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LIBRARIES AND THE MISSING NARRATIVE:
PRACTITIONER EXPLORATIONS IN THE USE OF DESIGN PSYCHOLOGY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY FOR LIBRARY BUILDINGS AND DESIGNS

by

AMY BETH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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LIBRARIES AND THE MISSING NARRATIVE

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Practitioner Explorations in the Use of Design Psychology and Environmental Autobiography for Library Buildings and Designs

By
Amy Beth

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Libraries and the Missing Narrative:
Practitioner Explorations in the Use of Design Psychology and Environmental Autobiography for Library Buildings and Designs

By
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Advisor: David Chapin

This dissertation is a study of the meaning and experiences of libraries described by six library-building design practitioners in their environmental autobiographies. Participants were guided through an adaptation of Toby Israel’s (2010) Design Psychology Toolbox (hereafter known as the DPT or the “Toolbox”) exercises. The research is intended to expand the practice of designing libraries as places and spaces where social and emotional affordance is supported. Emphasizing the significance of libraries as place and space where people often have rich and even transformative experiences serves to augment use-efficiency and evidence-based space planning. Primary goals of the study included providing an opportunity for library-building and design practitioners to tap into their own environmental autobiographies to explore how experience creates meaning in
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the environments of our lives, and to explore how personal narratives in the form of library stories hold rich information about place and space. As part of this research, participants were encouraged to consider which aspects of the DPT exercises they might incorporate into future client intake exchanges and explorations for proposed library-building programs. This dissertation describes a mixed method approach inherent in environmental autobiography research where both in-depth interviewing as well as sketching and mapping are employed as participants recall their past, explore their present, and imagine their future in describing the significance of libraries over their life course.
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List of Abbreviations

American Institute of Architecture New York Chapter ........................................... AIANY
American Institute of Architecture Committee on Architecture for Education... AIA CAE
Design Psychology Toolbox .................................................................................... DPT
Environmental Design Research Association ....................................................... EDRA
Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design ............................................... LEED
Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans ............................................................................... LGBT
Library and Information Services ....................................................................... LIS
New York Public Library ....................................................................................... NYPL
Post Occupancy Evaluation ............................................................................... POE
Rhode Island School of Design ........................................................................ RISD
Part One

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Research Problem

Library-building and design projects frequently reflect patterns of building use based on metrics of information access, efficiency, and evidence of collection use (Elmborg, 2011; Janks & Lockhart & Travis, 2012). Extremely limited project budgets as well as demands derived from perfunctory facility needs-assessment surveys inform and drive the vast majority of library project planning (Janks, et al., 2012). Relying on metrics-based information and retrieval-use data almost entirely excludes the significance of the human experience of place and of space. In contrast, personal library stories—individual narratives of the library’s meaning in memory and today—offer abundant evidence of the impact of libraries as environments where transformative personal experiences can unfold (Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Gough & Greenblatt 1990; Beth, 2010). Buschman and Leckie wrote and edited the anthology, *The Library as Place; History, Community, and Culture* (2007), inviting contributors to situate their personal journeys in libraries as essential sites for shifting social movements over decades of changing American political mores. Gough and Greenblatt edited an entire volume on the library as a place of privacy and self-protection, enclaves that have fostered the coming-out process for generations of LGBT people. In earlier research, I interviewed people to elicit their appreciation for libraries as sacred places. In this work, I listened to immigrants name the library (and identify their library cards) as their first toe-hold in
understanding themselves as Americans and I learned how, for many users, libraries are a place of continuous return for the unfolding of significant life transitions. While library practitioners—including architects, designers, and library building planners—may hold a sense of place and a deep regard for human environmental meaning (Franck & Howard, 2010), all too often this understanding is not employed in building and design project planning (Israel, 2010). I contend that library design is impoverished by this oversight, and that the widest range of user-experience is diminished when we neglect personal narrative and the insights that derive from individual histories. I seek to show that accessing personal narrative can influence and greatly benefit the library-building experience for all who participate in the process and for all who libraries seek to serve.

It is the received wisdom that libraries, along with print publications, are threatened and headed toward rapid extinction (Edwards, 2013; Shenton, 2014; Stripling, 2014). Stripling names libraries as vital bulwarks against nationally plummeting literacy rates, and one of the few places where the shame of illiteracy is countered by overt support, including programs and environments designed for new readers to succeed. In an era of big box (book) stores, with the widespread presumption that digital information adequately replaces the need for “a trip to the library” and online retail imitating library services, library building projects today are vulnerable to being remade in the image of strip-malls, one-stop-shop environments. The entity we know of as the library is in danger of being reduced to its most flashy, consumable parts: Internet access, juice for portable devices, and cup-holder accessorized seating in stain-resistant fabrics. In this moment, key practitioners—architects, designers, and library professionals—lack
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awareness of the tools and protocols that are being developed to create and enhance human environmental meaning in (library) design and building projects (Israel, 2010; Mattern, 2014; Sharpe & Bodnar & Long & Deisley, 2011). Resisting this trend, Mattern sees the public library as an innovation lab (2014). Sharpe et al. held a weekend-long symposium to reimagine libraries, naming them as essential in all that is great and good for growing self-reliant, and civically engaged individuals starting with primary and secondary education (2011).

Issues and Background to the Problem

Despite these promising preliminary investigations, the field of environmental psychology has neglected to look at libraries as a significant environment akin to home, childhood playground, neighborhood, etc.¹ From course readings to published articles, conference papers, poster sessions, proceedings, and invited speakers, libraries as relevant environments of relationship, offering people some of the most significant spaces and places of their lives, are conspicuously absent. While libraries as institutions serve—among other functions—to honor and hold a place for narratives of many kinds, it is narrative research methods, the data collection and analysis of library-focused stories, which are largely missing from the investigation of libraries, past and future. In the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), academics privilege quantitative data over qualitative data, in stark contrast to many other practitioner fields. Not only has the LIS field lagged in the embrace of narrative as a form of valid or rigorous research (Eckerdal, 2013; Bates, 2004), theories of ‘place’ and ‘space’ have only slowly been incorporated

¹ Based on an analysis of the indices of the EDRA Proceedings, editions of the Handbook of Environmental Psychology, literature review searching, and a review of syllabi from environmental psychology courses.
into LIS literature and practice, and are slower yet to inform the formal training of librarians (Buschman, Given, Leckie, 2010; Kevin, Mehra, 2016). By inviting participant narratives about the experience of information retrieval—the process of seeking information, refining a search through trial and error, the benefits of enacting a fruitful search—Eckerdal’s article demonstrated the power of individual library adventure. As editor, Susan E. Montgomery’s (2017) monograph on library assessment for learning spaces includes chapters such as “A Place to Think, Feel, and Act: Psychological Approaches to Understanding Library Spaces” (Harris, Schweighardt, 2017), and “The Evolving Role of the Architect in Library Design” (Sens, Dowlin, 2017), articles identifying the significance of library stakeholders’ narratives, including those of the architect. Notwithstanding regional and cultural differences in their formal practitioner education, my research and acquaintance with architects shows that schools of architecture and design actively stifle the environmental knowledge and concerns that budding practitioners bring to their work (Dujardin, 2013; Israel, 2010; Gutman, 2009). Professional training routinely fails to educate architects and designers about the importance of human interactions with environments or the meanings of human-environmental interactions. (Carter & Cromley, 2005; Nasar, Preiser & Fisher & Salama, 2007; Brooker & Weinthal, 2013). Dujardin worked with design students in the Netherlands to champion people-centered designs for critical stakeholders. Toby Israel’s extensive interviews with three famous architects included passages reflecting on how their formal training demanded their personal environmental amnesia, and instead privileged the building of forms and configurations devoid of individual memory and meaning. In the work of Carter & Cromley, the people who shared the stories of their
lives used the vernacular in the re-telling of place and the project of an architectural endeavor. Nasar et al. were early provocateurs in challenging schools of design by demanding that designers draw from lived experience rather than emphasizing innovation for its own sake. Because schools of architecture and design have produced generations of practitioners lacking an awareness of the significance of human environmental experience and who are utterly unfamiliar with the tools and protocols being developed to address the significance of such experiences (Franck & Howard, 2010), those responsible for proposing and designing library building projects fail to engage their clients in this exploration of what is termed “self-place needs.”

As a career librarian now in my fourth decade of service, I am profoundly aware of the bonds people have to libraries as environments of physical meaning, in addition to their social, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic significance. Time and again, people reference their need to re-experience the library in the evocative ways of their past, and to protect the branch or institution from losing characteristics they hold as dear. Important features may be as seemingly incidental as how mission-style wood furnishings offer an inviting setting for their intellectual curiosity, or the way that light pours welcomingly into a library room at a particular time of day. From childhood to adulthood, people seek out their library as part of bigger weekly rituals, and depend on the persistence of libraries to satisfy their sense of community. Over a lifespan, library-use rituals and meanings may change, but personal ideas of “the library” persist. Inclusion of self-place needs in the re/design process would allow for an examination of the ways “self” influences place, and conversely, how aspects of “place” influence the self. Libraries are places where people describe having transformative experiences of identity and find
profound meaning in relationship to the environment. Yet remarkably, self-place needs in library building projects are rarely, if ever, investigated in the early phases of needs-assessments, nor are they seen as priorities at the design table—and thus they are rarely incorporated into building programs (Smale & Regalado, 2014).

Smale and Regalado have accumulated ethnographies of college students’ use of libraries among other, more informal study spaces. Their research includes descriptions of students studying in their apartment building hallways considered to be conducive as options outside of their college libraries, and students without home study-space composing academic papers on smartphones during subway rides. Students provide drawings of their daily comings and goings of their college library making it evident that college libraries offer them a wide range of fundamental meanings: from use as a base for socializing with classmates, to a place where health and personal hygiene can be maintained, and from a site of intellectual encouragement and support, to “a place of my own” for students who otherwise lack quiet and privacy. Karen R. Diller published research on methods for space assessment to support learning (Diller, 2015; Diller & Phelps, 2010). Her 2017 literature review frames Montgomery’s anthology on assessing library space; it incorporates ways of studying space for learning in general and uses of academic library space, in particular (Diller, 2017). In recent years, promising new voices and new dialogues have emerged (Hanagarne, 2013; Mattern, 2014; Shenton, 2014; Stripling, 2014) helping to refine understanding of the library’s significance for diverse groups. Hanagarne speaks explicitly about how individuals experience their library trips and what takes place in the space to encourage their return. He articulates how community engagement has always been and will continue to be more than the mere use
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of collections. The meaning of access and use of libraries is reflected in the fact that librarians are invited speakers for TEDx talks, write well-subscribed blogs on the future of public spaces, and are solicited for opinion pieces in intellectual publications concerning not only the future of libraries, but of the experience of place (Michael, 2016).

The examples above demonstrate the imperative for architecture and design professionals to incorporate self-place needs and the environmental meanings held as valuable by generations of people as they create library building programs and projects. Toby Israel is a design psychologist who crafted The Design Psychology Toolbox (hereafter known as DPT or the Toolbox). She created it to invite environmental autobiographies and to generate data to counter missing personal narratives. This dissertation addresses the practitioner-client process of engagement with library projects and it expands the discourse on library space and place for the field of environmental psychology in promising ways, to offer a model toward building libraries that are most reflective of human needs.

Goals of the Research

The primary goal of my study was to collect data from architects and design participants who had undertaken DPT exercises to analyze the DPT’s adaptability for libraries. By providing an opportunity for library-building and design practitioners to tap into their own environmental autobiographies, I sought to explore and analyze how experiences create meaning in the environments of our lives. Narratives in the form of library stories hold rich information about the significance of place and space in the creation of individual agency and democratic community mores. As physical, noncommercial space is increasingly contested and rare, library narratives offer us insight
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into the continuance of a robust and informed public. The findings from library narratives warrant exploration and inclusion in the fields of environmental psychology and deserve to be factored into the practice of architecture and design for library building projects. To explore these ends, I adapted Israel’s DPT exercises.

Additional goals include:

- Providing practitioners (architects, designers, and librarians) who work with library building and design programs, with specific terminology for engaging in dialogue that prioritizes explorations of individual meaning and with an opportunity to practice self-place reflection through an adaptation of DPT.

- Expanding the literature on the meaning of human environments by appropriately situating libraries alongside childhood homes, playgrounds, neighborhoods, etc., through an analysis of libraries as known environments of significant experience and meaning over the life course.

- Researching education in the fields of architecture, design, and librarianship to support learning about place and space, and the value of human environmental meaning, alongside time-honored studies of form, function, and metrics of use assessments. Such an expansion stands to enrich professional practice. The contribution of this research will identify experience and inherent knowledge that students in these fields already possess and bring to practitioner education and training (Freire, 1970).

- Researching the use of narratives and narrative inquiry to determine how library narratives might serve as rich, knowledge-based content and in what ways
narratives constitute a valuable source for qualitative research in the LIS field.

Where are the missing library narratives?

**Potential Significance of the Research**

Participation in this research introduces a small set of architect and design professionals to an adaptation of the DPT exercises tailored specifically for professionals who build libraries. Through the social science research method of `environmental autobiography,’ a process of self-reflection generates self-place narratives, and with analysis, a valuable source of data for library design. Analysis creates the possibility for the assessment of such practices for application to building projects. There is no other body of qualitative research on design professionals that catalogues practitioner experiences of self-place needs or their fulfilling self-place bonds with libraries. My assessment of the six practitioners’ narratives generates data that can be analyzed towards an understanding of how their past library experiences meaningfully informs their future professional library project work.

The analysis generated from this dissertation can inform future research on the use of narrative inquiry tools as part of professional training and on the potential for their use in professional practice. While the number of participants for this in-depth study is intentionally small, there is the potential for informative follow-up exchanges with other architects and designers, through professional development offerings such as practicums, lectures, courses, conferences, internships, etc. Participants will be positioned to share their experience of the DPT, perspectives of the tool, and the value they derived from participation in the research. Finally, there is the potential for the practitioners who
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participated in this study to embrace a discussion of self-place needs as a method for working with library design clients and stakeholders.

I contend that shifts in practitioner-client self-place awareness might shift the intake process for library design and building programs. When the social and emotional experience of use and human relationships to libraries is incorporated into the design and planning phase, it is likely to enhance any existing processes in which use-metrics and efficiency of information retrieval have dictated outcomes. Through my participation in professional networks, this dissertation might expand the respect for and consideration of using narrative inquiry in research pertaining to library science topics. This dissertation might serve as further evidence in the quest for social scientists involved in environmental design to bring social science research concepts to the practice of architecture and design fields. The American Institute of Architects New York’s (AIANY) Architecture and Social Science Committee offers educational programs promoting research and practice between these fields. A social science and architectural history primer is provided each year (Wener et al., 2017). As a career librarian with a wide range of professional contacts and colleagues, I am regularly invited me to share my work at institutions through all-staff, in-service days, conference panels, blog entries, addresses to special interest groups, and hands-on project work. I envision delivering an educational hands-on session along with other scholars on library space and with architect and design professionals who have expertise in library buildings for participants planning to enter library building projects at an upcoming Association of College and Research Libraries preconference. Finally, the dissemination of the ideas proposed in this dissertation might also expand the recognition of libraries as environments of significant
meaning alongside other long-noted significant environments of experience such as childhood homes and neighborhoods (Boschetti, 1987). My research for this dissertation has reinforced my belief that there remains a great deal of importance still to learn about human attachment to libraries as places, and that the narrative content of practitioner library stories in particular is one key to understanding the experience of meaning in the environmental setting of the library.

I plan to publish this research in a variety of highly accessible journal articles in the practitioner literature to share the opportunity for further research and application of the methods. I plan to participate in programming with AIANY’s Social Science Committee. I also intend to present the process and findings of the research to audiences at professional conferences and potentially in in-depth workshops often associated with conferences. Finally, assuming the findings affirm the significance of the research, I am inclined to partner with Toby Israel to identify audiences concerned with library architecture and building projects for expanding the use of the DPT.

**Research Questions**

The focus of this work is on the experiences and meaning of the self-place connections described by the participants, namely those practitioners who create library-building programs, from libraries as spaces and places in their lives. The main research question shaping this study is:

How do library-building practitioners describe their experience(s) of libraries in their own environmental autobiographies, and how do these descriptions inform our understanding of libraries as environments of significant meaning?

To answer this research question, I pose several sub-questions to guide my study:
i) Understanding the powerful influence of one’s own environmental story/environmental autobiography (Rivlin, 1978; Marcus, 1979) on the relationship between self and place, how might the DPT exercises support opportunities for practitioners to use self-place exploration with their clients as part of the process for creating library building and design programs?

ii) What value do participants themselves find in DPT exercises?

iii) What are the usual expectations and planning processes for library-building practitioners and clients as they enter the design proposal stages? How do practitioners and clients experience the usual expectations?

iv) Does the library as place figure into people’s place attachment, place genealogy, and place memory? If so, how is the library as place significant to individual practitioners of architecture and design?

With this study, I hope to stimulate interest amongst library-building practitioners to invite reflection on self-place attachment and the value of environmental autobiography. I hope to contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of libraries as place over the life course. In addition, my analysis of the data might prove useful for helping those involved in library building projects become aware of the emotional aspects of libraries as distinct from the library’s historic, primary role in information storage and retrieval. The results of the study may also support a path to rediscovering unarticulated or sublimated design desires. In her interviews with architects on home design psychology and the creation of ideal places, Israel consistently and unintentionally recorded the architect’s desire for ideal library spaces. In my own preliminary research, I
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foregrounded libraries as the spine of one’s life story to prompt practitioner environmental autobiographies. This method immediately brought out descriptions of ideal library spaces that my sample of practitioners longed to recreate in their commissioned work. In short, showing the longing for creating evocative projects that successfully reflect libraries as rich, meaning-filled places and spaces in the lives of library-building practitioners is what drives this study.
All buildings tell stories. We know that buildings tell stories because we can identify them by place, time, and culture (Psarra, 2009). I consider Psarra’s *Architecture and Narrative: The formation of space and cultural meaning*, a seminal work in my topic area. We can recognize the differences in cultural, historic, geographic narratives between the library building framed by the lions on 5th Avenue in Midtown Manhattan and the brownstone Carnegie library on a corner in Harlem, and between the glass-walled storefront library in sprawling downtown Houston and the library bookmobile on a South Dakota reservation. All people tell stories, and linguistic theorists as well as psychologists have long documented the necessity of human expression for development, growth, and self-understanding (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Rosenberg & Ochberg, 1992; Sarbin, 1986). We can choose to believe that lives are stories in progress, interpreted and in translation, and through the research of human scientists we determine that communication, culture, and connectivity are where meaning surfaces (Polkinghorne, 1988; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Josh Hanagarne, (2013) is a library scientist with Tourette Syndrome. He names his inability to control his volume, spontaneous vocal eruptions and physical disruptions as making him the most unlikely candidate to serve in a library profession. His patrons have designated him as “the world’s strongest librarian,” a fitting metaphor for how his personal, involuntarily visible narrative repeatedly draws articulations from others on the meaning that libraries hold for them. The culture of communication and connectivity that libraries make possible draws users who approach Hanagarne and bond with his story, sharing the meaning that they make of his presence,
and their determined choice to inhabit the library environment with him. His authority as a librarian, along with his involuntarily loud sounds and his reflexive movements, confirms for many that the library operates as a great, open, welcoming, inclusive, and professionally-served place where diverse interests are met in one public space intended for all by a civil society.

The examples of buildings that echo local landscapes, of Hanagarne, or of countless immigrants who have found a true welcome in libraries, tells us how cultural content, ancestry, and geography build narratives that give us content to understand where meaning surfaces. While there is much about libraries that yield stories of noble, heartwarming, justice-demonstrating transactions, libraries are institutions that carry the flaws of humans who lord over them. Sometimes librarians are information gatekeepers; sometimes taxpayer patrons are privileged over the unemployed homeless; sometimes the milieu of a library is intimidating; sometimes collections are dated or filtered at the expense of underrepresenting marginalized lives; sometimes age groups have imposed limits on access to collections—insulting their curiosity and capacity to grasp content; sometimes sexual prudery dictates both collections and circulation policies; sometimes libraries exacerbate frustration with false claims for lost items or inflated fines; sometimes libraries are places of unwelcoming signage and worse; and sometimes libraries make privacy feel impossible and the thought-police feel probable, and occasionally privacy has been won out by the FBI. When we listen closely to the narratives of the disgruntled as well as the contented, then we can claim to make good use of narratives for building libraries as human environments.
The experience of entering a library and being in a library holds profound meaning for a vast number of people experiencing the library as a place of designated transaction (Beth, 2010; Elmborg, 2011; Stripling, 2014). Libraries are also often experienced as a space (de Certeau, 1984), and that which is transacted does not exclusively concern literary commodities. Where this research is concerned, place might be considered the “where” of a being, and is literally experienced through the body and our senses (Lefebvre, 1984). Space might be thought of as the possibility or as the texture of experience. I define place as a tangible environment, and regard space as an abstract concept more intimately connected with a mental understanding of the physical place. Space is external, experienced and held within the mind. Since libraries are greater than the sum of their collections and services, it seems prudent for practitioners—architects, designers, library administrators, and city/campus planners—involved in library-building projects to acknowledge the meanings that libraries represent to a variety of people in different historical geographies.

When we build, design, remodel, or renovate, we select stories to tell and methods for telling them (Gopnik, 2000). Buildings tell stories about many things, about their location in space and time, about the culture of their context, about the values and knowledge of their creators—both those whose applied talents brought forth the building and those who inhabit its space (Smale & Regalado, 2014). My research investigates how architects and designers who work in relationship to libraries as both place and space can create, foster, and cultivate cultural content—what I call narrative meaning—and how narrative meaning can be supported in the initial phases of library-building projects, whether they are new, redesigned, renovated, or remodeled.
When Meaning Goes Missing

When I began to explore the topic of library as place and space in people’s lives more than a decade ago, the topic was conspicuously absent in the literatures of LIS, architecture and design, and environmental psychology. My own practitioner-training as a librarian never investigated theoretical explorations of place or space, and in the 30-plus years since my initial training, the LIS field has still not developed such theories, nor has it incorporated theories of place and space from other fields into its scholarship, reflective practice or review (Kulthau, 2004; Schroeder & Hollister, 2014). Leckie, and Buschman took their well-received anthology The Library as Place (2007), and understood the time had come for the field to develop formal theories. Together with Given, they looked at Lefebvre’s work on spatial dialectics and pushed the discourse further in the LIS field (Leckie & Given & Buschman, 2010).

The historical work of LIS pertains to the history of the book (Hall, 1996); to the social history of public libraries, intellectual freedom, and freedom of access to information (Wiegand, 1989; Wiegand & Davis, 1994); and to the American library system as part of the evolution of civil society (Augst & Wiegand, 2001). Wiegand is a comprehensive historian of libraries in that he neither rests at a chronology of institutional building counts or architectural patterns, nor a record of policy formation. Rather, he situates all his research in a social historic context and is forever asking questions about the impact on individual lives through collective institutional practice. Quite recently, a healthy handful has been written about the “library as place” (Buschman & Leckie, 2007; Elmborg, 2011; Kapitzka & Bruce, 2006; Most, 2009; IFLA, 2004; May, 2009; May & Black, 2010). However, with Buschman & Leckie and Elmborg as
exceptions, most current investigations emphasize hyper-technology, social media, and access to information from a variety of commercial providers. These trends beg the questions of what a library is and what a librarian should be. While these perspectives are necessary elements of library education and information advocacy in today’s world, they neglect to account for the meaning to be found in the experience of using libraries that informs our understanding of the library as space (Chaban, 2017, September 18; Kells, 2017).

There is a range of perspectives on the concept of the library as place and space. The term “library as place” is used in LIS literature to address place as a physical, architectural, and mapped environment (Foote, 2004; Osburn, 2007); sometimes “library as place” is used to evoke an environment of sacred embodiment of literacy (Wiegand, 2005). In many instances, “library as place” describes a physical library in direct opposition to the digital library (Templeton, 2008; Gorman, 2000). Bennett (2009) wrote about three paradigm shifts in the design of library spaces, defining them as reader-centered, book-centered, and learning-centered. Finally, the “library as place” may refer to the library as a repository, along with all the attendant physical facilities management issues (Closet-Crane, 2011). In her review of renowned film documentarian Fred Wiseman’s 2017 documentary *Ex Libris: The New York Public Library*, Manohla Dargis of the New York Times wrote, “…he takes his camera into those same [grand] halls as well as into more humble city branches. He sweeps into atriums and down corridors, pauses in reading and meeting rooms, and lays bare this complex, glorious organism that is the democratic ideal incarnate.” (Dargis, 2017, September 12). Libraries often, though not always, are physically impressive entities where an equally impressive array of
activities, processes, conversations, and performances occur. More than a mere location, libraries are constructed space (Lefebvre, 1984) as well as social and transactional space.

As depositories, libraries hold and offer a wide range of cultural resources for many public uses. Libraries are a type of cultural and social institution amongst other such institutions, and reflect various external institutional interests including those of government and corporations. Grievously, in these times, the library is often required to defend itself, needing justification to persist as a professionally-served physical environment, viewed as competition to large commercial chain booksellers and at risk for succumbing to virtual space and online information. The virtual library, it needs pointing out, exists nowhere in particular and answers to no unitary authority. While the virtual library is a marvelous, recent arrival with its own unique place and space attributes, the physical library is understood as both a place and space belonging to someone(s), in fact, to everyone, all of us.

Theoretical and conceptual writings that consider the library as a space, such as Hersberger, Sua, and Murray’s (2007) writing on the existence of “Negro libraries” in the development of African American education and civil society engagement, and Templeton’s (2008) work “placing the library” and the human geography of the library, were critical new readings in the LIS field. Bushman & Leckie (2007) pulled together the most important anthology of writings on this topic to date. By inviting narrative writings that honor the library as a place of history, community, and culture through lived experience, a new discourse unfolded along with the realization that we have been remiss by not asking questions of the significance of libraries as places that are also spaces.
Research of the past 10 years places the exploration of space in the context of theories developed from many fields, including psychology, philosophy, geography, and architecture. This has allowed for the recognition of the experience of place and space, a “sense of place” (Tuan, 1977), emerging from studies and discussions of the life of the library space itself (May & Black, 2010). One example occurs in discussion of how people arrive in libraries not only for a scheduled meeting but for the experience of sharing the library as place and space before, during, and after meetings (Aabu & Audunson & Vårheim, 2010; Elmborg, 2011). Theories of space from each of these fields lend library science theorists and practitioners a host of new perspectives on the experience of using the library for transactions apart from literary consumption. Whether as a formal place where meetings are held or as a space where meetings ‘happen,’ the research and publications specifically include libraries as environments of human transaction where the experience has every bit to do with the setting. When the library is considered as an environment that is not reduced to one of literary consumption, it is rapidly revealed as an environment of potential expansive meaning over the life course (Beth, 2010; HFMUS, 2010). Much of the research acknowledges a phenomenological perspective (psychology and architecture) (Seamon, 2000; Templeton, 2008) and recognizes the possibility of connections between people and the place (library) (Pruitt, 2010; Prigoda & McKenzie, 2007).

As a library administrator, I have participated in numerous library-building projects and learned first-hand that designers seldom incorporate their own meaningful experiences of libraries in their professional design work, although they often express a yearning to do so. The meanings that library practitioners remember and wish to honor
have become delegitimized in the beleaguered process of achieving project budgets, bureaucratic authorizations, and committee-pleasing design requirements. It is critical that we acknowledge building design practitioners as knowledge producers, encourage reflection in their practice, and call for them to incorporate experience and meaning into their library designs.

**Libraries as Transactional Spaces**

Space studies (Bisbrouck, 2004; Demas, 2005; Freeman, 2005; Janks, 2012; Kapitzke, 2006; Limberg, 1999) in libraries focus almost exclusively on functionalist metrics of measuring use patterns, to the blatant exclusion of libraries as environments of transactional meaning. Project budgets prioritize high traffic encounters at service points, pathways to hasten access (to both the service points and collections), and facilities use. If the purpose of encountering and experiencing the library doesn’t survive the functionalist chopping block, it doesn’t survive the project. Accordingly, those in supervisory positions on library projects often fail to understand libraries as unique entities whose environments consistently afford meaning beyond mere functionalist use, an enjoyment that characteristically extends into meaningful life experience.

It is deeply troubling that we lack social science research and collaboration opportunities for architects, designers, and librarians to create libraries of our future where place and space reflect vital meanings that people draw from their experiences of libraries. In an age driven by information, speed of information, and the power associated with the commodification of information, those who are drawn to libraries as human environments of cultural, social, symbolic, and intellectual meaning are underserved—and the designers of places/spaces known as libraries are underutilized. Instead, a new
type of dominant space is envisioned, where newly constructed environments of sophisticated technological tools are given pride of place, presenting the illusion of control over the purpose, description, and human use of libraries (Sherman, 2015).

The prevalent assumption that “comprehensive digital access” means that virtual space seamlessly replaces physical space, and that physical collections can be sufficiently replaced by virtual collections flattens and distorts human experience. This perspective, which presently dominates perceptions of the future of information access and colors environmental preferences, relegates the experience of library-use to a limited sphere of search and discovery—as though this were a complete description of the role of libraries and the full range of the meanings that libraries should be designed to fulfill.

Big-box bookstores are offered as the modern, rightful evolution of public libraries (Fister, 2014; Mattern, 2014). This commerce-driven vision threatens the core of libraries as environments of public culture and inheritance. The library’s albeit imperfect broad access, balanced selection, pluralistic possibility for discovery, and transactional experiences are replaced with calculated “tell you what to read” collections and cafés offering seating for one—opportunities that are calculated to add pleasure to the thrill of spending money in a habitat that increasingly can only be accessed by car. Reliable technology and digitized collections create marvelous possibilities for virtual libraries, or as is more commonly the case, virtual collections. Accordingly, virtual libraries and collections inhabit a new space and add new dimensions for accessibility, access rights, transaction, and interaction. The fact of some aspects of libraries having “gone virtual” is often praised and frequently discussed as the [sic] successful evolution of libraries themselves (Hanagarne, 2012).
Fister, Mattern, and Hanagarne clamor for public recognition of libraries as transactional spaces where “throw[ing] the baby out with the bathwater” does a deep disservice to society. If we rest at a misunderstanding of libraries as information access and retrieval storage houses rather than as houses of transaction and development we will renege on the social development of society ranging from the intimate personal growth of becoming literate, through to the innovation of artists, industries and entrepreneurs. While “improvement” holds tremendous opportunities for greater accessibility, new kinds of collections, and for the meaningful integration of virtual place and space, “improving” cannot justify “removing” libraries as physical environments to be visited and created in partnership with patrons. In the now widely cited 2005 Council on Library Information Resources report, contributing authors Demas (2005), a renowned academic library leader and innovator of library space and virtual learning, and Freeman (2005), a nationally recognized authority on library planning and design, drive home this very point in their unique essays challenging us to think about new potential for the place we call the library. Their work underscores the importance of the library as a continued place for teaching, learning, and research in the digital age.

Making Room for Meaning

Two popular misperceptions threaten the future of the physical library. The mistaken belief that the physical library is obsolete, that the virtual library provides everything we need, reveals only the narrowest understanding of what the library truly is and can be. The other sees libraries as cookie-cutter units, little different from generic franchise bookstores. Recognizing the distinct ways that libraries serve local communities—provide multiple means of access to information, offer specialized
collections, and give patrons varied pathways to programs and space—is essential for keeping doors open (Mattern, 2014). For the most part, when libraries and peoples’ experiences are considered in the same conversation, the discussion embraces literacy and the power of books but seldom includes an interrogation of environments or people’s experience of space. When libraries are invoked as sacred entities, this discourse also focuses on books, but usually to the exclusion of the library’s uniquely transactional environment. When there is a chance to talk about experience of place or the meaning that the use of space holds for people, literacy, technology, and learning are privileged over the social and emotional aspects of libraries. It is no wonder that a commercial environment offering shelves of books steeped in the aroma of freshly brewed coffee and dotted with cushy seating is able to foster the misperception of the chain bookstore as “a library”—even if it is only a version of what the library is becoming, despite being no library at all (Lane, 2017). When we reduce libraries as equivalent to all that has been digitized and pinned to the Internet or to the notion of ‘appear-anywhere’ entities like chain bookstores, we diminish our ability to conceive of libraries as unique spaces of culture and of meaning over the life course.

**Libraries as Space**

Oldenburg (1990, 2001) has written extensively on great good public spaces—spaces to which people go by *choice*—that he terms “third places,” defining these as public places where people can gather, putting aside the concerns of home and work (their “first” and “second” places, both *necessary* places). “Third places” are where people can unwind, meet, chat, connect, engage, and which also serve social community. Here I argue that Oldenburg’s earlier thinking about the life and value of culturally
created spaces—essential for lived stories and for identifying environments where experience consistently renders it a place of significant meaning for people—critically overlooked libraries as “third place” environments, and that this oversight might stem from his lack of a feminist lens, and a general undervaluing of female-dominated environments. Nonetheless, building on Oldenburg’s core insights, I regard the library as a complex environment that potentiates significant meaning as a “third place”—along with aspects of “first place” (home and family) and “second place” (workplace) experience. While for the vast majority of patrons, libraries do not qualify as “first place” environments within Oldenburg’s narrow definition, librarians have written compellingly about serving populations who access libraries for their “homelike” aspects, including resting and washing. Without qualification, those of us who work in this female dominated profession at all levels certainly experience libraries through the “second place” designation of his theories, and beyond a doubt, libraries were for too long conspicuously absent from an understanding as “third places.”

Under competing pressures, library planning and design practitioners may render 21st century libraries as places and spaces that are devoid of meaning. Templeton (2011), referring to linguistic expression as narrative (Bruner, 1986; Sarbin, 1986) states, “What a library becomes under such hyper-generative circumstances is born out of patterns in which the lives of its users and communities weave disparate and novel experience into spaces of communal infrastructure, linguistic and material” (p. 200).

The existing discourse of library design is dominated by concerns of technology, equipment, and space requirements that do not address the “third place”—places of meaning, psychological, and environmental qualities (Harris, 2007). To apply our
understanding of the significance of libraries as place and space over the life course, it seems necessary for the professional discourse to expand. I wish to use narrative research to promote a more full understanding of the library in the life of the user, and to reimagine our inherited understanding of the user in the life of the library.
Chapter 3

Design Psychology

Toby Israel is an environmental psychologist who identifies herself as having founded a relatively new field known as design psychology (Israel, 2010). Defined as “the practice of architecture, planning and interior design in which psychology is the principal design tool” (Israel, 2010), design psychology supports the articulation of experience in identifying how an environment becomes a place of significance to us and illuminates what it is about the experience, textures, furnishings, objects that makes the place meaningful in our memories (Neary, 2005). With methods that build heavily on environmental autobiography, Israel developed a set of exercises—the Design Psychology Toolbox, or DPT—intended to bring memory to the conscious fore and to explore intimate connections with past experiences of place.

The fundamental principles of design psychology build upon the idea that we all have emotional attachments to certain surroundings, places, and atmospheres of our past. As adults we often seek to recreate these symbols or environments to achieve ideal environments in our present. Often, we are unaware of the ways in which the environments we strive to create are linked to past places and objects. Beyond the baseline of achieving shelter and places where we experience feeling secure, an awareness of self-place relationships and an articulation of our environmental autobiography can contribute to our awareness, growth and actualization.

In the discussion of methodology that follows, a section entitled, “Using Narrative Research to Derive Self-Place Meaning: Environmental Autobiography and Design Psychology” there is a further description of the process of environmental self-reflection,
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Gaston Bachelard’s (1964, p.8) “topoanalysis- the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives,” and the foundation of environmental autobiography in design psychology.

**Methodology Introductory Statement**

This section includes discussions on qualitative research, narrative analysis and environmental autobiography, design psychology, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and issues of validity. The process of determining an appropriate methodology for this inquiry has been a lengthy one, but in the end, the methodology did not just provide me with a way to approach the research, it forced me to think about my central questions in new ways. Methodology informed my inquiry.

I am compelled to think about how designers reveal narrative meaning in their work. For my research, I have adapted Israel’s DPT environmental autobiography interrogatories to the concerns of libraries. The methodologies that I have chosen support the investigation of libraries as environments of rich human experience quite apart from traditional understandings of the library’s centrality to the history of the book or the attainment of literacy. These methodologies support a shift in the way practitioners approach the relationship between human experience and place, while interacting with clients to create library building and design space proposals. Using methods rooted in environmental autobiography, I am looking to engage practitioners of architecture and design, of library science, and of human environmental relationships who are involved in building, designing, renovating or remodeling library buildings and spaces of the future. I believe people-centered public spaces are essential to democracy. Accordingly, I proceed with the belief there is value in incorporating the social and emotional human aspects of
the experience of using libraries when entering the design process. Since there is no precedent for the work of capturing and analyzing narratives of practitioner experiences of libraries as environments of significance over their life course, it seems judicious to proceed in a manner that achieves the accumulation of data while affording practitioners an opportunity for participation and reflection.

In preparation for this dissertation, I explored layers of narrative inquiry through two routes. First, I undertook an initial study of definitions and methods of narrative research from a wide range of authors investigating the ‘how-to’ of narrative research, the ‘how-come’ of narrative research, and the rise of narrative research in importance as a form of data (Atkinson, 1998; Clandinin, 2007; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Herman et al.; 2012; Leiblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Linde, 1993; Mitchell, 1981; Riessman, 1993; Warhol, 2010). I believed I would learn the ‘how to’ and ‘how-come’ of the narrative research options, but instead gained a living sample of grounded theory—grappling with a study of my own emergent learning (Glaser, 1992). Narrative inquiry and analysis have no precise prescribed or delineated methodologies. In fact, there is no clear canon. The history of narrative inquiry indicates splinter groups of theorists and departures from accepted methods. Narrative—increasingly recognized and accepted as a valuable source of information and accepted as an important approach in many research efforts—was once a hard sell where questions of the validity of its methods within qualitative research was concerned (Mishler, 1986).

Second, I sought a research methodology for libraries and narrative meaning that could be useful to practitioners directly engaged in constructing the future of libraries. The targeted participants: architects, designers, and library professionals who, by
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participating in DPT exercises and in-depth interviews, might find self-awareness and value in the tools. My hope for this study is that practitioners will consider portions of the DPT or the tool in its entirety to shift the practitioner/client approach in the visioning phases of design projects and for identifying priorities in library-building programs. How can the narratives of practitioners tell stories of libraries, and what stories can they tell? How can library narratives tell stories of people’s lives, and what stories can they tell? How can these stories be applied to library building projects? Beyond the privilege of extending a self-learning opportunity to an individual practitioner, I sought to foster a greater understanding of the significance of experience and of meaning of libraries for practitioners, generally. I hoped to build on an embryonic body of library research and practice, and to enhance practitioner/client dialogue, documentation, and planning participation amongst those engaged in library planning, design, and architecture.

Qualitative Research and Narrative Inquiry

Narrative methods center on the experiences of our lives and the expression of our stories as collected by narrative researchers. Although interviews are a primary form of narrative data collection, other forms such as observations, documents, photographs, moving images, drawings, or performances also can provide rich ways of conveying our experiences (Creswell, 2013 p.71). Blogs are increasingly recognized as a form of data collection for narrative research, while journals and letters were two of the earliest formats for documented narratives.

Bearing in mind Bruner’s (1986) idea that narratives are a primary method for humans to know and think about our worlds, I am drawn to narrative inquiry to learn about the role of libraries in the life stories of practitioners who participate in the design
of library as professionals. Because architects and design professionals often best express themselves through visual communication, I opened “environmental autobiographies” to include sketches as part of the narrative process. I will discuss this and the choice to use Israel’s DPT exercises—which builds on environmental autobiography—at greater length later in this section.

Personal narratives were once marginalized under the influence of rationalist epistemology and the insistence on rigid hypothesis testing in experimental methodology along with the scientific preoccupation with objectivity and generalization over individual experiences (Clandinin, 2007; McAdams, Josselson, Lieblich & Turns, 2001). All of the authors named here took professional risks by pushing against prescriptive measures and asserting the qualitative richness of narratives as invaluable data. In contrast to other qualitative methods in scientific pursuits, narrative is the primary scheme or means by which human existence is rendered meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives are a portal to the mind in action, both for the content of the mind and its operations (Chambers, 2005). Narratives offer a holistic, qualitative type of inquiry, which moves us away from more traditional subject manipulation and focuses instead on learners in their natural environments, with all their complexities and interconnectivities (Shlain, 2010). Narratives may offer insights that exceed the understanding of researchers and practitioners alike, and in applied fields such as health, law or public administration, narratives can bring forth “local knowledges” or aspects of unique demographic experiences (Ospina & Dodge, 2005). In my efforts to connect library narratives with practitioners involved in the design and future of library buildings, I value narratives as a source for aiding in producing meaningful, actionable knowledge.
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The “narrative turn” (Mitchell, 1981) refers to the impact of narratives and the methods of narrative research as “narrative” was first identified, as it edged into new disciplines, before “arriving,” and ultimately becoming an aspect of interdisciplinary inquiry (Cortazzi, 1993; Lieblich et al., 1998; Ricoeur, 1981). This “turn” refers to how researchers explore questions of the meaning derived from experiencing and interpreting the world, rather than measuring, predicting and explaining it. The “turn” acknowledges the potential importance for narrative inquiry in the experiences and perspectives of both the researcher and the people studied. As some feminist researchers contend (Belenky, 1986; Gilligan, 1984; Goldberger, 1996; Warhol, 2012), narratives have always been a valid way of knowing, and perhaps the renaissance of narratives as a method within qualitative research reflects an appreciation for new, more sophisticated collection and analysis (Clandinin, 2007; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Herman et al., 2005).

Personal narratives, recognized as a fundamental cognitive activity (Cortazzi, 1993), have always been an important meaning-making tool at the core of human experience, giving us a holistic understanding of the contributions that actions and events make to particular outcomes (Polkinghorne, 1988). McAdams (2001) writes extensively on the significance of life stories, stories that give a life a sense of unity, meaning, and purpose, and how narrative case studies allow us to focus on the stories of participants. They serve to ground theory in the particulars of lived experience, and they give participants a voice in the construction of theory. Riessman (2008, p.194) names case-centered narrative analysis as a method that can produce rich, context-dependent new knowledge that can be usefully combined with other knowledge to augment our understanding of meaning.
Narratives of lived experience often include space, and pose fascinating challenges in expanding our notions of ‘validity’ (Lentini, 2010). But the new landscape of narrative methodological introspection today offers a wide embrace of research methods (Bateson, 2010; Bragg, 2004; Braid, 1996; Gilbert, 2002; Ospina & Dodge, 2005). These individuals looked beyond the use of narratives for learning about health crises and listened, so that Bateson would shift our awareness from demographic burdensome caregiving, to longevity as legacy; Bragg could ask new questions in research on identity; Gilbert could learn about the extension of grief over the life course; and Ospina and Dodge would have narrative evidence of sacrifices made in lives dedicated to public administration service. The potential of personal narratives as data for making sense of things and for interdisciplinary connections has only grown stronger with the introduction of new media and the opportunities created by cyberspace for millions of people to be part of much bigger and more flexible communities (Boellstorff, 2010; Shlain, 2010) both in written and visual content. These new mediums are magnets for narrative, and the resultant explosion of examples that reinforces the value of narratives as data.

Being more process-than product-oriented, collecting personal narratives is valued for adding a time integrated, historical perspective on things (Josselson & Lieblich, 1999). Personal narratives are also valued for revealing a multitude of complex environmental factors which shape learning and through the telling, an articulation of meaning from race, social status, age, ethnicity, and sexuality, to (dis)ability and culture may emerge (May & Black, 2010).
Israel (2010) believes that environmental narratives include a family genealogy of place that acknowledges temporality akin to theories of spatiality and dialogue set forth by Julia Kristeva (1981). While Kristeva’s theoretical work is explored in this dissertation in greater depth in Chapter 6: Data Analysis: Narratives of Environmental Meaning and in Chapter 7: Data Analysis: Reflections on the Design Psychology Toolbox, it is important in this chapter to note Kristeva’s influence on Israel’s articulation of individual narratives holding family genealogies of place and more. Additionally, research indicates that it matters if the language of the telling and the language of the experience coincide or not (Marian & Neisser, 2000). As authors of our own personal stories, we have a unique perspective on our specifics in time and space, neither of which might be shared by others. This is what Bakhtin (1986) calls the “surplus of seeing”—the processes, critical experiences and interconnectivities that each of us experiences, which others may not have had, or that may be overlooked or discounted. By adding one person’s “surplus of seeing” to that of another, a better, richer picture of reality emerges.

Bruner (2004) offers that there is no such thing as an innocent eye and that the brain is never free of “pre-commitment.” Bruner and Braid (1996) both believe we should consider personal narratives as discursive constructions, more than factual representations. This means that what we choose to tell in our own story is always influenced by what we already know about other people’s stories and experiences; what we say or do not say is shaped by what we believe to be of interest to particular audiences. To capture the phenomenon of narratives always influencing other narratives, Kristeva coined the term “intertextuality,” a succinct way of indicating that right from the
onset, every text “is under the jurisdiction of other discourses” (Jardine, 1981; Kristeva, 1981) and subject to the inescapable realities of temporality and spatiality.

**Using Narrative Research to Derive Self-Place Meaning: Environmental Autobiography and Design Psychology**

What are the traditions, how are narratives used, where do my interests fit in, and how are my questions simulative? Enter author and environmental psychologist Toby Israel, and her book, *Some Place Like Home: Using Design Psychology to Create Ideal Places* (2010). *Some Place Like Home* (2010) presents design psychology as a conceptual tool for architectural planning and design purposes able to retrieve the inner environmental images each of us has packed away in our memory banks. Israel (2010) states:

Thus what began as my personal exploration of my environmental autobiography has ended up as a much broader exploration of the psychological connection between person and place… my theories are based not only on the work of Bachelard, but on the ideas and methods of other colleagues, many of whom were also inspired by Bachelard to journey down the path of environmental meaning. Environmental psychologists, interdisciplinary professionals who examine the interplay between people and the environment, have particularly contributed to thinking in this area. Yet the challenge for environmental psychologists has always been to see their thinking—their theories and research—applied as part of the actual design process. Thus, I present here not only a process by which individuals can gain insight into their self-place connection but a useable programming technique which can help match people and places at the deepest
possible level. In fact, I have come to refer to this method of working as a new “inner vision” field of design called “Design Psychology.” I define Design Psychology as “the practice of planning, architecture and interior design in which psychology is the principal design tool.” (p. x)

Israel’s book primarily focuses on achieving an ideal home, but the intention of her work was to bring design psychology to any building and design process. The book includes the DPT, composed of nine exercises in a series of in-depth interviews, and draws heavily from the methods of environmental autobiography. The DPT presents a new methodological framework for the exploration of self and place. It is a methodology steeped in qualitative narrative inquiry, narrative analysis, and environmental autobiography. The DPT framework anticipates that understanding of self and place are molded by the environment in which we live and work, by our social and cultural inheritance and surroundings, and by the aesthetic awareness we gain from those places and times. Proceeding from the insight that self and place are intertwined throughout life, the DPT foster in-depth interviews, prompting participants to explore how understandings of self and place grow and change.

In Some Place Like Home (2010), Israel states, “I just want to demonstrate that the methodology is appropriate. If my application of narrative hasn't been used before it's about demonstrating fit of the method to the content, not the content derivation” (p. xii). Bruner (1986), in naming the significance of narrative analysis, describes narratives as one of the primary ways that humans know and think about their worlds. Coupled with the awareness that architects and design professionals often best express themselves through visual communication, environmental autobiography’s signature combination
method of sketches and in-depth interviews makes this form of narrative research highly relevant for the targeted practitioner-participants: architects and designers.

In a 1979 UC Berkeley working paper entitled “Environmental Autobiography,” Clare Cooper Marcus includes a footnote explaining the premise for the write-up, “This course - Landscape Architecture 240, “Personal Value in Design”—is a seminar for about ten graduate students in which a once-a-week experiential exercise…enables students to gradually uncover their own environmental values” (p.13). In the Appendix that follows, Cooper Marcus provides a detailed description of the method of environmental autobiography in which she comments on what is meant by the call to document “significant environments of your life” (p.15), “How you interpret “significant” is up to you: for my purposes, I’d say an environment was significant if, in thinking about it, it still has some emotional “charge” for me, either positive or negative, and especially, it would seem significant if similar environments today elicit a similar emotional response” (p.15). I remember reading this list for the first time with great anticipation to see which places would be offered to students as examples to consider recalling and writing about:

- houses you lived in
- houses of friends or relations you visited
- neighborhoods you lived in or visited
- landscapes you played in, or studied, or spent vacations in, or possibly just read about and never visited
- schools you went to
- cities or countries or landscapes you visited as a tourist

I am still struck by the conspicuous absence of libraries from the list. Home, neighborhood, school, relatives’ houses visited, new lands—but not libraries.

Environmental autobiographies have often been used for expressing and capturing childhood space meaning (Boschetti, 1987; Chawla, 1992; Sobel, 1993). In Brian
Kenney's dissertation, *The Transformative Library: A Narrative Inquiry into the Outcomes of Information Use* (2008), narratives of library-use consistently referenced how attachment to libraries stemmed from childhood. In Kenny’s findings section, he acknowledges the significance of what participants described about their earlier library experiences, naming this in his conclusion section as an unexamined aspect of his own story. In 2012, I interviewed Kenney about narrative as an appropriate research method for library science and for environmental psychology, and he stressed the importance of providing opportunities for people to revisit their past library experiences in considering their practices and preferences in their adult library use and lives (B. Kenney, personal communication, October 26, 2012). This advice echoes my own research compiled in 2004 when participants were asked to describe what they thought about when they heard the word “library.” Many described in visceral detail a library of their childhood, and almost all the participants spoke of social and emotional experiences having nothing to do with the information or resources they utilized. Narratives included first experiences of independence: being allowed to ride a bicycle to the library unaccompanied by an adult, or befriending the librarian, an adult who was neither a family member or relative. Also included in narratives were moments in the development of their autonomous self: forming rituals on the pathways to and from library visits; having the yearning for privacy fulfilled in libraries; finding space away from family members and expectations; exploring sexual identity in the sanctuary of the stacks; coping with negative experiences with mean librarians and the process of recovering from them; experiencing intellectual freedom; becoming an American with the rite of passage of using a public library. The library also holds pride of place narratives as the location for finding ground or retrieving
a feeling of groundedness after life transitions such as the end of actively raising children, losing a job, starting a new business, encountering a health crisis, relocating, the death of a parent, a retirement, or a divorce. In these narratives, participants articulated how they had made meaning in childhood through their creation of rituals and pathways to and from the library, and the memory of texture of place and the experience of the actual library itself (Beth, 2010). While there is a special place for childhood library memories formed from our initial encounters with libraries, it is library experience over the life course that offers the richest array of narratives from which to learn.

**Procedures, Recruitment and Ethical issues**

This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of the City University of New York - Graduate Center. Participation in this project was not expected to have any negative repercussions for the participants, beyond what might be encountered in everyday experience. Participants were fully apprised of the research methods, objectives and timetable and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, or end an interview at any time.

Targeted participants were architects and design professionals who have worked on library design, construction, or library renovation projects as authorities in their fields. “Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). In the end I worked with six participants, each one an architect or design professional with experience in library designs, renovations, and building projects. Library projects included the design and building of new facilities, expansion of existing facilities, restoration of a library, and renovation of libraries. Librarians who intimately engage with such projects were also
considered for inclusion. As there is no definition of a “library architect” or “library designer,” I sought participants who self-defined as such. Librarians who share the responsibilities of library building projects may also have extended their talent where design and planning were necessary, and so too were considered for participation in the research. To arrive at the final six participants, I set out to identify as many as 10 potential participants, since even when proceeding from the best intentions, research participants sometimes may need to step aside during the process, or at the last minute.

All participants ultimately requested confidentiality, which has been kept in three ways. First, a copy of the names, contact information, and the pseudonym of each participant is kept in hard copy, locked with the researcher’s personal papers, with the commitment that hard copies will be destroyed after five years. Second, all electronic documents will consistently use pseudonyms. Third, while transcribed portions of the interviews, sketches from the environmental autobiographies, and the DPT exercises from all six participants are included in this dissertation, accompanying information will be changed or deleted to insure confidentiality for those requesting it (i.e. “XYZ Library” will replace the actual project name).

Participants were recruited via two strategies: word of mouth (aka snowballing), and via online notification (See Appendix A). With established professional networks in library administration, in architecture/design/construction fields, as well as amongst environmental psychologists, when I shared my interest and my intended dissertation approach, my professional colleagues were eager to refer potential participants or to spread the word. I also posted a call for participants at forums (e.g. New York School of Interior Design, the New York Chapter of the AIA, Center for Architecture, METRO NY
professional library meetings and speaker series, New York Public Library Midtown Campus planning sessions, etc.) to promote visibility on the topic and to inspire those who might be knowledgeable and wish to participate. My topic is important to consider across fields, so cross-posting through professional networks (listservs, membership distribution lists, special interest group electronic bulletin boards, etc.) was an effective way to draw participants whose interest in place and space connect back to libraries and architecture and design.

For research that is exploratory, I choose to use a fairly homogenous group with the hopes of producing the richest possible data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Homogeneity in the participant group was not a goal, but nevertheless, it did occur. The field of architecture remains dominated by white males; the fields of design and of librarianship are also predominately white professions (Shannong, 2013), but are female dominated. By design, this research was undertaken with a small group of participants who self-identify as having professional experience in library building or design projects. While the findings may be strong, I certainly do not claim that they can be generalized. Nonetheless, the findings from this research on libraries will add to the person-place literature, will provide another example of how DPT exercises can be applied to future research considerations, and will expand the numbers of practitioners who, having experienced this method, might shift their understanding and approach to factoring in human experience when considering a library (or other) building project. While the number of participants in this research is modest by design, I hope that my investigation serves as a model for further exploration of narratives in fields where practitioners are under-represented as a critical knowledge source, for applying environmental
autobiography in the self-place relationship and process of awareness, and for design psychology as a method for aiding library architecture and design professionals alongside librarians in approaching library building designs as a place and space of significant experience and meaning over the life course.

I created a demographic profile of participants in (Figure 1). Demographic data beyond Figure 1 is included in the analysis section of my dissertation. Figure 1 serves to share at-a-glance standard information about which readers are often curious. I provided brief, engaging profiles of each participant that you, the reader, could become better acquainted with the individuals who provided the lengthy quotations provided in this dissertation.

**Demographic Profile of Participants** (list of demographic data inquired about)
- Gender
- Age
- Occupation
- Years in occupation
- Race
- Lifestyle (optional?)
- Class background
- Current class identity
- Education level and credentials
- Participated in raising children

**Data Collection**

**Location**

This research was conducted among architects and design professionals, and included one participant who holds a library degree but is not employed as a librarian, and me, the researcher who is a practicing librarian. The study took place in 2016 in the greater NYC metropolitan/tri-state area. During the six-week interviewing period, I was available to travel and schedule meetings to suit the research and participant needs. This
decision allowed me to maximize financial resources required for travel, and supported my access to potential participants who may have responded throughout the region to my call for participants through snowballing/word-of-mouth notification. My professional life afforded me access to cost-free spaces in which to invite participants and to conduct the research. Every priority was given to conduct the interviews in an environment deemed comfortable by the participant.

At the start of the six-week interviewing period, I worked with participants one, two and three for the first three weeks, and then worked with participants four, five and six over the subsequent three weeks. Because narrative produces rich individualized data it was important to keep the number of simultaneous interviews on a scale that allowed me to be fully present in my listening and reflecting on what they shared. The interview had three segments (past, present, and future) and each participant was guided in that order. Supplemental contact with participants took place when there was a need for a follow-up question, completion of a thought, or clarification.

All interviews took place either in a lounge or in a study room of a library, a café, or in a client consultation/discussion room of an architect and design firm. Whereas only the café space could properly be considered neutral space, the most important factors I addressed were making certain that each participant felt comfortable and that their privacy was supported. Additional considerations that I addressed and met were ensuring each participant’s ease in meeting with me, a stranger, seeking spaces comfortable and quiet enough for conduct interviews, and scheduling meeting space that was easy to locate and relatively accessible. All the spaces used had comfortable seating and a surface space conducive for the creative work of sketching.
Procedures

Interviews were taped at the time of meeting, and transcribed subsequently. For depth, I undertook an iterative process of re-listening and note-taking. Sketches were a component of the interview process and were collected at meetings. I recorded a total of 36 hours of interviewing and sketching discussion time for the six participants. Additional interview hours were not initially anticipated, but brief exchanges for clarification and inquiry took place over the following months.

I conducted the interviews with as much mutual professional acknowledgement as possible. Dervin (2007, p.53) describes a “naturalistic and holistic approach to interviewing, [in which] it is the informant—not the researcher—who is free to define terms such as emotions or learnings or muddles. While many dominant theories of interviewing attempt to structure interviewing in such a way that the goal is to constrain informant interpretations to research intent, sense-making draws on different theories of communicating… treating interviewees as knowledgeable informants on their life situations, capable of theorizing events, causes, and outcomes.” I set out to achieve the naturalistic and holistic approaches of interviewing Dervin describes, and believe that I was successful in my treatment of the participants as respected partners.

The research instrument used for interviews was an adaptation of Israel’s DPT exercises (Israel, 2010). I adapted the exercises for my research specifically to address practitioners of architecture and design for whom library-building projects were part of their work (Appendix D). I met in person with Israel on April 11th, 2014 and received her verbal assent to work with her DPT exercises for my research. On April 25th I received
Israel’s written consent to adapt the exercises for my dissertation (T. Israel, personal communication, April 25, 2014, Appendix B).

The DPT exercises are intended to explore a sense of place deeply and fully, and to elicit a sense of self in relationship to place. Israel described a past, present, and future sequence as an ideal approach, with an intentional period of reflection time between exercises (Israel, 2010). Israel also explains:

In all cases, the exercises are suggested for a springboard, as catalysts for further discussion and contemplation about the relationship between one’s self and place. In particular, the exercises are meant to encourage self-place growth, not to assist in delving into the emotional complexities of people’s non-environmental lives. They are not intended as any form of therapy though, in fact, any discussion involving personal growth always has the potential to strike a very personal note. With this in mind, those entering into the personal aspect of the Design Psychology process should participate only on the level with which they feel comfortable… Overall my hope is that the readers will use these exercises to become more conscious of the meaning the environment holds for them and encourage all to more consciously create homes and other places that express a fulfilling self-place bond. (p.46-47)

Accordingly, my adaptation of Israel’s DPT exercises are named and sequenced as follows and are presented in their entirety in Appendix D:

Past:
- Library Timeline
- Library Family Tree
- Favorite Childhood Place Visualization
The DPT includes nine exercises and draws from the methods of environmental autobiography as a form of narrative inquiry. Environmental autobiography is comprised of two parts: writing or talking aspect, and a drawing aspect. In environmental autobiography, an inquiry is posed (i.e. “Using the tools before you, tell me about the chronology of your life, using the library as the guide.”). The DPT process took three sessions per participant and I followed the recommended Past, Present, and Future sequence. The exercises and sessions described in this chapter are written in the present tense to emulate the script I used in introducing the adaptation of the exercises to Toby Israel, to support any reader of this dissertation that might consider using them, and to present them in as consistent a manner as possible with the way they appeared in the initial proposal for this dissertation. Here are my brief descriptions of the sessions and exercises along with explanations of directions I gave:

**Session 1: Past:**

*Library Timeline: Ex 1:* (20 minutes) The purpose of this exercise is to plot a personal chronology of relationships to libraries, including geographic location, type of library, and approximate age at the time that the practitioner experienced the library.
**Library Family Tree: Ex 2: (20 minutes):** The purpose of this exercise is to expand the memory of the past beyond our own roots and to acknowledge the roots of our ancestors. This allows us to understand that in environmental terms we not only possess environmental autobiographies but environmental genealogies as well. Participants will be asked to fill in a graphic of a ‘family tree’ with boxes as library buildings where they can indicate what they might know of the past library experiences of family members and other significant people in their genealogy. Once the ‘family tree’ is completed I will ask the participants a few short questions to further explore the influence of library experiences on their lives.

**Favorite Childhood Place Visualization: Ex 3: (30 minutes):** The purpose of this guided visualization is to help participants recall a favorite place from the past that may have influenced their present sense of library as place. I will read a script and instruct the participant to complete the exercise only on the level comfortable to them.

**Mental Map: Ex 4: (30 minutes):** The purpose of this exercise is to generate an image of an environment experienced by the participant that allows them to become more aware of the qualities of place that are especially pleasing or significant to them. I will ask the participant to draw a map of a memorable library they experienced in childhood, before 18 years of age. Once the map is drawn, I will ask for annotations describing the look and feel of the place. Last, I will ask the participant to reflect on and respond to questions that seek an articulation of the qualities of the described place, especially those that may have been pleasing, disturbing, or significant.
Session 2: Present:

*Library Sociogram: Ex 5: (30 minutes):* The purpose of this exercise is to stimulate thinking about the social dynamics of how space can be used and the “who” of space when it comes to library stakeholders. Participants will be asked to draw a rough floor plan of a library that they are familiar with and to label it in terms of individual, shared, and public space. Finally, I will ask questions intended to elicit an articulation of the experience of the three types of space uses and whether the participant designed, redesigned, or worked in that space.

*Personality and Library as Place: Ex 6: (30 minutes):* The purpose of this exercise is to have participants bring to the surface assumptions they may hold based on their own experiences about constructing functional library spaces. Thinking aloud about personality and library as place, may heighten awareness of what informs their design preferences and decisions. Participants will be asked to answer five questions in the process of exploring the topic.

Session 3: Future:

*Special Objects Inventory: Ex 7: (20 minutes):* The purpose of this exercise is to make a connection between objects and place and the experience of objects in our attachment to place and our awareness of the significance of objects beyond form and function. Participants will be asked to make a list of special objects in libraries that for whatever reason have been a part of their life, as well as to categorize those objects and to name if and how the objects held meaning. Once the list and the assigned categories are completed, I will ask the participants to answer related questions.
Taste Structure: Ex 8: (20 minutes): The purpose of this exercise is to reflect on how our aesthetic, taste, and style may derive from our past experience including what might be inherited from our family library genealogy. With that awareness at the fore, I will ask questions of how the participant might bridge to current and future library projects while honoring the importance of taste in forming place.

Ideal Library Place Visualization: Ex 9: (1 hour and 20 minutes): The purpose of this exercise is to imagine an ideal library place, now, with the awareness of one’s own library environmental autobiography, and the articulation of libraries as a place of significant experience and meaning over the participants’ life course. It is a guided visualization exercise. I will read a script and instruct the participant to complete the exercise only on the level comfortable to them. Participants will be asked to draw the ideal place they imagined. They will be asked to depict or describe as fully as they can the many design aspects that go into creating a successful library place. This exercise will model the potential for participants to arrive at a satisfying design approach when preparing to engage future clients in developing a library-building program.

Data Analysis

Data consisted of completed tables from the DPT exercises, sketches by the participants, transcriptions of their interview—including reflection and answers to additional questions I posed—and notes taken during live conversations.

Qualitative in its design, a wide array of analyzing approaches was used to interpret the results of this narrative inquiry process. Narrative analysis is often crafted in thematic representations, but Reissman (2008) also notes how at times structural analysis of the telling of our stories is key, and in other instances ‘audience,’ or acknowledging
‘who’ the story is directed at (dialogic/performance) is where analysis rests. Israel designed the sequence of Past, Present, and Future to allow reflection to build organically upon it, and for reflection to become articulation in the future imagination of desire. Some of the analysis was drawn from participant responses to questions asking them to consider—as practitioners—the potential for self-place connections in future library projects. Those reflections naturally came after having experienced the telling of their own library life story/narratives.

Although there were typically several days of down time between interview sessions, some of the analysis emerged in real-time collaboration with the participants. For example, after a sketch was completed, I asked participants to tell me about their sketch as follows:

“I would like you to tell me your sketch, all the events and experiences which were important to you and any textures or descriptions that came to mind. Start wherever you like. Please take the time you need. I’ll listen first, I won’t interrupt, other than to clarify; I will just take some notes for afterwards.”

These conversations were audio taped and later transcribed. Again, the iterative process of re-listening and note taking provided me with data. I carefully and repeatedly listened to each interview, attending to descriptions of experience of the library as place. Two participants preferred to further illuminate their sketched content in writing directly on the page rather than through talking through the sketches alone.

I first analyzed the data using the themes from the interviews and then by identifying experiences and expressions of meaning or the connections that participants had to their libraries and associated environments. Two examples of themes that emerged
include the intellectual development of experiences described in the Past section, and concerns about grace and transition in the Future section. I reviewed their data and created plates as a way of visually sharing outtakes from the narratives. Some sketches are integrated in the data analysis chapters as evidence of and relationship to the words participants used to describe memories, experiences, and imaginings. As expected, I found that even though participants did not presume the power or influence of their past experiences in their present work, in fact, aspects of their past self-place attachment and experiences presented themselves clearly in their professional work and were even more apparent in the participants’ hopes for their future professional work. I analyzed their ideas and concepts of ‘libraries’ as lived experience, as well as in comparison to library designs created by other architects. I wanted to understand the opportunities and challenges they perceived in knowing how to explore and assess self-place needs in the process of creating future library building programs. I wanted to learn their reactions to the DPT in specific ways so as not to rest at a yes or no answer for whether they found it useful or would consider using it. In addition, I hoped to get a better understanding of their value as practitioners incorporating the social and emotional human aspects of the experience of using libraries when entering into the design process.

I conducted this dissertation study to understand the place-experiences of practitioners who design and build libraries and how they: (1) relate to the library as place (2) name experience from their own library story as an influence or lens on their professional work, and (3) how/what/if they anticipated bringing forward aspects of environmental autobiography or Israel’s DPT exercises in future client explorations of library building projects. Within the dissertation I have provided analysis and discussion
of practitioners designing libraries as places and spaces where social and emotional affordance is supported early in the process and is communicated to the client as critical to the cost, planning, and success of the project.
Part Two

Chapter 4

Brief Introduction to the Data Analysis

There are three data analysis components of this dissertation and they are broken into three distinct chapters starting with Chapter Five and ending with Chapter Seven. Chapter Five, “Data Analysis: Meet the Participants,” provides demographic and biographical snapshots of the six participants and includes an entry on me, the researcher. Chapter Six, “Data Analysis: Narratives of Environmental Meaning,” offers long quotations and sketches from the participant narratives. In this chapter, I provide an in-depth presentation of how narrative data brings experience and meaning together and where narrative data supports discovery of complex thinking true to feminist research methods (Stanley & Wise, 1983). Chapter Six is structured along eight points of belief that informed Israel’s development of the DPT, plus two additional points of my own that evolved from my analysis of this research. Chapter Seven is called, “Data Analysis: Reflections on the Design Psychology Toolbox.” Using the guiding periods of Past, Present, and Future of the DPT exercises, I have sorted through the data, documented themes that emerged, and provided analysis with short quotations and plates that further illuminate participant responses and reactions to the research. Emerged themes include personal journeys, intellectual development, thoughts on the library as space, professional journeys, objects associated with building and experiencing libraries, transitions and grace in the libraries as a place, and finally reactions to participating in the research and thoughts on future ideal environments for libraries.
Chapter 5

Data Analysis: Participants of the Research

Demographics of the Participants

Six participants ranging in age from 35 to 62 participated in completing the nine exercises of the Design Psychology Toolbox. The median age of participants was 51. While all six are architects, several of the participants have other professional training. One participant holds an additional advanced degree in music for vocal performance, one participant holds a library degree but has never been a full-time librarian; yet another participant holds an MFA with a concentration on museum design leadership. One holds an MS in urban planning. Four participants identified along the spectrum of being female, and two identified as male. Three Caucasians participated in the research. Among the three Asian participants of different heritages, one identified herself as biracial and referred to being of two different Asian ethnicities. Three participants had strongly-held identities as belonging to immigrant families; one participant was herself an immigrant. Two immigrant-family participants come from the Northeast corridor of the United States, as did a third non-immigrant participant. One participant hails from the Midwest, one from the South, and one equally identifies as coming from Southern California and Central Florida. While participants used a variety of different words to self-identify, most have middle class origins. Five of the six participants have been involved in raising children. All participants chose to participate confidentially and accordingly a pseudonym was created for each. The number of years they have each professionally practiced in architecture and design, and brief descriptions of their lifestyles are noted in the Demographics of Participants chart included in this chapter, below.
Figure 1: Demographics of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you describe your gender?</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Female (but tomboy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your age?</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your occupation?</td>
<td>Architect and Designer</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>Architect and Designer</td>
<td>Architect and Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in this occupation?</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you describe yourself when asked your race?</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Biracial Asian/Asian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you describe your lifestyle? (optional)</td>
<td>Father Husband Designer in that order</td>
<td>Educator Architect Data Junkie</td>
<td>Owner of Architectural Firm</td>
<td>Straight in a Designer World</td>
<td>Professional grind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you describe your class background?</td>
<td>Always Middle Class</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class Blue Collar</td>
<td>Active part of cultural NYC</td>
<td>From the Bootstraps</td>
<td>Immigrant, Working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you describe your current class identity?</td>
<td>Always Middle Class</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>Gratefully Comfortable</td>
<td>Awkward, Education one place, $ another. Debt and big dollars</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you participated in raising children?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>For 9 Years</td>
<td>Yes, Twins</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Indirectly, Big Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What region of and what country were you raised in?</td>
<td>US, New England</td>
<td>Southern California, Tampa Bay, FL</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>US, The Carolinas</td>
<td>Philadelphia, Northeast US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figure 1 created by Amy Beth

In addition to Figure 1, under the heading, “Meet the Participants,” biographical snapshots provide readers with familiarity of the participants’ geographic roots and an overview of their family genealogy of libraries. Along with listing participants’ significant intellectual developments, the snapshots of important environments and people in their lives helps to color the depth of what they share more fully in their environmental autobiographies and narratives. The biographical snapshots are also starting points for becoming familiar with each participant’s personality, and the spirit of
their architecture and design work. Last, the summary data presented here sheds light on their interest in participation in this research. All six participants were passionate about their work, passionate about libraries, and passionate about libraries as transactional places, beyond their functions as sites of information storage and retrieval.

I have included myself under the heading, “Meet the Researcher.” While I had no prior relationship to any of the participants, neither can I be perceived as a generic researcher. Since my presence facilitated and was inseparable from their participation, I include myself to avoid the pretense of invisibility or neutrality. While the participants brought their familiarity of working with librarians to the table, on my side, I brought my familiarity of working with architects and designers from years of professional work, as well as a long history of supporting and producing social science scholarship and service. As a library professional, I have been a lead administrator and partner in library building projects more often than I have stamped due date slips in books. The schools of architecture and design to which participants refer are places familiar to me. In the course of my professional life, I have had the opportunity to visit almost all of the libraries where the participants earned their architecture and design degrees, and where several of them worked while enrolled as students.

The specific libraries that made lasting impressions on them, the history of library building styles, the trends in library program demands, all that was referenced I am familiar with or at least conversant. Several practitioners were elated to learn that I could read blueprints and could follow the vernacular used in their field. The fact that, like the practitioners, I am middle aged, allowed for a certain ease of communication, an unspoken but understood peer connection as they talked about their lives.
participant spoke, for example, of their shift from print to digital media, we spoke as contemporaries, without second-guessing if the participant was being regarded as a dinosaur. My service on public library boards and as an accomplished academic librarian gave me credibility with my accomplished interviewees, and meant that I was well received as a partner in the research process.

My work as a librarian and a practitioner is relevant in my analysis of the data I collected. I have spent 25 years learning, thinking about, and exploring the field of environmental psychology. Motivated by the desire to have libraries treated as important environments of study, my research seeks an articulation from architects and designers that libraries are significant environments in their lives—and to see if the DPT could be adapted to learning more about libraries as ideal places. My interest in the entire scope of the participants’ library experiences goes beyond their professional attainments, and is designed to engage them as whole people, while serving as a path to their own potential growth as library designers. As Creswell (2013) and Bruner (1986) attest, telling our narratives is a primary way for humans to know and think about their worlds. Bringing decades of anecdotal library-based observation and research to the formal interview table affirmed their participation, and it helped me to see patterns and categories in the research analysis.

One final short section, “Confidentiality and Naming Process,” addresses the process I undertook to rename each participant while preserving their privacy. In the renaming process while rendering them confidential, I nonetheless sought to recognize each of them as individuals, creating resonance with their geography and heritage as
measures of respect for their work, their insights, and their generosity of time given to this research.

Meet the Participants

**Augustus Buffington, 53: Organic**

> “Libraries are where you learn to respect taking care of something that is temporarily yours.”

Augustus Buffington embodies his New England roots. He’s less a displaced New Englander living in New York and more of a transplant bringing New York the best of New England. His love of libraries, and subsequently of museums, began as a childhood weekly ritual of visiting the public library with his mother and brother in northern New England. The Carnegie building and its contents sparked interest in how the old and the current worlds could come together for old and young alike. He recalled how his mother devoured reading. She had no college education, had lived a demanding agricultural life, but knew the marvels of a free public education available through a library card. She guided her sons away from farming. Together they exited the barn and rows of crops in the field. Together they entered the library and rows of stacks filled with books. Augustus carries this memory forth in his professional life by starting each project with the question of “who is the audience?” and “what will the barn be used for?” As a New Englander he believes “…if you have the house, then what you can do with the barn is limitless.” He spoke of how architects and designers create space where the value for memory can be expressed alongside the intention of holding space for new intentions and new memories.

He recalled discovering Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Architecture: Man in Possession of his Earth* (Wright & Wright & Nicholson, 1962) and how it solidified his interest in
designing space. “It has text by his daughter Iovanna Lloyd Wright and beautiful renderings and images of Wright's architecture side by side with photos of the great monuments of architecture—the Egyptian pyramids, cathedrals, the Taj Mahal, etc. … I think what grabbed me was Wright's search for a truly American form of architecture, his innovative buildings, what young mind could not be inspired by them, and the idea that architecture is a continuum that reflects its time and culture. Very inspiring book to find in the small local public library—and one of the few they held on architecture. I was probably about 13 or 14 at the time.” Augustus references Wright’s belief in organic architecture, the primacy of designing places in harmony with humanity and the environment, to be his compass in all that he is and all that he does professionally. When asked to describe his lifestyle, Augustus answered, “Father, Husband, Designer in that order.” His love for his roots inspires him. “I’m forever interested in that sort of nostalgia aspect. Utilitarian agricultural structures were awesome childhood spaces for games and activities.” As a father he converts that space of multifaceted use, wonder, and exploration in bringing his own children to, and in the designing of, museums and libraries.

Rosa Dawson Loeb, 60: Sensory

“I have a hard time separating the genealogy of libraries from the genealogy of my relationship to books… I have an experience of place that maps to the books I’ve read from there.”

Rosa Dawson Loeb designs library and book spaces with a well-honed sense of how people physically experience their bodies in relationship to the biblio-environment. A passionate reader, she grew up in Minnesota as one of six siblings. “I come from a big family and a noisy household, but I could drown out the cacophony with my books!” Her
words were put to the test as we coped with the bustling environment of the café she’d chosen for our meeting, the door ajar to both cool air and asphalt-blasting jack hammering providing a surrounding street soundtrack. Rosa sat through the exercises and interviews of the DPT completely engrossed in the tasks I set her, while seemingly unaware of the constant flow of disruptive noises and activities bumping up against our conversation. Her ability to concentrate is equally an asset at the busy architecture firm where she is a principal, where her own work area sits in the center of a big open space. She disappears into her work and into her process, finding comfort in the vibrancy of the environment. Rosa holds a second graduate degree in the performing arts and brings to her architectural work an understanding of how vocal projection and sound draws in the human senses and defines any built environment. Describing her journey as a parent, she gave a remarkable account of the uniqueness of each of her (now grown) children telling me about the books she read aloud to them, the location and spaces where books were read, and how she recognized the sparks in her children’s development relative to those readings and spaces. Her professional commitment to public, cultural design projects draws from her background in the arts, and ensures that library projects reoccur in the firm’s portfolio. Many of her career projects preserve and celebrate an existing building’s architectural classicism with modern, astutely blended additions or renovations that celebrate the original design while meeting contemporary communal needs. Sustaining a tradition that has its roots in her childhood in the Midwest, at 60 Rosa still rummages through library and bookstore collections, seeking out books to read aloud with her adult children and husband, preferably while sitting by a lake.
Avery Golden, 36: Alchemy

“There used to be a tactile way to achieve conceptual learning…take the *Avery Index*, you had to touch the pages, scan the listings with your finger, flip the page, sometimes you had to use your fingers to hold a couple of different places and reach for a second volume…you were having a two part brain experience while you were taking information in visually… you’re having to project forward, but you’re physically engaged in your learning…the *Avery Index* was alive and it was my library.”

Figure 2: “…the *Avery Index* was alive, and it was my library.”

Note: Figure 2 drawn by participant Avery Golden
Avery Golden is an unstoppable thinker. Architect, urban planner, educator, designer, GIS methodologist and data alchemist head the list. She is passionate in her commitment to bring data to the fore of visual learning. This passion informs her design work, all of which addresses spatial injustice and informational ethics, as well as her approach to engaging clients and architecture students alike. Her journey to libraries is unusual in that her childhood included trips to a public law library with a father drawn by intrigue and personal interest rather than profession. She was a keen observer of her mother who didn’t read and who did not fill the house with books, but who labeled objects and created organization systems for everything. At a young age she began to see and think in categories of objects and ideas of her own, becoming fascinated by what informed and constituted order.

In Figure 2, “...the Avery Index was alive, and it was my library.” She describes in vivid detail her first discovery of the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals while working in her undergraduate college library. She encountered this paperbound subject-specialized index (shown in red on the bottom stack shelf in Figure 2) with fervor. Her exploration of the Avery Index coincided with the beginning phases of digitization of specific years of the Index by the library where she worked. Note the computer square in red is depicted as an older, bulky desktop machine. It was an exciting period of transformation in libraries during which, for the first time, indices could be searched electronically, allowing people to find results that came from more than one category (author, article title, or subject), and which could be narrowed by fields like date or periodical name. She found herself grappling with the format change of the Avery Index not only as a new way of experiencing a reference tool but also as an upset to her once easy relationship to all
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things paperbound. In Figure 2, the dotted red lines take us to black dots emanating from both the print and the digital versions of the Index. Both formats of the Index were necessary until the back years could be digitized and finally incorporated in their entirety into the digital version. Further above the swirl of black dots, Avery provides a schema for how she plots data today; in her interview, she spoke of the power of visual data in all things creative and as a valuable way to communicate concepts and thought. Avery describes the moment when the Index first shifted to an online format as the moment of her greatest personal transformation in understanding the concept of the library as place. She claims the Avery Index itself as her library, rather than the building that houses it, “...the Avery Index was alive, and it was my library.” This idea that the Index itself is the library opened her to the possibility of data sets where “the narrative embedded in any data set is its autobiography.” Originally raised in Southern California before a portion of the family made a major geographic shift to Florida, Avery has a fierce ability to make her findings and projects digitally portable. “I take stock of what has influenced me because in some ways it traces where I’ve been and what I’ve at least intellectually or mentally considered enough to read. In that way my personal library is autobiographical as a collection.” Professionally she leads architecture students to create visual data to plan and create spaces, and she implores them to understand that no data set tells a story as a standalone piece. Without the people who had resources, gathered questions, instruments, and used field-based research to collect answers, a raw data set, by itself, cannot reveal the story. Her concept of libraries of the future is grounded in creating spaces where visual data and data sets can be accessed, shared, interacted with, and which constitute a space that is itself a library. While the learning curve to access the information contained
in these libraries might be steeper at first, she believes that once we are initiated we will all achieve a new but equivalent sensorial experience of library as place. Where once the smells of books and textures of wood and upholstery library furnishings held primacy of place, the digital equivalent can become meaningful in our senses too.

Charles Marion, 62: Grace

“I have a predilection for buildings that connect to nature and the community of people in its surroundings. I’m motivated in the creation of public spaces where there is a sense of individual arrival and a shared experience of “borrowing the view.” In libraries where you can get obsessed with all there is to keep pulling you further into the library the borrowed view gives you relief from the intensity of diving in. When you can see nature it’s like coming up for air, restoring, and then returning.”

I first met Charles Marion at the Center for Architecture in New York City, where the event of the evening addressed the importance of how the architectural program, the social program, and the program of activities all shape how space is created and produced. When I shared my call for participation in this dissertation research (which echoes some of the same concerns), Charles didn’t hesitate to say yes. As the principal architect of his firm, he is not only interested in the specifics of the projects the firm is hired for, but how he can build skills to support a transformative architecture. “If our work enables organizations, communities, and individuals to thrive, then that’s where I want us to be.” My interviews with Charles were held at his firm in a cold, industrial conference room. Bare brick exposed walls, plain painted peeling pipes, a non-descript project table, and miserably uncomfortable stackable Eames fiberglass shell chairs. His
schedule was tight, his posture apologetically said, “I’m just so busy…”—I arrived uncertain he’d make it through the first set of exercises of the interview process. I was wrong. His warmth quickly defied the look of the meeting space. The questions and exercises evoked memories of his family and life in South Carolina. He revealed his emotions revisiting the ways in which people of his past had invested in his intellect and pushed him to expand as a thinker. He described a grandfather who had books and little else in his home, a teacher who generated ideas for him to investigate in the library, a librarian who tracked him down to help him expand from where he’d left off, and his continuous surprise in the generosity of elders who invested in his potential. “There was a message of expansion of ideas ever calming the unfolding and the craft of mind play meant to understand how new ideas pushed boundaries or opened possibilities for how things could be created.”

The muscle memory of that growth is where he attributes his calm, composed, and evolving openness to new design ideas. At this stage of design success, he is intensively focused on learning how to do research with clients to determine best outcomes for human experience in a given space and how space resonates with intention for those human endeavors. Charles dipped back to the Southern culture of his upbringing and how it informs his current thinking about grace as an expression of culture in the built environment. Libraries in urban New York are “mobbed,” but achieving transitions that recognize how grace is manifest by the culture of people in those spaces is compelling. His own grace flowed as he pondered the ‘how’ of designing public libraries today when “…120 people from 120 countries will arrive each with a different
architectural concept of grandeur and of space and of access to books, and I want them, all of them, to feel welcome here.”

Kai Shizi, 35: Textured

“Architectural books were cost-prohibitive when I was in school and training, but the library, oh the library—floor to ceiling access to all that I coveted. My sense of grandeur was more in my imagination than tied to the library as place, but that’s the beauty of libraries. They transform limits into expanse.”

Tailored, clothed in black, and attentive to all that is the personal aesthetic, Kai Shizi commands a ‘take me seriously’ presence, stating, “Rigorously simple picks are a part of the architectural interplay.” Raised in a northeast suburb of Philadelphia where housing had a particular brand of monotony, Kai tuned-in to ‘difference’ to feed her passion for what more was possible. This expression of the self struck me as a continuation of her family refugee-immigration narrative, one that has persisted for generations. Originating from China and arriving in America by way of several periods of stay in other countries, Kai named her maternal grandmother as her human map to opportunities, a love of books, learning, and of libraries.

Her grandmother’s intellectual curiosities were stifled by virtue of her generation and gender, her mother’s applied intellect was limited by immigrant oppression and political unrest, and Kai’s passion for the “possible” was hampered by the expressionless institutional repetition that defined the working-class socio-economic survival her family had negotiated. While there was no shortage of intellect, the paucity of educational opportunities for the women in her family led them to self-reliant learning. “My grandmother made us treat books with an extreme level of respect. We were not allowed
to sit or stand on them. They were treated as precious things. To this day I cannot underline or make notes in a book.” Kai’s interview connected her personal experience to her professional drive in stunning ways. She insists on designing libraries as engaging spaces where discovery happens harkening back to generations of the women in her family who entered libraries and found them to be essential places of encouragement and where desire was kept alive in direct opposition to their oppression. As one member of a large refugee-immigrant family who is living and practicing in America in the decades that abut the 21st century, Kai identifies her ancestry as a point of distinction from professional peers where computerization and its effect on conceptualizing space, grasping scale, tactile creativity, and observation held different norms. Speaking of the “choreography” of space as her guide in her work, she talked of designing libraries through the experience of always having been part of large, shared family-spaces. Finally, she emphasized the importance of tactility and texture both in her life and in libraries—how people experience the texture as the message of place—whether you are welcome to settle in to stay, or if you are expected to complete your arrival by preparing to go.

**Connie Zhōng, 49: Sanctuary**

“…be quiet to find themselves in a world full of noises.”

Connie Zhōng and I first met by happenstance at a public program on designing future libraries at the New York School of Interior Design. While chatting after the panelists spoke, I invited her to participate in my dissertation research. Her enthusiasm for doing so was remarkable. She may have been the one to phone me even before I initiated scheduling contact. Our first session took place in an unimaginative conference
room at her architecture and engineering firm. Her interview hours were filled with highly descriptive language, detailed drawings, and strong emotions. Within the first few sentences she literally exclaimed, “The library was my sanctuary!” Listening to her, the doldrums of the conference room transformed into a time travel visit within her imagination— flying about the globe, visiting people, places, projects, and different time periods of her life. Connie spent her formative years in Hong Kong, and later attended a New England all-girl boarding school to complete her primary education.

A college graduate of Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), she set her intentions on building a life in New York and has lived and worked in the state almost exclusively since she was in her 20s. She describes the library as a place for people like herself to “be quiet to find themselves in a world full of noises.” Now approaching fifty, she proudly notes never having had a hiatus from libraries and spoke at length of her personal use long after libraries were no longer paired with her educational years.

Today her professional success as an architect reflects her specific calling for library building projects. The principal architect of her firm recruited her specifically for her demonstrated understanding of the importance of including librarians as essential partners in library building projects. She focuses on what patrons and librarians as stakeholders genuinely want in libraries while respectfully resisting those board members with tendencies to drive projects into banality. Connie is a woman of vision who is as interested in the dynamics that inform a project as she is in the outcomes. Despite libraries having been personal refuges and places for turning inward to hear her own best thinking, she builds environments with rich, interactive community space and sound, places that foster people being “connected.” To my delight she asked if I knew of the
work of Oldenburg and “third places.” She explained, “Libraries are like my first, second, and third place.” The word LEGO derives from the Danish phrase “leg godt” which means “play well.” Her intense love of LEGO fits her in that an appropriate phrase for the architect with the reputation for bringing the stakeholder parts together to form a good fit.

Meet the Researcher

Amy Beth, 53: Narratives

“Audre Lorde was a librarian you know...”

Although my experience of working through the Design Psychology Toolbox is not incorporated into any of the data provided in this dissertation, who I am, what I bring as a researcher to this dissertation, and what my professional experiences have been in library building projects makes me an instrument of the research. My senses have been tuned to experience and now I am bringing my experience to the research. I’m not standing at an objective distance, dispassionately trying out a tool on participants. There is no blank slate in me. As the analyst whose conclusions inform the outcome of the research, I offer the reader a small introduction of myself, a mini environmental autobiography as a participant in the research process:

I have been a librarian for more than two-thirds of my life. Throughout this time, I have had ample opportunity to reflect on my choice of career, whether in answer to those who ask, “What made you decide to be a librarian?” or in quiet self-reflective moments when I marvel at my own enduring satisfaction with the profession. I grew up in an urban environment where childhood trips to the library fulfilled the need for a clean public rest room or a cool sip from a working water fountain as much as they served the desire to
find books in which to disappear. The library had practical purpose at every turn. In my
difficult teenage years, the library became a refuge and a sanctuary. Distraught by the
circumstance of a deteriorating family life, I would go to the library, pull out a random
reel from The New York Times on microfilm, thread it to the uptake reel, and “let ‘er
spin!” In the solitude of the backlit screen and with the warmth of the fanning motor, I
would sit and read about the complexity of others’ lives finding consolation in the
broader troubles of the world that I randomly discovered at the reader. Libraries held me.
They were a landing place, a place from which my desire to know other stories and other
possibilities could unfold. In combination with my anonymity, my curiosity allowed me
access to library buildings over many years and in many locations, leaving distinct
impressions on my understandings of space and place in a person’s life. From these early
experiences

I derived a meaning and belongingness that has sustained me over the course of my life. As a librarian I am committed to supporting self-reliance in the educational
endeavors of all people, secure in the understanding that I have skills and resources to
share with others to discover anything we need to understand. I am fascinated by the
narratives of those for whom libraries hold deep meaning, and recognize myself in those
who regard libraries as sacred as they enter/exit/re-enter the spaces and places of libraries
over the course of their lives.

Confidentiality and Naming Process

The six participants who took part in this research were warm and welcoming. In
the course of our interviews, they shared their cell phone numbers, invited me to their
firms, shared their portfolios, flexed bragging rights on projects, told me about their lives,
told me about their parenting, told me about their relatives, and shared secrets. From the start, five of the six participants asked to not have his or her name used in the dissertation. This was agreed upon in the first meeting, and each participant and I signed off on the consent to participate sheet that committed me to confidentiality. Much later in the process I circled back to participants for a follow up question, and I shared with the participants that I was at the stage of creating a name for each person. I asked each one again if they remained of the mind to keep their anonymity. This time, the sixth participant also requested confidentiality. In the conversation that followed, the participant said that taking part in the research had been a great experience, but the idea of having clients “Google me” when being considered for hire, and stumbling across a good read about their past simply wasn’t appropriate or good business. They were clear and committed to the fact that this dissertation will be open access and searchable down to the last word on the page.

Despite my social science training, I chafe at standard techniques for protecting anonymity. I am not of the numbering ‘Participant 1, 2, 3’ mindset. For me, such naming strips the participants of their dignity and, for the reader, causes them to all blur into one. While it is the participants’ prerogative to not have their names used, it is my prerogative to assign them names in the research that uphold their dignity as real individuals and maintain their human accessibility for readers. But how was I to uphold confidentiality and assign appropriate naming?

For each participant, I made a list of variables related to their geographic past and the libraries in which they had developed as professionals. I listed features of their legal names and other aspects of inheritance, attributes that defined them as individuals. I listed
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the ‘what’ and the ‘where’ they had shared of how they came to work on library building projects. This process allowed me to consider the participants as complex people in deliberating on pseudonyms.

Here is an outtake on my notes while constructing Augustus Buffington’s name:

“…U of Maine. Katz Library in 1974. Too Jewish-sounding to reflect his roots. (undergraduate, but Augusta, Maine—fitting since it was his youth, could name him Augustus) Augustus (very New England, he’s a dyed in the wool Mainer) RISD later = Fleet Library. Named after the damn bank…dreadful, Augustus Fleet. No way. What was RISD’s library called before that? Totally generic. BUT!!!! The infamous Eliza Buffington (first librarian!). Elijah (also common in New England) Fleet… Elijah Fleet. no. Augustus Buffington. Yes.”

It should be evident that the participant named Avery had a deep connection with the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals.

In constructing Kai Shizi’s name, I felt it was important to reflect her Chinese ancestry, that I not Anglicize her name. I called her for approval, to which she replied, “Ooo, do I get to have a big mane with my big name?” My notes include this thought process:

“Penn State Architecture and Landscape Architecture Library—online library catalog is LionSearch and the Nittany Lions are the mascot of PSU. Princeton history is thrown in here, but no relevance. Lion in Chinese is Shi Zi. Lions are an auspicious symbol of courage, valor, energy and wisdom. Fits her! It also symbolizes strength, goodness and the spirit of change. Spirit of change. Now THAT fits her. In her education and in her use of public libraries she described monotony as her nemesis. Her need to
bust out. The friend whose family encouraged creativity. The supplies at the library. Regionally she hails near Levittown, Levi… Levi… derives from the 10 lost tribes; in China the place where Jews are found in is Kaifeng. Kai Shizi.”

It was both a privilege and a fun task to consider each participant in their respective history, places of discovery and greatness, and create new names reflective of each individual. I value the opportunity that this research has offered to work with my participants’ narratives and to uphold the confidentiality of their names.
Chapter 6

Data Analysis: Narratives of Environmental Meaning

In this section, I explore with my six participants the influences of their “Past” and self-place bonding, and how these influences inform their “Present,” and their “Future” professional practice. I have adapted this “Past,” “Present,” and “Future” structure directly from Israel’s work, and it serves as part of my own analysis of the study data. The data for this exploration comes from a form of “behavioral mapping,” gathered during open-ended, interactive interviews with each participant.

For each of the three sections, “Past,” “Present,” and “Future,” I use 10 points of analysis. Israel (2010) developed the first eight points (Appendix E), which I have expanded with an additional two points that elucidate the findings from my own research. The lengthy quotations that follow are reproduced here to demonstrate the fullness of thought that occurs when practicing design professionals are invited to explore their intimate pasts.

Exploring self-place connections is valuable in building project processes and outcomes where human experience of space and place is valued. Libraries are long overdue for being understood as environments where tremendous self-place bonding happens. Israel (2010) investigated how the bond between a person and a place becomes an ideal that we seek to repeat in environments that follow. Point 9, the first of the two points I have created, considers how larger scale place-settings (i.e. libraries, as compared to homes) are able to hold intimate meaning for people, and for design professionals in particular. This point recognizes the importance of scale and kind of environment in considering how intimate place settings of the past might inform both present practice
and future professional engagement. In Point 10, I explore how the methods, tools, research, and data generated by social scientists may be useful for design professionals and the projects they command, either in formal education settings or incorporated into the practice of a firm. As a whole, the 10 points frame ways in which foregrounding awareness of self-place connections can consciously create fulfilling places for practitioners and clients alike.

By giving each participant a memorable name, I hope to help the reader form a coherent understanding of each practitioner throughout the analysis. A single descriptive word has been added as a mnemonic reference to each named participant. I also see that there is a large social relationship in accordance with Bakhtin's (1986) conceptions of socially situated text, and I try to capture those social relationships in the presentation of participant biographical statements as well as in their narrations and my analysis of what each participant shared.

To both honor participant narratives and to offer the reader a deeper sense each participants’ voice, I have chosen to include lengthy participant quotations in this data analysis chapter. These passages, taken from my research notes, capture what I have so often heard on the sidelines of library projects, in an architect’s yearning to incorporate an element or a feature from a long-ago remembered library, a piece of their past, some manifestation of which they have dreamt of bringing into their professional present or future. In the details of their memories, they describe their place attachment and their desire to recreate spaces where those memories might come to life anew. Architects and other design professionals make up a small percentage of the people who, unprompted, share their library story once they find they are in the presence of a librarian. I offer a
sampling of statements from my 2010 research—and from my many year’s experiences of having strangers divulge their memories of libraries—to demonstrate the library’s iconic nature and to pique interest in understanding how the library’s meaning is created.

Each of the excerpts below was shared with me in conversation. Again, these remembrances are from people who are not architects and who did not contribute to this dissertation. Since the statements were not recorded at the time they were made, the quotations do not reflect the grammar, slang, or regionalisms of the original speakers. But the sentiments and stories were preserved, pulled variously from my professional research notes, the people who piloted the research methods of this dissertation, memorable interactions with individuals, and from my personal journals. Many who shared their experience spoke about their ritualized journeys to the library, revealing how place attachment is formed first through occurrence and then through memory. For many, remembering a trip to the library and the rituals associated with time spent in a library captures memories of coming into one’s self, identity formation, and an awareness of one’s intellectual development. Remembrances reveal how people’s attachment to books and reading were formed in the place of the library. For others, library-experiences capture remembrances of the neighborhood and the people with whom they shared their geography, from friends and teachers to neighbors or shopkeepers. Other memories capture social mores, laws, and political climates against which the library was experienced as a refuge. In all of these remembrances, the library is powerful as place and space.
Here’s some of what people have shared with me regarding the trip to the library:

When I was a kid, the library was the first place I was allowed to ride my bicycle to alone.

I think the library was the only place I knew how to find from my home other than my school. Sometimes I would ride my bicycle there even when they were closed just so I could practice getting there. Here is where I always wanted to be.

Every Saturday we looked forward to the trip to the library. For certain we looked forward to what books the librarian would help us find in exchange for what we brought back, but we also stopped at the bakery on the walk back. That was like chasing heaven with heaven.

We always walked to the library. Along the way we’d tell each other about what we were hoping to find this week or what we’d read, and inevitably we’d slip into our imaginations on the walk and make worlds along the way that echoed the books we’d find at the library.

We always went to the Performing Arts library on Sundays and I noticed we walked a little bit faster on the way getting there than we did on the way home. I think we all hated to leave.
My siblings and I took turns being allowed to invite one friend on our weekly trip to the library. I remember feeling like I was about to show off a part of our home, even though it was probably the same neighborhood public library they used with their family!

I don’t think we would see people we knew there, but my mother always made us wash and comb our hair before we could get on with going to the library. I just remember the building and how I didn’t really know the address, but I’d walk along scanning for this different looking building, it was quite beautiful with long windows and wide stairs, and when I’d see it in the distance I’d get this feeling we should hurry because I found it and now let’s be there!

When I was a kid, the librarian was the first adult I was allowed to have a relationship with that wasn’t a relative.

I grew up in the Deep South and the library, curiously enough, was the only place in my childhood that was not segregated.

The library gave me a card and it made me feel for the first time like I belonged here. I would go there and be reminded that someday I was going to be an American.
Just as people, unprompted, share their library story once they find out they are in the presence of a librarian, one library story often begets another. It’s quite possible that you, the reader, may be recalling your own library experiences in response to these statements. Bruner (1990) insists that *meaning* is not “out there” but is constructed in the human sphere of culture. There is also a larger, socially-based context for telling the “library story,” one that appears in the work of authors, screen writers, bibliographers, and artists who situate the story of their characters in libraries to convey the origins of their values, the confirmation of their thought, or a culturally situated setting for depicting the greater social context of the story they wish to tell.

Autobiographical writings that depict libraries as places and spaces that were transformative in the lives of their authors include Stephen King’s *On Writing: A memoir of the craft*, and Barbara Kingsolver’s essay, “How Mr. Dewey Decimal Saved My Life,” as well as works of fiction such as *The Time Traveler’s Wife* and *The Night Bookmobile* by Audrey Niffenegger that detail the experience of journeying to the library. Where does the library as place begin and where does it end? Is it defined by the librarian who directed you to worlds and cultures you were unaware of, or genres and formats you never knew existed? Is it defined by ideas that pushed you beyond your comfort zone and denied you your ignorance? Is it defined by your ancestor’s genealogy of reading?

Graphic novelist Alison Bechdel depicts her own genealogy of reading in a four-page graphic work, “Compulsory Reading,” published in 2008 in the 1000th issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, that shows her in lively conversation with classic authors as well as her father, a book “missionary.” There are entire bibliographies (Raish, 2011) cataloguing scenes in films that take place in libraries, lists of marketing ads that use
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libraries as product-selling settings, works that include a librarian as a character, games that incorporate library settings, and entries on music referencing librarians and libraries. These depictions reveal that ‘the library’ can be variously the collection, the place, the space of transaction, a relationship, and the offering. Like literacy, reading, and books, the journey that brings us to the library is often inseparable from what is compelling about the place or the experience of using the entity we call the library.

Before delving into the library stories of the architects and designers who participated in this dissertation research and my analysis of their stories, I want to explore the concept of environmental meaning raised in Chapter 2, where I discussed the social contexts in which narrative lives, citing Bakhtin (1986), Bruner (1990, 2004) and Jardin and Kristeva (1981). Where Bruner (1990) emphasizes that meaning is socially constructed in human culture, Bakhtin (1986) posits that meaning stems from our relationships with one another and the words we use, derive from a particular cultural time and place. Both contend that meaning is specific to conditions of culture, language, time, and place. Each one of us witnesses the transactions of our environment with a lens that is ours and ours alone. Kristeva (1981) described “intertextuality,” the immediate influence of every narrative on every other narrative, that our environmental influences are never static and are forever simultaneously preceding the moment where narrative emerges and where narrative instantly shifts every forthcoming narrative, “the inescapable reality of temporality” (Jardin and Kristeva, 1981). Every one of us has personal stories with a unique perspective on what our own specific influences were of environment, what Kristeva calls time and space. Even when there are threads of commonality, the meaning of our story can only ever be uniquely our own. This is why it
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is so important to explore a range of library experiences; each narrative is one piece, helping us to understand how libraries function to support individuals in achieving environmental self-place bonds, and how libraries subsequently are understood as meaningful spaces in their lives.

The passages shared below are from the participants who were part of my dissertation research. As their stories unfold I show how their memories of past library experiences enriches what happened once they arrived at the library. I discuss what I find significant about the 10 points of analysis, and the quotations to which they are mapped.

The Ten Points and My Participants

My 10 points (Appendix E) of analysis illuminate the significance of intimate and fulfilling self-place bonds. As stated previously, the first eight of these points derive from the analytic work of Israel (2010), to which I added a final two points to more usefully analyze my data (Beth, 2018). In reporting on each of the 10 points, I use quotations from my research with design professionals describing their relationships to libraries of their “Past”, “Present”, and “Future.” For each of the 10 points, I use quotations from two or three participants to confirm the connection between the participants and that point. For each participant, I chose two or three quotations that best convey the participant’s self-place bond to the library. At the end of each quotation, I provide the name of the participant, along with the section of the DPT where the quotation can be found.

Point 1.

Our sense of self and sense of the environment are intimately and profoundly intertwined. (Israel, 2010, p. x).
To illustrate Point 1, I have chosen material from Augustus Buffington and Rosa Dawson Loeb.

From Augustus Buffington, who can wax poetic about his beloved Maine boyhood to the point that one feels transported to a New England landscape, listening to him speak with his arm outstretched in the chill northern air:

I do think back to the center of my childhood, the types of games or activities that are from my agricultural past. Every building I enter I bounce off of it as though it were the barn and I’m seeking, seeking, seeking what magic happens inside. I’m interested in that sort of nostalgia in aspects of library designs of today. In Maine, the population was small, and the buildings seemed vast. The library of my childhood was a classic solid Maine building designed by John Calvin Stevens, a totally architecturally distinguished building made of granite from the area, and like every solid house and farm had huge chimneys. We knew it was Maine looking like Maine, even if we didn’t know exactly why, but even in a cold big building it felt like home in Maine.

As described in the Meet the Participants section, he is the man you can take out of New England, but you can’t take the New England out of the man:

So, when I’m asked to work on a library in Queens and we start every project with “the audience,” it’s a lot more difficult to answer who the user group actually is. The diversity of users, the issues of security, the cultural behaviors of its visitors, the sheer numbers of people who will use the space, the ways in which libraries are like community centers—I need to design it, so they can get out of the flood and find a connection in the broader space—I want to bring them the
magic of the barn and the sense of continuity like the granite. I want to bring them a barn or a library building that is etched into their story of arrival and they can grow with the building every time they discover another reason for being there. My childhood buildings and environment were full of endless discoveries and they still define who I am today. Can I design and build that for someone else? I hope so. Augustus Buffington—Organic (Mental Map and Favorite Childhood Place)

In Augustus Buffington’s words I am most struck by how very strongly he sees himself today as a product of his past and the buildings he experienced as a child. Maine for him is a place of solidity, of stone buildings built for permanence. He recalls his childhood experience of exploration of the interior of barns as “magic”—the same magic that he tries to evoke as a designer, a very clear example how he connects his own past with his present as a professional.

Rosa Dawson Loeb’s narrative demonstrates how in talking about libraries we may describe ourselves as inseparable from the environments of our lives:

I tried to depict some of the most redolent memories I have of libraries having to do with childhood where it relates to certain books that were my favorites, I remember the smell of certain books and textures of the library the same way I remember the smells of Minnesota. My mother taking us kids—there were six of us, taking a handful of us to the local public library—we would take out books, I remember the smell, I remember the book jackets with the little identification number on the bottom, it was kind of exciting, I remember the books, but I also remember the experience of going to the library. I remember my mother—of
course we’d never find all the books when it was time to go to the library, lots of fines—of course you can never find them all on that one trip, trying to get ready to go while trying to find all the books… I experienced the same with my kids growing up, trying to find the library books, but it was, you know, not really going to happen and you could just picture the exchange at the return desk, I laugh, but it was a very positive memory. Rosa Dawson Loeb– Sensory (Mental Map and Favorite Childhood Place)

In contrast to Augustus Buffington’s expansive, regional sense of his childhood environment, Rosa Dawson Loeb brings forth a sensual, up-close, intimate scale of environmental memory. She tells us about smells and textures. Now at age 60, she shares how the memory of childhood library visits (her “Past”) and the environment of her family informs her professional practice (her “Present”):

I was a real reader as a young kid, and I think it was partly my family was very, you know, big family noisy household, and I could essentially drown out all the cacophony by just taking up my library books to read for hours. I’m still that way. I can sort of ignore whatever’s going on around me; I work in a very open office situation, and I just never even hear, it just never bothers me, in fact my desk is in the center of a great big open space and I think, in a way, it harkens back to just growing up in a big and busy household where I could retreat, it was often through reading, I would just grab some of my favorite library books and I would you know, I reread book series that I just really loved… Rosa Dawson Loeb– Sensory (Timeline and Sociogram)
Point 2.

The seeds of this connection between self and place are planted in childhood. (Israel, 2010, p. x).

I will now cite additional material from Rosa Dawson Loeb, and introduce material from Kai Shizi that has similarly strong references to childhood beginnings. It is important to note that childhood was a strong reference for all my participants. While the exercise itself was designed to lead the participants back through their childhoods, I was taken by how readily these memories came forth once the exercise opened access to them, and how much they each had to say based on their childhood memories. I often had to ask participants to move on to the next exercise to allow enough time to complete the whole sequence.

While this next quotation specifies a different childhood memory for Rosa Dawson Loeb, like the “redolent” memories previously mentioned, it too has a textural tactile quality to it. Rosa Dawson Loeb first sketched herself in a bookmobile (Figure 3) along with words describing the memory of her childhood. I also include a photograph (Figure 4) of a tight stairwell bookshelf she and her husband designed later, during their married life together, showing how childhood memory repeats itself in our reach for ideal places throughout our lives.
This is a bookmobile. It used to come to our neighborhood when we were kids. What I liked about it was that it reminded me of our first kitchen, and the way the kitchen used to be our apartment, where I basically could reach every single book. What I really liked about the bookmobile when I was a kid, I felt like I could, like it was just my scale, human scale, like you didn’t really have to move too far, everything was at
your disposal. I think of that as a space that I really liked, and it was tight, you kind of shimmied your way through, just like the kitchen, communal, full of what you liked, everything within reach… I still like to build libraries where a nook allows for that very dense, kind of compact, almost like a crate type feature. Rosa Dawson Loeb–Sensory (Mental Map)
Figure 4: Home staircase library “I can reach every book” designed and photographed by Rosa Dawson Loeb

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The narrow spaces in both images allow Rosa Dawson Loeb to touch the books on both side of her, thus relating her body and its dimensions directly to her experience of a book-filled space—a body-to-object relationship that she very self-consciously incorporates into her work.

Kai Shizi articulates the connection between self and place, of an ancestry where books mattered and later of libraries, seeds that were planted in her childhood and that remain apparent in her understanding of her adult self—an architect who builds libraries:

I’m excited about recognizing that my love of libraries and my love of books actually started generations back and from a lacking thereof. A big part of my history has always been the family narrative about how my grandmother was not able to go to school because in her generation even though she was unbelievably intelligent girls were not allowed to go to school and they were needed for work whereas the brothers were allowed. It was a gendered thing… So now I am an adult who helps design and build libraries, and the importance of access to learning and books and libraries are all a part of my genealogy… It starts with books and then transfers later on to libraries. Libraries were a huge part of me being able to find my way around this huge desire to create things that just didn’t go away. It wasn’t about a lack any more, it was about libraries as desire and encouragement. Kai Shizi– Textured (Family Tree)

Point 3.

Our sense of self-place connection continues to grow and change throughout our lives. (Israel, 2010, p. x).

Demonstrating how the seeds of meaning grow once planted, I continue with Kai Shizi’s narrative of how what started as a connection to a place where she had access to
books becomes a greater environment for her creative outlet. The second narrative segment of Point 3 is addressed through the words of Connie Zhōng, whose narrative takes us from her experience of libraries as a refuge from loneliness, into her evolution as a person whose professional work ethic is characterized by collaboration and discovery. Connie Zhōng found continuity in libraries, tracing her growth over many years in how she used libraries to cope with the involuntary disruption of self-place connection. In contrast, Kai Shizi sought out libraries as an intentional disruption to the expressionless monotony of her childhood neighborhood environment. The library expanded Kai Shizi’s understanding of herself and nurtured her imaginative capacity, building off her seeds of connection and genealogy:

Libraries were a huge influence on my becoming an architect… I had an elementary school friend and we would always go to the public library and get books out on crafts like instructional books on how to do those things because she came from a family that was very more overtly artistic and would push being artsy and creative as a ‘thing.’ Looking back at my family, being artistic was not something that was understood in those terms… So, we would always get these library books and we would make things. And that ends up being an important part of my genealogy because her being artsy and having art supplies and my feeling encouraged in the library legitimized art as an avenue for creative expression that I didn’t know I needed and hadn’t articulated as such… Libraries were places where I could further explore what I learned with my hands in a bigger sphere of what is possible and how to do it. The specialized interest grew, and I went to architecture school. I could not afford all those different fancy-pants architecture books because they tended to be
printed by academic presses and be all kinds of full color and glossy and beautiful. It was definitely at that point a matter of access to a whole other degree. But my earlier experiences with libraries evolved to inform my personal interest in ‘the tactile’ and different modes of engagement and access are tied to my research and it all stems from my genealogy. Kai Shizi– Textured (Family Tree)

This is how Connie Zhōng addresses self-place connection and names libraries as vital to continuity in her life:

I was very much of an introvert. I’m not like a popular person. I’m basically a big nerd who didn’t fit in, but I think most people feel that way. The library was my sanctuary. It was my church, per se. I found, and I still find a world of things that could open my eyes in any single direction that I want it to go. I love them, and I can hide in there and read anything in the past, anything in the future. I don’t even know how to begin. It’s just, I have a very deep relationship with libraries… With the public libraries, I came from Hong Kong. I came here to the United States when I was 15 and I went to a boarding school. My parents were divorced. By myself. So that is the school library. Before I left Hong Kong it was the public library. I went to junior high in Hong Kong, which is called a secondary school, library becomes my sanctuary at lunchtime. When no one eats with me, I go there and read and read and read. Which is fine. I got used to being at peace with myself and talked to myself and my best friend, basically. And then when I came to boarding school here, again, that became my hiding spot. Because of my English, it was a lot of just catching up, so it was really a place to hide but also a place to study and a place to empower myself. When in college, same thing. I just feel like this is a world of misfits that came
together for some reason and unless you are interested in having conversation with yourself… at that time, libraries were very… not collaborative spaces. It was very much alone and be with yourself, and seems to me that unless someone is interested in talking to themselves or finding out more about themselves or are very self-focused, they’re not going to come here. So, at that point it was a very different world of libraries for me… Lack of self-esteem. Solace in printed words and books. Trying to find myself in these written forms. That became home to me. Libraries became a home to me. My second home. It’s not necessarily where I made friends, but it was where I grew up. Because I found, realized, who I was… To me, this is very important. … The library being my “third place,” you understand, from Oldenburg… The library as the “third place” in my formative years was almost like my “first place” or “second place”… But the libraries I build today are still all about discovery. Collaboration and discovery. And it’s funny because my boss doesn’t know I used to hide in libraries. He thinks I’m same as the libraries I make, and I make libraries exciting places to go on discovery adventures. Connie Zhōng– Sanctuary (Timeline and Family Tree)

**Point 4.**

That connection is shaped not only by the physical reality of our environment but by the psychological, social/cultural, and aesthetic meanings that place holds for us. (Israel, 2010, p. x).

The three quotations I chose to illustrate Point 4 describe different formats and uses of libraries. Each participant describes a texture and an experience that would not have been possible in a place other than the library, or at least not at that particular moment in
each of their lives. The geographies of these participants are in high contrast to one another, and yet the thread of shared experience as library goers resonates throughout. I start with Rosa Dawson Loeb who comes from a large Midwestern family, whose avid reading became one of many means to carve out space for her curiosity and who literally found her voice through singing and through spectacular discoveries of recorded voices collected in libraries. Her life as a creative person continued, evolving with her as her professional in New York where libraries remained a constant for her:

I had a hard time separating the genealogy of libraries from the genealogy of my relationship to books. That’s it essentially. I have an experience of places that now have been co-opted by my architectural life where I evaluate libraries as buildings and, so I don’t—even the libraries I experienced as a kid with my mom—don’t stick with me but what comes to the forefront is the books and recordings that I experienced in those places. But for me, I started thinking on a personal level about libraries as spaces or places in which I discovered things that I didn’t know existed like early recordings of Pavarotti, Pagliacci, Bellini. That was so amazing and profound as a kind of learning experience for someone who was learning how to sing. Listening to these great songs that were not readily available, or I had never understood they had existed. One could go hear them again at the opera house but that’s very different than listening to a great recording. And that was a similar experience to when I moved to New York and I was still singing where I utilized the New York City Public Library of Performing Arts and again it was the repository of performance that seemed incredibly rich and fascinating. Rosa Dawson Loeb—Sensory (Timeline and Family Tree)
Kai Shizi experiences life through texture, the feeling of materials in combination and contrasted with one another, and her experience of the library is suffused with the psychological, social/cultural, and aesthetic meanings that place holds for us:

The inspiration and genesis for all things library for me is rooted in my repulsion for beige Formica. High trafficked public libraries often have tables made out of it. It’s supposed to be cost favorable and something you ignore because it blends with everything, but this is exactly why it stands out to me. I find it repulsive probably because I am trained to look at textures. It makes for a sense of “sad” where it is supposed to support social things. It’s a “safe” surface that encourages achieving being alone even while together with others using the table. It’s compounded by drop ceilings with stains and a kind of beige, ugly common neutral grid which is not neutral, it’s just ugly. These textures and beige spaces are not intended for coming together or working together or even being alone in a more collegial way. You get more of a sense of the library being a “shhhh…do your thing and leave,” and less of it being a space that facilitates interaction or thinking together or anything else that is about being together. Beige Formica is not hospitable. So, what’s memorable for me is the distaste of space. Kai Shizi– Textured (Mental Map)

Avery Golden grasps life by the abstract horns. Her description of the psychological, social/cultural, and aesthetic meanings that place holds for us are intangible and should be considered as important insight into how libraries are spaces not just of access but of affordance, much in the way Kai Shizi’s creativity and Rosa Dawson Loeb’s experience with recorded sound originated in their experiences of libraries. Avery Golden’s thought on this topic includes:
The thing is that’s different is when a library is a data warehouse. We all know what a server farm looks like. Which is so funny, right? Ohmygosh… I have to think about this and while I’m thinking about it I’m gonna reflect on a different synonymic image. I have memories of film and television with the personal, with the library full of books and everything that it connoted it for me. If we compare that now to the plethora of film and television on the server farm, on a bank of servers… it connotes something completely different. Calm, like the former library images—calm and quiet and solitude and freedom, like intellectual freedom and the ability to selfishly pursue what is interesting to you and to collect those things and there’s like a stability and a safety and a comfort in that, whether it’s just images of someone’s personal book library or the Little Mermaid’s collection of human crap like, archived together, it’s all backed up and services the server bank and this giant warehouse of cold machines with blinking lights, which always connotes the lack of freedom and control. It connotes control instead of freedom. The very impersonal, nothing about inquiry, but about network sameness. It’s not quiet respite, it’s unrelenting oppressive systems. They might be the same. Not all server farms are that, but data banks and server warehouses, in some respects, they could be the same as the book library, the image of them is so very, very different. Or what that image has come to culturally mean is so very, very different. Avery Golden–Alchemy (Objects and Taste Structure)

Point 5.

We can become conscious of the meanings that places hold for each of us uniquely. (Israel, 2010, p. x).
At this stage of self-place bonding, each participant has become more aware of how environmental meaning has formed them, allowing them as individuals to begin to name themselves in direct relationship to meaningful places. Quotations from Avery Golden and Charles Marion clarify this point.

Avery Golden is the alchemist-gone-architect who initially formed a library in her head from entries in the *Avery Index*, and who creates libraries as data sets and conceptualized spaces. She describes the “cinematic” uptake of consciously forming place-meaning for the concept of libraries:

What’s interesting is that I did not grow up around a lot of books. We weren’t a reading family. I’m an anomaly. There are no other academics in my family. In fact, few are even leisure readers. This is probably going to be out of order. There are libraries that are ideas. And I never, when I was younger, enjoyed being in the library. I went to very small schools that didn’t have a library. I can flash through images of places [in my mind] that I won’t be able to actually name. There’s that sort of cinematic [vision], and I mean that in many ways including just having seen them on screens whether television or movies. Images of stacks of books. It’s ubiquitous, this image of a very large personal library, as an idea, as a backdrop for... and it connotes a certain kind of life, it connotes a certain kind of mind, a certain kind of inquiry, or the ability and freedom and time for inquiry and reflection that image implies, quiet sometimes solitude for better or for worse. Avery Golden– Alchemy (*Timeline*)

While the quotation above drives home Israel’s 5th point regarding becoming conscious of the meanings that places hold for each of us uniquely, Golden expands on this in her interview:
From very young—this is about to sound so cliché and silly—but it’s even ubiquitous in Disney films from my childhood. Beauty and the Beast has that image. The Beast has that big beautiful giant Library with the rolling ladders and the heroine Belle is obsessed with reading and always has her nose in a book and this is a Wonderland to her. Extend that one step further and the quasi-hoarder Ariel in The Little Mermaid has her archive of found objects that operates the same way. It’s a space of reflection and collection that is selfish in the best possible way. These artifacts, these documents—and to her they are objects—but they operate the same way as the books do in the library that they are collected, they're organized, they’re on display. They wrap the space, implying that you’re reflecting upon them, in the same way that the books do in a library. I have probably no physical libraries to speak of in my early childhood. Which is odd because I have a pretty long memory. What’s the movie? Is it ‘My Fair Lady’? Where Henry Higgins takes the not-so classy girl and turns her into a lady? How many scenes take place in his library? It’s this backdrop. That’s the space of the life of the mind. Avery Golden—Alchemy (Timeline)

Charles Marion eventually left his small southern town and now commands not only a notable NYC architecture and design firm, but he evolved as an intellectual who readily incorporates international perspectives into his work. Every part of his pathway to who he has become holds his conscious awareness of the meaning each place of opportunity afforded him:

I remember going to the main public library in the big urban downtown when I was a teenager and it was kind of a thrill. It’s kind of like you graduated to the big library. It was kind of a cool experience because you were suddenly mixing in with people from
all over the city rather than just your local branch. I didn’t know any of the people, it wasn’t like I was going to run into anybody, but it was kind of almost like a big city experience even though I was growing up in really kind of a small town. To kind of go into this hall of intellect from your little southern town. I mean I didn’t grow up with the New York City public library and suddenly run into the serious place of learning where there’s a heavy social aspect. It was a very cool experience. Charles Marion– Grace (Timeline)

Point 6.

Such consciousness can help us create places that express a fulfilling self-place bond. (Israel, 2010, p. x).

To illustrate Point 6, I have chosen excerpts from the narratives and images from the interviews of Charles Marion, Augustus Buffington, and Connie Zhōng.

Charles Marion thought back to describe the quintessential 1960s cement-panel municipal library of his personal past. The experience of using this no-frills building had a substantial impact on his awareness of the built environment. At this point in the interview, he has sketched an image of the cement-paneled library, emphasizing its simple single glass wall that offered relief in the form of a view out on to nature, a respite for him from an otherwise austere building. This early experience formed him as an architect. As I listened to him speak of “grandeur” as an important building quality, my interest was piqued when he referenced the Phillips Exeter Academy library. A renowned Louis I. Kahn design, the interior of the Exeter library incorporates wooden horizontals alongside massive cement panels with large portals for natural light facing out onto open green space. Despite its serviceable materials, the Exeter library is heralded for being
anything but utilitarian. The cement-paneled municipal library of Charles Marion’s past with its refreshing view out onto trees, resonates with his appraisal of the Exeter Library, comprised of massive amounts of similar material to very different effect. His reflection allows him to provide insight on the origins of fulfilling self-place bonds:

Figure 5: Municipal library, concrete slabs, wood, and one glass wall

Note: Figure 5 drawn by participant Charles Marion

I’m a believer in great architecture. Something that is very uplifting and inspiring as a piece of architecture will make people return. Just that alone… I came back to this library—which was not a piece of uplifting architecture—because I was young and there wasn’t anything else available. Which made it kind of great to me. It was a very kind of glass and metal building as I recall, and it had stone and cement panels in it.
Very 1960s-typical, kind of like post office buildings. But, in that town, it was a big civic building and it was across the street from a major church. But this is quite a magnificent square. But inside the building, there were people to help you; there was a circular reference area. I suddenly had a very clear image of spending a lot of time at that card catalog trying to find stuff. Frustrating. And I like buildings that have a lot of grandeur and hierarchy to it so that there is sort of someplace that gives you an orientation, so you kind of know where you are, so you keep coming back to that. I like buildings that have a strong, symbolic quality to them, that are kind of based on a statement about the meaning of the function in today’s world. I think a library is a pretty exciting piece of architecture that says something symbolic about human knowledge and is gonna be very inspiring… there’s something very nice about going into a really big space that’s quiet and there’s this sense of awe that you have of it. … The Exeter Library, when you see the big circles framing the books, there’s this awe-feeling of human knowledge. It’s amazing. Charles Marion– Grace (Favorite Childhood Place)

Figure 6: Exeter Library, concrete slabs and wood

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Augustus Buffington is in perpetual hope of sharing the magic of the barn. His quest to create fulfilling self-place bonds is at the heart of his motivation to create meaningful design:

The libraries of my past cling to me. But they are already built and live in a different place on the map from where I am called to design. Yet I’m always going back to how you can help people feel a building as an extension of how they know that’s them. It’s challenging, particularly if you haven’t been in that space or building before and lived the experience of it. How can I grab on to preference or something that relates to the reasons why those people are attached to the library building that’s more than books? We are constantly asking who we are to come fit into that space. And this is where my past makes it happen. Bring the natural world inside. Discover local materials that define the community. Use synthetics to illustrate a situated story of the community, the local economics, and the building, but reconnect us back through what’s real and what’s tangible and what’s familiar, and what’s their own.

Augustus Buffington—Organic (Ideal Library Place)

Throughout my own library career, I have worked with architects and design professionals on many building projects. There have been countless times when one of them has sidled up to me to confess their desire to incorporate features and experiences of beloved libraries from their pasts that would emulate those fulfilling self-place environments in the new space. I have been astonished at how many times an architect has created a side-conversation to share that their mother was a librarian, or to mention their own memories of the library experience, and to express how much they wish they could, just one time, incorporate a certain feature of a past library into a current client
project. The desire for design professionals to want to extend a fulfilling self-place bond into current work is not, in my experience, uncommon.

Connie Zhōng proclaimed, “Libraries are my sanctuary!” For her, the library is more than an analogy to a sacred space; it’s nearly a visceral experience. Having become conscious of the meaning that libraries as ‘place’ hold for her, she maintains a silent mission to create places that express the fulfilling self-place bond of libraries in her younger days, while still being able to honor the diverse purposes public libraries must serve today. Our many hours engaged in the exercises of the DPT brought her library-empathy to the fore. After sketching a school library of her past, while describing a recent visit as an alumna, she began:

This is, basically, my [New England] high school library that turned into a cafeteria. Obviously not exactly, but it embodies pretty much what I think libraries are now. There are no quiet group studies. It was very much self… it’s where you go to find yourself. Whether you study, yourself, whether you read, yourself, whether you sleep, where you find things. Then you face the authority and you ask them and you pay, because you get penalized, because you have to pay for the late fee and then you meet people very shortly and then you leave. This is almost like a church, believe it or not, now that I’m talking about it… If you look at the…it’s very orthogonal, which is like a church. It has many little pockets of privacy areas. There are really no nook things, per se, any more. So, like a church, you come to find yourself, you come to pray, you come to study, you come to do whatever you’re gonna do, and apologize, to atone, to whatever, and then you face this authority figure, and they either slap you or they give you answers. So, to me, it’s very much like that.
Figure 7: “Library as church: you face this authority figure"

Note: Figure 7 drawn by participant Connie Zhōng
There was a pause in Connie Zhōng’s interview that I answered with my encouragement, “It’s fascinating. Many people talk about libraries as sacred places and therefore it evokes memories of being in sanctuaries or religious places, but you actually have an experiential way that you relate it to, so I love listening to you talk about it.”

She continued:

I think libraries have changed so much and I am actually an old soul and I yearn for [she pauses] I think based on the past conversations we’ve just had I think you understand where I was going with that. Libraries became a playground. And, it’s lovely, but it’s not play… it’s not a community center. It should be that, but there still should be private areas that you still feel that little bit of that sanctuary, that church, that something, and I think maybe people these days don’t need them. I don’t know. I don’t know where they find them. There doesn’t seem to be any place that you can be there. Connie Zhōng – Sanctuary (Mental Map and Ideal Library Place)

While there is great lament in her words, Connie Zhōng’s reverence for quietude and retreat are present along with the consciousness Israel describes as necessary for helping design professionals create places that express fulfilling self-place bonds.

**Point 7.**

Those in the design world who shape our physical environments have a particular responsibility to build places that help us reinforce these vital bonds.

(Israel, 2010, p. x).

In support of Point 7, I offer quotations from Augustus Buffington, Kai Shizi, and Rosa Dawson Loeb. Their statements were chosen because, in speaking as practitioners about library environments, their words echo the obligations Israel sees as specific to
practitioners: to intentionally create places and spaces so that people can experience environmental meaning and potentially achieve that self-place bond. All their quotations come from the “Future” section of the DPT interviews.

Augustus Buffington speaks with enthusiasm for designing environments that potentiate self-place bonding. His articulation of his role makes it impossible to confuse his design approach with that of someone interested in mere spectacle. Augustus Buffington’s sensitivity to the development of young people, captured in the quotation below on designing children’s spaces in libraries, is echoed in his overview of himself, “Father, Husband, Designer in that order.” He is the sum of all parts:

Every library I’ve ever done has had a children’s library. In the Hamptons there is a space with elements of the General Store. Out on the shore there are nautical elements, windmill seating elements… children actually sit in the windmill for during story time. Literally I have installed icon lighthouses, and giant shore themed alphabets like A equals artist, B equals boat, C equals clam, D equals and so forth and check this out, the librarian’s desk is a real boat! The kids are touching all the parts of their environment that they see all the time but can’t reach or can’t explore on their own, yet it’s their history and their personal landscape, and now we signal that the library is inseparable from their coordinates too! Augustus Buffington– Organic

(Objects)

Kai Shizi also avoids the pitfall of spectacle, noting that it is the responsibility of designers to be intentional in their choices to support design affordances, in this case the vital environment bonds so many experience in libraries:
It was always kind of fascinating to me how going into the big NYPL reading room, how it managed to be grand, but also sort of warm, and for me at least it didn't come across as alienating or isolating. Kai Shizi—Textured (Objects)

When we resumed the exercises of the DPT a week later, she shared:

I started a little mini brainstorm list for a library space I would want to build and much of that is texture, but texture more from the sense of the things you choose to put in the environment in terms of the materials you choose. Textures that are evocative, and that evoking actually does shape and change behavior. Design affordances. Like, going to something that’s sterile, like a doctor’s office, implies certain things very differently than something like going in to a living room or a place that was made for you to linger. I feel like the libraries that I don’t like tend to have almost that more like, ‘ok, you’re gonna use the service and leave’ kind of feel to it than necessarily wanting you to be there. The beige Formica uncomfortable-seating libraries.

Recalling her recoil from the functional places I offered, “It’s a sadness.” Agreeing, she returned to the responsibility of designers to create fulfilling self-place bonding environments, and the possibility of achieving that even on larger scale projects:

Yeah. And I get why it happens but another part of my list that was also the magic of the NYPL reading room is besides texture, it’s the sense of intimacy. Part of that can be read in the direction of scale and the way you relate either to seating or to other people or to things like individual library lights that create intimate spaces. Intimacy you can even have happen in a larger space based on how you organize and do other things but always in the sense of intimacy in relation to relationships and actually
connecting to people and to be in a place where everybody knows or can learn your name. Yeah, it’s not a bar but why can’t it be a community space in that sense of where communing actually happens and wants to happen as opposed to being a disconnected service you just kind of deal with. Kai Shizi– Textured (Ideal Library Place)

Rosa Dawson Loeb made the connection between a consciousness of design with the duality of rootedness in place. As I reread her words on reading, I believe she addresses the vital ways in which libraries, often inseparable from reading, evolve in people’s lives as meaningful environments where bonding to place can occur. Although she never read Israel’s words, I believe this is Rosa Dawson Loeb’s way of expressing Israel’s Point 7, the particular responsibility of those in the design world to build places that help us reinforce these vital bonds:

The nature of reading is a kind of vicarious experience. It’s the one kind of universal experience you could get into someone else’s head. It’s your imagination that takes you to a place that you can’t go on your own, right? So, the kind of magic of being transported to another mind, to another consciousness, to another place. So, what it seems to me [is] that the object within a library ties into both, it’s a connection in a certain way that is twofold: it’s bringing you into an outer realm, it’s bringing you to another place, but it’s also connecting you to a singular community—because somebody picked that art, is it related to, you’re in a library in a fishing community in Maine, is that a boat on the sea?—to a singular community, so it’s a personal choice any way you look at it. And it speaks to a particular place. To a rootedness in place. I think that’s, to me, a really interesting aspect, that almost, if you were to diagram it,
you’re going in and out simultaneously. You’re moving in and you’re moving out simultaneously. That’s a paradox in a way. That suggests kind of a consciousness that’s both contracting and expanding. Rosa Dawson Loeb– Sensory (Objects)

While people draw meaning from characteristics they associate with libraries and draw environmental meaning, the idea is less about preserving a past but about introducing new furnishings or configurations that still hold the potential for resonating what people have drawn from mission style furniture or long New England windows that spill in light; it is the sense of welcome-to-stay that a heavy broad seat invites and the soothing way natural light illuminates your work and connects you to the greater landscape rather than leaving you feeling boxed in miserably removed from the world.

**Point 8.**

Design professionals who, themselves, explore their own self-place connections can more consciously create fulfilling places for themselves and others whose lives they touch. (Israel, 2010, p. x).

I illustrate this point with a long quotation from early on in Rosa Dawson Loeb’s interview. It was imparted to me as though this was the primary concern that she wanted to say when she first agreed to participate in the research. Her appreciation for libraries as meaningful cultural environments is demonstrated her commitment to giving back communities by using her professional talents so that others may enjoy the opportunities she had. I follow with Avery Golden’s reflections, which articulates how she consciously creates places that touch others’ lives. While these two practitioners approach their work entirely differently from one another, they speak to the same point: that once a design
professional explores their own self-place connections they can proceed in an awareness of how to create libraries that offer other the opportunity to find meaningful connection for others.

Rosa Dawson Loeb is a partner in a firm that seeks cultural/institution projects; library buildings are highly attractive undertakings for them. Her background in vocal music provides an entry point for her experience of space, and gives her a wealth of insight to draw upon in designing spaces that bring people together for the opportunity to appreciate the programs presented there, whether or not they were originally intended as arts spaces.

While Rosa Dawson Loeb’s statement pulls several contemporary issues together, I include her response in its entirety with the hope that her articulation of self-place connections is potentially helpful for others in creating fulfilling places:

We’re always asked, “Are libraries obsolete, what does the e-reader do to the library?” And, as you point out, it's very true that Library usage is not going down. In fact, book circulation is going up. Books are always my first love of libraries. So, that’s counter-intuitive but it’s not all these other forms like the e-reader, audio books, or online—none of that is what’s changing libraries, in fact Library usage is also going up so, why—(pause) I think it’s true that a sense of place, I think this is partly why people go to libraries and museums. I think they get out of their apartment and they go to a beautiful environment where they go to spend time in a place with other people in that beautiful place. I think part of it is the services that libraries are offering. They almost operate as community centers. Which is why people arrive early to the theater! In addition to the more traditional library programs they’re
offering job training programs, they’re welcoming non-native English speakers.

There are a lot of additional services that libraries are giving whether it’s storytelling places for kids to go. When I think about young families, going to the library is a way to get out of the house with the kids. Storytelling is kid’s theater. It’s more than books if you build it to be. So, I think the library continues to be a really important public program in the city. And New York City is going through—they’re spending a lot of time analyzing what those changes are and how buildings need to adapt to suit those purposes. Rosa Dawson Loeb—Sensory (Family Tree)

There’s a very determinant quality about what she describes. I believe she is entirely in-tune with the project needs and is not imposing her own love of a performance environment as much as she is making good on what she has identified in her own journey spent in fulfilling places and using it, enthusiastically, to benefit others. She continues:

One library that I worked on that I felt a real relationship to was the renovation of the [XYZ] Library, which is [one of] the last Carnegie Library that was built in the US. … They knew they needed certain things. That Library had been renovated in the 70s. They dropped an acoustic ceiling, they ruined the great reading room—they did all that to install a mechanical system. They did a lot of things that essentially wrecked the space. The outside of it was pretty much intact. So, our mission was to recreate the grand reading room but then deal with installing an elevator to support programming throughout the building and thinking about the offering of universal pre-K in the library and then looking at, how do you serve the demographic of the community which is incredibly diverse, and have them experience the grandeur of
this building as it was intended and as we can support it to be once more? So, we’ve enjoyed getting to know it. Rosa Dawson Loeb– Sensory (Family Tree and Sociogram)

Avery Golden wants her colleagues to know the power of arrival she achieved in exploring her own past. She offers her understandings to help inform how design professionals create space under her leadership. She quotes herself guiding her colleagues, and then comments on the ‘why’ of her choice to intervene in this way:

Stop. Take your hand off the mouse, look away from the screen, pull out a piece of paper and talk to me. What are you doing? Not in commands, not in the names of tools you would click on, not in the language of the software but conceptually, talk to me about what you’re trying to accomplish, what are you trying to do. What are the relationships between the data sets that you’re trying to visualize? Sit back and consider what we’ve heard.

She continues, now referencing herself and the human experience as the ‘data set’:

So, not only are my techniques between the physical—I’ve got all this modeling stuff around—I draw, and eventually the data becomes visualizations, those don’t happen by accident, those are designed, based on several different iterations, and what’s the right way to communicate these and what’s the drawing I need to make? Software doesn’t act like that; I designed those drawings. But I designed them from what I heard. What I heard when I pieced together how my mind evolved to hold space. The data sets are the lives of the people who inhabit the space, the lives they are constantly scanning to bring in. The engineering, the costs, materials, purpose,
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positioning—those data sets take a back seat now. Avery Golden–Alchemy

(Sociogram and Taste Structure)

More than any other participant in this research, Avery Golden can articulate the moment when the library ceased to be a place where she accompanied her law-book reading father, where she went to retrieve materials identified in the Avery Index, or where she went for paid work. In that moment, she ceased seeing the library as a repository and shifted to understanding libraries as places of individualized transaction. When libraries ceased to be the spaces of and for others, and they became the repositories of resources, she made her own self-place connection to the library and it stuck. Her evolution of that understanding is expressed in her dedication to creating library spaces where the same experience can happen for others. This is the intention and process Israel refers to in Point 8 when she charges design professionals to “consciously create fulfilling places.” Avery Golden narrates further:

We know that work flows more smoothly and workspaces are more productive if they’re designed specifically with this question of human transaction in mind… The visualizations I make that are part of an analytical process where I’m sorting things out and conceptually reconfiguring what I’m looking at and testing hypotheses that nobody may ever see, reflect that human—anticipates that human transaction—most often by an individual. I guess my brain file structure, my organizational system for my own files, and my own data reflects that; they follow my logic. I’m a human library. Very different from my collaborative work with a couple of my colleagues, like, I do collaborative research on projects very different from the things that will eventually become public, because then, accessibility, usability, not having to …
deducing, reducing, that initiation load… It’s very important and what we think about when we’re sharing data or sharing visualizations of the data, you can think of both of those as a space and a data set as a sort of library collection, information structured into a system, and you’re sharing that data. This initiation question—how closely did you hear from the client—how comfortable and how familiar is that space going to feel for someone—how much sense is that space going to make to someone—does that space allow for collaboration—or, are you getting a glimpse into my private space in a public setting? This library—is it my personal library or is it a community resource? Avery Golden– Alchemy (Ideal Library Place)

**Point 9.**

Design professionals in particular stand to benefit from psychological exploration of both larger and smaller scale sites in their lives as settings where intimate meaning may have also been achieved (Beth, 2018).

I created Point 9, addressing scale, and Point 10, addressing the optimization of social science tools and research, from three bodies of work: 1) my study of design professionals’ self-exploration through environmental autobiography and Israel’s Toolbox exercises, 2) my analysis of the data from this research, and 3) insights from my previous studies in environmental psychology.

Every year the trade publication, American Libraries, runs a special issue called the Library Design Showcase. The issue arrives in the mail, and librarians in lunchrooms all over the United States gush over perfect, glossy “if-only-we-had-enough-money-to-do-that” well-lighted photographs, while eating leftovers brought to work in recycled brown
paper bags. In 2017, American Libraries introduced the issue with the phrase, “innovative architectural feats”:

Welcome to the 2017 Library Design Showcase, *American Libraries*’ annual celebration of new and renovated libraries. These are shining examples of innovative architectural feats that address user needs in unique, interesting, and effective ways. Renovations and expansions dominated this year, showing that libraries are holding on to and breathing new life into spaces already cherished by their communities (https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2017/09/01/2017-library-design-showcase/ accessed September 1, 2017).

For several years, when new construction rather than renovation or repurposed spaces dominated the Showcase, *American Libraries* used this introductory sentence:

New construction dominated this year’s submissions, but renovated and repurposed spaces were a close second, showing how today’s libraries are both conserving existing resources and adapting to economic realities (https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2015/09/01/2015-library-design-showcase/ accessed September 1, 2017).

A look through 2017’s photographs shows much of the same splash, and in fact, *American Libraries* has applied the caption to some photographs as “Wow factor.” Indeed, they are all high-end, showcase, stunning spaces. Architects of public buildings are rewarded for extreme architecture—spectacle if you will. Spectacle is the order of the day for competitions, the emphasis and drive in their education, curriculum content, demonstrations, publications, exhibitions, tours, and professional review. Architecture schools traditionally challenge students to take on large-scale complicated building
design, complete with huge structure, infrastructure, situated planning, and surrounding landscape as their thesis projects. There is no requirement to demonstrate how real people are expected to relate to such buildings or what self-place bonding is likely to occur there.

Like any large, public project, libraries can be stunning to the senses when they too are designed to be spectacles of architecture. In their function as sacred places, it is expected that libraries reflect grandeur and awe. But libraries serve also as the places of the people, the last institutional vestige of true public intellectual space, a place for common sense, open inquiry, and cost-free access to resources supporting intimate personal journeys. In Frederick Wiseman’s monumental documentary, *Ex Libris: New York Public Library* (Wiseman, 2017), he shows transactions equal in passion, relevance, and importance taking place within very different structures, all of which are recognizable to us as libraries. At one end of the spectrum is the landmark Beaux-Arts Main Branch of the NYPL, located on 5th Avenue in midtown New York City, and on the other end of the spectrum is an oppressively limited one-room library, the Macomb’s Bridge branch, situated in a New York City Public Housing Authority public housing complex in the New York City neighborhood of Harlem.

The literature of environmental psychology frequently investigates the ordinary environments of our lives; social justice obligates us to apply the teachings of the field—recognizing how the environments we transact in have an impact on us—to improve the quality of civic and personal life. The six participants of this research called forth memories of their formative years in local libraries. As their participation in the exercises of the DPT progressed, they offered narratives of their library interactions over time, as they developed from library users to designers of libraries. The research illuminates the
inquiry into the relationship between children’s experiences of libraries in which deep emotional connections are established, and the later, larger-scale library sites in their lives as adults where intimate meaning still has power and influence. Given the conditioning of their practice towards the spectacular, and the professional demands on architects, I believe they stand to benefit from psychological exploration of larger-scale sites in their lives. In her own work with architects, Israel found that their environmental pasts and histories were relevant not only in how they created their own homes, but “also their well-known public buildings and/or architecture /planning philosophies” (Israel, p. ix). I offer Point 9 to demonstrate the importance of psychological exploration of larger-scale sites with my own participants, to bring Israel’s scholarship forward and demonstrate its usefulness as a method of analysis.

Charles Marion described how his intellectual development paralleled his discovery and use of ever-more architecturally captivating libraries. “The first significant experience was a little branch library right around the corner from where I lived.” His interview includes passages describing teachers recognizing his strength of mind and sending him hunting for more complex lessons. He accesses increasingly larger libraries as he gradually moves through primary and secondary school (see his quotation in Point 5 above). Remembering his post-secondary education, he unpacks memories of his college library and the influence of scale:

There were lots of libraries on the campus like any college and they were beautiful, you know. Neo-Gothic places. I spent the most amount of time in the art and architecture Library because I transferred into it... I didn't know I was going to be an architect when I went there... I spent a lot of time in there. It was
very formative for me. It opened up a lot, a whole world of architecture. I spent hours in there. Learning about the history of architecture. I was very transfixed with, and I have no idea why, post-war Japanese architecture... I don’t know why because I wasn’t that sophisticated to even understand what they were doing and what was pretty sophisticated was what they were doing. Charles Marion– Grace

*(Timeline and Mental Map)*

Keeping up my role as researcher, I asked, “And this library happened to have a collection to support it?” To which he replied, “Well, it was designed by one of those architects. It was designed by Maki who was a fairly radical architect at the time. Huh.” He now pauses. His head tilts and his eyes wander reflectively. “I knew that, but I don’t think I combined them until just now.”

At this moment in the interview a number of things are happening at the same time. A design professional is experiencing new connections and awareness emerging from the process of investigating his environmental autobiography with a partner-researcher. He also achieves the realization that his student environment was an essential source for his intellectual development—in a way that he had not previously imagined or considered: his fascination with Japanese architectural forms is now less mysterious and more traceable, finding an echo in the fact that an architectural expert of that same world designed the building.

Then, while the objective fact remains that his college library was superb on many levels (function, collection, etc.), as a design practitioner Charles Marion recognizes how a larger-scale setting can nonetheless also offer a setting where individuals find more intimate, personally transformative meanings. He mentions library transactions he has
experienced in ever larger-scale spaces where he will only ever be a transient user, but the scale of which still allow him to achieve significant environmental meaning. In his earlier years in smaller-scale library settings, he is working through the collection discoveries, intellectually, in his mind alone. In larger library settings in his later years, he is eager to share experiences of discovery and place with budding design colleagues, as solutions to problems in the real world. Charles Marion’s experience and narrative are not unique. While the architect’s professional training and work have their collaborative aspects, psychological exploration of larger scale environments offer a further way to collaborate to the end of understanding how self-place meaning forms and emerges:

I just remember spending hours looking at the stuff and being obsessed with it… such an enjoyable experience… you’re flipping through these pages and looking at this amazing photography and reading the articles. So, you naturally have this social experience every time you go in there. You want to tell your classmates and stuff like that. That was a very special experience. I wouldn’t say it was the most beautiful library in the world, it was just the stuff that was in it and the way the place was made for you to sit with it was really great. And then I came to Columbia. And of course, Columbia had Avery [Library] and you just can’t beat that… Avery was amazing. I remember at one point when I went and I said oh my gosh I'm standing in the Avery Library. I’m standing in it. For me it’s transformative to say all that got in there came here [he taps the side of his head]. It’s a beautiful space and just awesome what they have in there, so it was a whole other level of study. And it had great exhibits which was a surprise to me. I never had been to a library that had exhibits. Charles Marion– Grace (Timeline and
I conclude Point 9— the importance of larger-scale settings and the intimate effect they can have on the life of the design professional— with a final quotation from Charles Marion that addresses the future for his own practice of architecture. Many decades have passed since he was a student and he is now at the peak of his years of practice as an architect, the owner of a private firm. He has shared with me that in recent years he has begun assigning colleagues to devote time to speak with the people who will eventually be using the new project spaces and to learn about the surrounding neighborhood, long before they sketch and spec out a building. Twice he says, “We were just doing what we do.”

When you start to talk to people about their experience, and what defines a library for them, they talk about what it means to have the privilege of being in libraries. There’s something of inherent value. We learned this when we did a community center in the Bronx that included a branch library. We were just doing what we do. We were doing this super-nice detail, lots of natural light, lots of transparency, you could see from one space to the next, we just detailed the hell out of it because that’s what we do. A year later they had an open house, so I attended. And for some reason, there were a lot of parents of the community who were there. Mainly mothers. It was really moving. One of the women approached me and sternly asked, “Did you do this?” I admitted I had and braced myself for what she would say next with that serious look on her face, and she said, “I feel like we got us a Lexus here. We got a downtown building here.” And I thought, oh my god. I never realized the effect on somebody’s self-esteem that that would have.
And I said, “We were just doing it because we like doing it.” She called over others who joined her in thanking me for this “Lexus.” I thought to myself, she’s right. They don’t get this, but they see this on television. They know what it is. There was something that really made them feel proud about themselves and made them want to use it. I understood that they felt like it was theirs. I had never experienced that before. Bringing the beauty into a community building, bringing in a Lexus instead of another utilitarian space has a transformative effect on people. Charles Marion– Grace (*Taste Structure and Ideal Library Place*)

**Point 10.**

Design professionals who recognize the importance of incorporating social science research and social science research methods for exploring human factors stand to enrich their future practice and project outcomes, that in turn touches people’s lives. (Beth, 2018).

It might be fair to characterize my outreach for participants of this research as a call and response. My flyers and in-person announcements sought, “Architects, Designers, and Librarians who work on library building projects—whether new buildings, renovations, expansions, design proposals, remodeling’s, or something in between” to “share your personal memories of libraries and your professional experience in library building projects.” Practitioners who responded were motivated to do so for a variety of reasons, including their own love of libraries, and their curiosity about what might be gleaned from the stories of their past for their present practice. From my official “Call for Participants”: 
Libraries are often described as an environment where rich memory and experience rest. How do Architect, Designer, and Librarian stories of our past inform aspects of our professional work related to library building environments and designs? Early in the practitioner-client exploration of library building programs, stakeholders describe personal meaning and experience using libraries. How well do we factor in these aspects alongside the evidence based metric design demands of efficiency and patterns of use? (Call for Participants, Appendix A)

It would be extremely helpful for librarians to undertake narrative inquiry as a way of understanding the lived experiences of patrons. This would potentially drive decision-making and a range of initiatives if the findings were to be discussed during the initial stages of a building project. Perhaps the voices of those who elect to not use libraries are the most glaringly missing narratives of them all. Including narratives of facilities staff is also long overdue when considering the building program. Importantly, narrative inquiry in the decision-making process would likely support greater clarity for achieving place-attachment and could help practitioners avoid recreating negative library design. It is mission critical to comprehend the institutional aspects that are not ideal in our efforts to build libraries that honor not only those who do use them, but in response to those who do not.

The participants of this research were not seeking to reform the education of architects and design professionals. They were not clamoring to hire social scientists in their firms. Their voluntary participation in this research demonstrated a curiosity about approaching the practitioner/client relationship anew. Participants learning about how
self-place bonds inform place and space meaning repeatedly described the interview process as compelling. They each took part in exploring their self-place bonds with openness. Social science research and its place in the design world intrigued each one of them. In Point 10, I assert my understanding, based on professional experience now coupled with the research of this dissertation, that design professionals who optimize social science research and social science research methods stand to enrich their future practice and project outcomes, which in turn effect people’s lives. Enter the rich process of environmental autobiography, Israel’s DPT, consulting narratives of stakeholders, studying patterns of wayfinding, and an array of human factors research, data and design considerations.

In the data collected on my participants who completed the DPT exercises, there was almost no mention of using social science research to address design problems. In the two instances when participants mentioned social science research it was in passing, the value of discovery was noted only as an intellectual exercise, and not as a useful way to meet human concerns by a professional practice. A primary goal of my research was to provide an opportunity for library building and design practitioners to tap into their own environmental autobiographies to explore how experience creates meaning in the environments of our lives—and through that experience, to see the value of exploring others’ environmental autobiographies. Another goal was to expand their awareness of the richness of the research methods of environmental psychologists, namely the collection and use of narrative inquiry as a highly valuable source for improving design to serve real people. My 10th point expresses the desire for continued work with this method to enrich their future practice and project outcomes more than my examples.
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provide clear evidence of that progress. I provide a brief discussion of professional efforts that support the importance of this point following the framing and presentation of two participant quotations.

Connie Zhōng knows her personal reclusive ways would never yield a library with more than nooks and alcoves for one individual at a time to disappear into. Her work in creating public library buildings is instead expected to be dynamic. At her firm where she is the lead on library building projects, she has implemented a suggested practice for clients prior to enumerating deliverables for any proposed library-building program. She identified that she married a psychologist and that their conversations influenced her decision to incorporate the suggested practice of exploring of person-place attachments described as follows:

Her firm aids its clients in “field research” as part of the initial intake process, immersing them in feeling and experiencing library spaces, after which they are guided by her team to make sense of what they encountered. The office she works for puts out a library services prospectus that speaks of creating collaborative spaces that reflect the environment and the aesthetic of the location to foster a sense of community. During our interview she proudly explained to me that eliciting the client’s perspectives, emotions, and narratives creates a collaboration from which a client-pleasing design can emerge:

Our clients need help to have all the tools together that you can build the environment you want. And then instruct them in that environment so that future librarians can find where they are. This is becoming the formative space. Do you understand? … They should see the space in the library and build the space based on different weather and sun patterns, they should really experience that, so they
could know what kind of library suits them and the people who are gonna use the space. They’re not gonna build a library from scratch. They’re gonna interview with libraries that suits their personality that they can successfully navigate in there and so it’s possible to find your style, per se, as a librarian experiencing it. Right now, you’d probably have to go to 100 libraries just to look at different libraries just so you could feel, is this me is this me is this me? Our work supports the research first. Connie Zhōng– Sanctuary (Sociogram and Personality and *Library as Place*)

Enthusiasm aside, “tentative” might be a good term to describe the firm’s intentions. They hire these field research consultants only on an as-needed basis. They encourage exploration, but they list the human factors research as “optional” on their proposals. There is no requirement for the client to pay for further research, it’s not automatically included in the price of a design project, and the firm makes no commitment to invest further resources to anything that may result from an investigation into possibilities, despite it being offered. Connie Zhōng’s portfolio is full of evidence that her work is responsive to unique client environmental needs and that there are no cookie cutter layouts or approaches. Still, it would be difficult to consider this effort to incorporate stakeholder participation in the process as a bona fide instance of social science research for the purpose of eliciting valuable input; rather it is an open-ended invitation for clients to collaborate, possibly, in the design process.

Charles Marion’s firm stands in an inquisitive posture at the time of this research:

We’ve had two strong interests, one that we’re trying to write an article about, I’m not one of the best writers, which was all about this idea about architectural
identity and symbolism and multiculturalism. This is some of the stuff I was
mentioning coming up with clients, so that’s one thing. The other thing is because
we’ve done a lot of healthcare… there’s a lot of social research on, does nature
make you feel healthier, is it better to have the color green in this room, does that
make you heal faster, and then there’s a broader issue in the public health
movement which says, the best thing you can do to keep people out of the hospital
is to give them better housing or have less auto dependence in society so people
get more exercise … we’re kind of interested, we’ve been in a bunch of programs
at the AIA but we’re kind of interested in, this may sound kind of dumb but, does
design excellence have an effect on your health? And it’s kind of a hard thing to
pin down but a lot of people are talking about these things like better stairs, or
things like that that are certainly important and bicycle lanes and stuff like that but
if you design something that is really uplifting, if it’s a healthcare space, does that
have an effect on people’s health. Do they use it more? Charles Marion– Grace
(Sociogram and Personality and Library as Place)

He does not mention searching for or finding research that can be usefully applied
to the work. He does not mention hiring an environmental psychologist as a consultant or
a different type of trained social scientist.

This meeting of social science, environmental design, and architectural minds is
at a minimum fifty years in the making.² From the Environmental Design Research
Association (EDRA) “About” page:

The early years [the late 1960s] of EDRA were marked by an unbridled optimism.

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² 2018 marks the fiftieth anniversary of several key institutions addressing the coupling of social
science and architecture: EDRA, the Environmental Psychology program of the Graduate Center
for The City University of New York, and the Journal of Environment and Behavior (SAGE)
There was a belief that a clear and conscious understanding of the design decision process coupled with a similar understanding of the methods and techniques used by the social sciences would provide the foundation necessary for ameliorating problems in the environment. http://www.edra.org/page/about (accessed 10/1/2017).

The mission statement of the AIANY Chapter’s Social Science and Architecture Committee reads, “The Social Science and Architecture Committee was formed January 2016 with the goal of bringing professionals and students together from architecture and social science fields as well as many other fields to discuss, collaborate, and facilitate programs for the community.”


In 2017, The AIA Committee on Architecture for Education’s (AIA CAE) Research Task Force summarized results from an unpublished survey of architectural firms in the United States doing educational buildings:

Different forms of praxis have different toolkits that they draw from. Larger firms tend to rely on in-house “specialists” with research responsibility. These same firms also hire outside consultants. The smaller firms have more of a tendency to have their existing staff do research which is less reliant on expertise, but often is more integrated into the practice, with buy-in from the top of the firm. The larger firms share an acknowledgment that there is (some) value in expertise, but the degree of buy-in is variable. (AIA CAE Research Task Force, 2017).

Point 10 stands more as a future wish than as a present reality. While I am
confident the mandate for services and insights is shifting, professional design education, the firms, and the practitioners are simply not yet committed. There are some deeply engaged innovative social researchers and fifty years of environmental psychologists to look to. In her article, “Architecture in the Social Data Era: Transforming our practice to engage new data sources and design intents,” Melissa Marsh describes her pursuit of new methods for understanding, analyzing, and incorporating user behavior in the design process. She states, “To lead this effort, we must shift our own focus as professionals, while also expanding the definition of “architect.” We need an inclusive rather than exclusive model of the profession: an architectural diaspora composed of many experts” (Marsh, Oculus, 2015). The narratives of my participants, the presenters and attendees of the annual EDRA conferences, and the audience at events crafted by the AIANY Committee on Social Science and Architecture stand in a blend of frustration and promise alongside a limited but vibrant array of colleagues representing architectural firms and projects as social science research consultants. With no commitment on the part of design firms, consulting firms, creative agencies, and others are delivering ad hoc, on-demand services. My research involved six architects and, to a lesser extent, their respective firms. In the conclusion chapter of this dissertation I will explore possibilities for greater numbers and greater impact.
Chapter 7
Data Analysis: Reflections on the Design Psychology Toolbox

Toby Israel created the DPT to guide people in their exploration of home as an ideal place, with the understanding that it could be adapted for use in other more public environments. In the Appendix of *Some Place Like Home*, Israel states, “The following Design Psychology Toolbox includes a series of nine ‘tools’ derived from the exercises laced throughout the main portion of the book. However, while the exercises previously presented are for use by individuals, groups can do these exercises. These exercises form a toolbox which designers can reach into as they facilitate a visioning process that helps client groups brainstorm ideas for schools, workplaces, institutions, and other places including even large-scale environments that users will feel connected to in the deepest possible way.” (Israel, p. 199). My research focuses on the meaning and experiences of self-place connections of the library, and the participants of the research were exclusively architects, design professionals, and librarians to expand understanding and practice of designing libraries to support social and emotional affordance.

The research questions that shaped this study included: How do library-building practitioners describe their experience(s) of libraries in their own environmental autobiographies, and how can this inform our understanding of libraries as environments of significant meaning? To answer the research question, I analyzed several sub-questions: By understanding the power of one’s own environmental story/environmental autobiography (Rivlin, 1978; Marcus, 1979) on the relationship between self and place through engagement with Israel’s DPT, would my group of practitioners 1) find value in
the exercises, and 2) consider using the DPT during client in-take or in the visioning phase of library building and design programs?

My findings met an essential goal of my research in encouraging consideration of DPT for work with clients and for explorations of library-building programs, with a number of useful provisos to guide future DPT-led investigations. As you read the paragraphs ahead, I concur with the limitations identified by the participants of this research who determined that the strongest aspects of the Toolbox are derived from the exercises pertaining to the Past, and that the instructions in the 11 Exercises need to be simplified. The tools should be modified to capture the thought processes of creative professionals who are accustomed to sketching as a way of thinking. The DPT tends to elicit the most ideal responses, ignoring negative experiences and concerns.

All six participants expressed their interest in receiving a copy of the DPT exercises that had structured their participation in the research. All six responded positively to the suggestion that their firm associates experience using the DPT. All six participants articulated the concern that, as they experienced it, the DPT process is too lengthy for their work. The amount of time required for participation in all of the DPT exercises exceeded what they thought plausible for typical client-work.

All the exercises of the Past held tremendous appeal for each of the study participants. The two exercises of the Present, *Library Sociogram* (Exercise 5) and *Personality and Library as Place* (Exercise 6) elicited mixed responses. While each participant was comfortable sketching (Exercise 5), their professional inclination was to reach for completed work either available through their firm website, through their portfolios, or in some instances through rolled blueprints within arm’s reach. The
participants responded well to Exercise 6, discussing distinctions between individual, shared, and public spaces, as this is a staple of their work when thinking about and creating institutional building spaces. In Israel’s original conception of the DPT, Exercise 6 explores these space distinctions exclusively in the context of the private home, where architects may not think to apply this analysis. In contrast, participants expressed a variety of distinct likes and dislikes to exercises 7, 8, and 9, the exercises concerning the Future. While they initially found the instructions for Exercise 7, *Special Objects Inventory*, to be confusing because the words had multiple meanings, once I provided them with examples to help them interpret the prompts, they began to offer lengthy descriptions of the objects that have featured prominently in their memories of their own library use, and in their own design projects (e.g. Lincoln pennies in the shape of Lincoln’s head; the boat as a reference desk in a nautical town; art as color pairing wayfinding, etc.). In the Future portion of the DPT Exercise 8, *Taste Structure* was met with some resistance. Comments from participants expressed that they experienced redundancy between Exercises 7 and 8, and that they felt were obliged to repeat themselves; similarly, participants expressed that the exercise, *Special Objects Inventory*, included points of reference they felt they had already described. In reviewing the interview transcripts, it is notable that as participants opened up to DPT exercises early on, their answers flowed and anticipated questions that were yet to come. Finally, participants expressed something akin to disdain when being asked to do relaxation grounding (Exercise 9) before imagining the creation of ideal library spaces for the future. While it is impossible to quantify precisely the generosity of time the participants gave to my study, it is reasonable to note that an exercise consisting of taking a “relaxing
“magic carpet ride” exceeded the non-billable time participants were willing to donate. In contrast, describing “ideal place visions” for libraries offered each participant a high note for ending the DPT exercises every single time.

Final/follow-up interviews with participants demonstrated that the DPT was well-suited for adaptation to guide practitioners involved in library design and building projects, meeting two central goals of my research: to allow design professionals to tap into their own environmental autobiographies to explore how experience creates meaning in the environments of our lives, and to explore how narratives in the form of library stories hold rich information about place and space. Each of the six research participants viewed the DPT exercise process as enriching for their personal and professional development. All six participants found exploring self-place attachment through the DPT exercises to be beneficial for their thinking about building libraries: it reinforced their own understandings that articulating attachment to place creates buildings we want to use and return to. All six expressed unsolicited enthusiasm for having had the chance to restimulate their experience of finding meaning in the space and place of the library. All six visibly demonstrated a palpable energy as they went through the paces of the DPT exercises. From my field notes: “Gratitude; enthusiasm; huge energy upswing (push away from the table, the need to walk and talk), watching their eyes look back into memories; an urgency expressed to get to the drafting table; holding their heads in a gesture of a rush of ideas and then using their hands to indicate a need to draw; interjecting emotional outbursts of “I love talking about this!”; watching a flash through the mind—a cinematic review of libraries through life with tremendous facial expressiveness.” Despite their concerns for the time-demand of the exercises, they recognized the worth of the DPT for
their work during client in-take or visioning process, just as Israel described—meeting my research goal to “Encourage consideration of DPT exercises that can be incorporated into future client intake exchanges and explorations for proposed library-building programs.” That participants also asked me to return to administer abbreviated versions of the DPT exercises to their colleagues also bears out the success of my research.

Discussion of the Toolbox: Past, Present, and Future

In Chapter 3: Methodology, I described the DPT at length. My adaptation of Israel’s DPT is best described as having substituted “library” or “libraries” in place of “home.” The Toolbox in its entirety is comprised of a total of nine exercises. In keeping with Israel’s original formulation, I designated the Past, Present, and Future as three distinct periods of exploration, reflection, and thought. The data analysis of this chapter is also organized as the Past, Present, and Future, but my findings do not always correlate to each of the nine exercises on a one-to-one basis. Often participants’ responses bled from one exercise into the next. To avoid redundancy in reporting I have chosen to write about the responses that emerged from each of the three distinct periods, as well as from the exercises. My iterative process—listening and re-listening to the recordings, of transcribing, reading, and digesting what was said, of consulting my field notes and notes taken from the transcripts—led me to an analysis from which specific themes emerged. I have paired those themes with the distinct periods, Past, Present, and Future, that Israel’s Toolbox provides with the understanding that other adaptations are possible. The themes are a reflection and a distillation of the exercises according to my analysis and are designated as follows:

Past: Personal Journeys; Intellectual Development
Present: Libraries as ___ Space; Professional Journeys

Future: Reactions to Participating in the Research; Objects; Future Ideal Libraries

Personal Journeys

The initial session addressing the Past incorporated grounding exercises and generated more response from participants than any other single exercise. The Past exercises are comprised of the following: Library Timeline, Library Timeline Graph, Library Family Tree, Library Family Tree Graphic, Mental Map, and Favorite Childhood Place. This DPT section introduced the concept of ‘environmental autobiography,’ and elicited the most detailed responses to the exercises. Consistent with Israel’s DPT, tools like the Library Timeline Graph (Figure 7) and Library Family Tree Graph (Figure 8) aimed to expand memory of the past beyond one’s own roots and to acknowledge the genealogy of libraries from ancestors. Libraries were not strictly defined as a building or place but also include ideas about libraries that have been passed along to us through family stories and in other ways, so the Library Family Tree exercise included the inheritance of influence. I include Rosa Dawson Loeb’s responses to illustrate how a participant might respond to these tools, creating information that then became a supporting instrument in the research as she referred to them time and again in demonstrating her points. In addition to recalling libraries in the home or community, books and reading were described as significant.

My research results led me to understand that, in environmental terms, we not only possess environmental autobiographies but environmental genealogies. Participants filled in the Library Family Tree indicating significant people in their genealogy with past library experiences of their own. While it may have only taken a participant 20
minutes to complete the exercise, their narrative included a more lengthy exploration of the influence this environmental genealogy may have had on their lives. Once participants filled in the family tree boxes—their comments overflowing along the margins, arrows connecting links to people and the related geographies of their lives—they repeatedly returned to that page with enthusiasm for the remainder of the interview session.

Figure 8: Past: Exercise 1: Library Timeline Graph
Initially, participants had to warm up to the tools. Professional meetings are typically for the business of generating business, and individuals attend to represent the interest and expertise of their firms. My research participants invited me to meet with them and came prepared to show completed, polished work. Instead, they were each asked to represent themselves, and to present ideas about their personal evolution. Once they understood there was no competitive edge to anything they would share with me, they relaxed into the exercises and an expanse unfolded. They would complete something like the *Library Family Tree*, begin to tell me what they had included, why, and what memories it evoked.
Then, as memories continued to build, they would return to the graphic with more narrative to offer. While none of the participants expressed hesitation that I keep the materials that they generated, some shyly asked if they could make a photocopy for themselves: for several, the exercise took them to new understandings of themselves and had personal resonance. In some sessions I was asked for a blank copy of the exercise materials for the participant to keep, and in one instance a participant said of her husband who is also an architect, “I have to make [him] do this, he’s gonna love this.” As the researcher, it became fascinating to watch the shift about 20 minutes into the start of a session, seeing a participant go from puzzlement at the outset of our meeting to then landing at an energized, talkative posture about libraries in their past lives. This shift reveals that the study was successful in the goal of offering participants the opportunity to tap into their own environmental autobiographies in exploration of how experience creates meaning in the environments of our lives.

Once the ice was broken, Exercise 3 (Favorite Childhood Place Visualization) just flowed. Participants sketched silently for only brief portions of the allotted time. In fact, some referred to the Library Family Tree and genealogy, which included describing their Favorite Childhood Place memories, after which they were hardly ever silent again throughout the interview. In all instances, participants chose a favorite childhood library place, which meant that they had already launched themselves into Exercise 4, the Mental Map. Figure 10 shows both a Favorite Childhood Visualization and a Mental Map from participant Kai Shizi. She captures the specific memory of peeking through the shelving and how that transformed the library into a place of secrets and discovery. Her leanings in architecture and design, as noted in Chapters 5 and 6, are frequently about texture. Here,
she has visualized the effect of lighting against the texture and weight of bookends. The opportunity to draw in Exercise 3 and 4 allowed for some “delight” to surface.

Exercises 3 and 4, respectively Favorite Childhood Visualization and Mental Map, called forth memories of the experience of going to the library. The ritual of the trip to the library was sometimes described in such intimate detail that I could imagine myself along with them. In one instance I felt like I was on the seat of the bicycle holding on to the belt loops of the young boy (who would grow up to be an architect) as he did all the pedaling while standing, our books in the handlebar bike basket, racing to the library. Sensorial memories of place told of the cold displeasure of beige Formica library tables and counter tops; the librarian with a skinny upper lip who drew in a thicker, fake one with a lipstick pencil liner; the way a hand was held by a mother until being released inside the library where it was always safe and they would go their separate collection-seeking ways; the wood on the arms of the tapestry upholstered chairs, the pull of your attention to the worn places in the staircases; the smell of ink and paper and wood all rolled into one; the sounds of whispers that carried in the tall ceilinged rooms; and the natural light pouring in through long, arch-topped windows. Using libraries as the timeline, their environmental autobiographies were rich with references to experiences, objects, people, the specific books they could recall having read. They remembered, their relative smallness as children in relation to the library, their body movements at various ages handling books with more or less difficulty, the discovery of computers, and navigating their ways of going to and coming from the library.
It’s important to distinguish properly between the success of the DPT—exhuming a design practitioner’s own environmental biography of libraries to stimulate their favorable participation in the work—and the further success of having the same design professional use this newfound awareness in client-commissioned library-building projects. This distinction between enthusiasm, on the one hand, and the application of the Toolbox to encourage library projects is at the heart of my research: to support consideration of the DPT for client intake exchanges and explorations of library-building programs. The critical question remains: what would it take for tools such as a modified DPT or an environmental autobiography exercise to be deemed as necessary as any other
customary meeting protocol or intake data, and to be incorporated into the standard design practice of professionals?

While the interview process of my research allowed insight and enthusiasm to surface, nothing indicated in the early research steps or volunteered by the participants shows a commitment to incorporating the exercises into the participant’s commissioned professional work, nor where the money to do so might come from. Still, detailed participant responses such as this one from Augustus Buffington provide evidence that DPT-based exercises incorporating past influences on present projects can hold meaning for practitioners:

“Having grown up in New England, I hold an affinity for barns. Utilitarian agricultural structures draw me in. Mill factory buildings alongside running water are an inspiration to me. Gable houses or saltbox structures appeal to me. If you can build a library that stands as “the house,” then the barn is the complement to it. So, I have drawn up projects where the barn is where the community space happens in the library design and exhibits and meeting spaces are intended to be held there. For me it’s explicit, the influence of my past. I’m interested in that sort of nostalgic aspect. Particularly if others have never been in that kind of space or building before, I have a longing to bring it to them.” Augustus Buffington–Organic (*Mental Map*)

The Past section of the environmental autobiography offers a fertile method for design professionals, accustomed as they are to taking pencil to paper. None of the participants showed any hesitancy in using drawings to impart a narrative. The recounting of their relationships to libraries (e.g. in the homes of relatives, situated in
their neighborhood, affiliated with a school they were attending, or encountered as they traveled) provides us with the journey of discovering belongingness in buildings, of literacy, and of the love of reading and books. The participants’ responses—verbal and drawn remembrances of library experiences—offer narratives of identity formation, emotional growth, attachment to place, elements of environments that participants found satisfaction or dissatisfaction with, as well as relationships to the people in their lives who were part of their personal journey.

Connie Zhōng’s personal journey to libraries is layered in her relationship to books; the authors who are “the people who wrote in there,” the people who she learned from as she “grew up,” and developed her into the professional she was to become. Connie Zhōng’s narrative succinctly expresses my research imperative to understand how library stories hold rich information about the significance of library environments in our lives. Her words are a call for the inclusion of human factors in the education of design practitioners:

“The library is not necessarily where I made friends, but it was where I grew up. Because I found myself, because I realized who I was. Because the people who wrote in there are not in my family, but they made me realize, I learn something from them, even though they didn’t realize that I learn something from them. When I say I learn something I don’t mean technical knowledge or intellectual knowledge or whatever but just something about myself. I found myself just by interacting with these people. And that contributed to who I am.” Connie Zhōng—Sanctuary (Timeline and Mental Map)
Connie Zhōng’s narrative includes an implicit demand that library building design practitioners pause to understand that the end-user experience is less about the efficiencies of information-finding than it is about the relationship to the place where exploring and becoming occurs, the place of the library echoing the narratives collected and made available in libraries.

To share outtakes from participant narratives where they describe memories and aspects of their personal life journeys in relationship to libraries, I have developed visual plates (Plates 1 - 3), for “Discovering Environments,” “Expressing Meaning,” and “Experiencing Scale.” A discussion of some of the findings included in the research follows the visuals. In total 21 plates (or visuals) were created to extend the reporting of the Toolbox. I did so to demonstrate how themes emerged and how data can be highly effective in grasping the importance in eliciting narratives even when presented in brief form. I gave extensive thought to future moments when I will share the research of this dissertation and need to gain the interest of practitioners who will be making a shift from applying an ear towards economic efficiencies to instead consider ways of incorporating human concerns and values.
Plate 1: Personal Journeys: Discovering Environments

memory of place
Avery Index was the library I was in
discovering content, discovering the self
understanding all the privilege
connected to experiencing reading
moods—specifically experienced in libraries
connected to experiencing handling books
library as place: distinct awareness of self-place relationship at a young age

Note: Plate 1 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 2: Personal Journeys: Expressing Meaning

**access to self-education**

**access to endless ideas**

**books as objects of precious value**

**welcoming place following immigration**

**libraries offering intimate spaces... solace with printed words and books**

**generations of my family have called the library their own; it tells me I belong here too**

**emotions of building buildings and then one day you are the architect to build a library building... a building that surpasses what any other building is**

**postpartum: never another word of that world—it just shifts into use and function thereafter (describing the intimate process of working on library building projects with stakeholders)**

Note: Plate 2 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 3: Personal Journeys: Experiencing Scale

The building doesn’t change size but the individual experiences the building as ever LARGER and LARGER.

outside the library the world is a noisier place of CHAOS

inside the library one can experience quiet and order

returning to a former library is a distinct experience of experiencing a building

libraries trace where I’ve been and what I’ve at least intellectually or mentally considered worthy enough to read... in that way libraries are autobiographical as a collection!

The distribution of my books throughout my apartment says more about my home and the way I feel about it than it does about the library.

It’s not for other people, it’s for ME. I’ve distributed the books around the whole space, the whole apartment as my library, so it’s a space of selfish reflection and thought. This is so great to name.

Note: Plate 3 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Intellectual Development

Distinguishing intellectual development from personal journeys of the past honors the ways in which the research participants came to understand their strengths as people with visual intelligence, creative force, and ideas about how things are formed and can function. Each participant took risks to invest in their own education. Architecture and design fields are competitive, demanding practices that require years of applied training as well as licensing and credentialing for professional practice. Practitioner narratives articulate humility in discovering each individual’s capacity to join the world of brilliant creators who had come before them and whose work had influenced them. The participants of this research are highly educated individuals who took the time to carefully recall the sources of encouragement in their intellectual development (e.g. teachers, relatives, books, or projects) and the relationship of “becoming” specifically to libraries. In each narrative there is a moment in time, a change in what fed their intellectual development, that specifically names the role of a library or libraries that made a difference in the who and the how of what each participant becomes.

The Intellectual Development Plates, “Childhood,” “Young Adult,” “Professional,” “Adult,” and “Sage” (Plates 4 - 8), contain quotations that are grouped to reflect the period in the participants’ development during which experience informed thought. Naturally, experience does not constitute a correlation in time to thought. Kristeva (1981) spoke of this temporality, how thoughts expressed are derived from all narratives and environments that contributed to that very moment. Participants consistently shared reflections of having had experiences that first informed and then evolved into the articulation of their narratives they hold today.
Four quotations from three different participants illustrate how retracing their formative experiences with libraries where place-attachment and environmental meaning were created leads to an articulation of their intellectual development:

I’m not there because I feel good being there, I’m there because I have a need and it becomes more extrinsic and intrinsic in terms of why I am there, in a weird way. I shelf-read casually when I go through the library and kind of straighten out the books, still…. I strongly believe that there’s an effective layer to space in terms of what it facilitates in terms of people coming together, in terms of people staying, people being more comfortable and how that effects their willingness to accomplish things in that space. Kai Shizi– Textured (Mental Map)

My 6th grade teacher really complimented me on a book report I had to give out. She pushed me to read even more difficult books, and then pushed me some more. She said, “Alright, let’s go to the library and I’ll show you some more.” I vividly remember like, “wow, I really have some ideas here,” and I was hooked. … I had a very significant English teacher in 7th and 10th grades who definitely took a liking to me and pushed me. He too took me to the library and got me to love books more and again recognized that I had ideas. … I had a couple of art history and architectural history teachers at XYZ University that definitely opened my mind. He was teaching us about famous modern African architects. In the early 70s I was like, what are we studying this stuff for? But I think something clicked for me that this was not the usual stuff, you know we’re not just studying Renaissance and that kind of stuff, so he had a lasting impact on me and it
definitely made me go back to the library to look this stuff up. Charles Marion–Grace (*Library Family Tree*)

The lack of confidence, would that count? Lack of self-esteem. Solace in printed words and books. Trying to find myself in these written forms. That became home to me. Libraries became a home to me. My second home. Connie Zhông–Sanctuary (*Library Family Tree*)

It’s all about discovery. When I was little I really loved Legos and I still love them. But I obviously don’t get to play with them anymore. I remember when I was little one of my aunts—I said something to her about how I’m finally done with this model—and she’s like, “Well that’s no fun, because the fun part is when you build it, which is true. So, the fun part is how I found the book. So, I don’t go to a library with a perceived notion in mind. Connie Zhông–Sanctuary (*Library Family Tree*)
Plate 4: Intellectual Development: Childhood

- libraries as where I grew up
- memory of place, library as place, connected to experiencing books
- attended small schools—no school libraries—made the public library that much more exciting
- early experiences included knowing people at the library; was everyone smart? was I?
- vivid memories of the trip to the library, sharing what we read
- vivid memories of seats, light fixtures, building features
- required motivation ...pre-internet implies engagement with libraries
- the medium of exploration
- obsessed with discovery and learning
- I am an anomaly in my family of non-readers

Note: Plate 4 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 5: Intellectual Development: Young Adult

studio as library

longhand, delve and discover

extensive time spent within those library walls

articulation of acquiring knowledge, ideas, etc.

all participants have vibrant curiosities

teachers were guides, encouraging going to libraries

narratives as primary resources—infinity loop:
objects as narratives and narrative objects

articulation of the sources of influence—authors,
teachers, artists, chapters in books, librarians

later years it’s collaborative; finding one’s self is
not solo, but part of the interact with of today

suddenly the joy of libraries stopped—never enjoyed being in
there or any library elsewhere but the ones from the earlier years

Note: Plate 5 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
**Plate 6: Intellectual Development: Professional**

- *Architectural Digest* turns out to be real homes
- monument and permanence in contrast to flexibility
- the difference between art and architecture is occupancy
- many interviewed knew of third place and Oldenburg: **libraries as third place**
- genealogy of libraries is my genealogy of books; becoming the architect shifts that
- methods in architecture school are so different from how learning previously happened
- five of the six participants worked in libraries for employment: RISD, Avery, other architecture and design libraries
- mentors sent architect students down rabbit holes intentionally—today it’s Google Scholar where you get lost chasing find after find, linking and looping
- architecture education means architects filling the bill versus living in the work space or experiencing it—libraries *un-become*
- social experience when you see libraries you’ve built being dual-purposed for fundraising and author talks—space newly comprehended

*Note: Plate 6 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth*
Plate 7: Intellectual Development: Adult

over the life course access to new sanctuaries: home, firm

uncertain if it is possible to provide the kind of isolated spaces of yesteryear

library as an office, as a 2nd home, long before I could own my own firm

affinity for OLD SCHOOL methods

all participants are highly educated, many hold additional degrees

library as metaphor throughout your life—

then library as just a building once you’ve practiced architecture

all participants are trained theorists;

realization of I have ideas happened in libraries

today Google Scholar is used to see how citations lead you >FORWARD>

old school was you went <BACKWARD>

Note: Plate 8 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 8: Intellectual Development: Sage

No data set tells a story; or if it tells a story, it only tells the story of its own creation.

Libraries defined:
It’s a space of reflection and collection that is selfish in the best possible way. These artifacts, these documents—here they are objects, they operate the same way as the books do in the library, they are collected, they are organized, they are on display. They wrap the space, implying that you are reflecting upon them, in the same way that the books do in the library.

The Avery Library index not only helped introduce me to architecture beyond the classroom, but was a SPACE. It seemed to me like a design project beyond the construction of that index, the scale of which, I think for the first time I encountered it, was astonishing and astronomical.

That somebody, at some time, with a certain set of resources, with a certain set of instruments, asked a question and then collected this to try and answer it and maybe... more. That a person in a certain amount of time, and a certain amount of biases, brought those together, means this data set was produced. That’s the only story a data set tells. It doesn’t tell you anything else beyond that. But that doesn’t mean we can’t get it to speak. That doesn’t mean we can’t get it to tell other stories, and we build narratives with it.

There are libraries that are ideas.

Note: Plate 8 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Session 2 was scheduled within three to six days of an initial interview session. Whereas an intentional period of reflection was useful, keeping the self-place topic current and retaining the participant’s internal clarity and articulation was most important to the process. At the second session, the participants greeted me with entirely different body language. Even if our schedule was tight, each one openly expressed delight in meeting with me again, and appeared more relaxed to roll up their sleeves and dive into whatever steps were next.

In our second sessions, the DPT exercises addressed the Present including investigations of the social dynamics of the use of space and the “who” of library stakeholders. DPT Exercise 7 was called Library Sociogram and Exercise 8 was called Personality and Library as Place. Participants drew a library with which they were familiar and spoke about space as individual, shared, or public, and the anticipated experience of those differentiated spaces. The distinctions between these types of spaces support exploration of the social dynamics and personality of these spaces. This exercise provides a clear example of the organic flow of the DPT, where participants started on one exercise (social dynamics of the use of space) and subsequently arrived, unprompted, in the work of the upcoming exercise (Library as ___ space). Each time a participant spoke of how space plays out for different constituents they began to draw comparisons to other spaces that, like libraries, face similar challenges or considerations.

In speaking about differentiated spaces, the participants described the library as a place where individual space is sometimes defined by furnishings, but more often by behavior. A long table might have a total of eight possible seating places, but given a
choice of seating at a shared table, individuals typically first seat themselves opposite each other, at either end of the table. The implication is not that the table occupants must spread out because their study materials take up significant space. Rather, people have come to be alone in a shared space. If space efficiency and low-budget decision-making didn’t dictate project decisions, a variety of comfortable seating could instead be used to delineate spaces within an entire floor or section of a library.

Kai Shizi spoke extensively of her awareness of how libraries had a culture of people, like airports, who came together under one roof to undertake individual and even very private transactions. While they were likely to perform those transactions in the presence of others, yet they never intended to connect with the others with whom they shared the space, and had parallel experiences. Rosa Dawson Loeb had a very concrete comprehension of the workings of libraries:

There’s the library staff and there’s the people who visit your library. You might have a private office but mostly staff has private spaces in shared offices. If you are the public, you might use a group room alone even if you are not supposed to, but a carrel is much more likely where you will get private space, and even those are right alongside other carrels, so it might be the illusion of private space but really you are in a shared area. Public spaces are all over libraries in lobbies and activity and meeting rooms and reading rooms, rest rooms, court yards, book sale rooms, video storage rooms—the children’s rooms are always public spaces, which should be kind of scary but it’s mostly not—maker spaces, and all of the service points are always public spaces. I tend not to notice if I am in a public
space because I can tune out the cacophony, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have to build them well for people who can’t! Rosa Dawson Loeb—Sensory (Sociogram)

While Rosa Dawson Loeb’s statement captures the many different spaces that may make up a library building, neither she nor any other participant addressed their ideal for what percentage of a library might be allocated to one type of space versus another. Because not all libraries are public or academic libraries, the guidelines for allocation of space must shift in accordance with the mission and purpose of each library. Augustus Buffington reflects:

Distinctions between individual space, public space, and shared space. There were nooks and crannies; it was a draw for me when you went in. Is that the kind of space people seek? A lot of young people want to be at the big open tables to see and be seen because that’s developmentally where they are. Shared space is an example of a lot of the office space in the back where people need to organically have contact with one another for ideas to flow and that’s different from public space which is intended for the author lectures or the AA meetings that take place in libraries, or the atrium in libraries intended as social space where you can have sound and art. So, I’m mindful of those distinctions of individual, shared, and public spaces when I build buildings. Libraries aren’t the only ones. We face this in museums all the time and we face it in places where restrooms are really important, but you don’t really want to call attention to them either. Augustus Buffington—Organic (Sociogram)

Charles Marion has clearly given the topic of space careful thought as well:
All the time. I have to be. There are separate human needs. You need to have those public spaces, you need to have a sense of arrival, and you need to have a sense of the community of that building. In other words, to kind of come into a space and say, “oh, I’m in the blah blah library,” is important and uplifting for people. That doesn’t mean it has to be a noisy space. It can be a very quiet space. I’m always amazed at how quiet Grand Central actually is. You walk in there…it’s actually a hushed feeling in there. I don’t know how it works acoustically, but it’s not a loud space. I think it’s just so big that the sound just gets lost, so it almost feels quiet. I think that’s one of its appeals. There’s something very nice about going into a really big space that’s quiet and there’s this sense of awe that you have of it. Whether it’s awe over a large group of people that are rushing to go to their places or when you go into the main space… But then there’s always the question of the transition to the more private spaces, which you have to have, and so we have our work cut out for us. The one thing we can’t be sloppy about is compromising—building the library as a place that still gives you that sense of awe every time you enter. Charles Marion– Grace (Personality and Library as Place)

This question of individual space, public space, and shared space evokes thoughts of how libraries as a space are experienced. The frequency with which people—architects, design practitioners, librarians and people who use libraries alike—speak of libraries as places that are akin to, or likened to another space, or are experienced similarly to other spaces is remark-worthy. In my prior research responses to libraries included, “notions stores, hardware shops, the post office, gardens, churches, and sewing
pattern stores” (Beth, 2010). From the transcripts of this dissertation research, I provide a wide array of examples of how libraries were thought of or described by the participants. After sorting through the data, I arrived at five distinct categories for organizing responses. They are captured in Plates 9 – 13 and are labeled with the lead header of “Library as: ___ Space” filled in by the categories of “public,” “shared,” “personal,” “emotional intellectual,” and “sacred.” When people describe other places as having likeness to their library experience, it is most often a place where people are aware of a structured system, with categories and order. The act of speaking of libraries as akin to other places makes their eyes light up as they emote fascination and enthusiasm. People recognize each of these environments as places where sometimes information is stored, and where knowledge can be accessed, and where sometimes objects are ordered and accessed. When some interviewees say “the subway”—a response that might conjure up thoughts of noise and movement completely antithetical to libraries—their comments express awe for environments similar in their vastness and complexity, blending transient and familiar people, with distinct features specific to that environment. Subways and libraries both serve public demand and public need, offer layered systems that intersect and rest situated apart, that blend individual, shared, and public spaces all in one. Beyond the comparison of libraries to other recognized, structured environments, there is the idea of libraries as sacred places. The descriptions of “Library as: ___ space” reveal people’s passion for this place, and the significance of its societal symbol and its civic offerings.
Plate 9: Library As: Public Space

Library as public Space

- subway
- expert indices
- chronology
- maps
- bookstore
- categorization of material
- intentional display—defining geography
- an encyclopedia (has data sets as objects)
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- specialty library, unique collection, specialty bookstore
- doctor’s office vs. living room—serve & leave vs. linger & intimacy
- a collection—becomes a RESOURCE, not just a collection
- students—who were born mostly digital and have e-devices
- clean and organized information that will get used by somebody else
- car service center; they have everything categorized and inventoried, you wait in an area, devoid of relation or emotion
- data set as its own library, i.e. spreadsheet of population demographics for every block in NYC as a library—explanation followed by “each data set is that kind of space”

Note: Plate 9 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 10: Library As: Shared Space

Note: Plate 10 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 11: Library As: Personal Space

Note: Plate 11 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 12: Library As: Emotional/Intellectual Space

Library as emotional/intellectual Space

memory of place

collected data sets

maze

an ideal

a place to navigate desire

not for the uninitiated

sensory experiences

space/place for experiencing

place connected to experiencing books

life’s backdrop: in My Fair Lady—Henry Higgins turns a girl into a lady...

decoded system, a system of organization

“I want to figure out the system”

space of productivity, selfish contemplation and completion

Note: Plate 12 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 13: Library As: Sacred Space

- ritual trip to the library
- a place you have to walk away from and leave in order to reflect on
- space of reverence
- respected space
- sacred space
- monument
- glorious conception
- metaphor
- black dots of data in my mind
- chaos into order
- endless language
- keeper of finite spaces: stitch them together
- libraries as narratives: narratives as primary resources—infinity loop, objects as narratives and narratives as objects

Note: Plate 13 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
It is hard to consider how people use space and not impose assumptions based on personality or style preferences. This tendency among architects and design professionals can be countered by examining social science research in creating human environments. Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) yields critical information on the quality of a building and the expectations of people who use the building that corrections or improvements be made to support its best or intended use. POE scarcely makes up for the lack of research undertaken in the beginning of building projects that would otherwise bring greater harmony between social scientists and design professionals. In the fifty years since environmental psychologists and related social scientists have leaned into architecture, design education, and professional practice, there is little evidence for other formal practices that transform the projects by emphasizing human experience and meaning (Sutton, et al. 2017). In responding to my call for participants, and in their responses to the exercises of this section, the practitioners interviewed for my research reflected this absence.

**Professional Journeys**

To qualify for participation in this research, participants needed to have experience with library-building projects. Accordingly, the participants’ professional journeys referenced these projects and reflected the keen interest they have in working on library renovations, expansions, or new building projects. Participants were all in their mid- to mid-late career stages, many of them experiencing the rewards of seasoned professionalism, with peak career opportunities and accomplishments. To bridge the impressions and influence of the past into a demonstration of their current practice, they often spoke enthusiastically about when, where, and how their professional journeys
included libraries. As sharing their professional portfolio is a common practice with potential clients, participants referenced their recent or current work with delight and ease. Their professional journey narratives flowed without difficulty into descriptions of the significance of objects, of social commentary on the ever-evolving place we know of as libraries, and of the libraries of our imaginations and future libraries.

Connie Zhōng is utterly in tune with how she uses her skills for projects and clients:

I think, as an architect, I thrive on tension. This push and pull is very important to me. I’m not an artist, in other words, if you were to say, “Oh, you have an island and there’s no building code, build anything there,” I’d be lost. I need boundaries. I need very strict boundaries. My thing, I think, to become a very successful architect, you know those little games where you only have one empty spot and you have to move all the empty spots; it’s like a puzzle where you only have 12 empty squares and there’s one sliding box? I’m in there. I gotta have to scoot around and get myself somewhere in here and this is what I am good at. If I don’t have boundaries I’m totally done. So, the stake holder, that tension, for me to play the marriage counselor, the mediator, for me to find a way to incorporate the two, to make a space dual-function perhaps… When you talk about stakeholder push and pull, my job is to sell these spaces so that it fulfills everyone’s desire. That’s my job. Connie Zhōng—Sanctuary (Sociogram and Personality and Library as Place)
Future: Objects; Taste Structure; Future Ideal Libraries

Session 3 followed the same scheduling pattern, and was set to occur within three to six days of Session 2. The Future exercises, 7, 8, and 9, centered on Objects, Taste Structure and finally Ideal Library Place. Objects from libraries are often referenced in people’s narratives and hold importance as touchstones of memory and significance. Participants were asked to recall objects from their library pasts and objects they have chosen intentionally for their library-related work. They were then asked to talk about meaningful objects in their personal attachment to libraries or specifically about objects they incorporated professionally. While it was expected that design professionals have style, taste, and aesthetics derived from their training and experience, these exercises asked how they brought these influences to client work, and what, if any, value they held in bridging their past aesthetics to their current work. The work of envisioning Future ideal space, Exercise 9 occurred after many hours of probing and recalling past experience, and served as the final invitation of this research: to visualize ideal library places for the future. Transition and grace emerged as significant themes in exploring future ideal library places.

Objects

In Israel’s research on memories of ideal places and home, objects proved to be a way of referencing culture, aesthetics, class, and place attachment. With libraries, objects have been used most frequently for wayfinding, but simultaneously they are referenced as ways of defining local culture, memories of place attachment, and unique signifiers of building textures that meet the senses and express the experience of using libraries. As some of the comments and the plates (Plates 14 - 17, Objects) that follow show, people
associate certain distinct objects with libraries. While some are highly specific—the sound and touch of clear plastic covering book jackets or the banker-style library table lighting—other memories are of the materials associated with the sensory experience of libraries, such as wood, paper, and ink, all rolled into one sensory memory. In the “Narratives of Environmental Meaning” data analysis section preceding this chapter and in other selections of this dissertation, those interviewed rejoiced as they described features they incorporated into libraries. This included objects from the surrounding environment where the library was located, or from the institutional inheritance that gave rise to its fame, variously, the bust of a founder; a windmill placed in the children’s section; the reference desk made from an actual boat; seating built from retired, repurposed card catalog drawers; mosaic tiles in the floor memorializing the fame of authors whose works line that library’s shelves; themed art; and an Asian Studies library study room outfitted with Japanese tatami mats.

For those of us who spend extended time in the library once it is built, we observe the reliance people have on objects for wayfinding, or the interest they hold for things in the library that ground them, such as a spectacular mobile hung in an atrium, or a 14-foot-high carved wooden soccer player at the library’s entranceway, each time they return. Objects may serve as functional in wayfinding or may meet an aesthetic need in the process of place attachment, but they also provide us with insight and meaning as the stories of objects are narrated and inherited. They may provide us with stability or rootedness as the larger landscape of our lives evolves and changes. As I listened to participants recall objects in libraries of their past that made an impression or impact on their genealogy of libraries, I came to wonder whom else, and how many other
generations of libraries might carry memory of those same objects as a shared environmental genealogy—whether pleasing, or memorably unfavorable. Sculpture might be an artifact of personal identity or key to the development of personal values—or both. My findings show that objects are indeed a significant aspect of how people achieve fulfillment and self-place bonding in their experiences of libraries over the course of their life.

Legos that you can keep in an old wooden card catalog drawer. You just need to label them like an apothecary. Connie Zhông– Sanctuary (Objects)

I think that the artifacts—and let’s say the meaning of art as an object is [as an artifact]—it’s almost in a funny way a programmatic tie-in, because what the art does is command you to consider why this piece, why in this library, why here in this spot. Rosa Dawson Loeb– Sensory (Objects)

Of books—touch held comparable to brick—designed by hand to have a relationship to masons by hand. Connie Zhông– Sanctuary (Objects)

The following quotation, from author Ann E. Michael, a lover of libraries but not a non-participant of the research, is included here to demonstrate the way objects in libraries capture the soul of the place and experience of its devotees, its. It depicts libraries as akin to houses of worship, a way that libraries are described commonly by people the world over as “sacred places.” An entire set of plates themed Libraries as
Space depicts just such associations commonly expressed by people who hold the library as sacred space:

I grew up, physically and intellectually, in churches and libraries. Different in purpose, they were nonetheless both built to impress upon the visitor admiration for the possible. Their architecture varied from grand to bland, but their missions as I grew up remained intact, as did certain expectations of what you would find inside. In the church, there would be a pulpit, candlesticks, bibles, hymnals. The sanctuary’s role was to provide a shared contemplative space for congregants and their God. In the library, there were likewise tables or desks for quiet study and contemplation, a reference area, and—most important—shelves and shelves of books where you could lose yourself while seeking information, inspiration, or entertainment. (Michael, 2016)

Plates 14 - 17 show groupings for objects named in and pulled from the narratives. I have assigned the themes of Objects as “precious,” “Libraries are synonymous with,” “tactile,” and “purposeful/intentional.” Acknowledging overlap in my categories, I invite the reader to review the plates with curiosity rather than precision, and to appreciate the objects named and the strength with which they emerged as shared themes.
Plate 14: Objects: Precious

Note: Plate 14 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 15: Objects: Synonymous with

Note: Plate 15 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 16: Objects: Tactile

Note: Plate 16 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 17: Objects: Purposeful

Note: Plate 17 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Taste Structure

While participants almost uniformly believed their past experiences of childhood place, are rarely if ever expressed in their work as designers, both Israel and I would beg to differ. Augustus Buffington may not have built actual barns in children’s reading rooms, but he brings the environmental equivalent of that New England icon into the creation and furnishing of his designs for library spaces. Rosa Dawson Bloom, who as a child loved the scale and experience of the bookmobile, would later build a staircase library in her own home that clearly carried forward that sense-memory and aesthetic into her adult world. In Israel’s 2010 publication, several astonishing visuals illustrate this point, among them an example from the work of the renowned architect Michael Graves. In reviewing sketches and historic photos of his past, Graves realized how the scale and lines of the stockyards he grew up with are incorporated into his designs for the Denver Central Library, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the San Juan Capistrano Regional Library (Israel, p. 76, 124-125). A repeating element in Charles Marion’s work is how he offers the library goer the opportunity to look out from the building onto nature or a landscaped open space—a direct carryover from the municipal library of his young adulthood, where a window onto nature saved him from the monotony and grind of that cement slab building. Kai Shizi has successfully fended off use of beige as a color in a commissioned space, and my guess is that if she had to pull the dollars from her own pocket to keep Formica from having anything to do with a space associated with her name, she would do so gladly. The value of this exercise is that it enables participants to revisit their histories to become aware of the importance of the past’s presence in their professional lives, and to arrive at an articulation of the past’s impact on the present. Once they had this understanding incorporated consciously into their thoughts and
reflections, the participants readily spoke of future ideal spaces.

**Ideal Libraries**

Throughout our sessions together, participants frequently mentioned “the future of libraries,” and their visions of ideal features, elements, or types of library they would like to create in their professional future. I have collected the topics that emerged repeatedly under the heading *Transition and Grace*. Increasingly, libraries are multi-purpose use facilities. Design professionals are challenged to create spaces where even the dedicated collection browsing and consulting rooms serve more functions. Some typical examples include: library space made available for community use, after-hours, when the collections are closed, yet without compromising security and nonetheless permitting access to exhibition spaces and restrooms; where meeting space is situated adjacent to service points; creative maker-space, 3-D printing, performance space, and concert areas built into libraries. The broad function of the contemporary library is reflected in designs that understand that sound and noise are to be expected, but must also be contained so as not to travel to those areas where quiet is preferred. This understanding of the library is seen in buildings where technology is secure, privacy is considered, demonstration is possible, and seating for both individual and collaborative use of technology exists. The well-designed, multi-use library contains accessible storage for the objects of daily life such as strollers, skateboards, luggage on wheels, and even cumbersome outerwear to be securely retained for the duration of its owner’s visit. This type of library is experienced in spaces designed to welcome people to congregate while at the same time keeping service points, and points of egress clear. The message of *Transition and Grace* is that visitors experience being invited to enjoy the library’s traditional resources even while
they arrive to participate in community calendar offerings, without ever feeling that they exited one space to enter the other.

“The way I conceive a space is as a choreography and facilitation.” Kai Shizi–Textured *(Taste Structure)*

When asked to describe in words the sketch he created of a future ideal place, Charles Marion articulated how transition and grace work in his imagination:

I’ve thought a lot about the word ‘grace’ in the last few years. Graceful. What does that mean? And so, there’s something nice about having transitions from one type of space to another that feels easy… part of this is from a modernist predilection [for] spaces that are open to each other and flow into one another.

At this moment in our session, he crumples up his sketch, swivels to the office trash basket, and makes the two-point shot. Turning back to me, Charles Marion offers this uninterrupted discourse on transition and grace (ellipses indicate pauses, not omitted words):

There’s something that’s very nice about something when one space sort of leads into another. And there are a lot of devices to do that. You can do it with lighting; you can do it with layers. You can do it with all kinds of stuff. But I think the word graceful kind of means something that goes from one movement to another and seems effortless… you see it in athletes, right? They go from one movement to another and it feels like you can’t even notice…there’s no jerky motion or anything. It’s actually taking a giant amount of effort to do that, and an amount of strength and control… so I think you can do the same thing in architecture where you’re going from a public space to a less public space to a private space…but they have different needs. Private’s…the ability to get away, to think by yourself
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or be sad or contemplative or whatever; it’s very important. Or to work. But I think it all has to be linked architecturally; maybe that’s what gives it sort of that grace—is that there’s this overriding aesthetic to the whole building, the whole interior, whatever. But you’re subtly modulating that with different types of lighting or [it] gets smaller or whatever, but you’re not going into like a completely different aesthetic when you go into a private space. So, the message of what this environment is about is kind of all throughout… Charles Marion–Grace (*Taste Structure* and *Ideal Library Place*)

Connie Zhōng is bursting with ideas about libraries of the future, particularly as spaces that can be created for dual purposes. However, she assumes the role as guide rather than as deliverer of the future right now:

I’m gonna talk to you as if you’re my client now. I’m the tool for you to create what you wanted or, you don’t even know what you wanted, and I extract it out of you. You have to present me with what you are, what your past is, what your present is, and whatever you aim to be—not as a person, as a community, as a demographic, as something, so that I can build around it. It’s not about me. I don’t pick. … You don’t know this vocabulary? Fine. I’m helping you with them but by the way you dress, by the way you talk, by the way your community’s statistics, by the way you want your community represented, by all these things, I suggest something. I’m just the tool. … Future spaces should have some guidelines, general guidelines. Goals, or intent. I think a library should be should be *suggestive* and not definitive. It should have areas that are not telling you what you should be doing here but this is what you could be doing here but if you’re creative enough, you can do something else here. Or, you can
be that person that fits into the room, but you don’t have to be. So, it has to be open and accepting enough to appeal to a large group of people that all are different but because people don’t usually necessarily know what they want, you need to suggest a path and they can follow it or any other path. So, this is what I would suggest a library should look like. Connie Zhōng– Sanctuary (Ideal Library Place)

For the most part, participants shied away from sketching out their ideas of future ideal spaces. For me, this moment revealed the essence of their professional practice: creating real solutions to work in specific physical conditions and to meet actual requirements. In this context I was not a client. We were not brainstorming to find workable solutions. Nor were they physically situated in the familiar places where they produce initial sketches. My box of colored pencils and sketching pads were only rough tools, the equivalent of a bar napkin. They were happy to use tools for exercises describing the past, but sharing ideas of the future was almost entirely a “hands-off” event. As discussed in this chapter’s introduction, the participants were wholly turned off by the visualization exercise that preceded the request that they draw or articulate a future ideal place. With the exception of Kai Shizi, they distanced themselves from the drawing tools on the table, instead relying on their words.

While the “Future: Ideal Spaces: ___” plates (Plates 18 - 21) provide ideas gathered from participant narratives, I will state again that the conversations of transition and grace dominated what they shared. The themes of the “Future: Ideal Spaces: ___” plates are, “people,” “space,” “things,” and “transactions.”

Connie Zhōng longs to build and protect intimate spaces in bustling public libraries, both in a nod to the hallowed halls of libraries of the past and in offer to the next
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generation. She designs while keeping in mind the isolated individual who needs a library space, as she once did, that is place to escape to, separate from the fray. Kai Shizi is interested in how people can be alone while together, and draws from a variety of industries to bring sensibilities of the modern age to libraries. She described her ideals to create a sense of ‘zoning.’ For her future ideal spaces she had us seated on tall chairs at a high, long bar table complete with affixed tablet computing and power outlets, with individual space subtly indicated by separate, hanging lamps or by a change in the rug pattern color beneath each seat. She spoke of imagining modern technology situated on furnishings built of heavy, enduring materials, conveying old-world library solidity in easy partnership with the continuously upgrading tools of the new world. Kai Shizi described her future libraries as being:

   Less spatial, but more programmatic… more interactive adult program and not just interactive program focus space for kids’ programs. Overall use of space is subtle and calm, warm and inviting, with small, subtle, splashes of surprise and joy. And bring on the laptop cart-style access to the Internet rather than a fixed bank all the time. You should be able to walk in, borrow one, heap your stuff on a shelf or bin that it comes with, or hooks, and move about doing what you need to be doing with your hands on the computing device and not having to worry about your stuff, like the way the vet[erinarian] wheels one in. To appear thoughtful, considered, like someone cared about your experience rather than it being an after-thought or cost driven measure. Inexpensive can be thoughtful. Kai Shizi—Textured *(Ideal Library Place)*
Plate 18: Future: Ideal Spaces: People

Note: Plate 18 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 19: Future: Ideal Spaces: Space

- more Intimate
- seating not vulnerable
- smaller seating groups
- welcoming planned spaces
- contracting and expanding
- saving “Carnegies”—return to quiet
- choreography of space transitions
- transition between space and place
- a bounce of sound rather than an absorbing material
- currently libraries are doubling as community centers
- NYPL Rose Room is grand; warm not isolating or alienating
- the way I conceive a space is as a choreography of facilitation
- library is the environment, is the space that allows me to make sense of those things—not to be consumed by them

Note: Plate 19 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Note: Plate 20 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Plate 21: Future: Ideal Spaces: Transactions

Note: Plate 21 designed by Terry Marks and Amy Beth
Chapter 8

Conclusion

No dissertation combining environmental autobiographies, narratives, and library building projects would be complete without the story referencing itself. The work concludes where it began, the research coming full circle. The first time I read *Some Place Like Home* (Israel, 2010) I marveled at the frequency with which libraries were referenced as ideal places in reflections on “home.” Beginning on page 13, the author quotes her mother saying, “The best thing about this house was that it was right next to the library where I spent hours reading.” Israel’s work explores in-depth interviews from three superstar architects, all of whom discuss libraries in their homes and in the homes of their ancestors, and who also provide examples and images of the famous libraries they have built. Israel demonstrates how the places of their past informed the inclusion of ideal aspects into their (present life) design work. When I tallied the instances of libraries discussed, and the images of libraries used to demonstrate the self-place bond, I couldn’t help but wonder if Israel noticed how extensively the experience of ideal places of home bled into libraries. Our correspondence began with that question, and with my mention of the more than one dozen times libraries were explicitly discussed and shown in *Some Place Like Home*. We live fifty miles apart. I followed up our correspondence with a call; she gave me an invite, and together we sat in her home—featured in her book—and talked about the significance of libraries in people’s lives, the interest that libraries as ideal places hold for architects, designers, and people in general, the beauty of environmental autobiography, the work of the Design Psychology field and of the Toolbox. We talked of raising our children and our thoughts about communal
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scholarship. As with the vast majority of other environmental psychologists, libraries hadn’t figured among the settings explored during her graduate education, but the scholarship she had created on self-place bonding and ideal places provided a distinct way to include and consider libraries going forward.

For more than two decades I have gathered narratives about how people experience libraries, while seeking how to present narrative as useful data in the design and redesign process of library building projects. In the field of architecture, both in design and theory, qualitative studies most commonly appear as post-occupancy evaluations. The education of architects and design professionals lacks well-honed intersections with social science research. Concerns of aesthetics, technology, structure, and theory dominate architecture school curricula and ultimately control the field. The architecture school tradition of challenging students to take on large design projects to demonstrate their competencies in imagining and handling huge structures, infrastructures, and spectacular presentations does not assist the budding professional in creating human environments. I recommend, as part of the architect’s education process, tuning in to one’s own environmental story, such as Leanne Rivlin documented in the Childhood City Newsletter of 1978, and as Clare Cooper Marcus did through environmental autobiographies with her students at UC Berkeley in late 1970s (Marcus, 1979), work that was expanded by Toby Israel through her creation of an adaptable Design Psychology Toolbox. Drawing from some of the readings listed in the bibliography of this dissertation, I implore my colleagues who teach in the field of environmental psychology to incorporate libraries as environments in their programs of study. Libraries should not be environmental anomalies. Understanding one’s own
environmental story and considering the meaning of space in the lives of people can offset an emphasis on learning about design gurus and design meant for image, and instead calls forth the invaluable, innate environmental knowledge that architecture and design students bring to their education, training, and eventually to the field. The core notions that make up a design professional’s sense of place start in the childhood experience of the spaces they inhabit and in which they are encouraged to grow. These understandings continuously develop throughout a designer’s life, and influence the work produced throughout a career. I entitled this dissertation *Libraries and the Missing Narratives*, because I consider the environmental stories of design professionals to be missing from general cultural understandings of the way libraries work, and how libraries can be better imagined and built when we consider the human possibilities. My findings support my belief that learning how to tap into one’s own great reservoir of environmental knowledge would be best started in the early stages of formal practical training, but that it’s never too late to benefit from tuning in to one’s own innate knowledge while becoming a seasoned practitioner. Whether considered in the context of an architecture and design program, or by colleagues at a firm, or by stakeholders creating a library project, an exploration of environmental meaning might transform the overarching emphasis of the practice of architecture from form and function, to the realization of architecture as both form and culture.

This dissertation discusses the significance of libraries as an environment of important meaning over the life course for architects, designers, and indirectly, for librarians. I investigated and examined the value of narrative data as qualitative research with practitioners who design and plan library buildings and renovations. The central
question of this research asked whether the DPT could be adapted from exploring home as ideal places to exploring libraries as ideal places in architecture and design projects. When I sit with Israel’s Some Place Like Home (2010) alongside the data compiled from the participant-narratives, I affirmatively conclude that, “yes, the DPT is adaptable for use in exploring libraries as ideal places for architects and designers.” The research stems from the observation that meaningful ways to capture, analyze, and include prior library experience in the design of libraries are missing. I believe that my research indicates the possibility for an examination of human relationships to libraries that are likely to inform new project planning, and to guide architects to seek data that will affect the project outcome positively.

The specialized environmental experience of architects, designers, and librarians forms a critical piece of the puzzle in understanding the social, emotional, and interpersonal attachment to the library as place, and toward building human-centered libraries.

This dissertation investigated the memories, thoughts, ideas, and experiences of six architects and designers who participated in the exercises of Toby Israel’s Design Psychology Toolbox (DPT), adapted for an exploration of libraries. The analysis of the completed DPT exercises provides empirical evidence that there is benefit in using the Toolbox and methods of Design Psychology to prepare practitioners for visioning and client in-take work and as they engage with library stakeholders and building clients. The study participants agreed that taking part in environmental autobiographies, narrative reflections, and ideal place-visioning helped them better understand what influences their professional concerns, their taste, their sensitivities, and their concept of ideal places.
Projects that prioritize cost measures for efficiency and metrics of use fall short of creating spaces that are responsive to human needs; they have also been known to disrupt the project plan in untimely ways. Space plans that are intentionally designed to support individual and group relationships to libraries as a significant human environment are much more likely to achieve self-place fulfilling outcomes, and in turn, are more highly regarded by those who come to claim them as their own. The relationship of people to libraries described in personal narratives holds rich data in what the building program should consider. Exploring the relationship of people to libraries yields rich data about libraries as environments of importance where people develop self-place bonding and where the journey through personal, intellectual, and professional development may occur. The six design professionals who agreed to explore the DPT for this research found that understanding, analyzing, and incorporating a qualitative environmental autobiographical tool revealed much in their own self-bond place awareness.

In conclusion, the participants identified two valuable applications of this inquiry for their own practices: as a tool for increasing their own capacity as library design project leaders, and as a tool for guiding clients and stakeholders in articulating more fulfilling, inclusive, place-based decisions while in the initial, creative stages of library planning.

I believe that the DPT, adapted for libraries, also has relevance for librarians. As essential partners with architects and designers in library planning, it is necessary for librarians to understand the tools, methods, and experiences that literally can shape where and how the work of libraries takes place, and that has substantial impact on various library-users. The DPT can be adapted for use at all-staff meetings, not only as an
exercise for reflecting on the work environment, but also as a way to consider how patrons navigate in library spaces. If facilitated properly—with consent for sharing responses and memories that emerge—this process can generate rich conversation amongst colleagues. Committees tasked with rethinking space needs may embrace the DPT tool to allow them to foreground human self-place attachment at the beginning of a design process, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of projects that only privilege budget and efficiency of space-use metrics. A committee of library colleagues who have experienced using an adaptation of the DPT for libraries are likely to have a better command of space-planning concepts for communicating human and facility needs as architects and designers join the table. While architects and designers regularly work in teams, the hierarchical culture of librarianship stunts individual input and participation. Empowering library staff to explore the DPT to lend their insight to a project as peers can break down some of the natural reticence that becomes second nature in rigid workplaces. It might take committee members to explore the tool prior to extending it to groups of library stakeholders to build a more inclusive building program, but the awareness of input from various stakeholders may prove invaluable in their participation in the project and certainly in project outcomes. The DPT provides an opportunity not only to work with the narratives of those who are deeply invested in the building program, but also with those who are less familiar with how the library functions, and those who do not use the facility, those who are not as conversant with its systems, and to learn more about how the library can better reflect and serve them, too.

My experience as a librarian has included many people volunteering their “library stories,” wanting to relate their meaningful remembrances to me. Over many years, I
have learned that receiving library stories from members of the public is a transactional or performativity norm in librarianship. This abundant data, if explored formally by environmental psychologists, architects, urban planning designers, and library educators, can move us toward a deeper understanding of narrative data and developing theories of place and space with profound implications for the libraries in our lives.

In the Ten Points section of Chapter 6 under Point 6 I state that in my work on library building and renovation projects, architects and designers have pulled me aside, one by one, in almost confessional tones, to impart their own library narratives. They describe a yearning to incorporate something specific from their past, a library memory, a library space they loved, or simply the chance to re-create space with deep meaning for newer generations. I expand this recounting to address how their hopes are repeatedly dashed by the bare-bones utility of the project specifications, budgets reduced to durable, long lasting materials, and only “justifiable” expenses. As virtuous and fiscally responsible on the part of institutions and governing bodies with oversight for libraries as this may sound, the reality of creating library spaces with this “frugal first!” mindset produces libraries with a tendency to be mechanistic and graceless. If the end goal is to create spaces that people want to return to, library boards and stakeholders must rethink economizing for the sake of economizing. Designers attest it takes vision more than funding to create outcomes.

August Buffington, in discussing future libraries, shared:

“Walls are super expensive. You take a busy urban library and you need to factor in things like people, flow, and sound. You have to factor in skateboards and people on canes and people congregating. There’s no end to behaviors in libraries.
You need design to navigate behavior. But the committee wants it to be austere and ascetic, so it doesn’t get a taxpayer scowl for spending—even if the taxpayer wants it to be beautiful when they get there. So, we looked at the requirements for the number of feet for bookcases that needed to be built into the project and we used this furniture to create different zones and connections to bigger experiences and spaces while still retaining the experience of an intimate, visually engaging space.” Augustus Buffington—Organic (Ideal Library Place)

In the attempt to be civically and financially responsible, building project boards and committees can make shortsighted decisions to save money that end up more costly in the long run. My experience serving on library building projects and supporting stakeholders in preparing to work with designers has taught me that different, more productive conversations occur when people take the time to acquire the tools.

A classic example is the shortsighted way a board or committee will turn down the more expensive lighting attached to the outside of the library building or parking lot when they learn it is LEED certified and jump to the conclusion it is costing more just for the LEED designation. In reality, there is ample data showing the cost of the LEED fixtures are a return on investment in record time because the maintenance and replacement lighting mechanisms have drastically higher endurance rates. Fear from having to defend the high cost of an appropriate fixture at the next Town Meeting will drive stakeholder decisions that not only cost more over time but also compromises safety when lighting is faced in the wrong direction. In rural areas where libraries are depended upon for high speed Internet access a cost efficient well-lit parking lot can literally serve as an extension of library hours.
Architects dream of going beyond joyless, conservative, static spaces to create welcoming and desirable library spaces such as they once knew. Libraries ride on the laurels of being libraries, that is, places considered time honored and sacred just by virtue of being a library. Libraries didn’t start out as storefronts in strip malls where you need to be transported by motor or with extreme caution by bicycle, and least of all by foot. Buildings are a part of the experience of experiencing libraries. While it is important to respond to the client, often the culture of responsible and thrifty project committee members can diminish outcomes as well.

To support the work of staff and committees involved in library building renovations, redesigns, and new visions for library-building projects, I have incorporated aspects of environmental autobiography exercises, and in more recent years, DPT exercises into my workshops. The design teams assigned to these projects have responded favorably to the client preparation, and have remarked on their ability to discuss the projects at hand more deeply. When the team enters the project with a discussion of the meaning of the place rather than the specifications and design steps, the outcome of the project, while keeping in budget, is inevitably different.

In my experience, given the enthusiasm of both design teams and the project stakeholders for doing the work of a fuller consideration of the library, and the potentially positive impact this work can have on project outcomes, we need to shift from wondering why approaches like the DPT are not yet standard, and instead seek leadership and accountability for structuring this important work into guiding the project steps. Architects, including those in this study, have told me that it is not uncommon that two-thirds of the way through a building project, clients will inform them that concerns have
surfaced; the project, however seemingly on target it is to meet its stated requirements and deadlines, is somehow lacking the very qualities they sought to make the library resonant for their users. Even in those cases when architects often agree with client complaints and are willing to revise the project to make adjustments to the human environment, there is a high cost in revising the project at a later stage. The practitioners who have experienced this moment on any number of projects attest that costs would have been considerably lower had two things occurred at the outset: if the design firm had felt secure in guiding conversations about the human environment at the project’s beginning, or if they knew that the client might have been open to considering the human environment as much as the more utilitarian aspects. When asked directly if there is any financial gain in waiting two-thirds of the way through a project to increase the price tag, architects have definitively answered in the negative. New projects with new deadlines are waiting in the wings. The reputation of their firm is at stake. Refitting is uninspired work in comparison to creating. A large-scale project typically has spending timelines with bureaucratic mandates. Everyone stands to lose financially when a project is delayed and redesigned. The client in-take process, planning, and proposal stages are the appropriate periods in a project’s development for examining meaning and attachment to a library. This happens best when qualitative research tools, including the partnership of social scientists, the skills of architects, and the insights of librarians are all brought together.

The findings of this dissertation support that the effectiveness of the DPT begins once the practitioner—an architect, a designer, or lead librarian on the project—has finished many if not all of the exercises in the Toolbox. Having done so, practitioners will have
experienced a personal exploration of connection to place that gives them a deeper understanding of how the library comes to have meaning in the lives of patrons.

The client can then be invited to participate in DPT exercises, before the conventional closed-door committee design process begins, and before square-footage cost figures, efficiency of information use, and retrieval metrics dominate the project landscape. I am advocating that library narratives inform the work of these committees from all reaches of people who use the library, who work in the library (at all levels!), who support the library (as volunteers, board members, administration outside of the library, fundraisers, etc.), and who do not use the library at all. If utility becomes the exclusive driving exploration of the project, the opportunities to support design, use, and the reasons why people have sought to return to the library, or to avoid it, get lost. Efficiency must make way for calculations that honor human connection, fulfillment, and place attachment.

Adapted for work in library settings, the DPT requires a substantial investment of time and focus. Simply stated, the DPT is too long. Research participants who would see the study through all the way through were not easy to find. Several participants dropped out of the research having completed eight of the eleven exercises. There was no lack of enthusiasm for the research, they simply could not take more time away from the demands of their professional work and were not inclined to donate personal time when no continuing education credits could be offered. I consulted Dr. Israel about this dilemma, and she shared that completing the research with her three superstar architects was an exercise in patience and repeated efforts to secure their time.

While the DPT can be used in degree or certification granting educational settings as is, or for those private clients investing in projects that involve exploring home as an
ideal place, then its length is not at issue. I strongly recommend it be modified appropriately for commissioned or tax-funded institutional projects where ample funding is not the case. Full exploration of the Toolbox stands to strengthen it adaptability and saliency. Mentors and guides can make a world of difference in the process of applying new skills and studying its efficacy. I recommend that design professionals and environmental psychologists form partnerships to work with clients when using qualitative research tools like environmental autobiography and the DPT. This partnership will not only make for a stronger interpretation of results with the client, but it will strengthen the ability of the practitioner to manage the findings and incorporate them into the early project programming phase. Last, I believe that architectural firms should include tools like environmental autobiography and the DPT as a standard part of initial project planning. Making the process optional only diminishes the likelihood that this necessary approach to human design concerns will be understood as an integral to a positive outcome.

The participation of six architects in this research fully introduced them on a personal level to the DPT as an instrument and an approach to working with library clients for future library-building and design projects. The research was limited to explorations of how the participants’ sense of self and sense of place are entwined and might be relevant in creating library environments, and did not extend to an investigation of how the six practitioners might use the Toolbox more broadly with their clients. I can only speculate how they might use DPT exercises as a formal aspect of the initial practitioner-client project intake process. The impact of this research may go beyond the six participants, as each one works collaboratively with colleagues in their firms and in
their professional lives. Some participants explicitly indicated they had already shared
take-aways based on their study participation with their immediate colleagues. In addition
to incorporating elements of the DPT at their firms, the participants shared that they were
likely to use some of the exercises with clients, and that further educational, public, and
professional programs of interest would be places for them to share their experiences and
findings. In addition to having clients, several of the participants teach on the university
level, and some of them serve on committees in professional associations; all of them
actively attend professional programs. My commitment to this work and my curiosity
about its usefulness might lead me to follow up on their intentions in the future. Until
such time, their enthusiasm and good will toward my research project is sustaining:

- “In listening to myself, there’s the experience of remembering coming to a place
  of self-awareness.”
- “The exercises elicit memories—interesting! —about libraries and being book
  related.”
- “The opportunity of this interview to articulate these emotions is powerful.”
- “That was enjoyable to rethink.”
- “I am reflecting on learning about the Avery Index, thank you.”
- “This is why I love talking about this with you… This is so great to name.”
- “I never thought about it until now.”

In conclusion, I am wholly appreciative of the memories and insights the six
participants shared with me for this study. There were times during the interviews when I
wanted to pause to reflect on and to fully integrate the depth of their narratives into my
understanding. Furthermore, with each participant, there was at least one moment when they asked me to stop the recording to say something off the record; they continued describing a sensitive private experience or an intimate event in their life or a set of emotions that shaped them because of the trust that had developed between us.

To undertake this particular type of work, at its core an investigation of meaning and memory, the researcher must be prepared to sit in the presence of personal truths earned through trust and respect, and to receive the gift of an individual’s narrative, including those beyond the usual professional comfort zone. The many hours that I spent getting to know the participants as individuals and reviewing participants’ words made it difficult for me to categorize their experience simply as patterns of data for analysis. I repeatedly felt honored to be the recipient of their sketches and stories. There were periods in the process of analyzing the data that I held their stories too close to my protective instincts to be able to zoom out and see patterns while the voice of the individual proved too intimate to release into the summary data. To be the keeper of narratives, to be a librarian attuned to how environments affect human experience in the evolution of libraries, and to be an environmental psychologist determined to bring the gifts of our insights, methods, skills, and analytical abilities to the place where architecture and design professionals meet us, is a privilege every day.
Appendix A

Information for Potential Research Participants
Call for Participants

WHO: Architects, Designers, and Librarians who work on library building projects – whether new buildings, renovations, expansions, design proposals, remodeling’s, or something in between—share your personal memories of libraries and your professional experience in library building projects.

WHERE: New York City and surrounds, the Northeast Corridor from Philadelphia to the greater Western Massachusetts region. Wherever possible, I’d meet you somewhere convenient for you, ideally in a place where you can comfortably explore memory and imagination.

HOW LONG: Interviews take about two hours and are held at a time and place that suits you, whether that’s the place where you do your work, a cafe, a library, etc. I anticipate meeting with each participant three times (for a total of 6 hours). Feedback suggests that many people find the interviews a rewarding opportunity to reflect on their professional experience and practices.

LET’S: If you’re interested in taking part or finding out more, please email me at abeth@gradcenter.cuny.edu or contact me via text at 1-413-559-0674. Please include your name, preferred contact details, and a good time to reach you.

ME: I am a PhD student in the department of Psychology at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York, working in environmental psychology-- a highly interdisciplinary field dedicated to exploring the relationship of people to the places and spaces in our lives.

WHAT: Libraries are often described as an environment where rich memory and experience rest. How do Architect, Designer, and Librarian stories of our past inform aspects of our professional work related to library building environments and designs? Early in the practitioner-client exploration of library building programs, stakeholders describe personal meaning and experience using libraries. How well do we factor in these aspects alongside the evidence based metric design demands of efficiency and patterns of use?

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the project up to the point of data aggregation or analysis. If you’re interested, I can send you digital or print files of your interview and sketching’s, or my final dissertation and any relevant research publications.
Appendix B
Letter from Toby Israel

April 25th, 2014
Toby Israel <tphoenix3@gmail.com> to Amy Beth <abeth@gc.cuny.edu>
Hi Amy,

How nice to hear from you but so sorry to hear about your mother-in-law's illness. I'm so gratified to hear that SPLH has helped you think through a new living arrangement that would work well for all of you. Good luck making that happen!

It was so nice to meet with you the other day and hear all about your research. I hope my comments were helpful.

As for using and adapting my toolbox: I am OK to sign a simple letter of agreement for you to adapt the Toolbox assuming the usual permission and conventions i.e. that you acknowledge that the source is my DPT of exercises. Also, although I am happy to give permission for you to adapt the tools for your dissertation, I wouldn't be giving permission for them to be published elsewhere besides your dissertation nor does my permission to have you adapt them imply that I've reviewed or approved of your version of the tools. (It's for you and your advisor to agree upon their appropriateness and efficacy as a research tool.)

I would be very interested to see how you've adapted them, if you want to forward your finalized version. Of course, I'd be most interested in reading your study when it's completed!

In answer to your other question, the first Favorite Childhood Place Visualization I did was with Marc Francis who was teaching at CUNY's EP program when I was there. (I believe I reference this in SPLH.) Nevertheless, I've scripted the Visualization in the book myself based on that experience and other things I've learned and read about the visualization process.

Thanks for your ongoing enthusiasm about my work and for spreading the word at CUNY. It would be great to come back and speak there in the Fall.

Meanwhile, feel free to be in touch if you have key questions and . . . take time to smell the beautiful spring flowers when you can!

Best regards,

Toby
Appendix C
Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Questions for Participants:

I am going to ask some demographic questions:

1. How do you describe your gender?

2. What is your age?

3. What is your occupation? Architect  Designer  Librarian or Administrator  Other

4. Years in this occupation?

5. What is your education level and credentials?

6. How do you describe yourself when asked your race?

7. How do you describe your lifestyle? (optional)

8. How do you describe your class background?

9. How do you describe your current class identity?

10. Have you participated in raising children?

11. What region of and what country were you raised in?
Appendix D

Adaptation of exercises and questions from the:

*Design Psychology Toolbox of Exercises* (by Toby Israel)

INDEX:

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FUTURE
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Taste Structure
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PAST: Library Timeline Exercise 1

Create a timeline of libraries that you have experienced from birth to present (see graphic). List both the name and location of each library as best you can recall. Indicate the approximate age you were when you experienced each library*.

LIBRARY TIMELINE GRAPH
My Place Timeline for LIBRARIES
Name and Location
Type of Library
Approximate Age(s)

*By experienced I am inviting you to recall all libraries of your environment, not just those that you may have used. An example might include a library that you viewed from
your daily commute as a landmark but never entered, or a library in the home of a relative or friend.

After completing the Library Timeline, I will ask you to reflect on and respond to the following questions:

1. Looking at your Library Timeline, what were the types of libraries that you listed?
2. How long was your relationship to each type of library you listed?
3. Under the age of 18, which were the library(s) in which you had the most significant experience(s)?
4. As an adult, which libraries are the ones in which you have had the most significant experience(s)?
5. Reflecting on your answers to the preceding two questions, in which type of library have you had the most significant experience(s)?
6. Is there a library on the timeline that you feel had a major impact on you? If so, why do you think that was so?
7. Thinking about the libraries you use now, do you feel that they are in any way similar or different than what you used as a child?
8. Are you content with the library experiences you are having now? Why or why not?
9. Do you have any further reflections on past, present, or future library experiences?
LIBRARIES AND THE MISSING NARRATIVE

LIBRARY TIMELINE GRAPH

My Place Timeline for Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Location</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Age(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PAST: Library Family Tree Exercise 2

**Purpose Statement:**
When we think about exploring our past, we need to think not only about recovering our own roots but those roots of our ancestors as well. In environmental terms, we not only possess environmental autobiographies but environmental *genealogies*, environmental family trees.

**Instructions:**
Fill in the blank **Library Family Tree** (see graphic) by using nouns or adjectives to describe the memories of library experiences you might know of from your family’s past.

Use the branches to indicate who the people are and the buildings to describe the libraries and library experiences of your ancestors. The libraries you describe can be those used by your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or close teachers, neighbors, and friends. Include anyone who has had an impact on you. There is no correct way to complete this exercise. Do what feels comfortable to you.

After completing the Library Family Tree, I will ask you to reflect on and respond to the following questions:

1. In what way(s), if any, did your family’s experience of libraries differ from generation to generation?
2. In what way(s), if any, was your family’s experience of libraries the same from generation to generation?
3. In what way(s), if any, do you think your family tree influenced your own perspective and values when it comes to libraries?
4. What sense of place do you want to pass down to future generations as part of your library legacy?
5. Do you have any further reflections on how your environmental family tree may have influenced you?

PAST: Mental Map Exercise 3

**Rationale:**
A Mental Map is an image of an environment as experienced by you. In creating a mental map it allows one to become more aware of those qualities of place that are especially pleasing or significant to you.
LIBRARIES AND THE MISSING NARRATIVE

Instructions:
Draw a map of a library that you experienced before 18 that was memorable for you.

The map might include your neighborhood or your path to and from that library. The map might include any other destinations you commonly included in your experience of using that library. The map might include details of the library itself. The map doesn’t have to be perfect, exact or even accurate. Just draw this place as you remember experiencing it—almost as if you were drawing a map for someone who’s never been to that place and wants to visit it.

When you are finished, go back to the map and annotate it with words that might give a visitor an accurate impression of how that library setting looks and feels. Add all the detail that you can. For example, label the map with words that say what you like the most or least about that setting (i.e. warm, friendly, noisy, crowded, etc.).

Then:

What you’ve just drawn is a “Mental Map”, an image of the environment as experienced by you. Now having completed a Mental Map, I will ask you to reflect on and respond to some questions. In answering, try to include the qualities of the places you are describing, especially those that may have been pleasing, disturbing, or significant for you.

1. Thinking about your map, what if anything, made this setting distinctive? Did it have features, qualities, or landmarks that were particularly memorable for you? In what way(s) were they memorable?
2. Thinking about the interior of the library you have just drawn, list the positive and negative qualities of its interior.
3. As a professional do you feel that any library settings you participated in designing or that you built contained similarities to those that appeared in your mental map? Describe any similarities or differences. If you are a designer or architect, do you think your own design work has replicated any of the elements from the libraries of your childhood?
4. Are there other significant settings in your present life that repeat elements of a past library setting?
5. Which, if any, of the elements of your past library settings would you want to replicate or reject when designing or building a library for the future? If you were to design a future library of your choosing, which elements from your map might you incorporate and why?
6. Do you have any further reflections on any connections between your image of past, present, and future libraries?
PAST: Favorite Childhood Place Visualization Exercise 4

Purpose Statement:
The purpose of this exercise is to help you, the participant, recall a favorite place from the past that may have influenced your present sense of libraries as place. This exercise will be guided. I will read a script and I will instruct you to complete this exercise only on the level comfortable to you.

Instructions:
Guided Visualization (read slowly with long pauses to allow for imagining between sentences):

Relax. Listen to your breathing. Close your eyes. Make sure you are comfortable. Breathe easily. Begin to imagine that you are resting comfortably on a carpet. Imagine that the carpet is a special carpet of your own. This is a carpet that floats and moves. Feel the carpet become magical. Let it begin to float upwards, off the ground, into the sky, higher and higher, gently, safely. Look down as you move over the tops of trees, of buildings, see everything become smaller as you float higher. Feel relaxed, peaceful. Feel happy.

Now try to remember a favorite place—perhaps a place you haven’t thought about in a long time. Some favorite place from childhood: a country or city place, an inside or outside place. Decide that you want to go there and feel your carpet slowly move you through the clouds, further… and further until you can see the paths and roads leading to that place. Float down further following above the path. Land softly in front of your favorite place. Step off your carpet and walk into your place.


Now imagine getting up. Do anything in that place that you used to do there. Now, only if you want to, have someone join you there. Say something to that person. Have them answer. Be alone again. Then, if you want to, change something in that place as if with no effort—add something, take something away, or leave it all as it is, whatever.

Now look carefully around once more. Walk back out of your place. Walk towards your carpet again. Move carefully on to it.
When you’re ready, have the carpet move again. Slowly begin to float up towards the sky. Reach out and touch a cloud. Move through it. Look down and see the buildings below again.

See the trees and cars. See this place. This room. Float slowly down. When you are ready, open your eyes.

Then: Now that you have completed the guided visualization I will ask you to answer the following questions:

1. Were you able to visualize such a place from childhood? If so, reflect on what you visualized. Take a few minutes to draw or write about this favorite place. There is no right or wrong to this exercise. Include whatever helps you recreate the quality of that place: the shapes, colors, textures, smells, objects, people, etc. Above all, reflect on the meaning of that place for you and why you chose that place to visualize.

2. Think about any ways that this past favorite environment resembles some environment in your present life. Are the feelings you experience in the present place similar to any feelings you had in your favorite place of the past?

3. If you are a designer or architect, are there environments you have designed that repeat the qualities of this favorite childhood environment? If so, in what ways?

4. Are there elements of this childhood environment which you have not incorporated in your library designs and buildings but which you would like to incorporate in the future?

5. Do you have any further reflections on the influence of this favorite childhood place upon your present and future sense of library as place?
PRESENT: Library Sociogram Exercise 5

Purpose Statement:
Libraries are shared environments. It is useful to consider how it functions in terms of social space. Typically, when we look at the floor plan of a library, we look at the functional room labels on that plan to help us decipher the division of rooms (Reference, Children’s Room, Computer Labs, Paging Area, Staff Area, Circulation, Technical Services, Public Meeting Space, etc.). It is useful to analyze the social dynamics of how stakeholders use these spaces.

Instructions:
I will ask you to draw a rough floor plan of a library you have worked to create or redesign, or in which you work, or with which you are very familiar. The plan does not have to be to scale or perfectly drawn. It need only be a plan indicating the relative size of the rooms and their relationship to one another. After completing the floor plan, I will ask you to label the rooms according to the following categories:

Individual space—space that belongs to only one person where privacy can be maintained, such as a private office or personal carrel.

Shared space—space belonging to a specific group of stakeholders (i.e. parents with children) such as the Children’s Room.

Public space—space for all the stakeholders in the community such as a reception atrium or gallery, space belonging to all those in the library.

Note: (the categories listed above may be found in Toby Israel’s text, Some Place Like Home, p.108, and are originally established by Sebba and Churchman in their study of “The Uniqueness of Home” Architecture and Behavior, Vol. 3, no. 1, (1986): 7-14.

When you are done, I will ask you to analyze the different spaces of the library floor plan you have just drawn by answering the following questions:

1. Is the library equally divided between individual, shared, and public spaces? If not, which type of space predominates? Why do you think that is?
2. Is the space in the library equally divided among stakeholders? Does one group of stakeholders (faculty, trustees, patrons, employees, etc.) have more control over the space than others? Why is this?
3. Does the division of space and control as you have described seem appropriate? What are the areas of conflict, if any? Why is there conflict in these areas?
Present: Personality and Library as Place Exercise 6

Purpose Statement:
As shared social spaces, libraries serve a wide variety of people. Too often these spaces are constructed for function without meaningful consideration of the personality types of the people who will use them. By asking you to think about the role of personality, I invite you to consider assumptions you might have that are grounded in your own personality, and that might inform your design preferences and decisions.

Instructions:
I will ask you to answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe some people are more predisposed to certain environments depending upon their personality?
2. In what ways can you imagine personality affecting a person’s experience of and relationship to the library as place? Give examples.
3. Thinking back about the libraries in your own Library Timeline, was there something about the character of any of those buildings that might have appealed to one personality type more than another?
4. As a designer or architect, are there ways in which you think your personality is reflected in any library projects with which you have been involved?
5. Do you have any further reflections between your personality and your sense of library as place?

Future: Special Objects Inventory Exercise 7

Purpose Statement:
Libraries are collections of many things—most notably of books. Often libraries incorporate sculpture, works of art, interactive displays, unique furnishings, and other notable objects. For people, certain books or objects in places where there are books, might be considered special objects of their lives.

Instructions:
Make a list of special objects in libraries you have been a part of. Then, distinguishing between the meaning and the objects, categorize them in terms of what they mean to you.
Example:
Meaning: Love of art
Objects: Art books, artworks, pottery

Meaning: Connection with many cultures
Objects: Tapestries, masks and artifacts, and furniture from other countries

Meaning:
Objects:

Meaning:
Objects:

Meaning:
Objects:

Reflections:

1. What library objects from your past relationships with libraries do you recall?
2. Do you feel that these objects and category reflect you? Why or why not?
3. If you could save only one of these special objects, which one would it be and why?
4. Are there other special interests or values you have that haven’t been reflected in library designs or programs?
5. Are there other special objects you could include in these library designs and programs to reflect you?
**Future: Taste Structure Exercise 8**

**Purpose Statement:**
Your own particular aesthetic, your taste, and style may be derived from your past experience—for example, from your ancestor’s sense of taste and style—what Herbert Gans called one’s “taste structure”.

**Instructions:**
I will ask you to answer the following questions:

1. As a designer or architect or librarian, do you see any similarities or differences between your taste culture and that of your library clients and library users? Does one represent high culture versus popular culture, for example?
2. Do you think it’s important to bridge those differences? If so, how do you see yourself doing that?
3. In developing library-building programs, are there aspects of design that you would like to bring out or develop to express taste or cultures?
4. Do you have any further reflections on the connection between your past, present and future taste structure?

**Future: Ideal Library Place Exercise 9**

**Purpose Statement:**
I join Toby Israel in her contention that a fully satisfying design is a result of the combination of aesthetic form, cultural and social as well as psychological significance. (p.116)

Places of aesthetic satisfaction bring about pleasure in beauty.
Places of social satisfaction support privacy as well as community.
Places of psychological satisfaction support self-expression, love, and belonging.
Places of shelter bring about a sense of safety and protection.

The Ideal Library Place visualization is placed as an exercise after you have gone through many earlier exercises intended to probe your remembrances of your past alongside your awareness of your present practice, and now serves to invite you to imagine a future ideal library place. This is an opportunity to learn if your ideal library place holds your articulation of your environmental inheritance and your heightened awareness of how your environmental autobiography may or may not inform your future vision of an ideal library place.
Instructions:
The following visualization exercise will be read by the researcher (me). I will read it slowly, including pauses as indicated, to allow for imagining between sentences.

Relax. Listen to your breathing. Close your eyes. Make sure you are comfortable. Breathe easily.... Begin to imagine that you are resting comfortably... Begin to imagine that you are in a field or a meadow...it is warm and it is pleasant... You are alone and you are happy...

Now imagine raising one arm and light as air being lifted into the open sky... You have begun to float, safely upward, off the ground, moving effortlessly right through to the space above the meadow or field... gently, safely, you begin to soar through the sky... Looking down you can see tree tops and the tops of buildings... you are floating above with a fantastic view and you are smiling... Feel relaxed, happy.

Now begin to recognize the landmarks below you. See a neighborhood where you would like to live. Float gently lower and see places you would like to eat, places you would like to pass through, places you would like to touch, places you would like to visit...

Float down lower and discover this environment... Float down lower still and realize you can begin to explore this place... You can walk to its limits... you can explore its boundaries... What does it smell like?.... What does it feel like?... What do you notice taking place in this environment?... Are there people there?... Are you alone?... Are there sounds that you hear?... What is it like there?

Now notice a building... Imagine that you see the entrance to a new library space you are designing, right in front of you... What does the entrance look like?... Take your time... Walk into the library space and notice... everything is completely new... What do you see?... Look closely all around... Notice the colors.... Notice the furniture... Notice the objects.... What are the textures in there? Where is the light coming from?... What is it like?...

Move on into another part of the newly designed space... Look carefully all around. Notice the colors, textures, shapes...anything that tells you that this is a special library... What do you see as you walk through the space? Notice the floors you are walking on... What is in front of you?... What is above you?...

Walk on through and all around the new library, perhaps to the area where you will spend the most time.... What do you see? Do you notice anything that has now made this
PLACE SPECIAL?... KEEP WANDERING THROUGH TO OTHER NEWLY CREATED PARTS OF THIS LIBRARY PLACE...

CONTINUE TO MOVE THROUGH THIS LIBRARY... NOTICE ALL THERE IS TO SEE... ARE THERE THINGS YOU NOW NOTICE THAT YOU HADN’T BEFORE?... ARE THERE PEOPLE OR SHAPES YOU ARE DRAWN TO?... FIND A PLACE IN THIS LIBRARY WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO LAY DOWN... GO THERE... LAY ON YOUR BACK... PLACE YOUR HANDS ATOP ONE ANOTHER AND PRESS THEM INTO YOUR HEARTSPACE ON YOUR CHEST... CLOSE YOUR EYES AS YOU LIE THERE... BEGIN TO IMAGINE THAT YOU HAVE CAPTURED IN YOUR MIND’S EYE AND IN YOUR SENSES, ALL THAT THIS LIBRARY HAS AND HOLDS... IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE Fulfilled.... IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE AT PEACE WITH LEAVING IT... IMAGINE THAT YOU HAVE DREAMT OF THIS IDEAL PLACE AND YOU CAN HEAR MY VOICE SLOWLY COUNTING... IMAGINE WHEN I FINISH SPEAKING YOU WILL BE HERE, IN THIS ROOM, AND BESIDE A PERSON WHO IS LONGING TO HEAR OF YOUR PLACE... AND WHEN YOU ARE READY, OPEN YOUR EYES....

WERE YOU ABLE TO IMAGINE AN “IDEAL PLACE” VISION FOR A LIBRARY?

IF SO… TAKE SOME TIME TO DRAW AND ARTICULATE THE PLACE YOU IMAGINED. THERE IS NO RIGHT AND NO WRONG TO THIS EXERCISE. YOUR DRAWING SKILLS DON’T MATTER. INCLUDE WHATEVER HELPS YOU RECREATE THE LOOK AND FEEL THAT YOU IMAGINED FOR YOUR IDEAL LIBRARY PLACE. DEPICT OR DESCRIBE IT AS FULLY AS YOU CAN: SHAPES, COLOR, TEXTURES, OBJECTS, PEOPLE, LIGHTING, ETC. INCLUDE THE SETTING FOR THE LIBRARY, THE EXTERIOR DESIGN, AND THE INTERIOR DESIGN.

1. OF THE MANY ASPECTS YOU MAY HAVE INCLUDED, WHICH OF THESE DO YOU CONSIDER A PRIORITY?
2. DOES YOUR IDEAL LIBRARY HOLD ANY OF YOUR OWN ENVIRONMENTAL GENEALOGY?
3. THINKING ABOUT YOUR VISION OF AN IDEAL LIBRARY PLACE, HOW WELL WOULD YOU SAY YOUR VISION ALSO SPEAKS TO:
   a. Creating an environment that provides welcome and a sense of security for others who might engage in the space?
   b. Libraries, while often aesthetic environments, also have high functional demands of the space. Does yours?
   c. Is your ideal library a place that might satisfy a human need for social contact? Is it a place where social growth has potential?
   d. Has your ideal library created a place of aesthetic pleasure for you? Could you anticipate the aesthetics satisfying others?
   e. Does your ideal library place allow for or encourage personal growth?
   f. Does it anticipate group use or development? Does the space allow for the people or groups who might inhabit it to ever make changes?
4. WERE YOU ABLE TO IMAGINE A NEWLY DESIGNED PLACE?
Appendix E

Toby Israel’s 8 Points
&
Amy Beth’s Points 9 and 10

1. Our sense of self and sense of the environment are intimately and profoundly intertwined;

2. The seeds of this connection between self and place are planted in childhood;

3. Our sense of self-place connection continues to grow and change throughout our lives;

4. That connection is shaped not only by the physical reality of our environment but by the psychological, social and cultural, and aesthetic meanings that place holds for us;

5. We can become conscious of the meanings that places hold for each of us uniquely;

6. Such consciousness can help us create places that express a fulfilling self-place bond;

7. Those in the design world who shape our physical environments have a particular responsibility to build places that help us reinforce these vital bonds;

8. Design professionals who, themselves, explore their own self-place connections can more consciously create fulfilling places for themselves and others whose lives they touch.

(Israel, p. X)
9. Design professionals in particular stand to benefit from psychological exploration of both larger and smaller scale sites in their lives as settings where intimate meaning may have also been achieved (Beth, 2017);

10. Design professionals who recognize the importance of incorporating social science research and social science research methods for exploring human factors stand to enrich their future practice and project outcomes, that in turn touches people’s lives. (Beth, 2018).
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