

**“Everything’s Fine: How Design and Public Library
Communities Interact in South Dublin”**

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Abstract

The research seeks to understand how physical design strategies are implemented, what priorities are involved and if those strategies are aligned with the goals of engaging communities. Four qualitative semi-structured interviews with senior librarians were conducted as part of the research. International best practices suggest that flexible environments with multi-purpose spaces are best suited to meet the needs of their communities. The research finds that librarians in South Dublin agree that flexible, multifunctional spaces are required in modern library environments. The librarians feel removed from the overall design process, which is driven by architects. Informal knowledge-sharing practices are often used in public libraries, regarding layout and design. Unlike international examples, communities are not involved in the design process. Engagement and facilities in South Dublin libraries appear slanted towards academic and educational activities, especially for younger users. Community exhibitions may prove instrumental in centralising the library conceptually in the community.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	x
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Context.....	1
1.2 Aims.....	3
1.2.1 Research Question.....	4
1.2.2 Research Objectives.....	4
1.3 Literature Review.....	5
1.3.1 Introduction.....	5
1.3.2 Storage Vs People Space.....	6
1.3.3 Designing for People.....	8
1.3.3.1 Design in Practice.....	9
1.3.3.2 Frameworks.....	11
1.3.4 Place-making and the Community.....	13
1.3.5 Accommodating the Non-General Public.....	16

1.3.5.1 Accessibility.....	17
1.3.5.2 Toilet Facilities	18
1.3.6 Conclusion	19
2.0 Method	21
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Participants.....	21
2.3 Design	23
2.3.1 Overview.....	23
2.3.2 Research Philosophy	24
2.3.3 Research Approach	25
2.3.4 Research Strategy.....	25
2.3.5 Time Horizon	28
2.4 Materials	29
2.5 Procedure	30
2.5.1 Invitations	30
2.5.2 Conducting interviews	32
2.5.3 Transcripts.....	33
2.6 Ethics.....	34
2.7 Data analysis	36
3.0 Results.....	39
3.1 Introduction.....	39

3.2 Thematic Analysis	40
3.2.1 Becoming familiar with the data.....	40
3.2.2 Coding the data	41
3.2.3 Searching for themes and recognising relationships.....	43
3.2.4 Refining themes and testing propositions	44
3.3 Themes.....	47
3.3.1 Constant Change	47
3.3.1.1 Flexibility.....	47
3.3.1.2 Multifunction	48
3.3.1.3 Limitations	50
3.3.2 Environment.....	51
3.3.2.1 All Things to All People	51
3.3.2.2 Atmosphere	52
3.3.2.3 On Display	54
3.3.2.4 Creative Space	54
3.3.3 Design Process	55
3.3.3.1 Architect-Led	55
3.3.3.2 Function and Form.....	56
3.3.3.3 Informal Processes	57
3.3.3.4 Impact	58
4.0 Discussion.....	59

4.1 Introduction.....	59
4.2 Themes.....	60
4.2.1 Constant Change.....	60
4.2.1.1 Flexibility.....	61
4.2.1.2 Multifunction.....	62
4.2.1.3 Limitations.....	63
4.2.2 Environment.....	64
4.2.2.1 All Things to All People.....	64
4.2.2.2 Atmosphere.....	65
4.2.2.3 On Display.....	67
4.2.2.4 Creative Space.....	68
4.2.3 Design Process.....	68
4.2.3.1 Architect-Led.....	69
4.2.3.2 Function and Form.....	69
4.2.3.3 Informal Processes.....	70
4.2.3.4 Impact.....	71
4.3 Strengths.....	72
4.4 Weaknesses.....	72
4.5 Future Implications.....	73
4.6 Future Research Recommendations.....	74
4.7 Conclusion.....	75

References.....	77
Bibliography	84
Websites.....	84
Appendix.....	85
Appendix A Interview Questions.....	85
Appendix B Information Sheets.....	88
Appendix C Consent Forms.....	90
Appendix D Invitation Emails	91
Appendix E Follow-up Emails.....	92
Appendix F Library S Transcript.....	93
Appendix G Sampling Frame	106

List of Figures

Figure 1. Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 130)	23
Figure 2. Original Thematic Map	44
Figure 3. Refined Thematic Map	46

List of Tables

Table 1. Main Themes and Subthemes	39
Table 2. Example of Data Coding.....	42

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context

Community engagement and audience building activities are integral to the national public library strategy (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2019). This research approaches engagement from the perspective of understanding the physical space offered by libraries and how it is utilised to serve the needs of our audiences.

Encounters with members of the general public who are non-users of the library often question what function libraries have in the modern information age (Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.*, 2018), when online resources seem easily accessible. Libraries can be seen as academic or overly formal spaces; complex, exclusive or simply not for everyone (McAfee, 2018). The question of why people may or may not use libraries is broad and complex, with any number of threads worth investigating. This research focuses on how librarians utilise the physical space they have available and what their priorities are.

Libraries are not static institutions and have been responding to the changing needs of their environment. This often sees a shift from libraries as information repositories into service-oriented spaces (Sidorko and Tao Yang, 2009). Libraries may still be existentially centred on “books” but access to information sources like books, journals and magazines should be seen as the foundation of the services on offer, rather than the end point of the service itself (Forrest and Bostick, 2015). Libraries remain a space for reading but in order to enhance utilisation they must ensure that comfortable, inviting, usable spaces are available (Sequeiros, 2013) and should now offer more dynamic social and cultural community

environments to encourage a broader context for learning processes and creative activity (Boyle *et al.*, 2016).

Libraries can facilitate creative drives in the community that are not otherwise accommodated, particularly in commercialised spaces (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2017). School-going students often abandon library spaces completely with the completion of third-level, if not second-level, education (Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.*, 2018). There is often a preconception that these spaces are tied up in educational activities and are no longer relevant to people in their private or professional lives. Globally, however, libraries have been and continue to be innovative in response to new realities and requirements, becoming more dynamic social spaces (Latimer, 2018). If our audiences cannot see and process the updates to our spaces they are unlikely to reconceptualise that space intellectually (Fallin, 2016, p. 310).

There is a current trend to embed or at least incorporate new service models into what libraries traditionally deliver (Fox, 2014; Haapanen *et al.*, 2015; Boyle *et al.*, 2016). Karen Latimer calls this a move “from collections to connections” (Latimer, 2011). Challenges around the way space is used are not new, of course. The physical card catalogue was transitioned into a digital format arguably to alleviate demands on physical space rather than purely to improve findability (Coyle, 2017). The continued digital revolution affords us the opportunity to reformat our space to best serve our function as place for information-processing, be that individual, social, academic, professional or creative. The most successful, enduring library spaces are likely to be those that offer flexible and multi-purpose spaces (Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen, 2012; Choy and Goh, 2016).

1.2 Aims

This research seeks to understand how physical design strategies are implemented, how space is deployed in public libraries and what priorities currently dictate how it is used. If engaging with our community, both users and non-users, is a priority for public libraries, we must ask does our physical presence in the community communicate and inhabit that goal in a practical sense.

In the broadest sense, the most desirable qualities in library space are often considered to be flexibility and multifunctionality (Latimer, 2011; Fallin, 2016), or the ability to engage in different kinds of processes. This research will look at the priorities highlighted in existing models and frameworks available and seek to understand if and how these priorities are realised in Irish public library spaces.

Two models in particular will be used as benchmarks for the design and layout of library spaces. Firstly, Choy and Goh (2016) have created a framework for academic spaces consisting of four types of space, which can be understood as individual space, social space, space to access expert/professional advice, and event space. Secondly, Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen (2012) have a similar, though more abstract model, identifying the need for inspiration space, learning space, performative space and meeting space. This research seeks to understand if the ideas of creating and offering flexible, multipurpose space exist in public libraries and what elements, particularly those stemming from the community or user-base, influence the deployment of available space.

Since there is a lack of information about physical design strategies available on Irish public libraries specifically, and more generally with regard to public libraries, this research seeks to fill a gap in understanding the role of libraries in information and learning service provision in Irish civic and community life.

1.2.1 Research Question

How does the need to promote community engagement influence physical design strategies in public libraries in South Dublin?

1.2.2 Research Objectives

- To establish to what degree public library spaces are flexible
- To establish to what degree public library spaces are or can be responsive to community needs
- To understand if public libraries spaces are responsive to the needs of small or minority audiences in their community
- To establish if libraries can adapt to social and cultural changes in their current format
- To understand the current priorities in laying out library spaces

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Introduction

A literature review has been undertaken, to better understand contemporary design philosophies in libraries, and to contextualise the relationship between space and the community. The literature review provided insight into the current philosophies guiding design, particularly in public libraries, and has influenced the methodology of the research.

The literature was compiled from searching databases for public library design, community engagement topics, as well as the social and cultural context for libraries in the current digital information age. A number of writings specifically originating in or related to Ireland were identified however the wider international context was considered in the search. Literature from the last ten years was prioritised and this was expanded slightly to literature developed after the 2008 economic crash. The initial focus was limited to public libraries, however this was broadened to include academic spaces due to the depth of writing available in that context (Denscombe, 2012, p. 61).

The literature was assessed critically for relevance to the research and a number of themes emerged from the critical reading. These themes will be expanded on below and will demonstrate the value of the research in the context of current library design processes.

1.3.2 Storage Vs People Space

The question of prioritising space for books, services or processes is by no means settled, though, broadly there is an acceptance that collection storage is no longer the most suitable endpoint for a library's activities. Much of what has been written about physical library spaces has been about the shift away from physical collections and other ways of freeing up space or accommodating a reduction in available space.

Forrest and Bostick (2015) consider user experience the primary measurement factor for gauging the success of libraries. From their perspective, while the fundamental activity of libraries – information processing – remains in place, the methods by which we measure that are outdated. Libraries have already seen a shift from measuring the collection itself, to measuring circulation - from measuring stock to outputs (Forrest and Bostick, 2015, p. 10). Forrest and Bostick see fulfilling the user needs as our priority, within the information processing exercise. Book-borrowing is no longer the defining activity users expect from libraries, requiring us to focus attention on ancillary, complimentary services like study and meeting spaces, clubs and social activities. This is what Latimer means when she considers the tension between “collections and connections” (Latimer, 2011, p. 122). Design, for Latimer, is a problem solving exercise (Latimer, 2011, p. 113) and is focused on this attempt to resolve the tension between book and people space.

This tension is by no means without consequence. Even accepting the argument that libraries spaces need to change, there are inherent dangers to abandoning too much of the identity of libraries. Fallin (2016) acutely draws out the potential loss of identity from shifting into a digital space. The library and its offerings now can and do transcend the physical space it occupies, but Fallin warns that it must be grounded in those real, physical services or risk losing not just identity but function. A learning environment totally

disconnected from books becomes a distinct environment from the library space. Fallin conceives successful libraries as lived, used spaces which are complemented by digital technologies. Users need to see and process the ways in which libraries have changed, and presenting them with a welcoming, versatile space in which they can understand their place and its function in their information processing activity (Fallin, 2016, p. 310).

McCombs and Moran (2016) look at the need for flexibility in design, acknowledging a sustained trend for more active learning spaces and socialising factors like cafes as part of the functional space. They see this as a move from transactional to transformational interactions. To make room for these active spaces, their special collections were moved to supplementary subject libraries. Leclaire (2016) notes that the trend of falling loans but increased visits in French libraries is borne out in her study of Roubaix Public Library. Reduction of collection space was undertaken and used to reorganise the internal processes and formalise the overall identity of the library space so that a consistent experience could be delivered throughout. Leclaire also highlights an ideological struggle to keep certain space empty, for patrons to explore or to use for events. Hedge, Boucher and Lavelle (2018) again stress that sense of reprioritisation from the repository to a learning processing space or commons. In particular, they note that given the size of their user base living off campus in the Texas State University, there was a particular need for a space for students to spend their time between on-campus activities. They had 3,000 seats available but at peak annual demand, might have 12,000 visits, placing significant pressure on the service (Hegde, Boucher and Lavelle, 2018, p. 895). In response to that need, renovations were undertaken to provide additional seating, for both social, group work and individual use.

The significant challenge, when print collections are reduced, is to ensure that the goals of information dissemination and processing are not diminished. For the University of Finland library, the emphasis was on prioritising physical access to parts of the collection not

available digitally (Haapanen *et al.*, 2015, p. 687). Self-service machines shift routine processes to the user, while the customer service area has been redesigned so that “the customer can sit next to the staff” (Haapanen *et al.*, 2015, p. 687) to produce a more collaborative, engaged atmosphere. Similarly, in the University of South Australia, aligned with the university administration’s goal of increased digital delivery, the library moved a suite of services online and removed the enquires desk completely (Hockey, 2016). Although this was a radical change to the service, in practice it resulted in increased visibility in both digital and physical environments. In particular Hockey notes an increase in the complexity of enquiries over digital channels (Hockey, 2016, p. 132).

Sidorko and Yang (2009) discuss how the University of Hong Kong updated their processes and physical environment. This was in response to the reduction in library space and in order to accommodate the expectations of their students. In particular, they prioritised the development of flexible and multi-purpose spaces to balance the loss of physical space. Perhaps implicit within their work is the sense that they are making difficult choices in the face of the limited options available and the updates to library are occurring because their space is being reduced and re-prioritised and is an effort to mitigate against that loss.

1.3.3 Designing for People

While we can see that there is a trend emphasising moving from collection storage to a more service- or user-oriented, people space, there remains uncertainty over what should occupy library spaces. Fallin (2016) considers space to be the single most valuable asset available to libraries. If the traditional sense of libraries was the display of the collection, the new model should be about visually communicating a welcoming, information-rich, processing space (Latimer, 2018). Latimer contends that the shrinking of book collection changes the

fundamental ambiance of many libraries. Latimer (2018, p. 205) promotes the integration of services and different kinds of functional spaces into the traditional library, with cafes, informal social and study areas, technology labs all becoming embedded into the library structure. This aligns with Fallin's idea that visual structural changes to the library are needed so that visitors can reconceptualise their internal notion of what a library space is capable of doing (Fallin, 2016, p. 310).

1.3.3.1 Design in Practice

Something that emerges from both Latimer and Fallin, is the importance of the aesthetics of the environment. That is something further borne out by Black's (2011) survey of public attitudes to library architecture in the UK. The study finds that there is no unanimous preference for traditional versus modern architecture, that both camps have support and further suggests a need to preserve civic heritage where possible. Of particular note is the criticism of trends in previous decades which prioritised function ahead of form (Black, 2011, p. 39) and the open plan styles which created noisy, exposed environments.

In Christchurch, New Zealand, on the other hand there was a stronger preference for modern architecture (Fox, 2014, p. 23). In interviews conducted amongst library users during reconstruction efforts following the 2011 earthquakes, Fox looked at the preferences for the new buildings being designed. The public highlighted desire for related soft services like cafes, creative or performance spaces, as well as designated zones of usage, particularly for children and younger people. Sequerios (2013) looked at public reading space in Portugal's Biblioteca Municipal Almeida Garret and highlights the different user groups and importantly, the benefits of responding to user-actions and restructuring space to their lived, actual usage, changing one emplacement completely in response to how it was being used.

Users often want a sense of haven or privacy but contextualised within a community engaged in similar practices or activities (Sequeiros, 2013). This is something also drawn out by Chow (2011) looking at public libraries in Wayne County, Michigan, noting that the users often want “anonymity without isolation”. Hedge, Boucher and Lavelle (2018) found a preference for private study spaces in Texas State University but highlight a trend, particularly in academic settings, of a changing annual cycle in needs.

While there is some consistency that users often want haven-like or quiet spaces this is by no means universal. Sequeiros (2013) notes the presence of regulars who tend to group together in her study. Beard and Dale (2010) stress that social networking is a key component of library spaces. This can be both positive or negative but it is clearly part of their environment. This is something that May and Black (2010) tease out, surveying in Public Libraries in Nova Scotia. In particular, they emphasise that their libraries are social spaces, involving interaction between staff and patrons and between patrons themselves. Different libraries in Nova Scotia reported different levels of interaction, however. We should remain mindful that not all communities need the same experience, nor do the same parts of that experience appeal universally. For instance, while patrons wanted more seating, there was no broad agreement on what kind of seating (May and Black, 2010, p. 23).

Given that no standard idea of library spaces emerges, the preference for changeable, adaptable spaces is unsurprising. In some cases, this flexibility takes the form of low cost, recyclable fixtures. This might be temporary signage while the librarians assess the environment and the areas of confusion for patrons (Barclay and Scott, 2012) or might be something more substantial, like a library’s service desk built from plywood so it could be continually reconfigured until the optimum design was achieved (Schwartz, 2018a).

1.3.3.2 Frameworks

Traditional library spaces can, historically, be subdivided into three kinds of space all centred around the collection – general stack, reference and reading room (Edwards, 2011). Although Edwards claims this is not substantively different today, this is an unhelpful approach to considering library spaces. Rather than seeing the traditional spaces as “sacrificed” to new services, we should consider the complementary factors presented by the new ways space is used to provide the experience, processes or outcomes our communities need. The traditional concept of the singular “reading” room is no longer a substantial enough offering. Two useful frameworks have been identified for considering how physical library space can be deployed, both of which prioritise multifunctional, flexible spaces.

The four-space model developed for public libraries in Denmark is discussed by Jochumsen, Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen (2012). This model can be used in both major and minor redevelopments and is built around the idea that the public still want to use the library but are and will use it in new ways. The model identifies four kinds of spaces meant to accommodate discovery, experience, participatory and creative processes. These spaces are outlined as follows;

- Inspiration space – this space often contains story-telling and artistic expressions, intended to help users move beyond familiar, known choices and experiences.
- Learning space – this space empowers discovery, both individually and socially, using formats like study space, homework clubs, open courses.
- Meeting space – this is space most typifies the concept of the Third Place introduced by Oldenburg (1999), emphasising cross-communication through cafes, clubs and informal discussion and debate.
- Performative space – this space houses equipment and facilities intended to help or empower community creators of music, videos, writing, or staged productions.

It is important to note that these need not necessarily be considered four distinct, separated physical spaces and one area of the library may serve multiple aspects, particularly if it is possible to integrate flexible functionality into the design. The model is abstract and does not provide concrete guidelines for how to practically layout a specific library but it does give us a tool to frame and conceptualise what the spaces we have can and should be doing.

For a more practical guide for how to use space, we can look at the framework proposed by Choy and Goh (2016) for academic libraries, drawn from their experience redesigning Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. They stress the importance of physical space to students who need that “third space” between their home/dorm life and their classwork. They emphasise, much like Fallin, that physical environments are artificial in nature and presentation shapes usage behaviours (Choy and Goh, 2016, p. 14). Their four kinds of spaces are not entirely removed from what is proposed by the Four Space model, but are perhaps more readily identifiable physical spaces. These are;

- Collaborative space – where users work together in a group, with space that is reconfigurable and aided by accessible technologies or facilities.
- Sanctuary space – where users work individually in quiet or silent spaces, generally free of distraction from unwanted stimuli but not necessarily physically removed from other people. Social ambiance can create a sense of participation or solidarity even in solitary study.
- Interaction space – where users interact with librarians, expertise, resources and collections, and should be integrated with technological offerings like ebooks, chat functions and digital equipment.
- Community space – where users can interact in a more neutral setting, or common, public forum, to share and consume or disseminate cultural, social ideas or artefacts together, through public talks, plays or public viewings.

Something that is drawn out in their work is how the annual cycle may change the stresses on particular kinds of space. This requires space be flexible enough to change with cyclical needs, and changing cultural requirements.

While Edwards (2011, p. 212) remains dubious about the increased emphasis on socialisation in library spaces, it is evident from these two frameworks that social community spaces are now becoming a part of the ideological conception of library space.

1.3.4 Place-making and the Community

As Edwards (2011, p. 212) has articulated, there is a philosophical, if not ideological, distance between the idea of a space and the concept of that space as Place. Without involving the community, it can be difficult to get a stable vision of what a library space needs to be, or to challenge preconceptions of what it already is. The limits of top-down design are explored by Meunier and Eigenbolt (2014), along with the challenges of seeking the opinions of the community. Participatory design involving multiple stakeholders provides improved outcomes in the design process. A representative study conducted in Catalonia focuses on reasons for non-use of libraries and suggests that while the public may have a good impression of libraries, they do not have a tangible connection to it, and often see it as an academic or educational space (Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, the study highlights a need to integrate the idea of libraries as cultural or leisure space, particularly in school-goers who may not return to library spaces once school or college education ends. One method of resolving this disconnection, according to Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Rasmussen (2017), is to ingrate more creative spaces into libraries. Makerspaces and workshops supported by facilitators are used to gather existing community interests or, with innovative strategies, foster new ones. The “soft power” of reputation can be a significant

lure. Exploring the current community creative environment leads to success but needs to be underpinned by a long-term flexible approach that accommodates changes and shifts in the community (Boyle *et al.*, 2016). Libraries are, or at least have the potential to be, more than simply interchangeable, identical branch repositories of book collections.

Placemaking often involves creating boundaries and managing space. Young (2010) centres the discussion of the law library as Place within the tension between books and users, noting how in traditional libraries there is often a sense that the space is for books and not people. Peoples (2017) advocates that law libraries can enhance that sense of place by focusing on subject-specific areas, which can become liminal, non-hierarchical meeting spaces for student and faculty, creating a more involved sense of collaboration. Young advocates for clearly delineated spaces for socialising or solitary study, a managed sense of space, which benefits and smooths out the friction between competing patterns of utilisation which will ultimately help condition a stable, comfortable environment for users to inhabit and internalise as their space (Young, 2010, p. 19).

Van de Pas (2013) is predominately concerned with the identity of libraries in modern society. The framework presented is particularly abstract but promotes libraries as an information service grounded in expertise. Acknowledging that the public library cannot provide the same breadth of information and speed of access as Google or Wikipedia, libraries should differentiate themselves as places of expertise, where good information can be accessed, processed, and/or synthesised in a comfortable setting, whether that is solitary or social. This is something that Sequeiros (2013, p. 233) touches on, noting that even when working or reading alone users often value the sense of similar activities or “co-presence” around them.

Schwartz profiles a number of libraries which have engaged in community-building exercises in order to recentre the library within their local environment. Perhaps the most significant is that of Sacramento Public library, which saw three people jailed following an investigation into improper spending in 2008 and the murder of a staff member in a library branch car park in 2018 (Schwartz, 2019a). In order to build trust, the library engaged extensively with the community, adding additional opening hours, eliminating fines, bringing in assistive technologies and developing a membership card system for people without permanent addresses. In Bisbee, Arizona, the library programme is maintained by a volunteer network and is engaged with a number of local organisations, which includes partnering with the school district to create a sustainable community garden, a science centre and STEAM literacy area (Schwartz, 2019b). In the words of the library administration, having space to try “random things” is often key to their success with engaging the community. In a project in Vancouver Community Library, the implementation which followed a community engagement process there is a palpable sense that the community are happy their feedback was acted upon (Schwartz, 2018a). In particular the inclusion of locally relevant items like the cockpit of an airplane foster a sense of ownership. This is something that emerges too at Auburn University, where including students in the design of an exhibition space saw an measurable increase in foot traffic, and developed a sense of pride in and ownership of the library (Leousis and Sproull, 2016).

A qualitative review of offerings in public libraries in Greece looked at innovation specifically and found positive community responses to clearly demarked, functional spaces, particularly makerspaces, American language spaces, collaborative and communal spaces and “e-Gov”/electronic government or social services offered in library spaces (Vassilakaki Evgenia and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou Valentini, 2016). Pape and Smirnova (2018) present an interesting study on Moscow’s city libraries during a regeneration project that did

not progress beyond the pilot stage. Here the public preference for open, free, civic meeting spaces was met with approval and support. Public events and community space were prioritised, as well as comfortable personal reading/study spaces. Ultimately, the political direction did not support continuing the project, despite overall success.

Paramount in creating an environment which the community can and will use, is to focus on its functionality and usability. Perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from User Experience models is to understand that any individual library community will have different and unique requirements (Young, Chao and Chandler, 2020). There is no universally applicable design and fitting the library space to the community often proves far more beneficial than “build it and they will come” or one-size-fits all approaches. Somby (2016) argues that many people no longer know what to expect from libraries at all. While they remain in popular usage in many communities, there is not a strong sense of what a library is meant to do. With this in mind, she contends that any renovation or upgrade process should not start from the perspective of solving perceived issues or including particular features or furniture, but rather should begin with local, public and municipal consultation, as they did in the case of Bardu Library. The Danish four-space model provided the framework for this project, but the ultimate touchstones that emerge were firstly, to develop sense of connection between community and library, and secondly, the need for flexibility or to create “change-oriented library spaces” (Somby, 2016, p. 98) to keep pace with social and cultural shifts.

1.3.5 Accommodating the Non-General Public

It should be acknowledged that the idea of a community should not be conceived of as a monolithic form. Within the community there are multiple different kinds of stakeholder and

even similar seeming audiences can have different requirements and temperaments. For instance, areas for children and young people are often highlighted as desirable, engaging and long-term benefits to the community (Bertrams and Mosch, 2011; Keller, 2011; Millan, Omella and Viladrich, 2015). Children then represent a tangible sub-population with distinct requirements that are generally not simply integrated into the main library space. Younger adults, particularly school-goers, often dominate study spaces, but once their academic life is over, feel like libraries no longer serve a purpose for them (Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.*, 2018). Totally isolating areas can disrupt the sense of integrated community engagement libraries can strive for. With this in mind two specific “needs” within the community in the literature – accessibility, and toilet provision – will be reviewed to tease out some of the issues at play.

1.3.5.1 Accessibility

Library users cannot be assumed to follow a standard form or pattern and may present with disabilities, without English and any number of other characteristics which impact their ability to use library services (Spina, 2017). Spina proposes “universal design” principles as particularly suited to managing their needs as it centres lived experience and real people in the design process. A study of Ontario Public Libraries used surveys and interviews to explore the offerings through a “capability-approach” which prioritises real-outcome opportunities (Hill, 2011). Hill found there was an impetus to do more than the legal mandate required in libraries, rather than simply a regulatory compliance activity. Hill does however highlight a risk of creating isolating hierarchies if accessible technologies are always segregated away from more generally used areas. As noted previously, the sense of community fostered by “co-presence” is a significantly beneficial part of the library atmosphere (Sequeiros, 2013, p. 233).

While Hill focuses predominantly on physical disabilities, Andrews (2016) looks at hidden disabilities in an ethnographic study of two libraries that highlight the effects atmosphere and positioning can have on users. Her conclusions suggest that library management must prioritise the kind of dialogue and flexible design Spina is talking about. Guder (2012) reviews technologies available to libraries but also looks at some of the key considerations that emerge in these choices. His conclusion is that libraries must integrate these technologies with reference to needs of their specific users, which is best achieved by developing relationships directly with these communities.

1.3.5.2 Toilet Facilities

Another area that emerges in the literature for consideration is that of toilet facilities. Specifically, Schwartz (2018b) looks at gender-neutral toilet options and the effect on the LGBTQ audiences. Her piece is reflective on the process that has taken place in her library and looks at the pros and cons of single use versus multi-stall offerings. Notable is some of the positive reactions from the community, referencing the library as one of the few available, welcoming spaces available to them. Gender-neutral and inclusive toilet spaces are not without dispute, however, with unintended consequences for reducing capacity for other user-groups, over-all longer queues when not implemented well, and issues around ethnic and religious groups more comfortable with binary gender segregation (Greed, 2019). Accommodations for user needs have context that should be considered in terms of the whole environment, while still ensuring safe facilities for groups like the LGBTQ community.

1.3.6 Conclusion

Two motifs arise commonly in the literature. Firstly, there is the need for spaces that fulfil multiple purposes. Libraries can no longer be book repositories and see other kinds of demand (Leclaire, 2016). This move to a more social, community space (Latimer, 2011) should be seized as an opportunity by libraries to refix their place in the cultural and community consciousness, both in the abstract and in practice in local communities, as places of creative, cultural value (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2017). To do this, libraries must accommodate the ways in which modern audiences work and engage, which often requires meeting the disparate needs of multiple audiences at once, through the provision of different kinds of space (Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen, 2012; Choy and Goh, 2016). One aim of this research is to understand if South Dublin libraries are equipped to do this.

Secondly, the vast majority of writings about contemporary library design speak of the need for flexible spaces, which can be reconfigured and reprioritised to accommodate cyclical changes in requirements, different user needs or long-term social and cultural shifts. Technological and social changes will render services and offerings obsolete (Fallin, 2016) so fixtures and technology that cannot be easily removed or reorganised will be a detriment into the future. Certain activities or demands are often seasonal (Choy and Goh, 2016) such as study spaces being in significantly higher use around state exams compared to in the summer, so modular, changeable fixtures mean the library can be reconfigured at ease. Spaces which library users can reconfigure themselves often allow the library staff to see actual patterns of desired use (Sequeiros, 2013). Change should be expected, planned for and ultimately embraced. This research will discuss if libraries here have flexible spaces to accommodate this.

As most of the research available here focuses on libraries outside of Ireland, the research seeks to understand if there are similar trends or priorities in Ireland, compared with international counterparts. As with international examples, the degree to which the public are involved in the process of creating library space will be considered. In particular, the research explores how the space offered impacts the ways the community engages with services.

2.0 Method

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the steps taken throughout the research and will provide detail on the participants, the design and strategy of the research. It outlines the research methodologies involved and explain the method of data analysis involved. A discussion of the ethical considerations involved in the research process will be provided.

2.2 Participants

The researcher chose South Dublin as the area for the study as they were familiar with it and is relatively accessible compared to other parts of the city or country. It was felt that there were a sufficient number of libraries in this area to provide a relatively robust sample. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, physical access to the libraries was not required or possible.

Following the advice of Denscombe (2012, p. 96), the researcher set clear criteria for their sample, which was senior librarians working in South Dublin public libraries. South Dublin is defined as districts south of the river Liffey and includes libraries in Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and South Dublin County Council areas. The Libraries Ireland website was used to determine the specific areas for the researcher's attention, using the Find your Local Library feature - <https://www.librariesireland.ie/find-your-local-library>. A working list of twenty libraries was identified (**Appendix G**). Part-time, small, hub and mobile library services were excluded from consideration. Libraries closed for refurbishment or being constructed were not excluded from consideration. Librarians with

seniority or experience laying out library spaces were identified for the research. Executive and senior librarians were prioritised for involvement.

The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling to determine those who would be invited to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is particularly useful in a study like this as it allows for the researcher to identify individuals who are likely to have expert knowledge or relevant experience for a study (Denscombe, 2014, p. 42). An attempt was made to select individuals with different criteria, however given that the research intends to be illustrative rather than statistical, typical case purposive sampling is sufficient (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 318).

The researcher aimed to include six libraries from the sample frame. In practice, only four libraries were available in the limited timeframe to take part in the study. The researcher found that there was exceptional difficulty in this period finding participants who could take part. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant restrictions on libraries, in terms of staff present, working space available and the demands of constantly changing guidelines and services. In a number of cases, and in particular with regard to older library buildings with limited floor and office space, there were not enough staff available to cover work while an interview could take place. A similar study conducted under different circumstances would likely find more librarians available to take part.

2.3 Design

2.3.1 Overview

This researches uses the “research onion” as proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 128) in order to ground the processes. The research onion is a layered framework of decisions taken to identify the best methods to approach the research question, creating a step-by-step process that results in the collection and analysis of relevant data through a method that compliments the research in question. As each layer is resolved, the process signposts the next methods the researcher can consider, so the research philosophy informs the research approach through theory and this in turn influences what methods the researcher should consider.

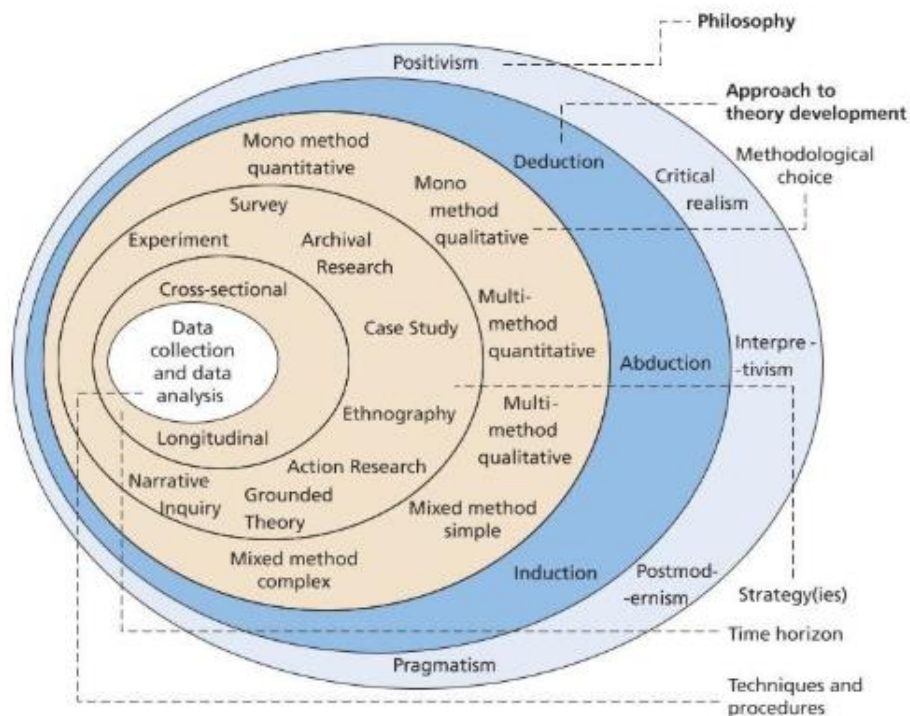


Figure 1. Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 130)

2.3.2 Research Philosophy

For our purposes, philosophy can be taken to mean the set of values and assumptions involved in the process of understanding reality. This is the first layer of the research onion and is concerned with the underlying internal processes the researcher will bring to bear to understand or interpret their world, as well as the nature of the research itself (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 130).

This research is grounded in subjectivism, an ontology-based approach. This approach takes cues from the arts and humanities, which is the researcher's background, and considers that "social reality is made from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (people)" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 137). In particular, the research follows social constructionism, which considers reality as constructed through interactions between people, built on incompletely shared conventions, assumptions and meanings.

Complementary to this is the philosophy of Interpretivism, which contends that people and their social structures cannot be considered as natural or physical phenomena because of the ways in which they create and experience social realities (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 148). This philosophy would argue, for instance, that the ways in which a librarian and library patron experience a library space are not the same, and are again distinct from how an architect would view that space. Interpretivist research is generally inductive and uses small samples to collect and analysis qualitative data.

Implicit in much of the reading which grounds this research is the sense there is no singular agreed method for designing library spaces in the modern world. This is tested in the research but from a philosophical perspective, it follows that a subjective approach would work for this research. The researcher will need to be aware, however, of their own biases as well as that participants will be bringing their own contexts and realities into the discussion.

While the researcher acknowledges this, there is little chance of achieving a sense of objectivity in any research, as data and the findings will always be formed in the context of the researchers experience and outlook (Denscombe, 2014, p. 29).

2.3.3 Research Approach

An inductive approach to theory development was taken. This approach is a natural follow-on from the Interpretivist philosophy underpinning the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 145). The research uses the models proposed by Choy and Goh (2016) and Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen (2012) as touchstones, however it does not seek to evaluate each library against specific criteria set out in these frameworks. This research is concerned with understanding what priorities exist in Irish libraries with regard to design; it does not have a specific conclusion in mind to test, so the inductive approach is appropriate. A smaller sample of subjects is recommended for an inductive approach, as well as a less structured approach to data collection than might be used in a quantitative, deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 155). This affords the researcher the opportunity to collect more detailed data and explore alternative explanations and avenues of thinking. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 152) point out, however, in an inductive approach, there may be a leap involved between the premise and conclusion, backed up by research observations and findings, but it cannot be assumed to be objective fact.

2.3.4 Research Strategy

Qualitative methodologies are seen by the researcher as the best fit for the research question, as this is most commonly aligned with an inductive, subjective approach. Qualitative research

lends itself to small-scale studies which take an in-depth and holistic view of the situation or environment being researched (Denscombe, 2014, p. 27), which the researcher sees as the optimal manner in which to proceed for this project. The data collected is based on the observations of a researcher or the testimony of individuals, and is largely subjective in nature, requiring the researcher to interpret the constructed meanings of those involved (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 179). Qualitative research is concerned with the relationships and meanings both implicit and explicit in the information provided. Meaning, as per Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 179), is derived from words and images and may be unclear or ambiguous. Interactive methods of data collection are employed to tease out and explore the underlying implications of the information provided.

Throughout the literature reviewed, qualitative methods were employed most often, though there are a number of examples of studies which used mixed-method and quantitative research. The researcher did consider the applications available through quantitative research, however it was felt that this was not the best method to approach the specific question. Rather, quantitative methods would lend themselves to a broad assessment of the specific facilities in public libraries in South Dublin, with the aim of testing a theory about those facilities (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 176).

The research question, seeking to understand design priorities and their place within community engagement strategies, is exploratory in nature, which lends itself more to a qualitative approach (Denscombe, 2014, p. 113). Having settled on a qualitative approach, the researcher initially considered two complementary avenues for qualitative data collection. These were semi-structured interviews and observation using ethnographic methods. The researcher felt that a multi-method approach utilising both shadowing and interviews would yield informative results.

The researcher had intended to include that ethnographical approach, however, for two reasons this was not included in the ultimate research project. The initial intention to observe individuals as they interacted with the environment may have lent itself more to a scenario where the physical design was tested for usability by the public audience (Priestner and Borg, 2016), which was not the aim of the research. Following this, the researcher considered how Shadowing, observing the natural interactions of selected individuals, could be used to formulate a deeper understanding of interactions with the physical library environments (Denscombe, 2014, p. 247). Understanding the actions and reactions of patrons would have provided insightful additional context that would have been followed up in semi-structured interviews with library staff. This was, unfortunately, not possible to undertake in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both ethically and practically, observation in this scenario could not be undertaken (Denscombe, 2012, p. 20) and the researcher had further concerns that any information collected in this situation would apply only to the presumably temporary restrictions in place.

In this context, the researcher conducted a mono method qualitative study. Exploratory studies tend to involve subject experts, who are well positioned to provide in-depth contextual information to the researcher (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 187). These interviews were semi-structured in nature and were conducted on a one-to-one basis. Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of giving the interviewer a list of issues to be addressed, but are flexible enough to allow the interviewee to expand on points of interest, as well as allowing the interviewer to follow unforeseen threads (Denscombe, 2014, p. 204). In the case of structured interview or survey methods, that contextual nuance might be lost. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 436) note that a researcher may take an objective approach with interview data collection, and choose to treat the information as more or less factual however they highlight that this privileges the answers themselves, rather than

seeking a deeper contextual understanding of the issues at play. Interviews are particularly valuable when seeking privileged information not necessarily accessible outside a specific organisational context (Denscombe, 2014, p. 215) such as the decision making, priorities and thinking behind the layout of a specific physical building. Further to this idea, the use of semi-structured interviews is recommended where the data being collected is complex or open-ended and affords the researcher the opportunity to infer links between variables and to probe into details provided by interviewees (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 444).

There are disadvantages to semi-structured interviews which the researcher is aware of. Some of the main issues are around the quality of the data collected (Denscombe, 2014, p. 221; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 447). The biases of both the interviewer and interviewee come into play in what is collected and how it is understood. Preconceptions may influence how information is interpreted. The validity of the data can be improved through probing questions and the results must be grounded in the contextual information that this data represents opinion and reflects an interpretation of a lived reality at a specific point in time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 451). Understanding the issues does not invalidate the data collected but should be considered when drawing conclusions.

2.3.5 Time Horizon

The time horizon for the research was necessarily limited by the twelve-week period available to the researcher in which to complete the project. A cross-sectional study seemed the only practical option available to the researcher in this window. This provides a snapshot of a specific point in time, rather than a longitudinal study which might explore how attitudes and priorities can evolve over a longer period of time (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 212).

2.4 Materials

Interview questions were created with reference to the research question and objectives and were informed by perspectives from the literature review. The interview questions were semi-structured and the researcher included potential probing prompts in addition to using open questions (Denscombe, 2014, p. 223). This kind of interview is suited to exploring background or context associated with an environment or situation and is useful when taking an inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 443). A list of sixteen questions (**Appendix A**) was decided upon and the questions were reviewed by the research supervisor before interviews were undertaken. Two pilot interviews were conducted with peers to assess the tone of the questions and allow the researcher to test and familiarise themselves with the flow of the questions.

The first two questions seek to establish if the libraries have been updated or refurbished recently and to understand the extent to which the participant has been involved in the process, which the researcher considered as significant influencing factors.

1. When was the last time there was a major restructuring of the building?

Probing – Were you involved?

Probing – Why was it undertaken?

2. When was the last time you made a noticeable change to some part of the layout?

Questions are tied to the research objectives. For instance, Question 11 is specifically exploring how the library interacts with the creative needs of the local audiences of libraries, both generally and with regard to specific subsections of the local population.

Objectives:

- Objective - To establish to what degree public library spaces are or can be responsive to community needs
- Objective - To understand if public libraries spaces are responsive to the needs of small or minority audiences in their community

Related Question:

11. What kind of creative equipment or facilities do you have available for the local community? Who uses these facilities?

An information sheet (**Appendix B**) was prepared based on a template provided by Dublin Business School (DBS). The information sheet presented details of the research, the expectations of the participants, their right to withdraw consent, as well as details of how their data would be handled (Denscombe, 2014, p. 369). The information sheet was accompanied by a consent form (**Appendix C**) which asked participants to read the information sheet and confirm they had done so and understood the process.

2.5 Procedure

2.5.1 Invitations

Invitation emails (**Appendix C**) were distributed to purposefully selected potential participants in June 2020. The email clearly set out the purpose of the research, why it was being undertaken and time requirements involved. The email acknowledged the current COVID-19 pandemic and suggested an online meeting. There was a low response rate to the

initial email. Several of those contacted related that there is currently a lot of staffing pressure on public libraries due to COVID-19 restrictions, so many are working with reduced staff levels which accounted for delays. Based on the initial email, only one librarian agreed to be interviewed. A second librarian was unfortunately retiring and was not in a position to take part.

A follow-up email (**Appendix D**) was sent after a two-week delay. It was decided this was appropriate given the pressure on public libraries due to the changes in restrictions and guidelines taking place throughout these weeks. At this time, additional libraries were also contacted about participation to maximise the potential to secure participants in the current environment.

Once a library contacted the researcher about potentially becoming involved, the researcher distributed the Information Sheet (**Appendix B**) and Consent Form (**Appendix C**). In some cases, potential participants also requested more detail on what would be required of them. In these cases, the researcher provided a version of the question list (**Appendix A**). In one case, upon reviewing the question list and the information sheet, a librarian declined to participate.

When a librarian confirmed their participation, the researcher randomly assigned a letter to the librarian and their library, based on a roll of a twenty-sided dice. At this time, the researcher also made arrangements to conduct each interview. Physically visiting the sites was considered but was deemed inadvisable due to the COVID-19 pandemic particularly with the lack of space available in all libraries. Instead, the researcher arranged with the librarians involved to use whatever telecommunication method they were most familiar or comfortable with, at a time that was suitable to them. The increased pressure on public libraries and

limitations on staff in libraries had a significant impact on the researcher's ability to secure interviews.

2.5.2 Conducting interviews

Interviews were conducted between 15th July 2020 and 4th August 2020. 31st July had initially been set as a cut-off point, but owing to time constraints for participating libraries due to staffing pressures, this was extended to accommodate participants.

The researcher arranged with the individual participants what tools would be used to conduct the interviews. In most cases, video conferencing software was used to conduct and record the interview. Interviews were conducted with Zoom or with Microsoft Teams. The researcher is familiar with these platforms due to previous work involving a significant amount of teleconferencing. Both tools allow for video and audio recording and, with permission from participants, the video was captured. In one interview, a phone call was used and the audio recorded using standard Microsoft voice recording software. Interviews were over 30 minutes in length. One interview was significantly longer than the other interviews conducted but reflected a larger library and as it was semi-structured, pursued a number of threads that did not emerge in other discussions because of facilities unique to that library.

At the start of each interview, the researcher confirmed their willingness to participate and reiterated the participants' right to withdraw consent at any time. The researcher gave a short introduction to the research for context and invited questions from participants before beginning the interview. Due to the nature of online meetings, the discussions were slightly more formal than might have been achieved in person. The researcher secured permission for video/audio recording in each instance. Using printed question sheets, the researcher took hardcopy notes against each question. The researcher provided clarification where necessary

to questions but generally attempted to keep to the phrasing on the question sheet.

Ambiguities or different readings of the questions often expose priorities, so the researcher endeavoured not to over-explain or clarify questions in order to avoid cutting off potential avenues of discussion. The researcher also noted where the participants were particularly effusive or animated about points being made. It should be noted that, in one interview, due to the lighting, a participant was particularly difficult to see and so there are limits to what could be gleaned from this participant's body language and expressions. At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher offered participants the opportunity to make any additional comments or ask any questions.

2.5.3 Transcripts

Transcripts were prepared using the Descript software platform (<https://www.descript.com/>) which the researcher was already familiar with. The software parses both video and audio files to produce a script of the conversation. The software automatically distinguishes between speakers and allows the user to code each speaker. The title "Researcher" and the letter code for each librarian was used to distinguish speakers. The software does not produce a perfect copy of the dialogue. In particular, where Irish names and colloquialisms are used, the software struggles. It is necessary to review each transcript in full against the recording to ensure accuracy. The software has a playback feature which runs the video/audio concurrently with a moving dot to make amending text easier. The software also allows the researcher to insert captions, notes and observations about the interview into the text. The transcripts were annotated to include observations about the tone and body language of participants (Denscombe, 2014, p. 308). Once the researcher was satisfied with the overall quality of transcription, the file was exported into Word format. The video and audio files

were maintained in Descript in case the researcher needed to further validate the transcript while coding.

Each transcript was then edited again to excise the name of the library and participating librarian from the text. Where other libraries were mentioned, these names were left unchanged, even if those libraries were also participating in the study. At this point it was felt that the transcripts were ready for coding and analysis.

A transcript of one interview has been included in the appendices (**Appendix F**).

2.6 Ethics

Two fundamental touchstones are laid out by Denscombe (2014, p. 340) with regard to research ethics. First, that researchers have no essential or privileged position justifying their work, regardless of any perceived benefits to the participants, the public or society. Second, that the public should be protected from potentially harmful research methods. With this in mind, the researcher proceeds at all times with integrity. The researcher abides by the four central principles identified by Denscombe (2014, p. 343) summarised as;

- protects the interests of the participants
- ensures that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent
- avoids deception and operates with scientific integrity
- complies with the laws of the land

Specific considerations have been identified to meet these principles.

Details of the research, information about the researcher and intentions, and the expectations and rights of participants were all recorded on the participant Information Sheet (**Appendix B**). Participants were invited to voluntarily participate and explicitly record their

consent. The right to withdraw was highlighted on the information sheet and was reiterated at the beginning of each interview (Denscombe, 2014, p. 351). Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process and identifying names and details were edited from the transcripts. Consent forms and email correspondence are not linked to the transcripts. This is seen as a significant method for mitigating potential issues that might arise as a result of the data collection process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 257).

Permission for audio and video recordings was sought and obtained in all cases and these files will be maintained in a secure, confidential manner until they are destroyed after the period of time stated in the Information Sheet has elapsed. GDPR regulations will be abided by for all data related to this research project.

Before the research was undertaken, at the proposal stage, the intended methods for the research were reviewed by the Dublin Business School research ethics committee. Research methods were amended based on their feedback and approval was granted to proceed.

The researcher was careful during the analytical stage to document the steps taken in coding the data so that steps can be followed logically. These steps and processes are recorded in subsequent sections below. The researcher was careful that details are provided in full so that relevant information is not misrepresented or withheld to influence the results reported which at its most serious could amount to falsification of the findings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 272). There is an ethical responsibility to accurately and honestly portray the information received and the conclusions that can be drawn from that information.

2.7 Data analysis

When engaging with qualitative data for analysis, it is typically necessary to fragment or breakdown that data into smaller constituent parts and meanings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 643). This allows the researcher to compare and draw conclusions from variables which are linked through similarities in theme or substance. Thematic Analysis was chosen by the researcher for this because it is considered both an accessible and flexible model for analysis of qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Themes were developed using the process known as “coding” which allows the researcher to manage large amounts of data by linking aspects of references with similar meanings or contexts so that they can be examined against each other and against other codes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 653). This has the advantage of highlighting the contrasts and comparisons in the data as they emerge which created more robust themes (Denscombe, 2014, p. 117). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 653) recommend that when taking an inductive approach, a significant portion of the data will need to be coded, even with a research question to ground the process, in order to allow themes to fully develop.

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight six considerations that the researcher has worked through before undertaking the thematic analysis. These are;

- What counts as a theme?
- Rich description or detailed account of one aspect?
- Inductive vs theoretical thematic analysis?
- Semantic or latent themes?
- Essentialist/realist or constructionist
- Questions vs themes

These are intended as reflexive questions, to be considered at the beginning of the process and throughout it (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82), rather than being steps which are resolved. As such the researcher has loosely applied the answers to these questions throughout the research but does not consider them a rigid framework. Themes developed through the coding process were not formalised by “prevalence” of the code arising in the text (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The research focuses on an inductive reading of a group of themes that emerged from the data which were relevant to the considerations of the research question and objectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). The research is not following a preconceived model but there are aspects of the data set which are not explored in detail as the researcher did not consider them vital to the Thematic Analysis. Although the analysis is largely semantic, dealing with much of the text at face value, the researcher takes a constructionist perspective about how reality is conceptualised, both for the participants and the audiences they serve (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 85). Finally, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 86) note that while themes may be linked to the questions asked in an interview setting, if the themes merely repeat the questions, then it is unlikely the researcher has achieved any real level of analysis, which is a caveat the researcher has kept in mind.

Analysis of the data began after each interview. Data collection and data analysis are complimentary and interactive processes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 640). Reviewing the emerging themes from each interview allowed the researcher to enhance the direction and probes in subsequent interviews. Ultimately, however, as the themes are arrived at inductively, the researcher needed to complete data collection in its entirety before the coding process and generation of themes could be finalised. An inductive approach to Thematic Analysis means the researcher will explore themes that appear related to the research question or area but the researcher does not impose a framework on to the data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 652).

In the following results section, the coding process is detailed, which will explain how themes were arrived at and formalised. The themes themselves will be presented in detail.

3.0 Results

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the analysis of the collected qualitative data. The process by which the data was analysed is detailed, which includes specifics on how the data was coded to produce a set of themes which reflect the objectives of the research. The research aims to understand the priorities and considerations at work in how space is utilised in South Dublin libraries, which informs the themes developed.

The themes and subthemes produced from the dataset are detailed in **Table 1** below. In the following sections, the researcher outlines the steps taken throughout the analysis and will present a breakdown of each theme and subtheme.

Table 1. Main Themes and Subthemes

Main Theme	Subthemes
Constant Change	Flexibility, Multifunction, Limitations
Environment	All Things to All People, Atmosphere, On Display, Creative Space
Design Process	Architect-Led, Function and Form, Informal Processes, Impact

3.2 Thematic Analysis

The researcher used the guide outlined by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019, p. 651). The structure for the Thematic Analysis follows their procedure and the researcher replicates that presentation here. These steps are; becoming familiar with your data; coding your data; searching for themes and recognising relationships; refining themes and testing propositions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 652). This was complimented by the enhanced detail provided by Braun and Clarke, which takes a considerably more in-depth look at producing a Thematic Analysis with a six-step process (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). These steps form the basis for the process the researcher applied to the dataset to produce the analysis, with Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill providing the framework for structuring that process. These steps are applied recursively, so were revisited throughout the process to fine-tune (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 86). A discussion of each step of this procedure is outlined below.

3.2.1 Becoming familiar with the data

The first step in both guides involves with immersion in the data, which Braun codifies as “Phase one: familiarizing yourself with your data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The researcher did not manually transcribe the data from the recordings which is often considered a key step in familiarisation (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87), however the act of correcting the generated transcripts was in part useful for creating that familiarity. In order to achieve real immersion in the data, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts and interview notes several times (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 652). During this period the researcher made notes of ideas and potential avenues for coding and for themes (Braun and

Clarke, 2006, p. 87), as well as noting links that seemed to emerge between ideas across the data. The importance of change, adaptation and flexibility became particularly apparent.

3.2.2 Coding the data

Once the researcher felt familiar with the content, they moved to the process of “coding” the data. This encompasses Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill’s second step (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 653) and Braun and Clarke’s “Phase 2: generating initial codes” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). This step is concerned with identifying motifs in the data that may be interesting, and noting them in such a way that they can be linked with similar ideas or concepts elsewhere in the data set (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 653). In this part of the process, particularly as the researcher was working for an inductive approach, the data was coded expansively for as many patterns as possible (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). In the initial phase of coding, a large number of codes were identified, particularly in the first data sets analysed. As the researcher progressed and became more familiar with the patterns emerging, it became easier to see when codes interlinked and certain codes became more dominant, such as using flexibility to cover adaptability (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 653).

In **Table 2**, the researcher presents two extracts which have been coded for different ideas. Coding was undertaken through a manual process using printed paper and highlighters, rather than using a software application. Different colours were used in some instances to begin grouping potentially linked ideas that would eventually contribute to the themes.

Table 2. Example of Data Coding

Data Extract	Coded for
<p>Librarian F: Well, I think it's probably this [question] and the next one is probably the key to the problem here. The children's library is great. Fantastic, lovely, big space. I told you - it's flexible.</p> <p>It is a different zone. It's a children's library now, but the big problem here is that, uh, noise control.</p> <p>And this would probably be the key thing that if we were building the space again, we would make absolutely sure that this was an area that could be cordoned off because the noise goes right throughout the building.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children's library 2. Flexible 3. Zones 4. Noise Control 5. Separate 6. Noise
<p>Librarian S: One of the things I would say that we lack is storage space, right? So, you know, when you're using spaces for so many different, um, things, uh, you are constantly moving furniture or equipment, or whatever and it's good to have, just put that to one side.</p> <p>Or when it's not in use so the space can be used for something else. So that's something they do have over there. Um, they also have like a kids' arts and craft space, which I would love as well with the sink and everything.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Storage space 2. Multifunctional 3. Constantly moving 4. Other libraries 5. Dedicated spaces

3.2.3 Searching for themes and recognising relationships

In this phase of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill's procedure, we are concerned with generating themes and establishing the connections between themes or subthemes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 657). Braun and Clarke establish three distinct, if recursive steps, which are all at work in this part of the procedure, as well as the next;

- Phase 3: searching for themes
- Phase 4: reviewing themes
- Phase 5: defining and naming themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

This section is essentially concerned with how codes interact and how that interaction can produce meaningful themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). While codes emerge as short-hand encapsulations of the data, the most substantive defining element of themes is expressed in their organisation through relationships (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 657). In particular, the researcher paid attention to Braun and Clarke's reminder that individual extracts may reflect many different themes and one piece of data may be relevant in more than one context (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). As noted, for Braun and Clarke, the production of the relationships between candidate themes is often seen as a distinct step within their fourth phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91), the researcher collapsed it into the search for themes, building themes in relation to each other as suggested by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 657). A thematic map (**Figure 2**) was developed from the initial code list, which defined three specific themes. The theme Inside Space at this point was created with two subthemes, Users and Environment. In the next section, the changes to this selection will be particularly evident.

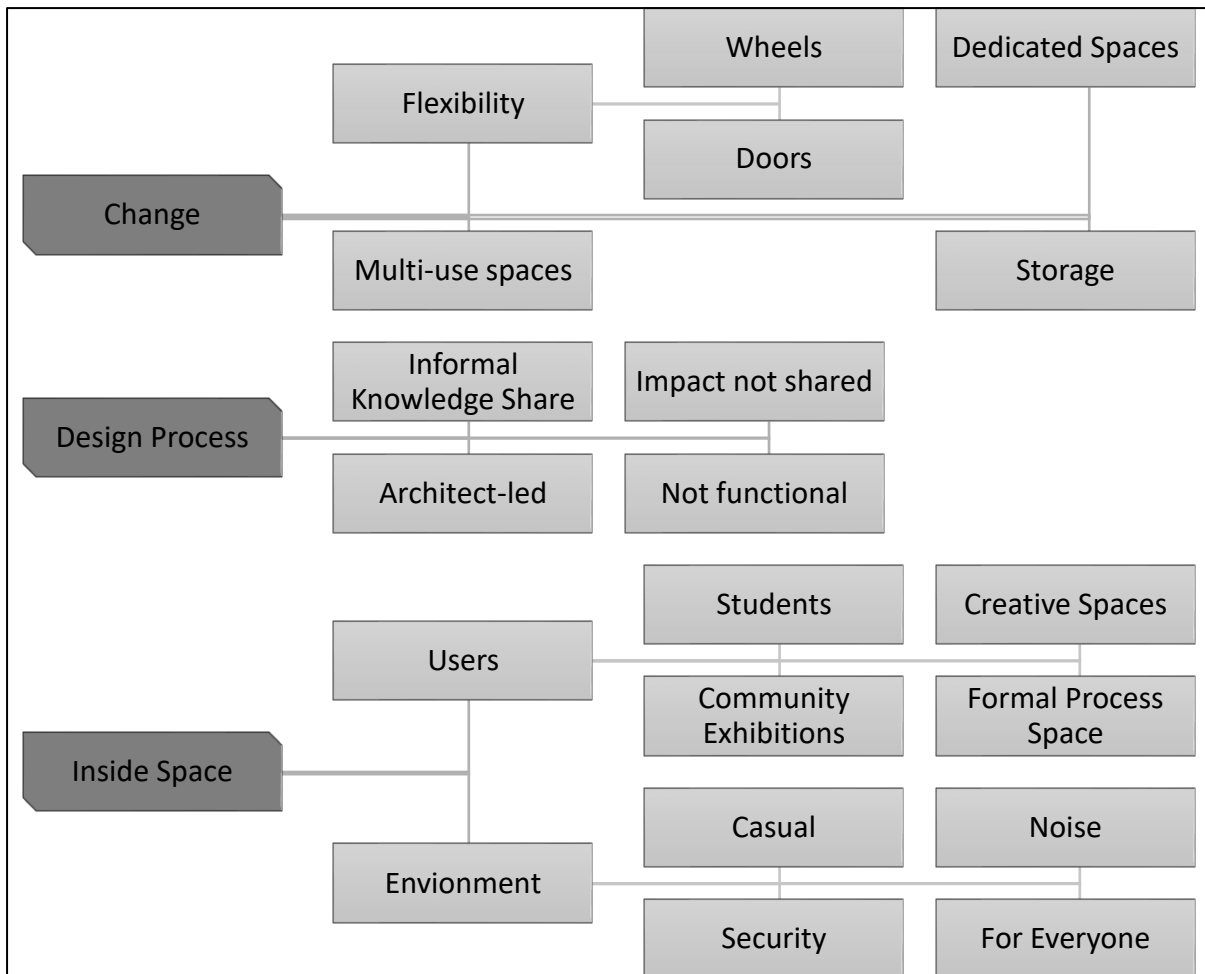


Figure 2. Original Thematic Map

3.2.4 Refining themes and testing propositions

Here the themes and their interrelations are more thoroughly scrutinised. Particular emphasis is placed on examining the themes and subthemes in relation to each other, in order to produce a meaningful narrative from the analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 658). It must be considered if the themes themselves do actually emerge from an evaluation of the entire dataset, rather than a selective, decontextualized reading of it (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This part of the process focuses on Braun and Clarke's Phases 4 and 5 (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87) and is an act of formalising and solidifying the themes. The central thrust or essence of each theme emerges here.

At this point, themes may be removed from consideration entirely or reconfigured (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 658), if they are not accessible or digestible. The Thematic Map is finalised as the themes and their subthemes are established. In the case of the thematic map produced for this research (**Figure 3**), the early Inside Space theme was dividing into two distinct subcategories, which seemed to represent two distinct perspectives. Ultimately separate Users and Environmental subthemes collapsed into one category for the Environment, through a number of shared considerations. The distinctions, as well as the commonalities will be outlined in detail below, but particular, as the Atmosphere subtheme includes creating an environment appropriate for all of the community, which is then complimented rather than distinguished from the conversation that emerged around providing space that can be All Things to All People. Once the themes and their relationships are established, it is then possible for the researcher to produce a narrative for each theme which in turn builds into the overall narrative of the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92)

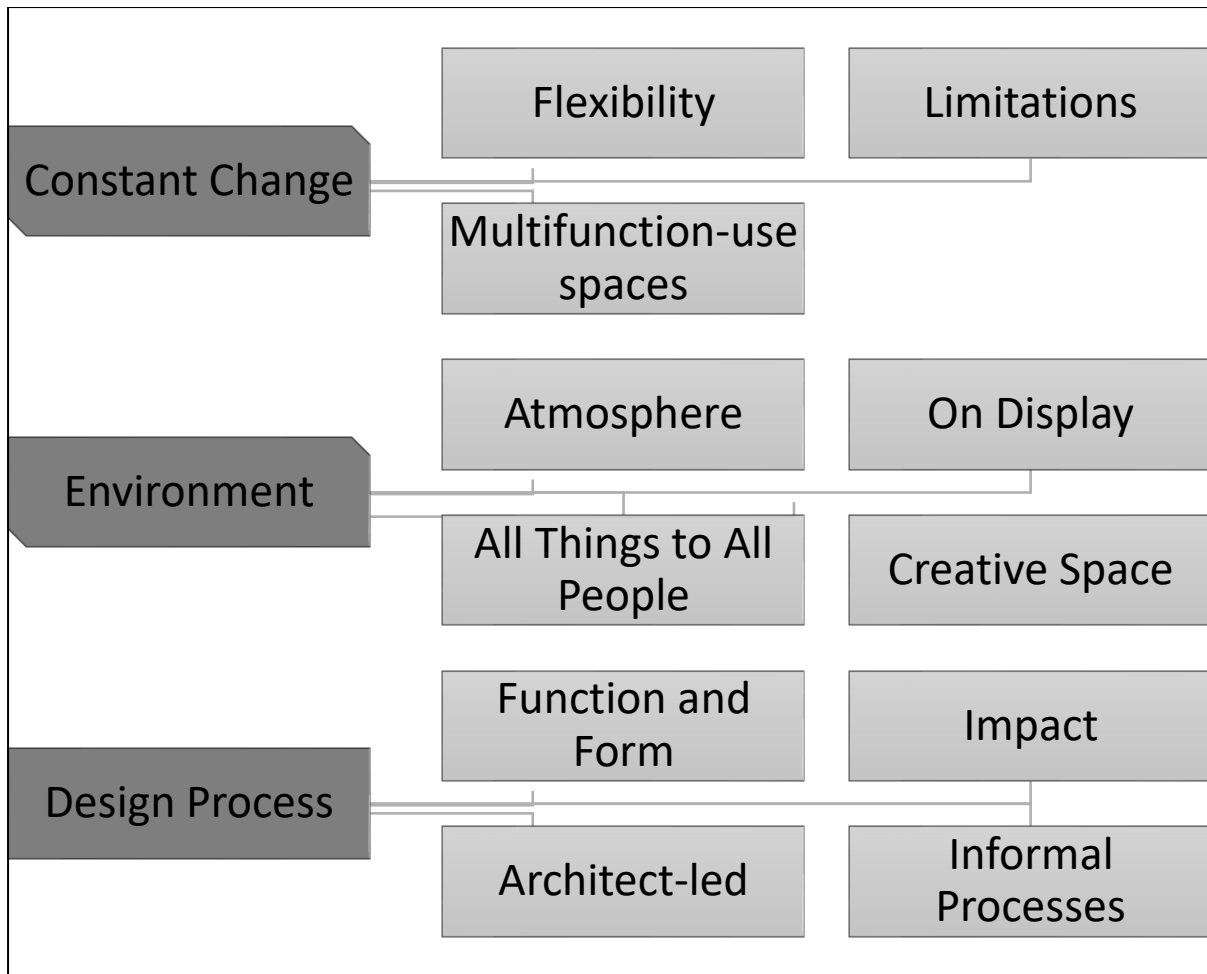


Figure 3. Refined Thematic Map

While this is the final part of the procedure for Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, Braun and Clarke make the process of writing or documenting a distinct step in their process (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87), which feels appropriate given their recursive approach. Although Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill do not specifically denote writing as a functional part of this process, they do advise writing in stages to build a complete project (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 708). With that in mind, although the themes are presented as distinct entries below, they have been built in an iterative and cyclical process.

3.3 Themes

3.3.1 Constant Change

The researcher was already aware that flexibility of spaces would form part of the research. It emerged as a major theme in the literature and a specific question was developed in relation to the flexibility of library spaces. The researcher noted that most librarians interviewed mentioned topics related to change, adaptation or flexibility before that question arose. This theme is developed around the concept of libraries as a series of constantly changing spaces which rarely have a static set of demands placed against them.

3.3.1.1 Flexibility

To differing degrees, flexibility is baked into the structure of modern libraries. Librarians D and F in particular highlight how critical that need for flexibility is, which Librarian D expresses as, “flexibility of space, would be one thing so that a space can be transformed at any time or into anything.” Librarian F states, “the real key to a successful library I have to say, having been the librarian here for that period of time, is flexibility.”

Librarian S noted that all their shelving units were on wheels and felt, “in most kind of newer libraries that will be kind of standard at this stage” and this is certainly born out in many of the libraries involved in the research. Librarian D is working in a recently built library that expects to open imminently and notes, “looking down at the library [floor] and you know, everything is on wheels practically. So all the shelving is on wheels. All the furniture can be moved if needs be.” Librarian K’s children’s library is flexible, but the adult portion of the building is not, limiting what happens there; “Furniture in the children's library is very mobile. The furniture in the adult library is static in that it's not on casters or anything like that. So in order to move a stack of books, you've literally to empty it and restack.”

Librarians D and S also note the adaptability of their meeting rooms. These facilities have folding walls which can be pulled back to merge conference rooms and create bigger or smaller spaces. Librarian S explains it as follows; “We have a conference room and the digital, the computer room next door. So the wall between them can be folded back and the wall, the wall from the conference room out onto the library floor can be folded back, so to make that a much bigger space. Um, I think that that’s really important.” Librarian D has the added advantage of being able to open both the children and adult libraries up to the library gardens outside.

On the other hand, Library F, which it should be noted is a much larger space than the other libraries involved in the research, has physically built in shelving units as well as static wall shelving. This does affect how the space is used; “Downstairs on Level 3, you can move [the floor shelving units] a bit. They’re at an angle. You can technically move them and my colleagues [sic] they have a big business day and they wanted loads of tables downstairs on Level 3. So it was a bit of a job to move these very heavy shelves back. So they're really not mobile.” Similarly, Library D lacks the accordion-like separation panels between meeting rooms/conference spaces. While they have a lot of smaller rooms and the ability to create space for gatherings of up to 250 people, they lack a mid-sized space. “Most of our meetings rooms are, you know, a maximum of about 20. I’d like another space where you could fit 50 people in. 50 is a good number and I don’t really have that space.”

3.3.1.2 Multifunction

Librarian F also notes that flexibility is not just the physical infrastructure in a space, but the way in which that space is conceptualised. For Librarian F this manifests as, “Flexibility of space, not having a hard and fast rule for one particular area.” This philosophy is perhaps best

exemplified in their library in the way that the children's library space is utilised. As Librarian F puts it, "Upstairs on Level 4, we can push back the children's library, all the tables, all the – it's children's furniture, all can come back and you can fit 250 people in there . . . Children's library during the day, Richard Dawkins at night, you know, so that's what we want to be able to do."

Adjacent to this is the need to have many different kinds of spaces available. Most of the libraries involved in the research have distinct study and social, or leisure reading spaces. The distinction is relatively obvious according to Librarian D, who says, "For instance, the study desk even though it is a modern desk, it would be very much a study desk. So you can charge in your phone. They're rectangular in shape, firm seats, Whereas the relaxing zone would have much more comfortable seats, that kind of thing, different colours, you know, we have different colours, but yeah. Yeah. It would be obvious that it's for relaxing to me to be honest."

For Library F too, having so many meeting rooms means that they can serve many needs at the same time, rather than just swapping the same space around constantly. This means they can serve smaller populations more easily. For Librarian S, we see that their conference room often doubles as an arts and crafts space. Similarly, this space expands into additional space for computer classes. They have a small office which is available for relatively small groups or individuals: "this little kind of glass office there. Um, again, that's used for various things for people can book in for group study or we use it for, um, people can book in, you know, if they have a Skype call or an interview, they're doing an online exam, that kind of thing. Um, so again, it's one of those kinds of multifunctional spaces. We use it as well for, um, we have business mentor clinics that are, are run by the local enterprise office." Library K is quite limited in this regard, saying, "you make a judgment call and you say, right, you know what I'm going to run a series of lectures in the morning in the

children's library because it's quiet. So move some furniture back or forward, create a smaller area for the children to access if they come in. And then you've created a lecture area as well. It's not ideal, but you're working within what you have.”

3.3.1.3 Limitations

These aspects of continuous change in the library environment are not without complications or even drawbacks, however, and issues can be exacerbated by a lack of complimentary features. In particular, storage emerges as something absent in Library S that is needed to facilitate the flexible environment; “One of the things I would say we lack is storage space, right? So, you know, when you’re using spaces for so many different things, you are constantly moving furniture or equipment or whatever and it’s good to have somewhere just to put that to one side.” This is something that Library D, which is a recent build, actually does have. Library F, due to its size does not struggle with storage capacity but there are limitations which emerge from not having distinct spaces.

Both Librarians F and S talk about the issues the lack of separation of spaces that emerge from having large, flexible spaces that serve multiple functions. While these spaces are obviously hugely beneficial, there are compromises involved. For instance, Librarian S notes that not having a dedicated arts and crafts space means that the conference space can require a lot of work to repurpose after use; “It’s something that, um, kind of annoys me, we have a carpet in the conference room, which gets filthy because you’re doing kids Arts and Crafts things in there. So, um, it would be lovely to have a dedicated kind of art space as well.” Librarian K notes that while their space might be theoretically flexible, it is not practically possible to make changes quickly; “The space is flexible with a huge amount of

effort.” In Library F the setup work for some events can be excessive and this requires the input of a dedicated facilities management team in a building that size.

3.3.2 Environment

This theme is concerned with the practical and conceptual environment created inside library spaces. It reflects, firstly, the very tangible atmosphere that is produced inside the library spaces, and secondly looks at the ways in which that environment is offered to the community.

3.3.2.1 All Things to All People

There is perhaps a seeming contradiction in the idea that open plan, wide spaces do not necessarily engender the sense that a library can be all things to all people. In particular, it is a recurring theme that in open-plan, expansive spaces noise control and separating people can become an issue. This is particularly raised by Librarians F, K and S. Library S is currently looking to renovate their children’s library to increase the separateness of that space, in the hope it “would make it more comfortable for both the kids and their parents and for everyone else using the library.” Librarian D, talking about these open and flexible spaces highlights that the essential library-ness of the place is insubstantial, saying, “All modern public libraries, you know in one sense it’s good and bad, they could be anything when the shelves are taken out – that’s kind of the modern library space.”

If being able to repurpose the library space for any conceivable event also engenders certain problems, it would seem that the availability of smaller, sectioned off, private spaces and events offers an alternative avenue for librarians. This is perhaps backed up by Library K, which does not have any smaller meeting rooms, so cannot offer a significant number of

targeted events. Librarians D and S focus on STEAM events, while Librarian F is concerned with creative workshops and mentorship programmes. Librarian F also extolls the virtues of having multiple meeting rooms available to serve diverse requirements; “we have three meeting rooms up at the top floor, on the fifth floor. We have another meeting room where the Magic Table is so, so certain groups that are older people are well looked after if they’re coming and we hire it out and we use it ourselves. So we would have book clubs, I think we have six of them now. Early last year we had a, we started with somebody who’s running an LGBTQ+ book club, which was going well and also a film book club, cinema book clubs.”

An emphasis emerged in most discussions centring students in library spaces. In particular, Librarian F referred to students as “the lifeblood of the library” while in Library D, education and improving educational outcomes is seen as a key goal for the new library. “What you’d be hoping is that if you start that at a young age then, that they would take up science in secondary school. If you continue doing those kinds of events with secondary school students that maybe they might take it up in third level and that would feed into the economy in South Dublin. That’s the plan.” While Library F accommodates seasonal demand by adding additional spaces, this is not something Library S chooses to engage in, “because, again, the space is in such high demand for events.”

3.3.2.2 Atmosphere

The open plan aspect of the libraries involved in the research did introduce a certain level of tension. There is firstly an issue with noise control. When library S initially opened the high ceiling meant sound, “reverberated like a swimming pool is the way that people described it. Just kind of echoey kind of, um, waffly noise.” This is a concern in Library D but has not yet been sufficiently tested in practice. Noise control is highlighted by Librarian F as well, in

terms of how the open plan, multi-use spaces make things hard to contain; “we thought it would be a quiet toddler group, but we ended up having, I think it was, um, something like 50 babies, you know, with their moms. So it was just jam packed and that would not have been quiet. So if you were in studying for your Leaving Cert, you know, it's just it's you have to have the headphones.”

Interestingly, however, there is an aspect of self-regulation inside study areas in particular. Librarian S has a dedicated quiet study space in a separate room; “it's funny the way it polices itself, you know, we rarely have to go in to give out to anyone or ask anyone to be quiet, it's just kind of, it's kind of the serious study place.” Librarian F makes a similar statement, saying, “because between 12 and 4, that was a time where there'd be no, nothing happening elsewhere in the library and it'd be dead quiet. I've come in here on Sundays, and they're so good at self-regulating.”

Perhaps the most important part of maintaining the atmosphere, is producing a consistent sense of security and comfort for patrons. Librarian K expresses it well; “the type of world we live in where it's everything is coming at you and there's noise, I don't mean literally physically noise, but there is stuff coming at you all the time. That idea of a space to withdraw and contemplate in is also important.” Librarian D conceptualises this as, “People need to feel secure when they are in the building. Yeah. No, there has to be a level of behaviour.” Sometimes, it is simply about communication, as Librarian F states that they would inform users about the potential for disruption, “we'll have warned people in advance, it's going to be a family day and we'd be right across the library.” Librarian D notes that customer care training is a fundamental part of managing library spaces, of producing that atmosphere. “So I am very conscious my staff need to be friendly to the public. No question is too simple to answer, I don't want staff to be off-hand, you know, that kind of stuff.” They also add, “There's a nice way to tell somebody that they have to keep quiet.” Librarian D

notes the specific impact of the physical space on people. In particular, they raise the impact of having a high level of shelving and book stock; “So the last thing we want to do is have too much stock. Which can be intimidating to people. It can be intimidating, I suppose, to, you know, people who don't speak English as a language or anybody with literacy issues at all.”

3.3.2.3 On Display

Exhibitions are a key way to conduct outreach and to ground the local community in the library space. All the libraries have some sort of exhibition space available. Librarian S says, “the people who will be using that and exhibiting there would be local artists. Um, so it's actually, it's actually very popular, like the slots fill up very quickly.” Librarian F talks about exhibitions integrated with local history and the community, “the history of the Harbour was so popular we didn't take it down. We did a book called *People on the Pier* to do with it. That's for sale, you know, it's people from the community sent in their photos and we projected them on the side of the building at the end of that year.” Library D has perhaps the best example of exhibitions as outreach into the community, through a creative writing and photo project: “we did a creative writing session with them . . . they have now finished the book and we're getting the book published for them and they will be the exhibition, the first exhibition to take place here when we open. So it will be like the *Humans of Balgaddy*.”

3.3.2.4 Creative Space

A corollary to the exhibition space, is space in which communities and individuals can make their own creative identities and artefacts. In Library S there is no dedicated space however they do run workshops and events; “we would run all kinds of classes in terms of art, um,

coding, photography, um, languages . . . we have a monthly STEAM class.” Library F, being much larger, has a broader offering which includes dedicated technology labs but also includes a significant artist and creative programme which would be linked to the local heritage of their area; “the writer-in-residence would use the room for that sort of activity as well. We would have done the Words Ireland Mentorship last year as well, so we would have used the room . . . somebody who is maybe working towards their first collection or wants to get advice would have the, um, access to somebody who is an established Poet.” Librarian D mentions their recording booth which they want to link to musical energies already locally in place; “there’s a church choir . . . a community centre down here . . . there’s a lot of schools around the area. There are choirs in those as well. So we thought the recording booth, maybe trying to upskill the students and get them to engage in something and make it a little bit different here than in other libraries in [the area].”

3.3.3 Design Process

This theme is concerned with how library spaces get developed. Two aspects emerged in the discussion, firstly with regard to large scale development or refurbishment, and secondly with regard to smaller scale updates that occur in the general running of libraries. In some respects, this is often a division by formal and informal processes.

3.3.3.1 Architect-Led

The librarians involved generally pointed towards the design of library buildings being driven by architects. Librarian F mentions specifically that in the Irish context, “We probably wouldn't do as much discussion with the users as they do in other countries.” This is what they refer to as being “architecture-led” and stress that they would, “probably have a

preference for the librarians being a little bit more um, upfront and being able to kind of contribute more to the original design.”

Librarian K suggests that while they may not have that much input, it is possible that the idea is starting to take root; “And that of course is another issue that it is being taken on board a little bit more is the idea that librarians should have input into design.” Library K is about to go into redevelopment in the next two years and Librarian K hopes to have some influence.

Librarian D also notes that much of the design is not driven by librarians, stating, “These are architect’s dreams here. We will see how they actually work.” They have a certain reticence about the layout, which includes removing excess bookshelves and also an uncertainty about some of the choices; “then your study spaces, which we will see how they pan out, like, you know, because one is out in the open and the other is pretty far away from the desk, I'm not sure if I like those ideas.”

3.3.3.2 Function and Form

A tension emerges in the discussion between function and form. Librarian F is particularly vocal; “there’s a few areas that are pure architectural wonders, but they don't work for us.” Interesting it is not always that the librarian’s preference function over form. Librarian F, talking about a particular window view and nearby area, says of the window, “the wooden block that kind of cuts into it almost from lots of viewpoints. I would have liked it to go down a bit, but architects like straight lines, but that's probably a small point I can live with it.” Librarian S has made updates because certain spaces did not work as originally intended, changing the seating because, “they weren't really being used for what they were supposed to

be used for, which is kind of somewhere for someone to sit and read the newspaper, you know, look at a magazine or whatever.”

Librarian S also maintains that “form” is part of function, saying that a space must be aesthetically pleasing in order to be used; “If the library isn’t nice, if it was dark, if it was dingy, if it’s old, you know, if it’s not comfortable, people won’t use it.”

3.3.3.3 Informal Processes

Adjacent to these concerns, is the informal ways in which librarians are managing developments inside their libraries. According to each of the librarians these are almost entirely informal processes. Perhaps owing to its size and its success, Library D has a slightly more formal level of engagement, as Librarian F says, “I did a presentation with a group of French librarians. It gives an overview of things.” They go on to say, “a lot of people would come to us. We would go to a lot of people. So before any of this was happening, we, we would have been on the lookout as some of my colleagues went to, um, I think to Holland. To some of the libraries in England.” Librarian D makes a similar case; “I mean, I’m well known when I go on holidays, no matter what country, I go into the libraries and have a look. I’d be very much like, like one of the things I was in Vancouver last year, so I saw that they had a creative studio or podcasting, you know, studio over there. So that’s something I’m, we’re trying to develop here.”

Librarian S talks about the casualness of the process, “So say for the junior library we went to um, just a couple of libraries that knew have had an upgrade recently or were new built. So we went to Deansgrange library and um the Lexicon Dun Laoghaire just to see what was there and if there was any ideas and, you know, we spoke to staff there about who their

suppliers were, that kind of thing.” They added that, “It’s casually, you just drop them an email or ring and speak.”

3.3.3.4 Impact

A key concern that arises from these largely informal practices is the sense that understanding the impact of choices is lost. This is particularly keen from the discussion with Librarian F, who says; “People came here to look, to see how it worked. And then I’d say it’d be interesting to see how it impacted. I know people might like a trolley we would have, or a, you know, a particular bit of furniture or something. So how it goes beyond here. I don’t know.” Librarian S also notes that design companies can be involved and the processes effectively can become outsourced; “have done it before in so many cases that they’re even more, you know, even more experts or they, they know what we want before we know ourselves.”

It is perhaps notable that Libraries D and S are inside the same local district and it seems in this case, as Librarian S puts it, “they are building on what we have as well” by incorporating more storage space. This is compounded by the practical reality that staff are not permanently placed in libraries, particularly in Dublin. Librarian K says, “Because of the nature in, in Dublin, in public library system, you’re liable to be moved. You could ring me next week? And I, my tenure, I’m heading down to the Lexicon to work.”

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The discussion section contextualises the findings in terms of the previous research examined in the literature review and the overall aims of the research as laid out in Chapter One. The inherent strengths and weakness of the research and its results will be highlighted. Both future implications and avenues for further research will be discussed.

The aim of the research was to understand how libraries in South Dublin prioritise the space they have in terms of community engagement. The research objectives were met through the collection of data from interviews with senior librarians in South Dublin libraries, which were then analysed by the researcher.

Broadly, much of what is suggested as good practice internationally is in place in Irish library environments. In particular, the notions of flexibility and multifunction appear to be deeply ingrained in South Dublin libraries. In some areas, however, differences did emerge. Community programming and exhibitions are a significant part of Irish libraries. These are not necessarily “Place-making” activities in intent but form a significant part of the outreach efforts of libraries. The level to which architects have control of the overall design of library spaces is something that would not necessarily be considered ideal according to the literature. In many cases in the literature review, not only were librarians heavily involved in the process, but they were engaged constantly with community stakeholders, a significant contrast to the Irish perspective.

The researcher had included questions on accommodating small or minority audiences in South Dublin libraries. This did not emerge as a significant area of discussion as Irish

libraries do prioritise creating inclusive environments. Facilities are largely accessible and accessibility technologies are in place in all libraries. These are under review in two of the four libraries. Facilities and events are in place for older communities, for non-English language speakers, for LGBTQ+ audiences for instance. There is an emphasis on autism groups in South Dublin as well as the provision of Touch, Type, Read and Spell courses. Although, it was mentioned as an area of contention in the literature, in South Dublin libraries there appears little to no significant issues around bathroom provision. All facilities interviewed had unisex single stall bathrooms.

The themes which did emerge as more relevant for discussion have been outlined in Chapter Three. These themes will be discussed in this section, in the context of the research aims and objectives and in relation to the existing literature.

4.2 Themes

4.2.1 Constant Change

The idea of libraries needing to be all things to all people seems particularly prevalent in the libraries that took part in this research. Even in Library K, which was the most static, this emerged in the discussion. The researcher had expected more tension, based on the literature review, between the need for book stock and for people space (Latimer, 2011). In practice, this did not emerge. Librarians were quite willing to sacrifice book space for more interactive space. Librarian D was clear that physically stocked, visible shelves were not a priority in their library, saying, “not too much stock because we can get access to any stock that we want.” While Librarian D did raise the concept of the library-ness of the place being

essentially diminished (Fallin, 2016), that seemed an acceptable compromise to them. There is a significant emphasis on events programming, utilising the flexible and multifunctional spaces that the literature promoted.

4.2.1.1 Flexibility

While Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen (2012) stress what users can do inside a space, there is a lack of practical considerations to achieving those goals in their framework. It is worth noting that three of the four libraries involved in the research are well able to facilitate all four spaces highlighted in their model, through the flexible use of space. Librarian F conceptualises this as follows, “Children's library during the day, Richard Dawkins at night, you know, so that's what we want to be able to do.” The only library which perhaps struggles is Library K, which is due for redevelopment in the next two years.

The framework for space proposed by Choy and Goh (2016) is more practically applicable, which emphasises the need for flexibility. While not specifically called out in the literature as a desirable feature, Librarian K goes so far as to suggest that functionally even “walls should be moveable.” This is something both Librarians D and S have and comment very positively on. Perhaps it is best borne out by the reflection from Librarian F, that “I'd like to have another space where you could fit 50 people in. 50 is a good number and I don't really have that space.” While the furniture in the building is quite modular and mobile, the physical building itself is relatively static, which does impact their day to day operations. Although it requires some work, Libraries D and S can create spaces of different sizes as needed.

All four of the librarians stress the need for flexibility, without question. In most cases this arises without prompt. Librarian F says, “the real key to a successful library I have to say

having been the librarian here for that period of time is flexibility.” For Librarian S, that flexibility is the only way libraries can achieve their perceived mission, “we have to be all things to all people - which is great, you know, um, you know, I've no problem with, but, um, in order to do that, the space has to be adaptable.” The librarians involved are eager to embrace fully philosophically and practically flexible spaces in libraries.

4.2.1.2 Multifunction

Multifunction is a complimentary thread of thought that emerges along with ideas of flexibility in the research. In the literature review, it is perhaps conceptualised more distinctly. The need for different kinds of space is expressed in both frameworks and throughout the literature. This reflects a need to accommodate both social and personal learning processes, and social/sociable interaction in library space (Beard and Dale, 2010, p. 481). If there is no longer a tension in South Dublin libraries between physical book stock needs and people space, there is certainly a tension in the different ways people need and use that space (May and Black, 2010). This is something that arises in particular in libraries F and S, where the children’s libraries present an obvious source of noise disruption that can filter out into the other parts of the library. Librarian F says, “if we were building the space again, we would make absolutely sure that this was an area that could be cordoned off because the noise goes right throughout the building.” In Library S they are looking at redesigning the space to mitigate similar disruption. Librarian K has a very limited number of spaces available to them, so they are perhaps the best case for this need, in that they have one space available to them to accommodate meetings of ten or a hundred. Library S has a distinct quiet study space available, which mitigates the effects of disruption from social spaces; “So if someone is studying down on the floor and is complaining about noise, they have that, to go

up there or, you know, they know that they can go up there. Um, whereas other libraries, wouldn't have that luxury.”

4.2.1.3 Limitations

The literature available does not emphasise the inherent drawbacks involved in creating and maintaining flexible spaces. Control of noise and other stimuli is evident in these open plan designs and although strategies do exist to mitigate them, these often place further additional stresses on librarians. In practice, there is often less work involved in managing a dedicated space. Librarian S's comments on cleaning is one part of this consideration; “We have a carpet in the conference room, which gets filthy because you're doing kids arts and crafts things in there. So, um, it would be lovely to have a dedicated kind of art space.” Utilising a space that is not built for arts and crafts effectively increases the effort that goes into maintaining it.

Similarly, to utilise a flexible space, there is a level of effort required to breakdown and rebuild spaces continuously. As Librarian F recounts, “They had a big business day and they wanted loads of tables downstairs on level three. So it was a bit of a job to move these very heavy shelves back.” In Library K, they note, “The space is flexible with a huge amount of effort.” This is not necessarily a negative point against flexible spaces but is a practical consideration for libraries. Flexible space is only flexible when you have the people and time available to rearrange it.

Finally, flexible spaces have related requirements that are not necessarily raised in the literature. A need for storage space to compliment flexible usage is a practical consideration that does not emerge in the largely theoretical frameworks available (Jochumsen, Hvenegaard Rasmussen and Skot-Hansen, 2012; Choy and Goh, 2016). Librarian S in particular raises it,

“You are constantly moving furniture or equipment, or whatever and it’s good to have [somewhere], just put that to one side. Or when it’s not in use so the space can be used for something else.”

4.2.2 Environment

Librarian K raised the idea of libraries as Place, unprompted, and raised one of the central ideas underlying this research – where does the library lie in the consciousness of its community; “We seem to exist on the fringes of the community. Even if we're located smack-bang in the middle of a community. I think that's something around that we need to think is that a design thing is a, or maybe it's a perception of what libraries are. So it's part of the whole placemaking thing.” This theme, then, is concerned with the ways in which the library interacts with its community through its physical offering, which, according to Fallin (2016) is perhaps the single most valuable asset of any library space. This includes how the library conceptualises its service, how the community is represented inside the library, and how the library in turn might be conceived of in the community.

4.2.2.1 All Things to All People

Three of the librarians involved in the research raised the concept of the library as needing to be, “all things to all people” in those explicit terms. Librarian F did not make this claim, however, they do mention providing services to a diverse audience, so while this many not have been an explicit statement, there is a degree to which it is implicitly part of their thought process. Given the number of meeting and event spaces available to Librarian F, they can service different audiences simultaneously. In contrast, Library K’s lack of separated spaces limits narrow-focused programming to brief windows of opportunity. The idea of libraries

being All Things to All People does not specifically emerge in the literature review, however it can be seen perhaps in the inverse statement, that people do not necessarily agree on what they want from their library spaces (May and Black, 2010, p. 23). Similarly, Somby (2016, p. 106) suggests that people themselves have no real concept of what a modern library is or does.

While the libraries involved might ideologically be prepared to be “all things to all people” Librarian F further complicates matters with the statement that “[students], they really are the lifeblood of the library.” During high-pressure exam times, the library can facilitate additional need by opening up extra space as suggested by Choy and Goh (2016). While this flexibility is good, it does raise the concern voiced in the literature by Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.* (2018) that libraries are seen as places linked explicitly to educational or academic activities. This is something that we can see in libraries D and S, where there is a significant emphasis on STEAM programming for young people. This raises the question of, although these libraries do provide social, leisure reading space, are they doing enough to convince younger users that libraries can also function as social, leisure spaces? In the libraries involved in this research, there is little evidence that they are.

4.2.2.2 Atmosphere

The kind of open plan library spaces which are most suitable to flexible reuse of space, are often the most difficult to maintain a coherent, suitable atmosphere in. This is noted by Black (2011, p. 39) in particular in the literature. In three of the libraries, noise from the children’s libraries spills out into the surrounding areas. Librarian F stresses that they and their staff are not and cannot be “shush-librarians” but this is placed against the need to maintain a certain atmosphere in libraries. Choy and Goh (2016, p. 17) conceptualise library spaces as

essentially “managed” as in they are overseen by spaces which are monitored and reformatted to produce an atmosphere. Interestingly, we do see an element of self-regulation emerge when or where there is an obvious demarcation of space or existing atmosphere of quiet, disruptive elements becomes significantly reduced. Librarian S refers to the quiet study space they provide in a separate room as self-regulating; “it's funny the way it polices itself, you know, we rarely have to go in to give out to anyone or ask anyone to be quiet.”

Adjacent to the notion of formal, quiet study space, Librarian K also raises the need for these quiet spaces to provide a contemplative, personal space. While Choy and Goh (2016, p. 20) conceptualise this Sanctuary space, they essentially conceive of it as a study and working environment in academic libraries. Librarian K makes a case for providing spaces where an individual can be absent from all forms of pressure or stresses; “We do increasingly see people looking for the quiet space too, you know, and it's not, it's not necessarily old foggies looking to throwback days when you were told to shush every time you come in the door of the library, but it's that space there are so - because of the type of world we live in where it's everything is coming at you and there's noise, I don't mean literally physically noise, but there is stuff coming at you all the time. That idea of a space to withdraw and contemplate in is also important.” In this sense, formal study spaces which are quiet may not encapsulate the entirety of what library users require from what we might deem Sanctuary space. This, perhaps, ties into the notion raised in the previous section that public libraries may be weighted towards formal, educational or academic information processing in a way that is detrimental to how communities conceive of them.

4.2.2.3 *On Display*

In terms of creating a Place for the community to see itself inside the library, we can see a number of useful approaches in South Dublin libraries. Library S hosts displays of local art; “it's actually, it's actually very popular, like the slots fill up very quickly.” They also have a some long-term installations; “We do have, um, um, a sketch by Sean Keating on the stairwell. He would be a local artist and he designed the, you know, he designed the stained glass windows in the church.” In a broad sense, these measures match successful strategies in international examples, such as bringing in an airplane cockpit to relate to the local aviation industry (Schwartz, 2018a) and giving users a space to see their work and peers work inside the library (Leousis and Sproull, 2016).

Both Librarians D and F discuss useful approaches that turn exhibition into outreach platforms that follow this model. Library F's local history of the harbour exhibition was so popular that parts of it are still in place; “that exhibition some of it is still upstairs.” Their People on the Pier photograph project was turned into a local interest book and still sells copies. Library D, in order to raise awareness of the upcoming opening, had their photo-essay project with local children, which will be turned into a similar book and exhibition, and will form part of the opening of the library, “they will be the exhibition, the first exhibition to take place here when we open.” Though this activity will likely be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems a significant strategy for getting communities into the building, so that, as Fallin (2016, p. 310) suggests, first-hand experience of a space will allow the public to conceptualise it as a lived, social, functional space for them.

4.2.2.4 Creative Space

Libraries are taking a more active role in the creative process, rather than only providing reference material or writing space. This is a transition from collection to creation and involves a new participatory use of space according to the literature (Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen, 2017, p. 513). This space can take the form of 3D printers, formal or informal maker spaces, music, and performative spaces. South Dublin libraries are well facilitated in this regard. Library D, for instance, intends to operate a recording booth; “we thought the recording booth, maybe trying to upskill the students and get them to engage in something and make it a little bit different here than in other libraries in South Dublin might be good.” This gels with the international experience that libraries cannot copy and paste creative energies and need to tailor towards their communities (Boyle *et al.*, 2016, p. 37).

Library F has built an entire reputation out of their commitment to the arts and artistic development. They run a writer-in-residence programme, facilitate poetry mentorships and host a lot of high-profile events; “Oh, we had about 250 people that came along with everybody from the arts literary, theatre kind of world came to that.” Jochumsen, Skot-Hansen and Hvenegaard Rasmussen (2017, p. 521) consider this reputational soft-power vital to the library in the community, and to the community itself.

4.2.3 Design Process

Both implicitly and explicitly, there was a certain level of remove from the building of the physical structures. Librarian K suggested, “obviously externally is the architect’s department and internal as well, to a certain extent,” while Librarian F states that South Dublin Libraries would not be involved in community discussion about the design as in international settings,

which is something that emerged in the literature as a positive process (Fox, 2014; Schwartz, 2019a).

4.2.3.1 Architect-Led

Community participation in library design was raised in the literature, though is by no means a given, with Meunier and Eigenbrodt (2014) in particular being proponents of participatory design processes leading to the creation of “People’s Palaces”. Leousis and Sproull (2016, p. 233) suggests it can create a sense of ownership and at the very least can engender a sense that the library is responsive (Schwartz, 2018a). While the literature suggests that community driven library design is, if not optimal, at least worth considering, this is not something that is present in South Dublin libraries.

Library design in Irish public libraries is, according to Librarian F, “architect-led”. While librarians are not dismissive of this, there is a sense that they would appreciate being more involved. Librarian D refers to “architect’s dreams” and is already in a position, prior to opening, where they know they will need to remove some of the shelving fixtures. That is not to say that there is no appreciation of design firms, as Librarian S points out they may “have done it before in so many cases that they’re even more, you know, even more experts or they, they know what we want before we know ourselves, you know?” Librarian K is going into a rebuilding cycle and hopes to have a level of involvement, “Ask me in five years’ time if I’m still here, we’ll see how much of my way I got.”

4.2.3.2 Function and Form

Emerging from the theme that librarians are not involved enough in the process of creating library spaces, is a certain tension between form and function. This too emerges in the

literature particularly around open plan designs (Black, 2011). Librarian D's comment about "architect's dreams" is something that marries with the experience of Librarian K, who understands there are constraints beyond function on space, from an architect's perspective; "That kind of brick isn't right. Or you can't use things there because they don't match that architecture there or whatever, you know." Librarian F has a similar opinion, though also suggests that they did have some influence; "there's just some areas that you feel, you know, like they would have beautiful bins that don't really work for us. They wanted to encase the kiosks, the, you know, the, the, the silvery shiny kiosks in woods to go with the wooden look of that. And we said no to that." Meunier and Eigenbrodt (2014) suggest that understanding how to meet the needs of actual users, rather than use as a social engineering concept, can mitigate some of these issues.

4.2.3.3 Informal Processes

Perhaps in response to this, most of the librarians involved spoke of visiting, often casually or during leisure time, other libraries to see what ideas were in place there. Librarian D says, "I'm well known when I go on holidays, no matter what country I go into the libraries and have a look." Librarian S also notes the largely casual nature of visits, while Librarian F notes the significant number of visitors that have come to see how they use their spaces.

The informal nature of the process here does make sense when considered against the notion in the literature that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach available for library spaces (May and Black, 2010, p. 22). That librarians are using their person experience to make choices on how to utilise that space is not necessarily surprising in that context. In some respects, this is desirable. Some of the literature is particularly keen on libraries making informal, experimental changes to their spaces (Boyle *et al.*, 2016; Schwartz, 2018a).

4.2.3.4 Impact

Librarian F raised the topic of wider impact as something of particular importance to them. Of all the libraries involved in the research, this library is probably the most prominent in South Dublin and as such sees a significant number of exploratory visits; “So many people did come. A lot of architects come here as well, because it was award winning.” Other librarians involved mentioned that they visited Library F when looking for ideas for upgrades, particularly Librarian S. Librarian F, however, noted that they would like to know if the visits had any significant impact; “it'd be interesting to see how it impacted. I know people might like a trolley we would have, or a, you know, a particular bit of furniture or something. So how it goes beyond here. I don't know.”

Librarian S raises the point that the storage capacity issue they have has been resolved in the designs for Library D, however Librarian D remains concerned about the noise issues that may arise from their high ceiling, which also occurred in Library S. While these two libraries are in the same district and there is at least some knowledge-sharing, it is worth asking if it is formal enough. Particularly given the mobility of librarians in Dublin, is it possible that experience and knowledge is continuously being eroded? Design is often a problem solving exercise (Latimer, 2011, p. 113) but there is a possibility, as far as the researcher can see, that the solutions to those problems are not being captured, that public libraries have the potential to lose those solutions, or fail to understand the entirety of the impact of design choices because of the reliance on informal, casual knowledge dissemination.

4.3 Strengths

The researcher began this study from an unbiased perspective on the current attitudes to design priorities in Irish libraries. This was maintained as far as possible throughout the literature review and because the researcher decided on an inductive approach, specific opinions of the environment were not fixed before the qualitative data collection began.

An inductive approach allowed themes to emerge from the discussion which would likely not have, if the researcher had taken a more deductive approach. In particular, the emphasis on student users and on the informal processes in laying out library spaces are unlikely to have been followed up on, had the researcher take a purely deductive approach.

Using qualitative methods for this study was a successful strategy. As exploratory research needs to look in-depth at active environments in order to understand them, qualitative data collection using semi-structured interviews of subject experts was very suitable for gathering this kind of contextual information (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 187). The researcher was able to interview four senior librarians actively managing libraries in South Dublin. Getting the perspective from a recently built library enhanced the research by providing a very current state of play.

4.4 Weaknesses

There was no significant literature available on Irish public libraries, so there was no particularly Irish perspective to build on. The literature offers an international view of how design is managed and while the South Dublin experience is compared to it, the political, social and cultural contexts are different. Even with regard to the UK, there are vital differences in the way public libraries operate.

The timeframe of twelve weeks is a limitation that must be acknowledged. While the researcher found it useful to have a defined period in which to operate, this also necessitated choices about the kind of research that could be conducted and who could participate. In particular, due to restrictions on library staffing some libraries were not able to participate during the window for data collection.

COVID-19 had a number of impacts in general. Firstly, it is acknowledged that the research was limited to a mono-method study. The original intention was to observe members of the public through shadowing, which would have informed the semi-structured interviews. This was not possible, so the research represents only the perspective of librarians and not of the local community as originally envisioned. Restrictions on staff numbers in South Dublin due to COVID-19 particularly affected librarians in older buildings. Despite there being a number of libraries in South Dublin which were built in the 1910s, none of those buildings are represented in the research. This means there is a perspective missing from the research. The researcher intended to interview six subjects but in the timeframe available was only able to interview four, which may limit the broader applicability of findings.

4.5 Future Implications

The researcher has identified two broad implications which may require future consideration. Firstly, the researcher has noted that the view in the literature that the public have an unstable view of what a modern public library is or does is broadly accurate. Librarian K's suggestion that libraries lie on the edge of communities' awareness or perception seems correct. While the librarians involved in the research stress that libraries are expected to be all things to all people, the statements from Librarian F, that students are the "lifeblood" of the library raised a concern in the researcher, when considered in the context that many students transition

away from library use once they finish second or third-level education (Fernández-Ardèvol *et al.*, 2018). If we consider that students are a significant element of the public library environment, there needs to be some effort to convince these users that the library is not just an academic or educational space, but also a leisure and social one.

Secondly, the researcher agrees with the perspective raised by Librarian F, that the informal or casual knowledge sharing processes do not engender an environment that provides the best metrics for understanding the wider contextual impact of design choices. If that persists, it is possible that knowledge of our environments and the principles underlying them will be lost as librarians move around districts, as they retire or as they change jobs.

4.6 Future Research Recommendations

Future research in this area should consider the user perspective with regard to how libraries try to accommodate them inside physical spaces more heavily. A more quantitative review of what facilities are available in libraries might also provide an overall picture of the state of play in Irish libraries.

In particular, it would be useful to look at the design and building process more closely. If a substantive case could be made that suggested overall outcomes were improved by involving librarians more fully in the design process in international contexts, it would be easier to make the case that Irish librarians should have more decision-making power in the over-all process.

4.7 Conclusion

The most significant finding which emerged from the research may be the way in which librarians do not feel they are active participants in the design and development of their spaces. This was a common thread in the discussion and does not necessarily represent the best practice standards that emerged in the literature review. Considering that Librarian D is already making changes to the environment it appears to the researcher like a lack of input actually increases the overall workload on the librarian once they take over the environment. Surrendering control of the projects to commercial firms, and the informal processes that have developed around knowledge sharing, compound into a situation where libraries may be losing some essential knowledge about their physical environments. In practice, public libraries do not appear to be building a robust working knowledge of design potential in Irish libraries. If the librarians are not involved in the process it seems like it would be difficult to integrate the knowledge and experience needed to connect to the different energies in local communities. A model closer to participatory design might have the effect of moving the public library conceptually deeper into the consciousness of their communities.

The researcher found that flexibility emerged as one of the key concepts in both the literature and in discussions with librarians. There is no singular conception of library spaces and this is perhaps an asset. Libraries are not limited to being one thing, so being able to offer so many kinds of environments is a benefit to these spaces, serving many different needs. The need for flexible environments is understood, even if they are not available. As libraries go into redevelopment, the researcher is confident that will be taken into consideration.

The researcher notes again Librarian F's comment that students are integral to the active library environment. While this emphasis was not necessarily universal throughout the libraries involved, there was certainly a strong sense that the academic and educational

activities of younger users are privileged. In order to actively transition students into life-long active users, the researcher feels that more could be done to construct the library as a social, sociable, leisure-space for these users. In particular, the game lab in Library F is a step in the right direction.

Further to this, is the need to move libraries from the fringes of the community, as Librarian K suggested, and integrate them into the day-to-day lives of their communities. Part of the process of doing this, as highlighted by Librarian D's strategy, should be to build with the idea of giving the community exhibition or performative space in which to see itself on display. This will go some way towards fixing the concept of the library as community space.

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Websites

Libraries Ireland - <https://www.librariesireland.ie/find-your-local-library>

Descript transcription software - <https://www.descript.com/>

Appendix

Appendix A Interview Questions

1. When was the last time there was a major restructuring of the building?

Probing – Were you involved?

Probing – Why was it undertaken?
2. When was the last time you made a noticeable change to some part of the layout?
3. How do you evaluate if a space is working?

Probing - Usability testing? Usage? Observation? Survey?
4. If you were looking for ideas or guidelines to renovate or update the space you have, where would you go?

Probing – Do you look at guidelines or research, for instance from IFLA, LGMA, ALA?
5. How flexible is the space you have?

Probing – Are the fixtures/furniture you have modular or built into the environment?

Probing – Is there something other than fixtures preventing changes? Time?

Authority?
6. Have you changed the shelving for the book collection in the time since your last renovation?

Probing – reduced/expanded shelving?

7. Do you have different zones for different kinds of activities? Could you tell me about the different zones?

Probing – is there good separation between quiet and social areas?

Probing - How are the different zones marked out? Signage, physical barriers?

8. Do you have good noise control/separation between different areas or zones in the building?

9. What kind of study facilities do you have here? Who uses them?

10. Is there anything unique that relates specifically to the local community here?

Probing – Have you any local art or history collections or had exhibitions in the past?

11. What kind of creative equipment or facilities do you have available for the local community? Who uses these facilities?

Probing – Do you have a 3d printer or musical equipment? Writers workshops?

12. How well are you able to facilitate the needs of smaller/minority groups in the local community?

Probing – accessibility, LGBTQ+ friendly, non-gendered bathrooms, foreign language literature

13. What kinds of assistive technologies or facilities do you have available?

14. How important is it to offer attractive physical space?

- a. (If yes) How well do you feel you meet that need?

- b. (if no) Would you elaborate a little on that? Why not? What is important about the space?
15. What factors do you think are the most important when designing your space?
16. If there was one aspect of the design of the building you could change, what would it be?

Appendix B Information Sheets

Information Sheet for Participants

Project Title: Design strategies and the community

Description:

You are being asked to take part in a research study on design strategies used in laying out public libraries to understand how design can be and if it is being used to engage with communities.

Researcher Name: Shane Doyle – 10520034

Research Supervisor: Trevor Haugh

Institution: Dublin Business School, MSc Library and Information Management

This project has been approved by the DBS Research Ethics Committee.

What will happen:

In this study you will be asked a number of questions about the layout of this library, including why particular things are in particular places and why prioritise led to those choices. Questions may be general or quite specific. Topics intended to be addressed will be around;

- Study areas
- Accessibility
- Leisure reading
- Layout/design priorities
- Changes to the layout

These questions are generally intended to ascertain to what degree engagement, user needs and responses inform the layout of the building.

Time commitment:

The study typically takes about between forty-five (45) minutes and one (1) hour.

Participants' rights:

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn / destroyed.

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study). If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect will be anonymised to preserve your confidentiality, retaining only information about the library you work in. This data will be used in my dissertation and may also be used in conference presentations and for publication. It is the intention of the researcher to omit, as far as possible, supplementary identifying details given in the course of data collection from published or presented materials.

For further information:

I or / and my supervisor Trevor Haugh will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at trevor.haugh@dbs.ie

Appendix C Consent Forms

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Design strategies and the community

Project Summary:

This research study on design strategies used in laying out public libraries seeks to understand how design can be and if it is being used to engage with communities. It is a case study involving a number of libraries in South Dublin.

Information:

By signing below, you are agreeing that: (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet, (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily, (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Participant's signature

Participant's Name (Printed)

Student Name (Printed)

Student Name signature

Date

Appendix D Invitation Emails

Subject: Research on Library Design - DBS

Hi [name],

I am a current student in Dublin Business School's Library and Information Management Masters programme and am conducting research for my dissertation on design strategies and community engagement in public libraries.

I am looking to interview senior librarians in Dublin about some aspects of their library, particularly related to layout and facilities and am hoping to speak to you about [name] library. The study will involve a number of libraries in South Dublin.

I would be very grateful if you would consider participating. My expectation is that any interview would be conducted virtually and that it would take about 45 minutes to an hour. I would be looking to conduct the interviews in mid-July but would be happy to do so earlier or later, if that was more convenient.

I intend to maintain the confidentiality of those involved in the final research output. An information sheet and consent form will be provided to you, which will detail how your information will be used.

If you would be interested in participating, please do let me know and we can arrange a time and method that is convenient to you to conduct the interview.

Regards,

Shane Doyle

085 143 6065

Appendix E Follow-up Emails

Subject: Research on Library Design - DBS

Hi [name]

You may have received my pervious email below about research I am conducting as part of my dissertation for my Library and Information Management Masters programme.

I am looking to interview senior librarians about the priorities in laying out their libraries and was hoping you would consider taking part. The interview would take between 45 minutes and an hour and can be conducted online.

If you would be interested in participating, please do let me know and we can arrange a time and method that is convenient to you.

Regards,

Shane Doyle

085 143 6065

Appendix F Library S Transcript

Researcher: Into this, cause I don't want to keep you too long, but just to give you a little bit of a background on it, em I am going to ask some questions that I know the answer to, em because I'm actually from Firhouse, I only live down the road, so I'm reasonably familiar with the library. Um, so some things

I'm asking so that you'll tell me rather than, because I don't know the answer. So, um, just to keep that in mind. So what I'm researching is kind of how libraries respond to communities through design and how things get arranged and things like that. And, um, When this is over, if he, well, I can go through the questions

if you want to know why I asked any of the questions or what I was trying to get at, that's absolutely fine. And just to remind you, you may have seen it on the information sheet - at any stage if you decide that you don't want this used in the research, you can come back and say, I actually, I, withdraw consent and that's fine.

Don't feel like, you know, that's a problem. So, um, so, um, just before we started having any questions, is there anything you want to.

Librarian S: I know we can fire away.

Researcher: Perfect. Okay. Cool. And so when was the last time that there was a major upgrade or restructuring of, of the building that you use?

Librarian S: Um, it depends what you mean by major, major upgrades.

(hesitant/uncertain) Um, do you mean rebuilding work or kinda?

Researcher: Basically. Yeah. Like I know that the, I think it was 2013.

Librarian S: Oh, sorry. Yeah. I'm just thinking of the current building. Um, I never worked in the old building, but, um, yeah. I mean the place was leveled and rebuilt in 2013. Yeah. So before, I don't know if you remember before that.

So, I mean, it was always a very busy library and obviously needed an upgrade.

Researcher: Cool.

And was it particularly because of the amount of people using it or was it because it had gotten too old?

Librarian S: Um, I think probably both. Yeah. Um, you know, when it was built initially, um, that was probably style that libraries were built in at the time and things have changed, you know?

So,

Researcher: um, were you involved back then? Had you started working there?

Librarian S: No, I wasn't, no I was working in Tallaght at the time. So.

Researcher: What about something sort of that's happened since then? Something smaller on a smaller scale. Have you done any sort of minor renovations in the last?

Librarian S: Yeah, yeah. (lack of eye contact) I've just been there, um, just over two years now.

Um, so we've done a few things, um, as you say, just minor things. Um, we kind of removed, I don't know if you remember, um, in the kind of center walkway. Um, there was kind of a seating area of the back of where the books are returned. We took those out and put in kind of a nicer seating. Um, they weren't really being used for what they were supposed to be used for, which is kind of somewhere for someone to sit

and read the newspaper, you know, look at a magazine or whatever. Um, they just weren't very comfortable or attractive. So we took them out and, um, got new seating for there. Something we're looking at at the minute, which, um, We kind of re you know, kind of, um, so they each know why everything I'm hopeful, hopefully by the end of the year, it's kind of a rearranging of the junior library to make it a more distinct space.

Um, To make it more recognizable as a, as a children's library I suppose. And so we're looking at new furniture and kind of rearranging shelving and that kind of thing to.

Researcher: Perfect.

Librarian S: As you know the library is just one big space downstairs, um, so it is divided into different sections, but that's not always apparent to everyone coming in.

Researcher: Um, I'm actually going to come back to that in a second.

Um, so how do you decide if that space is working or not? Like how you mentioned that you, the seating, the casual seating wasn't really working. So how did you decide that it wasn't?

Librarian S: um, (interviewee becoming more comfortable/confident) just by observing the ways that people use as I suppose. Um, and even the way the staff use it, you know, um, for me, that space had become a dumping grounds for things like

you know, council reports or, um, old kind of public consultation things for the planning department that we have to put. And, you know, they just know, we don't know where to put them, so they're just there. Um, you know, that kind of thing. Um, cause there was some shelving, um, at the side of it as well, but otherwise they were just benches and they were also attached to the back of the shelving unit where the book returns go. Um, It just wasn't kind of attractive.

Um,

Researcher: so, so when you're looking for kind of ideas of what you do with that kind of space, or, or to, to update something, where do you go to get those ideas? How do you figure out what you can or might want to do with this space?

Librarian S: Um, we would kind of look at what other libraries are doing. So say for the junior library we went to

um, just a couple of libraries that knew have had an upgrade recently or were new built. So we went to Deansgrange library and um the Lexicon Dun Laoghaire just to see what was there and if there was any ideas and, you know, we spoke to staff there about who their suppliers were, that kind of thing. So, um, just there, there are library design companies, as well as you know, um, who come out and give you ideas and, um, Who would probably have, you know, have done it before in so many cases that they're even more, you know, even more experts or they, they know what we want before we know ourselves, you know?

Researcher: Perfect. Yeah.

Um, and, and sort of when you're getting in contact with those other libraries, do you just like, is it, is that quite casual or do you go through like the LGMA or

Librarian S: It's casually, you just drop them an email or ring and speak.

Researcher: okay.

So in terms of the space that you have kind of, how flexible is that space in terms of like making changes or doing anything?

Librarian S: Um, in Library S it is quite flexible because it is just one big space. Um, all the, all the shelving is on wheels. So, I mean, we kind of, we're constantly changing or anyway, in terms of moving stuff to accommodate an event or especially in the junior library actually.

Um, you know, we just pushed back the stacks to, um, if we're having a big show or the events or that.

So yeah, I thought that the book floor there is, um, It's very adaptable. Um, well also the, the meeting spaces are quite adaptable as well. I don't know if you have been in them or

Researcher: I've

been in one of the small

ones upstairs.

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, downstair we have the two rooms and um, so we have a, uh, conference room and then the digital, the computer room next door.

So the wall in between them can be folded backed and the wall. The wall from the conference room out onto the library floor can be folded back , so make that a much bigger space. Um, I think that that's really important. Um, have you looked at the design for the new library in North Clondalkin?

Researcher: I, yeah, I've been, yeah looking at them.

Librarian S: The steps

of the plans. Yeah. Um, Like that is quite similar to Library S in a lot of ways. Um, in terms of that kind of adaptable space, now they are building on what we have as well. Um, one of the things I would say that we lack is storage space, right? So, you know, when you're using spaces for so many

different, um, things, uh, you are constantly moving furniture or equipment, or whatever and its good to have, just put that to one side.

Or when its not in use so the space can be used for something else. So that's something they do have over there. Um, they also have like a kids arts and craft space, which I would love as well with the sink and everything.

Yeah.

We do have kind of a, a space that you can close off in the junior library. It's kind of - we call it the pod.

So it's just sliding doors, but we usually have it open and kids go in there and sit down and kind of lounge around in but, um. It was kind of initially set up as a story telling space, but we don't really use it for that because actually it is a little bit small. But we have used it for, but you know, you can use it for small meetings or, um, It's usually the place where if you have someone looking for a room that you, if there's nowhere else available, that's where you put them but eh it does come in handy.

Yeah. So that is very adaptable which is, which is nice. Yeah.

Researcher: Perfect. Um, you kind of mentioned it already but have you changed the shelving for the book collection in since your last renovation?

Librarian S: Um, do you mean, have we moved us or have we changed it.

Researcher: Either

Librarian S: it has been moved a bit and kind of rejigged, uh, for various different reasons.

Um, and

Researcher: you said that it's on wheels, so it's quite easy to change?

Librarian S: It is

yeah

yeah,

Researcher: that's really handy.

Librarian S: Yeah. Yeah. Um, I think in most kind of newer libraries that will be kind of standard at this stage.

Researcher: And so, um, something else that you were talking about was that, so, um, do you have different zones for different kinds of activities?

And could you tell me a little bit about those zones?

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, so like the main room that we have is the conference room. So that will be used for anything from, um, book clubs to, um, you know, kids arts and crafts, adults arts and crafts,

lectures. Like most things go on in there. Um, the conference room or - the digital training room next door, where the computers are,

we kind of, we use that as you know, it was open the whole time when it's not used for events, for people just to go to in there. We also close it off when um, You have computer classes for the elderly. We have a coding club for kids and the older kind of STEAM things that involve computers will be held in there. And actually for the coding, we join those two rooms together so that we can accommodate extra kids in the coding on laptops in the conference room.

Mmm what other zones. Um, we have, we have a little room outside as well as, I dont know, if you know it, um,

Researcher: The bridge

room. I didn't think that was yours. I thought that was the community center. So that's yours as well?

Librarian S: Yeah. So again, it's a handy space for small meetings, um, we would have it's mainly used kind of, not by ourselves, so much but for community groups that would request to use. That's kind of like the groups doing crochet or.

Researcher: That's why I thought it belonged to the parish and not to you.

Librarian S: Yeah. Yeah. So it is ours yeah. Um, another space just beyond that, it's kind of over to the left [unclear] that's ours as well, but it's kind of given an open stance and we don't use it at all. They just, they have kind of constant use of it.

Um, We have then study room upstairs as well. Um, you know, this little kind of glass office there. Um, again, that's used for various things for people can book in for group study or we use it for, um, people can book in it, you know, if they have a Skype call or an interview, theyre doing an online exam, that kind of thing.

Um, so again, it's one of those kind of multifunctional spaces. We use it as well for, um, we have business mentor clinics that are, are run by the local enterprise office. So they take place up there. And you know, that study space upstairs is brilliant to have, not a lot of libraries would have a space like that.

Um, cause it can get so busy and kind of noisy downstairs. Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: And you mentioned that you kind of want to do something with the children's space to make it more distinct from the, um, the rest of downstairs.

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, so it's kind of, for a number of reasons. Number one, we need to try to make to the childrens

space more, um, attractive (emphasises this) I suppose to kids, but also we would get complaints sometimes, um, about kids running around the library or being outside the junior library or being noisy. And those kind of things so. Um, we thought that that would help that in some way, hopefully. Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: So, so on, on that then do you feel like in the library or in parts of the library, do you have like good separation or noise control between different areas or, I mean, I know some you do.

Librarian S: Yeah. um obviously not on the open floor, like it can, you know, that just the ceiling is so high as well, I think when they first moved into that building, um, I think noise kind of reverberated like a swimming pool is the way that people described it. Just kind of echoey kind of, um, waffly noise. But, um, actually the architects gave us some advice on just having the high shelving wasn't in use because it's kind of inaccessible, but, um, to have some stock up there to stop that, um, to muffle that noise a bit.

Um, I mean, it's, it's always kind of something that you're trying to strike a balance with because, um, you know, it is for everyone and there's a huge range of people coming in every day, wanting to use the space for different things. Yeah. Mmm. I suppose there is the upstairs room is great obviously. Its a quiet space and people respect that.

Um, well it's, as I was saying, it's just brilliant for us to have that. So if someone is studying down on the floor and is complaining about noise they have that

to go up there or, you know, they know that they can go up there. Um, whereas other libraries, wouldnt have that luxury, but I think it is important, you know, it's still, you know, we are trying to cater to everyone and of course we want children to be coming in. At the same time there is a whole group of other people who want to, who want that traditional kind of quiet library space.

Yeah.

Researcher: So there's those two kinds there's kind of two study spaces, at least. Do you find that you get very different groups of people using them or do people just tend to gravitate towards whatever's free or?

Librarian S: Um, usually people would, yeah, it depends, um, if you have groups of teenagers who aren't kind of serious studiers, they will tend to stay downstairs.

Because they can chat to their friends.

Move from table to table, but that wouldn't really be tolerated upstairs. Um, you know, people would - not by the staff, but by, you know, other people that are, are using space, they are usually kind of third level or there is, um, you know, people use it as a workspace as well. Um, you know, whether they're starting a business or they're, they're working on, and they're studying part time or whatever, they, they would, you know, so it's not all just kind of junior cert and leaving cert

people using it. Um, um, yeah, so, yeah, um, like coming up to, um, kind of April, May or, you know, it really starts after Christmas, to be honest with you, um, that space in that room upstairs would be in huge demand. Um, and immediately like the few weeks coming up to leaving cert, there will be queues outside.

So, um, You know if we didnt have it wed be lost without it.

Researcher: Yeah. And

do you have - so you mentioned that there are queues. Are you able to provide like additional seating at those times of the years? Are you able to do anything to alleviate that or ?

Librarian S: Em, Not really? Um, like the, the, we have enough seats for the amount of space there is up there.

Um, we, um, You know, some libraries do open up their conference room, and put kind of tables and chairs in. Um, we haven't done that, um, cause again, the space is in such demand for events.

Yeah.

Things, you know, so to be honest, it hasn't been a huge problem. We generally have space.

Yeah.

Yeah. Um, the only thing is, they do tend to use the computer room as well.

You know, just using the tables for sometimes you have to move them on if people if people want to use them, yeah.

Researcher: Cool. Okay. So, um, I'm gonna move slightly away from that now. Um, is there anything in the library specifically related to the, to the local community,

Librarian S: um, in terms of events or?

Researcher: In terms of events in terms of, um, exhibitions, permanent fixtures.

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, so we have, um, really nice exhibition space actually, um, which again is adaptable. The panels, the wooden panels can be moved. They can be, you know, configured in loads of different ways. So, you know, mainly, um, the people who will be using that and exhibiting there would be local artists. Um, so it's actually, it's actually very popular, like the slots fill up very quickly.

Um,

you know, the, do you mean in the physical spaces or anything?

Researcher: Um, well, so I'm, I'm particularly thinking the last time I was in there, there was the local history, um, related to. It's at 19...? No, the civil war. No.

Librarian S: Um, it was probably there. Was it the first Dail or there's been a few kind of different Centenary things.

Researcher: Might've

been the first it was in, Oh God. When was it? It was probably, probably March. I was there. It was, I think, I think it was the run up to the first Dail.

Librarian S: Yeah. Um,

so yeah, we, we would, we would have loads of kind of local history exhibitions. Yeah. Um, especially at the moments with the, you know, there's one being worked on at the moment for the war of independence.

Um, so yeah. Um, I suppose, yeah, not so much in Library S. We do have, um, um, a sketch by Sean Keating on the stairwell. He would be a local artist and he designed the, you know, he designed the stained glass windows in the church. Okay. So yeah, so that's something we could have a bit more of actually, you know, up in Tallaght, they, we always had kind of framed prints, so kind of local historical photos and that kind of thing.

Um, but yeah, we would have, um, we would have those exhibitions, yeah. On an ongoing basis. Yeah.

Researcher: What about, um, sort of creative equipment or facilities? What would you have that are available to local people?

Librarian S: Um, so we have, obviously the computers,

um, they have kind of different

software on them, um, That maybe people wouldn't have at home kind of, um, Lightroom and Photoshop and that kind of thing.

Um, we have our 3D printer, uh, um, which actually is with two, we've two actually. We have one in the staff space upstairs as well. Um, they're really popular. Um, we run exhibitions, run workshops from time to time on how to use them or, you know, staff will show people how to use them too. Um, You know, either download a design or make a design themselves when they come in.

Um, we, uh, apart from that, you know, they'd be kind of the things that are fixtures but, you know, we would run all kinds of classes in terms of art, um, coding, photography, um, languages. Um, what else have we been doing? Um, you know, even the, even, um, our, we have a monthly STEAM class, so they'd be doing all kinds of stuff in that.

Um, yeah. Um, Some libraries, Tallaght library, they're lucky enough to have kind of a maker space. Um, it's it, it's their computer training room, but it's bigger than our one. So they kind of, or they have kind of a big conference table in the middle of it that can be used. So that's where they would have everything related to that.

Um, something that else is, that is coming into libraries are media production studios. Yeah. So, um, there's one in Ballyfermot library. There's one mooted as well for one of our libraries. I'm not sure where it's going to go yet. Um, so yeah, it's kind of, um, there's more and more coming down the line I suppose if I had the space for it.

Um, you know, we have, we do have other, we have podcasting equipment, um, That can be used as well. Um, when it's kind of how to use it. Um.

Researcher: It's more, if you want, you're showing people how they could set themselves up. People don't come in and run podcasts?

If

Librarian S: They could. If we, if we had that mediaproduction studio that is in Ballyfermot library.

So people could book that potentially come in and, um, you know, record their podcasts there but um, it's, it's kind of, again, it's just one of those things that we haven't kind of worked out, how to engage people with or how to best make use of it, I suppose. Um, um, yeah. Uh, You know, something, we haven't really done it but Tallaght library have done kind of music production classes with teenagers and that as well.

Researcher: So, yeah. Cool. And

so how well are you able to engage with or facilitate, sort of smaller, um, or even minority groups inside that the local community?

Librarian S: Hmm. Um, (refers to previous library often) yeah, we're we are, you know, um, Again, it's good to have those small rooms that people can use. Mmm. You know, some libraries would have kind of a bigger, um, you know, Library S is in quite a settled kind of older area, but I suppose the one in minority group that we would, um, interact with is the Czech school.

So. Czech parents basically who set up a school for their, their kids on a Saturday morning. So they use the community center around the corner but they also use our spaces as well. Um, so you know, other libraries like Lucan or Tallaght would have kind of be engaging with a lot more kind of non Irish national groups.

Um, they would have a lot more kind of English classes and conversation classes, that kind of thing. Um, If they're mainly - apart from, you know, just giving them space to use, like a lot of it is kind of organizing kind of one off events. So say in Lucan to earlier in the year, they had an intercultural day where they invited, um, kind of just various local groups in.

Um, and you know, that obviously it's kind of creating awareness for them and creating an opportunity for networking and that for them, but also for us to kind of get the, those people into the library and kind of realize what is on offer

Researcher: Makes sense.

Um, what about, um, sort of, um, you know, LGBT community events or, um, you know, bathroom facilities, things like that.

Librarian S: Mmm. We do have LGBT events. Yeah. Um, so we was always around, usually centered around Pride. Um, we would have, you know, book displays, um, talks or film screenings, that kind of thing. And of course our book stock would be inclusive.

Researcher: Um, and I mean, In terms of accessibility, um, you've got ramps and things. Is, is there a lift?

Okay.

Librarian S: Yes. Yeah,

Researcher: yeah. Um, so, um, what kind of, um, sort of assistive technologies have you got available in the library?

Librarian S: Um, so that's something that's been reviewed at the moment actually, um, and being updated. Um, So we have, we, first of all, we offer access to TTRS, so Touch, Type, Read, Spell, um, software. Um, so we, we hold licenses for that, that we can give to people in the community.

Um, so yeah, um, theres a few kids who will come in and do it in the library, but most of them actually do it at home. I think very like in some places they would, okay, Um, all come into the library or there are more. For us, it's only a handful coming every week to do it but um, most of them just do it in their own time home, using our license.

Uh, and

Researcher: so do you mind if I just ask, how do you feel about, about that, that you're providing the service, but the service doesn't actually happen in your space?

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, I mean, obviously we would prefer if they were coming in, but at the same time, it's important to offer it. I mean, it's kind of the same thing with, um, you know, on the, on the online thing, it's just important, you know, the eBooks and the, um, you know, even the online archive, um Mmm, Mmm.

And the online magazines and that obviously people can use some at home, but it's, um, It's just important for us to, um, kind of keep track of that and keep it, keep stats on all that usage as well. Um, if it's all, you know, it all goes to, um, It's all, it's all library usage at the end of the day.

Researcher: Yeah, yeah, yeah, no, no.

Um, so, um, how, how do you decide what to get involved with in terms of something like that? Like do local groups come to you or do you go to them or, um, where does the, does the head office come down to you and say, this is availabl -. You're gonna run a programme like this.

Librarian S: Um, A bit, a bit of both, I suppose.

Um, some of it would come from, um, from the community that they would come to us looking for specific either types of events or, um, specific technologies to be available to them. Um, kind of one example would be like a local autism group in Lucan would have approached the libraries to provide certain things for them.

Um, a lot of it does come from the top down, from the LGMA and kind of national policy on, um, various things. So for instance, like Healthy Ireland or the Work Matters programme would come that way. Yeah. There are things that we would have possibly have been doing anyway, but it's just more structured, kind of a nationwide kind of, yeah.

Researcher: Perfect.

Cool. Okay. We're we're very close to the end. Um, so, um, how important is it to offer an attractive space physical space?

Librarian S: It's really important. (explicit in manner) I think it's the most important thing, to be honest with you. Well, maybe I shouldn't say that, but I think it's really important, you know, if, if the library isn't nice, it was dark, it was dingy,

if, um, it's old it's um, uh, you know, if it's just not a comfortable space, people won't use it. So, you know, it's really important to the maintenance of the building. Um, Keep it clean and attractive, and that I think it's really important.

Researcher: Perfect. Um, what factors do you think are the most important when designing your space?

Librarian S: Um, adaptability, um, it's that whole thing that we're, you know, the huge kind of broad mandate that libraries have that we have to be all things to all people - which is great, you know, um, you know, I've no problem with, but, um, in order to do that, the space has to be, um, adaptable. So, I mean, we're lucky in Library S that we have that um, uh, yeah.

You know, so, um, I do think that's important and a mixture of types of space as well, and so larger rooms, smaller rooms, and to kind of maximize what you have and to be able to make it available to people more of the time.

Researcher: Perfect. Brilliant. Um, okay. Last question. If there was one aspect of the design of your building that you could change, what would you change?

Librarian S: Storage space would be a big thing. I think. Um, yeah. Um, storage space. I would love to have kind of - Actually one thing I would change as well is, um, now, it's only a small thing, but if it's something that, um, kind of annoys me, we have a carpet in the conference room, which gets filthy because you're doing kids arts and crafts things in there.

So, um, it would be lovely to have a dedicated kind of art space as well. Um, I've been in some of these super libraries in, um, in, um, well, one in Sweden Malmo. Um, do you know, like just the spaces that they have and, you know, it's, it's the range over different floors, and kind of all the kind of breakaway kind of space that they had for various different things, obviously like would love to have that?

Um, um, yeah. Um, that is the main thing I would say suppose, um. I think I want now, it's really only a personal, so, um, opinion but um, I do think it's nice to have the children's library a little bit more separated from the main, from the rest of the library. Yeah, just, um, just to, um, For the reasons that I was saying for, you know, um, you know, thought it would make it more comfortable for both for the kids and their parents and for everyone else using the library.

Researcher: Um, to

be honest, that's something that's come up in pretty much everything I've read is, is to have a separate or a slightly demarcated space for kids in New Zealand, Switzerland, Finland, everywhere.

Librarian S: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Um, yeah. You know, um, something else I saw in that library in Malmo is a buggy, buggy parking space, um, um, which would be great as well, but I mean, that Library was huge.

I mean, the only thing that we would have really, honestly, on its scale would be the Lexicon. So yeah, obviously it's not practical to have that, to have all that stuff everywhere but, um, I think we do pretty well with what we have.

Researcher: Yeah, no,

I, I, I go into your library every so often just to study - not recently obviously.

Yeah, no, it is. I like it. Um, I actually, I don't like the quiet room upstairs. It's too quiet for me. Yeah. Yeah. I, I can just put on headphones downstairs and I don't feel like that I'm intruding. If I make too much noise, um, Up in the quiet room, I feel like I have to be really quiet.

Librarian S: Yeah. Yeah. You do, yeah.

It's kind of it. And it's funny the way polices itself, you know, we rarely have to go in to give out to anyone or ask anyone to be quiet, it's just kind of, it's kind of the serious study place, you know? Um, yeah, it's great. Yeah. Are you working in the library yourself or.

Researcher: No, I'm not working anywhere at the moment. I was, I was working for an IT company up until the start of March.

And I decided to give up, um, to finish my final assignments and then to do this dissertation. And then this happened. And since, since I left for the staff have either let go or been let go or have left because it just doesn't work at the moment.

Yeah. It's yeah. It's.

Yeah. It is what it is like. S

Librarian S: yeah. And are you looking at, you're obviously wanting to work in a library?

Researcher: Yeah. Um, I I've been working in kind of e-learning, um, for the last seven years and, and I just, it didn't really, it's kind of unfulfilling. Um, and I just kinda like libraries. Is a good fit. I already deal in taxonomies and, and, um, classification and, you know, training delivery. So it seemed like a natural place to go.

Um, but I just kind of wanted to do a job that didn't feel completely meaningless.

Librarian S: Yeah. Let's be honest. It is a nice job. Um, yeah. You know, I mean, I need you like those moments where you do feel like you're making a difference to someone are great, you know, um, so yeah. Yeah, I would recommend it. Well, listen, if you want, like, we are open at the minute.

Um, so like a lot of the spaces are closed off, we need were actually using that study room as an extra staff work space at the minute just so everyone is spaced out. But if you do want to come in and have a look around or want me to show you anything just yeah.

Researcher: Oh, perfect. That'd be great. I mean, I'm pretty familiar with the library, but take it from that towards later.

If I think of anything. Um, look, I I'll give you back the rest of your hour. That's everything that I've got. Um, I really appreciate you taking the time to do this is brilliant.

Librarian S: Um, listen, if you want to speak to anyone else as well, um, I can give you a couple of names. Um, You know, even about the new library North Clondalkin or anything like that.

Researcher: Oh yeah. If you know who North Clondalkin, I'd really like to talk to somebody about North Clondalkin.

Librarian S: Yeah. Um, I will, um, I think she's going to be it's is the, um, she's the sole staff member there at the moment, but, um, she, um, I will I'll pass your details onto her if that's okay. Um, I think she policies at the minutes.

Um, her, are you on a deadline?

Researcher: Yeah, but it's like, it's like September,

Librarian S: September. Okay. Are you ready now? Ashley? Do you need me to send back, um, the form

Researcher: of you to just, yeah. If you could just say that, um, you read through it and that you're happy enough to proceed. Just so I have it written down.

Librarian S: Yeah.

Perfect

Researcher: really appreciate that.

Appendix G Sampling Frame

Ballyroan Library	ballyroan@sdublincoco.ie	South Dublin County Council
Blackrock Library	blackrocklib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Cabinteely Library	cabinteelylib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Castletymon Library	library@sdublincoco.ie	South Dublin County Council
Clondalkin Library	clondalkin@sdublincoco.ie	South Dublin County Council
County Library, Tallaght	talib@sdublincoco.ie	South Dublin County Council
Dalkey Library	dalkeylib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Deansgrange Library	deansgrangelib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
dIr Lexicon Library	dlrlexiconlib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Dundrum Library	dundrumlib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Kevin Street Library	kevinstreetlibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council
Lucan Library	lucan@sdublincoco.ie	South Dublin County Council
North Clondalkin Library	N/A	South Dublin County Council
Pearse Street Library	pearsestreetlibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council
Pembroke Library	pembrokelibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council
Rathmines Library	rathmineslibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council
Shankill Library	shankilllib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Stillorgan Library	stillorganlib@dlrcoco.ie	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
Terenure Library	terenurelibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council
Walkinstown Library	walkinstownlibrary@dublincity.ie	Dublin City Council