Different Libraries:

Types, Comparison and Union

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PART I: TYPE OF LIBRARIES

School Library

The primary function of school libraries is to support school curriculum and the informational needs of school children. Although they are financed from the local tax revenue, the same as for public libraries, public schools and their libraries are under the authority of the state educational department and organizationally independent from the public library system. The advances in computer technology fundamentally changed the traditional understanding of literacy and curriculum support. In order to follow this trend, school libraries during 1990s transformed themselves into library media centers. In addition to traditional printed material, they now offer a wide range of electronic resources and audio/visual formats (Scott, 2005). Although school liberties primarily serve the needs of students, teachers, and school administrators, they often cooperate with public libraries especially in the area of cataloging and database subscriptions.

Special Library

The special libraries work, as rule, in association with some other institution, like a large hospital or museum. Government departments may establish them to serve the needs of their employees and fulfill the mission of their department (Dowling, 2001). However many also provide public access to essential government documents and archives, like library of the patent office or the Justice department. For-profit special libraries are established to support the informational needs of their founder institutions, such as law offices or designer studios. The nature of the collection, the size of the facilities, and the staffing policies depend on the interests and policies of parent (founder) institution. Because they are more often than not situated inside some other institution, special libraries usually limit access to their holdings and are not open to the general public. Because of limited size and scope of their collections, special libraries are intensively involved in interlibrary exchange and the shared use of electronic resources. Special libraries also regularly outsource their cataloging and indexing services to the specialized commercial vendors or cooperate in larger interlibrary collaborations (Eddison, 1997).

Public Library

Any non-profit library opened for the general public is a public library. The oldest public library in the USA is the Boston Public Library (BPL) established in 1848. The BPL was the first library supported by municipal tax revenue, something that is today the essential form of founding of all US public libraries. After 150 years of operation, the BPL has "27 neighborhood branches, free Internet access, two unique restaurants, an award-winning website and an online store". Every year, it also "hosts nearly 5000 programs, answers more than one million reference questions and serves millions of people" and "all of its programs and exhibits are free and open to the public" (Boston Public Library, 2003). The BPL is a typical example of how public libraries transformed themselves from simple book lending outfits, to today's mixture of cyber-cafés, media centers, community outreach centers, electronic information kiosks, and art galleries. Although not all of public libraries have funds to provide services and programs on level of the BPL, overall they are probably still the most egalitarian public institution in America.

Academic Library

Libraries that provide services for degree-granting institutions of higher education are categorized as academic libraries. They are spoken of as the "heart of the university" (Martin, 2000) and their primary goal is to support the curriculum and research needs of the university or college. They have scholarly oriented collections, with extensive journal and database resources. What really sets a part academic libraries from all other are theirs operating hours. Academic libraries operate by the academic rhythm of life - libraries are open from dawn to midnight, sometimes even 24-7 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003). As a drawback, these libraries are more often than not closed on holidays and during semester breaks. Public university libraries provide on-site public access to its stacks and library resources, and borrowing privileges that can be obtained for a fee. In other parts of the world, especially in countries with national university system, academic libraries function as national depository libraries (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia, or Hungary).

Part II: COMPARISON OF LIBRARIES

Public, school, academic, and special libraries are essentially collections of books and other types of information-bearing materials. All of them provide, in bigger or smaller volume, the basic library services: cataloging, preservation, the reference inquiries, and lending services. They all follow general cataloging rules and practices. Although similar, every library type has its distinct user groups, different acquisition priorities, and, not the least, different funding.

Table 1

Libraries with regard to their users, structure of holdings, and library space

Library	Library users	Structure of holdings	Library space
Public	General public	Wide range of subjects from general interest areas; Popular fiction; Audio/video material on popular and self-educational subjects; Extensive reference material.	"Public square"; Comfortable and familiar;
School	Students; Teachers; School admin.	Supporting school curriculum; School level reading literature; Audio/visual teaching aide; Reference material.	Spatial, able to seat a number of students; Helpful but not quiet study environment.
Academic	College students; Professors; Researchers; General public.	Material supporting academic curriculum; Number of scientific journals; Research literature; Extensive electronic resources; Extensive reference material.	Big, often monumental building; Space organized to enable study and research; Quiet.
Special	Employees of parent institutions; Paying members; Customers.	Holdings limited to scope and mission of special library, Audio/video/digital material Extensive electronic resources; Extensive reference material.	Small space often within larger organization; Quiet space for research and reading.

Public libraries have the most diverse group of users. Their goal is to satisfy the informational requirements of every possible social group, from smallest children to the oldest community member, often in languages other than English. The basic mission of a public library is to support literacy, self-education, and leisure reading - and that reflects in the diversity of their holdings. Subject areas covered by public libraries are wide in scope but not in such depth as the holdings of academic libraries. Library buildings tend to be rather bustling spaces, with lots of coming and going. Public libraries try to accommodate different users and control noise levels by designing spaces for various purposes – quite study rooms, public auditoriums, and separate children rooms (Crawford, 1999).

The mission of school and academic libraries is to support academic curriculum and informational needs of their students, teachers, and staff. Ninety six percent of American schools have libraries (Scott, 2004) on their campuses. With the development of new technology, school libraries transformed themselves into multi-media centers resembling more high-tech classrooms than libraries in the traditional sense. In this environment, there is not much quit study space, although many students use school libraries to do their homework (Crawford, 1999). The user group of school libraries is limited to the students, teachers, and administration of particular group. They are not open to public access.

Collections of academic libraries cover a wide area of intellectual interest, in range and in depth. Academic libraries are usually the central feature of college campuses, often the architectural and intellectual heart of the university (Crawford, 1999). Internal organizations vary, but they usually have several floors with open-ended stacks interspersed with quiet study areas and group study rooms. Because of the sheer size of the buildings and stacks, with their solemn atmosphere of study, they tend to be intimidating to the occasional or inexperienced user (Antell, 2003).

Special libraries are the most diversified group of libraries. They could be roughly divided into profit and non-profit organizations. Non-profit special libraries are usually established by various governmental departments or institutions. Their main users are government employees and sometimes, in limited numbers and for special purposes, the general public. Commercial special libraries usually have very specific and highly demanding user groups of employees or outside

customers. For-profit special libraries work in highly competitive environments with strict deadlines, due dates, and cost constrains. The majority of special libraries has very small holdings and relies heavily on modern computer technology and electronic resources to supplement their services. Very often special libraries do not have designated space, but rather "distributed service points served by central staff and collection" (Crawford, 1999). However, when specific library space does exist, the special libraries provide comfortable, quiet study area.

Table 2

Sources of library funding

	Sources of funding
Public library	Municipal tax revenue; Some state and federal budget allocations; Fundraising and philanthropy.
School library	Municipal tax revenue; State educational budget allocations; Federal grants and special programs.
Academic library	Parent institution; Fundraising and philanthropy;
Special library	Parent institutions; Competitive marketing of the services.

Public libraries nationally the receive bulk of their funding (77.1 %) from the local tax revenue. The other 22.9% is combined funding from federal (0.7%), state (12.8%), and various other sources (9.4%) (Chute, 2002). The budget of school libraries is a subcategory of the budget of the school entity to which they belong. However, the funding of school libraries varies widely by state, but the funding is more or less a mixture of local and state tax revenue and special federal grant programs granted under certain conditions. Academic libraries are financed by the university they serve and their budget depends on overall university revenue. However, they can increase their income through philanthropy or fundraising (Martin, 2000). Special libraries

usually receive the bulk of their income from its founder, affiliated institution and/or by charging market price for their services (Ard, 2000).

PART III: UNION OF SCHOOL AND PUBLIC LIBRARY

School library and public library seem as a natural pair. Both are basic non-profit institutions financed with mixture of local, state and federal funding. The mission of both is education and the enbetterment of the general public. Both libraries have extensive community outreach programs. Both are points of interest of their community. However, studies shows that school-public library combination has success only in limited range of situations and only when the community as the whole is united behind the project (Fitzgibbons, 2000; Harrington 2002). Combined school-public library facilities are a hot issue in the librarian community, and the prevailing opinion is negative.

Combining of school and public libraries is not a widespread practice in the US. Occasionally it is used as the transitional measure to ensure library services in newly developed area until the community grows big enough to warrants a proper branch (Christopherson, 2002) or to provide library services in remote and sparsely populated area that otherwise would not have benefit of library services (Fitzgibbons, 2000). Supporters of combining school and public library in one facility ascertain that this would:

- provide the community with the space where different groups of society could come together and interact in non-profit environment;
- pool their individual resources to develop joint outreach programs;
- provide convenient access to the internet, electronic resources, library services;
- pool combined resources to pay for professional library staff;
- avoid redundancy in materials;
- centrally handle and in process on material purchase, as well as database and journal subscription.

On this way, both entities could provide better services and combined have bigger resources and make better use of their individual finances.

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The financial side of the arrangement is one resonating the best with the politicians and the thrifty public (Owens, 2002). However, there is not any evidence that there any real economic benefit from combining school and public libraries (Fitzgibbons, 2000). After the politicians leave, the librarians are left to deal with the organizational and administrative ambiguities of the arrangement. When preexisting school and public libraries are combined, the administrative bones of contention could become a particularly taxing issue. The difference between school and public library hierarchies, salaries and perceived user groups create numerous conflicts (Casey, 2002) and could be devastating for the overall library atmosphere. The fact that most of the combined libraries are housed on school grounds creates three groups of serious problems:

- *security problems*: how to maintain school security procedures and provide free public access? This is usually handled by street side entrance to the building, but this is not always possible, so the most common solution is to open the library to the public only when school is not in the session;
- *problems of intellectual freedom, censorship, and internet access*: school and public libraries have different policies regarding available materials and internet access, and sometimes it is very difficult to reconcile the policies.
- *parking*: how to ensure that student parking does not crowd out public parking?

The issue with combined school-public library facilities is a typical example of what happens when a noble idea meets the messy reality of life. Most of the objections from the librarian community concern the organizational side, but the biggest controversies in the community rise from two essentially different missions. The mission of the school media library is to support the curriculum and other related activities in school. Their librarians or media specialists are trained to balance between impressionability, parental concerns, and intellectual freedom. On the other hand, public librarians are much more concerned to ensure free public access to all available resources, relying on the users to behave responsibly and in accordance with the law. When a combined library is the only way to have convenient access to the (any kind) of library services, the general public usually welcomes the opportunity. But given the choice, they too think that they would be better served with two separate facilities.

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