategic plan for the Seattle Public Library to set future goals and priorities. Through community surveys, community meetings, open houses, focus groups, and panel discussions, Seattle residents have been actively engaged in setting the course for the future of the Seattle Public Library (Seattle City Council, 2014).

During the life of the *Libraries for All* program, the role of the Seattle Public Library in the lives of the city’s residents became considerably more significant. The annual circulation of books and materials increased by 94 percent, library usage increased by 158 percent, annual attendance at library programs increased by 62 percent, and library card registration increased by 53 percent. Prior to *Libraries for All*, only nine library branches had community meeting rooms. Now, twenty-two out of twenty-seven branches have meeting rooms. The number of programs has increased by 7.6 percent since *Libraries for All*, and the Seattle Public Library now supports over 400 programs every month. In some cases, program participation is so high that people sometimes have to be turned away. As well, the co-location of library services with other institutions, including neighbourhood service centres, housing, community centres, and a Community College, helps to enhance the social and cultural connections within the community, while providing residents with better service alignment and delivery. Furthermore, *Libraries for All* has made it possible for the Seattle Public Library to provide support and outreach to immigrants and refugees. Because of expanded space and the addition of new branches, the Library has been able to bridge service gaps to provide services and programs to those who need them the most, and provide residents with the social, economic, and cultural resources they need to be successfully participate in their communities. The Library offers classes, equipment, computer-assisted learning programs, language-learning stations, and conversation classes for practice speaking English. As well, the Library

carries collections in over 40 different languages. The programs offered by the Seattle Public Library demonstrate its commitment to building connections and supporting a diverse community through the library system. By ensuring that every neighbourhood in Seattle contains an accessible and resource-rich library branch, *Libraries for All* has made the Seattle Public Library a place of community building – where people can gather, connect, and learn (Seattle Public Library, 2008).

Koolhaas and Prince-Ramus' library design has provided Seattle with a new civic, cultural, and public space. The exterior of the building draws people in and the amenities inside encourage them to stay, including the library's 'Living Room'. Its walls are lined with engaging art, and a café and seating areas "encourages visitors to be comfortable in the space, facilitating a feeling of public ownership" (Berk & Associates, 2005, p. 33). The design of the space allows it to function as a lively public space, which is demonstrated by the large number of office workers, passersby, and homeless individuals who use the space, in addition to those using the library's services. As well, the Library has contributed to revitalization efforts at the heart of the Center City Initiative, which is aimed at making Seattle's downtown a more attractive place to live. Over the past decade, the area has transformed from a retail and commercial centre to a more dense, mixed-use neighbourhood, and a growing residential population has increased the demand for neighbourhood amenities and additional public and community spaces. The Central Library is one of the main public spaces for downtown residents, while also serving as the main library branch for residents in the area. The Library's position in Seattle's Central Business District, amid office buildings, government buildings, and financial institutions, and its ability to draw people in from nearby residential developments and retail outlets, helps to knit together the diverse uses in the downtown area. Furthermore, the Library connects downtown and a neighbourhood to its east called First Hill, which has experienced significant urban infill development over the last few years. A freeway acts as a barrier between downtown and First Hill, but the developer associated with the First Hill project believes that the Central Library has the ability to make the freeway crossing "more vibrant day and night, weekday and weekend" (Berk & Associates, 2005, p. 35). The library's contribution to the overall livability of the downtown area has provided the city with significant economic returns.

Economic Benefits

New and renovated library buildings enhance the public realm, draw more people to them, and generate significant economic benefits for a city because of the land use impacts they produce. The success of the Seattle Public Library's Central Library provides evidence of the transformative power of a library to redefine learning, community, and economic development. During its first year of operation, the new Central Library attracted more than 8,000 visitors a day (double the average attendance in the old building), and the net new contribution to the local economy was close to \$16 million. Future projections indicate that over the next ten years, the Central Library has the potential to generate \$310 million in new economic activity for Seattle (Seattle Public Library, 2014b; Berk & Associates, 2005).

The strategic integration of design and function has provided significant impacts on Seattle's economy. Because the 21st century knowledge economy is centred on services, information, and knowledge, access to information is imperative. The design of the building provides patrons with greater access to information through an innovative circulation system, and with over 500 computers and millions of books available, patrons have access to a significant amount of resources. The new building is also an important public space and destination within Seattle. Overall, the Central Library is an economic development asset for Seattle because it promotes economic activity in the city, boosts the city's character and livability, and enhances Seattle's image and identity (Berk & Associates, 2005).

Many of the Library's economic impacts stem from the role it plays in the city's network of attractions, and its function as an important regional tourist destination. Visitor spending in restaurants, hotels, and retail establishments contributes to the city's economy. Local businesses in particular have felt the economic impacts associated with the Central Library, and since it opened, many businesses in Seattle's financial district have noticed an increase in pedestrian activity, which has changed the overall atmosphere in the area, as the increased activity has made the financial district much more lively. In addition to the economic benefits associated with an increase in library visits, there is an inherent economic value in the role of the library as an information resource. Information and literacy contributes to personal and professional development, which leads to greater business productivity. As well, some local businesses benefit from the availability of library resources (Berk & Associates, 2005).

The Central Library also plays a key role in Seattle's image and identity. The architecture of the library speaks to those who value art, design, architecture, and public space, and it enhances Seattle's reputation as a place of learning, creativity, and innovation. The city has long been home to entrepreneurs and innovators, and because the Central Library reflects the value the city places on knowledge and public amenities, it will help the city attract and retain its intellectual capital. According to the Downtown Seattle Association, "people who could live anywhere are more likely to want to live here now. After the tech bust, Seattle lost some of its luster; we became less of an attractive place. The new Library is helping us regain some of our status as a hip and interesting city; a place that young people especially, will consider a hot spot" (Berk & Associates, 2005, p. 43). The Library's ability to transform Seattle into a hip and interesting city is partly due to the considerable media coverage it has received since it opened. National and international media have highlighted the new Library, with much of the focus being on its design. GQ listed the Library as one of the 25 structures that everyone should know about, while Volkswagen featured the library in a print advertisement that ran on the back cover of the New Yorker in 2004. The Central Library's 'cool factor' has been described as providing the greatest economic development impact for Seattle (Berk & Associates, 2005).

Planning Context

The Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle, a 20-year vision and guide for the development of the city's future, guides planning in Seattle. According to the Seattle Department of Planning and Development, the Plan "guides City decisions on where to make capital investments such as utilities, sidewalks, and libraries. Our Comprehensive Plan is the framework for most of Seattle's big-picture decisions on how to grow while preserving and improving our neighbourhoods" (2013). The city is currently in the process of reviewing and updating the Plan to guide the city's growth and development over the next 20 years. The *Seattle 2035* plan is in the initial stages of development.

At the heart of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan are the following values:

- **Community**

The goal of the Plan is to develop and foster strong connections between diverse groups of people and places.

- **Environmental Stewardship**

The Plan seeks to improve and protect the quality of the city's natural environment, as well as foster the city's role as a steward of global environmental protection.

- **Economic Opportunity and Security**

The Plan recognizes that a strong economy and employment opportunities are essential to maintain the city's quality of life.

- **Social Equity**

The Plan acknowledges that the limited resources and opportunities available to Seattle residents must be shared, and the inclusion of under-represented communities in decision-making processes and discussions around the allocation of resources is vital to the success of the city.

Since 1994, the Seattle Comprehensive Plan has been successful in directing significant investments to urban centres and villages, which are areas in the city where housing and job growth are encouraged. The Plan has also allowed for the development of programs that help to maintain a high quality of life for the city's residents. More specifically, the Plan led to the passing of levies to support affordable housing, public libraries, community centres, and parks. The updates to the Comprehensive Plan that are taking shape in the Seattle 2035 Plan acknowledge the significant population growth within Seattle, as well as a significant increase in diversity and changing employment needs. The updated Plan is intended to ensure the city's infrastructure, services, and amenities can accommodate future growth and connect people to jobs, education, and cultural resources.

The Comprehensive Plan conforms to higher-level policies that also inform planning decisions in the Seattle area. These policies include the *Washington State Growth Management Act*, *Vision 2040*, and King County's Countywide Planning Policies.

- ***Washington State Growth Management Act***

The goals of this policy document include supporting economic development throughout the state by providing economic opportunities for unemployed and disadvantaged populations through the capacity of the state's public facilities. Furthermore, the policy document dictates that public facilities and services must meet the needs of the communities they are serving by ensuring service levels meet locally established minimum standards (Washington State Legislature, 2013).

- ***Vision 2040***

Vision 2040 is a Regional Growth Strategy for the Puget Sound Region. The aim of the Strategy is to promote the well-being of the region's residents and communities, economic vitality, and a healthy environment. The Strategy places significant emphasis on strategic investment in the region's public services, as it recognizes that the provision of adequate services and facilities, such as public libraries, help the region to maintain the health, safety, and economic vitality of its many communities. As well, it acknowledges that the siting of such facilities is an important component of growth management and curbing sprawl within the region (Puget Sound Regional Council, 2008).

- **King County's Countywide Planning Policies**

These planning policies acknowledge that human and community services are necessary to sustain the health and quality of life of the area's residents. The policies dictate that the provision of human and community needs must meet the needs of current and future residents and communities through coordinated planning, funding, and delivery of services by the county, cities, and other agencies (Department of Permitting and Environmental Review, 2012).

An examination of Seattle's planning documents demonstrates the city's commitment to protecting and preserving the public library as an important component of Seattle's public life. The policy statements from all levels of government express the importance of community services and facilities, such as public libraries, in providing a foundation for social well-being, economic vitality and growth management strategies. Strong public support combined with strong public policy has created a highly successful urban public library system.

TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY – Toronto, Ontario

With 98 (two additional branches are currently being built) branches, the Toronto Public Library is the largest public library system in Canada, and is one of the busiest public library systems in the world. Every year, over 18.5 million people visit the Library and borrow more than 32 million items. The aim of the Toronto Public Library is to be “recognized as the world’s leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making us all more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful” (Toronto Public Library, 2014).

Design

In a 2008 report commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Newman makes the case that public library buildings should be prominent in the infrastructure revitalization programs of all levels of government. She argues that infrastructure support and renewal initiatives for both new buildings and renovations have been lagging in the province’s public library sector. According to Newman, “libraries cannot act on many promising possibilities in inflexible or crumbling buildings. To meet future needs, public libraries require more meeting space, collaborative learning space and quiet zones” (2008, p. 27). Furthermore, innovation support for Ontario’s public libraries has been “small and uneven”. Libraries in small municipalities (population of 20,000 or less) are eligible for funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation’s Community Grants Program; however, libraries in larger municipalities are not eligible for this funding. Combined with the lack of provincial support, large municipalities in Ontario, including Toronto, carry the burden of the costs associated with innovating and extending the services of their public libraries (Newman, 2008).

In terms of design, the Toronto Public Library does not compare to other world-class libraries, such as the central library buildings in Seattle and Vancouver. However, a recent revitalization of the

The location of the Toronto Reference Library
(Map Source: Bloor-Yorkville, 2014)

Toronto Reference Library, located near the intersection of Yonge and Bloor Streets, has provided the system with much needed innovation. It recently underwent a five-year, \$34 million revitalization to “recreate the Reference Library as Toronto’s foremost public centre for lifelong learning, the exchange of ideas and community engagement”, and “to create a dynamic interface between the library and its community,

connecting the library’s interior more directly to the street, and the public services inside” (Toronto Public Library, 2014b; The Toronto Blog.com, 2012). The key elements of the renovation of the Reference Library, which was originally designed by Raymond Moriyama in the 1970s, include a new glass entrance cube nearly three storeys tall and visible from all directions, an expanded and revitalized gallery space that allows visitors to better engage with the library’s Special Collections, an expanded browsery on the main floor with a glass façade running along the Yonge Street side of the building, and a number of new study spaces, including free-standing translucent study pods and a group study room. Overall, the renovation of the Reference Library will enhance the library’s research and study areas and collaborative space, and will provide patrons with access to new and innovative technology, which will optimize connectivity and collaborative information exchange within the city (Toronto Public Library, 2014b).

Toronto Reference Library – Before Renovation and After Renovation
(Photo Sources: Moriyama & Teshima Architects, 2014; Toronto Public Library, 2014)

The Toronto Reference Library has an interesting design history. The original design proposed by Moriyama featured a five-storey, glass-walled building that would stand out among the 100 year old heritage buildings around the site of the library. There was opposition to the design as well as the \$30

million price tag, and as a result, Moriyama changed the design and recessed brick walls replaced the glass walls.

Moriyama's original design for the Toronto Reference Library
(Photo Source: Topping, 2012)

The renovation of the library, which was designed by Moriyama's son Ajon Moriyama, partner at Moriyama & Teshima Architects, pays tribute to the original design for the building with the glass cube at the entrance to the building. According to Linda MacKenzie, director of research and reference libraries for the Toronto Public Library, "before the renovations you could walk down Yonge Street and not really

be aware that there was a library here. MacKenzie believes the glass entrance cube acts as “our beacon out into the community, and an invitation in” (Topping, 2012).

In addition to the Toronto Reference Library, the new Fort York Library, set to open in early 2014, will provide the city with a new design-oriented library branch. Located on the northeast corner of Bathurst Street and Fort York Boulevard, the Fort York Branch will service the West Waterfront and CityPlace communities.

The location of the Fort York Library Branch
(Map Source: KPMB Architects, 2014)

This branch will provide an important public amenity in this relatively new neighbourhood. The 15,000 square foot library is attached to a residential tower and is adjacent to a new public park that is currently being planned. The library building is made up of a two-storey building with a glass façade that provides views to Fort York and the rest of the city. The exterior of the library will feature a public art project based on The Journals of Susannah Moodie, a collaboration between contemporary artist, Charles Pachter and Margaret Atwood. The art and poetry of these two Canadian artists will be featured. Also featured in the interior of the library is a staircase and ceiling beams constructed out of Douglas fir, which pay tribute to the historic wood cribbing excavated on the site where the library sits. These design elements will help create a strong sense of place within the library. (KPMB Architects, 2014).

According to the project’s architects, Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects (KPMB), “flexibility for future change was critical to the design. The armature of the public social spaces carries the identity of the branch, and functional spaces for book storage, study, reading, media are all designed to be flexible. As condominiums are built allowing smaller and smaller spaces for people to live in, the public

branch library becomes the place to escape to, to hang out in, important egalitarian spaces in our community” (2014). The Fort York Branch will provide the neighbourhood with an urban living room or third place, where people can gain access to important social and community services that cater to longstanding residents and new immigrants. Anne Bailey, director of branch libraries for the Toronto Public Library believes the new branch, with its open and welcoming design will attract people to the area, as “great architecture invites people in”. She believes the Fort York Branch will be among the most used library branches in the city (Scrivener, 2013; KPMB Architects, 2014).

The new Fort York Library and public park (Photo Source: KPMB Architects, 2014)

Despite these design successes, chronic underfunding has resulted in infrastructure challenges for the Toronto Public Library. A 2008 report on the state of public library infrastructure in Ontario “is in crisis and needs immediate attention”. The report outlines four problems that need to be addressed, including inadequate space to meet user demand, aging facilities need to be repaired or replaced, facilities need to be made more accessible, and temporary facilities need to be converted into permanent facilities (Rao, 2012, p. 22; Newman, 2008). Many of Toronto’s libraries were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s and require significant investment to bring them to a good state of repair, however, because of insufficient funding, infrastructure repair and expansion has been neglected. In 2012, a report released by the Federation of Ontario Libraries centered on the capital needs of Ontario libraries revealed that the Toronto

Public Library was in need of \$162 million to \$189 million to return its branches to a state-of-good-repair.

Rao argues,

The Toronto Public Library is in desperate need of an immediate and long-term reinvestment in staff, books and materials acquisition, repairs and new buildings to continue to serve the growing needs of the population. The city's challenge is not to cut, but rather to expand library services for Toronto's residents in a tough economy and in the context of a growing gap in wealth, opportunities and widening social exclusion. Toronto's library system has been a key factor in making the city a successful international example of a diverse, inclusive city. Chronic underfunding only undercuts this great achievement" (2012, p. 23).

In the City of Toronto's 2013-2022 Capital Budget and Plan, \$237 million was dedicated to the Toronto Public Library for infrastructure improvements, including the completion of the Mount Dennis Library renovation, the revitalization of the Toronto Reference Library, and the construction of two new library branches (City of Toronto, 2013a). While this funding will allow the Library to meet its current capital needs and address some of its state-of-good-repair backlog, future budgets may not allocate adequate funding to the Toronto Public Library. The city's libraries still have gains to make from greater investments in infrastructure support and renewal.

Community

According to Newman, the diversity of Ontario's population makes it challenging to serve hundreds of communities with a wide range of resources tailored to each community's diverse needs. She argues that "building the capacity in the six large urban public libraries, which serve 40% of Ontarians, would respond not only to diversity in these communities, but would also make resources such as collections and professional expertise available to other communities on a shared basis" (2008, p. 5). The users of the Toronto Public Library are very diverse, and the Library has played a significant role in bringing together the city's diverse population. Since the beginning of the Toronto Public Library in 1884, it has exhibited significant growth and has added important programs that serve the needs of Toronto's residents. The Library provides resources for people with disabilities, literacy services, children's programming, and the Bookmobile for residents with mobility challenges. The community benefits provided by the Toronto Public Library have been largely responsible for its popularity within the city, and the demand for the library's services has never been higher. In a survey conducted in 2012, 72 percent of

Toronto's adult population reported using the library in the past year. Furthermore, 44 percent of the adult population are frequent users (once per month) of the city's library branches. According to Rao, "more people visit the Toronto Public Library every year than the annual total for 10 culture, arts, and entertainment facilities in the Toronto area, including the Air Canada Centre (events, Leafs, and Raptors), the Rogers Centre (events, Blue Jays), the CN Tower, the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada's Wonderland, the Toronto Zoo, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario Science Centre, the CNE, and the Toronto International Film Festival" (2012, pp. 11-12; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013).

Research conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in 2012 reveals that the number of people who use the Toronto Public Library is relatively even across age and income, however, recent immigrants (67%) are more frequent users of the Library than the Toronto average (44%), and more women than men hold library cards (57.5%). Among frequent library users, usage is spread evenly across all income levels, which means the Library plays an equalizing role within the city. This is particularly important in light of the income polarization that Toronto has experienced since the 1970s. In 1970, over 65 percent of neighbourhoods were middle-income and only one percent were very low-income neighbourhoods. In contrast to these statistics, by 2005, only 29 percent of neighbourhoods were middle income, while 13 percent of neighbourhoods were characterized as very low-income. If things continue as they have in the past, 20 percent of Toronto's population will be low-income by 2015. The resources and programs offered by the Toronto Public Library provide the city with a mechanism to overcome the social and economic disadvantages faced by many of its residents. While some people may feel cut off from the "richness of the city", the public library provides an inclusive and welcoming space for all of the city's residents. The heavy use of the Toronto Public Library and its "increasingly important social role for the community" make it a vital service within the city – one that needs to be protected through strong policy and funding initiatives (Rao, 2012, p. 14).

The services and programs offered by the Toronto Public Library respond to the city's diversity and provide welcoming and accessible space that allows anyone to participate regardless of socio-economic or cultural background. These programs and services help to support social cohesion and tolerance, which increases the livability of Toronto. The Toronto Public Library fosters diversity and helps

to support the development of strong communities throughout the city in a number of ways. Library collections and materials are offered in forty languages, and the library offers a number of focused collections, including Native Peoples and LGBT collections, collections available through the CNIB Partners program for library patrons with print disabilities, and a collection of over 360 circulating books and DVDs for adults with developmental disabilities. The Library Settlement Program, which is a partnership between the library and sixteen community-based newcomer agencies, offers one-on-one guidance for close to 9,500 new Toronto residents, including English classes, accreditation information, and citizenship resources. The program has helped over 25,000 newcomers gain access to the services and resources needed to settle within their communities and the city as a whole. Overall, the library offers a number of meeting and community spaces that respond to the needs of users of different ages and backgrounds (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013).

In 2011, in an attempt to close an estimated \$774 million gap in the 2012 budget, the city manager called on the Library Board to cut ten percent from its operating budget. As well, Mayor Rob Ford's fight to eliminate the 'gravy train' at city hall by making cuts to key services in the city included the proposed closure of a number of Toronto Public Library branches. The proposed cuts to the Toronto Public Library stemmed from the recommendations outlined in two consultant reports – the 2011 *City of Toronto: Core Service Review* report released by KPMG and a report released by DPRA Consulting that examined the service efficiency of the Toronto Public Library – both of which suggested that the City could generate savings by closing some library branches, reducing the hours of operation, or by reducing or eliminating programs and outreach activities. The KPMG report identified the Toronto Public Library's service related to Study and Community Access as 'above standard', and concluded that the Library's service standard could be reduced to the lower standard of American public libraries. Rao (2012) states, "KPMG looked abroad to American public library systems decimated by years of deep funding cuts for a model for Toronto libraries just as officials from those regions were themselves looking to Toronto as a model of a "healthy and outstanding" library system to emulate" (p. 20). The DPRA report also suggested that branch closures and cuts to service hours would not lead to service reductions. Both KPMG and DPRA use American benchmarks when establishing their standards, and as such, their recommendations

undermined the unique needs of the city's population, and failed to take into consideration the importance of the Toronto Public Library to the city's urban fabric. According to Rao, "neither report took into account the diverse, immigrant character of the city or the equalizing nature of public libraries anywhere among their consideration. When their contracted mission is solely to recommend spending cuts, consultants quickly learn to ignore the real value of public services" (2012, p. 21; Church, 2011).

The proposed service cuts and branch closures led to an "unprecedented display of support" for the Toronto Public Library. An online petition to protest the potential closures received close to 25,000 signatures. In light of the support given to saving the Toronto Public Library, a 5.9 percent budget cut was approved – 4.1 percent less than the city manager's request for a decrease of 10 percent. This was a victory for the Library, but it was achieved at great cost. While no branches were closed, the Toronto Public Library was forced to eliminate 107 positions and reduce its acquisitions budget, forcing the city's libraries to maintain service levels with fewer staff and resources than needed (Rider, 2011; Rao, 2012).

Economic Benefits

As the literature and case studies reveal, public libraries have documented potential to contribute to a city's economic development. According to Newman, "Ontario has major opportunities to leverage that potential more systematically" (2008, p. 5). According to a report released by the Martin Prosperity Institute (MPI) in December 2013, the Toronto Public Library is providing significant economic benefits to the City of Toronto. The MPI, a global think-tank on the role of location, place, and city-regions in global economic prosperity, conducted an economic impact study of the Toronto Public Library, and the results indicate that the city's public library system delivers a strong return on investment through the delivery of library services. The report suggests that for every dollar invested in the Toronto Public Library, Toronto residents receive \$5.63 in return. This economic impact results from the market value of services delivered, as well as the impacts of direct spending and re-spending within Toronto's economy. The report estimates that the total direct benefit equals as much as \$500 per library member. Furthermore, the report reveals that the average open hour at any of the Toronto Public Library's 98 branches generates \$2,515 in direct benefits. The average cost of an open hour is \$653, which means the average benefit is

close to four times the average cost. Overall, the return on the city's investment in the library system is 463 percent. The Toronto Public Library spends close to \$200 million for direct spending, and Torontonians receive close to \$681 million in direct tangible benefits from the services used by residents across the city. The library generates \$142 million in indirect benefits to Toronto's economy from library spending on infrastructure and branch improvements, collection development, and support for service delivery (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013).

The report by the Martin Prosperity Institute makes it clear that the Toronto Public Library contributes significant economic benefits to Toronto's economy and the return on the city's investment into the Toronto Public Library is considerable. However, the chronic underfunding that has plagued the library system since the 1990s demonstrates that the city is not fully leveraging the potential of the Toronto Public Library to contribute to the city's economic development. As the data presented by the MPI shows, greater investment can contribute to greater gains for the city. To ensure Toronto is competitive and prosperous, collaborative strategies that help to strengthen workforce talent through education and lifelong learning, and through fostering the talent of immigrants are needed. The services provided by the Toronto Public Library contribute to the economic outcomes stemming from education and learning, however, because these benefits are intangible and cannot be easily quantifiable, the role of the Library in the city's future economic growth is likely being overlooked. According to the Martin Prosperity Institute, strategic alignment with the City's plans for economic growth and policies that contribute to the livability of the city is needed to "create an attractive climate for business investment and support a sustainable cycle of prosperity" (2013, p. 4).

Planning Context

Planning in Ontario is guided by the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), which is the statement of the government's policies on land use planning. The PPS is used by municipalities to develop their official plans and to make decisions about other planning matters. According to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the PPS "recognizes the complex inter-relationships among economic, environmental and social factors in planning and embodies good planning principles. It provides strong,

clear policy direction on land use planning to promote strong communities, a clean and health environment and a strong economy” (2013). While not explicitly noted, it is assumed that public libraries are categorized as ‘public service facilities’ in the PPS. Public service facilities are defined within the PPS as “land, buildings and structures for the provision of programs and services provided or subsidized by a government or other body, such as social assistance, recreation, police and fire protection, health and educational programs, and cultural services” (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2005, p. 34). The PPS outlines that the development of healthy, livable and safe communities depends on an appropriate range of uses, as well as the availability of infrastructure and public service facilities that are able to meet current and projected long-term needs. The long-term availability and maintenance of infrastructure and public service facilities is essential to enhance the vitality and viability of downtown neighbourhoods and to ensure the long-term economic prosperity of Ontario’s cities (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2005).

The Official Plan is the most important vehicle for implementation of the Provincial Policy Statement. Toronto’s Official Plan sets out the vision for the growth of the city to the year 2031. The Official Plan “is about making the right choices and shaping Toronto’s collective future. The Plan is about getting the fundamentals right. It is about having a clear vision for the City – grounded in durable principles that assure a successful future” (City of Toronto, 2010a, p. 1-1). The current Official Plan is grounded in the following principles: diversity and opportunity, beauty, connectivity, and leadership and stewardship (City of Toronto, 2010a).

A number of policies within the Official Plan recognize the important role played by the city’s public libraries in shaping Toronto’s future. Chapter 2, Section 2.31, which addresses the issue of creating healthy neighbourhoods, acknowledges that libraries are an important part of Torontonians’ daily lives, and because of their significance, they should be enhanced where needed through infrastructure improvements or expansion. Similarly, Chapter 4, Section 4.1, which outlines policy directives for Toronto’s Neighbourhoods, states, “low scale local institutions play an important role in the rhythm of daily life in Neighbourhoods” (p. 4-3). Toronto’s libraries are considered to be one such low scale institution. Furthermore, Sections 3.2.2 (Community Services and Facilities), 4.5 (Mixed Use Areas), and 4.8

(Institutional Areas) all specify that libraries are needed to meet the needs of Toronto's communities. Toronto's libraries are "woven into communities throughout the City and permitted in most designations" (City of Toronto, 2010a, p. 4-16).

The above policy statements demonstrate that the City's planning department understands the importance of public libraries in the creation of healthy communities and successful neighbourhoods. These policy statements suggest that the City has an understanding of the various impacts that public libraries have within a community, including the creation of well-designed public spaces, community building, and economic development. This understanding is further articulated through the Community Services and Facilities (CS&F) Studies that are undertaken by the City's Community Planning department. These studies generally include a review of existing library infrastructure. The CS&F study is undertaken in areas undergoing major growth and transition to ensure that the local community infrastructure is able to sufficiently support the health, safety and well-being of local residents. The study reviews the social, economic, and demographic composition of the community and identifies service gaps, future needs, and opportunities within the community. As part of the City's latest Official Plan Review, a CS&F study was undertaken for the King-Spadina neighbourhood in downtown Toronto. A study was undertaken for this neighbourhood because over the last decade the area has undergone major growth and transition. With respect to public libraries in the neighbourhood, the study identified a gap in library service, as the closest library branch to the neighbourhood is the Sanderson Branch located on Dundas Street West and Bathurst Street. However, this service gap will be alleviated with the opening of the Fort York Branch (City of Toronto, 2010b).

While the existence of the CS&F study exhibits that the City is concerned with the adequate provision of community services, the process only captures the gaps in service and infrastructure needs of areas in transition. For well-established neighbourhoods with library capacity issues or infrastructure-related issues, this process does nothing to ensure their needs are adequately met. The selection of the study area reflects the issue the City faces in choosing priorities in responding to demands for investment, which is outlined in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3 of the Official Plan. This section addresses the constant need for strategic reinvestment in infrastructure and service improvements that are required to maintain

the city's quality of life, but states that because of significant demands for investment, priorities for reinvestment need to be made from year to year (City of Toronto, 2010a).

These priorities are sometimes carried out through the use of Section 37 benefits. These benefits are provided for in Section 37 of the *Planning Act*, which allows cities to ensure growth is achieved in a balanced and responsible manner. Section 37 stipulates that additional height and density above what is permitted by the Zoning By-law for a specific project can be granted in return for community benefits, such as the provision of community facilities. Section 37 agreements, which are made between the developer of the project and the City, are intended to promote the city-building objectives outlined within the Official Plan, and to ensure the needs of local communities are being met (City of Toronto, 2010a). Section 37 benefits are somewhat of a contentious issue in Toronto. The City's planning department negotiates the value of Section 37 benefits, however, the ward councillor of the development area determines how these benefits will be allocated within a community. Some argue that ward councillors have been given too much power in this regard and they suggest that the city planning department should play a larger role in the allocation of these community benefits. The other side of this argument is that elected officials should be responsible for determining what is best for the community. Patrick Devine, a Toronto development lawyer who practices municipal and planning law, suggests "these spending decisions lack oversight by the planning department, are not governed by a defined process and are not linked to a policy that addresses larger planning goals." He argues, "there is a disconnect here between the development process, which is detailed and rigorous, and the more ad hoc approach followed by Section 37" (Moussaoui, 2013).

In April 2013, the Toronto Public Library's Budget Committee provided recommendations to the Library Board regarding strategies for increasing Section 37 funding for the Library. The Budget Committee recommended that the Library Board provide ward councillors with the Library's response to development proposals, meet with Councillors to discuss library enhancements and investment needs that qualify as Section 37 community benefits, and meet with the City Planning Division to provide updates on the needs of branches across the city and opportunities for community benefit projects that qualify for Section 37 funding (Toronto Public Library Budget Committee, 2013). Increased cooperation

and deliberation between the Toronto Public Library Board, ward councillors, and planning staff will help to ensure that the needs of communities across the city with respect to library services will be adequately addressed by all parties involved. Despite the ad hoc process that governs the negotiation and allocation of Section 37 benefits in Toronto, the Toronto Public Library has been successful in securing Section 37 benefits. The new Fort York Branch is being funded through Section 37 benefits, and a new Perth-Dupont Branch will be constructed in the city's Junction Triangle neighbourhood using Section 37 funding.

The Perth-Dupont Branch is currently the smallest branch in the city, and has been overcrowded for years. The branch has been ranked as one of the city's lowest circulation branches despite the fact that there are waiting lists for almost every program offered by the library. When the Toronto Public Library faced threats of branch closures, Junction Triangle residents rallied together to create a public-private partnership to fund an expansion of their library. Residents worked with their ward councillor, Ana Bailao to negotiate with the developer of a new condominium in the neighbourhood for Section 37 benefits to provide the community with a new library. Bailao was able to secure \$1 million in Section 37 funding, and a new 10,000 square foot library will be opening in the next few years (Rainford, 2013). The way in which Section 37 benefits were negotiated for use by the Toronto Public Library demonstrate the role played by ward councillors in the negotiation of such community benefits, but it also highlights the issues associated with this process. The Perth-Dupont branch has exceeded capacity for years, but it took a collaborative effort between residents and their ward councillor to secure a new library building for the community. There was a role for the city's planning department to play in the provision of a new library for the Junction Triangle neighbourhood, but it seems that role was not adequately fulfilled.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Contributions of the Public Library

The case studies outlined in the previous chapter clearly demonstrate the contributions made by urban public libraries. The public library systems in Vancouver, Seattle, and Toronto all exhibit a strong connection to the community, with each library catering to the specific needs of the unique communities they serve. The Working Together Program spearheaded by the Vancouver Public Library highlights both the opportunities for and constraints to actively engaging a community of library users to connect with one another and the community as a whole. A significant amount of academic literature points to the positive community benefits generated through the public library, but provides very little insight into how marginalized groups or non-users of the library access these benefits. The literature highlights the public library as a free and open public space, wherein people feel a sense of community ownership, but as the Working Together Program demonstrates, there are many individuals who feel marginalized from the public library. The work done by the Vancouver Public Library through this program highlights the role that the public library can play in building social capital, and also emphasizes the role of the public library as a catalyst for civic engagement, capacity building, and social cohesion. Through effective engagement with community members and strategic policy shifts, public libraries can maximize their role as a ‘democratic equalizer’ (Scott, 2011).

One commonality between all three of the library systems outlined within this research is the role of the library as a ‘third place’. The Vancouver Central Library provides the city with a distinct, mixed-used urban room, the Seattle Central Library offers an ‘urban living room’ on the ground floor of the building, while the Toronto Reference Library’s ground floor provides a lively and collaborative work space for library patrons and community members. Each of these spaces draw people in and help to redefine the public role of the library. Rather than providing a space that evokes the quiet solitude of reading that is often associated with libraries, these urban rooms provide a mix of uses, resulting in an ‘activated public space’ within the community (Mattern 2007). In his seminal work, *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg (1991) expresses concern that a lack of informal gathering places necessary to support public life

threatens a city's social vitality. He argues, "without such places, the urban area fails to nourish the kinds of relationships and the diversity of human contact that are the essence of the city" (p. xxviii). The inclusion of open, mixed-use spaces in the Vancouver Central Library, the Seattle Central Library, and the Toronto Reference Library provide surrounding communities with this type of informal meeting space – the third place – that Oldenburg speaks of in his research. Providing people with a space within which they can engage with others provides a solid foundation for community building, and creates an opportunity to unite the city. The libraries outlined within this research demonstrate the significant community benefits that a well-designed public library can generate. The large number of people who visit each library every year helps to reinforce this line of reasoning.

With respect to the design of the libraries discussed within the case studies, they demonstrate the significance of redefining the role of the library through the use of innovative design. The Seattle Central Library and the Vancouver Central Library, in particular, demonstrate the effort made by these cities to reassert the relevance of their public libraries by changing the "exterior representation of the institution" (Mattern, 2007, p. viii). The recent renovations to the Toronto Reference Library also represent a shift in thinking around the function of the public library. A recent article in *The New York Times* reveals that library usage has increased across the United States because of design innovations, and "because libraries have been reimagining themselves – a necessity for staying relevant as municipal budgets are slashed and e-books are on the rise". The article points out that "libraries are presenting a dramatically more open face to the outside world, using lots of glass, providing comfortable seating, as much for collaborative work as solitary pursuits" (Seelye, 2014). This trend is also highlighted in academic literature, particularly in the work of Mattern (2007), whose work focuses on the 'new' downtown library. Her work highlights both the Vancouver Central Library and the Seattle Central Library, both of which have helped to lead the way for library innovation. The Vancouver Central Library opened in 1995 and the Seattle Central Library opened in 2004, which demonstrates how important these public library systems are within each city, as well as how far ahead there are from other cities with respect to innovative and functional library design. Moriyama's original design for the Toronto Reference Library would have placed Toronto in the same context as Seattle and Vancouver. The design was bold and innovative, and certainly

ahead of its time, but because of the city's distaste for such a modern building at that time, a more conservative approach was taken and a nondescript building now acts as the central hub for the Toronto Public Library. That being said, the Toronto Public Library has begun to demonstrate an awareness of the importance of redefining library space, as demonstrated by the revitalization of the Toronto Reference Library, which has provided new collaborative study spaces and a new glass façade at the entrance of the building that opens up the library to the street and the surrounding neighbourhood. As well, the construction of the new Fort York Branch, which is intended to be a vibrant and unifying space for the surrounding community, featuring public art and ties to the history of the neighbourhood, demonstrates the desire of the Toronto Public Library to reassert its relevance within the city.

An interesting take away from these case studies is the value of the architect selection process when constructing or revitalizing a library building. The high-profile nature of both the Vancouver and Seattle Central Libraries demonstrates the significance of design competitions for drawing attention to the role played by the public library in urban life. Design competitions provide significant gains for cities as they provide a basis to enhance the built environment of the city, while providing the city with a number of community and economic benefits. As Mattern (2007) points out, several cities have chosen high-profile architects with the aim of transforming the library into a downtown destination. She argues, "the preference for visionary design and prestige is in many cases motivated by a desire to bring world-class architecture to the city, rejuvenate the downtown, or raise the city's national and international reputation" (p. 21). The architectural significance of both the Seattle and Vancouver Central Libraries has been noticed, and many cities, including Denver and Salt Lake City, have tried to emulate their success. Architects who involve the public in the design process can generate even greater success, as the community of people involved in the process is able to garner a greater sense of ownership over this important community asset. In the process of designing the Seattle Central Library, Rem Koolhaas regularly met with library and city representatives and members of the public to discuss his design (Mattern, 2007).

While Vancouver and Seattle have been successful in creating downtown destinations for residents and visitors alike through architecturally significant library buildings, Toronto lags behind in this

regard. The architect commissioned to complete the revitalization of the Toronto Reference Library is the original architect's son, which is significant in that he was able to pay tribute to the original design of the library with the glass box that now flanks the entrance to the library, however, greater dialogue around the redesign of that building could have garnered more attention for the city's (pseudo) central library. The Toronto Public Library is one of the busiest urban library systems in the world – the architecture of its buildings should reflect this success.

In terms of the economic benefits generated from a city's public library, the case studies demonstrate the importance of determining how much value the public library contributes to a city's economic growth. Studies of this nature have been undertaken throughout the United States; however, there is a lack of this type of research for Canadian library systems. The 2013 report that was issued by the Martin Prosperity Institute addressing the economic value of the Toronto Public Library is the first official report of its kind to be released in Canada. While the Vancouver Public Library case study points to a consultant's report that assesses its economic value, the information is based merely on estimates drawn up by the researchers. A formal evaluation of the economic value of the Vancouver Public Library system is lacking. The studies undertaken in both Toronto and Seattle provide well-researched and accurate information relating to the economic value of each library system. As the research indicates, libraries have the potential to generate significant economic gains, however, without an understanding of their true value, policy and budgetary decisions cannot be made effectively. Cities across Canada, in partnership with their public library systems, should undertake studies to assess the economic value of their libraries to ensure they are maximizing their full potential, and are adequately protected when policy and budgetary decisions are being made.

Planning Policy and Public Libraries

In addition to demonstrating the contributions made by urban public libraries, the case studies outlined within this research also provide insight into the relationship between planning policies and public libraries. The planning policies that guide planning and development in Seattle and surrounding areas establish strong support for the preservation of the city's public libraries. The policy statements from all

levels of government demonstrate how important community services and facilities are for providing the city with a strong foundation for social well being and economic vitality. Even when the city faced significant budget constraints that threatened the future of its public library system, the decision to have Seattle residents vote on a property-tax levy to supplement city funding to increase library services clearly demonstrates how important it was to the city's decision makers to provide Seattle residents with a library system that was able to adequately serve their needs. Policy guides decision-making, and it is evident that without strong policy guidelines, the Seattle Public Library would not have been met with the same level of support, as it was the city's policy framework that allowed for the creation of the *Libraries for All* levy. Unlike the strong connection between planning policies and public libraries that exist within Seattle, the Vancouver case study reveals less of a connection between the city's planning policies and its public libraries. In general, the city's planning policies make very little mention of the importance of the city's public library services. However, planning in Vancouver is conducted at the neighbourhood level, with area-specific priorities being addressed, allowing for planners to have a better understanding of what each community needs. As well, each community plan stipulates that new or improved public library facilities are to be negotiated with the Library Board. With effective collaboration between the Library Board and city planners, infrastructure and service delivery improvements can be directed appropriately. While the planning policies in Vancouver do not provide statements that explicitly demonstrate the importance of the public library to the future growth of the city, the policies do provide stipulations that new libraries are to be provided where needed. The construction of the Central Library in the 1990s – which, at that time, was the largest capital project to be undertaken by the City of Vancouver demonstrates significant commitment by City officials to provide Vancouver with a landmark library building. Something that both Vancouver and Seattle have in common is that both municipal governments reached out to voters to determine the future of each library. In Vancouver, the Central Library was built after the majority of residents expressed a desire for a new library, while in Seattle, the *Libraries for All* levy was given the go ahead by a majority of voters. These two case studies demonstrate that policy directives combined with strong public support can help to ensure the success of the public library.

With respect to the relationship between planning policies and the Toronto Public Library, the goals and guiding principles of both the Provincial Policy Statement and Toronto's Official Plan demonstrate an acknowledgement of the importance of public facilities in the development of a successful city. Furthermore, the benefits that stem from the presence of public libraries correspond to the guiding principals of both policy documents. Unlike the policy statements from all levels of government that guide planning in Seattle and provide explicit directives for ensuring that public libraries remain a viable community service, the broad nature of the policy statements in the PPS make it difficult to determine how much weight is given to the importance of public libraries in Ontario's cities. Broad language also allows for a misinterpretation of the intended vision and goals. As well, when the Seattle Public Library was faced with devastating budget cuts, city officials worked to preserve the service levels by reaching out to the public to determine if protecting the library was something they were interested in and willing to support. When Toronto was faced with the same budgetary constraints, the city's Mayor and some council members suggested the closure of several of the city's library branches. It took significant public opposition for the city to rethink its stance on the future of the Toronto Public Library. This demonstrates that despite the policy directives that exist within Toronto, the future of the city's public library system is at the whim of those with decision-making power. It is also unlikely that Toronto taxpayers would support a tax levy to help fund library services for the city, as was done in Seattle. The future of the Toronto Public Library will depend on stable public funding and a strong policy foundation to ensure it is able to meet the needs of its users and remain a community anchor and public domain for creativity within the city.

Strategic partnerships between all three levels of government will be needed to better support the public library and its many functions, including the role it plays in immigrant settlement and economic and cultural development. Because of the operating and capital funding they provide to the public library, the municipal government must take a leading position in making decisions that set out the future of the Toronto Public Library. According to Newman (2008), municipal governments need to take into consideration the distinct governance mechanisms of the province's public library systems and include them in municipal strategies and initiatives, such as cultural planning processes and tools. In addition to the principal role played by municipal governments, the provincial government also needs to provide

continuous support for public libraries to ensure equity of access across the province to the informal learning offered by the public library. Furthermore, the future of the public library depends on an acknowledgement from the federal government of the relationship between the assets of public libraries and national priorities, such as immigrant settlement and integration and workforce readiness. The presence of the federal government in providing support to public libraries is currently lacking, but increased support will ensure the province's public libraries remain viable and responsive to the needs of library users (and non-users). Because all three levels of government strive to make decisions that approximate the public interest, stable and continuous support for the public library from all levels of government will respond to the public interest in equity and learning, as well as social cohesion (Newman, 2008). Rao argues, "Toronto is not keeping up with other library systems, and where it was ahead of the curve, it needs new investments, new innovations to meet the expanding needs of residents" (2012, p. 35).

One opportunity that Toronto has utilized that demonstrates a connection between the city's planning policies and the Toronto Public Library is the decision to better coordinate and negotiate Section 37 benefits for use by the Toronto Public Library. While the CACs used in Vancouver are similar to Ontario's Section 37 benefits, there is no evidence to suggest that they have been used to support the Vancouver Public Library. The fact that Section 37 benefits have been used for two different library branches in the past year suggests that this may be a way by which the city can help support the Toronto Public Library in the future. The use of Section 37 benefits to fund new branches for the Toronto Public Library is one step in the right direction; however, more can be done to ensure the Library does not become neglected in the face of citywide budget constraints.

Overall, the three case studies presented in this research demonstrate that the public library provides significant contributions to a city. The case studies put into context previous academic research that discusses the many positive impacts public libraries have within a community. They also provide greater insight into the relationship between planning policies and public libraries. It is evident that a relationship exists; however, there is no direct causal link between strong planning policies and the success of a city's public library. As the three case studies demonstrate, what is needed to adequately

support the public library is a combination of strong policy directives, support from key municipal decision makers, as well as support from the public.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Since the first Carnegie libraries were opened in the late 19th century and early 20th century, public libraries have become a significant component of urban public life. Because of advancements in technology and the effects of globalization, a shift has occurred in the last few decades that has changed the role of the public library. The primary function of the library as a public depository of information has remained unchanged, however, the ways by which this information is provided to users has changed significantly. These changes, particularly changes to technology, have prompted cities across North America to work to reassert the relevance of their public libraries as important community hubs. As Mattern (2007) states, “turn-of-the-twenty-first-century library buildings should be known for seeking a means of architecturally balancing and enhancing the public library’s multiple roles: primarily its functions as *information spaces*, providing media in a variety of formats, and as *public places*” (p. 146).

The aim of this research was to explore the changing role of the public library, and determine its impacts on communities and cities. Furthermore, this research was undertaken to gain insight into the relationship between planning policies and urban public libraries, and the extent to which these policies inform the success of public libraries. This research stems from a gap in the academic literature related to the relationship between public libraries and urban planning and development. Much of the literature focuses on the impacts of public libraries, and there is a lack of understanding about the policy context from which these benefits stem. Through an analysis of academic literature pertaining to the design of modern public libraries and the community and economic contributions they provide, as well as through an examination of three case studies that discuss the Vancouver Public Library, the Seattle Public Library, and the Toronto Public Library, it is evident that public libraries provide significant contributions within the communities and cities they serve. Well-designed library buildings that are innovative and welcoming provide an important public space within a community. They allow for people to communicate and engage with one another, and provide people with access to information and technology needed to participate in the 21st century knowledge economy, which in turn produces significant economic gains for the city within which the library is located. The case studies also provide insight into the relationship between a city’s

planning policies and the success of its public library; however, the case studies demonstrate that policy alone is unable to ensure the success of a city's public library system. A combination of public support, support from decision makers, and strong policy directives is needed for a library to succeed.

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