

Implications of Monumental Construction for Public Library Services

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This study examines the implications of the current wave of erecting large, even monumental, library buildings for the functioning and status of public libraries. It was carried out through interviews with 42 individuals from five relevant professions: futurists, sociologists, architects, urban planners and experts in information and library science. Also, 24 directors of new, large libraries in Israel and the Western

world filled in a questionnaire. The study reveals a dramatic increase in the number of people visiting these libraries and a very significant increase in the number of regular clients who come to the library to receive services other than traditional library services. This research shows that the library is becoming a cultural centre and a place for social life, cultural meetings and leisure-time entertainment.

Introduction

In 2001, when the new public library in Alexandria opened, the designers and developers of the project declared that they planned to establish one of the largest libraries in the world and thereby revitalize the idea of the antique library of Alexandria (Bibliotheca Alexandria 2001). Similarly, the builders of the library in Shanghai, who call it the "palace of knowledge," include its large dimensions among its unique characteristics (Shanghai Library 2001). The size of the building housing Library 21, in Stuttgart, Germany, described by its manager as the city's "meteor," is said to reflect the library's tremendous significance (Jouly 2001).

Indeed, since the 1990s we have witnessed a wave of construction of large, even monumental, libraries around the world, construction of the type that characterized the ancient world. This phenomenon occurs in an age of advanced information technologies; an age which is character-

ized by developments in computerization, in general, and the development of telecommunications and the Internet, in particular, which enable easy access to information (including books). It is characterized as well by the development of user-friendly search engines which provide access to sources from any place at any time; and in addition by the rapid development of advanced technologies for non-paper storage and preservation of information which saves space. The purpose of the present study is to examine the implications of the current wave of large, even monumental, library buildings for the functioning and status of public libraries.

Literature review

Functions of public libraries over time

In the library in Nineveh (7th century B.C.), all collections were gathered: documents, certificates, correspondence, religious writings and historical

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descriptions, as well as works in various scientific fields. Hessel (1955) claims that these collections effectively declare the purpose of establishment of the library, to serve the state, to glorify the eternal memory of its founder and also for science. Since those distant days, libraries have assumed a variety of forms but their primary, "classical" function as guardians of the collective memory of human culture has remained unchanged from their earliest development until today. Over the years, another central function has been added: not only do libraries collect and preserve information, but also they now routinely process and disseminate new information. This change occurred gradually, beginning with the introduction of paper (in the 11th–12th centuries) and the invention of the printing press (in the 15th century) and climaxed in the 20th century. This development occurred simultaneously with the continued strengthening of libraries' position as public institutions with a social-education function of the utmost importance (Shoham 1984).

Throughout the 150 years of its existence, the modern public library has undergone changes in its goals and functions, and as a result in the services it offers the public. During each period, it attempted to meet the demands of the times. Since the latter half of the 19th century, libraries have become a part of the public sector and are funded by public monies. Therefore, they not only protect and preserve the knowledge that belongs to the community, but also have added services intended for the general public, in order to make education available not only to elites and academics (Shoham 1984).

Initially, the library was an auxiliary institution in the field of education, a continuation of, and supplement to, the public schools that were established during the same period. As an adaptive institution, its functions have changed with the times. Therefore, in the late 19th century, the public library moved into the field of leisure and began offering popular books for pleasure reading or folklore evenings, following the waves of immigration at the time. Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s, the library began to serve as an information centre for the general public and fulfilling a supplementary role by providing information services to public and economic institutions, both governmental and voluntary (UNESCO Manifesto 1994). In the 1960s and 1970s, libraries began to

participate in social projects and reach out to various groups of non-users.

IFLA (1986) clearly states that other functions have been added to the library's traditional role as a supplier of books, because the library has become a cultural and social centre in the community. As such, the library offers the community lectures, clubs, exhibitions, concerts, films, a venue for performances, the possibility of integrating a museum into the library and even a meeting place for different groups, including the elderly (Sannwald 2003). It is almost superfluous to note that in recent years, libraries have been required to go beyond their traditional services and adapt themselves to the information revolution by supplying their clients with new services using advanced technologies (Dowlin 1993).

However, the IFLA Core Programme (1999) repeatedly emphasizes and reaffirms the value of library collections and archives as vital for both the survival and development of culture and scholarship. It seems that among those working on the portrait of the current and future library, the voices that tend towards greater emphasis on social-cultural aspects are increasing.

Vision of the virtual library versus the reality of the monumental library

Many people would claim that the future has already arrived. Not only have the needs of information consumers changed significantly, but most importantly, the variety of means and possibilities for obtaining information have changed. It is hard to imagine the library's clients continuing waiting for a busy librarian to supply traditional service when they have not only telephone, facsimile and e-mail at their disposal, but also a home computer or laptop which can be used to connect directly to the Internet (Denton 1994). Young people tend to position the library as a marginal institution in future society and expect that it will become sort of a museum for "antique" materials (Benton Foundation 1996).

Awareness of the possibility that libraries might disappear is evident in almost every treatment of the issue. For example, in their book *The Incredible Vanishing Library*, Gross and Borgman (1995) describe the importance of the library both as a social institution and as an organization that supplies information from various sources (books or

computer). However, they claim that decision makers do not sufficiently understand and acknowledge the great importance of the library in fulfilling these roles and, therefore, they are gradually becoming an invisible institution.

Hage (1999) believes that the basic tools used by libraries will remain unchanged despite the advanced technology. A similar line of argument is taken by Schement (1996), who believes that even in the digital age, the role of librarians as skilled mediators between information and the public should be maintained since most people lack the skills to navigate between the many sources of information. Despite this, Schement does consider the possibility of the vanishing library realistic and believes that librarians should also provide "remote" information services outside of the library building.

As early as 1972, almost 20 years before the trend towards building new, large libraries began, Rohlf (1972) claimed that public libraries would not only continue to exist and expand the variety of services they offer, but also grow in size. Architects, Rohlf claimed, are currently required to plan libraries with a long-term vision and create buildings that are capable of adapting to developments and changes, house large quantities of electronic gadgetry, while at the same time being filled with light, space and having a layout that gives people a feeling of belonging and humanity.

In the face of all of the predictions of a world without books and without libraries, Naisbitt and Aburdene (1999, 72) claim, "In every place where the information economy has spread... the need for arts, new museums, cultural and literary renewal has experienced unprecedented growth." The authors even present data showing that more new titles and new editions of books are published in the United States every year.

A similar spirit of wonder, it appears, rests on most representatives of the large libraries that were constructed or expanded in the late 20th Century. Beyond the superlatives used to describe the buildings themselves, most of the library directors refer to the close connection between the rejuvenation of the library's visual aspect and its content and popularity level.

For example, the directors of the new public library in Rotterdam (Meijer 1999), the new library in Stuttgart, Germany (Jouly 2001), the new Queens Borough Public Library, New York (Strong

2001) and the new library of San Antonio, Texas (Zapatos 2000) all describe the impressive building as one of the city's outstanding landmarks and note an increase in the number of visitors and users of library services.

Do these changes in the character and image of the public library help strengthen and preserve its original goals and will they, in the future, position it as an institution with a central role in society? The purpose of this study is to attempt to clarify these issues.

Methodology

Research questions

1. Does the change in a library building have implications for its popularity? In other words, is there a significant increase in the number of visitors and users to monumental library buildings?
2. Is the change in the form of library buildings indeed being accompanied by a change in content? In other words, in the new public library, is it possible to identify a change in direction, transforming it from an institution that focuses on "traditional" services (circulation, reference, guidance) into a significant cultural centre in the community and society (Naisbitt & Aburdene 1990)?

Research Population

The research population included:

A. Directors of 24 libraries in Israel and other Western countries (Western Europe and North America), whose libraries meet two criteria:

1. The library was built and opened to the public after 1990.
2. The library could be included in the category of monumental structures. To meet these criteria, the study included libraries in Israel with a constructed area of more than 2,000 square meters and libraries in other countries that are five or more stories tall or cover an area of 10,000 meters square or more.

Most of the large libraries in the study were opened to the public between 1995 and 2001. Out of the 24 libraries included in the study, 79.2% are in new buildings and 28.8% are libraries that continue to function in an old building that has been expanded (sometimes even doubled).

Table 1. Does a Magnificent New Public Library Building Encourage More People to Visit the Library? Comparison between Groups of Interviewees (by percentage)

Profession	Architects	Information and library scientists	Futurists	Urban planners	Sociologists	Total
Percentage of positive answers	100.0	88.9	77.8	57.1	50.0	77.5

B. In addition, we interviewed 42 people from five relevant professions: nine futurists, seven sociologists, ten architects, seven urban planners and nine experts from the fields of information and library science.

Research Tools

A. A questionnaire was completed by the directors of the 24 selected libraries.

The purpose of the 15-question questionnaire was to examine the characteristics of the people who use the library services and to see whether there had been a quantitative increase, in addition to examining the functioning of the public library through the lens of the services that it offers in the new building and the different ways it is used, as compared to how it functioned in its previous building.

B. Structured interviews with 42 experts and a questionnaire each interviewee was asked to complete at the end of the interview. Analysis of the interviews was done according to a qualitative research approach, while the accompanying questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded, with the consent of the interviewees, transcribed and processed with a long process of summarization and adaptation of the statements to categories relevant to the research questions.

Findings

Large buildings – more users?

Can a public library in a magnificent building serve as a centre of attraction?

One of the questions asked of the experts in various professions was whether, in their opinion, a magnificent, respectable public library build-

ing would encourage more people to visit the library.

Table 1 presents the division of answers given by the interviewees who answered the question positively (by percentages), according to professional groups. The data in Table 1 indicate that most of the interviewees (77.5%), including all of the architects and most of the information and library scientists and futurists and more than half of the others, indeed believe that a large, respectable public library building will encourage more people to visit the library.

Did the number of visitors to the library increase?

From the research data we received, it emerges that after the construction of a new library building, there is a dramatic increase (in percentage) in the number of library visitors. Of the library directors, 96% answered that there had been an increase in the number of visitors. Most responded there was a 100% increase in the number of people visiting the library, meaning that the number doubled. Two directors reported an even higher increase.

Was there an increase in the number of regular clients?

Most of the libraries that participated in the study (68.4%) reported that one-fifth of the city's residents are registered subscribers. Four libraries reported that over half of the residents are registered as regular users. These numbers represented the number of subscribers *registered* as regular library clients. To these numbers, we must add the other, unregistered residents, who the library, as a public institution, serves with a variety of services that do not require registration.

All of the libraries, except one, reported a significant increase in the number of registered clients. From the data that we received, it emerges that the average increase in the number of registered subscribers at the new large libraries was 95.8%.

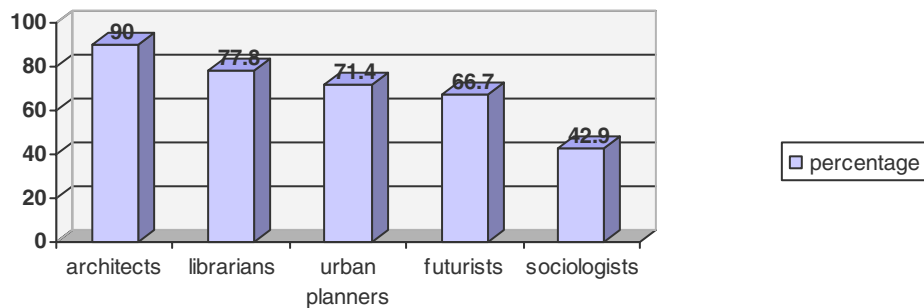


Figure 1: Division, by Professional Group, of Positive Answers Regarding the Library Placement in the City's Social-Cultural Center

This means that the number of regular clients increased by the same amount as the number of visitors to the library.

From these findings, it clearly appears that the construction of a large library building increases the number of people who use the library whether they come to visit, surf the Internet or even just to be with people. Furthermore, it increases the percentage of regular customers who take advantage of the services offered by the public library.

Functions of the public library in the virtual age

The library as a centre of social-cultural life in the city

Experts in various professions were asked to express their position regarding the library as a social-cultural centre. Figure 1 presents the percentage of respondents who believe the library is a centre for social-cultural activity in city. It shows that 90% of the architects would locate the library in the centre of a city's social and cultural life. They are followed by the information and library scientists and urban planners. Only 42.9% of the sociologists believe that a library needs to be in the centre of social or cultural life in the city. Most of the interviewees (71.4%) believed that libraries should be in the social-cultural centre of the city.

Roles of the public library in the 21st century – analysis of the interviews

After we learned about the interviewees' opinions regarding the public library and its location in the centre of the city's social and cultural activity, we

continued by asking what, in the interviewees' opinions, should be the library's role in future society.

Information and library scientists

After analyzing the statements by the interviewees from the field of information and library science regarding this question, it emerges that all members of this group agreed on one function: the library is a place for holding cultural activities and a meeting place for spending leisure time. "We are a society that is built on personal meetings ... some of the readers have a limited need for the collection ... they come in order to meet ... therefore the place is lively ... (V.B.). "The library of the 21st century is a social meeting place ... beyond this, the library needs to allow for clubs and generally be a cultural centre" (B.L.).

Regarding other library functions, approximately one-half of the interviewees from this group said that the library should be a place to learn and acquire skills, in addition to locating the necessary information. "The library is a place to sit and do homework, a place to study..." (S.H.). "The library has a very important role in acquiring the skills for locating and processing knowledge and information... it has a role in developing taste in reading and encouraging reading" (M.R.).

There are those who connect the public library's instructional function with its democratic function: providing equal opportunity for every one to access information. "In the 21st century it is important that the library instruction teach the use of computer and Internet – to reduce the digital gap" (S.B.). Only two of the information and library scientists interviewed mentioned the traditional functions of the public library – preserving knowledge

and lending books. Perhaps these things seem to be self-evident.

Architects

The function of the public library all of the architects agreed upon and mentioned was social meeting. "Library is like a house of prayer – these are buildings where large numbers of people gather" (Y.G.). The library has a role in preserving books and also in bringing together resources in all existing media. Most of the architects agreed on this point. "Practically speaking, a library is 'a museum of knowledge,' a warehouse of information for coming generations ... on paper and on electronics" (M.K.).

Urban Planners

This group had many doubts and there was not even a single function mentioned by all members of this group. Despite this, most of the urban planners interviewed noted that in the future the library would be a place for preservation or storage, but with the possibility of accessing this preserved material. "First of all, preservation for future generations is necessary ... but also presentation, to make all of the literature accessible and visual ..." (A.L.).

Sociologists

In this group, too, there was no agreement regarding the main purpose of the library. However, most of the sociologists interviewed think that the library must make information broadly available on a full range of media. "First of all, a centre of knowledge, a centre that facilitates access to knowledge ..." (S.N.). There were those who made a connection between libraries' offerings and equality in society. "This is in the context of people who do not have the means to purchase all of the books ... to provide information at no cost" (S.K.). Of the sociologists, three noted that libraries should continue their traditional functions of "lending, reading, guidance and reference" (Z.Z.).

Futurists

Most of the futurists interviewed do not consider the public library an essential institution, because of the technological changes that have already occurred and which are continuing to occur. However, when we asked what, despite this, roles of a library would have in the future society, several of

the interviewees mention the role of the library as a meeting place and also the necessity of a place that will gather and organize information and be responsible for preserving the culture. Several of the people interviewed referred to the role of the library in providing professional instruction and assisting the educational system.

The public library will not remain a source of information – that's over, but it will have other functions such as meetings with books, meeting to exchange information... people need the social interaction and everyone looks for an appropriate place. People are looking for a reason to meet. Some meet in a restaurant, others in a movie theatre, others in their living room and yet others in a library. (A.A.)

Functions of the public library in the opinion of all groups (analysis of questionnaires)

1) Functions of the public library in the opinion of all respondents.

Table 2 presents rankings of the public library functions according to the opinions of all participants in the study. We found that a majority of the participants think that a public library should be a place for study and research. Other functions noted were, in descending order, provision of reference services, cultural preservation, providing educational videos and reading books and being a cultural centre. Furthermore, it should be noted that only three-quarters of the futurists assigned any function to libraries in the future, consistently claiming that there will be no need for the public libraries and they will have no function in the future society.

2) Functions of the public library – comparison of the interview groups.

Examination of Table 2 reveals that differences exist between the perceptions that members of different professions have regarding public libraries. All (100%) of the sociologists and architects think that the libraries' traditional functions, providing books for reading and reference, are most important, compared to only 44.4% of the futurists who indicated that these would be among the public library functions in the future. The sociologists added that the library also functions to preserve the culture and serve as a cultural centre that offers lecturers, cultural events, etc.

Table 2. Functions of the Library – Comparison between Professional Groups (in percentages)

Library function	Futurists*	Sociologists	Architects	Urban planners	Information and library science	Library directors	Total
1 Reading	44.4	100.0	100.0	71.4	88.9	95.8	81.0
2 Reference	44.4	100.0	100.0	85.7	100.0	91.7	85.7
3 Study place	77.8	100.0	90.0	85.7	88.9	95.8	88.1
4 Newspapers	44.4	85.7	90.0	57.1	100.0	91.7	76.2
5 Educational video	55.6	85.7	100.0	71.4	100.0	82.3	82.3
6 Entertainment video	44.4	85.7	90.0	57.1	77.8	87.5	71.4
7 Information center	66.7	85.7	80.0	28.6	88.9	75.0	71.4
8 Communications center	33.3	71.4	100.0	42.9	66.7	70.8	64.3
9 Cultural center	44.4	100.0	90.0	85.7	88.9	95.8	81.0
10 Public clubs	44.4	57.1	90.0	57.1	77.8	87.5	66.7
11 Leisure activities	55.6	85.7	80.0	71.4	100.0	100.0	70.6
12 Meeting of distinctive groups	33.3	71.4	60.0	42.9	88.9	66.7	59.5
13 Attraction for visitors	22.2	57.1	50.0	28.6	55.6	66.7	42.9
14 Cultural preservation	66.7	100.0	90.0	100.0	77.8	70.8	85.7
15 Archive	66.7	85.7	70.0	85.7	33.3	54.2	66.7

*Approximately one-quarter of the futurists refused to answer the question regarding functions, claiming that the library has no future.

People interviewed from the field of information and library science responded that the most important functions are to supply reference materials as well as being a place for recreation and leisure. In contrast, the urban planners gave greater weight to the role of cultural preservation, while the futurists apparently considered the public library's functions less important for future societies.

To determine if there are significant differences between the different professional groups on the question of public library functions, χ^2 analysis was done. This analysis found that there were significant differences regarding several functions: Regarding the library's function as a provider of reading books, it was found that all of the sociologists, architects and interviewees from the field of information and library science thought that this is an important function, in comparison to the futurists who thought otherwise: $\chi^2 = 12.56$, $p < .05$.

Regarding the function of the library as a supplier of reference books and encyclopaedias, we found that all of the people interviewed from the field of information and library science, architects

and sociologist thought that this function is important, unlike the futurists: $\chi^2 = 16.85$, $p < .01$.

Regarding the library's function as a place to read newspapers and magazines, we found that all of the people interviewed from the field of information and library science and most of the architects think that this is an important function, unlike the futurists: $\chi^2 = 10.61$, $p < .05$.

Regarding the provision of video and audio recordings and recorded music for purposes of study and education, there was a significant difference between the people interviewed in the field of information and library science and the architects, in comparison to the futurists: $\chi^2 = 9.54$, $p < .05$.

Regarding the role of the public library as a communications and Internet centre, we found a significant difference between the architects and the futurists and urban planners: $\chi^2 = 10.89$, $p < .05$. On this question, we did not find a significant difference between the people interviewed from the field of information and library science and the sociologists.

Regarding the function of the public library as a centre for culture and leisure, performances, etc., a significant difference was found between the

Table 3: Library Functions (Desirable) Compared to Services Actually Provided (Actual)

Library Function	Desirable %	Actual %	Wilcoxon
Place for leisure activity	100.0	78.2	0.02*
Reading books	95.8	95.8	1.00
Plays for study or research	95.8	71.7	0.16
Cultural center	95.8	79.2	0.04*
Reference books	91.7	91.7	1.00
Local and international newspapers	91.7	79.2	0.18
Video and audio – for pleasure	87.5	79.2	0.32
Public clubs	87.5	75.0	0.08*
Video and audio – educational	83.3	75.0	0.41
Public information center	75.0	62.5	0.18
Public communication center – Internet	70.8	75.0	0.56
Cultural preservation	70.8	66.7	0.32
Meeting place for distinctive groups	66.7	58.3	0.32
Attractive place for visitors	66.7	62.5	0.56
Archive for storing existing collections	54.2	45.8	0.32

* p < .05

sociologists, architects, urban planners and interviewees from the field of information and library science, in comparison to the futurists: $\chi^2 = 10.43$, $p < .05$.

3) Functions of the public library in the opinion of library directors

From the data in Table 2 it is possible to see that all of the library directors who participated in this study included serving as a place for leisure time activities in the library functions. Three additional functions: providing reading books, a place for study and research and serving as a cultural centre were also noted by 95.9% of the library directors. Over 90% of library directors included the provision of local and international newspapers and reference books in their list of library functions.

The library directors expressed less support for several of the functions, including serving as a place for unique groups to meet, an attractive place for tourists, the functioning to preserve the culture and being a centre for Internet communications.

When comparing the responses of library directors in Israel to those from abroad, we did not find any significant differences for any of the functions presented.

It should be noted that there were library directors who added functions that were not included among the options presented on the questionnaire. In particular, they emphasized instructional functions. In their opinion, the public library plays an active role in education, instruction and nurturing reading.

Public library functions: or has the external change been accompanied by a change of content?

After we examined the functions of the library, in the opinion of all interview groups, as well as the library directors, we attempted to learn what was actually happening inside the libraries, which services they are providing in the new buildings that were opened in the last decade and which of these services were not provided previously, in the old building.

The public library and its services to the public: the desirable versus actual (analysis of the questionnaire for library directors)

From the library directors, we attempted to learn what is actually happening within the libraries, what services they provide in comparison to the services that are, in their opinion, desirable.

Table 3 presents the desired functions compared to the actual functions, those that are actually being provided by the libraries.

The services that are actually being provided: From the table, it emerges that two of the services were indicated by most of the library directors, more than 90%, are traditional library services: providing books for reading and reference books. Slightly less than 80% of the library directors indicated that their libraries supply local and international newspapers, video and audio recordings for pleasure and that their library is a cultural centre for lectures, exhibitions, etc. or serves as a locale for leisure activities. Fewer than half of the libraries included in the study also serve as an archive.

It should be noted that most of the libraries claimed that the library is egalitarian and democratic, yet the table shows that only 58.3% of the libraries provide services for distinctive groups with special needs in their community.

Again, there were librarians that chose to add services which, in their opinion, are important, but were not included in the possibilities listed on the questionnaire: virtual library services, the ability to access library databases without necessarily being present in the library but rather over the Internet, developing early childhood reading, purchasing and maintaining a large collection including antique books and museums, access to electronic data for the business community, special services for adolescents, and renting library rooms/halls.

Table 3 shows a sweeping difference between desirable and the actual. The library directors think that the library ought to fill many important functions but in actual practice, the libraries offer the public fewer services than their directors believe would be desirable.

Regarding traditional library functions – the provision of reading books for lending and serving as a reference room – there is a correlation between the services that libraries are supposed to provide the public and what they actually provide. For all of the other possible library functions included on the list, except providing Internet, more library directors indicated that the possibility was part of a library's desirable functions than actually provide that service to the public in their library.

All of the library directors (100%) believe that one of the library's functions is to serve as a cultural centre for leisure time activities, yet only

78.2% open their doors for leisure time activities. Similarly, 95.8% think that the library building should serve as a home for cultural events such as lectures, exhibitions, performances, thereby serving as a municipal culture centre, but only 79.2% allow this type of activity. Likewise, 87.5% of the library directors indicated it would be desirable for the library to serve as a place for holding club meetings for the general public, yet only 75% of the libraries actually offer clubs.

The differences between the desirable and the actual: To highlight the discrepancy between the desirable library functions and the actual services provided by the libraries a nonparametric, Wilcoxon analysis was conducted. This analysis reveals significant differences for three library functions, as follows: the library as a cultural centre, holding club meetings in the library and the public library as the place for leisure time activities. These three functions express the social need for meetings in a cultural locale, such as the public library. All three of these functions are desired more than they are actually provided.

New services in the new building

Having examined the opinions of library directors, the functions of public libraries and the services provided by the libraries, we examined whether new library services, which were not provided in the previous building, are being provided in the new building. In other words, has the public library changed only its external appearance or also its contents? Does a new, larger building make it possible to provide services that were not offered in the old the building?

The library directors were asked to indicate which of the services (listed in Table 4), currently provided by their library, were not offered by their library in its old building. Of the 24 library directors who participated in the study, only 19 answered this question.

The following table presents the distribution of the library director answers regarding *new* services in their library, in descending order (by percentage).

As the table illustrates, a new library building makes it possible to offer several new services that were not available in the library's old building. Approximately one-half of the libraries reported that the library now serves as a cultural centre for

lectures, art exhibits, performances, meetings with authors, and other events.

Approximately 40% report that they now have a place for reading local and international newspapers and magazines, that they can provide video and audio recordings for pleasure and that they can serve as an Internet communications centre. Approximately one-third of the respondents indicated additional new services: an attractive place for visitors, video and audio recordings for educational purposes, public clubs and a place for leisure activity while slightly more than 20% noted that the new library they manage serves as a meeting place for unique groups, and a similar percentage said that cultural preservation is one of their library's new functions, which was not possible in the old building. Only 15% reported that the library now serves as an archive for existing collection. In this section, too, some library directors noted additional, new functions that were not included on the list of possible library functions: virtual services and expanded programs for children.

It should be noted that there was no difference in the responses of library directors in Israel and abroad on this subject.

The responses from the library directors received clearly indicate that a new, more spacious library building does allow the library to offer more services, not necessarily traditional library services, but rather leisure activities: clubs, exhibitions (rare book displays), performances, theatre, space to read newspapers and magazines.

Discussion

Large buildings – are there more users?

The first research question asked whether the change in library buildings has implications for their popularity. The research findings clearly show that all of the new, large, magnificent buildings that have been built as public libraries receive at least twice as many visitors as their predecessors and there has also been a very significant increase in the percentage of library users and regular clients. Research conducted among public libraries in Israel (Yablonka 1998) found a direct connection between the image of the library and its use, both in terms of the number of users and the number of books borrowed. The present study shows that

Table 4: New Services in the New Building (percentages)

<i>New services the library offers the public</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Cultural Centre	47.4
Local and international newspapers	42.1
Video and audio recordings – for pleasure	42.1
Public communication centre – Internet	42.1
Attractive place for visitors	36.8
Video and audio recordings – educational	31.6
Public clubs	31.6
Place for leisure activity	31.6
Place for study or research	26.3
Public information centre	26.3
Meeting place for distinctive groups	21.1
Cultural preservation	21.0
Archive for storing existing collections	15.8
Reading books	0
Reference books	0

these new buildings have apparently improved the reputation of the library and thereby increased use.

This finding is very important because many libraries around the world report a general decrease in the number of readers, the number of books borrowed and the number of regular clients. By contrast, it is worth noting the research conducted by Westin and Finger (1991), which claims that the number of users increases in every place where a new library was built, regardless of size. Their claim is that any change in the library influences the library's environment and usage. Therefore, they recommend constant revitalization of the library's image. Yet another perspective is presented by McCabe (2000) who claims that the number of users increases because a wider variety of services are offered and it is the larger building that makes the services possible.

Library functions in a virtual age

Most interviewees considered it important for the library to be at the centre of the social and cultural life of the city. Another function mentioned by most of the interviewees, in most of the groups, was the function of gathering, organizing and storing information, as well as making it accessible. All of the people interviewed from the fields of in-

formation and library science emphasized the role of the library in the field of cultural activity and in facilitating social meetings. All of the architects consider the library a place for leisure-time entertainment. Most of the members of this group referred to the library as a democratic, egalitarian place where social gaps, especially the digital divide, can be narrowed. They also noted the role of the library in preserving culture, whether through books or other media. Most of the urban planners emphasized the role of the library in preserving existing collections and culture. Sociologists and futurists did not place special emphasis on any one function.

The literature deals with the concept of the public library as "the people's university," but in this study only seven of the 42 people interviewed mentioned this function. Furthermore, when we presented the library as a place for unique populations in society, this function was given a low ranking. Sannwald (2003) claims that libraries are becoming a place of social interaction, and research conducted in the United States (Benton Foundation 1998) found that the most important function of the library is to provide access to technology for people of modest means. Westin and Finger (1991) stress that the public library should live up to its name: public and free and therefore, by its very nature, serve as a bridge between knowledge and all strata of the population.

The library's traditional services (lending and reference) were mentioned by the experts in information and library science and the architects. The latter also added the library's function as a communications centre that provides access to the Internet

All of the library directors positioned serving as a place for leisure time entertainment as the most important library function, followed by serving as a place for study, circulation and a cultural centre.

Services offered by public libraries: or has the external change been accompanied by a change of content?

The second research question examined whether the external change was accompanied by a change of content. Did the large buildings allow changes in or additions to the services provided by the library? If so, is it possible to identify a change that transformed the library from an institution

focuses on providing traditional library services into a significant cultural centre for society and the community, as emerges from the opinions of the interviewees?

As noted in the literature review, public libraries have shown, throughout their history, the ability to adjust and adapt to the needs of the environment. Although they began as a municipal service to intellectuals by providing reference materials, they quickly opened their doors to the general public, lending books and offering guidance, to make knowledge accessible to all. Over the years, collections have become more varied and services have been added or changed. Knowledge is now available both on paper and on digital media, and the library attempts to provide a response in both the cultural and social realms. This service actually began in the late 19th century (Shoham 1984), when the public library entered the field of leisure by offering popular reading books and folklore evenings. The leisure field expanded and libraries also began to offer lectures, clubs, exhibitions and meeting places for different groups (Sannwald 2003; IFLA 1986). It is interesting to note that the 1972 UNESCO Manifesto states, "The public library is a natural cultural centre for the community, bringing together as it does people ... Space and equipment are therefore necessary for exhibitions, discussions, lectures, musical performances and films ..." (UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1972) yet the next UNESCO Manifesto, published in 1994, does not mention the library's cultural and social function.

The current study clearly shows that the emphasis in library functions and services to the public is shifting to the cultural and social realms. All of the library directors believe the public library should serve as a place for leisure entertainment and almost all (95.8%) believe the library building should serve as a municipal cultural centre.

On this issue, all of the architects and a majority of the other interviewees repeated that the library had to serve as "a meeting place with a cultural experience." Most of the people interviewed thought that the public library should be "a cultural shopping mall" that serves as a source of knowledge offered to the general public. Sociologists and architects emphasized the guidance and instructional services for finding the necessary materials, while it was actually the futurists who placed heavier emphasis on cultural preservation.

From library directors' responses, it emerges that the most widely accepted services provided by libraries are traditional services, such as providing reading and reference materials. We also found that in almost all cases the desirable functions exceeded the actual services available. In three cases there were significant differences between the desirable than the actual: the library as a cultural centre, the library as a place for leisure activities and the library as a place that allows public clubs. These differences reflect the changes in library services in the society of the future. All of the library directors believe that the most important function of the library is to be a place of leisure-time activity, and approximately 96% believe the library should serve as a cultural centre. Indeed, most of the libraries do provide this service. Approximately one-half of the library directors report that the library as a "cultural centre" is a new service that was not provided previously in their old library and that the move to a new building has made this possible. This finding confirms the second research assumption that where monumental library buildings are built, the library becomes a social and cultural centre.

Additional services that have been added after the move to a new building include supplying local and international newspapers, Internet communications centre, collections of local and international newspapers and viewing and borrowing movies for pleasure.

Conclusions

The current study regards the future of public libraries in the world that is changing before our eyes. The names of library institutions have changed during recent years. In many places the word "library" has been replaced with "media-tech" or "bibliotech", after the style of "hi-tech," to express the combination of books, digital media and high technology. What is their place in society and where are they headed? This confusion intensifies in light of the facts on the ground, which show a significant decrease in reading and borrowing books, the traditional functions of the library. In contrast to these reports, the current study reveals a dramatic increase in the number of people visiting new, large libraries and a very significant increase in the number of regular clients who come to the library to receive services

other than traditional library services. The research findings show that libraries are becoming a cultural centre and a place for social life, cultural meetings and leisure-time entertainment.

This research also shows that a new, magnificent building becomes an attraction in its own right and greatly increases the percentage of the population that uses the library. It is certainly possible that the number of users increases, because of the wider range of services possible because the building is larger. Expanded building size makes it possible to hold cultural events, introduce additional, special materials that could not have been accommodated in the smaller building and, obviously, a bigger library can house a larger, more varied collection that is attractive to many different population sectors.

The size of the public library building makes it possible to be attentive to the public's needs and offer a wide range of services: continued traditional services, access to information on a variety of media (paper and digital), holding varied cultural activities, a welcoming, pleasant meeting place and "a shrine of the book" where humanity's cultural legacy is preserved.

The picture outlined by this study shows that the library will be necessary in the society of the future, less for reading and more to meet the public's need for a relatively quiet, refined place for social gatherings with a cultural character. Indeed, the present research shows that the new buildings have allowed libraries to become *cultural centres* and offer services that have not been possible in the past or were offered only on a more limited scale.

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