

# 7 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR LIBRARY SPACE



What keeps library directors up at night? According to a 2019 Library Journal survey, optimizing facilities is the number one worry. With technology evolving and human behavior changing, public libraries are reinventing themselves – moving from traditional facilities and information hubs to community anchors and innovative gathering spaces.

Facility optimization plays an important role in ensuring a library's place in social infrastructure. Offerings like formal and informal learning, technology access, workforce development and community engagement depend on layout and experience. Updating facilities tends to be overlooked, primarily because doing so requires time, effort and money. Minor modifications, however, can have a major impact on patron satisfaction.

**Following are 7 ways to optimize library space that won't cost an arm and a leg.**

## 1. CREATE A SENSE OF ARRIVAL

For most patrons, libraries offer an escape from the outside world's noise and stress. Start this wonderland experience the moment a patron walks in by taking advantage of prime real estate near the entrance. Create a "marketplace" setup with creative displays of bestsellers, new titles and program information. The wow factor should begin with your best foot forward - at the entrance.

## 2. UTILIZE EFFICIENT CLUSTERS

Design a zone scheme that strikes the right balance between areas for different ages, activities and types of materials. Modern public libraries are community hubs, so create clusters that encourage group work and collaboration while maintaining nooks for quiet study and reflection. Work with the building layout, not against it, linking spaces organically. Libraries should not be static and movement should create a visual statement.

### 3. INNOVATIVE TOUCH POINTS

Get rid of fortresses. Encourage staff to walk around and engage with patrons. Consider a combined circulation and reference desk. Maximize self-service, reduce counter size and motivate staff to move and mingle. Plan the workflow of material management so checkouts and returns are fast and easy and automate as possible.

### 4. DELVE INTO SHELVING

Consider ratios, adjacencies and specific combinations of shelving in different-sized spaces. Choose shorter shelving units that allow clear sightlines and weed collections often to open up more space. Ensure shelves are not overly cluttered and consolidate and remove extra shelving to create space for people and programs.

### 5. LEVERAGE EXISTING SPACE

Yes, storage is always in short supply but storage areas are the ideal place to start the hunt for extra usable space. Consider shared offices and workspaces and avoid devoting space to material processing by purchasing pre-processed materials instead. Also consider partnering with neighboring organizations to share storage space and minimize duplication of supplies. Specialized storage facilities ensure access to and preservation of materials while removing excess holdings from collections.

### 6. AN EYE TOWARDS INTERIORS

Invest in modular furniture that can be multi-purpose and offer privacy. Consider new types of durable flooring alternatives as well as carpet squares that can be easily replaced at minimal expense when worn.

### 7. AMBIENCE MATTERS

Use color and imagery to create ambience and curves to open up spaces. Disrupt the factory layout by avoiding straight rows of desks and shelves. Ensure good sightlines from all areas and angles to promote patron safety and prevent vandalism.

**THINKING OF OPTIMIZING YOUR FACILITY?**

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