Community Commons: Public Libraries in Digital Age

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INTRODUCTION

“Bad Libraries Building Collections
Good Libraries Build Services
Great Libraries Build Communities”

David Lankes
In an age where economic, educational, health, and social opportunities increasingly depend on access to the Internet, lack of access means lack of opportunity. Only 35 percent of the world’s population is connected to the Internet, and people in rural and poor communities are the least likely to have online access or the skills to navigate the digital world. Public libraries are distinct from research libraries, school libraries and special libraries in that their mandate is to serve the general public’s information needs.

**PROPOSAL**

This thesis will identify the programs for the Onondaga County Public Library in Downtown Syracuse based on the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and organize the programs based on the navigational organization of digital information exchange platforms to connect the digital divide between improverish neighborhoods with the affluent neighborhoods of Syracuse, NY.

The articulation of the space will manifest as a commons for the demographics to access, create and exchange information in the community.
In the Digital Age, information is becoming digitized, the sharing, storing, and dissemination of information is changing the way people communicate, access and consume information creating a shift industries such as the education, journalism, business and well as architectural typology changes in physical information spaces like the library. Information is constantly being created due to efficiency of internet information transfer. Relevant and timely information is the key to the advances in information exchange in digital platforms as opposed to physical platforms.

Social networking platforms brings together minds that may not otherwise meet, which allows for the free exchange of ideas and emowerment of marginalized discourse.

Library is one of the physical sources of information exchange.
Digital information platforms like Twitter is a social networking platform designed around relevant and timely exchange of information. Users follow each other to gain access to their shared information. Retweet is sharing information where the user feels is relevant to his/her own Twitter community. Intangible digital communities are formed around people with similar interests, trust between the users are built around the consumption and contribution of information.

**Social Networking Platforms Serve as Both Manifestation of and Means by Which to Combat the Digital Divide.** Each of the sites host thriving communities that engage with otherwise marginalized population.
INTRODUCTION

DIGITAL LITERACY

Social media enables user to participate online and create content without having to understand how the technology works.

Spaces that have wireless access to internet are transduced by mobile and immobile devices accessing that network. The increasing adaptation and advancement in technology has allowed for economic capable and digital literate individuals to explore in the digital platforms with the facilitation of the various user interface design and the increasing connected world of the internet. The mass production and consumption nature of the devices and the increasingly seamless connection of internet the led the changes in the digital platforms to become more prominent.

My investigation is aimed to understand the contemporary architectural conditions of public library spaces in the digital based knowledge economy.
PUBLIC LIBRARY HISTORY
Benjamin Franklin initiated a "subscription library" as a way of sharing books among members of a literary society. It was incorporated in 1742 as the Library Company of Philadelphia, the first established in the U.S. You could join the library by buying stock in the company and books were only available to members.

An Athenaeum was basically a gentlemen’s social club (women were seldom allowed in the early days) with a collection of reading material. Members were from the richest and highest class of society. The cost was high, around $300 for a share of stock, to keep out the riff-raff.

Aimed at middle class young men, "to promote orderly and virtuous habits, diffuse knowledge and the desire for knowledge, improve the scientific skill" and create good citizens. Mercantile libraries were usually funded by contributions from the benevolent rich, to help educate the masses.

The first circulating library was in Anapolis, Maryland. They offered popular materials such as the latest fiction, including that 18th century innovation novels for rental.

School districts were expected to have books available for their students. There was no system; it was all haphazard, and materials donated usually was not interesting.
Libraries also were growing in scope. Reference departments were standard by 1900, as were open shelves.

Children’s Library
The first children’s libraries were founded in the 1890s. As late as 1894, 70% of libraries still had age restrictions, but by 1908, circulation of materials to children accounted for around one-third of total library lending.

Community Center
The library was also a haven for the waves of immigrants arriving after 1890 and, equally importantly, for their children. Storytelling was used to socialize immigrants and teach the customs and expectations of U.S. society. Libraries came to resemble community centers.

Reference Departments
Libraries also were growing in scope. Reference departments were standard by 1900, as were open shelves.

ANDREW CARNEGIE
Carnegie believed that libraries and books should be available to everyone. By 1920, the Carnegie estate had donated $50 million to erect 2,500 library buildings, including 1,700 in the U.S.—by far the most sustained and widespread philanthropic enterprise ever devoted to libraries. Carnegie’s donations got libraries started in small towns, not just big cities, throughout America. Carnegie is the driving force behind the modern U.S. public library system.
Astor Library

The Astor Library was created through the generosity of John Jacob Astor (1763-1848), a German immigrant who at his death was the wealthiest man in America. In his will he pledged $400,000 for the establishment of a reference library in New York. Although the books did not circulate and hours were limited, it was a major resource for reference and research.

Lenox Library

New York's other principal library during this time was founded by James Lenox and consisted primarily of his personal collection of rare books (which included the first Gutenberg Bible to come to the New World), manuscripts, and Americana. While use was free of charge, tickets of admission were required.

Samuel J. Tilden

One-time governor Samuel J. Tilden (1814-1886), who upon his death bequeathed the bulk of his fortune — about $2.4 million — to “establish and maintain a free library and reading room in the city of New York.”

New York Public Library

By 1892, both the Astor and Lenox libraries were experiencing financial difficulties. The combination of dwindling endowments and expanding collections had compelled their trustees to reconsider their mission. The NYPL was formed as an unprecedented example of private philanthropy for the public good.

Neighborhood Libraries

The New York Public Library contracted with the City of New York to operate 39 Carnegie branches in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island.

Andrew Carnegie

A month later, steel baron Andrew Carnegie offered $5.2 million to construct a system of branch libraries throughout New York City which provided the City would supply the sites and fund the libraries’ maintenance and operations.

Current NYPL

The New York Public Library’s 42nd Street building’s renovation aims to enhance that role, strengthening research services, opening more of the architectural gem to the public, and bringing back the circulating library.

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Throughout the system, the Library provides free and open access to its physical and electronic collections and information, as well as to its services for people of all ages, from toddlers to teens and adults. Research and circulating collections combined total more than 51 million items, among them materials for the visually impaired. In addition, each year the Library presents thousands of exhibitions and public programs, including classes in technology, literacy, researching, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. The Library serves some 18 million patrons who come through its doors annually; in addition, the Library’s website receives 32 million visits annually from more than 200 countries.
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

LOCATION: New York, NY, USA
ARCHITECT: Carrère and Hastings
YEAR: 1897–1911
SIZE: 29,348 sqm
BRANCH: 87

HIGHLIGHT: HISTORICAL VALUE
The Schwarzman main branch is a prominent historic landmark in Midtown Manhattan, one of four research libraries in the library system. The dominant feature is the Rose Main Reading Room, characterized by a fifty-two foot tall ceiling filled with long oak tables surrounded by two layers of book stacks against the walls.
SENDAI MEDIATHEQUE

LOCATION: Sendai, Miyagi, Japan
ARCHITECT: Toyo Ito
YEAR: 1995-2001
SIZE: 21,682 sqm

HIGHLIGHT:
FREE CIRCULATING SPACE
MEANDER BETWEEN STRUCTURAL TUBES

“...this building has many free spaces, that is, spaces that are not intended, as rooms are, to serve specific functions. Such spaces exist, for example, between the tubes and the building perimeter. Visitors will be able to use such spaces as they use the city streets, for various activities.” -Toyo Ito
SEATTLE CENTRAL LIBRARY

LOCATION: Seattle, Washington, USA
ARCHITECT: OMA + LMN
YEAR: 1999-2004
SIZE: 38,300 sqm
BRANCHES: 26

HIGHLIGHT:
PROGRAMMATIC CLUSTERS
FIVE STABLE AND FOUR INSTABLE

Each of the five stable platform is a programmatic cluster that is architecturally defined and equipped for maximum, dedicated performance.

The spaces in between the five platforms function as open floors and is organized as spaces for work, interaction, and play.
New York Public Library

Sendai Mediatheque

Seattle Public Library

reference → collection → reading room

HORIZONTAL MOVEMENT

reference → collection → reading room

COMBINATION MOVEMENT

precendents program
New York Public Library: 2 entrances

Sendai Mediatheque: 2 entrances

Seattle Public Library: 2 entrances

New York Public Library: 4 reference desks

Sendai Mediatheque: 5 reference desks

Seattle Public Library: 5 reference desks

PRECEDENTS CIRCULATION
REFERENCE DESK TRADITIONAL

REFERENCE WITH COMPUTER AND LIBRARIAN SPREAD OUT ON SEVERAL FLOORS

REFERENCE WITH COMPUTER AND LIBRARIAN ON ONE FLOOR

PRECEDENTS REFERENCE
New York Public Library: **2 collection floors**

Sendai Mediatheque: **2 collection floors**

Seattle Public Library: **3 collection floors**

**PRECEDENTS COLLECTION**
New York Public Library: 3rd floors

Sendai Mediatheque: 4th floors

Seattle Public Library: 10th floor

**PRECEDEMENTS READING ROOM**
children’s collection
newspaper/magazine
meeting room/office space
gallery/exhibition
auditorium
cafe/shop/public space

PRECEDES COMMUNITY SPACES
CONVERSATIONS WITH EXPERTS

shhh...

FLEXIBILITY

VISUAL

ACOUSTICS

FLEXIBILITY

ELEMENTS
WHAT DO YOU THINK A PUBLIC LIBRARY SHOULD BE?
first thing people think of when they come to a community, serve as a PORTAL TO RESOURCES
a COLLECTION OF SPACES that supply people based on their needs
NON-JUDGEMENTAL space for people to explore their interests
a DESTINATION for people to visit for public access to information

WHAT ARE SOME CURRENT ISSUES WITH THE LIBRARY?
book stacks are too tall, you can’t see the people behind the stacks which creates SERVICE AND SECURITY issues
the BIG WEED is happening to clean out uncirculated material and there are NOT ENOUGH COMPUTERS for public access
the amount of books on shelves and signage are OVERWHELMING and hard to differentiate
the amount of COLLECTION CAN’T BE ACCESSSED by Google search.
‘google can bring you back 100,000 answers, and librarian can bring you back to the right one’ by Neil Gaiman

CONVERSATIONS WITH EXPERTS
SYRACUSE ONONDAGA PUBLIC LIBRARY
DOWNTOWN BRANCH LIBRARIANS
WHAT DO YOU THINK A PUBLIC LIBRARY SHOULD BE?

GRADUATE STUDENT:

It is no longer a repository of books, it is a place to share information.

Knowledge of the past is going through Digital Preservation. Knowledge constantly being created due to general knowledge transfer. Relevant and timely information is the key.

We should reinvision how we market ourselves... Add tools instead of a place to absorb or find knowledge it should be a place of creation which puts knowledge in practice.

PROFESSOR:

PLATFORM FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Provide Tools for Development to create an employable community. Adaptable to Community wants and needs.

Bad Libraries Building Collections
Good Libraries Build Services
Great Libraries Build Communities

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN COMMUNITY AND OUTSIDE, NOT JUST ACCESSING OUTSIDE INFORMATION, BUT ALSO FROM EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESOURCE FROM EACH OTHER point to people in the direction to find information.

COMMUNITY PROFILE community member or business, club or group can be catalogued and held in a library.

COMMUNITY SHELF reflect the community in what it creates.

HUMAN LIBRARY check out a person to talk to for their expertise and interest in showing a skill.

CONVERSATIONS WITH EXPERTS

SCHOOL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

PROFESSOR / GRADUATE STUDENT
WHAT KIND OF SPACES WOULD YOU LIKE?

**VISUAL**
- no nooks, **VISUALLY OPEN** spaces so librarians can see what’s going on
- bright spaces with **NATURAL LIGHTING** and less artificial lighting

**FLEXIBILITY**
- there should be **TRANSFORMABLE, MULTI-PURPOSE** spaces for different types of events
- flexible spaces with lower shelves and **NO IMPOSING STRUCTURE**

**ACOUSTIC VARIATION** of zones for quiet reading and zones for activity and conversation

**ELEMENTS**
- shelves on wheels, so they can be **MOBILE**
- **VISUAL DISPLAY** of book covers instead of textual display of book titles
RESPONSES TO REQUESTS
SOUND PROMXIMITY

SOUND VARIATIONS
ACOUSTIC VARIATION of zones for quiet reading
and zones for activity and conversation

RESPONSES TO REQUESTS SOUND PROMXIMITY
DIVIDERS

no nooks, VISUALLY OPEN spaces so librarians can see what’s going on
there should be TRANSFORMABLE, MULTI-PURPOSE spaces for different types of events
flexible spaces with lower shelves and NO IMPOSING STRUCTURE

RESPONSES TO REQUESTS VISUAL PROMXIMITY
CONNECTION PLATE TO COFFER CEILING

STEEL ROD FRAME FOR CONE FABRIC

PLENUM FOR HOLOSonic SPEAKER

ACoustically FRIENDLY CARPET

SOUND LOUNGES
ACoustically CONTROLLED VISUALLY OPEN

RESPONSES TO REQUESTS VISUAL AND SOUND PROMXIMITY
Integrate the existing RFID tag with GPS tracking system for books.
ONPL EXISTING PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATION

SUPPORT

BOOKS

READING/STUDY

PUBLIC SERVICE

COLLECTIVE

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM

COLLECTIVE SPACE:
cafe style tables [discussion] HUMAN LIBRARY

MEETING ROOMS:
large group meeting room [20-30 people]
small group meeting space [5-15 people]

MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

CLASSROOM:
computer classrooms
language/
MOOC classroom

WORKSHOP SPACES:
MAKERSPACES [learn and create]
3D printers, lazer printers

CARSHARE PROGRAM

MAKING CONNECTIONS IN COMMUNITY AND OUTSIDE. NOT JUST ACCESSSING OUTSIDE INFORMATION, BUT ALSO FROM EACH OTHER

COMMUNITY RESOURCE FROM EACH OTHER point to people in the direction to find information
COMMUNITY PROFILE community business, club or group can be catalogued and held in a library.
COMMUNITY SHELF reflect the community in what it creates
HUMAN LIBRARY check out a person to talk to for their expertise and interest in showing a skill

ONPL EXISTING PROGRAM

L5
Administration Offices
Genealogy Collection [Books/Spaces]
3 Meeting Rooms [By Reservation]
Open Desks [Reading/Laptop]

L4
Info Counter [General Questions]
Children Collection [Books/Spaces]
Teen Collection [Books]
ESL [Tutoring/Books]
Star Center [Blind Readers]
Open Desks [Reading/Laptop]

L3
Info Counter [General Questions]
Office Space [Librarian]
Telephone Reference Room
Public Restrooms
Stacks
Open Desks [Reading/Laptop]
24 Public Computer [1hr/session 2 session/day]
Foundation Application
Job Resources

L2
Info Counter [General Questions] 2 Librarians
Service Counter [Library Cards, Book Reserve] 2 Librarians
Check Out Counter 2 Librarians
Circulating Books
DVD/CD-ROM
2 Catalogue Computer [Standing]
6 Public Computers [15 min/session 2 session/day] [Standing]
Open Desks [Conversation/Reading/Laptops]
Tax Return Forms

L1
Auditorium [Weekly Movie/Documentary Showing]
SITE DEMOGRAPHICS UNEMPLOYMENT

PROGRAM ADDITIONS FOR UNEMPLOYED DEMOGRAPHICS

CLASSROOMS MOOC MAKERSPACE

DISPLAY

CAR SHARE BIKE SHARE

LEARN

CLASSROOMS
MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES

CREATE

MAKERSPACE
3D PRINTER/ LAZER CUTTER AND VARIOUS TOOLS FOR CREATION

DISPLAY

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

SHARE

CAR SHARE BIKE SHARE
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITY GROWTH

PUBLIC SERVICE

JOB RESOURCES
TAX FORMS
GRANT APPLICATION

READING/STUDY

COMPUTER CLASSES
INTERNET ACCESS
2,700 DOWNTOWN POPULATION

**AGE** OF DOWNTOWN RESIDENT'S IS 30.1 YEARS

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60% OF RESIDENTS BETWEEN 25 AND 34 YEARS OF AGE HAVE A **BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER**
ONPL Proposed Program

Existing

- Auditorium
- Meeting Space
- Dining/Cafe
- Conversation Spaces
- Event Spaces

Addition

- Auditorium
- Meeting Room
- Dining/Cafe
- Conversation Spaces
- Event Spaces

- Patrons to Technology
- Patrons to Patron

- Classroom
- MOOC
- Makerspace

- Computers
- Open Tables
- Informal Spaces
- Sofas

- Display

- Car Share
- Bike Share
- Parking

Visual / Acoustics / Transformable

- Visual / Acoustics / Transformable

Existing / Addition

- Existing
- Addition

- Existing
- Addition

- Existing
- Addition

- Existing
- Addition

- Existing
- Addition

- Existing
- Addition
SURROUNDING:
Close to Museum of Science and Technology, Landmark Theatre, Everson Museum of Art, the Oncenter Convention Center and Memorial.
SITE

TRANSIT HUB

SITE

TRANSPORTATION
TRANSPORTATION:
On a major intersection between three main road in downtown Syracuse. Next to the central transit hub, the location will be easily accessible by residents of Syracuse.
COMMUNICATION METHODS
Traditional methods of communication were direct and private, it usually involves two people in a conversation. The current method of Social Media, Twitter, introduced indirect and public conversations which can be viewed by indirectly related members. The feature for public viewing allowed for a public forum that allows for individuals not included in the original dialogue to participate.

REACTIVE
This allows the reactive method of communication where anyone can add to or correct the information after it has been presented.

IN REAL TIME
The sources of information is no longer necessary, information is passed along many public networks and becomes viral if it is caught and shared between many users.

TRENDING
The trending feature creates a format which rates the popularity of #hashtag topics shared among users. The more a #topic is mentioned, the more likely a topic will move to the top. This creates Real Time News feed.

CONCLUSION
Twitter creates virtual communities based around news and common interests. It provides a public platform where people are free to voice their thoughts, share their interests and connect with others all in real time.

Following the similar format, if the virtual platform can be manifested physically, the platform can allow an extra layer of interaction between users to make connections and foster conversations.

SHARE, DISCOVER, QUICK, EASY, REALTIME

140 CHARACTERS
Every Tweet fits into a space that’s under 140 characters. Just the right size for a big idea, a headline or a timely observation.

@USERNAME
Identity
Your @username is your unique identity on Twitter. People will use your @username to mention you in Tweets and to send you messages.

# TOPIC
A hashtag is any word or phrase with the # symbol immediately in front of it. This symbol turns the word into a link that makes it easier to find and follow a conversation about that topic.

IMAGE TWEETS
More than words can fit into a Tweet. Images, videos and links now expand right in your Tweets to show the best of what you have to share.

COMMENT/REPLY
Start a conversation with someone by replying to their Tweet. If you see an interesting Tweet, add your opinion by clicking the reply icon.

RETWEET
You can pass along someone’s Tweet by clicking the retweet icon. Retweeting is a lot like forwarding an email — you’ll send along someone else’s Tweet to all of your followers.

STAR
Favoriting sends a brief, positive notification back to the author that you liked their Tweet. Click the star to mark a Tweet as a favorite.
TRADITIONAL NETWORK

ONE TO ONE
Location Based

ONE TO GROUP
Location Based

ONE TO SEVERAL GROUPS
THROUGH A MEDIUM
Non Location Based

BASIC NETWORK EXCHANGE BETWEEN
ANYONE CONNECTED TO THE WEB OR
A SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

TWITTER NETWORK

USERS OVERLAP IN TWITTER
PLATFORMS BASED ON THEIR
SIMILAR INTERESTS AND TOPICS

RADIAL DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
FROM ONE SOURCE

COMMUNITIES ARE CREATED BASED ON THEIR
EXCHANGE ON INFORMATION. THE SOURCE IS NO
LONGER THE ONLY SOURCE TO INFORMATION

TWITTER DIGITAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE SPACES
IDENTITY of the individual can be anonymous or real, for known public figures, Twitter has added an extra layer of verification.

140 CHARACTERS limits and condenses the messages shared so it would be quickly comprehended. # similar topics @ directed another account LINK to an article

PHOTOGRAPH can add a visual to the image, it could also have written message, but it makes the message more eye catching.

DATE/TIME stamps when the message was shared in order to relate it back to the event or message.

COMMENT allows the user to add input and feedback to the message, also allows the message to be monitored broadly.

TWEET VISIBILITY

EXCHANGE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE ON PUBLIC FORUMS CAN BE SEEN AND RECORDED BY OTHER

IDENTITY [anonymous]

TWITTER TWEETING

FOLLOWING

Subscribing to someone’s stream of Tweets is called “following”. To start following someone, click the Follow button next to their name, and you’ll see their Tweets as soon as they post something new.

You don’t have to ask permission to follow someone. Anyone on Twitter can follow or unfollow anyone else at any time. This leads to something unexpected: open and fun conversations that get people talking.

PRESENTING THROUGH A MEDIUM

EXCHANGING THROUGH A MEDIUM

OBSERVING THROUGH A MEDIUM

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

EXCHANGE THROUGH INTERNET PLATFORM

PRIMARY SOURCE

SECONDARY SOURCE

OPEN SOURCE

TWEETS TWITTER MESSAGE WHICH CAN BE SEEN BY THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE USER

140 characters
Your profile is where you show people what they can expect from your tweets and why they should follow you. Add a photo, short description and background image to give the world a taste of your personality.

A private message (sometimes called a DM or direct message) is a private Tweet between two people who follow each other. To read your messages, click on the envelope icon on your profile.

It is a space where all activity, comments and responses to you appear.

Provides the tweets by the users that you follow. It is a public space for all of the information exchange to occur.

**PUBLICITY**

**TWITTER** PUBLIC TO PRIVATE SPACES WITHIN DIGITAL PLATFORMS

**PRIVATE**

**NOTIFICATION**

**PUBLIC**

**PUBLIC TO INDIVIDUAL**

**MESSAGE**

**INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL**

**PROFILE**

**INDIVIDUAL**
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