READING THE LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS PLACE: EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESS MEN IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN VANCOUVER, BC

by

Jean Marie McKendry

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Abstract

Some homeless men are very frequent public library users, but are rarely asked by librarians for their opinions about libraries. Semi-structured individual interviews of 23 homeless men investigated how they used libraries and explored their understanding of the library as a place in downtown Vancouver, BC. Despite not being eligible for regular library membership privileges, often due to simply not having an address, 14 participants were still very frequent Central Library users. Homelessness is a high risk lifestyle and 4 participants who purposely avoided street danger in the Downtown Eastside found a safer niche within the Central Library, while 15 participants purposely chose to physically distance themselves from the stigma of homelessness and mostly kept to themselves while they were at the Central Library, which was often daily from opening until closing. Public space in libraries is especially valuable to homeless people who have no private space of their own. Amenities such as washrooms, comfortable seating and access to the Internet, which are not as freely available elsewhere as they are at libraries made the Central Library the preferred library among all participants. Just like many of the other library users at the Central Library, participants enjoyed very ordinary library experiences, such as reading for pleasure, learning, playing online games, searching the Internet and sending and receiving emails, and some of the most frequent users created a new social identity for themselves as library users, which is far more socially acceptable than the stigmatized social identity of homelessness. Being a frequent library user gave some participants a routine and stability and the anonymity of being an ordinary library user at the Central Library gave participants an opportunity to be treated respectfully by other library users. Seventeen participants believed that using public libraries had greatly improved their lives and used libraries as transition spaces to improve their circumstances. Some participants who were frequent library users said they would like to have their own library membership for the Central Library, perhaps as much to give them a sense of belonging in their own community as for borrowing library materials.

Preface

The Behavioural Research Ethics Board, Office of Research Services, at the University of British Columbia issued a Minimal Risk Certificate of Approval [UBC BREB Number H09-03179]on 8 February 2010 in order to conduct this research. The Research Ethics certificate for this research expired on 8 February 2011.

Twenty individual research interviews were conducted by the researcher in Vancouver, BC during April and May, 2010. The Research Ethics certificate was renewed on 1 May 2012, and three additional interviews were conducted by the researcher in Vancouver, BC during May 2012. This research is unpublished.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This dissertation reports a qualitative study of homeless men's opinions and experiences of their use of public libraries. This study is based on twenty-three individual semi-structured interviews with homeless men in Vancouver BC, which were conducted during the summer of 2010 and 2012. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to outline the statement of the problem, provide some background on contributing factors to the research problem, as well as highlight the significance of the topic as a research idea. This chapter also includes the research objectives, the research questions, and the scope of this study.

An important part of the mandate of public libraries is to respond to the changing needs of library users (American Library Association & Public Library Association, 1979). Although many homeless people frequent public libraries, relatively little research has been conducted into how homeless people actually use public libraries (Harvey, 2005). Perhaps due to the social stigmatization of homelessness, many library staff rarely interact with homeless patrons (Cronin, 2002; Harris & Simon, 2009; Hersberger, 2005b; Kreimer v. Morristown, 1991; McGrorty, 2009; Silver, 1996; Soneda, 2007). What homeless people think of public libraries as a place (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001) is unstudied.

This research topic is important and timely in light of the dual trends towards increasing homelessness on the one hand (Laird, 2007) and the construction of spacious new landmark public libraries in many North American cities (Mattern, 2007). Public libraries offer library services and Internet access which helps to bridge the 'digital divide', but information seeking is more challenging for stigmatized and marginalized people (Chatman, 1996; Hersberger, 1998; Hersberger, 2003; Hersberger, 2005a). Determining better ways to accommodate the physical space needs of homeless people in public libraries may also help to improve access to information in public libraries for them, just as librarians have done in the past for children, teenagers and other public library user groups (Bernier,

2003; Curry & Schwaiger, 1999). This research investigates how homeless men use libraries and explores their understanding of the public library as "place" (Black, 1996; Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Leckie, 2004; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002; Lees, 1997; Lees, 2001; Osburn, 2007; Ranseen, 2002; Wiegand, 2003). How library buildings are used may be of interest to librarians for planning better library programs and to architects for designing future library buildings (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002; Given & Leckie, 2003).

1.2 Background

The next part of this chapter introduces three factors, which, when brought together form the background of this research problem. The key issues are: homelessness as a personal and societal condition, homeless patrons in libraries, and libraries as public architecture.

1.2.1 Homelessness as a Personal and Societal Condition

The *Encyclopedia of World Poverty* (2006) defines homelessness as:

> the condition of lacking a permanent, regular, and adequate night time residence so that during the night a person uses supervised shelter designed for temporary living accommodation or uses a private or public space that is not meant for, or designed for regular sleeping accommodations. Homelessness is a severe form of poverty, as homeless people not only lack a permanent residence but lack all the amenities that come with that—a place to bathe, eat, store belongings, be found by friends or family, and from which to negotiate for employment and other social activities. (Segal, 2006, p. 495)

About 0.5% percent of the population of Canada [175,000 people] and about 1 percent of the population of the United States [3.5 million people] are believed to be homeless In North America (Laird, 2007; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2002). Currently, the Canadian government spends about $6 billion per year on homelessness, while the United States government spends about $28.5 billion per year through the Housing and Urban Development [HUD] program (Laird, 2007). Homelessness can be

found in every community throughout North America. Most social services for the homeless are contracted out by governments mostly to faith-based charities (Johnsen, Cloke & May, 2005).

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) created a new Canadian definition of homelessness. "…for many people homelessness is not a static state but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency. Homelessness describes a range of housing and shelter circumstances with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other."

While Vancouver, BC is one of the most desirable cities in the world to work and live in, not everyone is well off in Vancouver. Within a few blocks of the downtown Vancouver business district is the DTES, a ghetto of extreme poverty and crime, which is in stark contrast to the affluence of the rest of the city. Most of the social problems in Vancouver are concentrated into the DTES, where the normal social milieu is a mixture of drugs, alcohol and prostitution, which is not like any other neighbourhood in Vancouver. The majority of the population of the DTES are extremely poor single adults who are very dependent on charities that provide free emergency social services such as homeless shelters, free food and clothing, free showers and laundry, free phones, free storage, and emergency health care.

Since 2000, the DTES has received more than $1.4 billion of funding (Roe, 2009/2010). There are over 174 service organizations in the DTES. Many services for the homeless are provided directly by the local churches, such as First United, St. James, Salvation Army, and United Gospel Mission. Residents of the DTES must become clients of the plethora of social services in the DTES in order to get housing, detox, rehabilitation, emergency shelter, showers, laundry, etc. Since 2002, the homeless population in Vancouver has tripled, which has greatly increased the competititon for social services in the DTES, and so much so that the magnitude of homelessness has reached a public health crisis (Pivot Legal Society, 2006; United Nations, 2009). The milder winters on the west coast might also be a contributing factor

why more homeless people stay longer in Vancouver, rather than move to other more affordable cities in Canada.

In March 2011, the latest homeless count conducted in Metro Vancouver found 2,623 homeless people: 731 had no shelter, while 1892 were sheltered (Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 2011). According to the Media Release, "The homeless count is an important tool to better understand Metro Vancouver's visible homeless population, although it is always an undercount" (Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, 2011, n.p.).

Snow and Anderson (1987) identified three distinct sub-groups among people experiencing homelessness:

a. hidden homeless are people without any permanent residence who stay temporarily with family or friends and sometimes are referred to as couch surfers,
b. shelter users, and
c. absolutely homeless, also called rough sleepers, unsheltered or street homeless, are people who live in vehicles, or wherever they can find a place to sleep outdoors.

Since 1995, street homelessness has increased throughout Vancouver (McMartin, 2006). There are always many more homeless people than shelter beds available, especially in downtown Vancouver. The Mayor of Vancouver wants to end street homelessness in Vancouver by 2015, but it is unlikely, because homelessness continues to grow in Vancouver, particularly among street youth (Paulsen, 2010). In 2009, Covenant House in Vancouver estimated that there are between 500 and 1000 homeless youth between the ages of 14 and 26 in the Greater Vancouver area (Fast, Shoveller, Shannon, & Kerr, 2010).

Today, most extremely poor adults who live in SROs in the DTES remain as marginalized as homeless people, primarily due to the long-standing circumstances of poverty and social problems beyond their control which plague the DTES. SRO residents of the DTES are also heavily dependent on charities for social services to get by month to month. As homelessness increases in Canada, there

seems to be more public sympathy than previously about the chronic lack of affordable housing for the poor. The gap between the rich and poor is growing faster in Vancouver than in Toronto and Montreal (Vancouver Foundation, 2013). Nevertheless, many major cities enforce strict bylaws that mandate jail sentences for some activities conducted in public places, with the primary aim of sanctioning people experiencing homelessness (Mitchell, 1995). The tension between homelessness and use of public spaces is complicated by this need to avoid such sanctions:

> The homeless are forced into constant motion not because they are going somewhere, but because they have nowhere to go. Going nowhere is simultaneously being nowhere: homelessness is not only being without a home, but more generally without a place. Unlike the movement from place to place of travel or migration, the itinerant movement of the homeless is a mode of movement peculiar to the condition of placeless-ness. (Kawash, 1998, pp. 327-328)

In other words, sometimes people who want homelessness to end, will shun and deny homeless people everything, in order to try to force homeless people to stop being homeless. This does nothing to eradicate homelessness, rather it only makes things more difficult for homeless people. Thus, homeless people experience placeless-ness when they are denied access to any place, private or public.

1.2.2 Homelessness and Libraries

Long ago, it was said, "books are the friends of the friendless and... libraries are the home of the homeless" (Hilliard, 1850). For as long as there have been public libraries, many homeless people have used indoor public spaces in public libraries as a respite from their miserable lives on the street (McCrossen, 2006). In 2006, according to the [US] National Coalition for the Homeless, about 10 to 20 percent of homeless persons regularly used American public libraries. It is generally assumed that a similar percentage of homeless persons in Canada are regular users of Canadian public libraries. Using the rough calculation that 10 to 20 percent of the current homeless population the Metro Vancouver

[2623] use public libraries, there could be somewhere between 262 and 525 homeless people regularly using public libraries in Metro Vancouver. It is very difficult to determine the number of library users who are homeless, as libraries do not keep any records of this type of information (Harris & Simon, 2009). Unless someone self-identifies that he or she is homeless, it is virtually impossible to determine this with any degree of certainty.

The rise in use of public libraries by homeless patrons raises some challenges for libraries and library staff. As homelessness increases, there are mixed feelings among librarians about public libraries serving as *"de facto* daytime shelters for the city's homeless" (Ward, 2007a). Library literature reports that some librarians have difficulty dealing with the behaviour of some homeless persons (Cronin, 2002; Curry, 1996; Salter & Salter, 1988; Shuman, 1996; Simmons, 1985; Turner, 2004). Cronin (2002), a library professor commiserates, " Social inclusion is a noble goal and sound public policy, but it should not be construed as a license to abandon time-honoured standards and expectations concerning behaviour in public spaces such as libraries." On the other hand, Berman (2005), a social justice activist and a librarian, hopes that more librarians will support making libraries more inclusive for poor people, rather than perceiving homeless people as problematic library users.

Librarians in public libraries are not trained social workers and are unequipped to deal with the behaviour of some homeless patrons, especially those who may be unsuccessfully dealing with their own untreated mental health and hygiene issues (McGrorty, 2004, 2009). For example, in 2009, San Francisco Public Library was the first public library to hire a psychiatric social worker to deal with the social welfare needs of the homeless people at the public library (Knight, 2010). On the other hand, Washington, DC closed several homeless shelters and does not provide any dedicated places for homeless people to spend the day or night (Williams, 2009). Consequently, some homeless people in Washington, DC frequent public libraries, but the DC public libraries have restricted the access to libraries by homeless people. Homeless people are prohibited from carrying more than two bags or

sleeping in Washington, DC libraries. Libraries in Washington, DC no longer permit homeless people to stay in the library during the day, because "they do not use the library for research or learning, its intended purposes" (Siemer, 2009). Currently, librarians and architects are increasingly challenged with the best ways to design public spaces in new public libraries that are accommodating for all people, including the homeless (Schneider, 2010).

1.2.3 Libraries as Public Architecture

Public architecture may be designed with different motivations and purposes, ranging from openness and inclusiveness to social control. The humanistic Finnish architect and renowned library designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) believed that "architecture that is worthwhile...is an endeavour to show that we want to build an earthly paradise for people." (Schildt,1985, pp. 157-158). Aalto's altruistic idealism remains preserved in Finland's Land Use and Building Act (2000), which ensures public participation in all planning matters, resulting in architecture projects with a public mandate rather than a political agenda or a developer's profit as the dominant focus (Hurley, 2008). But, sometimes human behaviour is purposely negatively affected by architecturally designed public spaces. Architects, urban planners and criminologists have developed strategies for reducing crime and deviance in public places through environmental design [CPTED]. For example, blue spectrum ultraviolet light is used in public toilets in some European libraries [Tampere, Finland] to deter intravenous drug users [IDU], but it has recently been shown to actually increase harm to about half of the IDU population, who are undeterred by blue light (Parkin & Coomber, 2010). Some park benches and seating in bus shelters are purposely designed to deter sleeping, especially by people experiencing homelessness (Davis, 1990; Anderson, 2010).

Ideally, public libraries are indoor public places intended for use by everyone in the community. Increased privatization of public spaces has resulted in decreased democratization of many public places, but perhaps somewhat less so in public libraries because many librarians are cautiously protective of keeping the public-ness of public libraries out of private hands (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Smith

& Low, 2006). Thus, in ideal democratic societies, public libraries are places of social inclusion where everyone is meant to be treated equally (Leckie, 2004).

The architect Moshe Safdie, who has designed several important libraries, believes that libraries are "the cultural commons in our cities" (MacIntyre, 2005, p. R8). This is reflected in Safdie's community-based approach to public architecture: "Building the most for the least, sustainability, giving buildings meanings in terms of their settings and specific culture of their communities—these are all issues which not only do I believe in, but also they form an ethic of architecture" (Cook, 2005, p. C4).

While other countries may not necessarily be as inclusive architecturally as Finland, nevertheless a distinguishing feature of modern architecture is programming (Summerson, 1957). Library programming is a process that gathers together detailed information that will be used to guide the design of a library. Around the world, public library buildings are programmed by librarians and architects to serve the information needs as well as the social needs for all members of society: young or old, rich or poor . Designing public libraries is a very complex task for both architects and librarians (Curry & Henriquez, 1998). Architects rarely choose the location or size of a public library building (Koontz, 1997; Pelli, 1993). Librarians solicit local public input while preparing their finely detailed submissions of the project for presentation to the architects by the public library (McCabe, 2000; McCabe & Kennedy, 2003; Rizzo, 2002). Thus, new public library designs are a collaboration of the needs of the community as well as the needs of the library.

At the National Gallery of Canada's recent show of architectural works by Moshe Safdie, the architect commented, "A lot of people are saying libraries are a thing of the past...[but]... the opposite seems to be the case. The number of major North American cities that have built public libraries or expanded them greatly in the last 20 years is just staggering." (Cook, 2010). Newer public libraries allocate much more floor space for social uses than for book stacks compared to traditional library designs (Prince-Ramus, 2006). How library buildings are used should be of great interest to librarians for planning

better library programs and to architects for designing future library buildings (Lackney & Zajfen, 2005). Yet most architects rarely revisit the libraries they design to see how they actually are used. Safdie is an exception; he made a point of revisiting Library Square in Vancouver, for the tenth anniversary of the library.

While he was at Vancouver Public Library, Safdie remarked, "We [architects] as a profession don't come back to our buildings often enough, and yet post-mortems are valuable. The question of how our buildings meet their promise is an important aspect of our profession—and for improving it." (MacIntyre, 2005, p. R8).

If the most successful new public libraries are being designed to better serve everyone in the community, including the homeless, then it is probably best to hear firsthand from homeless people what they think about public libraries as place, which may help librarians and architects better understand what homeless people really think about public libraries as place.

1.3 Research Objectives

The key issues presented above about homelessness as a personal and societal condition, homeless patrons in libraries and libraries as public architecture together form the background for this research. With the exception of Hersberger (2002/2003; 2003), scholarly LIS literature reflects only the opinions of librarians about homeless people in public libraries; opinions that homeless people have about public libraries have never been recorded in the LIS literature. To the researcher's knowledge, with the exception of Harvey (2002), and Hodgetts et al., (2008) hearing first-hand from homeless men about public libraries as place has not been formally researched yet in LIS.

With this gap in LIS literature in mind, this research had the following objectives:

a. To contribute to the understanding of homeless men's experiences in public libraries and to inform the library and architectural communities about the existing conditions and needs of homeless men in public libraries,

b. To examine if homeless men benefit from social capital in public libraries and if libraries function as 'third places' for homeless men, and

c. To inform the future development of inclusive public space in public libraries.

Together, these research objectives help to address the missing voice of homeless men who use public libraries, within the understanding of public libraries as place. The next section contains the research questions that arose from the objectives of this research.

1.4 Main Research Questions

There are extensive architectural guidelines regarding building design to accommodate disabilities, but homelessness is a social problem not a disability, consequently there are no architectural guidelines for designing public spaces for the homeless. Designing public libraries to best serve everyone in a community is challenging, because people of all age groups and all abilities use public libraries. How homeless men describe their experiences in public libraries reveals how welcome or unwelcome they feel at public libraries, and what they like or do not like about using public libraries. For example, things that most people normally take for granted and never think much about, such as hot water, might be very important to a homeless person who wants to freshen up in a public washroom. Homeless men who are frequent library users have rarely been given opportunities to express their personal opinions about using public libraries, which in part is due to the stigmatization of homelessness and the reluctance of most homeless men to spontaneously voice their opinions about anything to anyone. The continued silence of homeless men justifies the need for librarians to ask them what they think about public libraries as a place.

Four main research questions informed this study:

a. How do homeless men use public libraries?

This is the core research question of this study. This research question may elicit many different responses or perhaps many similar responses about the social uses of public libraries by homeless men.

An ordinary, everyday visit to the public library from a homeless man's perspective may be very typical or very atypical of other library users, depending on the individual and their purpose for visiting the library.

b. What are the factors that encourage homeless men to use public libraries?

This research question is looking for evidence of social inclusion of homeless men in public libraries. Responses may show how accessible public libraries are to homeless men. Responses may show ways that homeless men can socially interact with other people in a non-stigmatized and non-judgmental environment in public libraries.

c. What are the factors that discourage homeless men from using public libraries?

This research question is the opposite of the previous research question. This research question is looking for evidence of social exclusion of homeless men from public libraries. Mainstream society considers homelessness to be socially unacceptable and deviant, but homeless people may not necessarily perceive themselves that way. Responses may show barriers that homeless men encounter when they try to use public libraries.

d. How do homeless men experience public libraries as place?

The purpose of this question is to look for any evidence of how homeless men experience public libraries as 'third places' and for any evidence of how homeless men benefit from social capital in public libraries. The concepts 'third places' and social capital are sociological terms that indicate trust, reciprocity, and pleasure in belonging and feeling socially accepted within a community. Responses may be positive or negative.

These four main research questions were formulated from the research objectives which will help to address the missing voice of homeless men about their experiences in public libraries. Understanding how homeless men use public libraries may better inform librarians and architects about planning better public libraries.

1.5 Scope

This research focuses on the concept of the library as place. This section defines the use of the term library as place. Additionally, the library as place is addressed in more detail in the literature review. Human geographers define "place" as the "intersection between social and physical spaces" (Massey, 1994). Thus, library as place reflects the many social uses of public space in libraries. Now that most public libraries function as social spaces as much as information places, "library as place" has begun to receive considerable scholarly attention (Black, 1996; Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Goedeken, 2010; Leckie, 2004; Leckie & Hopkins, 2002; Lees, 1997; Lees, 2001; Mattern, 2007; Most, 2009; Osburn, 2007; Ranseen, 2002; Wiegand, 2003; Wiegand, 2005).

As a public good, public libraries provide social value to the societies they serve (Kniffel, 2010), but the social value of public libraries as a place is very difficult to quantify (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Wiegand, 2005), especially for marginalized groups such as the homeless. With homelessness increasing in most North American cities, "policy makers are continually seeking out ways to make sure homeless people have no right to the city" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 199). The most successful public spaces seem to be those that balance civil liberties with personal security (Nemeth & Schmidt, 2007). Policies that bar the homeless from public places are common, sometimes leaving sidewalks and public libraries as the only public places where homeless people can legitimately go (Blomley, 2010). Thus, as democratic indoor public spaces, public libraries have become a vital part of the everyday life world of some homeless people (Ho, 2006; Miller, 2010; Murphy, 2006; Soneda, 2007; Ward, 2007b; Williams, 2009).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines recent scholarship on homelessness within the contemporary context of "public libraries as place", a phrase that first appeared in the scholarly and professional Library and Information Science [LIS] literature in 1999 (Most, 2009, p. 78). Several suggestions found in the LIS literature were used to guide the search for documentation:

First, Simmons, a librarian, suggested that "an attempt should be made to address the issue [of the use of libraries] from the homeless patron's point of view, to understand the nature of the homeless and their needs. This [a homeless perspective] is clearly lacking in the library literature" (Simmons, 1985, p. 117).

Similarly, for "library as place" research, Wiegand (2005) encourages LIS researchers to try the less familiar user-centric approach, that is, the "library in the life of the user" perspective, rather than the more traditional, library-centric "user in the life of the library" perspective.

> I think our focus on information largely from a "user in the life of the library" perspective has simultaneously had the effect of narrowing our understanding of the multiple roles of libraries of all types have played and continue to play in the lives of our users, a lot of which takes place under two broad headings I call "library in the life of the reader," and "library as place". (Wiegand, 2005, p. 76)

Thorough searches of the LIS literature located very little scholarly literature specifically on the topic of homelessness in public libraries compared to enormous amounts of scholarly literature on homelessness in the social sciences, confirming that "little basic research has systematically addressed the social role that the public library plays in the lives of its users." (Fisher, Saxton, Edwards & Mai, 2007, p. 145).

2.2 The Social Uses of Public Space

The *Canadian Law Dictionary* defines public place as "a place where the public goes, a place to which the public has or is permitted to have access and any place of public resort." (Public place, p. 186). Madanipour (2003) adds that "public spaces of cities, almost anywhere and at any time, have been places outside the boundaries of individual or small group control, mediating between private spaces and used for a variety of overlapping functional and symbolic purposes" (p. 113).

Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) reviewed geographical literature on the topic of public space asking two questions: "What makes a space public?" and "How does space shape who counts as the people who are entitled to use the public space?" (p. 793); they reported that "geographers see public space as crucial for creating or sustaining a public" (p. 798).

Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) found that public space was considered important because it is "a place of politics, it provides open space in a crowded city, it is essential to democracy "; it is "a meeting place – stressing its social and/or political function"; it is "linked to the public sphere"; it is "important for socialization into community norms; it is important for building community; and it is for "forming and affirming identity" (p. 798).

If urban public spaces are usually made and owned by a city or government, rather than created by private individuals, then "the public made the space what it was" which is why a public space can have multiple meanings for different people (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2007, p. 804). For example, Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) found that "public space of sociability is meant to be a space of display and publicity—in this sense a literal coming-into-the-public of private individuals" (p. 796) and that "sociability was vital for building a more inclusive public realm" (p. 799). Sociability refers to idealized kinds of social interactions that individuals who do not know each other personally have together in public places (Simmel & Hughes, 1949).

Especially in public places in urban settings, most social interactions involve strangers (Madanipour, 2003, p. 116). Compared to a traditional society where most individuals were known by all other members of the society, in modern urban societies, most people do not have deep roots in their communities, and most people are strangers with the other people in their community (Madanipour, 2003, p. 116).

Goffman's (1971) sociological research on face-to-face social interactions in public places showed that individuals behave differently in public places than they do in private places. Thus, in modern democratic societies, individuals separate their private lives from their public lives, more than was done in traditional societies. Park (1955), a sociologist, believed that individuals portray an idealized public self, that is who that individual would like to be, which is often quite different from the real private self that they actually are.

Morrill, Snow and White (2005) researched personal relationships in public places. Specifically, they asked the following questions: "How does public sociality matter?" and "How does place influence public sociality?" (226). Public sociality refers to the ways that individuals interact in public places. Public spaces in cities that are independent from private spaces are very important for social inclusion and a strong, democratic public sphere (Madanipour, 2003, p. 219). Morrill, Snow and White (2005) found that the boundaries for public sociality are not clearly separate from private sociality, which may make it easier for some people to accept the increased privatization of public space (p. 14). The United Nations (2004) predicts by 2030 that 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities. As urban populations increase, less public space is available per person, especially in crowded cities. Streets and sidewalks are public spaces but are primarily intended for the movement of traffic and pedestrians, which makes them unsuitable public places for public socializing (Madanipour, 2003, p. 215). Also, many public spaces in crowded cities are being privatized, but increased privatization of public spaces creates inequality, political struggles and social exclusion which weakens and diminishes the public

sphere (Madanipour, 2003, p. 219). Lefebvre's (1974) abstract concept of the social production of space differentiates between private and public space as the result of industrialization; but if public space becomes privatized, only those with access privileges are allowed to use the space, which excludes the rest of society and ensures that the dominant social group controls the space, with little or no regard for others, especially marginalized people (Madanipour, 2003, p. 219).

Design guidelines for successful public spaces, developed especially by the Project for Public Spaces [PPS] in New York as well as other private designers, have helped to make many renovated and new public spaces award-winning, vibrant public spaces (Kent & Schwartz, 2001).

PPS is an independent American organization that advises American and Canadian cities on how to create good public spaces, which in turn improves the quality of life for users of these public spaces.

The equivalent organization in Europe is The European Centre on Public Space and in Britain, the equivalent is the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [CABE]. These organizations mostly work with outdoor public spaces to make sure they have adequate universal access. Universal access refers to people of all abilities, including people with physical disabilities and all ages.

Maintaining public spaces in public libraries are beneficial to the local community they serve (Madanipour, 2004). Public libraries are safe, social places where all age groups, cultural groups and socio-economic groups in a community can interact in a non-threatening, non-political, secular environment (Boaden, 2005; Goulding, 2005; Harris & Dudley, 2006; Murray, 2004).

As Leckie (2004) states:

> There is currently no other public space quite like the public library, where citizens can engage in quiet reflection and study, able to pursue their own intellectual projects and personal growth free of the commercial pressures and ideological positions that permeate almost every other aspect of life (p. 236).

Canadian society takes enormous pride in the social infrastructure of Canada, including healthcare, public education, welfare and pensions, but despite these universal social benefits, homelessness is still a growing social problem found in every community in Canada (Laird, 2007). Homelessness is a very complex social issue which involves marginalization and stigmatization, mainly due to extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is usually the main factor that homeless people have in common with each other. Other factors associated with the marginalization and stigmatization of homeless people may include addictions, brain injuries or mental health problems (Hwang, 2008). For example, drug abuse is more common among homeless people in Canada, while alcoholism is more common among homeless people in European countries, and in Australia, homeless men have a particularly high risk of suicide (Hwang, 2001). A recent study in Canada has shown that "homelessness could be both a contributing cause and a consequence of traumatic brain injury" (Hwang, 2008, p. 783). According to the National Center for Disease Control in the United States, the leading cause of permanent disability in North America is traumatic brain injury. Traumatic brain injuries, most often occurring before the onset of homelessness, are very common among single men and single women experiencing homelessness (Hwang, 2008). Behavioural problems associated with traumatic brain injury may include varying degrees of attention deficits, cognitive impairments, disinhibition, emotional lability and impulsivity (Johnson, 2009).

Homeless people do not form cohesive social groups; anyone can become homeless, from any social, cultural or ethnic background, and at any age, and for any length of time (Laird, 2007). Marginalization is the psycho-social downward spiral into a lower quality of life. Marginalized people experience greater poverty, poorer health, inadequate education, more unemployment, more stress and more crime as their life spirals downward (Breton, 2004).

Homelessness is stigmatized because mainstream Canadian society considers homelessness a form of social deviance (Laird, 2007). Stigmatization is the shame associated with social disgrace. Visible homelessness is highly stigmatized, which results in some homeless people hiding their shame for as

long as possible, often when they are most in need of some help with their personal crisis (Takahashi, 1998; Takahashi, McElroy, & Rowe, 2002; Falk, 2001). Some American cities, such as Los Angeles, have harsh urban policies which target marginalized populations, especially homeless people and criminalize their behaviour rather than address the social inequality that they alone cannot remedy (Davis, 1990). Some homeless people admit they would rather commit petty crimes and go to jail for awhile just to get off the streets and out of the shelters (Allen, 2000, p. 93). Criminalizing poverty and homelessness is more harmful than helpful to homeless people and to Canadian society (Esmonde, 2002).

Whitley and McKenzie (2005) spoke of how psychiatric patients can sometimes form a "non-spatial community" due to their commonality of "otherness". Likewise, homeless people are not a cohesive social group, have no "first place" of their own, except perhaps a bed at an emergency shelter, and outside is their "second place" where they mostly walk, scavenge, recycle and line up for food from charities.

Possibly, homeless people could be considered a "nonspatial community" for research purposes. The complete urbanization of society has resulted in the social production of space, which is produced by society, except for homeless people, who have no space or mode of production of their own, because society refuses to let homeless people have any space of their own, despite the fact that it is not illegal to be homeless. Thus, in Vancouver, people have the right to demonstrate in public, but not to camp in tents on the public space on the grounds of the Vancouver Art Gallery, as occurred at the Occupy Vancouver camp (19 November 2011). In Vancouver, the Parks Control Bylaw states that no person can "take up a temporary abode overnight in any place on any portion of any park."

Homeless people have the same essential needs as the domiciled residents of any community, but without any legally recognized place of their own, they endure legal and political challenges to their right to occupy private or even public space, including libraries sometimes (Blomley, 2010; Kreimer v. Morristown, 1991; Mitchell, 1995). Since 1990, one American court case in particular, Kreimer v.

Morristown, changed the way library behaviour policies are written (Comstock-Gay, 1995; Holt, 2005; Olivares, 1995). Kreimer won his case, which was based on discrimination, but the decision was since overturned on appeal (Geiszler, 1998). Libraries have responded to this landmark case by making library behaviour policies less vague (Wong, 2009).

Often in public spaces, homeless people are not welcome; they are excluded because they might "potentially disrupt the sociability of a community" (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2007, p. 806). In many cities, bylaws are created specifically to discourage homeless people from loitering in front of businesses and stores, which pushes the homeless into public spaces. Ridding homeless people from congregating in public places is also common in many cities, but sometimes,

> ...only in public spaces can the homeless, for example, represent themselves as a legitimate part of "the public". Insofar as homeless people or other marginalized groups remain invisible to society, they fail to be counted as legitimate members of the polity. And in this sense public spaces are absolutely essential to the functioning of democratic politics (Mitchell, 1995, p. 115).

Homeless people who are perceived as social deviants are often socially excluded even from public spaces. "For those people or social groups who are marginalized, finding a space to be seen or heard, or simply to be is vital to their ability to develop a political subjectivity and a sense of worthiness as a citizen" (Staehelli & Mitchell, 2007, p. 809).

Lower socio-economic groups in communities benefit most from having good public spaces, especially if there are opportunities to socialize with other socio-economic groups in the community that they would not otherwise encounter, except in those public spaces.

"...while legislation is sometimes enacted with homeless people in mind, the homeless are frequently the explicit target; nevertheless the impact is disproportionately felt by homeless people because of their reliance on public space for conducting their day-to-day activities" (Doherty el al., 2008:292).

But, public space is never intended to be 'claimed' by anyone, or be a substitute for anyone's home. Unsheltered homeless people are forced to live their lives clandestinely in public spaces, because by law, they cannot live in public space, which is social space that is meant to be kept open and accessible to everyone. Thus, "public space regulation denies the essential rights of the homeless to freedom and autonomy" (Blomley, 2010, p. 332*).*

Research indicates that homeless people suffer more psychological distress than the general population. Kim Hopper, a medical anthropologist and researcher on homelessness in New York City believes that "residence on the street or in public spaces should be taken as *ipso facto* evidence of a mental disability" (Hopper, 2003, p. 121). Several factors commonly associated with being homeless include "adverse life effects, fewer economic resources, physical disability, self-perceived ill health, and substance abuse" (as cited in Schutt & Goldfinger, 2011, p. 149) any of which may increase psychological distress but does not necessarily indicate mental illness. Therefore, mental suffering is more likely a consequence of homelessness than a cause of homelessness, and mental suffering adds to the stigmatization of homelessness, which is often mistakenly presumed to indicate that homeless people are mentally ill. The longer a person remains homeless, the more socially isolated and excluded they become (Snow & Anderson, 1993). Prolonged social isolation and social exclusion increases the severity of mental suffering among the homeless.

Further along the continuum of mental suffering among the homeless, Burt & Cohen (1989) and Ritchey, La Gory, Fitzpatrick & Mullis (1990) reported that "serious psychological distress, including clinical depression, suicidal thinking, and suicide attempts are between two and five times more common among homeless adult individuals than among housed adults" (as cited in Schutt & Goldfinger, 2011, p. 149). Horowitz (2002) distinguished psychological distress from psychotic disorders such as hallucinations, hearing voices, paranoia and imagining bizarre thoughts which interferes with perception, thinking, and communication processes (as cited in Schutt & Goldfinger, 2011, p. 146).

Thus, psychotic disorders would likely indicate mental illness, while psychological distress indicates mental suffering. The conflation of psychological suffering with mental illness further stigmatizes homelessness. Snow & Anderson (1993) reported that mentally ill homeless people are most often avoided by other homeless people as well as by the general public.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (2007) reported that 30 percent of homeless people in Canada are mentally ill but there is considerable variation in the measurement strategies and procedures used to diagnose mental illness in homeless people, ranging from formal diagnosis, patterns of use of mental health services, self-reporting of symptoms, and various reports of observations of behaviours. For example, "When Hopper (1988) removed symptoms that are inevitably elevated as a result of the situation of being homeless (such as trouble sleeping) from a diagnostic checklist, he found that the estimate of mental illness among homeless individuals dropped by one third" (as cited in Schutt & Goldfinger, 2011, p. 322). Similarly, reports of mental illness among homeless individuals are higher than among homeless families. In order to reduce the skewed incidence of mental illness among homeless individuals Novac et al. (2006) suggests combining the lower incidence of mental illness among homeless families with the higher incidence of mental illness among homeless individuals (as cited in Roebuck, 2008, p. 21).

VPL participated in the Working Together Project [2004-2008], in four Canadian cities [Vancouver, Regina, Toronto and Halifax], which identified barriers that prevented socially excluded community members from using public libraries. The Working Together Project Toolkit (2008) reported that some socially excluded people felt that some librarians were too judgmental and authoritarian towards them.

Public libraries are often the only indoor public places in a community where homeless people can legitimately be indoors. Many homeless people like to keep warm in the library during the wintertime, and keep cool in the library during the summertime. Maintaining a very low profile in a public place may be an indication that a person is uncomfortable because they are experiencing social exclusion.

Despite American Library Association [ALA] Policy 61, "Library Services for the Poor", which has fifteen principles for making public libraries more inclusive, some libraries restrict the use of libraries by homeless people. When several emergency shelters closed in Washington, DC, the homeless had nowhere else to go except to the public library. In Washington, DC, homeless people are no longer welcome to spend the day at the public library (Williams, 2009). Apparently the library became so crowded with homeless people, that it was not possible for other people to use the library (Greenwood, 2008). Excluding people simply because they are homeless is discrimination.

Some librarians may recognize homeless people who frequent their libraries, but may only rarely talk to them or know very little about them. Many people who regularly use public libraries but do not have a library card may only be "familiar strangers" (Milgram, 1977, p. 51) to librarians and have "frozen relationships" because they avoid interacting socially with anyone at the library for fear that they may get evicted by the librarian or the library security staff.

In Vancouver, there are never enough emergency shelter beds available for all the homeless people, so unsheltered homeless people mostly occupy spaces in abandoned buildings, vacant land, under bridges, along railway tracks, in alleys and other less visible places in and around the city. These spaces are also known as marginal spaces (Snow & Anderson, 1993; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). Some homeless people occasionally also use more visible public spaces such as parks, or indoor public spaces such as public libraries, airports, bus or train stations, because they are all safe, accessible public places to have a respite from the stress and chaos of living on the street (Hopper, 2003; Valado, 2006).

2.3 The Socio-Spatiality of Homelessness

The next part of this section is about the socio-spatiality of homelessness, which is a geographic term that describes what homeless people do within the geographical area that they occupy. Thus, the socio-spatiality of homelessness refers to "the ways in which urban physical space and homelessness intersect" (Snow & Mulcahy 2001, p. 164). Snow and Mulcahy (2001) examined newspaper accounts of

how homeless people negotiated urban spaces in Tucson, Arizona between 1982 and 1997. They concluded that the "spatial dynamics of homelessness are much more multi-faceted and complicated than what may appear to be the case at first glance" (p. 164) and that not all space is viewed the same, depending on who else is involved and what is at stake.

Experiencing extreme poverty without having any home-base is very distressing, and homeless people often describe living on the street and/or living in shelters as "living on the edge" (Dordick, 1994; Liebow, 1993; Snow & Anderson, 1993).

Recent analysis of geographical literature on public space by Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) found only 26 articles (12 percent) of 218 articles published in English between 1945 and 1998 specifically about the living space for homeless people, with no mention of public libraries, which suggests that very little scholarly literature probably exists on the socio-spatiality of homelessness and particularly on the socio-spatiality of homelessness in public libraries.

Sense of place is the emotional attachment people have to a place (Cresswell, 2004). Having a sense of place (Cresswell, 1996) and a socio-spatial identity (Soja, 1980) is essential for everyday social functioning in contemporary urban society, just as belonging to society is essential for survival. Buttimer and Seamon (1980), both humanistic geographers, argue that throughout history, humans have created meaningful attachments to places in the world. Similarly, the existential philosophy of Heidegger shows that the experience of dwelling in specific places "roots people to a place" (Cresswell, 2004). Thus, the foundation of an individual's socio-spatial identity is determined primarily by where they live or where their home-base is (Fried, 1963). The most significant sense of place attachment for anyone is to their home. Home should be the place where an individual feels that they belong and where they can just be themselves, but not everyone has a home-base any more (Cresswell, 2004, p. 25). Sometimes homeless people refer to the place where they sleep rough as their "home", but such places cannot be considered a legitimate home-base by other people's standards (Cresswell, 2004, p. 117). Perhaps to compensate

for not having a home, a homeless person will refer to a sleeping place as a “home”, as a substitute for their home-base. Relph (1976) argues against Heidegger that place need not have any fixed location at all (Cresswell, 2004).

2.4 Architecture for Homeless People

In 2007, the Portland, Oregon chapter of The American Institute of Architects asked unsheltered homeless people to photograph places where they slept before they made the transition into a shelter. The photographs were compiled into a book called *Where I Slept: Being Homeless in Portland* (2009). An architect who commented about the photographs said,

> There's a starkness - a sense of dehumanization and otherworldliness - captured by these photographs that expresses the alienation that the chronically homeless feel on a daily basis. The most basic thing we can do to help the homeless is to reach out to them and acknowledge them as fellow human beings. The worst thing we can do is pretend that they don't exist. (Binder, 2009, n.p.)

Designing for the homeless: Architecture that works (2004) is the only whole book available about the architectural design of homeless shelters. The author, Sam Davis, who teaches architecture at Berkeley, believes that “architecture can play an important role in creating facilities that sustain the dignity of people who have fallen on hard times” (p. 13); “If the design of a facility can help the homeless feel that they have found a safe haven, they are more likely to come in and ask for help” (p. 20).

Instead of asking homeless people what they most need or want, too often homeless people are not asked anything at all when most services are being created specifically for them. An exception to this happened in 1987, when the notable architect Christopher Alexander (1977, 1991, 2005) designed a 100 bed shelter for homeless men at the Julian Street Inn in San Jose, California.

Before he began to design the new shelter, Alexander consulted with a local group of homeless men to find out what mattered most to them. The informal qualitative inquiry personally conducted by Alexander involved many hours of direct contact with homeless men, many of whom ended up designing and building the shelter together with Alexander (Groat & Wang, 2002). As Alexander began working on this project, he imagined himself as a man experiencing homelessness:

> Thinking of myself as homeless, I knew one thing above everything else: that a person who is homeless is an ordinary person, no different from anyone else. But faced for a time with circumstances, where because of lack of money or food or work, they have lost their apartment and being in that state, I, like them would want to come to a place that gave me dignity. In this frame of mind, we, they and I, together designed this building. (Alexander, 2005, p. 212)

Compassionate, empathetic architects sincerely believe that persons who experience homelessness are just as deserving of good public architectural designs as everyone else. Several architects have since taken an inclusive, humanistic approach to design for the homeless: "Design for the homeless and low-income people can be just as high quality as design for anyone else" (Bozikovic, 2008, p. 120). Architects who specialize in architectural designs for persons experiencing homelessness believe that public architecture designed specifically for the homeless "must sustain their hope and their dignity" (Davis, 2004, p. 13). Jill Pable does interior designs of homeless shelters from the point of view of the person experiencing homelessness (Pable, 2006a).

Both the architectural and interior design communities are becoming increasingly specialized in creating physical spaces for persons experiencing homelessness in other settings such as shelters (Alexander, 2005; Architecture for Humanity, 2006; Davis, 2004; Law, 2007; Mays, 2008; Pable 2006a, 2006b; Topham, 2004), and more recently in public libraries (Fortmeyer, 2008; Schneider, 2010). The new Santa Monica Library in California was designed specifically "with the needs of a diverse community –that includes a significant homeless population—in mind" (Fortmeyer, 2008, p. 86).

The Central Library in Madison, Wisconsin is being rebuilt and the architect Jeffrey Scherer, who specializes in libraries, is working out the best ways to "better serve all patrons, including the homeless." (Schneider, 2010). "One thing we have learned in designing public gathering places is to design public spaces for all people. The more people that use it, the more any kind of negative behaviour is minimized. We want to make it [the library] a destination with more active programming to bring people in—that's really where libraries are headed." (Schneider, 2010).

Discouraging homeless people from gathering outside public library buildings, locating washrooms within staff sightlines, and adequate suitable seating are some recent issues that have come up for librarians and architects when designing library spaces for homeless people (Keen, 2010).

2.5 Public Library Architecture

Since the 1850s, public libraries have provided opportunities for people of all ages to educate themselves through reading (Breisch, 1997). "Ostensibly, the public library was for all in society – although it has been argued that at its inception, purpose was very much oriented towards a working class patronage." (Black, 1996, p. 23). "Support for libraries existed because people felt that they contributed to the creation of a literate, prosperous, devout, moral and knowledgeable society." (Bruce, 1994, p. xi).

Between 1876 and 1923, the generous philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie helped to build 2,509 libraries in English-speaking countries (Bobinski, 1969, Van Slyck, 1995). In Canada, Carnegie library funding was selectively offered only to English-speaking communities. Unionized Canadian labour organizations considered Carnegie's philanthropy tainted after the confrontations that resulted in the deaths of striking workers in Pennsylvania in 1892, which is why many Canadian communities with union activities refused Carnegie's offer of a gift of library funding (Bruce, 1994). In Canada, 125 libraries were built with Carnegie funds (Beckman, Langmead & Black, 1984). In 1903, the Carnegie Library in Vancouver opened at one of the busiest street corners of the city: Hastings and Main.

Figure 2.1 City Hall and Carnegie Library, Vancouver, BC (Topley, n.d).

In 1929, the library acquired the vacant City Hall building next door to the Carnegie Library, and converted most of the space into a newspaper reading room, mostly for unemployed and elderly men. "As many as eight hundred individuals per day would read newspapers, play chess or checkers, or just doze in the Reading Room." (Curry, 2007, p. 66). On 18 May, 1935, the Carnegie Library in Vancouver was illegally occupied by 250 "striking" relief workers who were politically protesting the federal unemployment relief policy and became the rallying point for the On-to-Ottawa trek (Curry, 2007, p. 67, Roddan, 2005).

Figure 2.2 Men walking from the Ukrainian Hall to occupy the Carnegie Library, Vancouver, 18 May 1935. (This is Strathcona, 1935).

Most Carnegie libraries intended for small towns were economical, one –story rectangular buildings with book storage around the perimeter of a single, large room. Libraries with basements typically had a community meeting room and storage space downstairs. In 1911, James Bertram, Carnegie's secretary, created a brochure with six recommended economical Carnegie library building plans. Everything about a Carnegie Library design was for efficiency (Wheeler & Githens, 1941, p. 219; see also: Appendix A). Large city library designs were multi-story and much more elaborate.

Most traditional public library designs embraced the general principles of panopticonism, where a few librarians had the responsibility of managing a large number of people.

> "Users of libraries have always been conscious of a rule-bound surveillance, both administrative and physical. They have come to accept this surveillance as an inevitable aspect of using a library and have internalized as familiar and unsurprising the intrusive 'gaze' of the librarian." (Black, 2005: 416).

In the 1960s, as television was becoming popular in Canada, and in time for the Centennial celebration of the confederation of Canada, many Canadian public libraries were modernized and enlarged.

After 55 years of library service at the Carnegie Library in Vancouver, a new Main Branch was built on the corner of Robson and Burrard Streets, to better serve the Vancouver business community (Windsor-Liscombe, 1997, pp. 96-97). In 1958, the new Main Branch was designed with better facilities to compete with radio, television and film, which were the latest technologies in the 1950s, and operated until 1995, when the Internet seriously challenged the purpose of libraries. Libraries constantly strive to keep up with technology and today provide free access to the Internet, especially for people who do not have their own computers.

Library Square is the third central library building in the city of Vancouver. The unusual elliptical building shape symbolizes the classical monumentality of a Roman Coliseum, and has been in constant use since it opened in 1995. According to the architect, Moshe Safdie, it is the best public space he has designed. Safdie designs new libraries as "urban rooms" which "reflects and engages the city's imagination and aspirations" (Cook, 2010).

Figure 2.3 [Left] Exterior and [Right] Atrium of Central Library, Vancouver BC
[both photographs taken by researcher].

Each new library design is unique, so there is no single identifiable architectural style now for new public library buildings, as there was for Carnegie Libraries. Contemporary public libraries usually have lots of glass and natural light and open floor plans, eliminating alcoves, load bearing walls, structural pillars, and gloomy lighting found in the older libraries (Canty, 1992; Mattern, 2007). Libraries are necessary for ordinary, individual citizens to be able to access information that they need in order to participate in a democratic society (Molz & Dain, 1999). Thus, public libraries "strive to inform, enrich and empower every individual in its community by creating and promoting free and easy access to a vast array of ideas and information and by supporting lifelong learning in a welcoming environment" (Mission Statement of the Los Angeles Public Library, in Molz & Dain, 1999:195).

2.6 Public Libraries as Public Space

Public libraries provide library materials and library services for the public, which is paid for by public funds, and accessible to the public, in a public place. Public libraries are considered a public space, but increasingly, people are becoming aware that many "public spaces are no longer, if they ever were, democratic places where a diversity of peoples and activities are embraced and tolerated. Instead, they have become centers of commerce and consumption, as well as places of political surveillance" (Smith & Low, 2006, p. vii). Mitchell (1995) previously showed that in democratic societies, the privatization of public spaces, such as happened at the People`s Park at the University of California at Berkeley in 1991, conflicts with the Habermasian ideal of the democratic public sphere.

The German philosopher Jurgen Habermas showed that in a liberal democracy, the *bourgeois public sphere* is independent from the public authority sphere, which is the official voice of the state government and religion, and separate from the private sphere (Habermas, 1974). Thus, civic spaces and democratic institutions such as public libraries are part of the public sphere, which are essential parts of the foundation of democratic societies.

Citizens of democratic societies need civic spaces like public libraries, art galleries, museums and parks in their communities in order to actively participate in civil society (Madanipour, 2004, p. 215). "The public library is neutral space, as democratic, non-sectarian territory. Urban cultures need free space as much as they need working space and selling space: the life of towns needs convivial public spaces" (Greenhalgh & Worple, 1995, p. 12)

Like Habermas's (1974) *bourgeois* public sphere, which brings private people together in public spaces, public libraries are a public institution where private citizens are safe and free to think about and research their own ideas. Probably more than any other public institution,

> libraries reflect the ideals of civil society and ensure that all citizens have access to the basic resources that allow them to enter a public sphere, to belong to their society. They combine the conceptual principle of the right to knowledge with the physical rights of access to a building—a public institution. They are inclusive and non-stigmatizing, with a low 'entry threshold', i.e., you don't have to speak to anyone. The sense of openness and accessibility goes to the heart of the idea of a public sphere (Alstad & Curry, 2003, para. 38).

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) investigated the two largest central branches of Canadian public libraries in Toronto and Vancouver, to determine how successful they are at being public places. The single most pressing factor working against the continuation of the central library as public space in

> Toronto, Vancouver, and presumably elsewhere, is the ongoing ideological shift with libraries away from their neutral status as public institutions toward that of an active agent for private interests in the market economy...the threat to its place in the society of the twenty-first century is not technological but ideological: the encroachment of private interests in the form of commodification and branding and the accompanying costs to libraries and their users. Such public/private ventures...tarnish the sacred tenet upon which public libraries have been founded and have operated for most of the previous two centuries. (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002, p. 360)

Public libraries also provide free access to the Internet. Leckie and Hopkins (2002) found that information technology has made public libraries more important places. Their findings concur with the earlier findings of Molz and Dain (1999) that the social significance of public libraries has not diminished, despite the convenience of the Internet.

We see new attention being given to the meaning of place, to social interaction, not in anonymous commercial suburban malls, or in chatting at home with computer buddies in the new communities of cyberspace, but in neighbourhood institutions in real space. People are looking for social moorings. Libraries—stable, welcoming, venerable, but also modern—make good candidates. They are associated with education and culture and understood as communal property but not too associated with government. (Molz & Dain, 1999, p. 205).

As Leckie (2004) states: "there is currently no other public space quite like the public library, where citizens can engage in quiet reflection and study, able to pursue their own intellectual projects and personal growth free of the commercial pressures and ideological positions that permeate almost every other aspect of life" (p. 236).

Most (2009) researched the library as place in three new small rural public libraries in Gadsden, County Florida. Historically, this African-American slave community had tobacco and cotton plantations, but today they are no longer in operation. The current Gadsden public library system was established in 1979 and serves a small rural community of about 50,000 people with high (40%) adult illiteracy. Most (2009) replicated the methods of Leckie and Hopkins (2002), Given and Leckie (2003), Curry, Dunbar, George and Marshall (2004) and May (2007). She collected 109 survey questionnaires, conducted 41 interviews with patrons, 10 interviews with staff and observed 286 individuals in the three libraries. Most (2009) concluded that these three rural libraries were used primarily as information places rather than for more social purposes and that they generate social capital for their users.

May (2007) researched three urban and three small town public libraries in Nova Scotia. She replicated the methods of Leckie and Hopkins (2002), Given and Leckie (2003), and Curry, Dunbar, George and Marshall, (2004). May (2007) collected 271 survey questionnaires, interviewed 17 library users and 20 library staff as well as recorded unobtrusive observations called "seating sweeps" at each study library. The adult study population was highly diversified. May (2007) found no significant differences between the uses of the urban and small town libraries; computer use was the most commonly observed activity at all libraries.

May's (2007) and Most's (2009) replication studies both concur with Leckie and Hopkins (2002) findings that the main purpose of libraries is to provide access to information and support education, as well as provide communities with access to technology and to the Internet.

Thus, public libraries provide the public with democratic public space, and current research on public libraries as public space confirms that urban or rural, in large or small libraries, people use libraries for the same reasons. Public libraries provide public access to information, and a public place to access technology and the Internet.

2.7 Homeless People and Public Libraries

Homeless people have limited access to very few indoor places. Homelessness is a very complex social issue which involves marginalization and stigmatization due to extreme poverty and may or may not include mental illness, substance abuse and alcoholism, which can sometimes manifest into interpersonal behaviour disturbances (Hwang, 2008). As a precaution, many public libraries create specific behavioural rules to prevent problems associated with street homelessness from occurring inside public libraries (McGrorty, 2004; McKechnie, Dixon, Fear, & Pollak, 2006; Ward, 2007). Library policies should have enforceable behavioural rules, but should not selectively exclude particular groups; "Exclusion of particular groups is rooted in the assumption that they will behave in an illegal, threatening or otherwise inappropriate manner, thereby driving away customers and limiting

opportunities for business" (Alstad & Curry, 2003, para. 16). Alstad and Curry (2003) caution that selectively denying access to public spaces particularly contributes to increasing marginalization of the poor and the homeless.

"What they didn't teach us in library school" is Ward's (2007a) personal account of dealing with homeless people in public libraries during 29 years working as a librarian at Salt Lake City Public Library. Ward (2007a) argues that homelessness is a social issue, not just a library issue, and that librarians need to proactively work together with other community services in order that the homeless are treated respectfully and non-judgmentally as individuals in society.

"The mere identity of a person as homeless...should never disqualify that person from using the space. On the other hand, if that person's conduct...becomes such a nuisance to others that they are fully prevented from enjo ying that space, then that person may legitimately be asked to...leave that space." (Kayden, 2000, p. 147).

Due to the marginalization and stigmatization of homelessness, some homeless people may feel challenged about using library services (Hersberger, 2005b). Not all homeless people may have been library users before they became homeless. Having to ask for help at the library may be very intimidating for someone who is unfamiliar interacting with librarians, while at the same time if they are trying to avoid the library staff in order to maintain their welcome in the library.

Homeless people may simply need to feel that they can really belong somewhere. Libraries are a public institution with a significant sense of stability and permanence in a community. Belonging to a library might be very beneficial to a homeless person if it can help to fulfill their basic human need to belong and be a part of their community (DeFaveri, 2005). Silver (1996) and Murphy (1999) suggested that public libraries should work with local social agencies that provide services to the homeless, to help the homeless find alternative places in addition to the library in which to spend their days. Some communities created library outreach programs and depository libraries in day shelters; but Hersberger

(2005b) cautions that outreach library services are not a substitute for the full range of library services offered in a public library.

2.8 Current Research on Homeless People's Use of Public Libraries

Thorough searches of LIS literature revealed that very few homeless men have been asked about their use of public libraries other than by Harvey (2002), who interviewed five homeless men about their use of public libraries while they stayed at a shelter and participated in a drug rehabilitation program in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and by Hodgetts et al. (2008) who interviewed four homeless men about their use of public libraries in response to negative media reports questioning about the appropriateness of homeless people using public libraries in New Zealand. Harvey (2002) showed that the five homeless men she interviewed for her master's thesis used public libraries to look for information in order to gain knowledge on many topics, and that they also enjoyed public libraries as a place of tranquility and shelter. Some of the homeless men that Harvey interviewed said they used public libraries daily, while others used public libraries several times a week. Some men reported that they only stayed about half an hour per visit while others stayed for a couple of hours or longer per visit, depending on how busy they were with other activities. Homeless men reported they used public libraries for reading, checking their email, job searching and resume writing. They did not cause any problems while they used the public library; they behaved the same as ordinary public library users. "While many librarians may perceive homeless library users to be problem patrons, homeless library users do not perceive themselves that way. They see themselves as individuals who enter the library to exploit all it has to offer such as information, tranquility and shelter." (Harvey, 2002, p. 53).

Hodgetts et al. (2008) found that homeless men in New Zealand considered public libraries an important place. Homeless men said they particularly liked to be somewhere where they could simply be doing the same things as other people were doing at the public library. Just as Harvey (2002) found, Hodgetts et al. (2008) also found that homeless men tried to be unobtrusive and when they socially

interacted with other public library users, they were not disruptive. Other public library users interviewed by Hodgetts et al. (2008), said that homeless people were just as deserving as anyone else to use public libraries.

There are very few other indoor public spaces where homeless people are as welcome as they are in public libraries. In her doctoral research on homeless people's perceptions and use of urban space in Tucson, Arizona, Valado (2006) found that

> Numerous [homeless] research participants cited public libraries as one of the places they most value, because libraries are one of the few accessible indoor locations that offer various practical amenities. Getting out of the elements was appealing to homeless people, of course, but the availability of reading materials and computers was also important (pp. 216-217).

Thus, current research on homeless men's use of public libraries shows that some homeless men want to do the same ordinary things at public libraries as other library users.

2.9 ALA Policy 61: Library Services for the Poor

Public libraries continue to acknowledge the necessity and importance of providing library services to poor people as part of the mandate of public libraries, although currently very little evidence exists on the implementation and evaluation of library services for the poorest people, especially the homeless (Wray, 2009). The ALA is currently exploring new approaches for welcoming persons experiencing homelessness to public libraries (Dokoupil, 2008).

The most comprehensive source of information on library services for poor people is the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA). In 1990, Sanford Berman, a social activist librarian and others created Policy 61; *Library Services for the Poor* for ALA, in order to help make public libraries more inclusive, especially for poor children, adults and families [See: Appendix B].

Policy 61 “outlines fifteen principles for creating more inclusive libraries” (Gehner, 2010). The purpose of Policy 61 is intended to help to public libraries eliminate social barriers that poor people encounter when they try to use public libraries. For example, public libraries provide valuable free access to the Internet, which helps to bridge the ‘digital divide’, especially for poor people who do not have their own computers. But, in some libraries, especially since 9/11, it is necessary to provide identification to use the Internet (Akram, 2006). Sometimes, extremely poor people do not have any identification which prevents them from being able to use the Internet, often in the only place that has free Internet access. This is an example of the kind of barrier that poor people face in trying to use libraries.

In 1996, the Hunger, Homelessness & Poverty Task Force was formed by ALA to implement Policy 61. Occasionally, this task force conducts online surveys with the membership of ALA.

In 2007, the membership of ALA was surveyed online about library services to the poor, but the response rate was so low (648 out of 65,000 = 0.99 percent) that the survey was invalid (Gieskes, 2009). More than seventy percent of responding libraries did not know of any libraries that provided services to the poor (Gieskes, 2009). It is not known if the wording of some of the survey questions were not clear, or why ALA members were not interested in responding.

The results of a national (US) survey of librarians showed empathy towards homeless children in public libraries (Dowd, 1996). Sixty-five percent of public libraries surveyed reported offering programs for homeless children, mostly as story times in shelters and donating books to shelters. Ninety-six percent of librarians surveyed agreed that public libraries should liaise with local agencies to help homeless families, and sixty-one percent of librarians surveyed felt that homeless children should receive the same services and have the same access to library materials and programs as other children.

Results of surveys of librarians show that there is inconsistency about library services to homeless people. Results of the surveys above highlight deficiencies which socially exclude the homeless from the

rest of society, but there is another approach, called capacity building, which focuses on strengthening the skills and abilities of people to overcome social exclusion. Capacity building is often used internationally in community development projects. Capacity building is the approach utilized by the Working Together Project to promote social inclusion in public libraries in Canada.

2.10 Working Together Project

In Canada, a community-led library service planning model was developed by the Working Together Project (2008) as an attempt to engage socially excluded community members with library services (DeFaveri, 2005; Williment, 2009). The Working Together Project (2008) is based on the Needs Based Library Service model developed to promote social inclusion of non-users in libraries in Britain (Pateman, 2003). Thus, in theory, changing from library services based-in-communities to community-based library services reaches farther outside the library to the socially excluded members of society, and hopefully, helps build a more cohesive and democratic society.

The Working Together Project (2008) developed an online toolkit to promote social inclusion in public libraries. Williment (2009) describes the community-led service planning model used in the Working Together Project (2008), but does not give any specific examples of library programs with homeless men. As with all community development initiatives, it takes time to build relationships, and it may simply be too soon to find any assessments and evaluations of the Working Together Project (2008) in the LIS literature. It is unknown if the lack of cohesiveness among homeless people may make it more challenging and less likely for homeless people to adopt the Working Together model for their library needs.

Considering the extreme information poverty of some "small worlds", (Chatman, 1999), and also acknowledging that information poverty is not necessarily tied to economic poverty (Chatman, 1996), it may be the case that homeless people might be more inclined to use libraries only as individuals, rather than together as an identifiable social group of homeless people. Thus, due to the stigmatization of

homelessness, homeless people may not wish to implement any community-led group initiatives for library services. Homeless people are outsiders, and there is a distinct lack of trust associated with receiving information from outsiders, which prevents homeless people from associating together. Chatman (1996) showed that "outsiders are usually not sought for information or advice" (p. 205). Chatman (1996) also found that people were "desperately in need of information but pretended they were successfully coping without it" because "they wanted to give an appearance of normalcy" (p. 201). In light of Chatman's research findings, ALA Policy 61 may be more helpful for libraries to proactively eliminate some of the barriers that homeless people face when trying to use public libraries, so that homeless people will be encouraged to build social relationships in the community in order to become regular library users (DeFaveri, 2005). Thus, in order to make libraries more inclusive, a community development approach should focus on assets rather than deficiencies, in order to encourage marginalized people to express their needs, and then build relationships together with the library and the community (Gehner, 2010).

2.11 Library Cards

Another barrier that homeless people face in using libraries is their eligibility for a library card. Most public libraries will not issue library cards to anyone without proof of a permanent address, which perpetuates another barrier that ALA Policy 61 hopes to eliminate. Since 2006, due to technology upgrades at New York Public Library, [NYPL], a library card is mandatory for using the Internet at the library (Akram, 2006). According to DeFaveri (2005):

> Without a library card many poor and socially excluded people feel as though they do not "belong" to the library and will not even enter the building to use onsite resources. Vancouver's Carnegie Branch issues a special card that gives community members access to branch material but does not give access to all the system's collections and resources. While this is a valuable intermediary step it

is still a discriminatory one. Access to all the library's resources should not be withheld because a person or family is too poor to afford housing.

Many public libraries justify not issuing library cards to people without proof of a local address, simply on the basis that they are not taxpayers (Landgraf, 1991). Other library concerns about issuing library cards to homeless people are that library books may go missing at a shelter and might not be returned to the lending library.

San Francisco Public Library [SFPL] is an exception; Landgraf (1991) reported on the usage of 195 library cards that were issued by SFPL to homeless people in 1990. The delinquency rate, recorded as overdue items initially was higher for homeless people (6.4 percent) compared to housed people (1.3 percent), but as circulation increased, the delinquency rate dropped from 16.9 percent when the cards were first issued, to 6.4 percent after a year. Despite the delinquency rate difference, this program was still considered successful and was continued by SFPL.

Some public libraries offer fine-free library cards to homeless children (Dowd, 1996, abstract). In 2006, Worcester Public Library in Massachusetts was found to have illegally restricted the borrowing privileges of shelter residents, in particular a homeless mother who could not borrow more than two books, which was insufficient for her to home-school her child (Valencia, 2006).

The next section will show that in spite of the ways that public libraries have become more social places, there are still many people who may be hesitant to use the public space in libraries to pursue their interests, despite the fact that libraries are meant to be welcoming to everyone.

2.12 Social Exclusion and Social Inclusion in Public Libraries

Social exclusion occurs when an individual would like to but is prevented from participating in the normal activities of the society by factors beyond that individual's control (Pierson, 2010). In other words, social exclusion is the degenerative process of becoming disassociated from society, which is what happens when people are shunned by society. Weak social networks and poverty usually indicate

social exclusion which is harmful to individuals in society (Breton, 2004, p. 12). Social exclusion can also happen from a combination of social problems: "unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health, and family breakdown" (Cabinet Office [UK], 2000).

This phenomenon extends beyond North America: the European Parliament [EU] declared 2010 the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. They hope to end street homelessness by 2015 and develop strategies for social inclusion of the homeless into EU countries by 2020.

Social inclusion is beginning to be addressed in many public libraries. ALA Policy 61 "outlines fifteen principles for creating more inclusive libraries" (Gehner, 2010, p. 40). Social inclusion incorporates various strategies to overcome the marginalization process of social exclusion which was caused by the stigmatization and alienation of marginalized people from society.

A recent trend in the professional public library literature is the appearance of discussions of promoting social inclusion by encouraging marginalized and socially excluded people to use public libraries, as places where their individual differences and shortcomings will be respectfully tolerated and accepted (DeFaveri, 2005; Gehner, 2010; Harris, 2008; Harris & Simon, 2009; Hodgetts et al., 2008; Pateman, 2003; Walker, 2010). Previously, public library literature focused more on the homeless as the library's "problem" patrons (Salter & Salter, 1988; Shuman, 2002; Simmons, 1985, Wong, 2009). According to Wong (2009), a law librarian, the current "problem" of homeless people using libraries is due to the outcome of the Kreimer v. Morristown court case in 1991. Wong contends "libraries somehow feel powerless to address the issue of homelessness in libraries."(p. 398). Collins, Howard and Miraflor (2009) report how a library in San Jose California developed computer skills classes customized for the needs of the homeless and literacy classes for both adults and children. Librarians worked with local agencies to ensure that library program times did not conflict with other services such as shelter intake times and soup kitchen meal times. The library also arranged for lawyers and social workers to

offer *pro bono* services in the library for homeless people. Both articles agree that it is important to help the homeless to help themselves.

Harris (2008) researched social inclusion of homeless people at Welsh libraries for her Master's Thesis. Harris (2008) surveyed library staff, volunteers and managers in Welsh public libraries, but not any homeless people. She analyzed fifty-two questionnaires, conducted four interviews and analyzed library card policies on library websites to determine if homeless people in Wales required identification to get a public library card. Nineteen out of twenty-two libraries in the study required proof of identification to get a library card. Seventy-one percent of the respondents felt that homeless people should not be allowed to borrow books without providing the library with proof of their address. Harris (2008) concluded that in spite of the promotion of social inclusion in libraries in the past decade there has been little change in the social inclusion of homeless people in public libraries in Wales. The following sections focus on two sociological concepts, social capital and "third places", both of which are closely related to the topic of social inclusion.

2.13 Social Capital and Public Libraries

Social capital is a complex social issue that is emerging as a research topic in LIS. There are numerous perspectives on the theory of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Jacobs, 1961; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Woolcock, 1998). However, a general working definition of social capital for the purposes of this research is: social capital is a socio-economic term for a form of intangible capital created by social benefits including trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation through social networks (Saguaro, 2009).

Metaphorically, social capital is often described as the glue that holds the social fabric of contemporary society together. In other words, the strength of the social infrastructure of Canadian society is dependent upon maintaining adequate supplies of social capital, as well as economic capital, financial capital and human capital (Breton, 2004). Social capital is a value that "relies on four principal

factors: networks, relationships, norms and trust" (Whitley & McKenzie, 2005, p. 76). One of the challenges is that there is, as yet, no generally agreed-upon approach or instrument to measure social capital (Whitley & Prince, 2005). Research in this area is further complicated by the fact that "there has been little theoretical discussion of the appropriate contextual unit in which to conceptualize social capital" (Whitley & McKenzie, 2005, p. 82). Communities with high levels of social capital have more of a sense of trust and belongingness within the community, as well as higher levels of reciprocity, social networking, and volunteering within the community. Thus, Whitley and McKenzie (2005) suggest four constructs that can be used as indicators of social capital: "collective efficacy, psychological sense of community, neighbourhood cohesion, and community competence" (Whitley & McKenzie, 2005, p. 81).

Although public libraries were initially overlooked as sources of social capital, even by significant researchers of social capital such as Robert Putnam (1995, 2000), this has been remedied in recent years. Kranich (2001) recalls a telling encounter:

> As the featured speaker at my President's Program at the 2001 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference, Putnam captivated a full house of librarians who share his concerns about the erosion of community social capital. However, Putnam was taken aback when he discovered the extraordinary level of social capital resident in the room. His picture of America left out a key community institution, one whose history paralleled the findings of his research. The library is an institution rich in social capital and poised to usher in a new era of civic awareness and community revival. Like Putnam, however, public officials and citizens often overlook this key community asset. (Kranich, 2001, pp. 40-41)

Many studies have been done on the social impact of libraries (Kerslake & Kinnel, 1998; Linley & Usherwood, 1998), but very little empirical research has demonstrated that public libraries can actually create social capital (Varheim, 2007). Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen (2003) surveyed libraries in Chicago and found anecdotal evidence that libraries improve the quality of people's lives. People seem to take

for granted that public libraries are safe public places with high social trust, because it is assumed that social connections voluntarily formed and maintained through both the real and virtual experiences of public libraries create social capital, which accumulates in social value within local communities (Audunson, Varheim, Aabo, & Holm, 2007; Varheim, 2007). Research in Scandinavian countries indicates that countries that set high values on democracy, economic equality, and universal welfare programs and have low levels of corruption and patronage have more social capital than other European countries (Fine, 2010, p. 25).

Cox, Swinbourne, Pip, and Laing, (2000) conducted a social capital audit of ten public libraries in Australia using a standardized instrument. "The most important finding in the study is that most libraries are felt to be safe places where high levels of trust operate"(p. 8). Subsequently, Hillenbrand (2005a) conducted a social capital audit of one community library in Australia with similar results. Hillenbrand (2005a) found that people liked using the library because it was a friendly, safe and relaxing environment. Although delivery of traditional library services was identified as the main purpose of the library, Hillenbrand hypothesized that with more community partnerships, the library would gain strength within the local community, which would create more social capital.

Recently, Johnson (2010) examined the public library as a generator of social capital, and found "high levels of distrust in people in general" (p. 154), but that "levels of trust had little to do with library use" (p. 153). Johnson (2010) conducted her research in three libraries in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and found that "people with low levels of social capital did not use the library to compensate for this deficit" (p. 154). Johnson (2010) found that people who use libraries benefit from the social interactions that take place in libraries, just as Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen (2003) suggested that libraries may be an important source of social cohesion and trust in a community. Johnson (2010) also reported that "libraries are often the first point of contact for new immigrants where questions can be answered about social services, schools and ESL classes, this providing an interim stock of social capital as they

make contacts and adjust to their new neighbourhoods."(p. 150). Johnson (2010) concluded that even though it was "not possible to show a causal relationship between library use and social capital, the study does provide evidence that a relationship does exist." (p. 154). In hindsight, Johnson (2010) realized that a qualitative approach would probably have obtained better responses from the respondents, especially about their feelings of trust in the community, rather than the questionnaire survey of close-ended questions which was used for her quantitative study.

In another recent study of social capital conducted in Britain by Whitley and McKenzie (2005) social capital was found in the community centre, library and local shops within the same community. This ethnographic study was done by psychiatrists in a London UK neighbourhood who were studying social capital and mental illness to see if they were correlated. Residents chose the local community centre and the library as being the two most important places with social capital in the community, while others said that small shops, pubs, cafes and churches also had social capital (Whitley & Prince, 2005: 246). These results are important because they were not initially focused on libraries and thus, can be considered more objective than studies focusing on social capital in libraries.

Varheim (2007) gives three examples of how public libraries can create social capital. Libraries can work in partnership with local community organizations to create community activities. Libraries can become local meeting places and libraries can serve everyone in the community. These examples have the potential to create social capital in libraries because the social interactions would be an opportunity for trust to build through participation which might lead to more reciprocal social networking, perhaps among people that would not normally socially interact elsewhere in the community.

Not all social scientists who research social capital are convinced that social capital is what it claims to be. Fine (2010), the leading critic on social capital, contends that social capital is totally chaotic in definition, method and theory, and because it is non-calculable, it is uncritically interpreted any which way. Thus, Fine (2010) is very sceptical of social capital because it seems to thrive on chaos and much

unverifiable anecdotal and pseudo-scientific evidence. Portes (1998) contends that much of the research literature on social capital is biased. "Social capital has evolved into something of a cure-all for the maladies affecting society" (Portes, 1998, p. 2). He suggests that negative uses of social capital, including exclusion of outsiders (immigrants) and as a means of social control (gangs, drug dealers and other criminal pursuits) are some examples of public 'bad' that are unmentioned in the social capital literature.

Recently, Van Deth (2010) edited a special issue of American Behavioral Scientist on the "dark side" of social capital. Social groups that promote social exclusion and social networks that promote intolerance rather than democracy are examples of negative social capital, although very little of this relates specifically to libraries. Intolerance rather than democracy are an example of negative social capital. Biker gangs such as the Hell's Angels are an example of "bad" or negative social capital. Some social capital research has been conducted on the poor (Fitzpatrick, Irwin, LaGory, & Ritchey, 2007), although very little of this relates specifically to libraries.

Recently, there is growing evidence that, especially for some disadvantaged populations, social capital does not apply equally to everyone, as Putnam (2000) had earlier assumed. Lin (2001) contends that an individual's supply of social capital is dependent upon the scope and breadth of their social networks. "Bonding" social capital helps people get by with reciprocal social networks between similar people such as friends and family, while "bridging" social capital helps people get ahead with social networks between dissimilar people that are strangers and who have little in common to share (Putnam, 2000). Ethnic diversity has also been shown to affect social capital, especially when greater ethnic diversity is associated with lower social trust, which is consistent with conflict theory (Putnam, 2007, p. 147).

Wong (2007) found that social capital was not beneficial for poor Chinese immigrants in Hong Kong who came from mainland China to start a new and better life for themselves in Hong Kong. Wong's

(2007) research found the opposite of Cleaver's (2005) assumption that social capital must be good for poor people. "Maintaining social networks can place a heavy burden on poor people. Their fragile livelihoods, based on inequitable social relationships can also lead to further marginalization." (Wong, 2007, p. 35)

Mitchell and LaGory (2002) showed that "bonding" social capital actually increased mental distress among poor people. Poor people felt obliged to reciprocate with "bonding" social capital, but had no means to reciprocate, which was very stressful and actually defeated the purpose of benefitting from any "bonded" social capital exchanges. For example, the resources of "bonding" social capital may deplete quickly and then the obligation to reciprocate is much more difficult than with "bridging" social capital, which makes access to resources that are not normally available. Chatman (1996) studied information seeking behaviour of poor women and developed a theory of information poverty, in which she showed that economic poverty was not necessarily linked to information poverty. Chatman (1996) described people who live "life in the round" as being information impoverished, as they do not actively seek new information outside their own "small world" of insiders. Chatman (1996) found that information usually circulated freely among insiders, but that deception and secrecy were used strategically by insiders when they were competing with other insiders for scarce local resources. Lack of essential resources can make life in the round dysfunctional, and when this happens, new resources may be sought from outside sources, but only after sufficient trust are established among insiders with outsiders. Hersberger (2002/2003) used Chatman's (1996) theory of information poverty to study the information seeking behaviour of homeless parents who utilized social support networks. Hersberger (2002/2003) found that homeless parents tended to have small, weak social networks, and primarily sought essential resources from local social service agencies with a hybrid form of both strong and weak social ties. In her research, Hersberger (2002/2003) equated information capital with social capital and her preliminary results showed that most social networks were sparse and unconnected among

homeless parents. Hersberger's (2002/2003) research showed that the kind of information sought by individual homeless women specifically targeted essential resources such as shelter needs. As only social service workers are gatekeepers who control access to shelters, the hybrid social ties of homeless women with social service workers are quite distinct from the reciprocal social interactions that they would have with other people. It should be noted that Hersberger (2002/2003) does not discuss the concept of trust and its role in the sparse unconnected social networks in her research, but Putnam (1995) and Varheim (2007) both use trust as an essential indicator of social capital.

A sociological study by Fitzpatrick, Irwin, LaGory, and Ritchey (2007) showed that "social capital does not function for homeless persons as it does for the general population" (p. 750). Study findings showed that no amount of bonding social capital had an effect on lowering the odds of suicide ideation, but bridging social capital did have a significant lowering effect on the odds of suicide ideation. Bonding social capital "helps people get by" while bridging social capital "helps people get ahead" with "access to resources and opportunities not normally available" (Fitzpatrick, Irwin, LaGory, & Ritchey, 2007, p. 753). Fitzpatrick, Irwin, LaGory and Ritchey (2007) concluded that, "social relationships outside the immediate circle of homeless friendships make a difference and can clearly impact one's health and well-being" (p. 756).

In summary, social capital is a value that "relies on four principal factors: networks, relationships, norms and trust" (Whitley & McKenzie, 2005, p. 76). It remains unclear how social capital actually works with homeless people because homeless people often have weak social networks, unstable relationships, are often excluded from social norms, and may lack trust due to the instability of their socio-spatial identity.

2.14 Libraries as "Third Places"

One of the unique characteristics of public space in public libraries is that everyone can interact socially as equals within a public library. This social equality is what the German sociologist George

Simmel (1858-1918) termed “pure sociability”. Sociability refers to idealized kinds of social interactions that individuals who do not know each other personally have together in public places (Simmel & Hughes, 1949). Idealized social interactions occur in public places among strangers; they are not predicated on any existing personal relationships. Simmel’s research focused on the playful, idealized social associations that people have, regardless of materialistic, economic or other conditions. Pure “sociability creates...an ideal sociological world, for in it... the pleasure in it is always contingent upon the joy of others” (Simmel & Hughes, 1949, p. 257). Oldenburg’s concept of “third place” extends Simmel’s research on “pure sociability”. In the original publication about “third places”, Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) define “third places” as informal “places where people gather primarily to enjoy each other’s company” (p. 269), which is equivalent to Simmel’s “pure sociability”. “Third places” have lively conversations, but people have no guarantee of benefitting from participating in “third places” (p. 273). There is also an expectation of unpredictability that something exciting might occur in a “third place” (p. 274). Finally, “third places provide enabling, not escapist, experiences for their inhabitants” (p. 282). Thus, “third places” are social places intended only for play, not work, which is done at “second places”, or family obligations, which are private and occur in “first places”.

Glover and Parry (2009) studied Gilda’s Place, a place for people living with cancer in Toronto, as a “third place”. “For people living with cancer, home is indeed their “first place”, but more often than not, the hospital becomes their “second place.” (p. 98). Functioning as a “third place”, Gilda’s Place become a “home away from home and the hospital”, as well as a place to socialize with people who are experiencing similar health issues (p. 100). Glover and Parry (2009) found that “third places are particularly significant to people living with cancer because they provide a refuge from hospital and home” (p. 103). Just as Putnam (1995, 2000) did not mention public libraries as sources of social capital until 2003, (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982; Oldenburg, 1999, 2001) did not mention public libraries as “third places” (Harris, 2003). Perhaps this is because public libraries have only recently become more

social places. More recently, public libraries have been discussed as "third places" by Lawson (2004), Audunson (2005) and others. Lawson (2004) described libraries today as being virtual "third places" as much as traditional "third places".

Public libraries have become more vibrant social places than they used to be. Most new public library buildings are designed to encourage socialization and share in the discovery of knowledge (Alstad & Curry, 2003; Mattern, 2007). When the architects planned the new Seattle Central Library, two thirds of the library space was designed for social functions, while only one third of the total library space was set aside for media, including books (Prince-Ramus, 2006).

> Today's libraries face two major challenges: the Internet and sophisticated retailing...These challenges have forced libraries to reposition themselves as place-based assets in a way that dovetails nicely with urban revitalization efforts. The Internet, for example, has not eliminated the need for libraries, as many librarians feared it would. In many cases, it has reinforced the library's role as a place to go for information. (Fulton & Jackson, 1999, p. 7)

Shortly after it opened in 2004, Fisher, Saxton, Edwards, and Mai (2007) conducted 220 interviews with library users about the new Seattle Central Library. Interview questions were divided into three categories: the library as a physical place, an informational place and as a social place. For the library as a social place, the results showed that the Seattle Central Library did not satisfy many of Oldenburg's key criteria of "third places". This may have been the result of conducting the study too soon after the new library opened for people to feel comfortable using the library regularly as a "third place". Also, the very unusual library architecture of the Seattle Central Library is quite unsettling and might be too exotic for most people to feel comfortable enough to consider it a "third place". Most people go to libraries alone (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002), and may feel obliged to be quiet and not disrupt other people around them, even in the more social spaces of the library. Fisher, Saxton, Edwards and Mai (2007) concluded that the new Seattle library was an "informational place" rather than a "third place".

The front entrance steps of the New York Public Library [NYPL] are another outdoor public space that has all the qualities of a "third space". It is a very popular landmark in New York City where both men and women feel very safe to be alone or meet friends and sit and eat lunch in good weather. In a recent study of people who sat on the NYPL steps, 83 percent of the people interviewed said they felt safe and comfortable sitting on the NYPL steps, which made it a very good place which they enjoyed often (Rivlin, 2007).

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) compared the uses of public spaces at central branches of public libraries in Vancouver and Toronto. Most of the people that Leckie and Hopkins (2002) observed in both libraries more or less kept quietly to themselves. Today, with ubiquitous wireless technology, it is increasingly difficult to find spaces that are silent. Traditional library reading rooms usually prohibit talking, but much of the public space in most libraries are noisy, busy and filled with people interacting socially with their wireless, personal mobile technology devices.

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) found that technology has made libraries more important places. Their findings concur with the earlier findings of Molz and Dain (1999) that the social significance of public libraries has not diminished, despite the convenience of the Internet.

> We see new attention being given to the meaning of place, to social interaction, not in anonymous commercial suburban malls, or in chatting at home with computer buddies in the new communities of cyberspace, but in neighbourhood institutions in real space. People are looking for social moorings. Libraries—stable, welcoming, venerable, but also modern—make good candidates. They are associated with education and culture and understood as communal property but not too associated with government. (Molz & Dain, 1999, p. 205)

The concept of "third place" offers an interesting perspective on the social use of public space in public libraries, but the extent to which libraries play this role is still in question. Very little research has

been conducted on the concept of "third places" among disadvantaged communities such as the poor and homeless.

2.15 Chapter Summary

Homelessness is a very complex social issue. This literature review examined scholarship on homelessness within the contemporary context of public libraries as place. First, this literature review examined the socio-spatiality of homelessness, that is, how homeless people negotiate public space, including public space in libraries. Next, this literature review examined how public libraries acknowledge the necessity and importance of providing library services to poor people. The LIS literature reports a similar pattern of subtle social exclusion of the homeless in some public libraries in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

Next, this literature review focused on two social concepts, social capital and "third places" because they are both about social inclusion, and both are emerging as research topics in LIS. Recently, the concept of social inclusion has provided an important framework for discussion and policy-making with respect to sustainable community development. Social capital is a complex social issue that is associated with libraries as place. More social capital is believed to be found in places that value democracy, equality and inclusiveness. Public libraries are believed to be generators of social capital as they are more social places now than they have been in the past. Homeless persons are believed to have very low reserves of social capital (Hersberger, 2003), and it is assumed that homeless persons would benefit from having access to social capital, but it has been suggested that social capital may not function for homeless persons in the same ways that it does for the general population (Fitzpatrick, Irwin, LaGory, & Ritchey, 2007). The relationship between social capital and homeless people in public libraries is unstudied. The extent to which homeless men, who are socially excluded from mainstream society, avail themselves of social capital in public libraries or personally benefit in any way from sources of social capital in public libraries is not yet known. The social value of public libraries as a place may not

be equitable for all library users. The social concept of libraries as "third places" is another emerging research topic in librarianship. It is unstudied what homeless persons think about public libraries as a place.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the qualitative methodological approach taken in this exploratory research, and to outline the methods and procedures used for data collection and data analysis. "Exploratory research usually relies heavily on qualitative research methods because they are particularly well suited to the exploration of patterns in data that are not guided by a priori expectations or constrained by the operationalization of complex phenomenon" (Wicks, 2010, p. 153). The following methodological decisions will be discussed in this chapter: selection of an interpretive approach; research objectives; site selection, study population and sample size; procedures for data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and validity of results.

3.2 Interpretive Approach

Homelessness is a complex social issue that can be studied qualitatively. An interpretive approach guided this exploratory qualitative research which investigated how homeless men utilize public spaces in libraries in downtown Vancouver. Two levels of interpretation were involved in this research: the perceptions and experiences of public libraries as experienced by homeless men, and the researcher's further interpretation of these.

Although all qualitative research is more or less interpretive, more specifically, in an interpretive approach the researcher interprets the intentions of the research participants, from the participant's perspective, so that the researcher can gain knowledge about the meanings of the actions of the participants (Schwandt, 2003, pp. 296, 300). Interpretive approaches are used for achieving *verstehen,* literally interpreting or understanding, by focussing on the descriptive meanings that emerge from qualitative data during the research process, which are based in part on the researcher's own beliefs and associations with the behaviours, events and places being studied.

According to Morgan and Smircich, (1980) “An interpretivist ontology rests on the assumption that human beings do not passively react to an external reality but, rather, impose their internal perceptions and ideals on the external world and in so doing, actively create their realities” (as cited in Suddaby, 2006, p. 636). Thus, “...what is distinctive about interpretive approaches, however, is that they see people, and their interpretations, meanings, and understanding, as the primary data sources” (Mason, 2002, p. 56).

Two main sources of inherent bias problematize the interpretive approach in this research. First, the researcher is a practising academic librarian, and the study design has been influenced by what other librarians have reported anecdotally in the library literature about how homeless men utilize libraries and also through direct experience of this phenomenon as a working professional. Second, this study has been influenced by deep personal convictions on the part of the researcher that as public institutions, libraries should be open and inclusive and that homeless men should receive the full benefit of available services. These inherent biases have undoubtedly affected the researcher’s interpretations of the responses made by the participants. As these biases cannot be eliminated from this qualitative research, instead by acknowledging them and discussing them self-reflectively within the context of the experiences of the participants, the biases of the research can remain part of the interpretation. Throughout this research, the researcher employed the ‘reflexive turn’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) in order to be self-reflexive in considering and analyzing her own interpretations of the responses by homeless men.

In library research conducted by librarians, librarians would normally be considered the’ insiders’, but for this research, the researcher, who is also a practising librarian, purposely tried to become as much of a library ‘outsider’ as possible. This was done deliberately so that the homeless men who use libraries could play the role of ‘insiders’ and share their ‘insider’ knowledge more freely and confidently. Thus, in this research, the researcher has purposely reversed the traditional ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ roles

of librarians and library users, in order to glean an understanding of homeless men's experiences of using public libraries from their perspective.

In this study, although the researcher is neither male nor has ever personally experienced homelessness, nevertheless, she has tried to learn about the ordinary experiences of homeless men who use libraries, primarily through conversations with homeless men about their personal experiences using libraries, by unobtrusively observing people using libraries, and by spending time doing volunteer work with homeless people in the community.

The researcher felt it was necessary to have some first-hand experience dealing with homeless men before embarking on this kind of research. The researcher became aware of the work of Dr. Judy Graves, who is an expert on street homelessness, and has worked for the City of Vancouver for over thirty years helping homeless people get housed. The researcher was fortunate to arrange a work day on the streets of downtown Vancouver with Judy Graves. The researcher accompanied Judy on a typical work day in downtown Vancouver and observed first-hand how Judy Graves approached unsheltered homeless men, which was an invaluable learning opportunity for the researcher.

The researcher also became a community member of the South Surrey White Rock Peninsula Homeless to Housing Task Force, which meets monthly. This group of volunteers has helped with the annual homeless counts in the Greater Vancouver region, hosts public events to raise awareness of poverty issues in the community, and volunteers at the emergency cold weather shelter at First United Church in White Rock. Doing volunteer work with homeless men who were not part of her research gave the researcher some first-hand experience interacting with homeless men and provided an opportunity for the researcher to give something back to the community. The researcher has also attended social justice films, guest lectures, and community events that involved the topic of homelessness. These events have been unique learning opportunities which have given the researcher

further insights into homelessness as a social phenomenon that occurs in every community, whether rich or poor, or urban or rural in Canada.

When Liebow (1993) conducted his ethnographic research on sheltered homeless women, he wrote, "my original intention was to write a flat descriptive study and let the women speak for themselves—that is, to let the descriptive data and anecdotes drive the writing. In retrospect, that was a mistake. Ideas drive a study, not observations or unadorned facts" (p. 325). Similarly, the researcher in this study also wanted to ensure that the voices of the participants were heard, but also took an interpretive approach in order to try to investigate deeper than Liebow's (1993) previous descriptive approach. An interpretive approach was preferable to a descriptive approach because "...it is essential to recognize that the researcher, not the recipe, is driving the interpretation. Findings do not "emerge" in the sense of having their own agency; neither do participants in a study have their own "voice" in the sense of representing their own interests, nor do data really "speak for themselves". No matter how participatory and collaborative the method, it is the researcher who ultimately determines what constitutes data in this research, which data arise to relevance, how the final conceptualizations portraying those data will be structured, and which vehicles will be used to disseminate the findings" (Thorne, Reimer, Kirkham, & O'Flynn-Magee, 2004, pp. 11-12).

An interpretive approach is suitable for most smaller-scale social science research, such as this study, because it is based on a relativist ontology, in which reality is socially constructed through subjective meanings and understandings of the experiences of the participants. In Thorne's (2008) qualitative nursing research, "Interpretive description is an approach to knowledge generation that straddles the chasm between objective neutrality and abject theorizing, extending a form of understanding that is of practical importance to the applied disciplines within the context of their distinctive social mandates" (p. 26).

Rather than simply being generic variants or modifications of ethnography, phenomenology or grounded theory, interpretive description tries to "extend beyond mere description and into the domain of the "so what" that drives all applied disciplines" (Thorne, 2008, p. 33). Interpreting qualitative descriptions attempts to create new meanings, but stops short of causation, prediction and other more formal explanations (Thorne, 2008, p. 51) and therefore, makes no claims upon "truth" (Thorne, 2008, p. 206).

3.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

Public libraries are one of the few indoor public places where people experiencing extreme poverty can intermingle with the general public and do ordinary, everyday things like read the daily newspapers, magazines and books or use the Internet in a safe and stable environment. Very little is known about how people experiencing homelessness actually feel about using public libraries and how they experience public libraries as a place. Capturing meaningful contexts of public libraries as a place by persons experiencing extreme poverty and homelessness is the goal of this research.

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. How do men who are homeless use public libraries?
2. What are the factors that encourage men who are homeless to use public libraries?
3. What are the factors that discourage men who are homeless from using public libraries?
4. How do men who are homeless experience public libraries as a place?

The purpose of this exploratory research was to examine how homeless men use public libraries and thus the focus was on their experiences using public libraries rather than their personal situations and the causes of their homeless condition. As such, this is not a study of homelessness, but rather a study of the intersection between homelessness and public libraries.

3.4 Study Population, Site and Recruitment

Public space in libraries attracts more single homeless men than homeless women and children for several reasons. First, there are far more single homeless men without housing, partly because homeless women and children are considered more 'vulnerable' than homeless men, and are automatically given priority for social housing (Snow & Anderson, 1993, p. 319). Differentiation of the poor as 'deserving ' and 'undeserving' of social assistance goes back to the Middle Ages in Britain (Hopper, 1991; Johnsen, Cloke, & May, 2005) and France (Elliott, 2011). Thus, the 'vulnerable' includes disabled people, elderly, widows, women and children, who are considered more 'deserving' of social assistance, because their situation is considered to be 'through no fault of their own', while on the other hand, able-bodied men are considered 'undeserving' of social assistance because they are presumed to be the author of their own misfortune (Snow & Anderson, 1993, p. 319). This long-standing attitude continues today, especially among many faith-based charities, and as a consequence, single homeless men must compete more for fewer scarce resources when they experience homelessness, often disproportionately longer than women or children, simply because they must wait the longest for social housing.

Far more single homeless men than homeless women are absolutely homeless, use emergency shelters and live in the SROs in the DTES of Vancouver. Proportionally, there are more drop-in places in the DTES for homeless women than for homeless men, so during the daytime, homeless women, children and families are less visible in public places than homeless men. Consequently, single homeless men who have nowhere else to go, spend more time in public places such as parks, community centres and public libraries. As a relatively large user community, presumably with a distinct set of needs and concerns, men who are currently homeless or have experienced homelessness or extreme poverty are the target population of this study. Extremely poor people often drift in and out of homelessness, which is why absolutely homeless men, sheltered homeless men and men who are

currently housed in SROs, but who have previously experienced homelessness, are all included in this study. Their circumstances span the continuum of extreme poverty in downtown Vancouver. This study focuses on library users rather than homeless men in general because the focus is on understanding use, rather than non-use, of libraries. It is expected that future work will extend the focus to include homeless men who are non-library users as well.

Identifying study sites and recruiting participants was a major challenge in this study. When the researcher looked for a suitable location to conduct this research, she wanted to remain as neutral and independent as possible of the ongoing social justice struggles in the DTES, so avoided scouting in places with overt social justice agendas. Some background on the homeless situation in Vancouver is provided below to place these methodological decisions in context.

In 2005, 75 percent of the homeless population in the city had no regular income or social assistance to buy food for themselves (Riches & Graves, 2007). By 2009, only about 60 percent of SRO residents and low income housing renters in Vancouver were on social assistance (Juschka, 2009). Food security is a major problem in the DTES. There are very few places to shop for food in the DTES. Instead, since 2009, several supported housing projects in the DTES have introduced community kitchens programs, and hot meal delivery services to supported housing residents. This is necessary because 71 percent of SRO rooms do not have a fridge or cooking facilities simply because the electrical wiring in older SRO buildings cannot support the use of hot plates, and inadequate food storage attracts insects, mice and rats. Thus, homeless people and most residents of SROs have nowhere to store or cook for themselves and are heavily dependent on the numerous secular and faith-based charities that provide free meals and social services. Without the generosity of charities that operate in the DTES, living in Vancouver would be impossible for most residents of the DTES, but waiting time in food lines often takes two or three hours per day, which is longer than people normally get for food breaks in their work day. This is problematic both for homeless people who work and working people who live in SROs without any

cooking facilities. Some faith-based charities such as Union Gospel Mission also include a mandatory sermon before serving food, which adds to the time it takes to receive a free meal. Recently, Cavalry Baptist Church has implemented a different approach; they have stopped their free meal program (Kimmett, 2012). Instead, they realized that people who help with the preparation of a meal for themselves were more satisfied in a self-deterministic sense than those who simply received a paternalistic handout of a free meal. Similarly, Osborne (2002) has shown that homeless individuals who actively use homeless services and have a strong homeless self-identity are perceived negatively by mainstream society, primarily because they are not making sufficient effort to exit homelessness.

There are well over 100 places where free or low cost meals are provided to homeless people and people experiencing extreme poverty in Vancouver, but in the DTES there are so many people who need to be fed, that most of the soup kitchens are crowded and people are encouraged to just eat and then leave, without any time for socializing after the meal, in order that the next in line can be fed in a timely manner. The researcher decided that these places were unsuitable locations for conducting this study.

Extreme poverty combined with the concentration of social problems in the DTES marginalizes and stigmatizes the residents of the DTES. Waiting in free food lines on the streets of the DTES contributes to the stigmatization of homelessness. Social problems are more concentrated in the DTES and residents often resort to using social justice strategies to fight for the same ordinary services that are taken for granted elsewhere in Vancouver. Ultimately, the researcher decided that it was best to avoid recruiting for this study from any places with strong social justice agendas.

Given the high levels of crime in the DTES, it was important for the researcher to find safe locations in which to interact with homeless men, where opportunities to build trust between homeless men and the researcher could happen naturally, and to find safe places in downtown Vancouver to conduct the research interviews. Two community centres in downtown Vancouver, which are primarily used by people experiencing extreme poverty, were selected as suitable study sites. The researcher did

volunteer service totalling approximately 100 hours in these two centres from 2009-2012. Interviews were conducted in 2010 at The Gathering Place in Downtown South [DTS], one of three community centres operated by the City of Vancouver that serve people experiencing extreme poverty. The Gathering Place has a paid membership of approximately 4,000 members.

After the analysis was completed on the initial data set, additional interviews wereconducted to obtain richer data. Additional interviews were done in 2012 at the Carnegie Centre, the largest city-run community centre in the DTES, with a paid membership of approximately 5,000 members. Membership for each of these city-operated community centres is open to the public and costs one dollar per year in the DTES, and two dollars per year at the Gathering Place.

The DTES community proved problematic for the researcher to recruit participants from, and only three additional participants were successfully recruited by the researcher during the second phase of data gathering in 2012. Several potential participants from the DTES who inquired about the study decided against participating when they were informed that they would not be paid cash to participate. Other reasons why potential participants from the DTES did not complete interviews include scheduling conflicts and a lack of contact information to follow up with potential participants. While some of these missed opportunities for interviews were regrettable at the time they occurred, the researcher decided that it was better to let them go, rather than have to deal with any discrepancies that they might cause about how the data collection was done for this research. In the end, the identical recruitment strategy was used in both phases of data collection.

Researchers must be granted permission to conduct research in community centres in Vancouver. Research is not normally permitted in the Carnegie Centre, but in May 2012, the Community Relations Committee kindly made an exception for this study. The Community Relations committee members discussed the recruitment procedure with the researcher to ensure that people using the Carnegie Centre would not be disturbed by the researcher. Several times while planning this research, the

researcher was told that homeless people in the DTES have been over studied, and that they are not interested in participating in research, but those who participated seemed genuinely interested in being part of this research project, and most had never been research participants before.

The Gathering Place and the Carnegie Centre are both big enough facilities that people are always welcome to stay and socialize for as long as they want. Both these facilities operate every day of the year and are open to the public, conditions which met the accessibility requirements for this research. Both of these facilities have a zero tolerance for alcohol and drugs and enforce strict rules about appropriate respectful behaviour which met the safety requirements for this research. Also, they have a regular clientele of local men who are extremely poor including absolutely homeless men, sheltered homeless men and men who live in SROs, which made these facilities well suited for conducting this research.

3.4.1 The Gathering Place

The Gathering Place was chosen in 2010 because it was the most receptive and accommodating in response to the researcher's inquiries about finding a suitable public place to recruit research participants and conduct research interviews. The Gathering Place is located on the corner of Seymour Street and Helmcken Street, a busy intersection in Downtown South [DTS]. DTS is located at the north end of the Granville Street Bridge, between Yaletown to the east and the West End to the west [See: Appendix C: Map].

The affluent Yaletown neighbourhood has many new condominium and high-rise apartment developments, as well as attractive shops and patio restaurants along the streets, while the West End has older high-rise apartments that are within walking distance to English Bay and Stanley Park. The Central Library is located east of Yaletown, approximately half way between the DTES and DTS.

DTS has a young adult homeless population. Several older hotels in DTS have been converted into SROs and homeless shelters in DTS cater primarily to young adults. In part, homeless services specifically

for youth were established in DTS to try to keep at risk and homeless young adults away from the severe social problems of the DTES, especially drug addiction and prostitution.

The Gathering Place began operation in 1995, and is open seven days a week. Modelled on the Carnegie Centre, the Gathering Place provides the following services: a cafeteria, laundry facilities, a fitness centre, a pool room, showers, televisions, an arts and crafts room, and a reading room. The researcher first learned about the Gathering Place through Dr. Judy Graves, Director of the Housing Centre for the City of Vancouver.

As noted above, one of the services available at the Gathering Place, is the Reading Room, which is run by one full-time and one part-time library technician as well as several loyal volunteers. It is located on the ground floor of the Gathering Place and the windows face south onto Helmcken Street. People walking by on the sidewalk can see into the Reading Room.

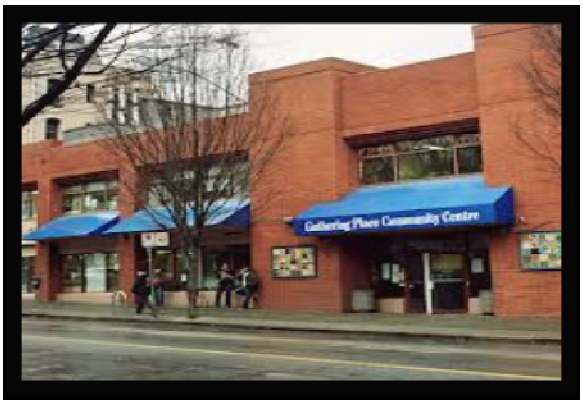

Figure 3.1 Helmcken Street entrance to the Gathering Place. Reading Room windows are under two blue awnings on street level (Vancouver Community Network, 2012).

Inside, the Reading Room is quite small and has simple floor to ceiling wooden bookshelves and rectangular wooden tables and sturdy chairs for reading and studying. The south facing windows let in the afternoon sun. There is a checkout counter by the entrance and a small workroom for Irene Brooks, the library technician who developed the Reading Room.

Figure 3.2 [Left] Irene Brooks the library technician who developed the Reading Room at the Gathering Place in 1995 (HeatherD, 2008). [Right] Reading Room at the Gathering Place (Vancouver Community Network, 2012).

Approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at UBC to conduct this study was granted on 8 February 2010 and 1 May 2012 [see: Preface]. As soon as research ethics approval was granted in 2010 by UBC for this research, the researcher applied to the Director of the Gathering Place for permission to conduct this study at the Gathering Place.

In order to learn more about the context and conditions of homelessness and expedite the data collection for this research, the researcher became a regular volunteer in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. A standard criminal record check with the Vancouver Police was required for the researcher to become a volunteer at the Gathering Place. As all recruitment and interviews for the first phase of this research were conducted at the Gathering Place in May 2010, becoming a volunteer there gave the researcher a legitimate and useful reason to be at the Gathering Place, while waiting for research participants to make contact. During the month of May 2010, the researcher volunteered three consecutive days a week in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place, in order to have the opportunity to work directly with homeless people who volunteered at the Gathering Place, as well as to have face-to-face contact with homeless people using the Reading Room [See: Appendix F].

Unobtrusive observations were done in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. On several occasions, the researcher unobtrusively observed what men were doing in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. People who were engaged in silent reading sat upright on sturdy chairs and were totally immersed in their own reading material, and did not socialize with the other people sitting right beside them at the same table. Not surprising, the daily newspapers were the most sought after reading materials read by men, followed by popular magazines such as *National Geographic,* while fewer men chose the fiction or non-fiction books to read. Many participants said they were avid readers, but the literacy level of participants was not measured and likely included a wide range.

3.4.2 The Carnegie Centre

Located at the corner of Hastings and Main Streets in the DTES, the Carnegie Centre is owned and operated by the City of Vancouver and is open fourteen hours per day, year round. The building dates back to 1903, when it was purpose-built as the main public library for the city of Vancouver. In 1980, after extensive structural upgrades and renovations, it was repurposed as the Carnegie Centre, and now functions as a public community centre for the DTES community.

Figure 3.3 Front entrance, Carnegie Centre, Vancouver, BC, 2010 (Van Eng, 2010).

On the main floor of the Carnegie Centre, a small reading room is operated by the Vancouver Public Library.

Figure 3.4 Reading Room, Carnegie Centre, Vancouver, BC (Vancouver Public Library, n.d.)

In addition to the reading room, there is also a learning centre, computer lab, gymnasium, weight room, pool table, cafeteria and theatre. Most of the programs and services in the Carnegie Centre could not operate without the 600 dedicated volunteers, who are mostly people who live in the DTES, and who receive meal tickets in exchange for working their volunteer shifts.

Ethics approval was received by the Office of Research and Scholarship at UBC on 1 May 2012 to conduct phase two of the research at the Carnegie Centre. Unlike the Reading Room at the Gathering Place, which is operated by the City of Vancouver, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is operated by Local 391 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which does not permit any volunteer positions in the Reading Room of the Carnegie Centre. During the month of May 2012, the researcher volunteered in the kitchen at the Carnegie Centre, as she could not be a volunteer in the Reading Room. The researcher was taken on a guided tour of the Carnegie Centre and interviewed by the co-ordinator of Volunteers, before being assigned four-hour shifts in the kitchen washing dishes, four days a week, as that was the place where volunteers were needed most that month. Volunteering in the kitchen at the Carnegie Centre gave the researcher an opportunity to have regular direct contact with homeless men who lived in the DTES.

In social conversations with people at the Gathering Place and at the Carnegie Centre, the researcher was often asked why she was volunteering, and in response, researcher would briefly describe this research project and explain that it was more appropriate for the researcher to be available to the

research population, rather than expect participants to travel out to the Point Grey campus of the University of British Columbia for an interview.

The Carnegie kitchen and cafeteria are located on the second floor of the Carnegie Centre. The menu for each meal is hand written by the kitchen staff on a chalk board near the concession where the meals are served. There is always a vegetarian entry as well as a meal with meat or seafood. The team of cooking staff in the Carnegie Kitchen are all professionally trained chefs with amazing talents for making superbly nutritious meals every day of the year with a very limited budget. Every morning, scrambled eggs and home fries are served for breakfast; fresh vegetables are peeled and chopped by volunteers for salads, pasta sauces, and main courses for lunches and dinners. Portions are measured for nutritional value. Homemade breads, scones and desserts accompany the main course and are also sold separately. Pure fruit juices, organic teas and fair trade coffee are available.

While customers wait in line to be served, they can look through the glass countertop to see the food that is available in the stainless steel warming trays. Each person is asked what they would like to order and their meal, drink, and dessert is put on a cafeteria tray for them to carry to a table to eat. People pay for their meals, either in cash or with meal tickets that are paid in lieu of wages to all Carnegie volunteers. Adjacent to the concession where the hot food is served are a dozen round tables and chairs in an open dining room with high ceilings. The tall windows of the dining room face east and look down onto the corner of Main and Hastings Street. If the weather is nice, these windows can be opened, but the constant noise of the traffic and the numerous emergency vehicle sirens are very loud. People are welcome to socialize or linger as long as they want in the Carnegie cafeteria. Most of the people who regularly eat at the Carnegie cafeteria are also volunteers at the Carnegie Centre and most are residents of the DTES.

Being a volunteer at the Carnegie Centre is taken seriously and volunteers willingly take on extra shifts if they are available, because they can earn more meal tickets, which help them make it through

the month if they do not have enough cash to buy meals. Many volunteers at the Carnegie Centre also do volunteer work at other DTES charities, such as at United Gospel Mission, the DTES Neighbourhood House and at the various DTES churches. Every month, all the volunteers at the Carnegie Centre are invited to a special meal that is prepared by the kitchen staff and served by the administration of the Carnegie Centre to acknowledge the work done by the volunteers. Each month, one volunteer is recognized as the volunteer of the month, and the evening ends with draws for prizes.

Volunteers in the Carnegie kitchen do four-hour shifts. In the dish pit, four hours of washing dishes is a lot of dishes! The researcher was the only female dishwasher on the days she volunteered. Dirty dishes are sorted and stacked in plastic bins on trolleys and wheeled into the kitchen by the volunteers who keep the dining tables clean. Preparing, serving and cleaning up after three menus per day makes the Carnegie kitchen a very busy place to be a volunteer, but it enabled the researcher to have regular interactions with homeless men in the DTES.

Recruiting research participants from a transient, marginalized and often stigmatized population required some creative strategies (Heckathorn, 2002; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2005; Tiffany, 2006). For hidden populations such as homeless people, Salganik and Heckathorn (2005) recommend respondent-driven sampling, but caution about sampling biases. In participatory and community based research, Tiffany (2006) recommends respondent driven sampling recruitment to foster more inclusive community participation in the research. De Verteuil (2004) described the barriers he encountered when he researched homeless women in an emergency shelter in Los Angeles.

All recruitment for this research was done at the Gathering Place and at the Carnegie Centre, with permission of the Directors of the Gathering Place and the Carnegie Centre. Recruitment posters [see: Appendix D] approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board were posted on bulletin boards at the Gathering Place and the Carnegie Centre to recruit participants.

The criteria for participation were as follows:

adult men who are currently homeless or have previously been homeless who use public libraries, and who are willing to be interviewed for about an hour about their experiences using public libraries when they were homeless.

Homeless men who do not use libraries were considered in the original research design of this study in 2009, but given the primary focus on library use and the library as place, it was decided to limit the study to library users who have direct experience using libraries. Homeless men who do not use libraries were eliminated from the original research design because it was concluded that introducing a "compare and contrast" element within exploratory research using a hard-to-reach population was an unnecessary complication. Future research including homeless men who do not use libraries is needed to better understand barriers to library use.

The researcher did not directly solicit any participants in this research. Potential research participants followed the contact instructions on the recruitment posters and contacted the researcher by phone or email. None of the participants had any prior contact with the researcher, and the researcher had no prior knowledge of the past personal or behavioural history of any of the participants.

3.5 Study Sample

Twenty-three adult men who regularly use public libraries and who individually self-selected and volunteered to participate in the study, came from among the approximately 4,000 members of the Gathering Place and 5,000 members of the Carnegie Centre. While not all members of the Gathering Place or the Carnegie Centre are homeless or have experienced homelessness, many members live or have lived in conditions of extreme poverty. The sample is not random because it was impossible to locate all the homeless men in Vancouver who comprise the target population. The sample included absolutely homeless men and shelter users, as well as materially impoverished men who currently live in SRO accommodations, but had prior experiences of being homeless.

This study also used the same subgroups identified by Snow and Anderson (1993) to group participants for data analysis:

1. absolutely homeless, sometimes called rough sleepers or street homeless, consisting of people who live in vehicles, or wherever they can find a place to sleep outdoors,
2. hidden homeless, consisting of people without any permanent residence who stay temporarily with family or friends and are sometimes called couch surfers, and
3. shelter users, consisting of people without permanent residence who stay at emergency shelters.

In addition, men who have experienced homelessness but are currently housed in SROs have also been included in this study, because homeless people and SRO residents all share the same social milieu of extreme poverty in Vancouver. People who can only afford to live in an SRO in Vancouver are extremely poor, and often drift in and out of being homeless (Tomlinson, 2012).

No hidden homeless men volunteered to participate in this study. Due to their transient status, hidden homeless are likely the hardest subgroup to recruit as research participants.

3.6 Data Collection

In social science research, the responses gathered in qualitative interviews are usually more detailed than the responses obtained in quantitative surveys and questionnaires. Interviews were preferred over surveys, questionnaires or other approaches because the complex nature of homelessness as a stigmatized social condition makes it inefficient to randomly sample a general population to find participants who are homeless or who have experienced homelessness.

In public libraries, it is not possible to know with certainty which library users are homeless, unless individuals self-identify. Due to the extreme stigmatization of homelessness as a social condition, many homeless people prefer not to associate themselves with other homeless people, especially if untreated mental illness is present (Snow & Anderson, 1993, p. 68). Homeless people rarely voice their opinions as individuals and much less so as a collective social group.

The stigmatization of homelessness was taken into consideration when designing the recruitment and data collection methods for this study. Focus groups seemed too intimidating for homeless individuals to feel comfortable sharing their experiences about using public libraries, so individual, in-person, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most appropriate qualitative method for this research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 homeless men who were willing to talk about their experiences using public libraries. The personal rapport established in an interview can help to overcome reticence and allows the researcher to investigate the subjective meanings of participants' experiences. This is particularly important in working with this population, who are likely to view widely-distributed questionnaires or surveys with suspicion and disinterest.

Interviews are the most common fieldwork data collection method used by contemporary human geographers, as they are the most direct way to gain access to the subjective meanings of an individual's experiences of a particular place (Interviewing, 2000, p. 407). Interviews are best for collecting personal perspectives, especially first-hand accounts of experiences. Typically, open-ended conversations tend to yield more descriptive data, while specific questions yields more analytical data (Murchison, 2010, p. 38).

According to Thorne (2008), "Interpretive description can be conducted on samples of almost any size" and "although the vast majority of studies within this approach are likely to be relatively small (including perhaps, between five and thirty participants)"and "the best way to justify a sample size is to generate a rationale that is consistent with the research question. How many instances of a thing would we need to include in our observations and analysis in order for the findings to have merit to those whom we are conducting this research?" (p. 94). In comparison, Creswell (1998) recommends twenty to thirty individual interviews for a grounded theory study (p. 65).

For this study, twenty interviews were conducted between 29 March and 14 June, 2010 and three interviews were conducted between 9 and 18 May, 2012. Nine potential participants who responded to the advertisement [Appendix D] and expected remuneration were no longer interested in participating after they realized this was voluntary research. All but one participant who agreed to be interviewed completed their interviews; one participant had to leave unexpectedly in the middle of his interview, so his interview was discarded. Interviews were always conducted in places that participants were familiar with, in locations where they felt safe, and in locations that were convenient for the participant, in order to give each participant the best opportunity to provide uninhibited responses.

3.7 Procedures and Instruments

Potential participants individually responded to posters about the research and contacted the researcher about their interest in possibly participating in the study. Potential participants were invited to meet with the researcher over a meal in the cafeteria at the Gathering Place or at the Carnegie Centre, in order to read and discuss the informed consent document [see: Appendix E]. Having an initial meeting and some food together was an opportunity for the researcher and the participant to establish some trust, and gave the participant some time to think about committing to be a participant. When the researcher first met with a potential participant, the researcher explained that they were not obliged to participate in the research and that the researcher would not be the least bit offended if a participant declined to participate, or if they did not finish all the questions in the interview. Some potential research participants accepted the researcher's invitation for a meal, but declined to take part in the research once they received more information about the study. Potential research participants who declined to participate were thanked by the researcher, in order to show that their decision not to participate was accepted by the researcher.

At the Carnegie Centre, there were some potential participants who agreed to be interviewed, but for reasons unknown to the researcher, did not show up for their interviews. It is unknown why 'no

shows' were more common among the DTES participants than with DTS participants, but it may have been that the participants were doing extra volunteer work shifts in the Carnegie Centre or elsewhere in the DTES. The researcher received some email inquiries and some telephone inquiries about participating in the study from people who were only interested in participating if they received cash payment. When the researcher explained that no one was paid to participate in this research, they were no longer interested in participating.

Being available downtown at the Gathering Place as a volunteer for three consecutive days made it more convenient for the researcher to interview participants; very few potential research participants were unable to meet on the days that the researcher was available at the Gathering Place. The researcher kept the interview process as uncomplicated as possible, in order not to inconvenience any of the participants. A voucher for a hot meal at the cafeteria at the Gathering Place was offered to each participant as a thank you for participating, although not all participants accepted the offer.

The same procedures for recruiting participants were followed at the Carnegie Centre. While waiting for participants in the DTES to make contact, the researcher volunteered four days a week in the 'dish pit' in the Carnegie kitchen and scrubbed pots and pans and loaded dirty dishes onto special trays that went through the automatic dishwasher. Two people were assigned four-hour shifts in the dish pit, so the researcher often worked alongside homeless men on four hour shifts in the dish pit. Working in the dish pit was an ideal opportunity for the researcher to get to know people at the Carnegie Centre. Not everyone who uses the Carnegie Centre is homeless, but many are or have been homeless.

Each day the researcher washed dishes, she wore her own colourful apron with the Union Jack on it. Many people commented on the apron, and it became a great conversation starter. One day a man followed the researcher into the dish pit area of the Carnegie kitchen and loudly confronted the researcher about the political symbolism of the British flag on her apron and angrily stated that he did not like governments. This unexpected situation was a bit tense, but the kitchen staff working nearby

were alerted and quickly responded to the man to stop and ordered him to leave the Carnegie kitchen. The Carnegie Centre has strict Rules of Conduct (December 2011) and uniformed security staff who enforce the Rules of Conduct, but in addition, any Carnegie Centre employee has the authority to enforce the Rules of Conduct. It was important to be mindful about personal safety when volunteering or conducting research in the Gathering Place and in the Carnegie Centre.

The researcher has extensive experience conducting reference interviews in academic libraries, and experience as a volunteer at a cold weather emergency homeless shelter, which were both useful when conducting the interviews for this study. The researcher repeated the same script for each interview. Before each interview began, the researcher reassured each participant that there were no wrong answers to any of the questions. The interview questions begin with questions that were easier to answer, while the more open-ended, complex questions were asked later in the interview. In 2010, all interviews except one were done at the Gathering Place. One interview was conducted at an outdoor cafe in downtown Vancouver, which was the preference of the participant. The researcher had originally thought of conducting interviews in the cafeteria at the Gathering Place, but the background noise in the cafeteria was too loud to record conversations into a digital recorder, so instead, interviews were held in quieter parts of the Gathering Place. Some interviews were done in offices, the arts and crafts room, or at the end of a quiet hallway.

In 2012, three interviews were done in the Carnegie Centre, but background noise was a problem while recording interviews with a digital recorder.

All interviews except one were taped with a Panasonic digital recorder. Only one participant did not consent to having the interview recorded. Interviews took approximately one hour to complete, and most were conducted without any breaks or interruptions. Each recording was transcribed by hand by the researcher into notebooks immediately following the interview in order to prepare the data for

analysis. By not only conducting, but also transcribing the interviews personally, the researcher had the opportunity to become very familiar with the data.

The researcher only asked interview questions that were directly related to the focus of this study, but during the course of the interview, some participants self-disclosed personal information. Respecting the individual privacy of each of the participants in this research is the duty of the researcher (Ogden, 2008, p. 680-681). During the process of informed consent for this study, the researcher assured each participant that their personal identities would not be revealed in this research, although their responses would be compiled into a public document. Including some personal information about the participants, such as age, former occupations and education, but without revealing the names of the participants, helps to give this research more context, but is not intended in any way to be judgmental or be detrimental to the privacy of any of the participants. For example, the researcher did not ask participants any specific questions about how much education they had completed because it could make them feel as though they were being judged by the researcher, but instead, participants spontaneously talked about using the library to self-educate themselves, or revealed that they never went to high school as they proudly reported that they recently successfully completed their grade 12 equivalency exams. Being respectful of their privacy, the researcher did not probe deeper by asking why they never went to high school, because the focus of this research was about how the participants used libraries, not about why the participants had not finished high school. Thus, in reporting the results of the study, the researcher has taken care not to reveal names or personal details that might reveal the personal identities of any of the participants.

Some participants were quite emotional as they spontaneously talked about their personal situations. Some men talked about being very depressed and suicidal while they were homeless. One man cried as he spoke about no longer having any contact with his children. The researcher paused the digital recorder and gave the participants enough time to regain their thoughts. When participants became

emotionally distressed as they talked about their pasts, the researcher listened, but did not stop or change the topic of their conversation or probe further into their personal lives. The researcher felt it was more respectful to just listen to what they were saying.

The researcher has taken care not to psychologically label any participants. Similarly, Liebow (1993) did not judgmentally label any participants with psychological descriptors such as "mentally ill", "alcoholic", or "drug-addicted" in his ethnographic research about sheltered homeless women. Liebow (1993) said, "I have no training as a mental health professional so it is not always clear to me who is mentally ill and who is not. There were always some women who acted crazy or whom most considered crazy, and the women themselves often agreed with the public at large that many homeless people are mentally ill" (p. xiii). What all the participants in this study have in common is extreme poverty, not mental illnesses, but if the participants self-disclosed personal information about themselves, it was noted by the researcher and included in the findings.

3.8 Data Analysis and Coding

Qualitative analysis is defined as "the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships" (Babbie, 2003, p. G6). Qualitative data analysis involves taking apart transcribed interview data, using various coding methods to sort the data, and then processing the coded data in order to more clearly interpret the meanings of the responses of the participants. Sixteen hours of audio interviews were transcribed into 36 typed pages for coding.

Codes can either be derived deductively by being theory-driven (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) or inductively, by being data-driven (Boyatzis, 1998). Theory-driven coding tends to be more influenced by the researcher's own beliefs and values than data-driven coding. As noted by Boyatsis (1998), "After all, in using a theory-driven code, the researcher is seeking to prove his or her world view" (p. 34). Thus, in this study, the inductive analysis approach used was interpretive and carried out by a single researcher,

and it is acknowledged by the researcher that some bias was naturally inherent and embedded within this analysis. In order to try to minimize bias, this study utilized data-driven coding which is more authentic and hopefully, more representative of the data, because the codes emerge from the data rather than making the data fit a theory.

In this study, the initial coding process involved sorting the data into topical categories, which formed the basic vocabulary of *in vivo* coded data. The first round of coding typically results in thirty to forty categories that are subsequently reduced to fifteen to twenty categories (Creswell, 2002, p. 266). For the second round of inductive coding of qualitative data, Thomas (2006) recommends having "between three and eight main categories in the findings" (p. 242). Thomas (2006) cautions that "inductive coding that finishes up with many major themes (e.g., more than eight) can be viewed as incomplete" (p. 242). In this study, the second round of coding identified the following key themes from the *in vivo* coded data: perceptions of self, perceptions of the library as a place, use of libraries, and benefits of libraries.

A theme is a pattern found within data and thematic analysis is the process of coding and identifying patterns within data. There are two levels of thematic analysis, directly observable themes, and deeper, underlying themes. "Thematic analysis allows the interpretive social scientist's social construction of meaning to be articulated or packaged in such a way (with reliability as consistency of judgment), that descriptions of social 'facts' or observations seem to emerge" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 145). Further sorting of the data and themes was done to link the data with the research questions. Below is a summary of the research questions with a sample of some of the data-driven codes and the themes that emerged from the codes. The codebook for this study is found in Appendix G.

Research Question 1: How do homeless people use public libraries?

Initial data-driven codes: nowhere else to go, sit and read, research, people watching, computers, email, washrooms, seating, rules, library cards,

Key Themes: Use of library: rules, library cards;

Physical library: facilities, computers, washrooms, seating, collection,

Research Question 2: What are the factors that encourage homeless people to use public libraries?

Initial data-driven codes: trust, safe, welcoming, feel included, access, respect, library cards, computers,

Key Themes: Benefits of libraries: safety, social inclusion, normalcy, belonging, respect,

Research Question 3: What are the factors that discourage homeless people from using public libraries?

Initial data-driven codes: no library card, don't socialize in library, rules, noise,

Key Themes: Perception of self: loner, homeless identity;

Use of library: rules, no library cards, noise;

Research Question 4: How do homeless people experience public libraries as a place?

Initial data-driven codes: noisy, respite, loner, silence, washrooms, seating, fireplace, not a home, safety

Key Themes: Physical Library: washrooms, seating, fireplace;

Perceptions of library as place: not a home, rest, respite, learning, access to internet,

3.9 Validity of Results

The demonstration of rigour is most desirable in qualitative research, but interpretive approaches to qualitative research are often carefully scrutinized due to their lack of vigour. Validity of results refers to the inferences that are made from the data, not the raw data itself (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125).

Believability of interpretive findings is reflected by the amount of rigour of the interpretive validity. Improving the rigour of research findings can be done by increasing the number of appropriate methodological techniques. Methods are a means to improving validity, but validity is not inherent in any methodology (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Creswell (1998) recommends that at least two appropriate methodological techniques are necessary for any qualitative study to be considered valid. Examples of appropriate methodological techniques for exploratory interpretive research include triangulation, thick descriptions, respondent validation, and researcher reflexivity. Interpretive validity

is described as “the degree to which participants’ viewpoints, thoughts, intentions and experiences are accurately understood and reported by the qualitative researcher” (Hannes, Lockwood, & Pearson, 2010, p. 1740). In order to fully understand the participant’s experiences using libraries, an interpretive approach was taken in this research, which required that the researcher become more intensely involved with the research than other qualitative research approaches. Intense involvement with this research could be considered a source of bias by some critics of this research. Being self-reflexive provided the researcher with the opportunity to explain how and why the interpretations were made. It also provided an opportunity to show how the ideas of the researcher changed during the research process.

One of the problems encountered with exploratory research is that ”there is no way of determining how many participants must share a point of view for it to be validated” (Pyett, 2003, p. 1174). Displaying qualitative data numerically can also be done with the intention of increasing the analytic rigour of the validity of qualitative research, but in some exploratory research, counts can sometimes be misleading (Hannah & Lautsch, 2010, p. 19), especially when frequency does not necessarily indicate relevance or importance (Thorne, 2008, p. 156).

This study utilized frequency counting to demonstrate the credibility of the research. Established guidelines are often lacking when calculating the representativeness of qualitative findings, so some researchers arbitrarily set their thresholds for representativeness at ten percent (Hannah & Lautsch, 2010, p. 17). Suddaby (2006) cautioned that ‘If counting is combined with an interpretivist approach, it may result in an inconsistency between the assumptions of that approach and the methods used to test its research questions (as reported in Hannah & Lautsch, 2010, p. 15).

Verbal counting using words such as *few, some, several, many,* and *most* that refer to participants and *sometimes, seldom,* and *rare* that refer to experiences, are too ambiguous to be numerically meaningful. Percentages are not used in this study because they are misleading when used to describe

a small sample. Operationally defining verbal counting with actual numbers maximized the numerical precision of this small sample of qualitative data. "A good rule of thumb is that if a total sample involved less than twenty-five cases (e.g., persons, families, organizations), it is more accurate to give the actual number showing one thing or another" (Sandelowski, 2001, p. 239).

Another approach which added additional rigour to this research was intra-rater or test-retest reliability of the coding of four interviews, which were chosen as a random sample of 10 to 15 percent of the data. Recoding was done under the same conditions by the same researcher. According to Chen & Krauss (2004) intracoder reliability "assesses the amount of inconsistency" of a single coder over time, whereas interrater reliability "assesses the relative consistency between two or more coders" over time (p. 525). Sufficient time elapsed between coding and recoding to eliminate memory bias from the first round of coding. Intra-rater reliability was measured by comparing the first codes with the second codes. The amount of variation between the original coding and the retested coding demonstrates the repeatability of the coding procedure. The results of recoding the four interviews averaged 0.72 agreements. George & Mallery (2003) consider a score of 0.70 or higher as good retest reliability.

Inter-rater reliability was not done in this study because only one researcher was involved with the analysis. According to Bazeley (2012), inter-rater reliability of coding is inappropriate for research that only involves one researcher, thus "if your analysis is interpretive/inductive/emergent (e.g., as in grounded theory) then there's no reason why someone else, potentially with a different perspective/question/concern/experience would interpret your data in the same way as you have – so then you have to train them to code and give them a very structured coding guide (which is antithetical to the method), and what does it prove other than that you can train someone to think like you?"

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the research methodology used for this study. Despite the challenges of researching a "hard to reach" population, twenty-three homeless men were interviewed. The locations

chosen to conduct this research and the procedures followed for recruiting participants were described. Safety of the participants and the researcher were considered in choosing suitable places to conduct this research, due to the increased personal risks of crime found throughout the DTES of Vancouver. The procedures for collecting, coding and analyzing the data were also discussed. An interpretive approach guided this exploratory research, in order for the researcher to examine the experiences and meanings constructed by participants. A discussion about the validity of the results is also included at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the results of twenty-three individual interviews which were conducted in two phases by the researcher. The primary objective for this data collection was to investigate adult homeless men's experiences and perceptions of public libraries as a place in Vancouver. A secondary objective was to provide a detailed account of these men in the context of the homeless situation in Vancouver's urban core. Section 4.2 draws upon the interviews as well as the researcher's own varied experiences working with this community and external sources to provide a contextualized portrait of the participants. Section 4.3 reports on the participant's preferences for and perceptions of particular libraries as well as providing background information on the libraries. Section 4.4 reports on the various aspects of the access to and use of libraries by the participants and 4.5 reports on the role of the library as a place in the lives of these men. Throughout the chapter, italics are used to show actual, verbatim, responses by participants.

4.2 Participants

Demographic profiles of the participants are presented in order to provide some general information about who took part in this study as well as create some context for the study results. Care has been taken to protect the identity of participants in reporting their responses. All personal names and geographic names have been redacted. Being mindful of privacy is important when reporting qualitative research, especially in this small, self-selected sample of homeless men from downtown Vancouver.

Twenty-one of the twenty-three participants spoke about their current living situations in Vancouver; four participants were unsheltered and lived rough, seven participants stayed in shelters, and ten participants were housed: nine lived in SROs and one had his own accommodation in exchange for volunteering as a city park caretaker. The nine participants who were housed in SROs had previously

experienced homelessness, and their current housing situation was tenuous; SRO accommodations offer limited amenities and are unstable, leaving SRO residents at risk of becoming homeless again.

During the course of the interviews, sixteen participants spontaneously volunteered information about their personal backgrounds. Participants were originally from all regions of Canada and somehow eventually had made their way out to the west coast. The mildest winter weather in Canada is on the west coast, which is attractive to homeless people who prefer to live outdoors all year round. Only during the wettest and coldest nights of the winter will the hardiest of the absolutely homeless look for emergency shelter indoors.

Only two participants grew up in Vancouver and had family nearby; eighteen participants moved to Vancouver from other parts of Canada. Four participants self-disclosed Aboriginal heritage. One participant was from Great Britain and one was from the United States.

Participants in this study ranged in age from their twenties into their sixties. Fifteen participants were over fifty years old. This is noted because the high-risk lifestyle of homelessness is a contributing factor to the shortened life expectancy of many homeless people.

Table 4.1 summarizes high-risk behaviours spontaneously self-reported by sixteen of the twenty-three participants in this study. Participants are identified by a number, rather than by their real names.

High-Risk Behaviours	**Participant's Identification Numbers**
HIV	19
Suicidal	2, 20, 22
Alcohol	3, 9, 16
Illegal Drugs	2, 4, 5, 6, 17, 19
Mood disorders	9, 10, 12, 15, 18,19, 20, 22
Activities that involve Police, Courts or Jail	2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19

Table 4.1 High-risk behaviours spontaneously self-reported by participants.

Six participants spontaneously reported that they had used illegal drugs [marijuana, cocaine, crystal meth, and heroin] in the past, but at present were not using drugs. Seven participants smoked cigarettes. One middle-aged participant spontaneously self-disclosed that he was HIV positive. One participant remarked that spending time in the library helped reduce his drug use: "*reading a good book at the library is better than chasing dope; I still have money in my pocket when I go to the library*".

Overall, participants in this study appeared to be relatively healthy, considering their high risk lifestyles combined with extreme poverty. Nineteen participants talked about walking to the library or walking mostly in downtown Vancouver and occasionally around the Stanley Park seawall, which may be how participants kept themselves in reasonably good physical condition. One participant said he did not carry a backpack because he had a bad back. One younger man said he would like to walk across Canada. One participant said he used to be a skateboarder, but due to too many injuries, has since given it up. One participant said he and a friend occasionally hiked nature trails in North Vancouver.

Participants were all very polite, and some men engaged in personal conversations with the researcher, including their plans, hopes and thoughts. A man who is now housed said he was "*seriously thinking of getting a small dog*" as a companion. Most participants said they were managing the best they could, despite their limited resources due to extreme poverty and personal setbacks. Six men had served time in prison. Five participants had previously been married. Four participants mentioned they had children, but no longer had contact with them.

One man self-disclosed that he "*lived with his girlfriend in the DTES*", but this was an exception; twenty participants reported that they lived alone. One man said that he "*came from a very dysfunctional family*" and one participant had a "*very bad experience as a foster child".*

On the condition of being homeless, one participant commented that "*being homeless is like being stuck; you can't get on with your life*". One participant said, "*When I was homeless, I was in survival*

mode; I couldn't plan past the present day, and I had no plans for the future". One participant said, "*If you work, you can't tell anyone you are homeless. The logistics are unbelievable*".

The various mood disorders and other behaviour issues with which participants had been diagnosed may have contributed to their current precarious housing situation, but these disorders and anti-social behaviours may not have been the primary reason for their homelessness. Other factors such as unstable employment and incomplete basic education may also have contributed to their situation of economic poverty. Five participants had attended university, but not all had completed their degrees. Eight participants had finished high school, and ten never finished high school. Of the ten that had quit school, four had since successfully completed their high school equivalency examination, by being self-educated in public libraries.

Of those participants who had former occupations, only two indicated that they longed to return to their former occupations which required driver's licenses, while six others said that they did not want to go back their former careers, for a variety of reasons, including that they had left stressful, high-risk jobs, or their business ventures had ended badly, or their jobs were now redundant. Former occupations of participants included two cooks, a carnival worker, a carpenter, a soldier, a security guard, a taxi driver and a truck driver. One participant had once worked in a public library, and two men had been self-employed. Four participants said they did volunteer work in DTS and in the DTES; one participant said, "*I'm interested in doing volunteer work, but I won't have a criminal record check done; I'm too afraid to face my past*". Another participant revealed "*Right now, I'm getting out of a very dangerous situation and I'm using the library to jumpstart my next life*".

For a wide range of reasons, the participants now all live in extreme poverty in Vancouver. Some of the participants are currently on disability pensions, while others are on welfare. Some participants may be eligible for pensions or welfare, but they choose to be self-employed. Four participants currently work at the Gathering Place, either as paid staff, or as volunteers. Five of the participants reported

doing volunteer work in the community with social organizations in the DTES or at the YMCA. One participant said he had been in foster care, and when he reached the age when he was no longer eligible for foster care, he was on their own, with no other means of financial support. He had to find work and has had to make do with what he had, which was very little. Seven participants said when they were younger, they got involved with alcohol and/or street drugs and ended up homeless and were now trying to get their lives sorted out. All seven reported that they had succeeded in getting off street drugs, and three had also succeeded in finding single room accommodation and were working.

The next section describes the four absolutely homeless participants, who live rough in Vancouver.

4.2.1 Unsheltered participants

Of the four unsheltered men who were participants in this study, the oldest man was in his sixties, two men were in their fifties and the youngest man was in his thirties. One had a master's degree from a Canadian university, one had been a truck driver, but his driver's license had expired and one had been a tradesperson. One did not disclose his occupation, but indicated that he currently works part-time.

Two of the unsheltered men worked daily, recycling empty beverage containers, and proudly said they had never relied on welfare, while the other two unsheltered men were on welfare or disability pensions. The two men who recycled beverage containers lived on about the same amount of money per month as welfare. One of the men proudly said, "*I won't go on welfare. I earn about $200 per week scrounging and recycling*".

All four unsheltered men in this study indicated they were interested in finding decent accommodation, but all said living rough was preferable to living in close proximity with mentally unstable people, alcoholics and drug addicts, especially in the emergency shelters or SRO rooms.

One unsheltered participant recalled, "*Stanley Park is not safe to live in, so a couple of years ago, I tried to live in an SRO, but I only lasted for two weeks. I left because people screamed all night, there*

were bedbugs and cockroaches and the toilet at the end of the hall was always plugged with condoms and syringes".

One unsheltered man said he had been on the waiting list for BC Housing for several years and wondered if BC Housing was unable to contact him without a stable phone number. He said that for the past two years he has lived in a tent in Vancouver, while waiting for BC Housing. "*My clothes always smell musty from living in a damp tent*". He had no idea how much longer his wait might be for housing.

The four unsheltered men seemed to be very self-reliant and independent. All four men consciously chose not to avail themselves of any handouts or social services for the homeless. A sense of pride could be detected when they discussed their lifestyle choice. These unsheltered men all said most emphatically that they did not have any association whatsoever with any emergency shelters, and as noted above, some had tried staying at emergency shelters or SROs but had chosen to live rough. As a public health precaution against tuberculosis and other airborne communicable diseases, shelter beds that are in close proximity are sometimes arranged head to foot (Johnson, 2011), but this arrangement may cause additional problems: one participant said he tried to stay at a shelter, but the person in the shelter bed next to him had such smelly feet, it was unbearable and so he left.

> *I live under a tree in Stanley Park. When you're homeless, Stanley Park is just for sleeping; you can't make any fires in Stanley Park. I won't sleep in shelters because there are bed bugs and people smell really bad, especially stinky feet. The air is really nice in Stanley Park. It's healthier in Stanley Park than in a shelter; I never get sick sleeping outdoors. I have two tarps and a sleeping bag. I put one tarp on the ground and use the other tarp like a tent cover. In the daytime I fold up the tarps and stash them. I have a shower pass for Brockton Oval [*a sports field in Stanley Park*]. They have hot showers and lockers there. In the wintertime when it rains, everything gets wet and it's very dark in the woods by 5 pm.*

These men live rough, either in the bush, at the beach or in parks around the city of Vancouver, which they believed, were safer and healthier places than staying in crowded emergency shelters or SROs. They did not want to be dependent on anyone for anything.

Most of all, they all said living rough kept them away from the mental suffering in the emergency shelters. They all said for the time being during the summer months, they had relatively safe places to sleep, and enjoyed the fresh air outdoors, especially in Stanley Park. Unlike a camping trip for a few days or weeks, living rough is very different, and these men experience the city differently from other residents. As one participant said, "*Stanley Park is only for sleeping, not leisure*". The homeless men who lived rough said they don't make a camp *per se*; they just unobtrusively sleep with a blanket under some pieces of cardboard or under plastic tarps. One man explained: "*I sleep on cardboard in the doorway of a downtown business".* Living outdoors in Vancouver is very damp; participants said that having access to a free hot shower and a place to shave every day and somewhere to do laundry for free [at the Gathering Place] was very important to them. Having access to showers and laundry facilities also helps to keep homeless people and people who live in SROs indistinguishable from people with regular housing.

Like travellers who often seek somewhere to temporarily store their luggage, homeless people find it more convenient not to have to transport their belongings everywhere with them. All four absolutely homeless participants talked about the importance of having a secure place to store their belongings. It is much safer for someone who is absolutely homeless to put their belongings in storage than carry all their belongings everywhere with them. Most commercial storage facilities will not rent storage space to people without a permanent address and storage space rent is more expensive than most homeless people can afford. Instead of private storage, there are several places in the DTES that provide free storage space for the personal belongings of homeless people. First United Church in the DTES created a storage system with individual plastic totes in their church basement. One unsheltered man said

"*Keeping all my belongings in storage is much safer than carrying everything with me*". More often now in Vancouver, homeless people are able to keep their belongings in storage and only carry the minimum of personal possessions with them, usually in a small daypack. Homeless people without a lot of baggage and belongings are quite indistinguishable from people with housing. "*I'm not a shopping cart person. I have a storage locker. I ride a bike. I wear a helmet and only carry raingear and my bike lock*". One participant said, "*I only have a clean outfit and my shaving stuff in my daypack*" while another man said, "*I have clean socks and my blanket in my daypack*". These homeless men did not fit the stereotypical image of scruffy homeless men, burdened with all their bags of belongings in shopping carts.

Homeless men on their own are justifiably fearful about being robbed of their personal belongings. One unsheltered man worried about getting robbed, "*my backpack is a giveaway that I am homeless*." One unsheltered man with a laptop said, "*I am terrified my laptop will get stolen. I use dark-adapted software so the computer screen glare won't be as visible outside at night*".

One participant with a medium-sized backpack, who has been absolutely homeless in Vancouver for six years, said matter-of-factly about his carrying a pack, "*My backpack is a giveaway that I am homeless. I get used to being shunned everywhere I go because I am homeless. It is very discouraging."* People are judged by their appearance, and the more homeless people can make themselves appear not homeless, the better they will be treated by everyone they interact with. Not carrying big backpacks and belongings helps people appear not homeless, which made it impossible for the researcher to make unobtrusive observations of any homeless men in public libraries.

The next part of this chapter describes the lifestyle of the seventeen participants who were sheltered, either in an emergency shelter or SRO.

4.2.2 Sheltered Participants

According to the new Canadian Definition of Homelessness (2012), shelter includes emergency overnight shelters as well as provisional accommodation such as rooming houses and SROs. Of the

seventeen sheltered men who participated in this study, seven men stayed in emergency homeless shelters, nine men lived in SROs and one man had accommodation as part of his volunteer job as a city park caretaker.

Emergency overnight shelters are not intended to be a substitute for social housing; they are institutions, not homes. At emergency overnight shelters, there is a limit to how long someone is allowed to stay for free. For those who cannot afford to pay to stay at a shelter, the process to find another free place to stay starts all over again after his limit of stay is reached. In downtown Vancouver, the length of a free stay varies from shelter to shelter. Some emergency overnight shelters limit staying to a few days, while others are longer, up to three months. Short-stay emergency shelters are usually only free for the first couple of nights, while the longer-stay emergency shelter arrangements cost money. People who work part-time, or are on welfare or disability pensions can stay in the long-stay emergency shelters as a transition to other low-cost housing arrangements.

In Vancouver, there are always more people in need of emergency shelter than there are emergency shelter beds, so there is a constant struggle among homeless people to find emergency shelter, which adds further stress to their already stressful lives. Despite all the chaos at emergency shelters, due to a chronic lack of social housing all across Canada, staying at emergency shelters has become a lifestyle for some homeless people. Staying at an emergency shelter may in part help to provide a vital sense of belonging for some homeless people, which is sometimes completely lacking in some homeless people's lives when they are living rough.

Emergency shelters in the DTES are always very crowded and operate with strict behaviour rules. These shelters are usually closed all day and provide no daytime services or activities for homeless shelter guests. One man who had experienced both incarceration and homelessness recalled, "*shelters are like jail; every day is the same*". Another man described his stay at a shelter that remained open all day: "*During the daytime I avoided the shelter like the plague. Other people who stayed at the shelter*

just watched TV all day like zombies". Instead, he went to the library to get away from the monotony at the shelter.

Many shelters in Vancouver do not serve meals, but instead provide guests with coupons for meals at McDonald's or the cafeterias at the Carnegie Centre or the Gathering Place. The policy of not serving meals has the effect of prompting hungry guests to rise early in the morning and leave the shelter.

In the DTES, some shelters remain open during the daytime, such as the 60 bed low-barrier shelter for men and women at First United Church. When the church congregation severely declined in numbers, the church stopped holding church services, removed all the pews and filled the nave with bunk beds for homeless people. The church serves meals and offers social services for their shelter guests. The basement of this church offers a place for homeless people to store their personal belongings. In May 2012, when the researcher visited First United Church in Vancouver during the daytime, it was very crowded with homeless adults resting on bunk beds and long lineups of homeless adults in the hallways waiting for free meals and social services.

During the coldest and wettest days of winter, emergency cold-weather shelters open in church basements and other locations around the lower mainland of BC. Temporary shelters are funded by BC Housing, in partnership with local agencies who provide services for homeless people. An example of this type of temporary cold-weather shelter is the nonreligious and nonjudgmental respite provided in the basement of the First United Church in White Rock, British Columbia. People living rough who do not normally use shelters are welcome to come to the emergency cold weather shelter late in the evening [10 pm] for a bowl of chili and a mat with a pillow and a sheet and blanket to sleep on the floor. The shelter closes early the following morning. A welcome new addition to the services provided in the church basement is a bath shower, constructed with money raised by the congregation. For the past three winters, the researcher has volunteered at this emergency cold weather shelter in White Rock.

The homeless men who frequent the emergency cold weather shelter in White Rock mostly collect empty beverage containers during the daytime and live off what they earn when they cash them in at the local bottle recycling depot. Some of the men have lived in the White Rock community all their lives and even though there is no social housing available for them in White Rock, the men live rough because they want to remain in their own community. During visits to the local beverage recycling depot in White Rock, the researcher occasionally recognizes some of the homeless men whom she has helped at the cold weather shelter in White Rock. These men are very comfortable on "their turf" at the depot, and they always pleasantly exchange greetings with the researcher as everyone—both homeless and non-homeless depot customers—submit their beverage containers for cash.

The Catholic Charities Men's Hostel in downtown Vancouver is across the street from the Central Library, and is operated by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver. This is one of the older shelters for homeless men in Vancouver, and caters to men who are dealing with the courts and are transitioning in or out of prison (Allen, 2000, p. 71). The researcher was given a tour by the staff of this shelter in May, 2010. This shelter is located on the third floor of a historic brick building, so homeless men must line up outside on the street and wait to be admitted into the shelter when it opens daily in the late afternoon/evening. Inside, there is a large dormitory with one hundred single beds and clean bedding [sheets, pillows and blankets] which is separated from a lounge with tables and chairs and a television. There are also some bookshelves with mostly popular fiction paperbacks and a computer terminal for checking email and job hunting. Shelter residents routinely "*go over to the* [Central] *library when the shelter closes in the morning and wait at the library all day until the shelter opens in the evening*". No meals are served at this shelter; guests must leave the shelter very early in the morning to go across the street to McDonald's or walk several blocks over to the Gathering Place for their meals.

Single room occupancy (SRO) accommodation provides an alternative to the emergency shelter accommodation described above. Ten study participants reported that they currently live in SROs,

which are different from rental apartments. SROs are small rooms usually rented month by month with no lease agreements. There is usually no socializing allowed in most SROs. There are often strict rules about not allowing anyone other than the SRO tenant into a room, and SRO rooms do not have any ensuite bathrooms or kitchens. Living in an SRO is a lifestyle of necessity often due to extreme poverty, and participants said they "got by" month to month with hardly anything left after they paid their rent with their welfare or disability pensions.

Living in old, run-down SROs, "*sharing dirty bathrooms at the end of hallways"* and *"interacting with people who are drunk or high on drugs*" was described by four of the younger study participants who have lived in both emergency shelters and SROs, as being as stressful as living in low-barrier emergency shelters, where people with addictions are tolerated.

> *I tried to live in an SRO but it was really awful, so I went back to the shelter. There were bed `bugs, and the space was only ten feet by twelve feet. It had a sink. The hotplate would blow the fuses. It's too hard to live near people who have drug induced psychoses*.

In contrast to the situation described above, one of the older participants lived in subsidized accommodations did not report any problems with drugs or alcohol in his building, so not all SROs provide poor living conditions.

This section described the participants in this study and the living conditions they experienced. Although none of the participants were required or encouraged to be forthcoming about their personal lives, some of the participants were quite frank about discussing their past. Homelessness is a very complex social problem; and as the profiles of these men indicate, there are many social factors which contribute to it and complicate it. Even though each participant comes from a totally different background, what they all have in common is that they are extremely poor single adult men who use public libraries.

4.3 Library Preferences of Participants

This section reports on the library preferences of participants and provides background information on these particular institutions.

All but three of the participants in this study lived in downtown Vancouver which is why the most frequently used libraries in this study are located in downtown Vancouver. Of note is the fact that participants typically reported using more than one library. One man recalled when he was homeless, *"I frequently used several libraries, but not for sleeping. I had no money, and I wanted to go somewhere to kill time, so I would go to the library a lot. I always felt welcome at the library".*

Table 4.2 summarizes the libraries that the participants mentioned using. The most commonly used libraries are the Reading Room at the Gathering Place in Downtown South (21), which was the primary recruiting site for this study, the Central Library of the Vancouver Public Library in Yaletown, which was used by all participants (23), and, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre in the DTES (8). The relatively small number of participants who use the Carnegie Centre is surprising because in many ways it is the most accessible of the three. All participants who mentioned using the Carnegie Centre either live in the DTES or are absolutely homeless men.

The only participant in this study with a Master's degree said he occasionally uses the Belzberg Library at Simon Fraser University's downtown campus when he needs to look up something that he cannot find at the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library (VPL). A more detailed discussion of the three most commonly used libraries is presented in the next section.

Library	**Distance from Central Library in Downtown Vancouver**	**Frequency of participants who reported use of this library** [main mode of access to library]
New Westminster Public Library	22 kilometers south-east in the City of New Westminster	1 [bicycle, SkyTrain]
Simon Fraser University (SFU) Belzberg Library, Downtown Vancouver [University Library]	1 kilometer north	1 [walk]
Persons with Aids Resource Library [non-profit organization, 5,000 volumes]	1kilometer east	1 [walk]
West Vancouver Memorial Library [225,000 volumes]	10 kilometers north-west in the District of West Vancouver	2 [bus, walk over Lions Gate Bridge]
Dunbar Library [Vancouver Public Library (VPL) Westside branch library, 75,000 volumes]	8 kilometers south-west	1 [bicycle]
Kerrisdale Library [VPL Westside branch library, 48,000 volumes]	9 kilometers south-west	1 [bicycle]
Kitsilano Library [VPL Westside branch library, 110,000 volumes]	7 kilometers west	1 [bicycle]
Strathcona Library [VPL Eastside branch library, 47,000 volumes]	2 kilometers east	1 [walk]
Britannia Library [VPL Eastside branch library, 70,000 volumes]	4 kilometers east	3 [bicycle, walk]
Firehall Library [VPL Westside branch library, 60,000 volumes]	4 kilometers west	3 [bicycle, walk]
Joe Fortes Library [VPL Downtown branch library, 80,000 volumes]	3 kilometers west	5 [bicycle, walk]
Mount Pleasant Library [VPL Eastside branch library, 200,000 volumes]	4 kilometers east	5 [bicycle, walk]
Reading Room Carnegie Library [VPL Downtown branch library, 11,000 volumes]	1.5 kilometers east	8 [bicycle, walk]
Reading Room Gathering Place [operated by the City of Vancouver, not VPL, Downtown South] [5,000 volumes]	3 kilometers west	21 [bicycle, walk]
Vancouver Central Library [VPL Downtown, 1.3 million volumes]		23 [bicycle, walk]

Table 4.2 Summary of libraries that participants mentioned using

4.3.1 Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre

The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre in the DTES is the smallest and oldest branch of the Vancouver Public Library [VPL] system and caters to the library needs of the homeless throughout Vancouver, as well as to the library needs of the residents of the DTES. Unlike other branch libraries in Vancouver, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is open every day of the year. One participant who lived in the DTES said, "*Of all the public libraries in Vancouver, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre has the best hours for being open*". Even without a home address, anyone in Vancouver can be issued a library card at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, but a Reading Room library card is only valid at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, not at any of the other libraries in Vancouver. This arrangement has been in place for a long time at VPL , but discussions about easing the restrictions on eligibility for library cards at all VPL branches for people without an address are ongoing [pers. comm., January 2011, VPL staff at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre and at Central Library]. Also, a new full service library is being planned for the DTES, with social housing for women and children above the library, which will be located at 720-730 East Hastings Street.

Accessing the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre requires going into the DTES area, which is the most dangerous neighbourhood in the city of Vancouver. Three participants, none of whom resided in the DTES, said they did not use the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre simply because in order to get there, they have to walk alone through the streets of the DTES, which they felt was too dangerous, even in the daytime. It was unexpected to discover that these homeless men feared for their own personal safety and avoided walking through this high crime-rate area where many homeless people reside. One younger participant remarked, "*I keep out of* [the area from] *Victory Square to Oppenheimer Park. It's too uncomfortable*". Another participant said, "*I don't go east of Dunsmuir Street*". An older participant said "*I don't go to United We Can to recycle my bottles any more. It's too dangerous*". United We Can is a beverage container recycling depot nearby the Carnegie Centre. These responses by adult homeless

men indicate their concerns about the dangers of walking through the DTES of Vancouver during the daytime to go to the public library. Thus, just getting to the Carnegie Centre involved more personal safety risk than three participants were willing to take.

Of the six men in this study who lived in the DTES, none of them spoke about being as afraid about walking in the DTES as did the three men who did not live in the DTES and who avoided the DTES. One of the men who lived in the DTES commented, *"It's actually pretty safe in the DTES because there are so many people out on the streets".* One of the participants who lives rough said, "*I usually go to the Central Library but the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre stays open later than the Central Library, so when the Central Library closes, I ride my bike over to the Carnegie Centre and stay there until it closes*".

Another participant who lives rough in Stanley Park said it was simply too far for him to walk four kilometers from Stanley Park to the DTES in order to use the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Consequently, the four participants who avoided the DTES were silent about the library services offered at the Reading Room of the Carnegie Centre as they did not venture into the DTES or use any services for homeless people in the DTES.

Five participants wanted more libraries to be open on holidays. *"The Reading Room at the Carnegie Library is open* [on holidays], *but we all can't go there* [because it is too small]". Another man who lives in the DTES remarked that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre has the best hours because it is open every day from ten a.m. until ten p.m., but *"the Carnegie Library is always crowded and the hard chairs are not very comfortable and not conducive to staying very long".*

The Carnegie Centre has a long history of being a refuge for homeless men who have nowhere else to go in Vancouver. The use of the Carnegie Centre by homeless men can be traced back to the Depression years following the stock market crash in October, 1929, when it served as "a refuge for unemployed and elderly men, who had lost their jobs or who were without families" (Curry, 2007: 66).

When the Carnegie Library was built in 1903, the library occupied the whole building and served the entire population of Vancouver for many years. Now, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre only occupies one small room on the main floor of the Carnegie Centre, and is very crowded every day, as the density of the downtown population has increased considerably. Currently, people who reside in the DTES are welcome to stay in the Carnegie Centre as long as it is open, a welcome service for those who would otherwise be alone all day in an SRO or waiting outdoors for a shelter to re-open in the DTES.

On numerous occasions, the researcher observed that the majority of users in the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre were adult men. Every day, the men in the Reading Room sit silently for many hours at the wooden reading tables and read newspapers, magazines and books.

The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is now old and small and crowded, but everyone is always welcome there. One participant remarked, "*In the poorer neighbourhoods, no one questions who uses the library*". This attitude was noted also by Allen (2000), who found that many people who reside in the DTES don't venture into other neighbourhoods because they feel too shunned and excluded outside of the DTES (p. 74).

One man commented that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre gets busier when the weather gets bad and more people seek indoor places to stay warm and dry.

One participant who lived in the DTES reported he enjoyed attending the Friday afternoon book giveaways that take place outside the Carnegie Centre on Hastings Street. To gain a greater understanding of this event and its importance to the homeless population, the researcher attended a Friday afternoon book giveaway. The library staff set up two tables on the sidewalk and placed approximately one hundred books on the tables; the books were free to be taken by any passerby, with a limit of five books per person. The books are donations to the Reading Room or withdrawn copies from the Vancouver Public library collections. A few videos, cds, or DVDs may also be included with the paperbacks and hardcovers. A crowd of people quickly gathered around as the tables were being set up

and the books were grabbed as soon as they were put on the table. The researcher was told by the library staff that people took the free books to read them, but the staff also acknowledged that people took the free books to sell on the street.

Internet access is available for a limited time on three computers in the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, but more Internet access is available for a longer time in the Computer Lab upstairs on the third floor of the Carnegie Centre. The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is very small and crowded, but is a safe and welcoming place. One participant described his own experience using the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, "*You can come sit here and relax and as long as you are not bothering anyone, you shouldn't be bothered and you can mind your own business and kick back".* The Carnegie Centre enforces very strict rules of conduct to make it a safe place for anyone who goes there, but the Carnegie Centre cannot control what happens outside the Carnegie Centre, in the challenging environment of the DTES.

The Carnegie Centre is very heavily used by residents of the DTES, but it was expected by the researcher that the Reading Room would also draw homeless people from throughout the city who do not have an address, or who are disqualified from obtaining a regular library card at other libraries in Vancouver. However, as noted above, a relatively small number of participants in this study use this facility, even though VPL designated the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre to serve the needs of library users in Vancouver who are without a street address.

One respondent commented "*the Carnegie Library is too depressing; all the people in the library stay there for their whole life*". Some homeless people try to have very little or no contact with homeless people at libraries, or elsewhere, so they avoid places where other homeless people congregate.

Another reason that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is avoided is that the DTES is dangerous and four homeless men reported that they felt unsafe walking through the DTES even in the daytime to go to the Carnegie Centre. Other comments by participants about the Reading Room at the

Carnegie Centre indicated that the chairs at the Carnegie Centre were uncomfortable, the Internet access was limited, and that the Reading Room was always crowded. Thus, it seems that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre under-serves the library needs of people in the DTES of Vancouver, as well as people without a street address who reside elsewhere in Vancouver.

4.3.2 Reading Room at the Gathering Place

The Reading Room at the Gathering Place is operated by the City of Vancouver, which also operates the Carnegie Centre and the Evelyn Saller Centre, but, unlike the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, it is not part of the VPL system. The Reading Room at the Gathering Place serves the "drop-in" library needs of the Downtown South community, much the same way that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre serves the "drop-in" library needs of the DTES residents. The Downtown South neighbourhood where the Gathering Place is located is a relatively poor neighbourhood in downtown Vancouver but with less of the extreme poverty that is found in the DTES.

The Reading Room at the Gathering Place is modelled on the services offered at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, but is only open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. Anyone with a valid membership at the Gathering Place, which costs $2.00 per year, can also apply for a free library card to borrow books and magazines from the Reading Room. Like at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, there are no fines for overdue library materials at the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. Anyone who does volunteer work at the Gathering Place can also borrow DVDs from the Reading Room. There are no computers to access the Internet in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place, but limited computer access is available at the Education Centre, adjacent to the Reading Room in the Gathering Place. The Reading Room at the Gathering Place is much smaller than the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Like at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, the Reading Room at the Gathering Place is mostly used by men.

Irene Brooks has been the coordinator of the Reading Room at the Gathering Place since it opened in 1995. One participant said, "*Irene is amazing. She gets us what we want to read*". The Reading Room at the Gathering Place is stocked with current reading materials that appeal most to the people who use the Reading Room at the Gathering Place—books, daily newspapers, popular magazines and DVDs are available. Due to very limited space, there are only wooden library tables and chairs for reading. A book club and a writing club meet regularly at the Reading Room.

One participant described how much he enjoyed the Reading Room at the Gathering Place:

> *Recently, I had some time to kill over at the Gathering Place, so I took my girlfriend into the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. My girlfriend found a book she wanted to read, and I found a poetry anthology with two poems I had not read before by one of my favourite poets. Although we were sitting right beside each other, we became so unexpectedly absorbed in our books that we didn't talk to each other for three-quarters of an hour, and it was surprisingly very romantic. We had the nicest time together there because nobody disturbed us while I transcribed the two poems and my girlfriend read her book while sitting next to me. It was exquisite.*

4.3.3 VPL Central Library

The Central Library at Library Square is by far the biggest and most vibrant library with the most indoor public space in the City of Vancouver. Designed by the renowned architect Moshe Safdie, it is an example of post-modern public architecture.

The Central Library is located within walking distance of many homeless shelters and SROs in downtown Vancouver, which makes the Central Library easily accessible for homeless people. Due to the central location in downtown Vancouver and the large size of the library, there is a greater mix of people who use the Central Library, in comparison with the smaller, branch libraries in the residential neighbourhoods of Vancouver. In addition to people who live downtown, people who work downtown,

and people from other Vancouver area communities, tourists and students from all around the world also use the Central Library, which enhances the vibrancy of the library.

The closest branch library to the Central Library is the Joe Fortes Library, located in the West End of downtown Vancouver and is the closest downtown branch library to the Central Library, a distance about 2.5 kilometers. Because of this Library's downtown location and proximity to the Central Library, it will be mentioned here. Five participants said they used the Joe Fortes Library, but three of them mentioned the Library's limited seating areas: "*it's always very crowded* [at Joe Fortes Library], *so I go over to the other library* [Central Library]".

All of the participants in the study reported that their preferred library was the Central Library, primarily because it had the most public seating, the largest collection of print materials and the best access to computers. At the Central Library, there are 1,200 seating choices, which offers library users a much better chance of finding a quiet place to sit than at the smaller branch libraries, which are considerably more crowded than the Central Library and tend to be noisier and often more chaotic, primarily due to multi-purpose uses of the smaller public spaces in the branch libraries.

Four participants talked about how they liked to browse serendipitously through the print book and magazine collections in public libraries in order to discover new authors or new subjects, while 16 participants indicated that they preferred to limit their reading to their favourite authors and favourite non-fiction subjects. Popular fiction authors mentioned by participants included James Clavell, Ken Follett, Greg Isles, James Michener, and Nicholas Sparks, and genres/series included Aboriginal books, best-sellers, graphic novels, manga comics and *Pearls before Swine* comics, and mysteries. One participant liked to watch Japanese animation. Favourite non-fiction subjects included American civil war, art, astronomy, biographies, carpentry, cooking, drawing, economics, geography, history, leatherwork, music, opera, poetry, politics, psychology, reference, science, stage production, travel, and woodworking, plus two perhaps surprising reference titles—the *Dictionary of National Biography* and

the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Favourite magazines and newspapers mentioned included *Hot Rod* magazines*, The New York Times* newspaper, and the *Chicago Tribune* newspaper. Participants preferred using the Central Library for browsing as well as for finding particular authors or books on special topics, mainly because the collection is more comprehensive at the Central Library than at any of the branch libraries.

The Central Library also provides more computer access to email and the Internet, unlike the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre or the Reading Room at the Gathering Place. Access to the Internet was another very popular reason why many participants preferred to use the Central Library.

4.4 Access to and Use of Libraries

4.4.1 Getting to the Library

The participants in this study reported that they frequently walked, occasionally rode a bicycle and rarely, took public transit to get to public libraries. As most participants were within reasonable walking distance to the libraries that they frequented, it was as convenient to walk or ride a bicycle to get to the library as it was to use public transit. The cost of transit was another reason that walking or bike riding was preferred.

Four participants in this study had their own bicycles and reported visiting more branch libraries around the city than participants without bicycles. Bike riding was mostly done in and around downtown Vancouver, which has dedicated bike lanes on some streets and no steep hills. One man reported that once he rode his bike about twenty-two kilometers from the DTES out to New Westminster Public Library for the day and then took the Skytrain (public transit) back to downtown Vancouver, while another participant reported that he occasionally rode his bicycle out to Wreck Beach when the weather was nice. One participant with his own bicycle, and who now has housing, said he often made a day trip riding over to the Kerrisdale Branch Public Library, with a stop for mid-morning coffee and a fresh-baked muffin at the Kerrisdale Community Centre, then he would ride out to the

University of British Columbia Point campus, stopping at the UBC golf course and then ride back through Point Grey, stopping at the Kitsilano Branch Public Library and then ride downtown to the Reading Room at the Gathering Place, where he could read until it was time for dinner in the cafeteria at the Gathering Place, before heading home.

Another participant who frequently rode his bike over to the Carnegie Centre and its Reading Room in the evening because it stays open until 10 pm, reported being ticketed several times recently in the DTES by the Vancouver Police for not wearing a bicycle helmet. He said he had lost his helmet and could not afford to buy a new helmet and pay all the fines he had been issued by the police. He said he was thinking he may have to spend time in jail if he could not pay off the fines.

Overall, participants most often walked or biked to public libraries.

4.4.2 Frequency of Use

Going to the public library was a major part of the usual daily routine for fourteen participants, one of whom reported, "*I go the library every day*". Nine participants reported that they stayed for more than two hours per visit, and often stayed until closing. Table 4.3 is a summary of the frequency of library use reported by the participants in this study.

Number of visits per week	Preferred time of day to visit	Typical length of stay per visit
14 participants go daily	4 participants preferred morning	5 participants stay up to 1 hour
7 participants go several times per week	2 participants preferred afternoon	5 participants stay 1 to 2 hours
2 participants go once a week	4 participants preferred evening	9 participants stay more than 2 hours, staying sometimes until closing
	13 participants go any time; no preference	4 participants did not state length of stay

Table 4.3 Frequency of library use reported by participants (N=23)

It must be acknowledged that the participants' answers about frequency of library use may be inflated by the "halo effect" in which research subjects increase numbers which show their behaviour in the best light (Standing, 2004, p. 451). However, the researcher's extensive experience dealing with

homeless men and the often painful honesty with which these research participants answered other questions in the interview led the researcher to believe that these men were being truthful.

The price of condominiums in downtown Vancouver close to the Central Library is the highest in Canada, but unobtrusive "people watching" those entering and exiting the Central Library leads one to conclude that not all library users are part of the wealthy, cosmopolitan lifestyle of Vancouver. Every morning, over a hundred people of different ages, and style/cost of clothing mingle together while they wait in the atrium of the Central Library until it opens at ten a.m. The responses of the participants in this study regarding early morning entrance to the Library would indicate that some homeless men would likely be in this crowd, but this researcher was unable to visually differentiate homeless people with any certainty during several observation experiences.

While there are many negative stigmas regarding behaviour associated with homelessness, the researcher did not observe any during twelve hours of unobtrusive observations at various libraries in downtown Vancouver nor any behaviours of library users that indicate homelessness with any certainty. This method of possibly enriching the data with contextual information about library use by the homeless was abandoned, as the behaviour of homeless people who use libraries appeared not to be noticeably different from other library users, assuming that there were indeed homeless men within the Library during the periods of observation.

Also, since storage facilities for the personal belongings of homeless people have been available in the DTES, more homeless people are able to go places and do things in downtown Vancouver, without having to haul all their belongings with them wherever they go. A homeless person without any personal belongings is indistinguishable from other people in downtown Vancouver.

Most participants in this study used the Library for many hours per day (Table 4.3 above). Several participants made comments that expressed the sentiment: "*It is hard to pass the time when the library is not open, especially when the shelters are closed and there is nowhere else to go".* Fourteen

participants reported using the library daily and stayed "*from opening until closing*". In defense of remaining at the library from opening and closing every day, one respondent remarked, "*Nobody complains if someone stays home and watches TV all day; what's wrong with going to the library all day?".*

One of the participants in this study reported that he has used the atrium of the Central Library continuously since it opened in 1995. While there is nothing stopping anyone from continuously using public space as often as this, continuous daily use of the atrium of the Central Library for seventeen years is not typical of most library users.

It was not unexpected for the researcher to learn that many of the sheltered homeless participants organize their lives into daily routines. Sheltered homeless participants live in "survival mode", that is, from day to day, which means they have to line up early for free food and shelter, or they could miss out and go hungry and not have anywhere to stay that night. Sheltered homeless people compete with other homeless people for scarce resources for their day to day survival. One respondent described his daily routine this way: *"I go over to the library when the shelter closes in the morning; I wait at the library for the shelter to open in the evening".*

Several participants said they would occasionally leave the library to get something to eat and then return to the library until closing. For example, among some homeless people in Vancouver, Tuesday afternoons are known as "*Chicken Tuesday*". Three participants said that while it is not a "secret", they did not want to say too much about it, in case too many people find out about it, thereby reducing their chances of getting a free meal. Rain or shine, only on Tuesdays, starting around mid-afternoon, an orderly single-file line about half a block long starts to form on a downtown street. They are quietly waiting for "The Chicken Lady" to arrive. Eventually, an ordinary car pulls up to the curb, the passenger window rolls down, and The Chicken Lady hands out single-serving boxes of Kentucky Fried Chicken to each person waiting in line. Everyone waiting in the line gets something to eat. Extra sandwiches are

brought along to give to the people at the end of the line if the Chicken Lady runs out of Kentucky Fried Chicken. When the last person in line has been given something to eat, The Chicken Lady rolls up the car window and drives off. Apparently, this has been going on for years, and nobody really knows much about who The Chicken Lady is, or why she does this, but one person said someone left money in a will for her to do this act of charity. Most study participants were appreciative of the generosity of people like The Chicken Lady, and other places where free food is given to the homeless in downtown Vancouver, but some homeless people, by choice, do not to line up in public for any handouts of free food. After having something to eat, participants said they went back to the library until closing.

Nine participants reported using libraries opportunistically, for as long as they could, whenever it was open. Ten participants reported using libraries occasionally, staying for "*about an hour or two per visit*." Occasional use of the library is behaviour typical of most library users. Four respondents preferred using libraries "*in the mornings*", while three preferred using libraries "*in the afternoons*" and three preferred using libraries "*in the evenings".* Again, these are very ordinary library user behaviours no different from the behaviours of other library users. Thirteen participants said they have no preference when they use the library, but that they would use the library any time they can.

4.4.3 Use of Libraries by Homeless Men

The constant use of libraries by some participants, day in and day out, suggests that the library is central to their lives, and may give them a stable base from which to re-establish their lives. Participants reported using public libraries to do ordinary, everyday things such as "*check my email and read books, magazines, comics and newspapers*", things that they may not be able to do elsewhere, especially for free. Other reasons participants reported using libraries included to play online games [Scrabble], to use the library computers, to recharge laptop and cell phone batteries, and to use the washrooms.

Table 4.4 is a summary of the activities that participants said they did at libraries together with the frequency of responses. The table is separated into two types of activities: those that require using

computers and those that do not, as this distinction was often made by participants. Separate sections below provide more details on each of these activities.

Library activities that do not require using computers:	Library activities that require using computers:
22 participants read print materials: books, magazines, newspapers	13 participants searched the Internet
4 participants browsed print collections	9 participants sent and received email
4 participants did personal writing at the library	4 participants played online games
3 participants browsed DVD collections	2 participants picked library items on hold*
2 participants searched for jobs in newspapers	2 participants returned borrowed items*
1 participant browsed music collections	1 participant downloaded iphone apps
	1 participant downloaded ebooks to a laptop*
	1 participant searched the online catalogue
	1 participant searched for jobs online

Table 4.4 Frequency of library activities

*Activities requiring a library account are marked with an asterisk

4.4.4 Use of Library Computers

Twenty participants reported that they used computers at public libraries, and eleven of these expressed the opinion that access to the Internet is necessary for everyone. Participants reported using library computers at the Central Library for the same ordinary reasons as other library users., as summarized in Table 4.4 Participants reported that they searched the Internet, received and sent emails, played online games, downloaded free i-phone applications and e-books, and one respondent did daily online job searching, as a requirement of staying at a shelter.

Twenty-three respondents similarly reported that they preferred to use the Central Library, primarily in order to have access to computers. One participant said, *"I'm not much of a reader; I just like to use computers* [at the library]".

One participant remarked, "*I like to use all the computer stuff* [technology] *at the* [Central] *library*". Three participants reported that they used computers to "*do research*", while another four respondents said they *"like to play online games*". One participant reported he occasionally played online bridge at the library. For the past six years, one participant said he has gone to the Central Library nearly every day it has been open because "*I seriously play online Scrabble with people from all around the world*".

Another popular use of the library computers by participants is to send and receive emails. One participant remarked, "*without an email account, you're hooped*". Another participant said that for years, once a week, he meets an old friend for coffee, and then after coffee, they go together to the public library to check their email accounts. Another participant said, *"I helped a friend learn to use email at the library. He's been in contact with his family through email and has gone home for visits twice. Using email has made his life so much better*".

One participant commented that he thought the Internet attracts people to the library who previously were not library users. "*Some people only come to the library to use the Internet but aren't interested in doing other things* [at the library]". One participant said, "*I look forward to reading, emailing and searching the Internet in peace and quiet at the library*".

While technology was used by participants primarily for social purposes, such as corresponding by email and playing online games, computers were sometimes also used to avoid the pressures of face-to-face social interaction, pressures which may be particularly acute for some homeless individuals who experience stigmatization due to their circumstances. One participant said he much prefers to interact with technology than deal directly with people, because with technology, *"it was not as personal*".

Participants also expressed curiosity and interest about new technologies available in libraries. For example, one respondent said, "*I would like to talk about Facebook*" while another participant said, "*I would like to try an e-book*". One respondent who owned his own laptop said he frequented places wherever free wi-fi [wireless Internet access] was available. Another participant revealed that he had Attention Deficit Disorder, and explained that he was unable to concentrate to read print books. Instead, he thought he might try to listen to audio books, but his library card has been suspended for six years for owing overdue fines.

Older respondents seemed somewhat less interested than younger respondents in using the technology available at public libraries. One older respondent said *"I'm not interested in computers, email, the Internet or playing online games; I just like being at the library".* Another older respondent said he did not use computers, even for email, because he was no longer dexterous, due to severe arthritis in his fingers.

Having public access computers available for free at public libraries is very convenient, especially for people who cannot afford to own their own technology. Nearly all of the participants preferred to use the Central Library, in large part because it had the most access to computers in downtown Vancouver. The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre has limited computer access, but there is another computer lab elsewhere in the Carnegie Centre. The Reading Room at the Gathering Place does not have any computer access, but there is some limited computer access elsewhere at the Gathering Place.

4.4.5 Seating Preferences

When asked about seating preferences in the library, the response from ten participants was that they had "*no preference for seating*". With a little more probing, a few preferences were stated. The next most common response by seven participants was that they liked to sit somewhere quiet. Two participants preferred sitting in corners or nooks. One participant preferred "*to sit where there was some solitude".* Another preference was to *"sit in a place where they could watch what was going on,*

but not be the centre of attention, or be stared at". Six respondents said they preferred to "*sit by a window",* while four participants said they would choose to sit anywhere, as long as it was "*comfortable".*

Participants who stayed in crowded emergency shelters said, "*When I need space, I go to the library. I find a good book and go by the window and read. It's my comfortable place to go*". Another participant said, "*I like to sit by the windows and just think my own thoughts*". One respondent recalled that at one library he had visited, his favourite style of chair was an "*egg chair; they are my favourite because they are very cocoon-ish"*.

Other participants made comments to the effect that there was *"lots of good seating"* at the Central Library. As well, several participants commented about the *"nice chairs"* that were designed by Moshe Safdie, the architect of the Central Library. Only one participant said that the chairs at the Central Library were *"uncomfortable for sleeping".* One participant, who recounted his addiction to heroin for six years, said he stayed at the Central Library all day because his family would not let him go home when he was using heroin. This participant said he was absolutely homeless for two years and when it was cold, he would stay in libraries to keep warm and rest. He recalled that *"if I didn't sleep the night before, I would fall asleep in a quiet corner. Thank God for libraries".*

Several participants made comments similar to: *"I know that librarians don't want homeless people sleeping in their chairs".* Several participants said they agreed with librarians prohibiting sleeping because libraries are busy places and don't have enough seating for people to use them for sleeping. Two participants mentioned that students often sleep in the Central Library, which may suggest that some participants recognize a double standard at play.

One respondent, who now has housing said "*I'm too shy to sit in the library*" and instead indicated he preferred to read at home. One respondent with ADHD said *"it's really difficult* [for me] *to sit still for very long, so instead* [of sitting] *I like to browse* [through the stacks] *and just wander around* [in the

library]". Study carrels with a power bar were the seating preference for one respondent because they allowed him to plug in his laptop and re-charge his phone batteries.

Two respondents asked the researcher if there was ever going to be *"public access to the roof garden",* at the Central Library. They thought that if it ever opened, it would be a wonderful experience to sit in a garden high above the streets of downtown Vancouver.

In summary, although most participants indicated that they were not particular about where they sat in a library, it seemed that their desire for solitude, comfort and to be out of the centre of attention were their main considerations with respect to seating, while a few other participants said they were either too shy or too hyperactive to feel comfortable sitting in any library.

4.4.6 Public Washrooms

In six interviews, the condition of the men's washrooms at the Central Library was discussed at surprisingly great length, which was unexpected. Of all the things that participants discussed in their interviews, this was, by far, the issue that six participants had the strongest feelings about. No other libraries' washrooms were mentioned in interviews. The researcher had not specifically asked participants any questions about the men's washrooms, and the researcher did not change the script of the interview questions, but the researcher was very surprised how much the six participants spontaneously talked about the condition of men's washrooms at the Central Library. Their comments about the men's washrooms were very similar, which indicated to the researcher that their comments were probably accurate and their strong opinions were probably not embellished.

There used to be public washrooms in stores and businesses, but there aren't any public washrooms [in downtown Vancouver] any more except in the [Central] Library. [At the Central Library] there is the worst mess ever in the men's washrooms, especially on the lower level of the concourse. There are three stalls and two urinals in the men's washrooms. Men take sponge baths in the sink. They camp in the stalls. The handicapped stall in the men's washroom on the second floor of the Central Library is

the penthouse. They shave, wash their hair and get cleaned up. Now there are signs saying no sponge bathing, no clothes washing.

Five participants suggested that the men's washrooms at the Central Library should be redesigned. They were described as being too small and very awkwardly designed. One participant even went to the trouble of taking digital photographs of the layout of the men's washroom at the Central Library and sent them to the researcher by email.

According to respondents, another long-standing problem with the men's washrooms in the Central Library is that they are used daily by men who bathe and shave, which leaves the men's washrooms "*in a vile mess*". One participant thought perhaps these men were unaware that *"they can go over to the Gathering Place every day to have free hot showers*". Participants were very concerned that other homeless men who regularly use the Central Library would be blamed for all the mess left day after day in the men's washrooms at the Central Library.

Participants who discussed the condition of the men's washrooms at the Central Library also mentioned how difficult it is to find any other public washrooms in downtown Vancouver. There are only three public washrooms in all of downtown Vancouver. During the Olympics, there were more public washrooms installed temporarily in downtown Vancouver, but they were removed soon after the Olympics ended. It is not uncommon to see men urinating in public in the daytime in the DTES.

All the participants who spoke up about this issue felt that not enough was being done by the Central Library staff to remedy this longstanding problem. One participant who was so concerned that the men's washrooms in the Central Library might be closed if these problems continue and are not resolved, said that he had recently written a letter to the City Librarian about this situation.

4.5 The Role of the Library as a Place for Homeless Men

Despite the fact that homeless people often describe their lives as "*being stuck*"' or that they "*can't plan past today"*, or talk about just being "*in survival mode*", it seemed from their responses, that some

respondents had established daily routines of going to libraries, while on the other hand, other participants talked about "*killing time at the library*" and having "*nowhere else to go, but the library*" which suggests that the library was the fallback destination for the day unless something more interesting was happening. Other social places that participants frequented in downtown Vancouver, but less often than libraries, were coffee shops, community centres, recreation facilities, parks, bookstores and churches. Participants without any transportation [bikes or public transit] seemed to stay within a few blocks of wherever they slept, whether it was in the bush, a shelter or an SRO in the DTES. Other participants said libraries were a place to rest and to cool off in the summer and keep warm and dry in the winter, "*libraries are a place to get warm after staying outside all night*".

While there are opportunities to socially interact with people at public libraries, seven participants in this study indicated they did not seek any social interaction when they went to libraries. These same seven participants typically responded by saying, "*I prefer not to socialize when I'm at the library*". Four participants said, "*I don't think of the library as a social place. I don't meet people at the library".* There was no indication that participants who did not socialize would rather be somewhere else, they were just interested in using the library as a social space.

Five participants indicated they occasionally socialized at libraries, for example, *"sometimes I have conversations with people at the library",* but further probing revealed that *"mostly I just keep to myself*". One respondent said that in his experience using libraries, "*most people* [at libraries] *are not very friendly"* and that *"most people* [at libraries] *just want to be left alone* [at the library]". Three other participants indicated similar thoughts, "*I just mind my own business* [at the library]", and that "*most people aren't very sociable when they are homeless*".

Six participants said they felt safe at the library and that they really "*liked to go to the library for some peace and quiet*", especially to get away from noisy street traffic. Responses from participants such as "*I like to be alone", "I am very shy", "I do not socialize at the library", "I am not very sociable"* indicated

that they chose not to socialize, whether they were at the library, but perhaps they were more sociable in places elsewhere in the city. Thus, public libraries are safe public places for people who want to be left alone to read or search on the computers undisturbed.

For an all-day stay at a public library in Vancouver, fourteen participants preferred the larger Central Library rather than any of the smaller branch libraries. There is a greater mix of people at the Central Library than at smaller, branch libraries in the residential neighbourhoods in Vancouver. There is more seating, more variety of seating, and more places that are quiet and private at the Central Library than are found in the smaller, busy branch libraries. Five participants commented that the smaller branch libraries were often very noisy, especially where there were library programs for children. One participant commented how noisy the library staff members were too, especially at the smaller branch libraries. One participant said, "*It's hard to find any quiet places for reading in the library. Libraries are big and open and chaotic and noisy. I lived in a very chaotic home and I don't like distractions".*

One participant felt that the Central Library is too small now for the population it serves. Probed further, the participant was asked if the library is trying to do too many things in one space. His response was "*no, but the atrium is a total waste of space*".

One man recounted that when he was homeless in another city in Canada, he played bridge [a card game] at the local public library as a social activity*. "We kept quiet and were not a hindrance, and it gave us an opportunity to be inside. The only bridge games I play now are online".*

Three participants reported visiting the new Mt. Pleasant branch library. One participant noted how "*upscale*" the new library is. Another participant remarked "*there is a very nice fireplace in the new* [Mt. Pleasant] *library", but "not enough natural lighting*". Yet another participant said "*I didn't want to stay very long* [at the new Mt. Pleasant library]" because he sensed that the new Mt. Pleasant Library "*was more for women and children"* and less welcoming to single men like himself.

Participants never spoke about being turned away from public libraries in Vancouver, but one participant recalled he had been permanently evicted from an academic library in another Canadian city. When he was unable to produce any identification, the library called the police and then he said he was escorted from the library and was told he was permanently evicted from that library. He said he had once worked in a public library and also used libraries when he went to university, and said he understood how they functioned. In recalling this particular situation, he felt he had probably been discriminated against because of his visible minority appearance. Despite this humiliating incident, he continues to regularly use public libraries, because "*they improve the quality of my life*" but he said now he is much more careful to "*mind my own business*" and "*keep more to myself*".

Throughout the interviews, the participants made comments about the library as a place. One man stressed the fact that libraries need to be places that "*serve everyone*", while another noted that the key element of the library as place was that "*the public-ness and the free-ness of the library are very important and should be maintained for everyone*". Several participants described libraries as "*welcoming places*", which is not surprising as many homeless people have nowhere else to go when most emergency homeless shelters are closed during the daytime. In many cases, their discussion of using public libraries was very pragmatic. One man said that "*using libraries is better than sitting on the street corner*", and another said, "*I go to the library to get away from all the street traffic*". Four participants said they appreciate libraries as places where they just like to sit and people-watch.

4.5.1 Attitudes Toward Libraries

Typically, participants said they came alone to the library to do ordinary things, such as to check their email, read a book or a magazine, play an online game or search the Internet. For whatever reason they used libraries, the majority of participants considered public libraries as free, safe, indoor public places where they felt welcome and where they could conserve their scarce personal resources.

When asked if they considered the public library to be the "living room" of a community, more than half of the participants had never heard of the phrase or didn't agree with it. As they thought more about it, four participants agreed that the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre felt the most like the living room of the DTES, and similarly that the Gathering Place was the living room of Downtown South. One participant felt that "*the Central Library did not feel like a living room because the architecture is too big and open".* Another participant said he didn't like modern architecture because there was "*too much wasted open space and no privacy*".

Another participant disagreed with the "living room" characterization by saying that "*a public library is not a home; it is an institution, not personal space".* With further probing he also said, *"when you are at home you can sit in your living room in your underwear, but you can't do that in the public library".* This participant equated privacy with home spaces.

Many positive comments were said about being at the library. One participant said *"At the library, I can forget the bad things that are happening in my life".* Other participants used metaphors about survival to describe the benefits of public libraries. One participant commented *"the library is a lifesaver"* and another participant said *"the library is like a sanctuary".*

One of the respondents said otherwise, "*I don't feel I really belong in libraries*". Three participants indicated that "*libraries are places for nerds*". One man said "*I'm concerned if people I know see me at the library, they will wonder what I am doing there. Not cool*". This was not a common response, but some of the respondents said: "*I didn't use libraries before* [I became homeless], *but* [I] *do now, because I have nowhere else to go"*. These new library customers are now regular library users. One participant said "*I grew up without any books", while another two reported: "I didn't use libraries as a child. There were no programs at the library in my community where I grew up. But now the Internet attracts people who weren't library users to the library"* and "*I never used public libraries* [when I was] *growing up. There was a library in my town, but there were no programs* [at the library]". Two other participants

said they came from remote, rural parts of Canada where there were no libraries and therefore they grew up without books, but another who also came from a remote part of Canada with few libraries had a richer home environment: "*I grew up with lots of books and have always been an avid reader*".

4.5.2 Library Cards

Traditionally, public library membership cards are issued for free by public libraries to residents of the communities that they serve based on proof of a local residential address. Within the VPL system, Vancouver residents without an address are offered a library card at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Six participants reported they tried unsuccessfully to get a regular library card at the Central Library, which is their preferred library branch. Without a current local address, they were denied a regular library card and instead offered at card at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre.

The library card for the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is different from regular VPL library cards because it permits only limited access to VPL databases, computer booking software and the VPL wireless Internet network. Table 4.5 is a summary of the number of participants who have been issued library cards for different institutions, according to participants' responses. Only two participants reported they had library cards at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. All the participants said they regularly used the Central Library, and ten participants said they had a regular VPL library card. For those who use the Central Library but do not have a library card, they cannot take anything out and they only have limited access to the computers and no online library services.

Five participants said they had a library card at the Reading Room at the Gathering Place, but it only has a very small collection of books, magazines and newspapers compared to the vast holdings of the Central Library and all the branch libraries of VPL and no computers. Seventeen participants expressed that "*the library is an important part of my life*" and six participants indicated *"I want a* [regular] *library card* [at VPL]", in order to become more active library users, especially at the Central Library.

Library	Number of participants who said they frequent this library	Number of participants who said they have a library card for this library	Number of participants who said they wanted a library card for this library
Reading Room at Carnegie Centre: no address required to get a library card; no fines	8	2	0
Reading Room at Gathering Place: no address required to get a library card; no fines	21	5	0
Central Library: address required to get a library card; fines charged	23	have library cards 10 lost library card 1 suspended library card[owes fines] 2	6

Table 4.5 Library cards issued to participants

Participants who had regular VPL library cards said their library cards were "*very important*" to them. One participant had a VPL library card in his wallet, but was currently unable to use his card because he owed fines for some overdue books from six years ago. That he kept his library card even though his library privileges were suspended showed that having a library card is significant to him. Five participants said that there are lots of good things that go on at the library, but because they do not have a regular VPL library card, they do not feel that they should participate in library activities, even though many of the activities in reality do not require possession of a valid library card. Five participants said that if they had a library card and belonged to the library, "*I'd join a writing club", or "I'd join a book club",* and *"I'd go to the events at the library*".

4.5.3 Public Libraries as Public Space

The *Canadian Law Dictionary* defines public space as "a place where the public goes, a place to which the public has or is permitted to have access and any place of public resort" (Vasan, 1980: 186).

When asked the interview question, "What does the phrase 'public space in public libraries' mean to you?", seven participants responded that they did not realize public libraries were public spaces. Other participants were aware that public libraries are public spaces, and understood that in Canada, everyone is welcome to use public space. One participant said "*true public space gives people dignity and equality*" and that libraries are important because "[libraries] *are a place for* [homeless] *people to socially interact with other people, if they want to*". Another participant who is no longer homeless said that "*being homeless is a pretty miserable life*", but that "*public libraries help* [to] *integrate people into society*".

One participant compared public space in public libraries with the [quasi]-public space in shopping malls. He said that there was "*more of a sense of trust at libraries than there was at shopping malls*" because when he goes into a mall in downtown Vancouver, "*it feels like the security guards and store owners* [at Pacific Centre Mall] *are more suspicious of me than when I go into the library*". Another participant commented that he thought a library *"is the same as a shopping mall because they had the same kind of security guards* ". One participant did not understand how libraries like the Central Library could "*be so big and still be free. I'm worried that libraries will become privatized".*

The general lack of interest among participants about public space in public libraries was somewhat surprising for the researcher, considering that few indoor public places are as freely accessible to homeless people as libraries are. However, few respondents seemed to be sensitized to issues of pubic space versus privatized space, at least with respect to public libraries.

4.5.4 Benefits of Public Libraries to Homeless Men

One participant said that public libraries are *"whatever you want to make of them";* in other words, everyone has a different reason why they use public libraries. Several participants said, *"There's nothing else like libraries*" and spoke appreciatively about how much *"people benefit from using them".* One

participant who was familiar with the historical significance and the legacy of Carnegie Libraries said, "*God bless Andrew Carnegie!*". Another participant exclaimed, *"Oh, thank God for libraries!".*

One participant said*,*

> *Using public libraries has affected my life. Absolutely. I consider myself a very well read person, but I haven't bought very many books in my life. The fact that the government or the library makes volumes available is really important. It's extremely important. It would make quite a bit of difference not to have a public library. I couldn't imagine not having a public library. Gee whiz. I mean I wouldn't have discovered all kinds of writers totally by accident. The beauty of the library is that you just go in and grab a bunch of books, and read one or two.*

Seventeen participants in this study believed that using public libraries had greatly improved their lives. From their conversations and comments, the majority of which were positive, it seems that the public library is an essential part of their daily lives. On the "negligible benefit" side two participants felt that using libraries had made no difference in their lives, while four participants had no comments.

4.5.5 Learning

Nineteen participants described libraries as learning places: eight said they experienced the library as "*a place to learn"*. One participant said that "*libraries are for life-long learning*" while another participant said that *"libraries are the people's university"*.

Eight participants said they never finished high school, but had self-educated themselves at public libraries. Four participants said they had successfully completed their grade twelve equivalency [GED] examinations with the knowledge they gained from reading and studying at public libraries. One participant said, "*I didn't go to high school. I left school in grade seven. I lived in group homes. Then I lived on the street. I am self-taught in public libraries. I spent so much time in libraries I did my GED in one month*". Another participant proudly recounted *"I didn't go to high school, but learned things by reading* [at libraries]*. I did my GED exam in only two months".*

Four participants said they had completed some post-secondary education and liked to use libraries to "*conduct research*". Another participant described the library as "*an infinite vault of knowledge*". One participant said he appreciated libraries because "*libraries give people the capacity to research anything".*

Participants also were very aware of the importance of knowing how to read and they openly discussed this. Some participants said *"learning to read is possible at any age*" and said *"I'm so glad that I learned to read",* while another was very proud that many years ago, he helped a forty year old man learn to read.

One participant said that for the past ten years, he has had an informal book club with about two dozen people at the Central Library. "*We exchange good book titles with one another, but not Oprah's picks*". Another homeless man said he had joined a writing club at a public library in another city and had some of his work published by the library writing club. He was especially proud of this accomplishment, because it was before he completed his GED exams.

It was obvious from participants' responses that reading and learning are very important and satisfying activities enjoyed by these homeless men at public libraries.

4.6 Summary of Results

This chapter began with a description of the participants in this study, followed by a thematic compilation of responses given by the men who were interviewed about their use of public libraries as a place in Vancouver. Despite all the affluence found in downtown Vancouver, homelessness is also found in downtown Vancouver, especially in the DTES. As a very high-risk lifestyle associated with extreme poverty, the stigmatization of homelessness makes it very socially alienating. Despite the freedom of access that the libraries throughout Vancouver offer as inclusive public places, other than the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, libraries in Vancouver currently offer few incentives for homeless people to become more active library users. Only eight participants in this study actually used the Reading

Room at the Carnegie Centre, the library designated for homeless people in Vancouver. Four homeless men avoided going to the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre in the DTES because they felt it was too dangerous in the DTES, even during the daytime. The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre currently underserves the homeless library users in Vancouver, but a new full-service library is being planned for the DTES.

The Central Library is conveniently located within walking distance to anywhere in downtown Vancouver. All twenty-three participants preferred the more spacious Central Library to other libraries because there are more places to sit quietly and read than at the smaller branch libraries.

Access to men's washrooms at the Central Library was very important to eight participants. They were concerned about the cleanliness of the washrooms and strongly disapproved of the mess that was left by presumably other homeless men. One participant said he was so concerned about the condition of the men's washrooms that he had written to the City Librarian. He said he felt that keeping the washrooms open was important for all library uses, but especially for homeless men.

Homeless men who regularly use the Central Library in Vancouver would like to be issued their own regular library cards, rather than only a card only for the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Participants used public libraries for many similar reasons as those of other library users; typically, participants said they came alone to the library to do ordinary things, such as to send and receive emails, read a book or a magazine, play an online game or search the Internet. Twenty of the twenty-three participants reported that they used computers at public libraries. There are more computers for email and the Internet at the Central Library, which are not available in the Reading Room at the Gathering Place and of limited access at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre.

Personal belongings and storage space was expected to be a major issue, but turned out not to be a major issue at all, since free storage for the personal belongings of homeless people has been made available in the basement of First United Church in the DTES. Consequently, many of the participants

carry only a small daypack for their personal belongings, just like many other library users, making unobtrusive observations of homeless library users impossible to locate with any certainty.

Public libraries are a free place for learning and many homeless people have self-educated themselves in public libraries. Four participants successfully completed their GED [grade twelve equivalency] with the knowledge they gained from reading and studying at public libraries. Five participants in this study who liked to write and expressed interest in belonging to writing clubs and book clubs and attending book talks and other social events at the Central Library felt that they should not attend such events without having a library card for the Central Library.

Participants perceived public libraries as public institutions: free, indoor public places where everyone is welcome, and there is no time-limit on how long someone can use a library each day, a policy which they opportunistically took full advantage of whenever they could. Most of the participants in this study believed that using public libraries greatly improved their lives. Two participants felt that libraries had made no difference in their lives, and six participants indicated that libraries are among the safest public places for homeless men to conserve their scarce personal resources.

Some respondents felt they did not really belong in libraries, but even those who said they did not fit in to the library environment echoed the sentiments of those respondents who felt more comfortable: they said they liked to go to the library to have a rest or sit by the windows and look outside and think their own thoughts. While public libraries are noisy, busy places, most respondents said they do not actually do much socializing at the library, and instead they prefer to just keep to themselves. Thus, public libraries can also be a place of solitude, where despite being surrounded by other people, participants who want to be left alone to just think their own thoughts can do so. Given the daily challenges of their lives outside the library, this solitude is all the more valued by these library users.

Overall, the participants in this study used libraries in Vancouver for educational purposes, to access the Internet, and for reading for pleasure, as well as a respite from the misery of homelessness,

specifically to access public washrooms, just for killing time or as a place to keep warm. Although they realized that homeless people without an address are not eligible for a library card at the Central Library, five participants still fervently wished they could have regular library cards for the Central Library, simply because it is the place where they choose to spend the majority of their time, largely because it is the safest and most respectful place with access to the most free amenities that they have found in downtown Vancouver.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research has tried to capture homeless men's personal experiences using public libraries to better understand what public libraries as a place really mean to them. The following discussion identifies and interprets several key composite themes that have emerged from the results.

5.2 Public Libraries as a Place for Homeless Men

According to Gorman (2000) "libraries are places that embody learning, culture, and other important secular values and manifestations of the common good, and there is a need arising from our common humanity to visit such places" (p. 45). Philosophically, public libraries are considered a "common good", because they are an essential public institution where people can improve their social, moral and intellectual pursuits through free self-education. Although technology used in libraries has changed over time, the primary purpose of public libraries is essentially the same as it was when they were established in the 1850s, which is to bring culture to the masses (Brunt, 2006). Thus, the popular ethos of public libraries continues to be to "help people to help themselves".

The contemporary Canadian architect Richard Henriquez (2006) believes that libraries are manifestations of community identity: "Every community must build its own library. The process, like writing an autobiography, organizes civic history, clarifies dreams, confirms uniqueness and satisfies the soul" (p. 161). In other words, communities with greater social and cultural diversification may have quite different library needs than communities with less social or cultural diversification (Most, 2009).

The Vancouver Public Library system as a whole has about 6.5 million patron visits annually and circulates 10 million items per year (Barrington, 2012). The Reading Room in the Carnegie Centre is the smallest library in Vancouver and is always very crowded with library users from opening until closing, every day of the year, partly because neighbourhoods such as the DTES that are disadvantaged by

extreme poverty tend to use more on-site library resources than more affluent neighbourhoods which tend to prefer off-site access (Japzon & Gong, 2005, p. 461).

Japzon & Gong's (2005) socio-spatial analysis of neighbourhoods and public library use in New York City found that poor residents, who were mostly Hispanic and blacks, underutilized public libraries as compared to middle-class residents, who were mostly whites and Asians. Two factors that are correlated with low library use in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in New York City were lack of education and low income.

It is unknown how many homeless people actually use libraries. At present, libraries in downtown Vancouver have no way of tracking how many homeless people use libraries because there is no way of accurately identifying homeless people from among the thousands of library users within Vancouver libraries every day. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2002) in Washington, DC estimates that about 10 percent of homeless people use libraries, but it is not known if this is a valid estimate for Vancouver.

The location of a library is another important factor for library use, especially for disadvantaged people. The participants in this study all walked or rode bicycles to get to the library. Men with bicycles used more branch libraries than the men that walked. Koontz (1997) showed that libraries which are located within walking distance are used more often. In downtown Vancouver, the Central Library serves the library needs of all the residents of Vancouver. Participants in this study preferred the Central Library and the Reading Room at the Gathering Place more than the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Besides distance, personal safety in the DTES was another consideration for library preference for some participants. In this study, one older participant who lives rough and has no immediate plans to exit homelessness has used the Central Library all day every day, six days a week, since it opened in May 1995. This individual avoids the DTES for personal safety reasons and instead has developed a daily routine at the Central Library.

Providing comfortable places to sit is essential to encourage use of a place. Whyte (1974) found that the simple availability of places to sit is by far what most people look for when they consider using a public space. Whyte (1980) also showed that "people sit where there are places to sit" (p. 28). Homeless people often need to find a place where they can sit and rest, but smaller branch libraries such as the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre have limited seating that is crowded and uncomfortable. The Central Library in downtown Vancouver was the preferred library by participants because it is big enough to accommodate everyone. The Central Library has washrooms on each floor, hundreds of computers, over a thousand places to sit and over 1.3 million volumes. The glass atrium of the Central Library is a popular place for people watching and hanging out during the daytime and evening, until the library closes, while the outdoor public area outside the Central Library is used more when the weather is nice.

Comfortable seating is provided in most public libraries, although sleeping is usually not permitted. Participants were well aware that libraries were not places to sleep. Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein's (1977) pattern language highlights this in Pattern 94: Sleeping in Public, which cautions:

> In our society, sleeping in public, like loitering, is thought of as an act for criminals and destitutes. In our world, when homeless people start sleeping on public benches or in public buildings, upright citizens get nervous, and the police soon restore 'public order' (p. 458).

There are very few other free indoor public places where people are welcome to spend unlimited time as opportunistically as they are able to at public libraries. Personal comfort and safety are important considerations for all library users.

The three publicly accessible amenities available at public libraries that are most sought by homeless men are free access to the Internet, comfortable chairs and functioning washrooms. Public libraries such as the Central Library which have free amenities such as washrooms, ample comfortable seating and computer access are even more attractive to homeless people than to other people with more means

who can afford to go into coffee shops, restaurants, pubs or other social places where it is expected that as customers they will spend money, usually on food or merchandise, in order to socialize or access the Internet away from work or home.

At the Central Library, the men's washrooms are used daily for shaving and bathing and left in a mess, presumably by homeless men. Several participants are worried that they will be blamed for the mess, which is not theirs. It is interesting to note that none of the participants spoke about the condition of the washrooms at the Carnegie Centre or the Gathering Place, perhaps because it is more widely known that there are free hot showers at the Gathering Place and at the Evelyn Saller Centre, which is nearby the Carnegie Centre. Six participants expressed concern about access to clean public washrooms at the Central Library. Some participants expressed concern if the men's washrooms at the Central Library were ever to close, that there were no other public washrooms nearby the Central Library for them to use.

The participants who reported spending most of their time in libraries indicated very ordinary reasons for using public libraries. This suggests that homeless people use public libraries as a place for many of the same ordinary reasons that others use public libraries. In addition to enabling them to belong to a community, the library also serves a special role for these homeless men – it provides them with a vibrant place to go to just be "ordinary" men, to be engaged in the same kinds of activities as other local citizens and to intermingle and blend in, which is in sharp contrast with their daily experiences of waiting in lineups for free meals or waiting to get a shelter bed for the night.

The results of this study strongly support the findings of Leckie and Hopkins (2002), who found that the library plays a dual role of serving information needs:

> The central library is rather unique in this regard in that patrons can satisfy both their higher-level informational needs and their need to feel part of a community at the same time. This aspect of the central library only contributes to its vitality as a public place: the library takes on

> multiple meanings for those who use it, and despite its size and complexity, citizens are able to make it their own and to incorporate it into the fabric of their lives. (p. 356)

Although Leckie and Hopkins' (2002) findings were based on a much broader group of public library users, their findings also hold true for the homeless men in this study. For example, the absolutely homeless men in this study behaved in ordinary ways that would not obviously reveal their homelessness. They distanced themselves from a traditional homeless identity that was reliant on others to provide their essential needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Instead, they seemed remarkably self-reliant and routinely used the library to satisfy their intellectual needs.

Leckie and Hopkins (2002) also found that public libraries in Vancouver are heavily used as "transition spaces" by new immigrants who are studying English as a second language [ESL] while adjusting to Canadian society (p. 354). Leckie and Hopkins (2002) did not specifically discuss the concept of libraries as transition spaces with any reference to homeless people, but this research found that participants discussed library use in the context of their own personal transitions. Like immigrants who are learning to speak English and creating a new Canadian identity, some homeless men in their own way also try to find new identities for themselves by spending time at public libraries. As one participant revealed, he was "getting out of a very dangerous situation" and spending time at the public library was enabling him to "jump start" into his "next life".

This research also found that some people continue to use public libraries after they exit homelessness, in contrast to the many services utilized by homeless people that terminate when a person exits homelessness. The social relationships formed between people of all ages and their library-related cultural and educational activities can create a sense of community, especially among frequent library users. Public libraries are safe and stable environments for all age groups and people can use public libraries throughout their lifetime. Public libraries are important places for homeless people to have access to, in order to be able to do the kinds of ordinary things that other library users also do.

5.2.1 Public Libraries as a Place for Reading and Learning

Public libraries are safe, indoor places where everyone is welcome to do ordinary library activities like read, use computers and learn. Reading is a leisure or educational activity that can be done alone, or together with other people. Reading at a public library can be a very enjoyable way for someone with very little means to occupy their leisure time, as it does not cost any money.

As reading can be a very time consuming activity, it is socially acceptable to spend a long time at libraries and to visit libraries often. In communities that are poor, such as the DTES, there is a much greater need for in-person use of libraries, and yet the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is the smallest library in the VPL system. People who do not qualify for a library card because they do not have a street address need somewhere to sit and read, but all the seats are usually occupied at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre. Thus, at present, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre under-serves the library needs of the DTES as well as homeless people in Vancouver who do not qualify for a library card to take books away from the library to read elsewhere.

Historically, three essential elements made libraries more functional places for readers: "as much shelf-room, as much reading space and as much light as possible" (Nicholson, 1877, p. 867 as cited in Pepper, 2006, p. 597). Before electric lighting was introduced in the 1890s, the best places to sit and read in libraries were at or near windows, and this remains the case today. A comfortable place to sit and read with just the right amount of non-glare natural light is the ideal environment for the enjoyment of reading.

All but one of the participants reported that they went alone to the library to read. All participants reported that the Central Library was their preferred library to use in downtown Vancouver. Leckie and Hopkins (2002) observed that 60 percent of library users were engaged in reading at the Central Library; older people spent more time reading than younger people in the library, while females were more often engaged in conversations than men.

Many participants spoke about the enjoyment they got from reading for pleasure, and some said that they liked to occupy their time by reading, because it was a way to stop thinking about all the bad things that were happening in their lives. One participant remarked that reading a good book at the library was better than chasing dope. Some participants had been avid readers and/or library users before they experienced homelessness, while others were not. Among the participants who were not such avid readers, some felt they did not really belong in libraries, but began using libraries when they were homeless simply because they had nowhere else to go. Some of these men had discovered libraries as a result of becoming homeless and had since developed an interest in reading. One of the participants had an informal book club, other participants had belonged to writing clubs at libraries in other cities, and several participants indicated they would be interested in belonging to book clubs at the Central Library.

This research found that homeless men engage in reading not only for recreation but also to learn new information and to improve their education. Although the basic literacy levels of participants were not evaluated, it would be expected that there would be considerable range in variation of basic literacy levels among participants. Several participants talked appreciatively about the importance of literacy and how glad they were that they knew how to read and that they had learned to use email and the Internet. One participant talked about helping someone else learn how to use email. He said that knowing how to use email had made this person's life so much better and through email he had subsequently restored contact with his family. Another participant also mentioned that in the past, he had helped another adult man to learn to read.

This research found that public libraries also function as educational places for some homeless people. A major contributing factor of homelessness is lack of education. The former occupations that most participants had before they became homeless did not require formal education. Nineteen participants described public libraries as learning places. A recent court decision in New York State ruled

that public libraries are educational institutions rather than cultural amenities (noted in *Library Journal*, 15 June 2011, p. 19).

In this study, eight middle-aged men who had experienced homelessness and extreme poverty since they were teenagers, said that over the years, they had gradually self-educated themselves by reading in public libraries. Four participants had recently successfully completed their High-school equivalency exams. This was an unexpected finding in this research, as the library literature makes no mention of homeless people self-educating themselves in public libraries. Given the opportunity, these men showed a positive self-interest in improving their education at public libraries. Four participants had attended university and indicated they enjoyed doing research at libraries. However, one of the participants who had attended university did not think that libraries actually made much of a difference in his life.

People who cannot afford to own their own computers are dependent on using free library computers, but they are restricted to only a limited amount of time per day. From their responses, many participants in this study expressed a keen interest to learn more about computers and technology. Three participants in this study had their own computers, but most participants were dependent on using the public computers in libraries for all their computing needs.

One participant expressed concerns about losing access to free computers if public libraries should ever become privatized. Another participant in this research commented that he could not understand how libraries could be free for people to use. These comments highlight the unique value that open access to technology in libraries provides to people who do not have other venues of access available to them.

In another study, Orrick (2011) surveyed 89 homeless people in St. Paul and Minneapolis about using the Internet, and 54 percent of the respondents in Orrick's (2011) survey said they accessed the Internet at public libraries, which is similar to the findings in this study.

It is unknown how many homeless people are digitally illiterate or intimidated by the Internet. None of the participants in this survey reported that they were illiterate, but some participants said they did not use computers, which could indicate digital illiteracy. In Orrick's (2011) survey, 22 percent of the respondents "reported that they did not know how to use computers at all. ...In addition, there were several individuals who mentioned that they did not access the Internet because they did not know how to read" (p. 12).

Orrick's (2011) research showed that homeless people would likely benefit from having more access to the Internet and improving their computer skills, as digital literacy has become as important and essential as basic literacy, but Orrick (2011) also acknowledged that public libraries alone cannot provide the necessary one-on-one instruction that homeless people might require to become digitally literate.

Public libraries are known as "the people's university", for anyone who wants to use libraries to read for pleasure or for educational purposes. One participant who had spent a lot of time at public libraries when he was a homeless heroin addict described libraries as "infinite vaults of knowledge". The majority of the homeless men who participated in this study acknowledged they were very grateful for all the things they were able to do in libraries.

5.2.2 Public Libraries as Social Places

People are generally more attracted to more sociable places than less sociable places, probably because it is basic human nature to be attracted to where the action is. Public libraries are vibrant social places that attract all age groups and all socio-economic groups within the communities they serve, and every day in Vancouver, thousands of people use public libraries. Whyte's (1980, 1988) behavioural observations of people in public places showed that people are more attracted to places where they can observe other people. Most modern public libraries have large transparent glass walls so that people passing by can look in and see what is going on inside the library. Seeing other people inside the public library may naturally encourage more people to also go inside and explore the library.

As public places, libraries aim to be positive places for individuals to spend time; quiet enough for individuals to be able to think their own private thoughts. Perhaps in part due to the extreme social stigma associated with homelessness, most participants in this research reported that they just kept to themselves, echoing the previous research of Snow and Anderson (1993), which found that some homeless people try to avoid being seen in public associating with other homeless people.

The majority of participants in this study said they preferred solitude when they were at the library. One of the ways that one participant socialized was by playing online Scrabble nearly every day with a group of international Scrabble players. This particular participant came to the library specifically to play online Scrabble, without having any face to face contact with any of the other Scrabble players who were in other countries around the world. This research supports Leckie and Hopkins (2002) finding that "the library as a place of enforced quiet has not disappeared and, in fact, may be exactly what the majority of patrons desire" (p. 349). Participants indicated they were mostly loners who preferred to keep to themselves and just sit somewhere quiet so they could watch what was going on, but not be the centre of attention or be stared at. At the Central Library in Vancouver, Leckie and Hopkins (2002) found that 76 percent of people they interviewed expected library patrons to behave quietly, and about 40 percent of their interviewees at VPL felt that people generally behaved appropriately at the library (p. 349).

For some library users, public libraries are more than books and reading; some people may also be attracted to public libraries for the social aspects of public libraries as a place, as much as they are looking for a quiet place for reading or learning. Public libraries organize many free social events for adults that include art shows, writing clubs, book clubs, author readings and public lectures where people have the opportunity to socialize together at the library.

In the present study, some of the participants indicated that they preferred not to socialize at all at libraries, but others said that they would be interested in participating in some library events, especially

if they could mingle with people who were not homeless. Although most participants in this study stated that they preferred to keep to themselves while they were at the library, some participants expressed an interest in wanting to join a book club or writing club at a public library. Inviting some of the homeless people to join a book club might be an ideal opportunity for librarians to do some outreach with these regular library users. Some librarians are finding that library book clubs with members who are experiencing homelessness "helped to open communication between the homeless men and women who frequent the library" (Lilienthal, 2011, p. 32).

Many public libraries have started community reading programs that encourage people in a city to read the same popular book. Some cities distribute free copies of the chosen book which helps to promote literacy and builds community. Reading programs such as these may be an incentive for some homeless people to use libraries as a social place. None of the participants in this study, however, mentioned participating in One Book, One Vancouver, which is an annual library book event for the entire city of Vancouver.

Several participants in this study said they enjoyed writing. One participant said he had tried to join a writing club in a library, but it did not work out because they could not find any suitable space in the library to hold the writing club. Another participant reported that he organized an informal book club with about two dozen people who regularly exchange good book titles. He also expressed a keen interest in joining a book club at the Central Library. These examples indicate that some homeless men are interested in participating in social events at the library, as long as they are included in events that are for anyone to join, rather than events that are exclusively for homeless people.

Several participants in this study said they felt unsure if they could attend any of the social functions for the public at the library, simply because they were not eligible to have a library membership card at the library. It may be the case that if the homeless people who regularly use the Central Library were issued library cards, they might feel more confident about attending social events that are held at the

Central library. Providing opportunities for homeless people to socialize at library events may help reduce some of the social stigma so often associated with homelessness.

Just as Leckie and Hopkins (2002) found in their study, the participants in this study usually went to the library alone and spent most of their time alone at the public library. When Leckie and Hopkins (2002) conducted their research at VPL Central Library, they found that 75 percent of their respondents were alone at the Central Library. Sixty per cent of their respondents were men. Similarly, when Fisher, Saxton, Edwards & Mai (2007) surveyed the Seattle Public Library, they reported that 76.2 percent of their respondents were alone at the Central Library.

Public libraries are ideal places to casually people watch, which some participants said they did at public libraries. People-watching is a natural way for people to observe and copy social behaviours of other people (Whyte, 1980). Social isolation has a long history in North America: it has been over one hundred years since Thoreau (1854) wrote that "most men lead quiet lives of desperation". More recently, in the book *Bowling Alone* (2000), Putnam showed that as the population in North America has grown older it has become more socially isolated and lonelier. Thus, perhaps some homeless people who frequent public libraries may simply be satisfying their natural need for some basic human social contact and normalcy in their otherwise socially isolated lives.

5.2.3 Public Libraries as "Third Places"

Oldenburg and Brissett (1982), both sociologists, report that throughout history, apart from home and work, social participation in public places is considered beneficial to people and their communities. Oldenburg (1999, 2002) does not include libraries as 'third places', but many librarians contend that public libraries should be considered 'third places', mainly because libraries are public places where social interactions occur. Although the following passage does not specifically mention libraries, Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) explain what a 'third place' is not:

> Third places exist outside the home and beyond the "work lots" of modern economic productions. They are places where people gather primarily to enjoy each other's company. They are not like businessmen clubs and singles bars which people inhabit in order to informally encourage the achievement of formal goals. Indeed, the majority of public places in our society fail to become actual third places. Upon entering many of these establishments, one finds intense devotion to the business at hand. One opens the door to a bar, coffee shop, or sauna, and finds people at work, either at their job or at their leisure. There is no lively conversation in these places, no suspension of the usual and typical, no joy of association. The "ingredients" of third place are simply not there. (p. 269)

Thus, "third places provide enabling, not escapist, experiences for their inhabitants" (Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982, p. 282).

With unsettled lives, homeless people often experience isolation and alienation from their diminished social networks (Chatman, 1996; Hersberger, 2003). Many of the participants said they preferred to keep to themselves in the library, rather than to socialize with others. Participants often reported that they spent most of their time reading alone or using a computer alone, which is considered very ordinary library behaviour. Most people do not engage in the same kinds of lively conversations at libraries as they would do at coffee shops or bars. Libraries are vibrant places that attract people and stimulate imagination and curiosity, but they are also studious places that are for reading and thinking and researching and writing activities, not pure sociability - joy, vivacity and relief, in Simmel's terms (Simmel & Hughes, 1949, p. 257).

In Fisher, Saxton, Edwards and Mei's (2007) analysis of the Seattle Public Library's [SPL] Central Library as a 'third place', they found that of Oldenburg's eight criteria of a 'third place', only three criteria were fully met. Similarly, Most (2009) reported that adults in Gadsden county, a rural community in North Florida community did not use their new public library buildings as 'third places'

(p. 251). Instead, libraries provided enrichment to the community as informational places and as educational places.

In the present study, the experiences of homeless men in public libraries would likely meet even fewer of the criteria for the library as a 'third place'. The only criterion for a 'third place' that would be met in the present study is that the library is on neutral ground. As most homeless people do not qualify for a library card, they are excluded from a regular library membership, although they can still enter the library and use the print resources, but are limited to only some online resources.

Thus, from their remarks, homeless men in this study quietly used public libraries more as public spaces, rather than as more sociable 'third places', much the same as how other library users also use public libraries . Furthermore, the homeless men did not exhibit sociability in the context of the library, which reinforces findings from other research on homeless people (Lilienthal, 2011) as well as research on the general population of library users. Thus, this research suggests that while public libraries are public places, they do not function well as 'third places' for homeless library users.

5.2.4 Public Libraries as a Place of Respite

Homelessness is a high risk lifestyle, especially in the DTES of Vancouver; 16 of the 23 participants spontaneously self-reported high-risk behaviours. High-risk behaviours, incomplete basic education and unstable employment all contribute to extreme poverty and homelessness. In Vancouver, homeless people occupy the least desirable, unsafe outdoor places - back alleys, under bridges and viaducts, along rail lines as well as in the dense bush and large forested areas such as Stanley Park and Pacific Spirit Regional Park at the University of British Columbia. Unsheltered homeless people suffer far more from personal harm compared to other people whose lives are not as high-risk (Bernstein, 2012).

Being inside a vibrant library is a stark contrast to the kinds of outdoor places to which homeless people often find themselves relegated. The Carnegie Centre in the DTES, The Central Library and the

Gathering Place are three relatively safe indoor places in Downtown Vancouver, where homeless men can greatly reduce their risk of personal harm simply by not being out on the street.

The Carnegie Centre is an important social hub in the DTES. In Vancouver, many residents of the DTES are extremely poor and live alone in single rooms, or are homeless and stay at shelters or live rough, but together they share the various community spaces within the Carnegie Centre, out of which has developed a strong sense of community within the DTES (Pedersen & Swanson, 2009). In addition to the Reading Room, the Carnegie Centre has a cafeteria and a computer lab, all of which are in constant use by DTES residents. The six men who lived in the DTES were careful about their personal safety but were not afraid of living alone in the DTES which is considered the most dangerous neighbourhood in the city.

On the other hand, four other participants in this study who resided outside of the DTES reported that they completely avoided going into the DTES and refused to use the Reading Room in the Carnegie Centre, even though it is the designated library for anyone in Vancouver currently without an address.

Snow and Anderson (1993) showed in their research in Austin, Texas that some homeless people purposely avoided associating with other homeless people (p. 68). In partial support of the Snow and Anderson results, this research revealed that four participants who resided outside of the DTES purposely avoided associating with other homeless people, but their decision was also in part influenced by their personal safety concerns about going into the DTES.

In this research, four participants voiced concerns about their personal safety and security, noting personal belongings that had been stolen and fears of being accosted or robbed. Several participants in this study said they felt much safer in the library than they did out on the street.

This supports the findings of Leckie and Hopkins (2002) that "libraries are among the safest public places" (p. 350). Similarly, in another study from New Zealand, a homeless man talked about places where he felt safe:

> Only in the library. Not only because I've been a constant reader and studier throughout my life, but also because I know about four or five people who work in the library....I always have someone to chat with....I gave myself a personal meaning, a social significance, a personal value by not allowing my situation to dominate my desire to carry on certain areas of my life unchanged. Like my constant desire to learn. And to research and to communicate. That's always been important to me throughout my life. So it was important that when I became homeless I didn't lose those. They were intrinsic to my core nature. And a lot of homeless people run the risk of losing that core. (Hodgetts, et al., 2008, p. 14)

While libraries may be "just a place to kill time" for some homeless people, for others, libraries are a very welcome respite from the misery of being homeless, especially for those who want to distance themselves from other homeless people. Participants who had experienced homelessness in the past but are now housed spoke about how homelessness gave them a bad feeling like they were stuck and said that they could not plan beyond the present moment. Another participant recalled the logistical nightmare of trying to get to work every day when he was homeless. One participant made the remark that "when you are homeless, it seems like the whole world is homeless". Another participant said "when I need space, I go to the library and find a book and go by the window and read. It's my comfortable place to go".

There are very few safe places other than at public libraries where homeless people can just be themselves and have some low-intensity social contact with people who are non-judgemental towards them.

Sometimes libraries become "transition spaces" where homeless people establish a new non-homeless identity that for some, if they are fortunate, may eventually lead to exiting from homelessness and reintegration back into mainstream society.

Catastrophic natural events such as hurricanes, floods, wild fires and earthquakes that affect whole communities also bring some homeless survivors to libraries (Public Libraries Online, 2010). A year after Hurricane Katrina, more than half of the flooded-out residents of New Orleans remained homeless (Duany, 2007). An online survey and interviews were conducted by Braquet (2010) to determine what roles public libraries played in the experiences of survivors after the hurricane and flooding in New Orleans in August 2005. Braquet (2010) reported 33 percent of 314 respondents in her online survey and 40 per cent of the 30 survivors whom she interviewed said they used public libraries after the New Orleans disasters.

The library experiences of the homeless men in this study and of Braquet's (2010) Hurricane Katrina flood survivors are remarkably similar. The purposes of both studies are very similar; both studies focused on library experiences from the users' points of view. Although participants in Braquet's (2010) study were only ever referred to as survivors, they did not indicate that they were homeless, but it is very likely that some of them experienced homelessness as a result of the hurricane or the floods.

New Orleans flood survivors interviewed by Braquet (2010) reported everyday experiences very similar to those reported by the homeless men in this study. The exact same words were used by the homeless men in this study and by New Orleans flood survivors to describe their respective experiences in libraries. Both the homeless men in this study and the flood survivors made statements to the effect that they were "in decision-making limbo" and used the library "to move forward" and that the library was a "lifesaver" for them.

Braquet (2010) reported that librarians in New Orleans were very helpful with disaster-related information needs and assisted survivors to fill out difficult online applications for disaster relief. Flood survivors mostly used computers in libraries for personal emails as well as for accessing online forms to apply for government relief.

Public libraries provide a place of respite from the stress of being homeless. Homeless men in this study reported that spending time at the library was a way to have a break from the stress of being homeless. Similarly, Braquet (2010) reported that Katrina survivors "recognized libraries as trusted public places to find what they need, whether it was information or a place to think" (p. 11). Braquet (2010) also reported that people said they needed a change from the continuous television coverage of the flood recovery, and reading books was a way for people to have a break from all the troubles in their lives caused by the hurricane and flooding (p. 10).

After the disastrous 9/11 attacks on the New York Twin Towers, people said that going to the library "gave them a sense of normalcy" and that "the library helped them begin their healing process"(Pierce, 2001, p. 17 as cited in Braquet, 2010, p. 11). Similar to what the homeless men in this study reported, Braquet (2010) found that libraries were described by flood survivors as "a warm comfy place, with a play area for kids, where damaged people could relax and try to piece together their lives" (p. 11).

Just as true today as two thousand years ago, when the inscription "medicine for the soul" was carved on the lintel of the ancient Greek library at Thebes, libraries are a welcome place for anyone who is in need of a respite for their soul. Thus, public libraries appear to provide stability and normalcy to people who are experiencing catastrophic changes in their personal lives, including the homeless men in this study.

5.3 Socio-Spatial Identity of Homeless Men

This research found that homeless men who use libraries do not want to be perceived as social outcasts, but appreciate being treated as respectfully as other library users. If marginalized individuals are not treated the same as other individuals, they experience social exclusion.

The foundation of an individual's socio-spatial identity is primarily determined where their home-base is located (Cresswell, 1996). In human geographical terms, socio-spatial identity is largely determined by social networks in the locations where a person lives and works. Various social factors including

economic, political and cultural influences may affect the social interactions of individuals, and consequently, an individual's socio-spatial identity. Without any social status, homeless people have no means of social production with which to produce their own social spaces. In other words, homelessness results in the loss of an individual's socio-spatial identity.

Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein's (1977) Pattern 14: Identifiable Neighbourhood showed that people need to have an identifiable space to belong to. People usually identify their neighbourhood as having a population of about 500 people, but not more than 1,500 people, and a home territory of a city block, but not more than two or three city blocks from their own home (pp. 80-85). Coincidently, many downtown central libraries have roughly the same number of visitors per day as the population of an identifiable neighbourhood and occupy about the same physical space as an identifiable neighbourhood.

Liebow (1993) researched homeless women in Washington, DC, and one participant in his study described her own homeless identity:

> There is no place for a homeless person. I always feel out of place, no matter where I am. I feel I shouldn't be there, I'm not wanted there....I feel I've lost my citizenship. I have no rights or responsibilities. No one cares what I do. I have no connection with the society I grew up in. (p. 218).

Fried (1963), a social psychologist, showed that a disrupted sense of continuity of the past, present and future of an individual's life can result in a grief-like response that is similar to mourning. If a person loses all their social bearings, such as where they live or belong, along with their social identity, which is usually defined by occupation, it is a very distressing experience.

In addition to the loss of a physical home, the breakdown of a person's social networks, including family, friends and workmates often occurs with homelessness. Adaptive behaviours such as using alcohol or drugs by some homeless people may be perceived by society as signs of mental illness which may cause further alienation of homeless people from society (Snow & Anderson, 1993).

The incidence of mental illness among homeless individuals is higher than among homeless families (Roebuck, 2008).

Goffman's (1959) impression management theory explains the kinds of social distancing behavioural patterns that are often associated with the loss of social identity that occurs during homelessness. According to Goffman (1959), a direct correlation exists between a person's self-esteem and social distance. As a person's self-esteem diminishes, the greater the social distance grows between the person and other people they know and others with whom they must interact. Over time, homeless people often become 'outsiders', even within their own communities.

Dordick's (1994) ethnographic research on the social dynamics within the Armory, a very large homeless shelter for about 700 homeless men in New York City, found that such large homeless shelters operate like 'total institutions', much like the prisons and asylums previously described by Goffman (1963). In her research, Dordick (1994) showed that distinct social hierarchies which form in large homeless shelters operate like gangs. As shelter residents devote enormous amounts of time and energy and make commitments to respect the gangs in the shelters, it makes it increasingly more difficult for them to exit homelessness.

On the other hand, Allen's (2000) research at Triage shelter in the DTES, showed that smaller shelters in Vancouver do not have the same kinds of problems that large shelters such as the Armory in New York have:

> Small shelters of no more than thirty residents are better able to meet the diverse needs of the homeless and near-homeless. For the short-term, Triage works because it provides a semblance of family in which clients feel accepted even though their stay is limited. Large shelters encourage depersonalization and merely reproduce the unsafe, unstable and dangerous conditions on the street and in the rooms. Triage is known on the street as the "Hilton" of shelters, maybe because residents can stay in bed all day, enjoy their single rooms, have their

> laundry done and eat good meals. But it may also be about regaining health, esteem and confidence. For a relatively brief period, residents are allowed the space to evaluate their lives and reconnect with a stable environment (p. 126).

Every society produces its own social spaces (Lefebvre, 1974); public libraries are a social institution with a significant sense of stability, normalcy, respect and permanence within communities. Stable environments such as are found in public libraries are especially desired by some individuals who are homeless.

Although none of the participants ever reported perceiving the public library as their personal space, the Central Library seems to be perceived as a place that provides the most stable social environment, with a more ordinary milieu, to those who are homeless in Vancouver. It is not possible to differentiate the homeless library users at the Central Library, whereas it is presumed that most if not all the library users at the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre and the Reading Room at the Gathering Place are homeless and therefore more of a homeless milieu is expected at the Carnegie Centre and the Gathering Place than at the Central Library.

While some participants reported that they went to the Central Library for a specific reason, such as to check their email, recharge their cell phone and laptop batteries, play online Scrabble, or read the newspaper, etc., other participants reported that they just went to the library to sit and read. Fourteen of the homeless men who participated in this research reported that they used libraries all day, and that they would only leave to go and have something to eat and then they would return to the library and stay until it was closing time. These are the same ordinary activities that people who are housed would be doing at home.

This research found that some of the participants who were regular users of a preferred library also took an interest in some of the issues at that library, especially if any of the issues had any personal

impact on them. An unexpected finding in this research was how much deep and genuine concern six participants expressed about the condition of the men's washrooms at the Central Library.

Snow and Anderson (1993) found that many homeless men socially distanced themselves from other homeless people. This research also found that homeless people do not seem particularly interested in socializing with other homeless people. In this research, homeless men individually talked about how different they were from other street people; for example, some worked rather than received income assistance, some refused free food handouts, and some avoided using shelters or SROs.

Tajfel (1974), a social psychologist, defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self–concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). In this research, some homeless men, especially those who chose to avoid other homeless people in the DTES, became very frequent library users at the Central Library, where they found a safe, stable niche for themselves, in a public environment where they could mingle with mostly non-homeless individuals who also kept to themselves and did not socialize very much.

Thus, compared to other libraries in Vancouver, the Central Library was preferred by most participants, because it was within walking distance, and because it had the most seating choices, access to the Internet, the largest print collections of library materials, and public washrooms. Some participants who became very frequent library users at the Central Library established a new social identity as a Central Library user.

Being an individual library user is free, unlimited and unconditional. Becoming a frequent library user gave homeless men a social identity that differentiated them from other street people within their community, but did not commit them to any social expectations of joining a particular social group. A homeless man could still keep to himself as much as he wanted to, while he was at the library.

Park, who studied urban sociology with Simmel, was interested in the assimilation of immigrants in America. Park (1955) showed that immigrants were marginal because they were between two cultures; no longer a member of their old culture and not yet a member of their new culture. According to Park (1955), assimilation occurs when dissimilar people form a new culture.

Similarly, Leckie and Hopkins (2002) research revealed that the Central Library was a popular place for recent immigrants to Vancouver who were studying English as a second language [ESL]. Like recent immigrants who are marginalized until they adjust to their new culture, homeless people also remain marginalized until they form a new social identity. Like recent immigrants, some of the participants in this study used the Central Library as a stable base while they established new social identities as library users. Another participant said he was spending time at the Central Library to "jump start into his next life" after "getting out of a very dangerous situation". Other participants spoke about how libraries were a "lifesaver" and "places for nerds", metaphors and phrases which were interpreted by the researcher as indications of transitioning from one social identity to another.

Thus, this research suggests that some of these men, who were very frequent library users, cultivated a library user social identity in part to compensate for their lack of socio-spatial identity. Having a library user social identity differentiated them from other homeless people within the homeless milieu. Associating oneself with a respected social institution such as a public library allowed participants to create more positive self-images for themselves that are more socially acceptable than simply being homeless people in Downtown Vancouver. This may explain why some homeless people have become very frequent Central Library users, but further research needs to be conducted to investigate this phenomenon.

Another way to compensate for not having an adequate socio-spatial identity due to homelessness is to establish an online identity. Communicating online helps people without a fixed address keep in contact with family and friends, social service agencies and employers. Social media tools such as

Twitter and Facebook are both useful for communicating in real time, but without being face-to-face. One of the participants in this study preferred only to communicate online rather than face-to-face or by telephone. Some of the participants in this study were avid computer buffs, and had their own laptops; while on the other hand, some other participants never used computers. While access to technology is a benefit for all library users, it has particular value for homeless individuals for whom online interaction can remove some of the stigma of their circumstances that may otherwise inhibit their face-to-face interactions.

The built environment reflects the social identity of people, but most of the built environment in the City of Vancouver is privatized and off limits to homeless people**.** In spite of the high cost of private real estate in Vancouver, outdoor public space is found throughout the city, which homeless people can legitimately and clandestinely utilize, but the only free indoor public space that homeless people can legitimately access is found in public libraries.

The homeless men in this study all utilized indoor public space in public libraries, albeit to a greater or lesser extent: this enabled them to legitimately exist within the architectural fabric of the city of Vancouver.

5.4 Social Inclusion and Belonging

Public libraries, in the ideal sense, are inclusive public places that try to serve the "unique cultural, informational, educational and rehabilitative needs of the community" (ALA & PLA, 1979). Public libraries are one of the few public places where everyone is expected to be treated respectfully, regardless of who they are or why they are using the library.

ALA Policy 61, Library Services for the Poor encourages social inclusion of poor people in public libraries (Gieskes, 2009; Wray, 2009). Being treated respectfully is especially important to homeless people; there are not many indoor places other than public libraries where homeless people are welcome. Unlike many private and commercial places that selectively displace homeless people in order

to attract more affluent customers, theoretically, public libraries are places where social behaviour rules apply equally to everyone. Within the egalitarian ethos of the public library, library users are obliged to be considerate of the needs of other library users.

In this study, fourteen participants reported that they used public libraries all day, every day, primarily because they had nowhere else to go, but also because they are safer places for homeless men to spend the day than outside. Older participants seemed to have organized their lives into simplified routines which included regularly spending time at libraries. As well as providing some structure and purpose to their day, spending time in libraries can be a beneficial way for people experiencing extreme poverty to conserve scarce personal resources.

When asked what their favourite thing was about public libraries, several participants responded that everyone is treated the same and they appreciate being respected by other library users. Only someone who has experienced the stigma of being excluded in public would respond that way. The stigmatization of homelessness makes it extremely difficult for homeless people to find inclusive places where they can just be unconditionally accepted for who they are.

In contrast to Dordick's (1994) findings, the homeless men in this study did not seem to form any cohesive social groups either inside or outside the library. This may be due, in part, to the decentralized shelter and social service systems in Vancouver and the transient nature of homelessness. It may also be that the homeless men who are attracted to the library are less socially connected. On the other hand, libraries are a place where people expect to be left alone in order to be able to read and think about things. Thus, it is an ideal indoor public space for homeless men who want to be alone. Other research has shown that homeless people often have small, unstable social networks, low levels of education and few employable skills (Hersberger, 2002/2003). As a result, there tends to be a lot of competition for scarce resources among homeless people. Spending time at the library is free, which helps homeless people conserve what scarce personal resources they do have.

It is estimated that only about 10 to 20 percent of homeless people use public libraries in the USA. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). These figures may be underreported today, as homelessness has grown during the most recent recession [December 2007 to June 2009], mainly due to the collapse of sub-prime mortgages in America (Lilienthal, 2011). It is not known what percentage of the homeless population, estimated in May 2011 to be about 1605 homeless people in Vancouver, utilize library services in downtown Vancouver.

Traditional library service models seem to work better for middle class library users than for poor people (Williment, 2009). For example, in a traditional library service model there is an inherent trust between a library and a library user that fines will be paid for lost or overdue library materials. According to Williment (2009) for poor people "the most immediate barrier to library use was the impact of library fines" (p. 2). People without a street address who are not eligible for a library membership card can only use library materials at the library, but not having a library card may make some homeless people feel unwelcome and socially excluded.

Reducing social barriers to library services for marginalized people is a common goal of many public libraries. Several factors contribute to the underutilization of libraries by poor people. Literacy levels are lowest among poor people; library use increases with literacy levels and education levels. Proximity to a library is another factor which affects library use by poor people; the participants in this study walked or rode their bicycles to get to the library, mainly because public transit is unaffordable and none of them owned a vehicle.

Since 1990, ALA *Policy 61: Library Services for the Poor* has encouraged social inclusion of poor people at public libraries. Public libraries acknowledge the necessity and importance of providing library services to poor people, but it was shown in the literature review that very little actual evidence exists regarding the implementation and evaluation of library services for them (Wray, 2009). Despite the fact that libraries say they try to treat everyone they serve as non-judgmentally and inclusively as possible,

most libraries have no way of tracking or evaluating how library services are actually utilized by socially excluded people (Williment, 2009).

Although homelessness can be a socially isolating experience, the participants in this research did not indicate that they were deprived of information at public libraries in Vancouver. Similarly, Muggleton and Ruthven (2012) found that homeless people in Glasgow, Scotland who used libraries were not excluded from mainstream sources of information.

Bure (2005) reported that digital inclusion does not necessarily lead to social inclusion. Bure (2005) studied how homeless people in Scotland utilized mobile phones and the Internet. While communication and information technology bridged the digital divide and was helpful for homeless people to gain more stability in their lives, digital inclusion did nothing to improve social inclusion. While use of mobile phones tended to be more inclusive than use of the Internet, Bure (2005) found that homeless people adapted digital technology into their existing homeless lifestyle and remained socially excluded.

An article in *Library Journal* by Lilienthal (2011) suggests that the conversation about homeless library users is changing in librarianship. In the library literature more librarians are reporting their involvement with homeless library users and their successes with library programs for homeless library users. Even so, few public libraries have reported programs that specifically encourage homeless people to use libraries as is done at the public library in San Jose, California. For the past five years, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library has worked collaboratively with several social service agencies in San Jose, California to provide social programs in public libraries specifically for the homeless (Collins, Howard, & Miraflor, 2009). The King Library offers a range of programs like family story times, computer classes, literacy programs, book clubs, and other cultural events that homeless people are invited to attend. The library also distributes books to shelters and food lines, but does not issue library cards to homeless people without an address. Working with the community was very beneficial, especially for the

homeless people in the San Jose community. Homeless people felt more respected by the library when they were invited to attend programs and encouraged to use library services.

Although this study did not focus directly on the kinds of informational sources that the participants utilized at the library, through the interviews it became apparent that participants' uses of libraries was not limited to strategic day to day survival information, but that they also enjoyed reading for pleasure and life-long learning at libraries. This finding supports the research of Muggleton (2010) who interviewed homeless men in Glasgow and Hodgetts et al. (2008) who interviewed homeless men in New Zealand, who similarly found that their interviewees tended to use libraries in the same ordinary ways as other library users. Like Muggleton's (2010) and Hodgetts' et al. (2008) participants, who satisfied their higher-level social needs with library resources in very ordinary ways, the ways that participants in this study utilized libraries indicates that access to libraries is vital for people with few personal resources to satisfy their higher-level social needs.

Public libraries are available for people who want to help themselves, including homeless people. As was shown in this research, given the opportunity, some homeless people have improved their situation by utilizing resources at public libraries. Seventeen of the 23 participants in this study reported that public libraries greatly improved their lives. As was shown in this research, given the opportunity, some homeless people improved their situation by utilizing resources at public libraries. The results of this research suggest that public libraries may be a bridge for some homeless people who are trying to reconnect themselves with mainstream society and especially for those who are trying to exit homelessness.

5.4.1 Library Cards

Having public libraries in poor communities enables marginalized people to have access to the same information and knowledge as advantaged people, but in poor communities there is a much greater in-person use of libraries. People who do not have a Vancouver street address do not qualify for a VPL

library card, so they must use materials in the library or borrow them from the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre, the branch designated to serve Vancouver's homeless population, which has the smallest collection of library materials in the VPL system. Thus, at present, the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre underserves the library needs of the DTES, as well as all the people in Vancouver who would like to have a regular library card but do not qualify, simply because they do not have a street address or identification.

When one participant who had an email account but did not have a street address because he lived rough in Stanley Park was denied a regular library card at the Central Library, he felt that the library simply did not trust him because he was homeless, despite having used the Central Library for years without incident.

Five participants in this study who are no longer homeless and have their own regular VPL library cards thought that regular library cards are very important for homeless people to have. Having a regular library card could help homeless people begin to re-build their self-esteem by first belonging to the library and gradually re-establishing trust with other services within the local community.

Four other participants reported that their library privileges were currently suspended for lost books and overdue fines, another participant had recently lost his library card, and another participant said he has a long term arrangement with a friend who has lent him his library card. Nine participants in this study who are frequent library users have never been issued a library card because they have no identification or residential address.

People without library membership cards are not able to utilize the full range of online services available at public libraries. For example, at VPL, some homeless people have their own laptops, but without a library account, it is not possible for them to use library technology such as wireless Internet, download e- books, put holds on books or request books from other libraries and other basic online library services because these library services all require an online library login and password.

Not having identification or a residential address is a barrier to qualifying for a library card in most libraries. Many homeless people have not updated or lost their personal identification and cannot afford to replace it. Many homeless people don't have personal bank accounts, utility accounts or use other services that identify them as customers elsewhere, which can be used in lieu of personal identification to obtain a public library card.

The Working Together Project in Vancouver reached the conclusion that Carnegie library cards were inadequate and created a double standard for the "haves" on the west side of Vancouver and the "have nots" in the DTES; furthermore,

> Circulation policies have a profound effect on people who are homeless. Without proof of a permanent address the library will not issue a library card. Without a library card many poor and socially excluded people feel as if they do not "belong" to the library and will not even enter the building to use onsite resources. Vancouver's Carnegie Branch issues a special card that gives community members access to branch material but does not give access to all the system's collections and resources. While this is a valuable intermediary step, it is still a discriminatory one. Access to all the library's resources should not be withheld because a person or family is too poor to afford housing. (DeFaveri, 2005, p. 6)

In the American Libraries Association monograph, *Public Library Services for the Poor: Doing all we can* (2010), the authors caution public libraries against issuing library cards to people in poorer neighbourhoods: "The library policy dilemma is how to protect your taxpayers against exorbitant losses of materials with a population that may be inherently unstable" (Holt & Holt, 2010, p. 52). Unfortunately, the Holts do not include any monetary amounts of the losses that they refer to, so it is impossible to know the actual magnitude of this problem. Instead of issuing regular library cards to homeless people, "Some libraries use guest passes instead of cards for computer users or allow homeless people to get a short-term card by using a shelter address." (Holt & Holt, 2010: 52).

Many homeless people have cell phones and personal email accounts, but not street addresses. Currently, most library notices are sent to email accounts or to voice mail boxes, rather than mailed to street addresses, so a postal mailing address is increasingly irrelevant as a library communication medium.

Some large urban libraries have taken a different approach. New Orleans removed barriers to access and issued thirty-six hundred temporary public library cards to people who were left homeless after Hurricane Katrina and the floods in August 2005 (Braquet, 2010, p. 2). Activating temporary library accounts helped to expedite the process for compensation for flooded homes and businesses in New Orleans.

Like Vancouver, San Francisco also has a large homeless population, and since 1989, SFPL has provided services for homeless library users, originally in response to a Homeless Advocacy Project with the San Francisco Bar Association, which advocated for homeless people to be able to vote and get library cards (Landgraf, 1991).

When they were implemented, library cards for the homeless at SFPL were valid for six months and then renewed (Landgraf, 1991). More recently, the San Francisco City Identification card can also be used as a library card. "Written verification issued by a homeless shelter that receives San Francisco City funding confirming at least 15 days residency within the last 30 days qualifies as acceptable identification for a San Francisco City Identification card". (http://www.sfgov2.org/index.aspx?page=113)

Landgraf (1991) reported the success of issuing library cards to the homeless at San Francisco Public Library [SFPL], and included this additional comment: "An interesting and unexpected statistic emerged in the analysis of the usage of the 195 library cards issued to the homeless in 1990: 37.4 percent (73) were never used to borrow library materials" (Landgraf, 1991, p. 949). This unexplained comment about library cards may demonstrate that for homeless people, simply belonging to the library is what is

most important to a homeless person about having a library card, rather than borrowing library materials.

There is no way of tracking the number of people without library cards who use libraries. Excluding homeless people from library membership prevents libraries from including some very frequent library users in their annual user statistics and future funding calculations.

"Single homeless men spend more time in public than homeless women, children and families and generate the least sympathy" (O'Sullivan, 2004, p. 2). Being eligible for a regular library card might make some homeless people feel that they really belong to the library and more socially included in their community. Participants in this study were interested in having their own library cards in order to use libraries for the same ordinary reasons as other library users. In keeping with policies and studies supporting the issuance of library cards to homeless people, this study provides evidence that homeless men who use libraries would like to have library cards. However, policies in Vancouver continue to be restrictive and to provide discriminatory service to homeless members of the community.

5.5 Summary of Discussion

This chapter discussed the concept of the public library as a place through the personal experiences of homeless men in Vancouver, BC. This chapter interpreted several key themes which emerged from the results. Public libraries in downtown Vancouver are relatively safe places where homeless men are welcome. Of all the libraries in Vancouver, the Central Library was by far the preferred library, because it is big, is within walking distance of many shelters as well as the deep woods of Stanley Park where some participants lived rough. Also, it has the most comfortable seating, the biggest print collections of library materials, the most washrooms and the most computers of all the libraries in Vancouver.

Homelessness is a very high risk lifestyle. Unlike New York, where sheltered homeless men form gangs (Dordick, 1994), the homeless men in this study do not belong to cohesive social groups, but mostly just keep to themselves. The Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre was the least preferred

library in downtown Vancouver, primarily because the DTES is unsafe, but also because there are few library computers for email or Internet available, and the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is very small and always overcrowded and underserves the library needs of the DTES.

Given the stigmatization of homelessness, it is extremely difficult for homeless people to find safe places where they can be accepted unconditionally and be treated respectfully for who they are. The Carnegie Centre and the Gathering Place both have Reading Rooms that provide basic library services for homeless people in Vancouver. However, only at the Central Library, which is much larger than the Reading Rooms at the Carnegie Centre or the Gathering Place, offers homeless people a respite from homelessness.

Homeless men value public libraries for being socially inclusive indoor places. Public libraries in Vancouver promote social inclusion as a way to more equitably serve the informational needs of everyone in the community. Participants particularly appreciated being treated the same as everyone else at the library, which was very important to them. Homeless men also enjoy doing very ordinary things at public libraries, such as reading, thinking, learning, people watching and using computers for sending emails, playing games, and doing research. Several homeless men also reported that they gradually educated themselves through reading at public libraries. Homelessness is a complex social problem and although the provision of services to homeless people in public libraries is not going to end homelessness, it may, as was found in this study, over time, be very beneficial for some homeless people.

The most unexpected result of this research was that half of the homeless men spent as much time as possible in the Central Library, which allowed them to develop a library user social identity that in their own minds substantially differentiated them from other homeless people who did not use libraries, especially those who remained in the DTES. Some homeless men indicated that they would like to have

a regular library card, and belong to library book clubs, writing clubs and attend more public events hosted by the Central Library.

5.6 How the Research Questions were Answered by this Study

This section is a summary of how each of the four main research questions that informed this study were answered.

a. How do homeless men use public libraries?

Homeless men in this study used the Central Library in many ordinary ways that satisfied their intellectual needs, including reading for pleasure and learning, using computers to send and receive emails, searching the Internet and playing online games. As the core research question of this exploratory study it was not unexpected that single adult homeless men used public libraries in ordinary ways. The majority of the participants in this study said they preferred solitude when they used public libraries, but some participants also expressed an interest in wanting to join a book club or writing club or occasionally attending library events at the Central Library.

Several of the homeless men in this study were very upset by the daily mess that was made at the Central Library, presumably by other homeless men bathing and shaving in the men's washrooms. They felt that the mess was a form of vandalism to the library and were worried that as homeless men who used the Central Library, they could be blamed for the mess and wanted it to be stopped by the library. Revealing their deep concerns about the condition of the men's washrooms at the Central Library indicated that participants used libraries for their basic social needs as well as for their intellectual needs. Participants expected to be able to use the library in ordinary ways. Clearly, this indicates that there are some problems associated with other homeless people using some public libraries inappropriately. The extent of the mess in the men's washrooms at the Central Library was not found at the Carnegie Centre or at the Gathering Place, so this problem is something that was limited to the use of the Central Library by men who are presumed to be homeless, but it is not known with any certainty

who actually makes the messes in the men's washrooms or whether or not they were actually homeless people who made the mess.

b. What are the factors that encourage homeless men to use public libraries?

Homeless men in Vancouver who felt that the DTES was unsafe preferred to use the Central Library rather than the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre which was the designated library for homeless people in Vancouver. The Central Library has more washrooms, more comfortable chairs, more computers and more library materials than any other library in downtown Vancouver.

The larger Central Library offered homeless people more of a respite from homelessness than they found at the smaller branch libraries in downtown Vancouver. Public libraries are a safe indoor place where people are welcome to spend time alone with the expectation of not being bothered by other people. Finding some solitude at libraries is especially desired at times, particularly by people who have no place of their own. Compared to the Carnegie Centre in the DTES or the Gathering Place in DTS, both of which are frequented mostly by homeless people, alternatively at the Central Library there were more opportunities for homeless people to co-mingle anonymously and unobtrusively with more non-homeless library users and in more non-judgmental and non-stigmatized ways than at any of the smaller libraries in downtown Vancouver. This is important, especially for homeless people who try to distance themselves from other homeless people. Rather than being in denial of their own homeless situation, distancing oneself from other homeless people can indicate self-reliance and a sense of pride and self-respect, which is necessary for the self-motivation to exit homelessness (Osborne, 2002).

c. What are the factors that discourage homeless men from using public libraries?

Small, crowded libraries which were frequented mostly by people who appeared visibly homeless were not the libraries preferred most by the homeless men in this study. The perpetually crowded conditions at the Reading Room in the Carnegie Centre underserves the higher-order intellectual needs of homeless people in Vancouver, who are directed there from the other libraries in Vancouver. Libraries

with uncomfortable seating on sturdy chairs and little or no Internet access were also considered less desirable places by homeless men.

Not being eligible to have a regular library card at the Central Library was disappointing for some participants, but did not necessarily discourage them from using the Central Library. Some participants felt that without a library card, they were unsure if they were eligible to attend library events at the Central Library.

Encountering these barriers socially excludes homeless men from public libraries in downtown Vancouver.

d. How do homeless men experience public libraries as place?

The library as place reflects the social uses of the free public space in libraries. Despite the barriers that somewhat socially exclude homeless men from in public libraries, this research has shown that public libraries are a safe and stable environments and important social places for homeless people to have access to. The atrium of the Central Library was considered by some participants as a more sociable space than inside the library. Several participants reported that the atrium was the preferred place for people watching at the Central Library. By choice, most participants preferred to keep to themselves more than they tended to socialize at public libraries. Thus, some homeless people who frequent public libraries may simply be satisfying their natural need for some basic human social contact and normalcy in their otherwise socially isolated lives.

Public libraries are socially acceptable places where homeless people can successfully conserve their scarce personal resources. Some participants who lived rough refused all paternalistic charitable handouts from mainstream society in order to avoid being stigmatized as stereotyped homeless men. Some participants who were very frequent library users established social identities as library users and used libraries to satisfy their higher-order needs, in addition to some of their basic social needs. When participants felt more respected by other library users, they realized that their social identities as library

users were more socially acceptable by mainstream society than being perceived more negatively only as marginalized homeless men.

In terms of social capital, public libraries as a place offer homeless people access to valuable resources, ideas and information that they may not otherwise be able to access elsewhere, especially without means. Although social capital can not be demonstrated in tangible ways, homeless men who used libraries often, spoke about the respite from homelessness that they experienced at libraries. The normalcy and stability that homeless people experience *in situ* at libraries may be a form of linking or bridging social capital that is beneficial to them individually when they use libraries, but is not reciprocal as in bonding social capital. In other words, homeless men who produce a socio-spatial identity as a library user while they are at the library may be utilizing and benefitting from linking or bridging social capital in libraries.

Although it cannot be shown with any certainty, it seems logical to assume that more bridging or linking social capital is available at the Central Library than at smaller libraries. If homeless men only went to the Central Library to check their email and then quickly exited the library, it may indicate that the library is not an inclusive place for homeless men. But, the homeless men in this study who preferred to stay at the Central Library for as long as possible, may have done so in order to benefit from a form of social capital at the library. Future research is needed to confirm that homeless men benefit from social capital in libraries.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This research has focused on the experiences of homeless men who use public libraries in Vancouver to better understand how they use public libraries and the role that the library plays as a place in their lives. Twenty–three homeless men who are public library users and live in downtown Vancouver, volunteered to be interviewed for this study.

Large urban public libraries such as the Central Library in Vancouver serve the needs of a much more diverse socio-demographic than smaller branch libraries. People experiencing extreme poverty are often more concentrated in downtown locations and tend to use more on-site library resources than those in more affluent suburban communities. The Central Library was the preferred public library among all study participants. It is a vibrant, indoor public place and a popular attraction in the city due to its stunning architecture and central location.

This research found that the information needs of homeless men are satisfied by the traditional nature and functions of public libraries, including access to resources, quiet places to read and think, safety, openness, and acceptance. In addition, some of the social needs of homeless men are satisfied by the library as a place, particularly the ability to participate in normal social behaviors, respite and a focus for the development of a socio-spatial identity. Overall, this research found that public libraries in downtown Vancouver are very important places for the homeless men who use them.

6.2 Contributions

This research makes contributions to LIS on a number of levels. First, very few studies have been done to understand how and why homeless men use public libraries, in particular from the perspective of the men themselves (for example, Hodgetts et al., 2008 and Muggleton, 2010). This is despite the fact

that use of public libraries by homeless people is a long standing social phenomenon and one that has received considerable attention in the media and in the library literature, primarily as a "problem" to be addressed. This research fills a significant gap in the LIS literature and provides an alternative and more positive perspective on homelessness and public libraries. It is hoped that this exploratory research will serve as a catalyst for additional, much needed qualitative research and policy development in this area.

Second, a number of the findings of this study run counter to the commonplace notions about the use of libraries throughout North America by homeless men and provide evidence to support a rethinking of current approaches to policy and service provision for this growing population of library users.

Third, this research makes a contribution on the theoretical level by adopting the perspective of "library as place" and drawing on a number of theoretical frameworks from outside the discipline of library science to make sense of this phenomenon. It is clear from this research that public libraries serve not only the information needs of homeless men, but also some of their social needs. In many cases this may serve to improve the lives of those experiencing homelessness, and in some may actually serve as the catalyst for them to exit homelessness. Additional details on the key research findings and contributions are presented in the sections to follow.

6.2.1 Ordinary Library Users

The men in this study described their use of public libraries in very prosaic terms: they go to the library to read, to think their own thoughts, and to use the computers and other library resources. Just like many of the other library users at the Central Library, participants enjoyed very ordinary library experiences, such as reading newspapers, magazines and books, playing online games, searching the Internet and sending and receiving emails in a safe and welcoming environment. What is surprising about this is its very ordinariness: their use of public libraries matches quite closely the behaviours observed in general studies of public library use (for example, Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). This runs counter

to common perceptions that homeless men misuse public libraries by treating them primarily as warm places to sleep and for bathing.

On the contrary, most participants were well aware that sleeping was not considered acceptable behaviour in public places, and some were very concerned about not being blamed for the messy condition of the men's washrooms at the Central Library. They expressed a willingness to follow library rules and appreciated being perceived and treated the same as other library users. In many ways, it was precisely the "normalcy" of the library that they were seeking, in order to feel that they belonged within their community, and that they were not perceived as social outcasts.

While they described using public libraries in very ordinary ways, half of the participants visited the Central Library far more frequently and for much longer periods of time than more typical library users, perhaps in part because they could not have regular library cards which would allow them to take away library materials, but also because the value of the physical space of the library is much greater for them than the average user. It is ironic that these men, some of the heaviest library users in the city, did not have access to the full range of library services, due to their ineligibility for regular library cards. This point highlights the unfortunate gap that exists in Vancouver and elsewhere, in which those who spend the most time in the library have the least access to its services. This gap is widening as more and more library resources and services move online.

Homelessness in downtown Vancouver is a very high risk lifestyle and the homeless men in this study did not seem to be part of any cohesive social groups. A major motivation for their use of public libraries was to have safe places to spend their time, primarily away from the dangers of street life of the DTES and to keep their distance from other homeless people. Although the Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre is intended to serve the library needs of the homeless in downtown Vancouver, due to the dangers in the DTES of Vancouver, it cannot and does not function as a safe place of respite and in this way, underserves the library needs of the DTES community. Participants, including

people who lived rough in Stanley Park, stayed in emergency shelters and former addicts all said that they liked to find a quiet, comfortable place to read at the Central Library, so they could forget for a while the bad things that were happening in their lives.

The Central Library is a safe indoor public place to spend time in downtown Vancouver, and due to its large size, provides homeless people with a larger place of refuge than at any branch library. What makes the Central Library preferable to the Reading Rooms at the Carnegie Centre and the Gathering Place is not only the enhanced library services, but the anonymity of being an ordinary library user in a big library, rather than being recognized as a marginalized person in a small library frequented primarily by others who are experiencing homelessness. The Reading Rooms at the Carnegie Centre and the Gathering Place are very small and crowded library spaces, which were of much less interest to the participants in this study, most of whom tried to avoid socially interacting with other homeless people.

Seventeen of the twenty-three participants in this study reported that public libraries greatly improved their lives. In practical terms, access to resources and technology to learn and communicate were extremely important for some of these men, and in some cases, libraries may help support a transition out of homelessness.

In addition to physical safety, the Central Library also functions as an important place of psychological respite. Being homeless is very stressful and full of uncertainty, and maintaining continuity in one's life while experiencing homelessness is often very difficult, so becoming a very frequent library user gave some participants a routine and stability, as well as a safe place to reflect, recover and plan, in a place where they were treated with respect, especially by other library users. Also, using libraries was something they could continue to do after they exited homelessness.

6.2.2 Library as a Place

The Reading Rooms at the Carnegie Centre and at the Gathering Place are small and crowded and although they are open to the public, they primarily serve the library needs of people experiencing

extreme poverty in downtown Vancouver, unlike at the Central Library where there is a much greater opportunity for people experiencing extreme poverty to integrate into a milieu comprised of a wider cross-section of the public.

Participants were particularly attracted to the Central Library as a safe place especially when they needed some space and just wanted to be left alone. Participants kept to themselves and avoided social interactions both with other library users as well as with library staff. Findings of this research did not support the idea of the library as a "third place" (Oldenberg, 1999; Fisher, Saxton, Edwards & Mai, 2007; Most, 2009) for homeless men. Although homeless men very frequently used public spaces in the Central Library, they used it more as a transitional space (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002) than as a "third place".

At the Central Library, some homeless men created new social identities for themselves as library users, which is more socially acceptable than being a homeless person. However, their new social identity as a library user was unendorsed by library staff because without an address they did not qualify for a regular library card.

Interacting with librarians would further validate their social identities as library users. Supporting homeless people in public libraries, especially to help them establish more positive social identities might also motivate them to seek help elsewhere, which may assist them in coping with and exiting homelessness. Thus, by failing to make library cards available to homeless men who would like to be full members, the Vancouver Public Library is missing an opportunity to demonstrate social inclusiveness and to provide full benefits to these members of the community.

6.3 Delimitations

Several things within the researcher's control which affect the transferability of the results are presented here. Only homeless men who used libraries were interviewed in this research. Originally, the researcher wanted to interview homeless women and homeless families as well as homeless men,

but it was decided to focus only on homeless men to increase the specificity and cohesion of the results. Homeless men were chosen because far more homeless men use public spaces than homeless women and homeless families. Also, homeless men are the least studied group of homeless people in LIS. Given this decision, it is clear that these findings cannot be considered representative of the general homeless population. In particular, it is expected that the perceptions of libraries held by those who do not use libraries may differ substantially from those presented here.

6.4 Limitations

Several weaknesses not within the researcher's control could potentially affect the transferability of the results presented here. Most library literature on homelessness represents the opinions of librarians rather than those of homeless people, but the data collected in this study consists mostly of information from middle-aged homeless men who use libraries, who all volunteered to participate.

As this was exploratory research, the sample is strategic but not random because it was impossible to locate all the homeless men in Vancouver who would comprise the target population. Respondent driven sampling was not done either, despite the challenges to recruit participants from a rather elusive population, especially among the hidden homeless, which includes couch surfers as well as the men who live rough in deep woods of Stanley Park. It is clear that the homeless men for whom the public library plays an important role in their lives and who are appreciative of its services are more likely to have self-selected to participate in the study. Thus, the results are do not portray the full spectrum of attitudes and uses of libraries by homeless men. Nevertheless, these findings are valuable, for they illustrate the important role that the library as a place and as an institution can and does play in the lives of many homeless individuals. In addition, the data may reflect some unique geographical, historical and cultural characteristics of the long association of homeless men and public libraries in downtown Vancouver, which would limit the transferability of the results. While further research in other contexts

is needed, it is encouraging that these results seem to echo those of studies done in New Zealand, Scotland and elsewhere.

One of the major challenges of this work was that concepts related to the library as place, including social capital and social inclusion are largely intangible and consequently very difficult to detect and measure. Qualitative concepts such as respite, restoring the soul, feeling safe, respect and trust may be indicators of social capital, and may be the main outcomes of library use by this population, but outcomes are more difficult to measure than inputs and outputs of library services. Furthermore, unmeasureable intangibles do not usually work well with policies, such as ALA Policy 61, Library services for the poor, because there is no way to objectively evaluate them.

Thus, while these limitations somewhat reduce the transferability of these results, this is exploratory research that has opened up avenues for further complementary studies.

6.5 Future Research

As a first step to further research, it would be valuable to collect additional data about homelessness and use of public libraries within Vancouver and other communities in the lower mainland of British Columbia with large homeless populations. Homelessness is a growing phenomenon in all regions of North America and each city has different homeless sub-cultures. For example, homelessness is getting more diverse, with many teenagers becoming homeless in Vancouver, especially after leaving foster care. Younger people may have different technology preferences compared to older people, and men and women may use public libraries differently. Further research could be conducted in other large urban centres, and could include a broader spectrum of individuals (male and female) as well as families and youth. These studies would strengthen and extend these results, and might uncover similarities and/or differences between uses of public libraries among these different groups within the homeless population.

This study only interviewed homeless men who used libraries in Vancouver. In this study, some participants lived rough in Stanley Park, some stayed in emergency shelters and some had successfully exited homelessness and were housed in SRO accommodation suitable for people living in extreme poverty. Two other groups within the continuum of extreme poverty that were not studied are the hidden homeless who use libraries, and homeless people who do not use libraries. The hidden homeless are by far the most elusive group of homeless people to research (Eberle, Kraus, & Serge, 2009). They are also known sometimes as couch surfers, who often stay temporarily with friends and relatives, and may be more dispersed at the branch libraries around the city.

Another study could be undertaken with homeless people who do not use public libraries to learn why they choose not to use public libraries. Given that the men interviewed in this study perceived the library as a valuable personal resource, it would be interesting to learn what barriers are preventing other homeless people from using libraries. For example, a study of the barriers to non-use of libraries by homeless Aboriginal people could be conducted. Across Canada, a disproportionate number of off-reserve Aboriginal people are homeless. Furthermore, many residents of reserves adjacent to urban communities with public libraries in Canada are not eligible for library membership simply because they do not pay property taxes to live on reserve lands. It would be expected that the non-use of libraries by Aboriginal children and families in Canada has contributed significant negative life-long consequences for literacy retention and low educational achievement, especially among homeless Aboriginal people in Canada.

Some of the most interesting findings reported here point to the value of public libraries as transition spaces and as places where new social identities may be formed. Conducting focused research into these questions through case studies or more longitudinal studies would be valuable in identifying the impact of library use among people experiencing homelessness and in helping librarians to develop more effective library services for them.

When the new full service Vancouver Public Library branch library is opened in the DTES in 2014, it would be interesting to conduct a user study to evaluate how library services are utilized in the poorest neighbourhood in Canada, as this has the potential to serve as a model for urban libraries in Canada and elsewhere.

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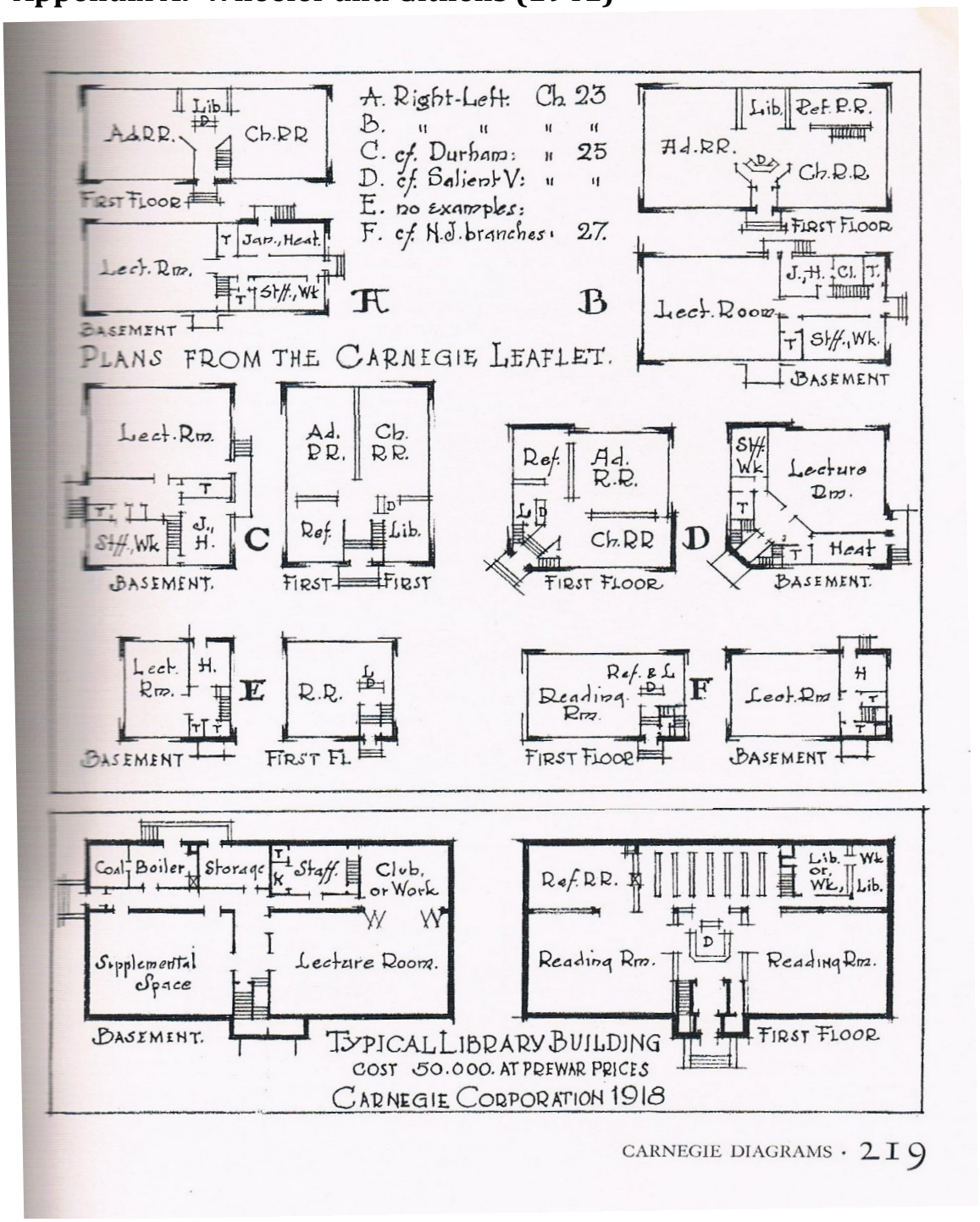
Appendices

Appendix A: Wheeler and Githens (1941)



Appendix B: ALA Policy 61

61 Library Services to the Poor

61.1 Policy Objectives

The American Library Association promotes equal access to information for all persons, and recognizes the urgent need to respond to the increasing number of poor children, adults, and families in America. These people are affected by a combination of limitations, including illiteracy, illness, social isolation, homelessness, hunger, and discrimination, which hamper the effectiveness of traditional library services. Therefore it is crucial that libraries recognize their role in enabling poor people to participate fully in a democratic society, by utilizing a wide variety of available resources and strategies. Concrete programs of training and development are needed to sensitize and prepare library staff to identify poor people's needs and deliver relevant services. And within the American Library Association the coordinating mechanisms of programs and activities dealing with poor people in various divisions, offices, and units should be strengthened, and support for low-income liaison activities should be enhanced.

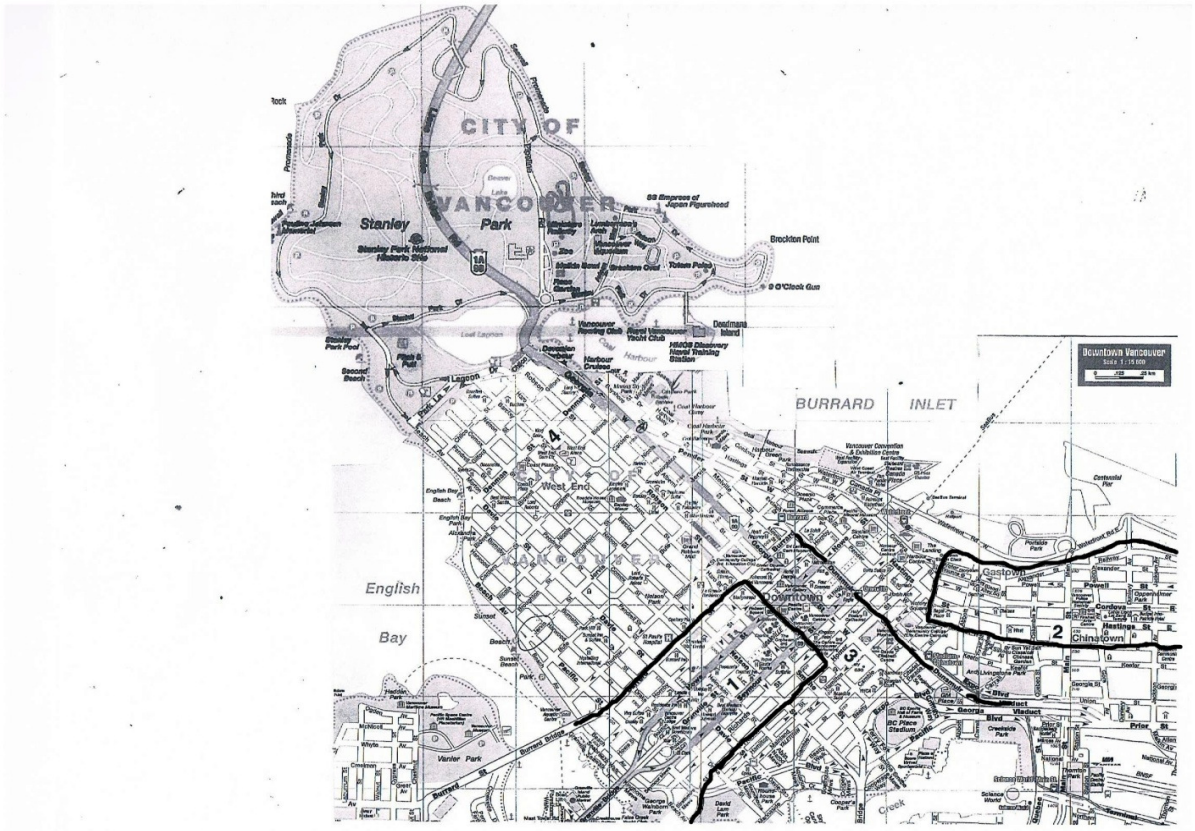
61.1 Policy Objectives

The American Library Association shall implement these objectives by:
Promoting the removal of all barriers to library and information services, particularly fees and overdue charges.
Promoting the publication, production, purchase, and ready accessibility of print and nonprint materials that honestly address the issues of poverty and homelessness, that deal with poor people in a respectful way, and that are of practical use to low-income patrons.
Promoting full, stable, and ongoing funding for existing legislative programs in support to flow income services and for pro-active library programs that reach beyond traditional service-sites to poor children, adults, and families.
Promoting training opportunities for librarians, in order to teach effective techniques for generating public funding to upgrade library services to poor people.
Promoting the incorporation of low-income programs and services into regular library budgets in all types of libraries, rather than the tendency to support these projects solely with ‘‘soft money’’ like private or federal grants.
Promoting equity in funding adequate library services for poor people in terms of materials, facilities, and equipment.
Promoting supplemental support for library resources for and about low-income populations by urging local, state, and federal governments, and the private sector, to provide adequate funding.
Promoting increased public awareness through programs, displays, bibliographies, and publicity of the importance of poverty related library resources and services in all segments of society.
Promoting the determination of output measures through the encouragement of community needs assessments, giving special emphasis to assessing the need so low-income people and involving both anti-poverty advocates and poor people themselves in such assessments.
Promoting direct representation of poor people and anti-poverty advocates through appointment to local boards and creation of local advisory committees on service to low-income people, such appointments to include library paid transportation and stipends.
Promoting training to sensitize library staff to issues affecting poor people and to attitudinal and other barriers that hinder poor people's use of libraries.
Promoting networking and cooperation between libraries and other agencies, organizations, and advocacy groups in order to develop programs and services that effectively reach poor people.
Promoting the implementation of an expanded federal low-income housing program, national health insurance, full-employment policy, living minimum wage and welfare payments, affordable daycare, and programs likely to reduce, if not eliminate, poverty itself.
Promoting among library staff the collection of food and clothing donations, volunteering personal time to antipoverty activities and contributing money to direct-aid organizations.
Promoting related efforts concerning minorities and women, since these groups are disproportionately represented among poor people.

Appendix C: Downtown Vancouver - Map of Study Area

Downtown Vancouver Areas	Library Location Codes
1 Downtown South [DTS]	1 Reading Room at the Gathering Place
2 Downtown Eastside [DTES]	2 Reading Room at the Carnegie Centre
3 Dunsmuir Street [bold black line] between DTES & DTS	3 Central Library
4 West End and Stanley Park	4 Joe Fortes branch Library

(MapArt, 2008, pp. 10-11)



Appendix D: Sample of Recruitment Poster

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Library, Archival & Information Studies
Suite 470, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
1961 East Mall
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604-822-2404
Fax: 604-822-6006
E-mail: slais@interchange.ubc.ca
Web: www.slais.ubc.ca

Seeking Participants For A Study About Public Libraries

This research study looks at adult men's use of public spaces in public libraries. [redacted] a doctoral candidate from the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies (SLAIS), University of British Columbia, will conduct the interviews. Dr. Luanne Freund is the principal investigator of this research, and can be reached at [redacted]

Who can participate?	**Adult men currently experiencing homelessness who use public libraries.**
What would you do?	**Be interviewed for about an hour.**
What would you talk about?	**Your experiences using public libraries.**
Who do you call to book an interview?	[redacted]

25 January 2010 page 1/1

Appendix E: Sample Participant Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

School of Library, Archival & Information Studies
Suite 470, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre
1961 East Mall
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z1
Tel: 604-822-2404
Fax: 604-822-6006
E-mail: slais@interchange.ubc.ca
Web: www.slais.ubc.ca

9 March 2010

SPATIAL NEEDS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES
CONSENT FORM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:
[redacted]

CO-INVESTIGATOR:
[redacted]

This study is being conducted to fulfill the research component of PhD studies at the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia.

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this research is to investigate homeless men's experiences with and perceptions of public spaces in public libraries.

STUDY PROCEDURES:
The Co-Investigator will conduct audio-recorded interviews of adult homeless men recruited at day shelters in downtown Vancouver.

POTENTIAL RISKS:
This research does not present any risk of harm.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:
Results of this research may help librarians and architects design public libraries that are better able to serve the needs of homeless men.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on digital media in a secure filing cabinet and only the Co-Investigator will have access to the raw data. Participants will not be identified in any presentations or publications.

CONTACT FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY:
If you have any questions about this study, please contact [redacted]

CONTACT FOR CONCERNS ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604 822-8598 or, if long distance please e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY:
Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE_____**DATE**_____

PRINTED NAME of RESEARCH SUBJECT:_____

Appendix F: Volunteer Certificate

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION 2009-2010

Presented to

Jeanne McKendry

We honour and respect our volunteers and would like to express our appreciation for your devoted service. Volunteers like yourself are the backbone of the Gathering Place and we couldn't operate our facility without you!

In sincere appreciation, please accept this certificate on behalf of the staff and members of
The Gathering Place

John Bengry, President DSGPCCA

Jo-Ann Stevens, Acting Director

Appendix G: Code Book

Code 1: IDENTITY **Label:** socio-spatiality of homelessness	**Definition:** ways public space and homelessness intersect **Description:** what homeless people do in a geographic area	**Examples:** Homeless identity, DTES, marginalization, stigmatization, essential needs, extreme poverty, SROs, living on the edge, loss of socio-spatial identity [Soja], loss of sense of place [Cresswell], social justice architecture [Alexander, Davis, Pable]
Code 2: PUBLIC **Label:** public libraries as public space	**Definition:** public libraries are a democratic public institution and civic space that is separate from public authority (government) and the private sphere. **Description:** public libraries are a freely accessible public institution where private citizens are safe and free to think about and research their own ideas.	**Examples:** Placemaking, accessibility, democracy, public space, privatization of public space, multiple democratic public spheres [Habermas], individuals conducting their private lives in public spaces, no sleeping in libraries
Code 3: SOCCAP **Label:** public libraries and social capital	**Definition:** the social glue that helps to keep society together **Description:** public libraries create social capital with universal access to information in public spaces	**Examples:** **Indicators of social capital:** trust, belonging, reciprocity, social networks, volunteering. [Hersberger, Johnson] **Types of social capital:** Bonding [get by] Bridging [get ahead] among individuals [Putnam] Linking [similar to bridging, but from institutions to individuals; one way, not reciprocal] [Saguaro] Insiders, outsiders, information poverty [Chatman]

Code 4: THRDPL **Label:** public libraries as "third places"	**Definition**: not home [first place] not work [second place] social places [third place] **Description:** informal, social places	**Examples:** sociability [Simmel], enabling not escapist experiences [Oldenburg]
Code 5: SOCEXCL **Label:** public libraries and social exclusion	**Definition:** systematic denial of access to social standards enjoyed by mainstream society **Description:** not everyone is treated the same, haves are included and have nots are excluded,	**Examples:** Library card eligibility, inability of poor people to pay overdue fines, discourage problem patrons from using libraries [Harris]
Code 6: SOCINCL **Label:** public libraries and social inclusion	**Definition:** enabling people to belong to society builds socially sustainable community values **Description:** treating everyone the same, everyone is welcome at the public library	**Examples:** ALA Policy 61: library services for the poor, capacity building, Working Together Project, Social identity [Tajfel]
Code 7: PLACE **Label:** public libraries as place	**Definition:** physical public space as well as functions [educational, informational, social] **Description:** a home away from home, the living room of the community, the people's university,	**Examples:** Public spaces inside and outside the library building, role of the library as a social institution in society [Leckie & Hopkins, Leckie & Buschman, Wiegand] Virtual online and digital spaces
Code 8: USES **Label:** uses of public libraries	**Definition:** all the things that people do at public libraries and all the ways that people think about public libraries. **Description:** includes facilities, collections, services	**Examples:** Technology: computers, Internet, social media, online games Research, thinking, reading, learning Washrooms, seating Safety, respite Belonging, respect, trust

Appendix H: Interview Script

Introduction: This is a special opportunity for me to hear about your memories, observations and ideas about using public spaces in public libraries. There are no wrong answers to any of the questions that you will be asked. I am most interested in hearing about your everyday, ordinary experiences using public spaces in public libraries.

1. First, I want to know how often you use public libraries.
Prompts:
When was the last time you visited a public library?
What time of day do you usually go to a public library?
On a typical visit to a public library, how long do you usually stay at a public library? Why?

2. Thinking back to the last time you visited a public library, please tell me about your experience using the public library.
Prompts:
Where did you go first when you went inside the public library?
What did you do there? How long did you stay there?
Why did you go there? Why did you leave?
Where else did you go when you were inside the public library?
What did you do there? How long did you stay there?
Why did you go there? Why did you leave?
Where else did you go when you were inside the public library?
What did you do there? How long did you stay there?
Why did you go there? Why did you leave?

3. Please tell me more about your experiences using public seating at the public library you last visited.
Prompts:
Do you have any usual places to sit at the public library? Why?
Are the usual places you sit at the public library special in any way? Why?

4. Please tell me more about your experiences with your possessions when you visit public libraries.
Prompts:
Please tell me what you do with your possessions when you visit public libraries? How does this make you feel when you use public libraries? When you go into different public libraries, do you have to do different things with your possessions? Please tell me about these differences?

5. Imagine if you were asked to design a public library. Can you suggest any ways to change the public spaces in public libraries?
Prompts:
Would you like to change anything about the public spaces in public libraries? Why? What do you think would happen if these changes were made?
What would you not change about the public spaces in public libraries?
The next few questions are about public libraries as social spaces:

6. First, please tell me about the social places you use in your community. What are the differences between the social places you use in your community and public libraries?
Prompts:
Dou you ever think of public libraries as social places in the community?

7. What does the phrase 'using public spaces in public libraries' mean to you?
Prompts:
What do you recall about using public spaces in public libraries?
What do you remember about the first time you used a public library?
Do you use more than one public library? Why?

8. Please tell me more about your social experiences when you use public libraries.
Prompts:
Please describe the social things you usually do at public libraries.
Are there any other social things you would like to do at public libraries?

9. Public libraries are described as the 'living room of a community'.
Have you ever heard of a public library described by this phrase?
What does this phrase mean to you?

10. Do you think that using public libraries affects the quality of your life?
Prompts:
Has using public libraries changed your life in any way?
Would your life change without public libraries?
How would your life change without public libraries?

11. Imagine if you worked at a public library, what are the things that you would do when homeless men visited your public library?

12. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

Thanks very much for sharing with me about your experiences using public libraries.