THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY DESIGN ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
MULTIPLE LITERACY SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

To the educators who have left indelible marks on my life:

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY DESIGN ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIPLE LITERACY SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS

Anna Carello
Amy Stornaiuolo

The role of school libraries in both public and private school systems has changed dramatically over the last two decades as the Internet and ubiquity of digital devices has made the world accessible within seconds just by the tap of a finger on a touchscreen or keyboard. The purpose of the school library as a functional educational space has traditionally been one that promotes information literacy, reading for information, and reading for pleasure with paper books. In today’s ever increasingly digital world, however, well-resourced libraries are exchanging paper books and reference sets for e-books and subscriptions to online services that store information in virtual clouds rather than on bookshelves. Moreover, their coveted spaces are sometimes transformed into tactile learning spaces inspired by the recent Maker Movement.

This qualitative research study examines the functional role of the school libraries in four independent schools, an inquiry seeking to better understand how young students use libraries to develop multiple literacies—digital, informational, tactile, and printed—all of which are necessitated by the growing prevalence of electronic resources and technology in schools. How should well-resourced school libraries today, historically bound to paper collections and archives, design learning spaces and allocate resources to
support a generation of students born into the digital age? It is the intersection of these two points, students born into a world dominated by technology and traditional school libraries dominated by paper resources, that the current role and purpose of school libraries is examined.

*Keywords: independent school, early childhood, school libraries, technology, new literacies, digital, educational space and design, librarians, literacy, qualitative research, fieldnotes, interviews, case study.*
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION, SIGNIFICANCE AND RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Introduction and Background

The role of school libraries in both public and private school systems has changed dramatically over the last two decades as the Internet and ubiquity of digital devices means that the world is accessible within seconds just by the tap of a finger on a touchscreen or keyboard. The purpose of the school library as a functional educational space has traditionally been one that promotes information literacy, reading for information, and reading for pleasure with paper books. In today’s ever increasingly digital world, however, well-resourced libraries are exchanging paper books and reference sets for e-books and subscriptions to online services that store information in virtual clouds rather than on bookshelves. Not only is this information available wirelessly and from virtually anywhere, literally, but it also allows for educators to think about learning and even research in creative, non-traditional spaces. This transformation of space and ease in which students can access information today calls into question the role of school libraries for technology savvy students; today’s students are “digital natives that need to learn in ways that are meaningful to them” and libraries are “potentially well placed to take advantage of new technologies in order to extend their activities and support reading and learning needs of these digital natives” (Rankin, 2012, p. 163). How many school libraries today, historically bound to paper collections and archives, are equipped with learning spaces and resources that reflect the burgeoning
generation of students born into the digital age? It is the intersection of these two points—students born into worlds dominated by technology, and school libraries dominated by paper resources—that the current role and purpose of many of school libraries should be reimagined.

School libraries as learning spaces are essential to student learning, and a significant amount of student learning today is happening with the use of digital tools and resources. The fact that so many digital natives are often learning with paperless devices highlights a need for educators to consider what the future of library spaces are and could be for the next generation. A poignant illustration of one school’s bold redesign of a library space enlivened the front page of the *Boston Globe* in 2009 with the headline, “Welcome to the library. Say goodbye to the books: Cushing Academy embraces a digital future.” The featured story chronicled the headmaster of a prominent New England school’s first steps in renegotiating the functionality of the school’s library space. The well-resourced private school replaced cumbersome shelving stocked with over 20,000 books with expansive open areas and ergonomically designed furniture that allowed students more space to collaborate. While not all 20,000 books were removed from the collection, a considerable percentage was. Librarians worked with students to develop informational skills on digital eBooks and laptop computers or tablets. A state of the art coffee and cappuccino machine was even added to the space in order to promote a sophisticated lounge atmosphere for high school students.

Abel’s (2009) story in the *Boston Globe* caused the Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) to issue a reactive letter of caution to other schools against Cushing
Academy’s intrepid redesign. The decision may not have been too bold actually; the ecological vibrancy of libraries as educational spaces in many independent schools began to shift away from static quiet places for studying, and into dynamic environments that reflected engaged school community members most especially of whom were students. Undoubtedly, the story in the *Boston Globe* (Abel, 2009) made school leaders across the country stop to think about the school library spaces that they maintained as well. On the other side of the debate were organizations like the MLA, American Library Association (ALA), and even the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA), who used empirical evidence and decades of research on the benefits of school libraries to argue that the digital age should not incite a paper book revolution as it seemingly did at Cushing Academy, but rather it should inspire blended learning environments that keeps the best of both “old” and “new” worlds.

**Statement of the Problem**

The replacement of paper books with electronic resources at Cushing Academy is not the only case study example of a bold, reimagined school library space. In fact, changes to the physical space of other school libraries can be seen in the recent educational trend called “maker-spaces.” The Maker Movement:

“...consists of a growing culture of hands-on making, creating, designing, and innovating... and a hallmark of the movement is its ‘do-it-yourself (or do-it-with-others)’ mindset that brings together individuals around a range of activities, including textile craft, robotics, electronics, digital fabrication, mechanical repair” or any other type of creative construction (Peppler & Bender, p. 23).
The Maker Movement also has deep roots in the STEM initiatives supported by President Obama through his call for students to “see the promise of being the makers of things, and not just the consumers of things” (Obama, 2009). The President, while still a Senator from Illinois, also once called libraries the “magic threshold” of a school, indicating that the library space was a gateway to knowledge and creativity unique from traditional classroom spaces (Obama, 2005). Such powerful and inspiring words from the country’s leader may give insight into why a number of public and private schools reconsidered the use and the general purpose of their library spaces, especially if such libraries were uncompelling spaces or rarely used. Some school systems financially strapped by budget cuts and few resources are closing the large and expensive spaces that libraries occupy because they do not have the money to maintain the collection, nor do they have money to hire library staff. Based on this history, it does seem logical that the large physical and open space of a school library could magically become the new milieu for students to spread out, collaborate, create, and build if the space was previously unused. These new, non-traditional uses of school libraries engendered by the Maker Movement and the digital age mean then that the school library today is a dynamic learning environment that supports multiple literacies: tactile literacy, informational literacy, digital literacy, and of course printed literacy.

In contrast to Cushing Academy’s bold move to jettison the abundant resources of its private school library and to adopt digital devices instead are experiences that I have personally experienced in the public education sphere. As a product of public school education growing up and two different states and five different schools, the range of
public school library services that I had access to were quite broad. I lived in middle class suburbs that typically had *enough* resources; that is to say that I had the option to check out books that seemed to be in good condition and in my mind served the purpose of research or pleasure reading. However, not every student in public education has the same privilege that I did growing up. I am a product of public education, I have teaching experience in a charter school and in independent schools, and I have had leadership opportunities in the private, public, and federal domains. The problem I focus on in this dissertation is how different school libraries across these domains are, and why they are so diverse.

Two profound professional experiences in public education and on a research trip for the Department of the Interior and University of Pennsylvania helps to frame this problem of disparity between school library resources and students’ access to quality information. The first experience was my yearlong work at the School District of Philadelphia’s Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. As a steward of the grant and employee nestled under the Office of Talent and Educator Effectiveness, my daily work involved looking at student assessment data, teacher evaluation data, and also frequenting schools to observe teachers alongside principals in order to build their observation and feedback skills within *Danielson Framework for Teaching* model (2013), the school’s rubric for evaluating teacher effectiveness and metric when it came time to determining a teacher’s overall effectiveness numerical score. Many of the schools I visited in Philadelphia had closed their school libraries completely. Some had repurposed the rooms into meeting rooms or student work spaces, but very few libraries were open and functioning. I came
to learn through my work and conversations that school libraries were not prioritized for many principals faced with constricted budgets and growing needs for more teachers or support staff. School libraries also cost a significant amount of a principal’s budget to maintain with quality and accurate books and resources, not to mention a librarian to staff the space. While the impact of closing a school library to me at that time was more of a personal sadness, my later work researching for a pilot study on graduation rates brought the role out of my periphery and more into the center line of my focus.

During my tenure at the District working on the RTTT grant, I also began pilot study research to understand how African American male seniors interpreted their learning journey towards an on-time graduation, specifically probing into how dynamics of the school culture they attended influenced their experiences and cultivated what the District called, “academic tenacity.” According to the District, academic tenacity referred to specific non-cognitive factors believed to affect student achievement including motivation, resilience, self-regulation, and grit. Academic tenacity also relates to students’ ability to work hard and stay focused on their goals (Engelman, Kowalski, & Wolford, 2014, p. 4). The term had particular significance to District leaders whose logic was that if district leaders and principals focused on cultivating academic tenacity in students at-risk of graduating on time, then the graduation rates would increase. The young men included in my interview were scheduled to graduate on time, and attended the high school with the highest graduation rate in the District. My task was to research what their high school was doing to cultivate academic tenacity so that it could then be potentially replicated in other schools. While my primary finding was that school
members like teachers and coaches helped the young men cultivate academic tenacity, a small but important data point came up in our individual interviews: libraries. Each of the young men I interviewed mentioned going to the public library or the school library to check out books, books that served as windows into worlds outside of their local neighborhoods and community and beyond the scope of imagination presented to them within the confines of the school classroom. It was the combination of this detail in my data with the experience of seeing so many school libraries closed in Philadelphia that first led me to wonder about the power and potential of school libraries in shaping children’s lives.

Not long after the pilot study research did a second experience at Pine Ridge Reservation help me narrow my thinking about the role of school libraries in today’s time even more. Pine Ridge is the Native American reservation of the Oglala Lakota Sioux Nation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. It encompasses 7.2 million acres and is home to 46,855 natives (Bureau of Indian Affairs website, 2017). Statistically, 97% of the population at Pine Ridge lives below the federal poverty line making the county the poorest in the United States. The unemployment rate on the reservation fluctuates between 85% and 95% with the median household income being a reported $2,600; the infant mortality rate is the highest in North America and 300% times higher than the average compared to the rest of the United States; the rate of diabetes and tuberculosis is 800% times higher than the national average; and the youth suicide rate is 150% higher than the nation average (American Indian Humanitarian Foundation website, 2016). The research trip to Pine Ridge was a part of a collaborative effort between the University of
Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs within the United States Department of Interior to understand the systems, environments and politics serving native American students. The dropout rates for Native American students is over 70% and few in the field of education realize that Native American students have consistently performed lower on achievement tests than their African American and Hispanic peers, creating an achievement gap within the traditional achievement gap between African American and Latino students and their white peers (American Indian Humanitarian Foundation website, 2016). It was on this trip that I toured schools and took note of their school libraries. One library in particular was in complete disrepair, decorated with disturbingly outdated posters and maps, and with scant collection of books that were arranged in a seemingly haphazard matrix on rusty book shelves. I could not fathom how such a small unkempt space, small collection, and outdated resources served the needs of children at the school. Hardly did the library harken inspiration, curiosity, or creativity, but rather reminded me of a storeroom closet dusty from being unused.

The experience in Philadelphia and at Pine Ridge left me both angry and curious as an educator and as a lover of books. The combination of the experiences led me to wonder what literature in the field had to say on the topic of school libraries as critical spaces for students to engage with and develop literacy skills. The experiences were also in sharp contrast to the experience I had as teacher and administrator at independent schools. It was these two experiences coupled with my experience in independent schools that led me to want better understand the role that school libraries could play in a
student’s success not only as a reader, but as a member of our society as well. I wondered if well-resourced independent schools were utilizing their library spaces and abundant budgets to make the greatest impact on student learning possible. I also wondered what made a quality school library program, and if under resourced schools could build effective programs even without comfortable budgets if I identified important free or inexpensive phenomena happening in well-resourced school libraries too.

Libraries today are changing. My experiences tell me that they are either disappearing, neglected, or transforming into places where digital devices and hands-on learning are more central than browsing for books. How students interact with library spaces to develop literacy skills is an important area of study in order for schools to develop global citizens of the future, especially when I consider my own site of practice.

I work at a well-resourced independent school in wealth ward of Northwest Washington, D.C. Our school serves a very unique population of students and makes us unique in the area and also in comparison to other independent schools in the United States as well. Our focus is on the early childhood and early elementary years for students in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade. A few very percentage of students that we serve are fully fluent and literate readers before the leave our classrooms. This is not because they are not capable students or because they are not being taught, but rather developmentally their reading skill development is still the emerging phase. What is the purpose of a school library then for students who cannot yet read?
Significance of this Study

There is most certainly a despairingly obvious range of school library programs accessible to students in the milieus of public and private education. This research study seeks to better understand what well-resourced school libraries are doing to develop literacy skills for students in order to in potentially inform the field with actions and programs that can replicated in any context. While there is no shortage in literature that proves the importance of school libraries to the literacy achievement of students, there are two primary constituent groups left out of the current research on literacy achievement and school libraries: independent schools and young children in early childhood grades. This frames an interesting context for an inquiry based on understanding how young students use library spaces to develop multiple literacies—digital, informational, tactile, and printed—all of which are necessitated by the burgeoning of electronic resources and technology. If one of the primary purposes of a library space in schools today is to support the development of multiple literacies in students, then how libraries support students who are not yet developmentally literate is also a critical point of inquiry for educational researchers and leaders as well.

A Definition of Multiple Literacies

As library have changed, so has the definition of what it means to be a literate person in today’s time. However, these two changes have not always happened in concert with one another. I have defined multiple literacies as a student’s ability to make meaning of their world through digital, informational, tactile, and printed sources of information. This definition of multiple literacies is inspired by the seminal work of the
New London Group (NLG) (1996) to define and describe multiliteracies. NLG researched and evaluated how technology changes and globalization were affecting education and defined multiliteracies as a pedagogical approached that “aims to make classroom teaching inclusive of cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological diversity” (NLG, 1996). Building on this definition, and my slight shift in wording gives room to specifically address literacy skills relevant to early childhood development.

Children in the early childhood and early elementary grades read the world through environmental text, images, symbols and shapes, colors, and even facial cues and body language. Concepts of print are not developed until the later early childhood years and beginning middle childhood years. Yet children are still able to navigate the world around them without being able to read, and so thus cultivate multiple literacy skills before and during multiliteracy skill development as well.

Discussions on how and why society should produce literate students is a central discussion in educational philosophy and theory, too, as many scholars and theorists posit that the goal of schooling is to produce students who are capable of succeeding in life beyond school. Defining literacy as just the ability to read and write falls short in a time when so much more is required of students in order to be successful beyond school. My research seeks to define and describe multiple literacies even further and in the specific context of school libraries serving early childhood and early elementary students. I explore how students develop multiple literacy skills in the school library space that go beyond the traditional scope of the term as simply reading and writing skills.

Researching how students make meaning from the printed sources of information alone
within a school library would not have captured how students in the digital age truly make sense of information. My research questions explore the intersection of traditional literacy skills with these new multiple literacy skills required to produce literate students equipped with the skills to thrive beyond school and in the 21st century and in school libraries. My aim is to develop a better understanding of multiple literacy skill development in the school libraries to inform my own practice and the field, and also to determine what activities and characteristics to cultivate multiple literacy skills can be replicated in school libraries regardless of their setting.

Research Questions

The intention of this study was to contribute to the field of literature examining the power and influence quality have on multiple literacy development in children. I approached my inquiry with qualitative study of four independent elementary schools in Massachusetts. The questions guiding my inquiry are:

1. How are four well-resourced independent school libraries designing learning spaces to support the development of multiple literacies in students of early childhood grades?
2. How do teachers and students engage with the library space in order to cultivate multiple literacies?
3. How does technology impact the role of school librarians and the function of the library?
4. How do school leaders support the school library?
As library spaces take on new roles and serve new purposes for students today, new questions emerge that challenge the traditional identity of these spaces, especially for the young children. Everall (2012) notes that while this “debate over the direction of library services is ongoing, children’s and school librarians must deal with ‘what is’ now and be able to respond proactively, innovatively and imaginatively to the many challenges that they are facing” (Rankin & Brock, 2012, p. xvi). For these reasons, an inquiry into how the pre-literate and early childhood students interact with library spaces to develop multiple literacies can potentially inform school leaders and community stakeholders in how best to support student learning into the 22nd century.
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review consists of four main sections. In the first section I explain Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory and apply it to the context of this study in order to build a conceptual framework for my research. I provide a visual example of how Bronfenbrenner’s theory frames this research around early childhood students and the various factors within a school library that influence their development of multiple literacy skills. The second section reviews literature and decades of scholarly research determining the important influence libraries as an environmental system within the school have on students. The third section explores the social theories of early childhood development through the work of theorists Bruner (1957) Bandura (1971) and Malaguzzi (1984). I then connect Malaguzzi’s study of young school children in diverse environmental settings and delve into literature exploring design theory in educational contexts. Finally, I look through lens of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory with specific review of literature explaining how the design of the environment impacts the social and cognitive development of children in the early and middle childhood stages of growth.

Conceptual Framework

This study takes an ecological approach to understanding how young learners interact with library spaces innovatively designed to develop multiple literacies engendered by the digital age. An ecological approach of inquiry aims to discover how the behavior and development of children are “influenced by the social systems around
them,” and is an approach adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 1989) social ecological perspective on how children are influenced by the settings in which they work (Rankin & Brock, 2015, p. 2). Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) model puts children at the center of a complex system of environmental factors and theoretically examines the impact of each factor on the child’s cognitive, social, and psychological development. This perspective has guided the design of my study as I inquire into the relationship between students at a developmental age when they are learning literacy skills for the first time and how they are impacted by the school library environment. For the purposes of this study, students in the early childhood and early elementary grades who are not yet fluent readers are my central focus within the system of the school library, and I examine how the physical and aesthetic elements of the space, teachers, school leaders, and other school community members influence the students’ multiple literacy skill development. Figure 1 is a conceptual representation of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory applied to this study.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Model**

![Conceptual Framework Model](image-url)
Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological approach to understanding this transactional relationship between students and their environments is unique and differs from other social behaviorists in that it holds that both students and the environment in which they learn are and should be dynamic; rather than a one directional relationship in which the environment remains unchanged while the students change through the social learning process, Bronfenbrenner (1979) instead describes the relationship between student and environment as mutually beneficial and evolving in relation to one another. I will elaborate and describe more about social learning theory and young children in the subsequent section. However, first I will review literature describing how influential the system of the school library can be on the academic achievement of students. Then I will weave in more social learning theory as well as design theory to give a fuller picture of how the student at the center of this conceptual framework is influenced by its environment.

**School Library Programs and Student Achievement**

Decades of work by Keith Curry Lance, Ph. D. (1992, 1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2003, 2011, 2012), in the field of public school library programs and their impact on the improved reading achievement scores of students has been the foundation for school library reform not only in the United States, but around the world as well. Lance’s longitudinal studies span both decades and states. Lance’s work has consistently found a correlation between school library programs and improved reading scores for students on standardized tests in multiple contexts.
Lance’s (1994) first study published in the *School Library Media Quarterly* journal is the seminal work of the field. The study focused on public school libraries in Colorado and provided quantitative evidence proving that school library programs have a positive influence on student achievement in reading. The extensive study included an analysis of student test scores and school library data statistics for 221 Colorado state public schools, 134 (60%) of which were elementary schools. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Test of Achievement and Proficiency (TAPS) test scores were used as the indicators of achievement of the school overall and a multiple regression analysis was used to exclude variables like community setting (i.e. urban, rural, suburban), race, and participation rates in subsidized lunch programs as possible factors influencing the findings. Lance’s (1994) Colorado study inspired commissioned studies in 20 other states, nine of which Lance is a key author. The findings of these commissioned studies that inform my conceptual framework include:

- In Alaska, students who receive frequent library and information literacy instruction from librarian practitioners also have higher overall standardized test scores (Lance, Hamilton-Pennell, & Rodney, 2000)
- In Colorado, elementary students who had teachers that frequently collaborated with librarian practitioners scored 21% higher on reading tests than those students who had less collaborative teachers and librarians (Lance, et. al., 1993; 2000)
- In Indiana, “more enriching” library environments are those that include certified library media specialists, teachers willing to collaborate,
supportive administrators, and current resources and technology (Callison, 2004)

- In Michigan, elementary schools with the highest reading scores on the state standardized assessment also had more frequent student visits to the school’s library when compared to lower performing schools (Rodney, Lance, and Hamilton-Pennell, 2003)

- In Minnesota, elementary school student achievement scores were related to increases in school library reading program spending (Baxter & Smalley, 2003)

- In New Mexico, overall achievement scores for students on state standardized tests rose in correlation to the rise of school library programs (Rodney, Lance, Hamilton-Pennell, 2002).

- In Ohio, a survey of 13,123 students in grades 3-12 found that 99.4% self-assessed to perceive that their school library program benefitted their learning (Todd & Kuhlthua, 2004).

- In Wisconsin, what students most appreciated about their library practitioners was that they taught information and technology skills not covered in classroom instruction (Smith, 2006).

- In an international report by the Ontario Library Association, the presence of a school library program for students in grades three through six who experience collaborative instruction by both teachers and librarians was the strongest predictor of reading enjoyment. Furthermore, reading
enjoyment was positively correlated to overall student achievement (Klinger, 2006).

These studies reveal connections between school library programs and positive school achievement scores overall, and describe characteristics that are attributed to quality school library programs. Improved perceptions of reading enjoyment and reading scores on state standardized tests are also evidence of how important school library programs can be for young students. In a meta-analysis by Lance and Russell (2004), the authors review another range of academic studies that were conducted after Lance’s (1994) formative study in Colorado. In this report, the authors (2004) note that even though there is compelling evidence that school libraries improve student achievement and reading scores, educators have too rarely utilized the research to inform their practice (Lance & Russell, 2004, p. 15).

Lance and Hofschire (2013) call educators to begin using research to inform current school library practice as the addition of computers, Internet, eReaders, and well as tablet or laptop computers make an indelible mark on the school library landscape as we know it today. The authors (2013) assert that in order for research to go further in the field, the new role of the school library and librarians will have to be defined. That new measurements of school library outputs and outcomes will also have to be determined, and so an inquiry into this topic is very much needed to benefit the field. The synthesis of the multitude of research linking school library programs and student achievement, successful school libraries are positively impacted by the collaborations between teachers, librarians, students, and the resources within the space. These research studies
inform my research by linking describing what features and aspects of library spaces impact student learning outcomes positively. Although the research studies are conducted in the public school setting, the features of the library spaces in these studies are generalizable to the library spaces of elementary independent schools.

Lance et al.’s (2000) study in Alaska that found that students who had access to informational literacy instruction also had higher reading achievement scores was also a seminal piece exploring librarian agency. An examination of Alaskan librarians in this study showed that librarians in schools that saw improved reading scores also focused on developing direct relationships with students and staff members (Lance, Hamilton-Pennell, & Rodney, 2000). In a brochure created by the authors (2000) of the study based on the findings of their research, librarians who were agents of a successful reading culture characteristically kept the library open longer hours than the school day, proactively provided resources to teachers, planned with teachers, delivered library and informational literacy instruction to students, promoted frequent visits to the library beyond time designated by teachers for student projects, and finally, were able to build strong relationships with the local public library system as well (Lance, Hamilton-Pennell, & Rodney, 2000).

**Social Learning Theory in Early Childhood Contexts**

Social learning theory from the renowned work of Bruner (1957), Bandura (1971), and Malaguzzi (1984), who is most well-known as the founding father of the Reggio Approach to teaching early childhood, also informs my inquiry. Bruner (1957)
Bandura’s (1971) theories help explain how children engaging in school library spaces socially in order to learn, while Malaguzzi’s (1984) work builds on these theories to consider the role of physical space in that learning process as well. At the end of this section I also review a number of studies that connect aspects of physical space that positively influence student learning outcomes.

Bruner’s (1957a, 1957b) constructivist perspective within social learning theory contends that young children learn through experience. How children then construct that experience into learning new knowledge varies by their developmental age; however, they learn to develop new knowledge beyond the information they are given by a teacher, once they are able to take that information and interact with it (Bruner, 1957a). Bruner (1960) developed the theory that the process in which children learn happens in three different stages of childhood: the “enactive stage” for newborns to one year old, the “iconic stage” for children between one year and six years of age, and the last “symbolic stage” of learning which happens at the age of seven and onwards; Bruner’s (1960) work suggests that learning is a developmental process that begins very early in a person’s life, and that learning is shaped in new ways as children develop and construct new knowledge of the world around them. These developmental stages hallmark elementary education: traditionally the last school year of early childhood education in America is considered to be third grade, a grade level in which typically developing children are eight years old. Bandura’s (1971) notion of learning as a social phenomenon also posits that students have an on-going reciprocal and imitative experience with both people and their environments throughout the learning process (Bandura, 1971). Similar to Bruner,
Bandura’s social learning theory hypothesizes the critical importance of interactive experiences between students and a facilitator. This facilitator, however, can be a teacher or can be the environment in which the student is placed. This last insight connects my framework to one of early childhood education’s most renowned theorists, Loris Malaguzzi.

It is impossible to consider the role of the classroom environment in early childhood learning without considering the contributions of Malaguzzi. Hall, Horgan, Ridgway, Murphy, Cunneen, and Cunnigham (2010) note that “for many in the field of early childhood education Reggio Emilia is synonymous with ideal practice” despite the fact that as its founder, Malaguzzi, wrote little about his philosophy of childhood education (p. 1). Malaguzzi’s contributions to the field of social learning theory is evident in the popularity of and reverence for a methodology known as the Reggio Approach. The history behind his approach is also interesting to consider, especially as I view my research questions through a design-oriented lens: Malaguzzi actually developed his methodology in Reggio Emilia, Italy, following World War II. He became distraught over the sight of dilapidated buildings and the generally dreary scenery haunting the Italian countryside after the War (Murphy, et al., 2010). He guided students to recreate more vibrant and dynamic learning spaces, a place where they could constructed their own “beautiful” world in which to learn despite living in an un-beautiful world (Murphy, et al., 2010). Malaguzzi believed that the learning process for children was interrupted by spaces that they did not have an active role in constructing themselves, and moreover that the learning process was in fact threatened by dilapidated
surroundings and a teacher facilitating most of the instruction and construction of the space (Murphy, et al., 2010). Malaguzzi famously claimed that there were in actuality, three teachers in each classroom: first students, then the teacher, and thirdly, the classroom. This concept is perpetuated in the early childhood education community, and the physical space of the early childhood classroom is very often referred to as “the third teacher” in parlance amongst teachers and school members. For these reasons, classrooms that embrace the Reggio Approach look in appearance quite different from traditional early childhood classrooms; the developmental needs and interests of young children are scrutinized and then meaningfully represented in a Reggio classroom.

The Reggio Approach is a pure form of authentic constructivism for children in which they have complete control of the learning environment from the decoration of the space together to the topics of interest that they choose to study. Learning with the Reggio Approach is a social process between students and teachers, but it is also an equally valuable interaction between students and their classroom spaces as well. In many schools, the library is considered the largest classroom—a space where children go to learn and cultivate new knowledge. In this way, Malaguzzi’s constructivist theory on education is applicable to library spaces as well. School libraries should be considered a classroom where children engage in and create an environment in order to learn and develop new knowledge.

**Design Theory in Educational Contexts**

Does literature support the notion that the classroom environment affects student learning? A number of studies reveal that certain aspects in educational spaces have a
positive impact on student learning and cognition. Ott’s (1973) study on the increased levels of serotonin production in students exposed to natural light in schools supports the notion that environment does indeed have an impact on student learning as this neurotransmitter is essential to sustained attention levels in all humans, but most especially developing children. Moreover, Zentall’s (1983) study revealed that classrooms with novelties, color, soothing noises and sounds, as well as natural light all positively impacted student attention compared to classrooms without these features (Zentall, 1983). Architects in school planning and design have taken cues from these research studies, building buildings that enhance the learning process for students based on empirical evidence proving that design matters in learning.

A quantitative study by Tanner (2008) also highlights the important relationship between educational spaces and learning, a study that professional architects and educators should consider. Tanner (2008) found that “the school’s physical environment, defined as various classifications of design items, influences student outcomes, especially behavior and achievement” (p. 383). The study included 71 rural and suburban elementary schools in Georgia and measured how the learning outcomes of 10,650 fifth grade students were impacted by three aspects of the schools’ design items: movement and circulation around furniture arrangements and structures, day lighting, and views. Data using a ten-point Likert scale was collected and then a reduced regression analysis was run to define the effect of the school’s physical environment on students’ outcomes based on results from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), a standardized assessment. The study found that the ability to move and circulate in non-crowded spaces, the
prevalence of natural day lighting, and views that extended to at least 50 feet outside classroom windows, indicated significant effects on reading comprehension, reading vocabulary, language arts, mathematics, and science” test scores (Tanner, 2008, p. 392). The author’s earlier research with colleagues at the University of Georgia’s School Design and Planning Laboratory also revealed that “color, light, acoustics, movement, circulation, views, design, scale, location, learning neighborhoods, and outdoor learning” have been consistently correlated to student achievement in recent years (Tanner & Lackney, 2006).

Furthermore, observations by Strong-Wilson and Ellis (2008) point to how important educational design is for students, but most especially young children. The authors concluded that the configuration of classroom spaces were important in order to successfully encourage the movement of students and to facilitate student interaction. They further note that one of the most “important and desirable human activities for young children is interaction with others” and therefore a key aspect of the learning process for children is actually the physical space. How children interact with one another, a teacher, and the arrangement of their classroom environment has an effect on their learning experience, and how young children perceive and use space in order to create meaning is an essential component to the learning process (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2009).

In addition to the arrangement of a space, what a child can see in that space is also important to their learning. Tarr (2004) critically examined the physical walls of first grade classrooms considering four perspectives: how walls added to the reading the
environment, how walls silenced or gave voice to students, how walls displayed learning, and the overall aesthetics of walls within classrooms. She notes that in one “visually busy” classroom in particular, the walls were either cluttered with decorative and colorful scalloped borders, or they were dominated by large bulletin boards covered with word walls, classroom rules, letters, numbers, shapes and colors. Some classrooms also had a number of cartoon characters decorating the walls and shiny, swinging objects hanging from the ceiling. Her observations provoked inquiry into the observable concentration levels of students in these visually busy classrooms in comparison to students in less visually classrooms. Her observations concluded with the clear recommendation that early childhood teachers pay close attention the aesthetics of their classroom walls to determine whether they actually contribute to learning “or whether they ultimately silence children in the learning process” (Tarr, 2004, p. 91).

Tarr’s (2004) observations resonated with me as I considered the more than 17,000 books that my own school library currently has shelved on tightly packed bookshelves. Moreover, my school library has bookshelves lining its walls, perpetuating a sense of abundance to me as an adult. After reading so many research studies, however, I have begun to wonder how the cacophony of books crammed into shelves and displayed by spine rather than cover could potentially appear to a young learner. Moreover, I am curious as to why students I observe in my library seem to gravitate more towards the desktop computers that sit idle on a countertop are more entertaining than the books that can teach them so much. It is precisely these observations of my own library, coupled the bodies of literature reviewed here, that I approach my research with a lens
that looks specifically at the design of a space intended to engage young children born into the digital age.

Physical Space and Multiple Literacy Skill Development. In order for children, young children especially, to learn and to make sense of the world around them, they must feel a sense of safety. Mariale Hardiman, a scholar in the field of educational neuroscience, makes explicit the connection between effective learning experiences, emotion, and the physical environment. Learning at the neuronal level happens in the center most region of the brain known as the limbic system. This system is actually comprised of “a collection of structures that play an important role in emotional process, learning and memory” (Hardiman, 2012, p. 21). The interconnection between learning and emotions is therefore inextricable and is an important connection to understand for the purposes of this study. Hardiman (2012) suggests positive emotional environments are the optimal learning conditions for students to attend to tasks. She also suggests that “setting the emotional climate for learning may be the most important task a teacher embarks on each day” as how a child’s brain processes negative and positive emotions in the limbic directly influences his or her “capacity to attend to, perceive, and receive information” (Hardiman, 2012, p. 35). Elements in the physical environment also have an impact on a student’s attention and interaction with learning activities, with Malaguzzi (1984) arguing that children need to interact with their physical environments socially in order to be able to make meaning of their world. Hardiman’s (2012) research explores how novelty in the classroom through design elements, natural lighting, seating arrangements, scents and patterns of organization allows the developing brain to engage
with the space in more “meaningful and enticing” ways (Hardiman, 2012, p. 61). Her work explains how novelty in a school space can trigger the limbic system’s orienting and alerting structures, and warns of the cognitive stunt called habituation if what was once novel becomes rote and familiar. She summarizes research from Ariga and Lleras (2011) in the cognitive sciences to explain:

The new poster a teacher puts on the wall, for example, may interest students at first, but if it remains there for a lengthy period of time, it becomes like wallpaper, blending into the background of the environment and even cluttering the space rather than enhancing it. Unchanging visual environments create habituation…If we consider the importance of novelty to capturing students’ attention, it is worth taking the time to make even simple changes that help engage students (Hardiman, 2012, p. 61).

Hardiman’s (2012) thoughtful work connecting cognitive neuroscience research with classroom practice is relevant to this research when considering how the library design impact students’ development of multiple literacy skills. Her field of study also brings together the theoretical writing with the empirical research explored in this literature review. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and other theorized that young students learn best socially and when they have direct engagement with their environments and empirical research reveals that the school library environment can potential impact student achievement in positive ways. Hardiman’s (2012) work then helps explain why and how school library environments impact students’ learning of multiple literacy skills with a point of view that highlights how important students feeling safe in a space is, and how important it is for students to engage in the space personally.

The traditional concept of a school library denotes space where students go to check out books and to research. Today’s technology on the other hand allows for students to use school libraries in different ways, and to develop literacies not just in
print, but digital, informational, and tactile literacy skills as well. Social learning theorists posit that learning especially for young children is interactive, involves others including the physical environment, and develops through play and tactile activities. Scholars in the field of library science prove that libraries are unique and special places within school communities that have a positive impact on school culture, and the importance of feeling safe and engaged in a physical space is proven through the sciences. These frameworks provide a structure to understand this study as it relates to pre-literate and emergent readers in four independent schools.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY  
Research Context and Setting

Framing my inquiry in the context of independent schools and early childhood students helps inform school leaders of an important number of schools and students in the United States. Independent schools are privately funded school entities accredited by a managing organization known as the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). In 2014, there were 1,098 accredited independent boarding and day schools enrolling 556,643 students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12 (NAIS, 2015).

Independent schools are a different environment from public schools, even distinguishable from private schools as well. In a research article sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Alt and Peter (2002) explain that independent schools are characteristically governed by an elected board of trustees, and are funded through nonpublic sources: primarily through tuition, donor contributions, and endowments. This is in contrast to public schools that are most typically governed by elected board members, and are funded through local, state, and even national budgets (Alt & Peter, 2002). The absence of literature on independent schools and elementary libraries forces the foundation of my work to be rooted in the theoretical context of public schools. Selecting independent school to research, however, has taken some careful consideration.

Independent schools have their own unique culture, and while the public school studies that have thus far informed my research are absolutely generalizable, there is a tacit expectation in independent schools that research applied to their practice are reflective of the school demographic data of independent schools. Curiously, the topic of
school library spaces in the independent school setting has not yet been researched. Selecting school libraries to study in Washington, D.C., the city in which I work, would challenge the validity of my research; independent schools are incredibly competitive in the District. Since this is a practitioner inquiry seeking to better understand and inform the work I do professionally, I felt the need to leave the greater Washington, D.C. area in order to preserve and sustain the cordial relationships that my school has with other areas schools marketing to the same families. Thus, I worked with the Head of School from my current site of practice to identify four independent schools in suburbs outside of the Boston area that had similar enrollment profiles and school communities in order to pursue my research.

My overall goal for this study is to have a list of characteristics of compelling library spaces that include both elements of design, but literacy connections between student, librarians, and teachers as well. Libraries, in a phenomenon that I also hope to better understand through this study, hold an incredible amount of emotionally charged memories for people. This made me even more eager to begin the research so that I could better understand what makes library spaces so compelling for people.

**Research Design and Methodology**

I used a matrix to outline the overall design of a research study, a strategy advocated by Maxwell (2013), to show how each research question is connected to a study’s conceptual framework (see Appendix A). This matrix also outlines the components of this research study and it has been an incredibly helpful tool in thinking
through not only the overall design of the study, but the sequence of my methods as well. This study focuses on four independent schools, their librarians, school leaders, and teachers. I captured a generalizable set of data on independent school libraries similar to my site of practice, while also offering me the ability to delve deeper to ask questions about relationships between school community members and to make observational notes that helped to investigate each school more closely. I relied heavily on Maxwell (2013), and Miles et al. (2014) to guide the overall design of my study, using their work to purposefully select four independent schools as research sites.

**Site Selection.** Since this is true practitioner inquiry that will inform my own professional work, I wanted to find schools to study that were similar to my own. I purposefully selected four independent schools in New England that matched my current site of practice based on the families and students they serve, school culture, and school values to build my suitable sampling frame. I selected independents schools in the Boston area because it is a city to which I could draw the closest parallels to Washington, D.C. More specifically, Boston is also on the east-coast, is considered a small big-city, boasts a number of colleges and universities within the city, and also has a large ratio of commuters into the city for work. I was also guided in selecting Boston as a location because the city is easy for me to access via train or plane. Maxwell (2013), who describes purposeful selection as deliberately selecting sites in order “to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” and I did my best to consider this when selecting the school sites and city (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). Maxwell also (2013) mentions that one
The goal of purposeful selection is to “deliberately select [sites] that are critical for testing the theories that you began the study with, or that you have subsequently developed” (p. 98), and so I shared my conceptual framework and the findings of a number of influential studies (Lance & Hofschire, 2012; Lance & Hofschire, 2011; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010; Lance, 1993) with my current Head of School so that she could help make thoughtful site recommendations, too.

I also developed a list of criteria that each school library had to meet in order to be selected. I created the list based on a synthesis of findings from quantitative studies linking public school library programs with higher student reading scores, most notably studies from Lance & Hofschire (2012), Lance & Hofschire (2011), Francis, Lance, & Lietzau (2010), Lance (2000, 1993). Without evidence from private school library systems in the current body of literature, the characteristics of effective public school libraries is a valid first step in creating criteria for this study. Hence, each of the selected school sites for my research shows evidence of:

1. School librarians who teach information literacy skills to students;
2. Certified (or equivalent) librarians qualified for the position;
3. Collaboration between school librarians and classroom teachers;
4. Extended library hours that are available and open to all school community stakeholders;
5. Having current collections that are weeded on a frequency consistent with AASL or ALA’s best practices in library science;

6. Having collections that include a broad range of resources that address various reading levels, and that include reference materials, fiction and non-fiction texts, as well as access to digital databases;

7. Computer systems or digital technology available for students to use;

8. Frequent visits from students;

9. Frequent visits from classroom teachers;

10. Financial resources that allow for the addition of new resources and technologies that keep the collections dynamic and current throughout the school year.

An overview of the four schools that matched profiles similar to my current site of practice and the list of criteria is included below in Table 1. A short synopsis of each school’s demographics, enrollments, a library and technology programs provides a general overview of each site as well:
Table 1
Overview of Sites Selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grade Levels</th>
<th>Day/Boarding</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New England School</td>
<td>Pre-K through 8</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Suburb outside of Boston, MA</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Coed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Penn</td>
<td>Pre-K through 8</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Suburb near Boston, MA</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Coed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Day</td>
<td>Pre-K through 8</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Suburb outside of Boston, MA</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>Coed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestwood Academy</td>
<td>Grades 4-9</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Suburb near Boston, MA</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The New England School.* An independent co-education day school for students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade accredited by the Association of Independent School in New England (AISNE) and NAIS. The school was established 100 years ago, and is situated on an 11-acre campus nestled amid natural wetlands, tree-lined paths, and small village-like cabins that serve as classrooms for over 500 students. The setting of the school extends learning beyond the traditional classroom.
and into outside learning spaces with an established outdoor curriculum. Class sizes are intentionally kept small at this school in order to facilitate small group learning, and the student to teacher ratio is 8:1. The school also has a commitment to diversity amongst students and faculty members, and a commitment to novice teacher preparation through its well-known teacher training course that was established in partnership with a local university. The New England School’s (NES) library was awarded the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Library Building Award in 2003. Three librarians maintain the library’s collection of over 25,000 books and other learning resources such as magazines, computers, and online catalogs.

**Country Day.** Also accredited by AISNE and NAIS, this co-educational day school serves 270 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade with an innovative weekly schedule: students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade attend school from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays, and from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Fridays. The 11-acre campus is fifteen minutes from Boston and attracts students from more
than 25 nearby towns and communities. The student to teacher ratio is 6:1, 24% of the students identify as students of color, and 83% of faculty members hold advanced degrees. Country Day refers to their library as the “heart” of the school, and students in every grade level experience skill-based lessons with the librarians to develop research and informational literacy skills. The technology department at the school has worked collaboratively with the teachers and the librarians to create a specific informational literacy program and library curriculum.

**William Penn.** William Penn is a coeducational day school serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grades. As a Quaker school, William Penn’s students and colleagues follow Quaker educational traditions including Peace Testimonies and engaging in silent morning worship meetings that are intended to give all members of the community time to reflect and quiet their minds. The library has two librarians and has one library serving its nearly 200 students, as well as two makerspaces: one makerspace for middle school students, and one for lower school students. A commitment to social justice issue, inclusivity, diversity, and equity have been central to the school’s mission and values since its establishment in 1961 in a neighborhood nestled deep within a suburb outside of Boston, Massachusetts. 40% of the student body identify
as students of color, 4.5% identify as Quaker, and 6% of families identify as LGBTQ. The library and makerspace programs at William Penn have both won grant awards to support student activities and professional development for the faculty members leading each space. The student to teacher ratio is 1:5 and the average class size is thirteen students.

**Crestwood Academy.** This all boys day school serves students in grades 4 through 9. Founded in 1929, this school is also accredited by AISNE and NAIS. The student to teacher ratio is 5:1, with a total of 333 boys attending the school just 15 miles outside of Boston. School E has a long tradition of volunteerism amongst both its students and parent community, as well as a commitment to diversity and equity. The school hosts a Multicultural Educators Forum and a Diversity Committee leads diversity initiatives that extend beyond the campus and include the greater community. The school’s library was rebuilt in 2013 to include areas for comfortable reading, collaborative learning, and group instruction. Two librarians support faculty and students, teach research and informational literacy skills to students, and maintain a collection of over 10,000 printed books. Students in grades 4 and 5 experience the Intensive Literacy Program (ILP) as their reading and writing curriculum, a rigorous program that uses a multi-sensory methodology for
literacy instruction. Crestwood Academy proudly advocates for technology to be used as a tool in the classroom for both teaching and learning, and every student is invited to bring their own device to school each day. A digital citizenship curriculum and Internet safety program has been designed in collaboration by the school librarians, student advisors, and a group of invested teachers. Even though this school serves students outside of the grade levels that are considered “early childhood” grades, I am curious to discover how fourth graders specifically interact with the library space as they bridge the developmental stages between childhood and adolescence. It was my hope that the data I collected at this site could serve as a “look into the future” of what lies ahead of primary aged students as they grow into the upper elementary grades; data that I collected at this school was helpful in thinking about what physical and curricular structures should be established in an early childhood school library so that students can make a successful transition to fourth grade, too.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2003) notes that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work… The goal of research then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p.8). While the school librarians and the leader of each school are straightforwardly chosen as participants for this study, selecting the best teacher participants to engage in this research has required more thoughtful selection. I was encouraged by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) who recommend to researchers that careful consideration be placed on who is asked to participate in the study. The authors (2014) suggest asking questions such as, “Do the
people I am studying have full information about what the study will involve?” (p. 94), to identify which participant out of many may be the best for a study. I asked the librarians for suggestions on teachers to interview, specifically requesting that early childhood and early elementary grade teachers who used the library or who had planned a specific notable collaborative project with the librarian to be suggested as well. I am grateful that the librarians referred me to such a diverse range of teachers: tone of the teachers taught third grade, five teachers taught second grade, one teacher interviewed taught first grade, and five teachers taught kindergarten. In addition to the classroom teachers, I also engaged specialist area teachers at two of the schools as well including one innovation lab teacher and one art teacher, both of whom had experience collaborating with school librarians in roles to either design and create projects related to characters in a book, or to visually represent their thinking and synthesis of knowledge about something related to the library program. The school leaders that I interviewed also had a range of leadership responsibilities. Two lower school division heads were interviewed, one head of school, and one assistant head of school who had direct supervision of and who worked closely on the library team as a thought partner. Table 2 provides an overview of the interview data I collected from the participants in this study.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Site</th>
<th>No. of School Leader Interviews</th>
<th>No. of Librarian Interviews</th>
<th>No. of Teacher Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Penn</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crestwood Academy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I asked every participant to review and sign a consent form (see Appendix B) and will explained my research timeline and methods. I shared my interview protocol questions ahead of our interviews, and then began the data collection. I de-identified my notes and used pseudonyms in my fieldnotes so that my research participants could remain protected by confidentiality in all of my data. In the next section, I detail the steps taken during data collection at each of the four sites, including a rationale for how I sequenced the data collection and the interview protocol for the individual interviews.

**Data Collection**

The majority of my data was collected over the course of four days in May 2016. I spent one full school day at each of the four sites and conducted observations, held individual interviews, and collected archival data to review. Four of the individual interviews were completed over the telephone when I returned to Washington, D.C. and were not able to be done at the site because of schedule conflicts and my compressed and restricted research timeline. This timeline was restricted not because of the participants, but rather because I work and live in Washington, D.C. In the next sections, I describe the sequencing of my data collection and how each qualitative method helped me to gather data helpful in beginning to answer my overall research questions.

**Sequence of Data Collection.** I used Ravitch and Carl’s (2016) work on sequencing methods to guide the sequence of my data collection. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggest that the sequencing of methods should be strategic, and further propose
that the intentional design of a research study is “an important component of validity” (p. 103). Therefore, the data collection plan for my qualitative study began with immersing myself in the library space itself. I observed library classes with students for a minimum of 45 minutes, and in between classes either conducted an interview or observed other students, parents or teachers using the space. I also used the time in between observations to tour the school with a school librarian so I could see teachers’ classrooms and get a better sense of the overall teaching and learning culture at each site. These tours proved to be very helpful, and I spent time after each visit making additional notes and writing memos to capture my thinking about the tours as well. Before leaving each site, and at different times throughout my site visit, I collected artifacts and archival data that I could review and analyze when I returned to Washington, D.C. I elaborate on each method used during this study to collect data in the next sections.

**Observations and Fieldnotes.** At each site I observed the library space while it was in use by students, librarians, parents, and teachers. Typically I arrived at the school near eight o’clock in the morning, and left before or around the school’s regular dismissal time. Spending the full day at each site allowed me to research the library dynamics including how librarians, teachers, parents and student use of the space. I was a researcher doing fieldwork and observing the library in order to focus in on how the activities and interactions within the library gave meaning to my overall research questions and interest in multiple literacy skill development in children just beginning to learn how to read. I created a template to help organizing my jottings at each school (Appendix C), as suggested by Creswell (2012) and Emerson et al. (2011) that
specifically incorporate description, dialogue, and characterizations that enabled me as the researcher “to coherently depict an observed moment through striking details” (Emerson et al., p. 57). I turned my jottings into fieldnotes after each site visit and wrote memos throughout the week to more descriptively capture what I was thinking and feeling. Observing each site first hand and writing about the experience proved to be helpful when I later reviewed the data collected from my individual interviews.

Being present in the library space as a researcher allowed me to later compare my thinking about what I saw and experienced in myself with what my participants said and described during my individual interviews and with what archival data I was able to review. I wanted to capture as much of the school library environment as possible in a way that was accurate, holistic, and offered a unique perspective of the space from someone who was not a community stakeholder already. Some of the data that led me to discover my first set of codes actually came from my fieldnotes and researcher memos.

**Photographs.** The copious amount of pictures I was able to take of the library space when it was empty of students and teachers was an important part of my data collection at each site as well. Photographs capture the essence of large spaces that a jotting cannot, and they are also rich sources of data that I can reflect back on and analyze during my coding process. I took pictures of all aspects of the space: the furniture, shelving, book displays, evidence of technology, window space, seating areas, and common learning spaces within the library as well. However; I relied on my jottings only—not photographs—to capture the activities and interactions of children with the space. Jotting about the interactions between students and the library space protected the
identity of the students. Finally, I also sketched and jotted notes to describe and outline the floorplan of each site from a bird’s eye view of the library. Later in the data analysis phase I had a graphic artist cross reference my sketches with the photographs I took for each library space in order to create the library layouts included in the previous chapter.

**Individual Interviews.** Maxwell (2013) notes that “your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people to gain that understanding” (p. 101). I shared my research questions electronically with each participant ahead of my visit and also printed copies of the questions again for the face to face interviews. The interviews were semi-structured so that the interview felt more like a conversation rather than an interrogation, a distinction that Rubin and Rubin (2012) make clear is sometimes an unintended consequence for researchers unpracticed in the art of interviewing. Using my interview protocol and being sensitive to the interviewee was important to me as a guest at each school, and so I entered each interview intentionally trying to engage respectfully with each participant. I did not anticipate every interview to be the same and therefore employed the flexible questioning strategies also suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012) to change the interview questions when the conversation is directed in a valuable but unexpected direction. Below is a table that outlines the individual interviews at each of my four research sites based on my purposeful sampling strategy. I used Creswell’s (2012) *Qualitative Inquiry Tools* to identify a sampling group for this study with the goal of interviewing a total of 24 participants, digitally recording each interview using my iPad which was password protected. The length of the interviews ranged, with the school leader and teacher
interviews being the shortest and averaging 30 minutes, and the school librarian
interviews ranging between 45 minutes to one hour. I introduce myself and review the
goals of this study, I will also ask my interviewees to self-select a name for me to use in
the transcripts to replace their real names. I attempted to develop some “easy” questions
and some “tough” questions as Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest, and have sequenced
similar but not exactly the same questions for each of the participant groups in Appendix
D.

I sought to create positive interview rapport that was not threatening or
interrogative, another suggestion by Rubin and Rubin (2012) in a responsive interviewing
model which encourages the interviewer to adopt a “friendly and supportive tone” (p.
38). For this reason, I conducted semi-structured and responsive interviews so that the
interview felt more like a conversation as Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest. I followed
the authors’ (2012) recommendation to reconsider my positionality before the interview
begins, as well as their suggestions on ethical responsibilities as a researcher interviewing
participants. I considered my positionality is as an outsider to the school, as a researcher,
and as a colleague in independent school leadership before conducted in interview. I truly
intended to be mindful of each participant’s generosity allowing me to interview them,
and wanted to ensure my participants were comfortable with me and that we had a good
rapport. I did my best to establish a trustworthy and positive rapport with them and to
make sure they were comfortable with my research process since independent schools are
rarely studied; my former colleagues and I in the School District of Philadelphia were
comfortable around researchers and during research interviews because the District
frequently engaged in scholarly studies. Moreover, as an independent school leader myself, I wanted to also be precise and careful when explaining that the purpose of my research was not to tattle or report on any information they share, but rather to make independent school libraries as a whole better tailored to meet the needs of the students that we serve.

After each interview, I had each audio file transcribed by an online transcription service called Rev. I maintain confidentiality with this third party by only using the pseudonym of each school and participant during the interview process. I cleaned the data as much as possible, checking for sections of the data that need to be clarified. Each participant was interviewed once, however I revisited the transcripts and goals of my study with each participant during my member checks. I conducted these member checks over the telephone and sent the cleaned transcript excerpts via email in advance of our call. I used the time together during these member checks to also solicit feedback from the participant on their transcription or thoughts after the interview. Maxwell (2013) suggests that these member checks are “the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do, and the perspectives that they have on what is going on” (p. 126-127).

The positive interview rapport felt easy to create with the kindness and patience that each participant had with me. I was taken aback that every school librarian thanked me after each interview, all expressing an appreciation for an educator to take a deep look at the work they have dedicated their professional lives too. Receiving their heartfelt
thanks was humbling, and I too felt as though each interview with the school librarians changed the way I was thinking about their great work and role in schools as well.

**Document and Archival Data.** The final method by which I collected data was through document and archival data. I prepared to “spend considerable time identifying, collecting, organizing, reviewing, and analyzing all relevant documents that contextualize and relate” to my study as Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggest (p. 171). I asked each librarian to provide any material or resources separate from the school’s website that I could use to better understand the role and function of the school library at each site. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also highlight an important difference in document and archival data, dividing it into three separate categories: personal, official, and popular culture documents (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I collected official documents that include artifacts from each school’s website, mission statements, position descriptions, photographs, school magazines and even one faculty survey that the librarian at Country Day had administered.

**Memos.** One of the greatest assets to me during my pilot study (on a completely unrelated research topic) were the researcher memos that I wrote after each interview and observation. I was surprised at how helpful the memos were to me when I began the coding process, and I was grateful to have documentation that captured my lines of thinking and impressions in those data-filled moments that could have easily been forgotten had it not been for my memo writing. I anticipated having a much larger data set to process and analysis for this dissertation, so I was diligent in writing descriptive memos to chronicle my thinking I collected my data but also so I could remember details.
and descriptions of events as I moved toward my analysis. Miles et al. (2014) describes “streams” of thoughts that emerge as researchers look horizontally across data sets. Maxwell (2013) builds upon this notion of capturing streams to suggest that researchers write memos in order to facilitate the analysis of data (p. 105). The memos help me to make sense of my initial emic and etic responses to the data and were helpful in developing a clearer picture of how school libraries help young learners develop multiple literacy skills. The memos were also helpful to me in reflecting on my own positionality and validity as the researcher throughout the research process. Maxwell (2013) notes that “there is no single or correct way for doing qualitative analysis” but that each strategy needs to be planned in order to address issues of validity and to consider how my role has potentially impacted the data collection (p. 105).

**Data Analysis**

Creswell (2013) describes six phases of qualitative data analysis: data management and organizing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting and then representing. My analysis began while I was organizing my data and writing my fieldnotes and researcher memos. Managing the data was difficult at first as I had so many electronic files and paper resources that classifying and organizing each unit was tedious but necessary. I stored all of my electronic data using a secure DropBox account that required my password, including data transcripts, school letters of support, and the electronically signed consent forms. I then used Atas.ti qualitative data management software to begin classifying and combining data to refine my codes. In the next
sections, I will discuss how I used thematic analysis to develop my initial codes sets, and will reflect on how I began to interpret the data to develop into this study’s findings.

**Thematic Analysis**

Miles et al. (2014) note that “findings are more dependable when they can be buttressed from several independent sources” and that they are valid “when they are confirmed by more than one data collection instrument measuring the same thing” (p. 307). I triangulated the data collected from the individual interviews, observations and fieldnotes, my researcher memos, and each school’s document and archival data. I also returned back to my research question, conceptual framework and literature review at the beginning of my analysis in order to ensure that I was analyzing my data in relation to my research questions and focus. I also strategized by reading and re-reading transcripts, made metaphors in my mind, and worked with the words the participants used to develop some initial themes. A function in Atlas.ti called *Word Cruncher* was particularly helpful in helping to narrow in on frequently used words that I did not note on my own close reading of the data. This specific function of the Atlas.ti reviews selected written files and then parses out the most frequently used words. I selected all of the interview transcript data, but excluded all of my fieldnotes and the faculty survey data. The most frequently used words in the data once I removed articles, conjunctions, and parts of speech are represented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Thematic Analysis Word Frequency from Atlas.ti**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency of Use in Interview Transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themselves</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This analysis of frequently used words in the interview transcripts was helpful in creating categories of data and then connecting categories together in order to develop some themes in the data. However, I had over 100 pictures to analyze as well, and numerous archival data points too. In the next section, I address how I coded the pictures and archival data and present my final code set.

**Coding.** The data sets I collected was larger in scope than even I had imagined, and so refocusing back to my research questions and conceptual framework was critical to honing in on important emerging themes. These codes will represent emergent themes in my data. Ravitch and Carl (2016) note that coding is data analysis actually “begins when you start organizing and thinking about your data” and so this process started while I wrote my fieldnotes and memos, was iterative, took time, and required both inductive and deductive approaches to forming my final code set. Ravitch and Carl (2016) further clarify that inductive and deductive codes “are not mutually exclusive, and in many studies, the strategic combination happens through” the iterative process of reading the triangulated data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 249). I took both approaches with my data analysis, and used Atlas.ti to code the interview transcripts, pictures, one short video, and screenshots of the school websites and pictures taken of school magazine articles related to each site. I counted the frequency of codes and factored in relationships among and between the variables to build a logical chain of evidence to support my initial themes.
Table 4 represents my final code set that I used to ultimately make contrasts and comparisons across the data to determine my overall findings.

**Table 4. Final Code Set**

**Theme 1 Codes: Multiple Literacy Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
<th>Definition: Descriptions of…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tactile literacy</td>
<td>TL</td>
<td>When tactile engagement within the library and because of the design of the space or the librarian’s instruction/interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational literacy</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Examples of when librarians explicitly communicate about how to access and assess information within the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital literacy</td>
<td>DL</td>
<td>When librarians communicate how they use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information within the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Literacy: Digital Citizenship</td>
<td>DL:DC</td>
<td>When librarians communicate how they instruct students on virtual etiquette; when librarians teach students how to be responsible users and consumers of digital information in various virtual environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed literacy</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Encoding and decoding of print by students within the library space to communicate new ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed Literacy: Read Alouds</td>
<td>PL:RA</td>
<td>When librarians read aloud to students who are unable to read themselves because they are not developmentally able to yet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 2 Codes: Design and Interaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
<th>Definition: Descriptions of…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makerspace</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>The school’s addition of a makerspace or innovation lab and all interactions within it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makerspace for innovation</td>
<td>MS:I</td>
<td>a Makerspace within the school as an innovative space for students to use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makespace for new skill building/development</td>
<td>MS: SB</td>
<td>a Makerspace within the school as a space where students go to build products or projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology: Presence</td>
<td>T:P</td>
<td>Digital technology devices in the school library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology: Use</td>
<td>T:U</td>
<td>Interactions between students and digital devices while in the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>The architectural design of each library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design is comfortable</td>
<td>D:C</td>
<td>Sections or areas within the library space that were intentionally created (not a part of the architecture of the space) for students to be comfortable in the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual cues/markers</td>
<td>D:VCM</td>
<td>Design markers or visual cues that help students navigate the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Design of Architecture</td>
<td>D:OD</td>
<td>Open-concept architecture in the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Borders</td>
<td>D:SB</td>
<td>Soft borders intentional created by librarian to designate a new space or alternative space within the open concept of the library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Light</td>
<td>D:NL</td>
<td>When natural light is evident in the space of the school library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Artwork</td>
<td>D:SA</td>
<td>When student artwork is displayed in the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Representation</td>
<td>D:CR</td>
<td>When aspects of the school community, mission, or values are intentionally represented or are on display in the library space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmentally Appropriate Designs or Book Displays</td>
<td>D:DD</td>
<td>Developmentally appropriate design elements including furniture, large print, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whimsical Design Element  D:WH  Whimsical design elements ancillary to the architecture of the space

Multifunctional Design  D:MF  The space is used for number of purposes and functions by different members of the community

Welcome  D:W  When a participant other than the librarian describes the library in words that describe emotions of acceptance, non-judgement or and safety in the library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
<th>Definition: Descriptions of…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curators of accessible knowledge</td>
<td>A:K</td>
<td>The participants’ perceived role and identity as a school librarian serving early childhood students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curators of information</td>
<td>A:IN</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the librarian indicating their role or responsibility as a librarian to provide students access to information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curators of New or Unknown Ideas</td>
<td>A:ID</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the participant indicating a role or responsibility of a librarian to expose students to new or unknown ideas and concepts within the multiple literacies definition (printed books, digital media, information, and tactile resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity</td>
<td>A:EQ</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the participant indicating a role or responsibility of a librarian to curate a collection representative of a diverse and inclusive school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>A:IM</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the participant indicating a role or responsibility of a librarian to engender creative thinking and imagination with student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>A:C</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the participant indicating a role or responsibility of a librarian as one who allows students to be creative in their thinking or reading interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philanthropy</strong></td>
<td>A:P</td>
<td>Perceptions shared by the participant indicating a role or responsibility of a librarian to share or donate the school library’s resources to organizations outside of the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Connections</strong></td>
<td>A:CC</td>
<td>Attention of the librarians to making connections for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to World</strong></td>
<td>C:TW</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students to make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to Self</strong></td>
<td>C:TS</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students to make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time to themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to Text</strong></td>
<td>C:TT</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students to make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to Imagination</strong></td>
<td>C:TI</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students that make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time to the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to Touch/Play</strong></td>
<td>C:TO</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students that make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time that is identifiable in observed play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections: Text to Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>C:TC</td>
<td>Actions or comments made by librarians or students that make a connection from a text shared during library instructional time to their current curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>When a librarian makes reference to his or her role as one who is responsible for helping students to develop their individual and unique identities as young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity as participants in the school community</strong></td>
<td>I:P</td>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who wants students to use the space during non-traditional library time; when librarians reference the desire or the explicit examples of when students use the library space other than during a designated library time with their classmates or teachers; when librarians reference their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>role as one in which serves students in a community by giving them access to the space to explore their own curiosities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>I:S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who wants students to feel safe in the library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>I:W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who wants students to feel welcomed in the library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers’ Identity</td>
<td>I:RI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who gets to know the students’ reading interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers’ Skill</td>
<td>I:RS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who is responsible for knowing the students’ reading skill and ability; when a librarian references wanting to know the students’ reading level from a formal assessment by classroom teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers’ Skill: Not responsible</td>
<td>I:NRS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives his or her role as someone who is not responsible for knowing students’ reading skill and ability; when the librarian does not want to have access to students’ reading levels from a formal assessment by classroom teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of Reading</td>
<td>I:LR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian perceives their role as developing a love of reading in students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity in new interests</td>
<td>I:RN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian views their role as a one who gives students access to new genres of books, although not necessarily of teaching reading skills of explicit teaching of that genre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian mentions aspects of his or her role that include maintenance of the library collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering</td>
<td>CU:O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a librarian refers to his or her role as one who is responsible for ordering new items for the library’s collection including books, ebooks, magazines, and other media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Weeding**

When a librarian refers to his or her role as one who is responsible for removing books that are no longer deemed worthy for the collection because they are MUSTY (phrase from ALA, 1976: Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial, or no longer relevant to their collection)

**Check outs**

When a librarian refers to the number of books that students are allowed to check out from the school library

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**Managing Data Analysis and Coding.** The amount of data that I collected felt overwhelming to analyze and code in its raw and cleaned form. I looked and tried different ways to organize the data to analyze it by theme, mostly by drawing tables, pictures and idea maps on the large dry erase wall at my site of practice. This helped me to visually identify patterns that I could not have identified scrolling through text digitally through Atlas.ti, however; I did rely on the software program to analyze the photographs. I uploaded all of the photographs and then reduced the number down by deleting images that were near duplicates, or that contained the same images of the library space but from different angles. The Atlas.ti software allowed me to highlight and applied code to parts of the photographs just as it did for coding parts of the text. This feature allowed me then to run a report on a specific code with the yielded results being in both text and photograph format. Reading on to the next chapters that describe my findings and referring back to Table 4 will likely substantiate the broad range of data that I collected during this study. There are many codes that I developed and placed into themes that did not make it into the findings not because they were not important or interesting, but rather I narrowed the scope of my findings to what answered and explained the phenomena nestled into my research questions.
Validity

Maxwell (2005) asserts that “validity threats are made implausible by evidence, not methods; methods are only a way of getting evidence that can help you rule out these threats” (p. 105). One of the major responsibilities that I have in my current position is to reimagine the library space, designing it into an innovative library space for students in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade. My overall goal for this study was to have a list of characteristics of compelling library spaces that included elements of design, but literacy connections between student, librarians, and teachers as well. This aspect of my own professional work was important to consider when I thought about my positionality as an outside researcher engaged in practitioner research. None of the sites that I selected are competitor schools to the school in which I work which assuaged some of the pressure I felt going into the research.

Libraries, in a phenomenon that I hoped to better understand through this study, hold an incredible amount of emotionally charged memories for people. This made me even more eager to begin the interview process so that I could better understand just what makes library spaces so compelling for people. My own researcher bias factors into this study as well. For example, I often wonder if I have underestimated the amount of joy that others cull from reading books. Does everyone enjoy reading as much as I do? Reading is undoubtedly one of my favorite pastimes, and a cozy space with a lot of books surrounding me sounds like a place I want to be. Perhaps we all have fond memories of studying in library spaces amid tangible sources of knowledge, memories that some of us are not quite yet ready to let go of in order to surrender a coveted space’s purpose for the
potential of what could be, or what it should be in the twenty-first century. I myself value the solitude that a quiet library space of paper books brings when I am absorbed in and completely silent in the space. Thinking about a school “library” in the image that I have constructed via my own experience brings positive feelings of nostalgia and comfort. Holding that thought and replacing it with the image of a space overtaken by robots and speakers, or clacks from keyboards and the hum of students collaborating on projects certainly adulterates both my senses and my fond memories. I tried to approach my data collection and analysis from a neutral and truly inquisitive stance.

**Critical Friends Inquiry Group.** One way I monitored the initial stage of analysis to ensure validity was engaging with an inquiry group comprised of six critical friends. We followed the protocols outlined and designed by Harill and Belzer (1998) to design the inquiry rounds, and used Harrill’s (2001) system of collaborative sharing data to take some of the data I had already coded and critically review it to help me uncover any bias I had while also giving me new insights into my data from six completely different points of view.

First, I provided supporting documents that put my study in context for the inquiry group. I included my research abstract, research questions, methods of data collection and also excerpts of my data. Next, the group focused on the data excerpts I provided and the overall question that I posed of “How do these librarians perceive their role?” Each inquiry group member then reviewed the data excerpts with the focus question in mind, and asked any clarifying questions. After I answered all of their questions, I asked the group to reflect on the word “curator” and to describe or define it in
their own words. Finally, the group reviewed the data excerpts with me in five different rounds, with each group member commenting on the following:

- **Round 1:** What stands out for you in this data?

- **Round 2:** *Text rendering.* Each group member chose a section of the excerpted data and read along a segment of the text in which the librarian was speaking about her or his role.

- **Round 3:** *Text rendering again.* Each group member chose a section of the excerpted data and read aloud a segment of the text in which the librarian was speaking about her or his role in meaning making for the students.

- **Round 4:** *Paraphrase.* Each group member chose, read aloud, and then paraphrased a segment of the text in which the librarian was speaking about his or her role in meaning-making for the students.

- **Round 5:** *Summary.* Each group member concluded their inquiry by suggesting questions or concepts that needed further clarity on my part but from their point of view. Group members also made recommendations for me as I continued my analysis.

Overall, this inquiry group was an incredibly helpful in validating what progress I had made in the data analysis process, and helped me mentally take a step away from the data to look at it from six trusted peers’ perspectives. The group was an important turning point for me in my analysis because it propelled me out of the descriptive rut I had been stuck in, launching me into writing about my findings confidentially.
CHAPTER 4

SCHOOL LIBRARIES SHAPE AND UNITE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

I entered this study intending to focus on the use of the library spaces by students in the early childhood grades, and it was impossible to begin my data analysis to better understand how students use the space to develop multiple literacies before I acknowledged how and why the design of the space afforded such deep, individualized experiences for each of the school stakeholders. Each school library in this study was a coveted place to gather for students, teachers, school administrators, and parents. This chapter presents the synthesis of data revealing how school libraries build and influence school culture. First I uncover the transformative influence school librarians have in positively impacting school culture around teaching and learning, most notably curating relationships with teachers that are steeped in collaboration and trust, and curating relationships with students that open the pathways to experiences that shape multiple literacy skill development and even identity. In further analysis, I explain the balance the library space serves for early childhood educators charged with teaching students how to read with the role of school librarians in shaping a young reader’s identity through imagination and curious exploration. Finally, I examine the aspects of the library space that identify it as uniquely suited to build and serve community ideals and values, further attempting to capture the images of safety and even spiritual sanctuary that some school stakeholders described of their school’s library.
**School Librarians Serve as “Curators of School Community”**

*Space value* is a concept that I developed from the data to describe how and why each school library that I visited was such a frequently used place by all school stakeholders. It is the idea that a space in a school has the ability to attract members of the school community to use it beyond its original or intended purpose. The concept applied to this research seeks to capture the allure of what motivates students, teachers, families, and other community members to seek the library space to enjoy even when other spaces, sometimes even more accommodating spaces, are available. The school library at each institution in this study was a busy and bustling place, and certainly a sharp contrast to the myth of quiet and empty libraries often perpetuated in stories today. Rather, the libraries in this study were coveted spaces that actually were vibrant centers of learning and communing together not just for students but for teachers and parents as well. Indeed, the dominant factor influencing the space value of each library in this study were the librarians themselves.

The findings emphasize how important of a role school librarians play within the greater context of the school community, a role through which they became curators of knowledge, information and ideas for students, teachers and school leaders. Librarians also capitalized on their unique physical spaces by creating an atmosphere of non-judgement for students, teachers and parents as well. By ensuring that the diversity of each school communities’ students and families were represented in the libraries’ collections and by establishing a safe space to explore and expand ideas, school librarians
cultivated deep relationships that extended beyond the typical colleague-to-colleague or teacher-to-student relationship dynamic. The ability to create and establish such powerful relationships within and beyond the school made the librarians’ role one that held tremendous power in shaping attitudes about the school’s culture on teaching and learning, and thus was an undeniably respected position amongst community members. In addition to constructing strong relational connections with school community members, librarians also had the unique role of nurturing what some participants referred to as a student’s “reading identity.” Hall’s (2005, 2012) research on this concept of a student’s identity as a reader defines the term in the context of classroom teachers but was interestingly incorporated into the librarians’ self-perceptions. According to Hall (2012) the term reading identity refers to how capable individuals believe they are in comprehending texts, the value they place on reading and their understandings of what it means to be a particular type of reader” in the classroom. In this context, librarians identified a new perspective on Hall’s (2012) definition of reading identity to include identifying which stories and characters a student is interested in reading. Both Hall’s (2005, 2012) scholarship exploring “reading identity” and the librarians’ added insights on this concept are important to this study because librarians noticed that helping students to develop their own identities as readers was critical to their overall literacy development. Research by Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, and Tower (2006) confirm this insight by the librarians in a study that included second grade students engaging in literacy activities based in children’s literature. Duke et al.’s (2006) findings suggest that a necessary prerequisite for early elementary students to begin their trajectory into
reading and writing pathways was to have a reading identity established. In the context of this study, the concept of reading identity highlights the unique finding that teachers relied on librarians to understand each student’s individual profile of reading likes and dislikes and then to share that information with them in partnership in order to develop both skillful and avid readers. This finding also revealed that librarians curated books for children based on their past interests, curiosities, and learning. This is important to understand within the context of an early childhood classroom teacher’s role as the teacher of reading skills; while classroom teachers heavily focused on developing the skills necessary to develop fluency and comprehensions skills in students, librarians balanced the rigor of reading instruction by opening the pathway for students to appreciate literature and to develop a love of reading. In this way, librarians held a unique role as “curators” as opposed to reading instructors, deepening the pathways to reading for students by making their library spaces intellectually safe playgrounds for the curious and developing minds of young children.

The etymology of the word “curator” begins in the late fourteenth century with the verb curare meaning “to take care of” while the noun curatus means “one responsible for the care of souls” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016). In modern day, a curator is defined as “one who has the care and superintendence of something” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016). Gabriel’s insight, presented in this chapter, that his school library was “an almost spiritual place” invokes an image of safety and sanctuary. School librarians in this study were curators of more than resources, and there were distinguishable aspects of their craft that enabled them to build meaningful relationships that further opened the
doors to collaboration, inquiry, and creativity with their colleagues and students. This section focuses on the role of school librarians as curators that develop relationships to shape school culture surrounding teaching and learning

**Curating Relationships to Shape Teaching and Learning**

The school librarians were the first and the most important factor influencing a library’s space value in this study. Specifically, the librarians’ *affect* on the teaching and learning culture of each school emerged as a distinctly influential role in shaping multiple literacy skills in individualized learning trajectories for students, and collaborative relationships that were non-judgmental with colleagues and families. In this way, librarians curated not just items for the library collection, but relationships with community stakeholders as well. Teachers and school leaders consistently identified school librarians as invaluable assets to the school community because of their ability to build deep and meaningful relationships with students and with colleagues.

Deep relationships in the context of this study were those that were steeped in trust and respect, but that did not necessarily take years to develop. For example, Dawn, the Head of School from Country Day, described Shannon’s role as invaluable to the school community in her ability to relate to students across the school’s pre-kindergarten through eighth grade classes, but also through her ability to collaborate with teachers in a meaningful way that supported and enhanced their instruction and that, in Dawn’s view, consequently benefitted each child’s learning. Dawn described Shannon as “irresistible” in the sense that she “instantly” appealed to teachers as a desirable and respected resource
when it came to researching topics for classroom projects, supporting curricular work by
culling a selection of books to support their teaching and to benefit student learning
(Dawn, Interview, May 11, 2016). From Shannon’s point of view, she intentionally set
forth to begin making trusted relationships with teachers by inquiring about their
classroom curricular work, and by supporting their instructional content with read alouds
and book displays in the library.

Dawn also cited a survey Shannon created as one of the pivotal examples of
outreach to the faculty that made a strong first impression, and also included that
Shannon was one of the first faculty members to also survey the students to ask what
their impressions were of the library as well. The impact on teaching and learning that
Shannon’s approach to collaborating with teachers and including students in her
professional work impressed Dawn, but also other teachers. Dawn fondly recalled an
example of a lower school teacher who sought Shannon out to collaborate on research
projects every year so that “she could up her game” as a teacher, sharing further that the
student engagement that she and Shannon were able to promote together surpassed that
which she could have established alone in the classroom and of which led to deeper
student engagement with the content material. Dawn noted that Shannon’s impact as a
shaper of teaching and learning culture furthermore by remarking that “she is beloved
and respected by everyone” in the school community. By extending invitations to
collaborate with teachers and by serving as “the steward of the shared space” within the
school, Shannon was able to “know every child in the school,” every teacher, and many
parents on a personal level that transcended traditional classroom conversations and engagement (Dawn, Interview, May 11, 2016).

Anne, a first grade teacher from William Penn, shed light on a different aspect of the school librarians’ influential position as one who curates special and unique relationships with colleagues. In this example, Anne specifically places William Penn’s school librarians opposite from that of the role of early childhood educators charged with teaching students how to read. She noted that in more than one instance, the lead librarian named Allayna “stuffed” her school mailbox in the faculty room with books that she knew Anne and her students would enjoy and that related specifically to the topic being studied in her class. This outreach by Allayna to Anne was at first an unexpected support but one that she grew to be grateful for as she discovered that the students she was teaching how to read needed picture books and unlevelled readers to explore for no other reason than just to enjoy and imagine. This example of curation led to the two colleagues developing a deep bond steeped in appreciation and trust, but that also inspired Anne to utilize the library space more frequently so that her students could feel “unconfined” physically and intellectually in a larger, grander space (Anne, Interview, May 13, 2016). Bringing students to the larger library space also afforded them an opportunity to browse titles and books that they did not have access to in the classroom’s levelled library which is instructionally designed and curated to support the reading ability and “levelled” ranges of students. In this way, Anne’s saw herself as a reading teacher that taught students how to read, but saw Allayna’s role as providing the safety, space, and guidance for students to learn how to love reading. This relationship began because Allayna
voluntarily pulled a few books that she believed Anne and her students would enjoy based on a casual and unstructured conversation, and it led Anne to think more reflectively about her approach to teaching reading, ultimately coming to the conclusion that her school librarians were there to help support her instruction and to support her students’ appetite for reading and imaginations in ways that she herself could not.

Librarians initiating collaboration with teachers as a pathway to building trust and respect in each school community was a consistent finding across the participant interviews, and so was the context in which the relationships began: unstructured conversation and collaboration. Sidney from NES explained this point best when she described how she and her two librarian colleagues cultivated relationships with teachers by “reaching out” to them in ways that were “less structural and more relational,” noting further that she and her librarian colleagues did not wait to attend teacher planning meetings but rather preferred to “jump” into classrooms to see where they could support, or to have conversations while teachers assisted them during the library check-out time with their students (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016). She explained:

…Actually getting in the rooms is great, it just changes the relationship. So I’d like to do more of that and say “I noticed this. Maybe I could help with that.” I think [the librarian’s work is about] building relationships so people can trust that we’re going to be a help and not somebody who’s just trying to get their own agenda across. (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016)

Sidney’s view on developing relationships with teachers based in their classroom contexts by visiting rather than scheduling a formal planning meeting resonated within each librarian’s narrative. Being able to access teachers’ classrooms to see what students are learning inspired the librarians to curate book lists and book stacks to share with teachers in an overall effort to support instruction. Librarians learning alongside teachers
and being willing supporters helped to build trust and also proved to the teachers that librarians were safe colleagues to lean on for support. In fact, Elaine from Crestwood Academy illuminated this finding in a different light when she described some of the most trusted and respected relationships that she has with teachers steeped in the act of failing together.

Crestwood Academy’s mission is lived out in the library as Elaine works to have the boys think of themselves as problem solvers and critical thinkers, an intellectual attribution she noted was contrary to how previous generations of children who are now teachers were raised. While speaking about what was most rewarding for her in the role of lower school librarian, she discussed how failing with a colleague made them both better teachers and impacted the learning of her students that made them more resilient and which cultivate perseverance. Elaine’s library team collaborates with the “labrarians” in the school’s new innovation lab, and her role in the innovation process is to help students research topics in order to inform their imaginative solutions to problems. Working closely with her colleagues and failing together was not a negative experience, but rather a positive one that had tremendous power to shape not just her and her colleagues teaching, but students’ learning as well. She said:

The relationships with other teachers, they are also rewarding ... It’s incredibly rewarding to work with a teacher and fall flat on our face so that we can work together to change the learning or change the experience for boys. Often, the failure that we feel, the boys don't feel at all, they're still plugging along... I don't like saying that but they're so much more resilient than we are, that we can really take it to heart in a way. I love failing with another teacher so that we can figure it out [together]. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)
Failure is not always a negative experience to Elaine, nor to the other teachers and students at Crestwood Academy. In this way, Elaine’s security in failing together reframes the traditional teaching and learning dynamic to one that views failure as necessary to build resilience, trust and fueled curiosity rather than one to be avoided because it breeds feelings defeat and disappointment. Elaine’s ability to influence the boys’ attitude about learning was also evident in her explanation about what she herself learns from students when she engages them during check-out time towards the end of the library class. By engaging the boys in discussions about different books and different genres, she encourages them to take risks and to try something new in order to expand their ideas outside of what they already know or find comfortable. In this way, she also extended the invitation to check-out time to the students’ teachers as she realized that their instruction and relationships with students could also be influenced by simply observation an unstructured part of the library class routine:

…we talk more about the idea of taking risks and trying something new [during check-out]. In those conversations, it's pretty fascinating to see who are the risk-takers and who aren't. Watching during check out ... I sort of beg the faculty to come during check out because you're learning so much about risk taking, exploration, initiative and pattern making. I think check out is incredibly fascinating. I get to have a conversation with everybody who comes to the desk and say, "Why'd you pick this," and, "Here it is again, looks like the ..." Because we do talk about what you find today, and how did you get there? Plus, I'm with them from pre-K to fourth grade so that helps me know them for very long… (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

Taking risks often requires an element of trust, and Elaine’s comments about what happens during check out time speaks to the influence she has to encourage boys to take risks as readers, and to explore. However, she also noticed that the check-out time is a valuable time in her own class to invite teachers in to observe and learn a new side of
students that could potentially impact their own relationships with their students and influence their teaching. Elaine went on to synthesize how she and her librarian team help to influence a positive teaching and learning culture at the school:

As we talk about the pre-k to nine spectrum and what we have the luxury of doing in the space with the three of us [librarians]...we just keep coming back to [supporting] faculty so that they can support the boys in whatever inquiry or creation they're involved in. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

While Elaine is the only lower school librarian working to support lower school faculty, she collaborates with her team to make a greater impact on the entire school community. Her library space was not a place where students went to mindlessly wander around the library, but rather a space that they were encouraged to take risks as learners and readers, and a space where they saw their own adult teacher try something and fail only to try again and again. In this way, Elaine was a model for teachers and students and had tremendous power to influence the teaching and learning culture at Crestwood Academy. In a similar light, school leaders viewed the ability of librarians to shape school culture on teaching and learning through the lens of space and emotion. All four school leaders either explicitly stated or referred to the school library as the “heartbeat of the school” or the “heart” of the school—an image that conjures an emotional attachment of love, acceptance, and safety. It is not surprising then that librarians working in the school’s “heart” have the influence to positively impact the attitudes and dispositions of both teachers and students.

Librarians in this study influenced teachers and students first by initiating a connection or collaboration intended to support their teaching or learning, but then by cultivating that relationship through unstructured or causal conversation unconfined by
formal meeting places or strict lesson plans that resulted in trust and respect. These relationships were not necessarily built over long periods of time as most relationships are, but rather happened quickly and grew with increased collaboration with teachers and conversations with students. School stakeholders relied on librarians to provide safe and non-judgmental spaces where community members could go in order to expand their minds, to be curious, and to take risks. Teachers collaborated with librarians to enhance their instruction and curriculum, and students sought libraries as spaces that they could go to explore ideas and information not confined or limited to their levelled classroom libraries. Dawn captured the collective magic of these dynamic relationships when she enthusiastically shared why she believed her faculty and the students enjoyed the library so much:

“Librarians don’t give grades, they’re not evaluative, they don’t give tests… I mean think about it— in many ways you go and get to be your true self in the library. If you decide that you don’t want to read fiction or that you’re only into war heroes… unapologetically you get to say ‘this is who I am and this is what I want to read and you know that no one is going to make a judgement on you. If you want to read a steady diet of Captain Underpants? Go right ahead! …Sometimes I think that when towns close down their libraries that it’s like having a heart attack. I think libraries are the same way. There shouldn’t be a checklist that says a library has to have these things, but I do believe that there has to be a center for information and inquiry that is legitimized and celebrated in a school, and where people feel like the rules are different. In classrooms, teachers assign things, but in libraries you’re in charge. The librarian is the person you go to you if you have a question. It’s kind of like the Siri of a school… I think if you don’t have a library then you’re saying something about what you believe about the role of curiosity, about independent choice and research, and about answering questions. I think [libraries] are essential. (Dawn, Interview, May 11, 2016)

Dawn’s metaphor of libraries as the “Siri” of schools today conjures an image unique to our digital age, and is a powerful statement connecting the concept of instant access to
information with the role of a school librarian. Her words inference the role of the librarian as one in the school who essentially holds the keys that open the gates of information and ideas for the learning community, a position that Dawn places in a realm of respect. Undoubtedly, the member of the school community that functions as this “curator of information and ideas” holds a position of authority that tacitly breathes life into the school’s community of teaching a learning, or in Dawn’s words, legitimizes and celebrates the culture of information and inquiry that schools promote and seek to instill. Schools value inquiry and curiosity, and the school librarians know how to give access to ideas and information to members of the community. In this way, librarians had the shaped the teaching and learning of a school community through the curriculum. Yet curriculum was just one dimension of the teaching and learning community impacted by librarians. In the next section, I explain how librarians were able to compliment and balance the students’ literacy development by helping to foster a love of reading and reader identity.

**Identity Curators to Balance the Rigor of Early Literacy Instruction.** While school librarians collaborated with teachers to enhance their instruction with information relevant to student learning, teachers also depended on librarians to support the development of each students’ identity as readers. My time at each school, analysis of interview transcripts, and personal experiences as a teacher led to me to discover that librarians serving early childhood students have a unique role that is very different from their role in serving older students. From my personal experiences as a teacher I can attest to a tension between wanting to teach literature appreciation to young students and
wanting to develop sound fluency skills as readers. This tension does not exist in middle school or high school classrooms typically, as students reaching that developmental stage of adolescence and young adulthood have acquired the reading strategies and skills that make them fluent readers. However; in the early childhood classroom that tension is real, and it is mitigated by the school librarian.

Early childhood and early literacy instruction focuses on developing the skills readers need to be able to read functionally and fluently. Richardson (2009) explains that “reading is more than blending sounds together to make words. It is a complex network of strategies and behaviors the brain uses to make sense of print.” The complexity of reading as a task required of the brain is “miraculous,” as cognitive neuroscientist and reading specialist Maryanne Wolf (2008) in her scholarly work on the science of reading and reading disabilities (Wolf, 2008). Thus the primary aim of literacy instruction in early childhood contexts is not to establish a love of reading, but rather to establish the basic phonological and linguistic principles of our English language so that students will be able to comprehend what they read (Richardson, 2016). This foundation in literacy acquisition is necessary in order for students to then engage with the content of books and the written language, an engagement that leads to the next phase of reading: fluency. Fluency is the concept in reading instruction that broadly encompasses the ability for students to understand what they read. Elements of reading fluency include a student’s ability to self-monitor for meaning, predict, infer, sequence, synthesize, analyze characters and themes, and also to make connections between what they are reading to themselves, other texts, and the world around them (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007).
Fluency also denotes that a child is able to read aloud with expressive prosody in order to convey meaning of the text from which he or she is reading. A student’s ability to read fluently does not engender a love of reading. Rather, cultivating reading habits in children that incline them to read often and frequently, and that allows the freedom to engage with the written word in ways that liberates ideas and wonderings in their minds does engender a love of reading. When I analyzed the interview transcripts from the teachers first and then the librarians, two very clear yet separate narratives emerged. The gap between learning to read and learning to love reading identified the librarians as a critical partner in helping early childhood teachers compliment intense instructions, and helped schools to balance their overall work to develop a strong community of reading students.

Teachers in the early childhood grades relied on the school librarian to help give students access to characters, genres, and books that students were not innately inclined to choose themselves and that teachers were not positioned to teach based on their explicit roles as reading skill and strategy instructors. In this way, librarians serving the early childhood grades approached their work differently compared to their work with older students. They held a unique role in understanding a student’s emerging reading profile of likes, dislikes, and in suggesting options to students that they felt could deepen the pathways to reading in the intellectually safe and accepting space of the library. The American Association of School Libraries (AASL) identifies this trait of librarianship as “reader’s advisory” (AASL.org, 2016) however; the school librarians in this study went beyond just interviewing students about their likes and dislikes. First, the school
librarians developed positive relationships with students and then carefully curated book titles to match the students’ interests and needs as a developing reader. As Elaine mentioned in the previous section, if she did not connect students with a book that they were individually and personally interested in, then that disconnection had the devastating potential to close off a pathway to reading that would have negative impact a student’s literacy development and acquisition of fluency. Elaine’s insight here leads into another view by Sidney who suggested that librarians were “matchmakers” between students and books that enhanced the student’s reading repertoire beyond the classroom library collection of levelled readers.

The image of the librarian as a matchmaker inspired Sidney from NES so much that she explained that it is in fact what brought her the greatest delight in her librarianship. She discussed how important relationships are, and how critical it is to know students as scholars in the classroom and as young, imaginative wonderers:

I think connecting kids to the right books or the matchmaking piece is one of my favorite parts of [being a librarian]. Getting to know kids, so you know what their thing is or what they might like to read next. I think being a friendly face is also a part of it. We check students out by typing in their last names to the system so over time you get to know the names of many, many people. I don't have everybody yet, but I'm working on it. I think supporting the interests of students is a huge part of it, getting them excited about books. The best is when you get a kid who hasn't been that into reading and then they discover their book that is maybe the first they've been excited about in a long time. I think as far as working with faculty and staff, it's a really fun challenge to have somebody say, "I need books that connect with this time period," or, "That will help teach this!" Gathering a pile of those books is really fulfilling. I love having conversations with kids about books and showing my love for reading. I'd say promoting love of reading is probably what [I enjoy most]. (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016)
Sidney’s self-reflection exudes an element of comfort with her confession that being a “friendly face” is an important factor when developing relationships with students. She also identified her role as one that helps students connect to books and to know what “their thing is or what they might like to read next” that can only happen when a positive relationship is established and conversations about books are happening. Her quest to know every student in the lower school is admirable, and further emphasizes just how important she believes knowing students is to her success as a librarian. She also perceives success as a librarian when she is able to connect teachers with books that support their instruction or that will bolster students’ understanding of a topic.

“Gathering a pile” of books for students and teachers that introduces them to characters, genres, and topics that they would have no knowledge of otherwise are fundamentally rewarding for Sidney in her position as school librarian.

Sidney’s colleague Hannah had similar sentiments about her role as a school librarian to match students with books that she believed they would enjoy based on her relationships with students. She too, gathered piles of books to recommend to individual students based on their known interests and past pleasurable reading experiences. Hannah also spoke about the process through which student patrons “judge a book by its cover” sometimes innocently as they are not yet able to read the title or back cover synopsis, and other times because socially they have heard good or bad things about a certain book:

The second graders give peer review critiques which is very cool. I think that's a great way to find out a book. They judge a book by its cover and they do the series. If I give them a book and firstly if it's not a new book, they would just look at it. Unless I can really sell it. I can do that with
some of the books but not … They won't read them. I was just hoping that this would be way to get them to read new books. I think my main thing is to get them engaged in books, and to love them. I don't care what they read. It's fine if they love this series but don't love that series... They get more involved in the story [when they are engaged with it]. It's a way of becoming a more sophisticated reader. I realize [suggesting books] is hit or miss...Also if they didn't really open it and read two chapters, they still don't know whether it was book they would've liked. I don't know whether they actually read them. I find that a challenge. I try to say, "It's just one week and it's just a book. It's not like for death. You can read this, start it. If you don't like it, bring it back. That's the end of that." It becomes very important to them, what they check out. (Hannah, Interview, May 9, 2016).

Becoming a “more sophisticated reader” in Hannah’s happens when a student is deeply engaged in a book that they enjoy. She initiates the first steps for students to embark down that deep pathway of literacy development by suggesting books that students may dismiss at first based on judgement and peer feedback. Her desire to “sell” a book to student is benevolently veiled in the greater quest to expose students to new ideas and genres that they may not ever naturally access themselves. She suggests that a challenge blocking students from being risk-takers in their reading is sometimes the judgement other students place on their peers during check out time. Shannon saw something similar with her students:

I don't even know if [check-out] is competitive, but more of “this is my identity, this is how I want to express my identity, this is who I want to be.” Aspirational maybe? In some respects, [students are] their own custodians. In the morning, they can check out whatever they want, and there aren't really limits as to how many books they can borrow. If they come with a stack of 12 books, you might have a little bit of a conversation like, "I'm going to hold on to some of these, why don't you take four books instead for today? These titles I know are still going to be on the shelf in a couple of weeks, so get through those, and these will be waiting for you, that's fine." There's negotiation there, but I try to make it as open as possible… My big fear is that I don't want to accidentally start playing God with their choices… Sometimes it is a book that hasn’t circulated for a while, and I'm just thinking about it and trying to see if
there’s interest because it might not be discovered otherwise. (Shannon, Interview, May 11, 2016)

Both Hannah and Shannon work to create judgement free space where students can be intellectually curious and let their imaginations wander, and a threat of soured relationships with students in the library is the potential judgement by peers at check-out time. While both librarians worked to select books for students to expand their reading repertoire, they did not force students to read specific genres or book titles either. Maintaining positive student relationships and protecting the library as a space that is judgment-free and safe was therefore more important than forcing a child to read a certain book. A student’s individual autonomy to develop their own identity as readers emerges in this excerpt from the data, too. In some ways, a child checking out 12 books at a time is taking a personal stance on what he or she finds interesting. That stance can be informed and encouraged by the librarian, but ultimately the Shannon and Hannah realize that there is a limit to how much they are willing to impact a student’s choice in reading.

Similarly, Elaine from Crestwood Academy also saw one her roles as getting to know her students as readers. She specifically hoped that her role inspired boys to know themselves as “readers and problem solvers” and she too alluded to the aspect of her role that tries to “sell” books to students and teachers that they would not themselves select. She also had profound insights into why the library as opposed to a classroom space is an important element in developing fluency as readers. She said:

The fact that they want to be here is really important. They're not always here to read, they're not always here to pick books. For some of them, as I said, it's just a safe place. It's one of the few spaces in their day where they can make their own choices fully. I think that's really important. Just not
be physical because for some boys, that is not a measure of their power and the playground is definitely about motion and strength, physical strength. For some boys, just having a space to relax and not have an agenda other than enjoying if they choose what's on the shelves or just enjoying their peers is really important. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

Elaine’s insight into why her library is a safe space for students implies that there is a tangible and attractive difference between the school library space and other classroom or common area spaces in the school. From Elaine’s point of view the library is beloved because it is a safe place where boys have individual autonomy and where they can expand their minds without exerting the strength of their bodies. It was undeniable from my observations or Elaine teaching and helping boys during check-out time that she had tremendously positive relationships with students that allowed her to get to know their interests and curiosities, and that also fostered a sense of safety amongst the boys that made them seek the library over classroom or common areas to imagine and wonder.

School libraries are the intellectual playground of young minds, and librarians have a key part in developing the intellectual curiosity and multiple literacy skill development that students need in order to become fluent and avid readers. In this way, each of the school libraries in this study were aptly given the reputation of being a safe, inclusive, and inspiring space by all community stakeholders. The libraries in this study emerged as the true “heart beat” of each school’s mission to foster curiosity and a love of learning. The libraries position as a seat of inquiry, acceptance, intellectual and emotional sanctuary coupled with the librarian’s pivotal role in shaping school culture around teaching and learning are powerful reminders of why schools need libraries today. Moreover, helping students to curate their own identity as readers outside of the classroom highlights the important role of librarians serving early childhood students
especially; students in the early grades who are just learning to read depended on the librarians to create and help carve out deeper pathways to explore multiple literacies in ways that they were not afforded in their traditional classroom settings. In these ways, librarians themselves were the dominant factor influencing the space value of each library in this study. Adding to their unmistakable value is their ability to unite diverse school community as well. Librarians in this study were agents of diversity and inclusivity, equity advocates, and allies to the cause of helping young students to find their own identity as readers and as young people; by carefully and thoughtfully curating their collections to represent the social identity markers of the community, librarians were critical to each school’s mission pursuit of social justice and equity.

**Curating Equity through Critical Literacy: Librarians as Agents of Diversity and Inclusivity.** Shannon referred to the American Association of School Libraries’ stance on the role of the librarian to “help students and teachers to become effective users of ideas and information” as she explained how she perceived her role while working with teachers and students. All of the librarians in this study held similar views, and saw one of their primary roles as curating books and information that supported the curriculum within each grade level. However, the school librarians did not always support the formal written curriculum of grade levels. Librarians shaped school culture by teaching and advocating an unwritten curriculum of diversity and inclusivity, too. This unwritten curriculum gave students a pathway to engage in children’s literature in a way that they did not always have in the classroom where levelled readers and reading skills were dominant; librarians intentionally curated books and designed lessons that
represented the culturally and socially diverse aspects of their students’ lives in order to shape safe and comfortable pathways that young children could then explore themselves.

Educator and equity advocate Emily Style (1982) described why teaching with text that represents the students in a particular school is important. She wrote that “half of the curriculum walks in the door with the students in the textbook of their lives” (Style, 1982, p. 1). A traditional approach to classroom instruction uses scholarship on the shelves of classroom library to teach knowledge, but teachers must also recognize the importance of shaping learning with the “scholarship in the selves” of students (Style, 2004). This is to say that some classrooms have an established curriculum introducing concepts and themes that may or may not represent the “life-texts” of the students, and that shifting pedagogy away from the text of the shelves to the text of the self is not always second nature for teachers (Style, 2004). However, this was second nature to the librarians in this study.

Early childhood classroom teachers tasked with growing fluent readers with direct reading instruction often forfeit the ability to curate books that intentionally represent their students’ lives. Yet the librarians in this study all saw this forfeiture as a critical addition to their own instruction by intentionally curating, displaying, and sharing books that represented the diversity within the school’s community. Rose explains her collaborative approach to curating books that represent the “constellation” of families and social identities of students with her colleague Allayna:

We hope that every child with every particular family constellation can see themselves here in some way in the books that we read so that when I am making my choices for what I’m reading to the kids I’m mindful of that…. I think that things that I’m most proud of about our library is that I
do feel that every child can find themselves in a fiction book somewhere in our library. For example, we just had a family visiting this morning that was two white men, they clearly have adopted a child, because they asked "Do you have books about adoptive families?", and we have many, many, many. I feel that we have worked really hard, and Allayna and I both, when we're out and about in the world, we look at books with the eye to "Can we improve our collection by having this book that shows these kinds of kids?" (Rose, Interview, May 13, 2016)

Rose’s narration of how she and Allayna look for books with a certain “eye” towards curating a collection that represents the students and families at William Penn is a unique role that the librarians assume that was starkly different from how teachers explained they curated their classroom libraries. Classroom teachers were tasked with teaching reading to early childhood students and therefore curated their classroom libraries based on the reading levels of their students and the text features of the books, rather than curating a classroom library collection that represented students’ identities. In this way, the school librarians were critically important to establishing a pathway for students to see themselves in literature.

Rose further explained that is important for school librarians to curate book collections where students see themselves in literature because it establishes a pathway for students to engage more personally and deeply with the story. She described intentionally shifting language in a book to represent the social identities of the students of that class:

I change the language of the books. I don’t know if you noticed that I did change the languages. Several of the books that I read to be inclusive. In the pre-kindergarten we have several kids who have two moms rather than a mom or dad. So I always change things... I feel both lucky and entrusted because these are our littlest of kids and for [some] they're the majority of [a school’s] population, but for us they're the entry… I feel that really for the two years that I have the pre-kindergarten and the kindergarten
students that I do a lot about social issues and getting along. (Rose, Interview, May 13, 2016)

Rose’s insight that the youngest students are “the entry” for the librarians to engage students in personalized reading by intentionally selected books that represent them or their families emphasizes the critical role that school librarians have in developing an important pathway towards literacy and literature appreciation for students learning how to read. While classroom teachers are focused on developing reading skills, the school librarians partner their efforts to develop both a love of reading and a safety in reading by using the text of a student’s life in their instruction and curation of books. Elaine from Crestwood Academy, the all-boys school, highlights an interesting and new dimension of the role of the librarian to use the school’s community as inspiration while curating the collection. In a single gendered school, Elaine intentionally worked to give her male students access to female characters. Elaine’s approach to curating a collection of books to represent the school Crestwood Academy’s community holds a different perspective considering that the school serves all boys. Thus, how lower school librarians successfully partner with classroom teachers to make connections with characters not represented in the student body was ever more important.

While William Penn’s librarians intentionally curated books that represent their diverse community, gender diversity at Crestwood Academy was absent as it is an all-boys school. Therefore, Elaine viewed one of her primary roles as curating books that promoted gender diversity. She noted that while she wanted her male students to come to the library to “feel successful and really engaged and connected” to characters in a book,
it was a professionally “heartbreaking” struggle to make female characters accessible to the boys:

It's a little heartbreaking sometimes because there are some things that I know will not get checked out by the boys... As a librarian, you have to make space, I feel, for things that you know the boys will engage with which means there are some things that they won't. I try to sell them to classroom libraries and do book talks for teachers and say, "Please, this would be a terrific read aloud." It's not something that boys generally will pick up so I try to promote certain characters or stories through the faculty as read alouds, if I think or fairly confident it won't go off our shelves through the boy's hands. One of the biggest things we try to do when we're choosing our collection is to keep it as diverse as possible, that's incredibly important, in terms of character and author but within the confines of what we know boys will engage with, especially as they get older...Gender is a big issue in terms of who checks out what. If we're talking about fiction, the character's gender makes a big difference to the boys. They really have a tough time feeling like “I'm going to pick up Judy Moody”, that’s the book that always comes to mind, because first, she has is a girl although Stink is next to her so that helps but Junie B. Jones is another one... there are very few female characters that they will pick up and read. Again, I will try, all the time when I read aloud to them to find female characters and promote those to faculty. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

Elaine shared that the consequence of promoting female characters too much with her students has resulted in some boys “closing themselves off as a reader”, a dangerous threat to her role as a school librarian who sought to establish safe and meaningful pathways towards literacy development (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016). This excerpt also surfaced a new theme of librarians as identity shapers: librarians saw an aspect of their role as helping students to make connections to books and characters that they themselves may not have a natural proclivity towards on their personal “scholarship of the self” (Style, 1982).

The work of the school librarians in this study to give students access to characters and themes from minority groups at such a young age is tremendous as
socialization in early childhood and identity formation are dependent on a child seeing his or her image in the world around them. Banks (2013) scholarly work on multicultural education poignantly explains how critical it is for young students, especially students of color, to see themselves represented in their school community:

Each of us becomes culturally encapsulated during our socialization in childhood. We accept the assumption of our own community culture, internalize its values, views of the universe, misconceptions, and stereotypes. Although this is as true for the child socialized within a mainstream culture as it is for the minority child, minority children are usually forced to examine, confront, and question their cultural assumptions when they enter school. Students who are born and socialized with the mainstream culture rarely have an opportunity to identify, question, and challenge their cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives because the school culture usually reinforces those that they learn at home and in their communities (Banks, 2013, p. 80)

Banks (2013) insight here that schools are commonly the place for minority students to examine and confront the stereotypes associated with their cultural identity is accurate and further emphasizes the critical role that librarians have in helping young students see their social and cultural identities represented in books. The school librarians in this study actively worked to free children from a culturally encapsulated school community by doing more than just displaying book covers with diverse characters; each librarian worked to ensure that each child in the school felt safe and represented in the library past the tokenized “hero and holiday” displays that some school communities often relegate minority groups to (Banks, 2013) by curating a diverse collection and connecting students with books about diverse topics and with diverse characters. In this way, the school librarians incorporated culturally responsive pedagogy in their daily work as a way to give minority students equal representation, consequently illuminating new paths
towards literacy development and identity formation inclusive of all students within the community.

My analysis of librarians in this study as powerful agents of diversity and inclusivity is appropriate when one considers the collective work these librarians did to shift one of the dominant paradigms in independent school education: the paradigm that independent schools are “bastions of privilege and elitism, high tuition schools that enroll the children of the nation’s power elite” (Doyle, 1981, p. 661). Through intentional and thoughtful collection curation, reader’s advisory, and relationship building with all students, these librarians worked to subvert this dominant paradigm so that each child had equal chance to develop, examine, and confront their own identities in the safety of the school library. The librarians in this study worked to ensure that the cultural and social identities of their students were represented in their collections and in the books that they read aloud to children. By doing so, the librarians became agents of diversity, inclusivity, and equity. As Banks (2013) suggests, there is an especially important need for young children in school to be able to see their social identities represented in ways that challenge stereotypes. Through storytelling, librarians did just that: challenged stereotypes and introduced images of minority students and different family structures to students to bring these important identities into what Cruise-Robinson Howe, and Style (2014) call the “marketplace of ideas” or more literally, the school community.

Chen et al. (2014) examined multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy through the lens of “storytelling.” The concept of storytelling in Chen et. al’s (2014) focuses on the act as a reflective strategy for educators, however; the authors’
(2014) use the function of storytelling to explain how important it is to tell the stories of minority groups so that their identity and experiences are brought into the “marketplace of ideas” systemically developed in schools:

… Storytelling empowers us to see our selves as change agents. If a person who is accustomed to having their experiences and stories taken seriously and listened to in their marketplace of ideas, their stories are automatically connected to the systemic. If someone shares an experience or story in the marketplace of ideas and it is taken seriously for the first time then it is not merely sentimental it is the beginning of a paradigm shift (Chen et. al, 2014, p. 5)

Intentionally curating books and a library collection that represents the diversity of a school community or the ideals of the school’s mission can shift how students see themselves and others. Librarians were important agents in shifting the paradigm of independent schools as white elitist institutions by bringing the stories of minority groups into the “marketplace of ideas” in their spaces. Ideas are important in schools, as they nurture the inquisitive spirit of students to become sophisticated learners and thinkers.

**Curating Ideas and Information in the Digital Age.** The librarians in this study examined their own positionality as agents of change and actively worked to curate collections that put the social and cultural identities of their students into the “marketplace of ideas.” As ideas are important to healthy learning communities, I found that the role of school librarians used technology to mediate the process through which students developed their ideas and gained access information. Digital devices were used to quickly access information that helped students find answers to their curiosities and to give more information to fuel their ideas.

While every librarian had technology present in their library spaces, no library was dominated by eReaders, projectors, or computers. These libraries were dominated
by print resources, and each librarian saw their role differently when it came to the topic of using technology. Rose and Allayna both felt that children in the early childhood grades preferred the action of roaming the library to look for books and sorting books in the bins by cover as opposed to holding an eReader. Digitally searching for books in an online catalog system was not a skill they taught students at William Penn until the upper elementary grades and middle school. Similarly, NES used their digital information catalogs and research tools with older students as well, and focused the time that librarians had with the elementary school students to allow students to browse books from the shelf and to “wander and wonder” in the library (Fieldnotes, May 9, 2016). All of the schools had a printed encyclopedia set, however research was never mentioned as being done in the library alone or without collaboration from a classroom teacher; while the school libraries were places to research information and ideas, the research was connected to the classroom curriculum or a project-based learning opportunity, and the librarians partnered with teachers to support and expand students’ access to information. Elaine mentioned that she and her two “labrarian” colleagues collaborate and teach the boys at Crestwood to research ideas in the library, but then to build and construct representations of those ideas in the I-Lab. In this way, technology in the library is used as a tool to access information, not as a vehicle through which to build knowledge about a topic that was isolated and restricted to a student’s time in the library alone. Rather, students were presented a problem to solve in a classroom project, they researched the problem in the library under Elaine supervision and help, and then they moved onto the I-Lab to tactiley represent their understanding or solutions with material. Jonathan alluded
to this the quote mentioned earlier, and his teaching colleague Frank elaborated that the collaboration between the library and the I-Lab to research ideas happens almost every day and is necessary to fully implement a project with students. At Crestwood, technology was a tool used in the service of the learning in the library, in the I-Lab, and in classrooms.

On a tour of the school by the lower school technology teacher, Holly, we stopped in to observe a third-grade teacher using iPads to frame their thinking about the location and plot setting. The boys were mobile and spread around the classroom, walking around with the iPads to connect and talk with their peers to share what they discovered or what they struggled with while some students also were sitting on the floor with their backs propped up bean bags and cushion pillows. Research was clearly not relegated to the confines of the library space only, and the iPads allowed students to not only access information quickly, but to move about the room to share and discuss with their peers or to comfortable situate their bodies to engage in deeper inquiry about their topic and new ideas. In this way, the school library was not the only space in the school that students were able to access information and ideas thanks to the mobility of iPads. Holly explained that every teacher in the school had a set of classroom iPads, and that one of her primary roles and responsibilities was to help teachers integrate research on the iPads into their classroom instruction and curriculum in order to enhance and support student learning (Fieldnotes, May 10, 2016).

Country Day’s second grade co-teachers, technology teacher, and Shannon collaborated to support a classroom project on gardening and as an extension activity to
the students’ summer reading book *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner. The project eventually involved partnering for instructional support from the visual arts teacher as well. When students arrived back to school in September as new second graders, they discussed the book and began working on the school garden to connect what they had read with what they knew through the experience of tending to a real garden. The project specifically focused on the elements that make up the garden, and then each student took ownership of researching a plant or animal necessary to grow a successful garden using articles from the library’s online database. Students did the research in the library and in their classroom. Once each student had researched their specific topic, they wrote a short explanation to read aloud on a voice recorder explaining how their element of the garden helped it to grow. Shannon worked with Sharon and Connie (the co-teachers) along with the technology teacher to record students reading aloud and then included the visual arts teacher to help students construct a bare conductive soundboard mural. Upon pressing a section of the mural, a student’s voice narrated how and why that element of the garden was essential to its growth. Sharon and Connie explained during our interviews that the project took on a tremendous amount of collaboration, but that it was a meaningful project that they saw impact student engagement in the learning and researching process. They also each mentioned that the collaboration with the Shannon and the technology teacher was essential to the project success since they needed the guidance and assistance to give informational access to the students and to better understand how electricity on the soundboard worked so that they could teach the students. The result of this collaborative project was a visually beautiful
mural made by students that spanned a large wall leading to Sharon and Connie’s second grade classroom.

Learning is about making connections and experiences. In fact, our human brains are plastic and shaped by experiences. The more experiences that we have and the more connections we can make with information, the stronger the neuronal connections are in our brains and the greater likelihood we are to retain that information in our long term memory centers. The learning process for students in the stages of early childhood development are especially unique because the brain is changing rapidly, is shaped by experiences, and at night will prune away weak neuronal connections in a process called “pruning.” Therefore, isolated learning that is static is the least impactful learning on a child’s brain. On the other hand, learning that is dynamic, engages students in an active experience, and that is connected to more than a single event or fact is how a child’s brain is shaped and knowledge is constructed. All of the librarians interviewed in this study used technology as a vehicle through which to access information and ideas, but in the

Figure 2. The garden mural at Country Day that is also a bar conductive sound board. Notice the copper wire linking each drawing in the garden to a voice recorder. In the photograph on the right, Shannon presses a worm on the mural to hear a student narrate how the worm impacts the growth of the garden.
close and connected collaboration with classroom teachers to support their curriculum and instruction and in order to enhance student learning. Both the collaborations at Crestwood Academy and Country Day are exemplar examples of project based learning experiences for children that incorporate multiple literacies: students research information digitally or in a book, write about their learning and then tactiley construct a representation of that learning. The library is an important space to develop these multiple literacy skills and the school librarians were undoubtedly influential collaborators who positively impacted their colleagues’ instruction and student learning.

By showing teachers and students how to find and use information and books, librarians gave students the space and knowledge needed to be inquisitive and creative. The American Library Association (ALA) established guidelines to outline exemplary school library programs, and the association describes the mission of exemplary library programs as “to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information; students are empowered to be critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information” (ala.org, 2017). The librarians in this study fulfilled the ALA’s mission and used technology to empower students to be critical thinkers. Librarians collaborated with teachers to research and apply information to tactile classroom projects, and together their students engaged in activities that developed multiple literacy skills.

The most important component adding to the space value in all of these libraries was in fact the people within: the school librarians. Moreover, the librarians’ ability to shape the teaching and learning culture in ways that supported the school’s mission and
promoted democratic ideals was apparent but also unique. Librarians, examined from the interview data from school leaders and teachers, had the unique position of serving the entire school community while also supporting the development of multiple literacy skills in students. Librarians in this study were also agents of diversity and inclusivity, equity advocates, and allies to the cause of helping young students to find their own identity as readers and as young people; by carefully and thoughtfully curating their collections to represent the social identity markers of the community, librarians were critical to each school’s mission pursuit of social justice and equity. Furthermore, librarians nurtured relationships that were non-judgmental by designing the library space to be safe and welcoming. In this way, librarians curated not just items for the library collection, but relationships with community stakeholders as well. In the next section, I explain how the physical features of each library evoked a sense of safety and acceptance for school community members. The image of the school library as a “sanctuary” within the school is examined, and is an image that bespeaks its value as a coveted and attractive space around the school. Serving as leaders of this coveted space, I explain how librarians were the primary emotional architects of each library and therefore contributed to the emotional architecture of the school libraries’ overall space value.

The Emotional Architecture of School Libraries Adds to its Space Value

Another perspective that further defines the concept of space value at each of these school libraries was the implicit role the school librarians embodied as the “emotional architect” of the space. Each librarian articulated their desire to create a
vibrant, comfortable, and well-curated space during our interviews. They also all mentioned the intentional addition of playful visual cues and décor elements to capture students’ attention and to give excitement to the space. What was not explicitly revealed through the data, however, was each librarian’s responsibility in creating a positive emotional climate in the library. Establishing a positive learning environment for students is an imperative condition to set an optimal learning experience, and while the librarians never communicated this as one of the responsibilities or roles within their professional work, it was evident in my observations of students engaging the space that they the librarians are in fact all extremely talented making the library a comfortable and safe space for all school members.

Each school librarians their intention for the library to feel like a safe and comfortable space, and their efforts to design an engaging and thoughtful space based on the age of the students was notable. My observations of each of the librarians teaching and then guiding students to careful book selections left me feeling inspired by the masterful ease in which the provided a safe and welcoming space for children to explore different literacies. Shannon at Country Day was especially poignant in her desire to emotionally design the library space as well, indicating that her library space was a place she wanted students to escape judgements or stereotypes that could stunt or stifle a child’s emotional growth during early childhood and adolescence. Her words evoke the sense of safety and acceptance that I felt in every library, and my observations of the student engagement in her space in particular lead me also to conclude that students too
felt the same sense of acceptance and safety during their visits. However, Shannon’s word powerfully captures exactly what I noticed in each space. She said:

I want students to feel welcome, I want them not to feel judged… I want them to feel like if I have an information need, that this is someplace where I can come and be accepted, and that what I want is legitimate, and it's not going to be dismissed or locked up. (Shannon, Interview, May 11, 2016)

Shannon’s words are similar to Elaine’s desire to have her library feel like home for the students who, “don’t quite fit in” at school, a feeling that many young students unfortunately are forced to confront and work through during childhood. In this way, the early childhood libraries in the study can be better understood as an extraordinary space that all school stakeholders enjoy because of the hard work of school librarians to curate the learning space and the chief architects of the library’s emotional environment. I did not interview students in this study, so to further substantiate my claim that school libraries hold a space value incomparable to other spaces within the school is Gabriel’s confession:

When I walk into this library, there’s that sense again of comfort. It's too small for me because I'm a big man and I walk in and some things are down here and some books are way down there [motioning low heights in reference to the short stacks of books for young students]. I still feel a sense of warmth, welcome, comfort, and communality. There's a real life there…I get that sense that this is a place that I can go... I remember one time I needed some place to calm myself and so I walked into the library and said to myself, “I'm going to sit down in the library and read a book,” and I got through I think maybe 25 words before some emergency happened, but it's a place that I want to go to be reflective and calm. (Gabriel, Interview, May 13, 2016)

The collective essence of the library as a place to be reflective and calm, safe and comfortable that Gabriel, the school leader, described is the space value I discovered
across the data. In design, the careful architectural and decorative design of each library space was unique, yet the consistent theme was that each library space was sought after, beloved, coveted, and a desirable place for all school stakeholders. The emotional climate of the space also had a primary role in mediating the literacy skill development of children by establishing it as a safe place where the freedom to be oneself allowed each child the cognitive disinhibition to be curious and wonder.

Each library in this study intentionally designed their space to support the development of multiple literacies in students of early childhood grades by focusing on specific architectural features and décor that enhanced each space’s aesthetic appeal and functional use by students, teachers, administrators, and parents. The more centrally located the libraries were on the school’s campus, the more frequently the study participants indicated the library was used; the New England School’s library was not located on or near the center of campus and was still used by school members at times. Comfortable seating, reading nooks, and niches made into the actual structural architecture of the space or with soft borders established those locations in the library as comfortable and cozy places for students to read independently or discuss books with friends. These unique spaces also make each library’s vast and open-concept design feel differentiated and accessible to the young students. Window seats were another consistent and charming feature that supported children while engaging in reading activities, and the playful, whimsical displays in each space added personality and creativity to the environment so that it was thoughtfully primed to inspire curiosity and inquiry. Furthermore, the school librarians themselves were discovered to be emotional
architects of each of the school libraries, each critically important to the positive and welcoming climate of the library space that was so tangibly felt while I was there and also explicitly captured during my interviews, observations, and analysis of archival data. All of these unique aspects combined to contribute to each library’s unrivaled space value.

**William Penn’s Library as the Symbolic Center of the School**

William Penn School’s library was also designed in such a way that afforded such deep, individualized experiences for each of the school stakeholders. The school’s library served students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, and was centrally located at the front of the school making it easily accessible to each of the school’s classrooms and also to parents dropping off or picking up their children. I noticed that a number of teachers and parents entered the library space during my observations at the school, and my interviews with the two school librarians also created an understanding of the library’s prominent role in the school as a welcoming and safe place for all stakeholders. The emotional climate of was best described by Gabriel, the Assistant Head of William Penn. Gabriel eloquently described the library from its inception as the school’s original gymnasium to one of its many purposes now as a community meeting space. His description of the “spiritual” essence of the space suggests a unique perspective on library space value not captured in other data. Gabriel reasoned that William Penn’s school library was an asset to not just school stakeholders but to its local community as well, a symbol of a relationship building and communal investment:

It's in a central place. It's one of the first buildings that ... Our natural entrance is the other side, and the first thing to your left is the library. It
was the gym, now the library, thank goodness...Long before I was here, that was the gymnasium maybe 25, 30 years ago. Now it's the library, and that's really symbolic in many ways. That first place that you can step into potentially is a library. It builds community. The younger kids from pre-K all the way up to sixth grade are there in community with [the librarians]. We invite the community outside in when you have Andrea Pinkney coming, or you have Sy Montgomery [author] coming, or you have a number of artists and writers coming outside the community to be in the community, to be a part of our community, to help us build community. In many ways, I think what we're doing in the library is central to who we are, what we do, and why we do it. There's a thing called community which is very important in the Quaker practicing faith. Having a library is a way to build community. When we are teachers or we are educators, we are often siloed away in our classrooms, so busy and so deeply invested in what we're doing in that classroom that day, not our malice but out of real honest effort to do what we can do to improve that child's life. We are almost like independent contractors in our rooms trying to get our stuff done. How do we build and bring out community? We have assemblies, we have performances, whether they're artistic or they're athletic, and we have libraries where we bring in these wonderful authors to talk about their experiences and to connect to us humanly about the human experience. The library helps us with building community. It helps the town, it's a place to go. I belong to a certain religion, you belong to a different one, so we're going to separate ourselves at churches. There's a secular community building almost spiritual space, a library, and what a library can be and do is a fascinating way to build community around something that's important. What's the idea behind a library? The collection of some of the best thought and some of the ideas in humanity so that we can learn and build on what we have and build a foundation. There's something nice about that. A library helps in a community. If it helps in a community, a small town, why can't it help in a school to build and bridge out to the community? It's beautiful to have a library at the center and the front of the school... There's that relaxed feel and that opportunity to hear people speak about things. Very different. A very different feel to be in a library than it is to be in other public space. (Gabriel, Interview, May 13, 2016)

Gabriel’s description of the significance of William Penn’s library to the school and to the local community as a “spiritual space” was a unique description in the data I collected; however, I appreciate the powerful imagery his words suggested as I tried to discern what it is about library spaces that draws so many people within a school...
community to seek it out as a place to just “be.” Moreover, his quote analyzed further alludes to the concept of the school library as a space were things and actions above and beyond our physical reality happen; to just “be” in a space while physically doing nothing suggests a certain spiritual transcendence is happening instead. Clarity of thought, connection to something greater than himself, and the space to reflect with others on the “human experience” are all incredible images of the school library that contradicts the typical image of the library as a place to read books. Gabriel’s choice of words in referencing the silo-effect that many school and community constituents operate justifies the need for libraries as a common space where people can go to re-engage with one another and their communities. He thinks libraries have value because they unite members of the community and give those members access to the best thoughts and ideas of all “humanity.” Gabriel suggests that the value of the library is greater than any physical or tangible item here on earth, but rather invaluable to a communities’ collective spirit as a place that gives testimony to not just ideas but our existence as humans as well.

Another example for how William Penn’s library space was used by the local community became evident when Gabriel escorted me back to the library for more observations. As we entered the room I noticed a placard on the wall depicting a bird’s-eye view of the library’s layout of tables and chairs. Upon questioning its purpose hanging on the wall when I suspected the two librarians knew how the room was to be arranged, Gabriel explained that the space is often used on the weekends by local organizations and sometimes even a church group for worship on Sundays. The placard was posted to ensure that all users of the space would reassemble it into the correct
format for the school to continue its use with students uninterrupted by an external organization’s use of the space. Gabriel’s explanation of the school library serving not just his school community, but the greater local community as well suggests that the space value of the library was coveted and incredibly valuable to both in school and out-of-school stakeholders.

**Country Day’s Library as an Evocative Community Space**

The physical space of Country Day’s library attracted different community stakeholders because of its charm and central location on campus, but Shannon, the school’s one librarian, wanted to know why the space was so valued by the community on a deeper level. Aside from aesthetics, she wanted to know why so many people requested to use a space she also thought was beautiful, but who was also trained to view the space as a community center for inquiry and imagination. Shannon sent a survey to faculty and staff at the school to uncover why such a range of community stakeholders used the space—from music teachers to parents, Shannon wanted to know why the library was the one place that brought so many people together. Admittedly, I wanted to know the answer to the same questions as I tallied the number of adults who entered the library to peruse books, sit down in the comfortable chairs, or to just pass through at 13 in just 45 minutes. Shannon clarified the findings of her own survey which led her to posit that for some, the space is just aesthetically pleasing and expansive enough to host large events. In particular, she referenced the monthly social meetings that parents hosted in the library. Parent volunteers from the school’s Parents’ Association used the space for social meetings called “Coffees” and Shannon explained:
Those monthly coffees are really meant to be a social opportunity for parents because each grade has different social events, so having one on campus where they are all being welcomed. We want them here. It's a good time. They can use the space and it's central and it's beautiful. (Shannon, Interview, May 11, 2016)

Shannon went on in the interview to explain that because parents in different grade-levels do not get to see each other frequently, the “coffees” in the library serve as a social meeting in addition to a meeting to plan and coordinate school-related functions. Shannon alludes to the fact that parents make the choice to gather in the library space, and when she said “we want them here” she was referring to the fact that while other meeting spaces in the school exist, she wants to build relationships with parents when they come to host events. Her suggestion that the parents use the space because it is “central” and “beautiful” are important to attracting parents to the space; however, the meaningful engagement that happens when parents and Shannon connect about what children are learning makes hosting events in the library a way to build a healthy school culture with parents. Shannon also invites parents into the library to use the space as their own reading library as well. Parents are allowed to check out books, and I witnessed Shannon assist a mother and her young son too young to attend the school but who had an older sibling in the first grade find pictures books to read together at home. Shannon commented that she encourages parents and their entire family to use the library’s resources. In her opinion, Country Day’s library was a benefit that should extend to all family members, and so sharing its resources with parents was an important part of her library program.
In these ways, it was clear that Country Day’s space value was valued by parents as a location in the school that they could use to gather socially and to access books and other media to support both their own and their family’s learning. My experience visiting Country Day and interviewing Shannon, her teaching colleagues, and her Head of School, started me thinking about the library space as not just transactional but transformative as well. Looking more closely at the data, I found that there are themes of ownership and investment at Country Day that highlights the unique role that the school library has to unite members of the community in one single space. Parents and teachers “invested” emotionally into the space and Shannon herself made it feel a welcoming and like it was a place that parents and families wanted to be. The library at Country Day was a place that parents valued for his inclusiveness and Shannon’s hospitable nature.

My observations also supported this notion that the school’s library holds space value with faculty and staff members as well, however Shannon collected data in a survey of her own design that paints a more colorful picture of how valued and appreciated the library is to her colleagues. Shannon arrived at Country Day as the new librarian eager to get to know the faculty and staff of the school. She graduated from Simmons University in Boston, Massachusetts, where she studied to receive a master’s degree in Library Science. She joked that the librarianship seemed to be more of a vocation rather than a profession, and one that also ran in her family. During our interview, she said in jest, “my mother is a school librarian. My husband is a cataloger. My parents met in a library. It's a little genetic!” Her love of her role was apparent, and I sensed that she was a librarian who did not leave her job at Country Day at the end of the
day to not think more about it, but rather that library science was a way of thinking and living; Shannon was the consummate librarian well steeped and trained in all aspects of the craft to the extent too that her personal and professional lives had coalesced into one powerful vocation, and the Country Day community was a benefactor. Shannon assumed her role as the librarian at Country Day in 2012, replacing a school librarian whose long tenure made him an iconic member of the school faculty yet who had not managed the school’s large library collection in line with contemporary library standards. Shannon navigated the transition cautiously in her first two years and intentionally focused her work on building relationships with all of the school stakeholders. In order to begin building relationships with faculty and staff members that were rooted in the spirit of helpfulness and a desire to help make connections between a library program and the teachers’ curricula, Shannon created a survey and distributed it electronically to all school staff members. Another motivation to send the survey was to make it known to her colleagues that she was genuinely interested in getting to know the school community from different points of view and aspects-- she wanted to establish herself as someone who was approachable and responsive to feedback. Shannon copied the survey results during my visit and shared them with me. Together we briefly reviewed how positive the responses were about the space itself. However, upon further analysis of Shannon’s survey, it became very clear how well endeared the library space was to the faculty and staff at Country Day.

Shannon received a high response rate on her survey, and the open-ended responses paint clear picture of what brings different faculty and staff members to use the
school library. Out of the 74 faculty and staff members sent the survey, 55 community members responded to six questions, one of which was “What do you see as the greatest strength of the library program?” An impressive 60% of the respondents mentioned the physical space as the library program’s greatest strength which was also the topic of responses most frequently mentioned compared to others. More specifically, the respondents identified the library’s centrality, flexibility, multipurpose use, and positive emotional climate as strengths. Respondents frequently described the library space as “cozy,” “comfortable” and “welcoming.” One staff member responded, “In my role as an administrator, I primarily use the library as a space for events, meetings, etc. It is a warm, welcoming and comfortable place to be and we always feel like hosting groups there!” Another respondent, most likely a teacher or staff member who worked closely with the children responded that the greatest strength of Country Day’s library program was the space because it “is inviting and the story room provide a cozy place for young students to engage in literacy activities” (see Figure 3). Still another respondent simply responded with five words: “Welcoming space. Warm. Inviting. Unique,” while yet another respondent admitted “I really like the space because it is very cozy and accessible for everybody.” One respondent referenced the feeling they believed students had in the space by describing the library as “a peaceful environment for students to read and imagine beyond the classroom.” Finally, another response described the library’s space as a wonderful setting for a meeting or to have a “nice quite experience.” That same respondent continued that:

As a non-teacher, my impression of the library is that it is the most evocative space in the school. The light, the ceiling height, the design that
incorporates past school historic fabric—all combine for a splendid area for any learning activity, meeting, or event.” (Faculty Survey, May 11, 2016)

The “historic fabric” referenced in this comment refers to a small stone cottage built into the larger library space. The cottage in Figure 3 was the original front entrance and head master’s office, until the school underwent renovations to reconfigure the school. The statement that the library is “the most evocative” space at Country Day is a powerful phrase to describe the space and its distinctive architectural features that led this respondent to claim the library as uniquely different from other spaces in the school. This response also exemplifies and captures a correlation in the survey data linking the positive emotional climate of the library to an identifiable appreciation of the space’s design with its centrality and use:

Because the library is “geographically” at the center of the school it serves as a core space that emanates welcome, warmth, and [a] love of learning to everyone in the school. It is an important space for research, browsing, questions and answers, and special events for members of the Country Day community from current students and parents to alumni. (Faculty Survey, May 11, 2016)

The library’s central location as one enters the school was noted by 10 respondents, and this particular response emphasizes the library’s space value in a succinct statement including all school stakeholders as investors. There are many spaces around a school to invest one’s time, to celebrate events, or to teach children. Yet, this faculty member thinks that the emotional architecture of the space as emanating warmth, inquiry, and to engage in community events makes this one space more valuable than other spaces available in the school. Country Day’s library has abundant resources, is centrally located, has a warm and inviting atmosphere, and is a space that past and present school
members seek out to use. Another poignant statement shared by one of these respondents clearly connected the location of the library to the school’s mission, representing a unique role that the library has as one space among many in the school that can to singly fulfill the vision Country Day has set for itself. The staff member offered that “the location of the library is its greatest strength. It makes a statement about our attitude about learning to have such a visible sign of intellectual pursuit as a person enters the school.” Indeed, Country Day’s guiding purpose statement published on the school’s website commits the school to instilling a love of learning within each student, and promises that faculty and staff members will be role models for the pursuit of knowledge and learning for all students.

Shannon established relationships with students too by including them in her survey. She collected the data in class orally with the prompt, “What’s one thing that you love about the Country Day library?” She documented responses in a notebook and later typed up the students’ responses and shared them with me during my visit. Together we reviewed the most frequent responses by grade level and Shannon told me that she was not surprised by the responses. In kindergarten, the most frequent response was that students loved the books, with specific mention of books about sharks being a beloved asset to the library in their opinion. First grade students responded that they loved the window seats and cushions in the library just as much as they loved the books and Shannon herself. Finally, the second grade students most frequently responded that they enjoyed the “story room cottage” and the library’s books. Shannon shared that the second grade students also made the collective bold request to update the library space by
adding hammocks, a “fort with bean bags,” “robots to find books,” and “another story room for more books” filled with a “bunch of pillows.” These comments are interesting because Shannon asked students to engage with her about the space, helping students to feel like they had ownership in the space and could be a part of selecting which objects are added within it.

The feedback Shannon gathered from the school’s important stakeholders shed even more light on the notion that the library space brought the school community together at Country Day. My own observations also substantiated the comments made by Shannon’s colleagues in the survey and further explain why the library has so much space value at Country Day. It was obvious that teachers sought the space to use with their own students in small groups, and the students themselves were drawn to the charming and cozy cottage also referred to as the story room and depicted in Figure 3. Teachers frequently used the library at Country Day despite having their own classroom spaces and common grade level areas. In a tour of the building, Shannon shared that each grade level has collaborative space in addition to large and open classrooms, although many teachers especially in the pre-primary grades chose to use the library as a space to work with.

*Figure 3.* The cottage at Country Day School, an original part of the school building now function as a reading room in the library space.
children in small groups as well. Her reference was quickly confirmed when we returned to the school library to hear commotion coming from the cottage. When I asked what was happening in the cottage, Shannon happily answered:

It’s their reading room! So they might be doing any number of reading-related comprehension activities in there. It is a strategy room and [the teacher] just uses the space. They have three different breakout groups. Their [classroom] space isn't really partitionable, they have another room that they can go to, and so this is just the third room… there's a big shift in seeing the library as being an academic space…as opposed to a place where kids just come and hear a story read to them. (Shannon, Interview, May 11, 2016)

Shannon’s insights here suggested that even with space options at Country Day, teachers were still inclined to use the library space with students instead of other spaces within the school, even the comfort of their own classroom. The comment also implies that before Shannon’s transition the library, the space was not used as a gathering place by teachers with their students to engage in different literacy activities except for scheduled story readings. Shannon attributed the value of the space being tied to the separateness of the strategy room in comparison to a classroom that is unable to be portioned into a closed and perhaps more quiet learning space for students, but clearly Shannon herself is an important reason why the school community enjoys coming together in the library. Shannon’s words suggest that before her, the library was not seen as a center for teaching and learning, nor was the purpose of the library viewed as one integral to the balanced development of literacy skills for early childhood and early elementary students. With Shannon now added to the space, her talents and personality invite teachers to use the library to foster the academic skill growth of their students in the pursuit of developing multiple literacy skills.
The attraction to Country Day’s library space by teachers as an alternative space for young children to learn was evident from my observations and conversations with Shannon and teachers. Aesthetically, Country Day’s library was extremely charming, filled with natural light, equipped with developmentally appropriate furniture including chairs and low-level bookshelves—ideal architectural and design features that distinguished it as an optimal space created for young children to learn within the library’s larger design. The charm of the cottage was not lost upon the children either, and I witnessed students in the cottage delighted to be there as was evidenced by their smiles and eager excitement to enter. Shannon used the house as a reading room for a small group of kindergarten students during their regularly schedule library time. My observation of the event described the emotional attachment that the young children had for the cottage. My fieldnotes captured the first five minutes of Shannon’s reading group with 8 children and revealed how excited the students were to enter the cottage:

The students line up on a long strip of yellow tape affixed to the carpet of the library floor. They’ve assembled themselves in an impressively straight line and it happened remarkably quickly for kindergarten students. Shannon talks to them about the expected procedures when they enter the house, but none of them seem to pay her any attention as they all fix their gaze inside the cottage and onto a window seat within the special house. As soon Shannon pauses her speaking to make sure the students are listening to her directions, the line leader makes motion to race inside. Shannon stops him gently with her arm and kindly says, “Hoodooed on! I’m not done yet explaining the directions!” in such a way that the students all turn their heads to look up at her with great anticipation. She decides, seemingly in that moment and in response to the attempted race inside, to instead to give each student a numbers that correspond to little round stickers inside the cottage. The stickers are strategically placed on the floor of the house, and three numbers correspond to the window seat. Once every student receives a number, the line leader saunters in with his classmates to follow. The students are smiling and are excited when they find their numbers, except for the three students who realize that they will
share the window seat—they are ecstatic! They, giggle and jump almost in unison onto the window seat cushion twisting and turning their bodies to each find a comfortable seating posture in preparation to listen to Shannon’s first read aloud. Their smiles linger through the first few sentences of the story, and then it fades into a complete and utter captivation by her reading of the story. (Fieldnotes, May 11, 2016)

This observation with kindergarten students at Country Day highlights the excitement around the actual reading room within the house and the coveted window seats where the children so eagerly raced to sit. It was also not a unique observation to just that one class. In fact, every class of students that came to the library during the day I spent at Country Day had similar and equally endearing reactions to entering that particular space within the library. Overall, the data collected at Country Day emphasized that while the students enjoyed the space as the primary patrons, but that parents and teachers enjoyed the space as well. The results from Shannon’s survey, her welcoming invitations for parents to use the space for meetings or with children not yet old enough to attend the school, and the delight that students also gained from the library space, made Country Day’s library a room in the building whose space value was unrivaled.

**Crestwood Academy’s Library as a “Safe Space”**

Crestwood Academy’s lower school library was also notable because of its vast resources, unique architecture, centrality on campus, and overall aesthetic. Together these elements contributed to its space value at a level that was also not matched by another space or room on the school’s campus. Students, teachers, parents, and even board members chose to use the library space after school even when other spaces were available. During my visit to Crestwood Academy I observed and conversed with Elaine,
a talented librarian who has served as the school’s lower school librarian for 17 years. Crestwood’s lower school library program supports students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade, while the upper school library serves grades five through eight on the all-boys day and boarding school campus. The upper and lower school libraries are attached by a grand foyer and shared circulation desk, and together they are centrally located on the ground floor of a main building on the school’s sprawling New England campus. Elaine was asked to teach lower school science four years ago in addition to her scheduled library classes, a role that she was eager to take on with the hints of a new innovation lab in the school’s master construction plan. She explained that she was excited to assume a role that expanded her training in Library Science and to collaborate with colleagues as a founding faculty member directing the new innovation lab. This new space was under construction at the time of my visit but opened for the start of the 2016-2017 school year.

Elaine holds a master’s in Library Science, and similar to Shannon, she too attended Simmons University to earn the degree. In our time together she mentioned that the library was frequently used by students but that it was also a destination for parents and faculty members looking for a quiet place to work. She also noted that the lower school library was a desirable meeting place for the school’s board members and dorm parents. In her own words, Elaine shared her interpretation of why the lower library space was used by the school stakeholders in preference over the upper school library and even other rooms on campus. She also shared the rationale behind the design of the space of which she collaborated with architects to plan. She discussed how she and the
architects aspired for the library to feel and suggested that sentiment was perhaps a reason why her library space was so frequently used:

From the beginning, because we're a boarding school and because the boys use the space at night, it was important for us to make it feel as if it was a home for them. The library is a safe space for a lot of boys that don't quite fit in… [the school library] is used all the time. It's used by the Board, it's used by the Parents Association, it's used by administration and it's used for things like last night, the boarding dorm parents used it to determine the proctors. It's a meeting space... because it's one of the bigger spaces for meetings. It has the screen [pointing to an electronic projection screen tucked into the ceiling] and it is not removed in a basement or way out from the edges, it's still in the center of this…smack in the middle [of campus]. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

Elaine’s comments highlight the library was a coveted space for the boarding students living on campus, faculty members supervising the dorms, and members of the school board even when other spaces in the school were also available. Her description of the library as “home” and “safe” were her own posits as to why students enjoyed the space. Elaine also shared similar thoughts on why board members and staff want to use the space too. During a tour of the library after our interview, Elaine continued to speak about the library’s use attributing it again to the openness of the room, the presence of large meeting tables, and the available technology used to deliver and view presentations. In these ways, the library at Crestwood Academy was undoubtedly abundant in space value for students and other important school constituents as well.

Elaine was one of the three primary leaders of the school’s brand new innovation lab, of which she and her colleagues call the I-Lab. The three team members renamed themselves, “Labrarians” while they work with students on innovation projects. Elaine’s colleague Jonathan elaborated on why the I-Lab was built directly in the middle of
campus and connected to the lower school library. He enthusiastically shared, “We’re really excited about the proximity—being able to send [students] right over to a part of what will essentially be the same building, but just a different room within that same structure, to go and do that research.” Jonathan was referring to the intentional placement of the I-Lab next to the library so that students could easily walk back and forth from both structures while constructing a project. He said that students needed to learn problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and having the I-Lab connected to the library would afford students the opportunity to research ideas and designs for their inventions before beginning construction on a project. The library’s central location on campus inspired the location of the I-lab, and the three “labrarians” were all excited to collaborate together.

**NES’s Library as an Open and Inviting for the Community**

NES’s library was not used as frequently as Crestwood Academy or Country Day; however, this school’s library space was still a valuable and coveted space within the community. Josephine, the lead librarian at NES, explained that the library was used by school stakeholders in part because it was “the biggest open space” on campus. She described the library’s use and suspected reasons for its use when she shared:

> [The library] is used less than once a month I'd say on average. Some months are busier but some months we don't have anything. People email and say, “can we use it after school?” …Spring is the season where a lot of things are happening. In June there's a reunion coming up and it's a backup space if it rains and they need a place to have the cocktail hour that they can't have outside so they come to the library and do it, that kind of thing. Occasionally parents have meetings in here early in the mornings, if they're preparing for the fair or doing some other kind of volunteer work they'll ask if they can use the space for an early morning meeting… I'd say [the library] is pretty open and inviting but cozy at the same time, enough
nooks and crannies to sort of provide that, but it's a big open space as well, it's a funny mix, airy. (Josephine, Interview, May 9, 2016)

The “cozy” description and “airy” feeling of the library is an attractive characteristic of the space that adds to the appeal for its use from various school stakeholders and for a multitude of purposes. Another librarian at NES, Sidney, noted how frequently the space was used by teachers even when they were not regularly scheduled to be at the library with their students. She said:

[Faculty members] come in on their own, they'll often come here during the week when our [novice] teachers are in the classroom on their own. A lot of people set up their desk here, their computer, and they just work quietly in here. Sometimes they have conferences or different meetings, but it's usually at a table with the computer working quietly. It's hard to even know that people are in here sometimes. The faculty and staff are definitely the quieter of the different people in the library. (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016)

Sidney’s description of the faculty members’ use of the space and insight that they are in fact the quieter of the library users is an interesting but not surprising perception. Early childhood classrooms are often times very noisy as young students learn through play and socialization. It is not surprising then, that teachers would flock to a location on campus that is separate from a traditional classroom and one that affords the quiet space to work independently. Her insight that teachers actually “set up their desk here” suggests that the library is not just a place to stop quickly in order to work, but rather a place that teachers enjoy spending quality time in order to complete their work, hold a conference, or host a meeting. Josephine and Sidney had a teaching colleague who expressed how frequently she used the library space personally, and then also how she used the space with her students. In our conversation together, she described using the library both
during regularly scheduled library time, and additional times not built into the academic schedule:

I come in the regular library time, so that's once every six days. We are on a six-day schedule and we come in half-groups. It's like an hour or a forty-minute block... We'll bring 11 kids at a time. I bring kids over at various times of the year if we need a different space to work as well as if we're going to be looking for books. Like maybe we're doing a study on poetry and so we might come over and look at the poetry section and then we pull books that they're interested in...I use [the library] as prep time for organizing something for my team and to get work ready...If I have work to do I tend to be here because I need quiet. Because it's a little quieter on this side but I like the corner right where Sidney teaches, where you can look over the green [campus lawn]. (Sam, Interview, May 9, 2016)

This teacher’s use of the library space was consistent with what other teachers described as their professional and personal uses of NES’s library space. Her mention of the “corner right where Sidney teaches, where you can look over the green [campus lawn]” referred to a corner of the library that was infiltrated by natural light from the open and expansive windows and that provided view that overlooked the sprawling campus lawn below. The openness of that library space, particularly where this teacher preferred to work, suggests that the openness of the space and views of greenspace add to the space’s value to faculty. During my visit I observed a dozen teachers entering library for nearly an hour at a time either doing work or hosting meeting with a teaching colleague. While the library was located on the outer edge of the campus’s boundaries, it was also neighboring a brand new innovation lab of which was also under construction during my visit. While the librarian team at NES were not taking on collaborative roles as innovation lab specialists, they all expressed interest and support of the new building’s purpose and promise.
Librarians, teachers, school leaders, and even survey respondents from Country Day all articulated a vibrant energy that fostered deep connections to the space and that helped to nurture positive relationships amongst school community members. Words used to describe the spaces such as “comfortable”, “safe”, and “home,” and the multiple references of the location of the library being central and convenient to school stakeholders were reasons why the library was often chosen as the meeting space at each school despite other locations being available. It was impossible to explain how students in early childhood grades used the library spaces at each school without first understanding how all school members viewed the space and why, as well as how it brought the school community together. Each library space was a place in the school that served a purpose more than just reading, and is a practical representation of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory in that people and places as a part of the microsystem that students come into contact with shape and impact the child’s development. The school libraries in this study shaped students as readers, as people, as students and members of a broader community of learners. The librarians and library space as a system provided students with a safe and welcoming haven to explore ideas and pathways towards literacy development, and even their own identity development. Likewise, the library as a system within the school also shaped the teachers, providing them a space in the school to access new knowledge and resources, to collaborate with librarians, and to develop as professionals. Reciprocally, how students and teachers impacted the library as a system within the school is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

LIBRARY DESIGN TO SUPPORT MULTIPLE LITERACY SKILLS

Students in the early primary grades do not enter school libraries alone, and even if they could electively go to a library as an option during the school day, a teacher would most likely not send that child alone because of their young age. Therefore, understanding why and how school libraries function as a space within the school for all of the community members was an important aspect of the data that I needed to understand before I explored how students use the space, too. Every school library in this study revealed a preferential endorsement as a coveted space because of its convenience, central location, and functionality as a large meeting space. The terms school leaders, librarians, and teachers most frequently used to describe the physical space of the libraries were “comfortable”, “safe”, and “home,” all terms that added to the library’s attraction as a space all school stakeholders elected to use even when other space options were available. Indeed, these benefits of the library spaces were discovered by examining the school library from the point of view of various school stakeholders; however, my deeper analysis of how the students experienced the space helps to explain how important school libraries are to the development multiple literacy skills in students.

Supporting Multiple Literacy Skill Development through Library Design

The architectural features of each space add to my definition of “space value” in libraries, and how librarians then leveraged those architectural features to help support the multiple literacy skill development in students of early childhood grades was clear in
the data as well. Two specific architectural elements used by librarians to engage children with the physical space while they explored different print, tactile, informational, and digital resources were vast, open concepts that included natural design elements, and novel spaces built to differentiate learning experiences within the open concept of the library. In fact, these two architectural features of the space afforded children unique opportunities to engage in multiple literacy skill development in ways that were not afforded to them in their classrooms. Each library’s open concept design and novel architectural features were used by the librarians to help mediate the students’ literacy learning experiences. In this way, they used the space value of the library’s architectural features to support students’ development of multiple literacy skills.

**Open Concept Design to Support Multiple Literacies**

Each school library had the enormous task of housing books, magazines and other media sources in one space. The number of items in each school’s collection from this study ranged from 11,000 to 32,000— an impressive number of resources in proportion to the number of students enrolled in each institution. In order to catalog and categorize all of these resources, however, each school library used their spaces strategically. The open concept designs within each school library were vast, allowing for creative shelving arrangements and for the construction of distinctive spaces within that open design using soft borders. “Soft borders” is a term that denotes the use of movable design elements like rugs and furniture to differentiate fixed spaces. Figure 4 represents how NES used soft borders to create a comfortable reading area for students. Teachers often create
spaces with soft borders in the classrooms; however, the scale to which it was done in each of the school libraries in this study was incomparable because of the vastness of the space. Each space also had high, vaulted ceilings that contributed to the open and grand feel of the space, a sensation that made the library unique to other spaces in the building. The openness of the space coupled with the intentional creation of smaller distinct spaces using soft borders allowed students the opportunity to move and spread out in the library while they engaged in the different literacy activities created by the librarians.

One observation of a kindergarten class at NES highlights how children in a kindergarten library class used the space during class:

At 9:45 in the morning, kindergarten students are perusing picture books. I see two girls huddling together and giggling under the shelter of a library table. It seems they have found a cozy place to “read” their book together. Another girl student is sprawled underneath an adjacent table on her stomach flipping through a picture book, intensely looking over the pictures and using her index finger to trace over the figures on each page. A group of three boys is loudly going through an Eyewitness Dinosaurs book that I know to be very popular in my school as well. Books are strewn across the previously tidy space designated for early readers in this massive and exciting library space. As I thread myself through the haystack of students, not a one seems to notice me since they are so engrossed in their books. (Fieldnotes, May 9, 2016)

Sprawled underneath furniture and across the floor in various places around the library at NES was actually not a unique scene. In all of my school visits I observed students making use of the expansive space while exploring how their bodies moved and felt in it as well. These particular spaces were used creating soft borders with a rug and some lower shelving built to a height that is friendlier for small children. These are examples of librarians using their “classroom as the third teacher,” one of the concepts guiding the theoretical framework in this study. Large spaces that are not closely confined have an
important a role within the library’s design as developing children do not have complete command of their own bodies. As they navigate their individual physicality and personal space, that have the room to move their bodies in order to engage in the library space on the stomachs or underneath the safety of a table as my observations noted. The “reading” that the kindergarteners were doing in the excerpt acknowledges the intention to read but also the developmental stage that precludes some children from being literate until they are in an older grade. Tactile learning is evident from this vignette as students moved themselves and engaged their bodies with the space in developmentally appropriate ways. Since the children were not able to discern the meaning of the printed words on the page they were working to infer meaning from the pictures which is a skill indicative of early literacy.

Moreover, a teacher at NES shared that biophilic design elements also contributed to the attractiveness of the library space to students. Another theory guiding this study is research in the field of optimal learning environments and design. Biophilic design is a method used by designers and architects that brings nature and natural elements into interior spaces. Examples of biophilic design elements present in the school libraries of this study were exposed natural wood beams, a wall of live plants, and large expansive windows that provided a view into greenspace outside. Biophilic designers justify the aesthetic in the claim that as mammals we are naturally inclined to surround ourselves with nature, and thus the inclusion of natural elements into the architecture of our space creates a positive, rich, and meaningful experience in that spaces. All of the school libraries in this study had biophilic design elements; however, a teacher from NES noted
that she believed it was direct contributor to the attractive openness of the library space as
“the openness and the windows are unique, it's a feeling like you're outside even though you're not outside. It doesn't feel closed in.”

In three other observations at the other schools, students also engaged with the library space without the librarian’s direct supervision. I noticed that students explored the open library space and selected a place to sit, lay down, hide, or even gather together within spaces because they were so large and accommodating to so many bodies, albeit small ones. At Crestwood Academy I documented a few moments while students were selecting books to check out for the week. While some students were still perusing the book stacks, a few other students were engaged with their books independently or in a small group:

This is a second grade class of 15 boys, and every single one of them is actively doing something in the library. While some boys are quietly reading, I am almost mowed down by two running from one room of the lower school library into another. They don’t stop and apologize, but they do finally make their way to the drawer of DVDs. They seemed to have known exactly where to go, and I suspect that they are looking for a specific movie since they rapidly thumb through the full drawers like they are on a mission. Some of their classmates are in a cozy room complete with a mantel and fireplace happily giggling as they look through an Eyewitness Spy book together around a short round table. One of their classmates has claimed the tiny rocking chair and seems blissfully engrossed in his book donning Bill Nye the Science Guy on the cover as he rocks back and forth in a comfortable rhythm. Still another student is tucked underneath a table that host an Apple computer for catalog searches. He seems comfortable and content until he notices me noticing him, and he squirms to turn in the other direction but does not give away his hiding space to anyone else. The furniture in the main room is developmentally appropriate—shorter chairs and tables with lower profiles that fit the growing bodies of the young men in grades pre-kindergarten through third grade who use this space. Elaine claps a rhythm and remarkably the boys drop what they are doing and repeat the same rhythm. She calls them in to gather around the fireplace, and she
herself walks in towards the fireplace she turns to the young boys sheltering beneath the table and says, “Hi! Can you come out and join us?” As the group of boys gathers around the fireplace and Elaine, some flop onto their stomachs and perch their heads on the hands propped up by the elbows. (Fieldnotes, May 10, 2016)

At Crestwood Academy I was endeared to see so much vibrant energy within the space, similar to the same energy at NES but different because the students were older, more advanced readers, and all boys. Still, a consistent theme was students engaged in the library space in a way that was developmentally appropriate to their age level and their developing literacy skills. The observations at NES and Crestwood Academy are the same in the sense that the students’ during each library time used the openness of the space to find a book or DVD and to select a space of their own within the larger context of the library itself to engage in literacy development. This type of engagement with space is not possible within the small confines of a traditional classroom. The library in all of the schools I visited were large enough for students to truly explore and engage with the library in a developmentally appropriate way.

**Novel Design Elements in the Library to Support Multiple Literacies**

The openness of the each of the library spaces was an asset to the learning experiences of early childhood students, but so too were the addition of novel architectural features within the spaces as well. Each library had some element of interest in the design of the space that impacted how students engaged with one another and their literacy activities. For example, Country Day boasted the charming and quaint stone cottage also used as a reading room for story time with the pre-primary grades (Figure 3). This house was actually the original entrance to the school when it was first
built in the early 20th century; however, when the school hired an architectural firm to reconfigure the entrance, the firm decided to keep the structure and convert it into the reading room that exists today. I previously referenced the students’ anticipation before entering the reading room, but the first impression of Country Day’s library was also captured in my fieldnotes. The anteroom of the library was also unique and housed a number of interesting focal points of its own. A collage of pictures illustrates the space immediately preceding the library space in Figure 5, while my fieldnotes also captured the following:

It’s a grand entrance into their library, and you can’t miss it because it is literally the first thing you see when you enter the front doors and sign in at the receptionist’s desk. The anteroom to the library is charmingly decorated with life-size stuffed animal sheep and a cozy stone fireplace. The two doors open to the library reveal high vaulted ceilings and exposed beams, and windows that cast the most exceptional light on the entire space. As I enter the library I see a beautiful and charming stone house with a glass roof, probably to make the natural light permeate that space as well. As I walked to the door of the house I think, “this would have been my dream come true as a kid” because I did in fact dream of a playhouse just as real and just as beautiful as this. Inside the house are tiny chairs for elementary school students, wall to wall bookshelves at a friendly height for the young learners, and a deep window seat and cushion cased in fabric and that overlooks the interior of the library space (see Figure 3).
(Fieldnotes, May 11, 2016)

The novelty of the house in the space was an asset that Shannon as the librarian valued, that the students through my observations enjoyed, and also was consistently mentioned in the faculty and staff survey she sent out as an element in the space that added to its allure and “beauty.” Novel architectural elements in all of the other school libraries were also presented. High, vaulted ceilings, fireplaces, and window seats all allowed students visual interest to explore their books quietly or to engage in a literacy activity. The vaulced ceilings and another view of Country Day’s cottage are shown in Figure 6.
Figure 4. Furniture, shelving, and rugs were arranged to create “soft borders” at the New England School, a design strategy that helps differentiate distinct spaces within larger open spaces.
Figure 5. The anteroom of Country Day’s library, whimsically decorated with two life-sized stuffed animal sheep, two fireplaces, comfortable seating, and current student artwork.

Figure 6. The high vaulted ceilings and original cottage at Country Day School are unique architectural features that contribute to the library’s space value at the school.
Novel architectural features were present in Crestwood Academy as well. The library space was redesigned in the early 2000s in collaboration with the lower school librarian. Elaine recalled the process to redesign the space and the creation of the fireplace which featured real wood logs and a maple wood mantel that matched the wainscoting adorning the perimeter of the room. The fireplace had a faux flame painted in a gradient of bright red, orange, and yellow paint on a sheet of thin wood. As my earlier fieldnotes documented, the fireplace was a popular place to gather for boys from the two different classes that I observed using the space. Its creation came out of a design conundrum on what to do with a pillar in the middle of two rooms of the vast library that could not be relocated because it was in fact the elevator shaft. Elaine recounted the rationale for the redesign of the library space and explained how the fireplace came to be a unique architectural feature:

We were lucky enough to have that be a part of our scope because of this elevator shaft affected the whole building so they had to put some things in. This became part of the scope and allowed us to expand this room. It was the only room that was outside the footprint. We were confined by the space. As I said, it was almost immediately apparent we have to put lower school in here and upper school out there although we did try to figure out ways to reverse that but it just wouldn't work. It was really important that the space to be as flexible as possible… we wanted to be able to move the furniture around. Even though they're really heavy, we do move them around a lot to accommodate the different kinds of groupings that we like. (Elaine, Interview, May 10, 2016)

Her mention of the intention for the space to be flexible is important as well. As a large, open space the room was the most thoughtfully curated space of all the schools I visited, and it was impressively flexible in design except for the elevator shaft that was creatively turned into a cozy faux fireplace. NES was also designed to be flexible, and its novel architectural features was the panoramic windows depicted and high vaulted ceilings.
William Penn’s brick walls and exceptionally high vaulted ceilings were remnants of the spaces former glory as the school gymnasium. All of these features, however, evoked a sense of grandeur that was noted by each of the participants and observed by me as well. That sense of grandeur and the physically open space allowed teachers and students to engage with literacy differently in the library than they could in their own classrooms: students could wonder and roam, get comfortable, lose themselves within the stacks of books, or cozy into a reading nook or next to the fireplace to read books or research ideas.

**Cozy Reading Nooks and Window Seats Create Safe Spaces for Children to Engage with the Library and Develop Multiple Literacies.** During my observations at each school and interviews with the participants, the frequent mention of “cozying up” and getting “comfortable” applied to how students interacted with the library space. In my own practice as a teacher and in my current site of practice, I know that young children especially actively seek small places within larger spaces to envelop them. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory posits that humans develop in multiple environmental contexts. School, as one place that students interact with every day, impacts the child’s development at the microsystem level. Following Bronfenbrenner’s theory, students interact differently with spaces in order to make meaning of the world and to understand their place in it. Additionally, Bruner’s (1957) social learning theory suggesting that the environment is a valuable facilitator of the learning process for young children coupled with Malaguzzi’s (2010) recognition that the environment is in fact the “third teacher” of a classroom, or in this case the library, are
important theoretical frameworks to examine how the library spaces were used by students each engaged in their own literacy activities. When given the opportunity to freely wander in the library, students in all of the schools most frequently sought cozy spaces and reading nooks to enjoy or peruse books. Some students even huddled into the window seats and reading nooks with peers to engage in literature discussion and to share ideas.

Three of the four schools possessed window seats, and all libraries had reading nooks and comfortable seating to facilitate students using and interacting with the space. The school that did not have any window seats was William Penn because the height of the windows precluded window seats. However, the library team at William Penn arranged comfortable seating for students, including a bright red children’s futon sofa that looked like a couch but was quickly deconstructed into a large, flat cushion by a group of five kindergarten students using their library time to look at picture books during one of my observations. NES’s window seats, on the other hand, were so abundant that they lined the perimeter of the early childhood section of the space as seen in Figure 8 and 15. These window seats were a popular destination for the students during their free time to peruse books for check-out. A teacher from NES even noticed that as she saw the students grow up and develop into adolescents, they still coveted the “nooks and crannies” present in the early childhood section of the large library. She shared:

I think there's lots of nooks and crannies, places where kids can settle with a book and feel comfortable. Pillows and carpets too and it's interesting because the younger children are only really in one space...as you see them get older and they feel completely comfortable to be the in the
Younger spaces that they have already explored when they were younger. It's really nice to see them as they get older, still creep into the little nooks and crannies in the young section. (Patti, Interview, 2016)

This recollection of how the older students sought the “nooks and crannies” even in the later late primary and early secondary grades suggests that those architectural features are unique to were beloved spaces to students even as they grow out of the early developmental stages of childhood and grow out of the early childhood. Sidney from NES also shared that the window seats are a “welcoming” element of the space: “I think having the places to sit and say ‘Come in, sit down and stay a while!’ I think having these window seats are an important part of that.” Sidney’s librarian colleague, Hannah, explained that the students prefer the window seats to the section of the library that just boasts windows but no seating when she responded to my question about seating with, “They really like the windows and benches.” From my observations and knowledge of developing students, window seats are cozy and inviting thus making them ideal places to huddle together to read.

Crestwood Academy’s one window seat was below a large window responsible for much of the natural light of the entire space, and had a wide ledge that was used to display even more books by their covers. An equally popular lounging space for the boys at Crestwood Academy were two cushioned reading nooks that had no window but instead had a circus-inspired awning draping over the boys as they huddled in pairs to read in the space (see Figure 7, 8, and 10). My previously cited fieldnotes illustrated how popular Country Day’s window seat in the house was amongst the students who were able to use the house for their reading activities, as well as the reading nooks. Figures 8
shows the window seats of each library. Window seats that were frequently mentioned as positive benefits to the library space in the data Shannon collected in her survey.

Teachers, librarians, and school leaders commented on the benefit of the window seats and “nooks” within each library, noting that the seating spaces made students want to come to the library to read instead of staying in their classrooms. Each of the school stakeholder’s insights revealed that the presence of unique architectural features within the space added to the attractiveness of the library as a location within the school that uniquely promoted tactile and early literacy skills. Students were able to move furniture around, expand into space, and tuck into other spaces or “nooks” in order to find a comfortable place to talk about or explore the books they had chosen to read.

Furthermore, these distinctive architectural elements allowed students to create their own deep, individualized engagement with the space. Figure 8 highlights the window seating in each of the four schools and reveals how the cushioned seats and natural light made the window seats appealing to students as comfortable reading spaces.
Figure 7. The cozy reading nook at Crestwood Academy built into the wall of the library space. This is one of two reading nooks, each adorned with the circus inspired canopy and equipped with comfortable cushions. Both niches were coveted spaces by the students during their independent reading and book check-out time.
Figure 8. Window seats at three of the four schools that had this architectural feature as part of the library design. *From top row to bottom row:* window seats lining the perimeter of the New England School also revealing the view onto the campus green from the image on the right; the window seats at Country Day fashioned with comfortable cushioning and pillows; the window seat at Crest Academy.
While the window seats in three of the school libraries were undoubtedly safe and comfortable places for children to nestle into while reading and perusing books, William Penn’s library as the school’s former gymnasium had windows too high to allow for window seats. Instead, the librarians used a comfortable red futon sofa nestled between two tall book stacks to reproduce a similar feeling of comfort and cozy. As this red futon was the only one in William Penn’s library, the librarians may consider adding more comfortable seating around various parts of the library in order to allow more students an opportunity to explore the library space and engage with books.

**Whimsical Design Elements to Support Multiple Literacy Skills**

While novel architectural design elements added charm to each library’s open concept design, the whimsical décor in each space also mediated the students’ tactile, printed, and digital learning experiences in the library in ways that was not replicable in classrooms. The thoughtful attention to the library’s aesthetic décor by the school librarians also contributed to the development of students’ literacy skills as well. Each school library created learning spaces that seamlessly blended the cognitive needs of early childhood students learning how to read with whimsical elements that added to each library’s open and cozy charm and that were also necessary for students to navigate the space. From my observations and interviews, the whimsy of aesthetic décor served multiple purposes: first, to help children feel inspired by the space so that their imaginations had physical items to wonder about and to think creatively about, and also to serve as visual markers around the large open library space. For some of the students
who were not yet able to read the library signage and genre markers, the whimsical characters and animals adorning the large spaces helped students locate books or places in the library easily and quickly. Finally, the whimsical elements tacitly invited students into the space so that they could see and imagine themselves as readers and users of the library.

A library, which historically is an extremely print-rich space, could be an intimidating space for children. Large, open spaces are often overwhelming to young children and a library raises that intimidation for a child not yet tall enough to peer over the shelving units. The school librarians in this study were able to leverage the open-concept design of the libraries along with the novel architectural features to create spaces for children that felt comfortable but were still developmentally appropriate. Children often have a difficult time navigating around libraries labeled by genres and call numbers—concepts of which early childhood students have not yet developed an understanding. The school librarians in this study created different spaces in their library to help young students navigate and explore their library spaces in comfortable ways, which ultimately opened new pathways for children engage in tactile, digital, and printed literacy activities in the space, and for children to use the space itself as a teacher facilitating their experience in the library. For example, all of the school librarians used whimsical displays as visual cues, creative labels on book spines, and were thoughtful about displaying as many books by their covers as possible.

Another clear theme that emerged from the data was that library décor was intentionally designed to assist students who cannot yet read navigate the large and
expansive library spaces. The whimsical displays therefore had dual purposes: to add to the space value of the library aesthetically, and to help students locate and access books easily. This is a powerful strategy by librarians. In a typical independent school lower school library serving students in grades pre-kindergarten through five, only 30% of students are fluent readers. This statistic is not because the students need remediation but instead is appropriate instruction for that developmental stage of childhood. Therefore, how do the majority of students in independent lower schools just learning how to read access books that are tightly displayed on bookshelves by their spine and in a seemingly abstract cataloging system of large numbers and decimals? Large, visually impressionable and whimsical displays of each of the four libraries in this study had a fundamental and important role developing early literacy skills for students to both navigate the library space and select books that met their individual interests. Figures 7-13 show how each library space added fun and whimsical yet also large figures, puppets, and fictional characters into each space help students locate both books and themselves within the library. The purpose of the whimsical displays was dual: first to add charm, whimsy and imagination to the large open space of each library, but also to help students physically locate books in certain areas around the library or themselves if they were in an area of the library with tall stacks of bookshelves.

The whimsical displays in NES were memorable design elements intentionally added to the space to serve as welcoming decoration, but also as visual cues or markers identifying stacks of books from afar and to children learning the Dewey Decimal system. The library had a zoo of giant papier mâché animals perched high atop stacks
of bookshelves, and in some cases the animals were quoted with witty directions or information about the contents beneath them. Some of the most prominent papier mâché figures in NES are evident in Figure 9; however, what these corresponding photographs do not capture is the first impression I had viewing all of the animals together from the entrance of the library. I chronicled the moment in a section of my fieldnotes:

This library space is incredibly exciting. I enter the space and walk around the library captivated by the huge papier mâché animals regally guarding the stacks of bookshelves. They are so large that they draw your eye up to the vaulted ceilings and one can’t help but notice how open the space feels despite being full of nearly 27,000 items. I see all different animals- a panda, a bull, a duck, and dolphin just in one space, and then papier mâchéd bees hanging from the ceiling. Bees are a theme I guess, as I see a display of stuffed animal bees and figurines behind one glass enclosure, and then signage directing students to stacks of books that are also adorned with bee images. (Fieldnotes, May 9, 2016)

These spectacular figures drew my eyes up to the vaulted ceiling, excited me as I traced each animal with my eyes, and ignited a childish excitement to explore the space. Josephine later explained the history of the animals and elaborated one purpose of the animals: to help students locate and access books within the large and open space. For example, she shared that if a student asked where a book was located, she could respond and say, “It’s underneath the bull!” (see Figure 9). Josephine explained that the large animal figures are actually student creations that every kindergarten class collaborates on together, and then Josephine and her librarian colleagues select an animal to display on the library shelves. She remarked how endearing it was to have students enter the space to see the animal that they helped to create displayed proudly above a stack of books.
Figure 9. The *papier mâché* bull at NES’s library that served as a visual cue and locator for students navigating the library, as well as other animals donning the stacks of books adding to the space value of the library.

Figure 10. The first impression one has entering Crestwood Academy’s lower school library. The movie prop dinosaur was featured in *Jurassic Park* and also served as a visual cue helping students to locate non-fiction texts in the library, including the school’s abundant number of picture books on dinosaurs.
Crestwood Academy’s whimsical displays also made a notable first impression. When I first entered the library foyer I was greeted by a life-size, and from my estimation, a very real looking replica of R2-D2 from the famed *Star Wars* original trilogy that continued to flash its blue lights as I passed by the front desk. My fieldnotes also described another impressionable dinosaur figures and other whimsical elements of Crestwood Academy’s library space as well:

I walk into the library and am greeted by a dinosaur. Literally. He is about ten feet tall, but situated on top of a four-foot tall book shelf, he towers over me so that I have the perfect view of his sharp teeth. Apparently, he is a prop from one of the *Jurassic Park* films, a collectable that one of the teachers secured and donated to the school. The dinosaur is perched next to a large but seemingly dwarfed *papier mâché* camel adorned with the Sorting Hat from the *Harry Potter* series and an untied bowtie that hangs around its neck. This library has incredible character, not just from the menagerie of animals and props adorning nearly every flat surface, but also in design: maple wood wainscoting climbs five feet up each wall, but the reading nooks are inviting and cozy. In fact, two boys sit in one of the cushioned nooks covered by a circus-like awning lit by a stained-glass lamp. They’re flipping through their books and talking. I see that they are reading different books from the *Captain Underpants* series. One boy says, “How many pages is your book?” and as his reading partner quickly riffling to the end of his book, the first boy boasts, “Mine is 144!” The other boy replies, “Mine is 129! Oh, dude, look at this!” (Fieldnotes, May 10, 2016)

Figure 9 shows the view as students enter the library. Elaine mentioned later in our interview that the dinosaur was actually a prop in one of the *Jurassic Park* films, and that the science teacher “had a connection” so the dinosaur ended up in the library. It sits above the non-fiction section where the plethora of dinosaur books live, a huge and exciting visual cue for students who perhaps cannot yet read the written word to orient themselves to the section of the large space to find the dinosaur books. Elaine describe all of the displays in the library as “really engaging” and shared that she looks to add to
the spaces aesthetic with student selections as well. She shared too that some of the stuffed animals on display are donated by the boys who as they grow older and transition to the upper school library space and seek out the animals that they remembered giving her to add to the space. Some of the stuffed animals that now sit atop one of the large stack of books in her library in Figure 11 are some of the beloved stuffed animal donations guarding some of the bookshelves in the connecting rooms of the lower school library, as well as a photograph of the library’s faux fireplace and flanking rocking chairs.

Figure 11. Some of the stuffed animal donations guarding the bookshelves at Crestwood Day, as well as other whimsical decorations and architectural features in the space like the library’s fireplace configured to accommodate an obstructive and unmovable elevator shaft.
Students at William Penn Friends School also had a hand in creating some of the whimsical displays within the space. The two librarians have an award-winning collaboration with the art teacher to create large puppets (see Figure 12) based on either characters in a selected work in children’s literature, or an original play from a local author. The puppets serve as a welcoming presence at the entrance of the library, and are also exemplars for the students currently working on creating puppets—a tedious and laborious project that takes patience, focus, and collaboration. More whimsy was added to the space by the student created artwork depicting an interpretation of the admired *Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Where the Wild Things Are*. Creatively painted chairs made for small children also add to the allure of William Penn’s library space, and were acquired after the author from each story painted onto the chair visited the school. Country Day’s whimsy was clear as well. The “new book nook” is not accessible without passing by two life-size stuffed sheep that flank the sides of one of the two stone fireplaces greeting students, teachers, and parents at the entrance of the library. The nook’s carefully
selected book titles and creative sign depicting paper doll figurines with balloons and the clever title, “Get Carried Away with Reading.” Photographs from both William Penn School and Country Day can be seen in Figure 13 and Figure 14.
The whimsical additions to each library space added aesthetic interest to the space as well as intentional visual cues for students to navigate the large library spaces in a playful and developmentally friendly way for students in early childhood grades. All of the school librarians interviewed mentioned the inaccessible nature of the Dewey Decimal cataloging system to guide students to books, and used alternative visual cues to assist in the discovery of and access to books within their respective collections. The visual cues were playful, whimsical, related to the identifiable characters from books or movies, or like the dinosaur in Crestwood Academy, marked a section of the library where a collection of books were shelved. However, while these whimsical displays helped to direct students to different areas of the library, gaining access to the abundant number of books in the collection was also identified in the data as a strategic and intentional aspect of the librarians’ practice that helped students mediate their literacy experiences in the space.

**Engaging Book Displays and Creative Labeling to Support Emerging Literacy Skills.** Whimsical displays added visual interest and were strategically placed around the four different libraries, yet another more detailed aspects of the displays emerged in the data as well. Traditionally, library spaces for fully literate students and adults are sequenced and shelved using the Dewey Decimal system. Rather, the majority of books in typical lower school library spaces are displayed on shelves by their spine—a sliver of visibility to a perusing reader, and a developmentally unfriendly system of display to students who are not yet able to read. For students who cannot yet read, the books crammed onto a bookshelf with only their spine displaying is a challenging way to
access books, put books back, and even shift through to browse. In fact, lower school teachers often display books in “book bins” in their classrooms so that students can see the front cover and large title of each book rather than the slim lettering of the title printed on its spine. NES’s librarian team was impressively attuned to the needs of preliterate students in their library space. They had a strategic mission to display as many books as possible by its cover. At one point in our conversation Sidney candidly reveals how important book covers are to lower school students, and how a terrible book cover could result in a complete pass over of the book regardless of the quality and depth of the story within:

With books, I'll read it and I'll be like, “It's such a good book! If only the designer had a different approach to the cover because it appeals to the wrong age group!” or it's just not what I see kids picking up. I think cover plays a huge part. That's where librarians can also come into play and say, "Hey, this is a really good book. Ignore this terrible cover. Trust us that it's a really good story." (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016)

Her admittance that students do in fact judge books based on their cover was based on experience, and her insight was inspiring in the sense that she naturally assumed the role of someone who could champion a book’s worth even if the cover art was terrible. When Hannah from NES gave me a short tour of her early childhood space where she teaches pre-kindergarten through second grade students, she pointed out book bins that were painted by parents and teachers to depict popular book series or characters. The strategy of those book bins was simply to have preliterate students notice the characters on the bins, and to perhaps explore the books within the bins if they were of interest. A yellow bin containing the Where’s Waldo? series sat atop a cushioned window seat next to other
bins, all housing books displayed by their covers so that students could see the front of
the books rather than their spines. The fiction section of the early childhood library was
displayed the same way: bins occupied the bookshelves so that cover art of each book
was displayed prominently. Books atop the bookshelves were also strategically displayed
to help pre-literate and emerging readers make connections to the world around them, and
to the curriculum. Each member of the librarian team at NES referenced their intentional
and strategic design of book displays, but Josephine elaborated the most on the team’s
intention to display as many books as possible:

People don't realize that [displays] are [part of] the job…if there's a
holiday or an event or a month, if it's black history month or if it's poetry
month. In April, we had poetry everywhere and we had pockets with
pocket poems in them that kids could take and kids were making spine
label poems and we were taking pictures and putting them up and that
kind of thing. There were poetry books everywhere. This last display is all
spring, flowers… so it's whatever we feel like kind of or if there's
something going on around the school. How we choose them is very
subjective, although always with certain things in the back of our mind,
sort of a range of kids and levels and different styles…Fiction? Is it non-
fiction? A mix of both? That kind of thing. Displaying a range of
diversity so that the covers reflect the diversity of the school and so that
the diversity of opinion and stuff, so that kind of thing is always part of
our thinking when we're grabbing books and putting them up on display.
The key component is trying just to catch people's eye and to want them.
People forget that, “Oh I can take that book and check it out!”, they think
it's sacred if it's on display and so it's a constant training to be like, “No,
actually we want you to take that book, that's why we put it up like that!”
It's not just for pretty, it's actually for use. Classroom teachers will come
in and they'll grab one or two and be like, “I'm so sorry, I'm decimating
your display!” and I'm like “That's okay, we want you to, do it, take them,
use them!” (Josephine, Interview, May 9, 2016)

Josephine’s candidness in explaining the subjective yet intentional decision making that
goes into creating a display within NES’s library space can be analyzed for the
perspective of early childhood, too: pre-primary students experience an intense stage of
development when making connections to the world around them and to what they are learning is the classroom is essential to the long-term learning process. For example, a student of diverse family background would most likely gravitate to a book on display depicting a family similar to his or hers as a characteristically inquisitive and ego-centric stage of development. Sidney also discussed the purpose and her method involved in selecting which books to display:

We're always working on having books out. Right now, the ones over there [pointing to a specific area of the lower school library section] in folk tales, for example, for the first grade, we read around the library. We read through different sections of the library and talk about them. We're on folktales and fairytales right now, so I put out a bunch of the books we read last week in the hopes that they would want to take one. Sometimes they're new books. Very often they're new books. Sometimes they're just books with interesting covers. Sometimes they're books that are favorites of ours. We really try to show a variety of different types of people on covers, different ethnicities, different races, different genders, different locations the books take place. (Sidney, Interview, May 9, 2016)

And Hannah added:

Last week it was Women's History so we had a nice display of women's books. We did poetry month and we had lots of wonderful poetry all around the library. That's really fun…I think when kids come in, and adults, to see, to be stimulated visually by what they see and perhaps they will go look a little farther. (Hannah, Interview, May 9, 2016)

NES’s library team was impressively focused on creating book displays that related to what students were learning in the classroom, school-themed initiatives like Women’s History Month, and genre studies like poetry. They also had a system for labeling books to help students find a just right book to aid and support their printed literacy development. By using specific colors of tape on the spine of each book in the library, the librarian team visually catalogs books in a way that supersedes Dewey’s system, and that is easy for students to navigate. Patti
from NES shared her observations of the how the colored tape system, in this scenario she spoke about “pink tape,” to label books. She noted that labeling the books in her opinion actually helped her first grade students develop the sound fluency and comprehension skills indicative of a developing reader:

We don't open [the pink tape section] until the end of first grade. That's the piece of allowing the children who feel like chapter books to wait until the end of the year. They're allowed to explore the picture book section with more vigor. Because they're not totally drawn to the chapter books but that's all they want to take out because they perceive that as being what makes a reader a good reader. It also pushes them to stay in the early reader section as long as they can because I think we do battle with parents around what's appropriate content-wise in what kids are reading. [Parents] shouldn't disregard kids’ reading books multiple times because they’re working on fluency and comprehension. Some of our kids who come into first grade and even kindergarten reading already, comprehension is going to be their sticky spot because they crack the code on their own but never really learn to think deeply about what they were reading, they just go through the motions. We try and keep them there as long as we can. (Patti, Interview, May 9, 2016)

This teacher’s mention of “cracking the code” is common parlance among early childhood educators and refers to a student’s ability to read and interpret the pictures of a book to understand the general story. It also refers to the ability of a child to read just enough of the words of the page to comprehend parts of the story, hence passing comprehension based questions on assessments and assuming “reading” text that in fact may be too challenging. The intentional labeling of books with pink tape in the section of NES’s library was a strategic effort by the library team to assist students, teachers, and parents in locating books that are appropriate for them easily and quickly. As the teacher explained in her interview, the tape is also helpful in ensuring that students do not read a book that is too challenging for them, and so that they develop the essential skills
such as fluency and comprehension in reading. Figure 15 highlights the library
team’s creative and intentional book displays that were developmentally
appropriate for early childhood students to engage in pre-literacy activities.

Librarians at William Penn Friends School also devised a unique labeling system
to help pre-literate students find books that were relevant to their learning and interests.
The system was also helpful to teachers and parents looking to find a book able to make a
deeper connection to their daily morning meeting of the Quaker tradition. Rebecca, one
of the school librarians, explained the labeling system and how it coordinated to the
beautifully painted and whimsical miniature chairs designed for young students. When
an author visited the school, the librarian team had a chair painted in that author’s honor,
and then created a labeling system to identify books on the shelf that were signed copies
or had been read aloud to students by the author themselves. She recalled:

We have the books that are coordinated with our chair [authors]. If you have
a chair in your honor, you have a rainbow on your spine. And then we also have
books that are meaningful worship books and they have a special designation on their spine. What it means is that they are very good books for starting out a meaningful worship or, in the third and fourth grade year a child will come in and borrow a book to get them in the right space to have a meaningful worship. Those are all designated. We have the books that were on the fifty favorite books on that 50th anniversary, and they have a special designation on their spine.

William Penn’s library space displayed books intentionally to support the students’
learning needs and their labeling system was created to help school stakeholders,
including students, navigate the space. Moreover, the displays in the early childhood
section of William Penn were also arranged in books bins and by their covers, in addition
to a book tree that spun around and was a popular display tool for the pre-kindergarten
students that I observed (see Figure 16).
The design of each library space and how it was arranged by librarians to intentionally create an environment that was welcoming and developmentally appropriate is illustrative of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory: not only are children interacting with the library environment, but the library itself as a system is shaped by the librarians based on the students’ needs as developing children and their interests as developing readers in a world that necessitates literacy to thrive. How each of the school librarians fostered this system of interaction between student and the environment was

Figure 15. The book displays at the New England School were deliberately designed to assist students who could not yet read the titles of each book spine to see the cover of the books instead. Also, large bins housed the books so that they would more easily be displayed by cover.
unique, but what they all did do was something different from what traditional library spaces have historically done: rely on the Dewey Decimal system to catalog and display books.

Each school in this study deviated from the typical “Dewey Decimal System” to locate books and used visual cues or other labeling systems on the books spines to help emergent readers locate and find books in the collection. Each school may also benefit from rethinking traditional display models to incorporate a display system that is more similar to what we see in book stores: display tables in strategic locations around the space that are filled with multiple copies of new releases or books of interest not displayed by their spines, but rather displayed by their covers and in piles so as to entice and introduce readers to the story within by the covers, or at the very least the book’s front cover and back synopsis. This “book store” method of display allows children to engage with books in new ways, gives students access to books that they perhaps would overlook if the book was indeed displayed only by the title on its spine, and invites students to pick up the book to peruse it. Each school library in this study had the space to pilot such a display method, and each library also had the abundance of books to curate a thoughtful table—or two tables—to invite students up to the display to find new books to pique their interests.

The Dewey Decimal system for cataloging books is an important part of maintaining a collection, but each of the school libraries’ approach to alternatively label books for students indicates that we as educators perhaps need to rethink the purpose of Dewey’s system of cataloging books especially for children emerging in their literacy
Moreover, the librarians in this study corroborated what the librarians at my own site of practice state about Dewey’s system: it is a wonderful system for librarians to know where and how to locate books for children, but it is not a friendly system that lends itself to being easily understood of navigated by children in the early elementary grades.

Figure 16. Different book displays at William Penn School allowed students the ability to engage with displays at different height levels and in different formats, displays that ultimately assisted their journey to find different literacy pathways within the library space.
In approaching this study through the lens of a research practitioner, I hoped to inform my own inquiry about the purpose of school libraries in early childhood settings to better understand what meaning making students engaged in while using the space. Considering that 100% of the student population at my site of practice is developing fluency in reading and have not yet reached full literacy, I wondered what and if our school library assumed another role different from that of a school library serving students along the pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade continuum. What I discovered is that the school library for students in the early childhood grades is critical to their development of multiple literacy skills in today’s digital age, and that the school library and librarian are teachers who help students create and develop deep pathways to literacy through both their explicit and implicit word: explicitly the library is identifiably the structure of the school that maintains and houses curated information; implicitly, however, it is the symbol of life, intellectual freedom, and judgment free safety. Explicitly, the school librarian is the curator of library collection and the school community’s archetype of inspired and informed inquiry; implicitly, they acted as emotional architects that supported students’ growth as literate persons.

The libraries in this study were not quiet spaces where students were hushed and forced to stay silent, but rather vibrant centers of discussion and investigation that often left the architectural confines of the library structure to infuse the same vibrant life and spirit of inquiry in traditional classrooms. Learning in these library spaces was dynamic,
imaginative, and personal to the students. These images contradict the stereotypical image of a library space dominated by shelves of books stacked in a vast vacuum of silence, therefore holding new implications for what and how school libraries in today’s function to support school communities.

**Summary of Findings**

While I began drafting the initial set of codes during one of the first iterations of data analysis, I employed the Word Cruncher in the Atlast.ti software out to query the frequency of words across all sources of my data. After I culled through the common conjunctions, prepositions, and articles of speech, the words “relationships” and “comfortable” emerged as two themes that carried significant relevance to what I heard and saw during my site visits. Why this struck me was because these two words were not at all in my purview after researching for my literature review on the qualities and aspects that make a successful library program in schools today. It is true that the school librarians in this study worked hard to establish collaborative and trusting relationships with teachers and students in comfortable spaces as a measure of their professional success. It is also concerning that the AASL standards fail to capture this important role that relationships with students and teachers have in burgeoning new and creative learning experiences for students.

Going back through my interview transcripts, I noticed that Shannon mentioned her frustration with the static and fixed standards as well while she shared how she designed learning experiences for her students in the library: “[One standard is]: ‘Presents
Am I creating curriculum around these different things? Sure. How helpful are they? I don’t know the answer to that.” (Shannon, Interview, May 11, 2016). While Shannon’s questioning of the ambiguousness of the library standard is ironically clear, it informs my understanding of very clear and important aspects of the library program that are completely left out of the standards: the power of relationships in schools, most especially relationships established and nurtured by the school librarian.

In the final phase of the study, I examined the archival data and online artifacts from each school to better understand how school libraries today develop multiple literacy skills in students within early childhood settings. Together, all of the data compiled from individual interviews, my observations and fieldnotes from each site visit, and an examination of artifacts were used to identify the following themes:

- School libraries are spaces that have the power to shape and unite school communities. Librarians helped to shape the schools’ cultures around teaching and learning, and the physical space united community members.
  - School librarians have an influential role in shaping the teaching and learning culture within the school community based on their central location and perceived roles as curators of information, ideas and resources. Librarians also serve to influence the teaching and learning community of the school by:
• Curating relationships with teachers and collaborating with them to compliment early literacy instruction

• Collaborating with teachers to support and shape classroom curriculum

• Helping students to connect with books that they will enjoy and love reading, thus developing desirable reading habits at a young age

• Supporting the schools’ missions to be diverse and inclusive communities; curating equity and becoming agents of diversity and inclusivity so that all students can find and identify their social identities in the library collection and in the stories told by librarians

• Curating information using technology as a tool to mediate the learning experience for students and teachers

• School libraries are invaluable community spaces—they had an unrivalled value in comparison to other communal spaces within a school based on central location, mission, and purpose.

• School libraries are worthwhile places for school leaders to invest financial, instructional, and social resources because libraries are:
  ○ Welcoming places that host community events for all school stakeholders
- Safe, judgement free places to imagine and inquire
- Evocative in design
- Promote the ideals of each school’s mission and values
- Librarians are also the emotional architects of the library space, a concept that makes the library even more valuable of a space when considering other spaces around a school. Librarians promote an emotional climate in the library that exudes safety, comfort, non-judgement, acceptance, and imagination

- School librarians leverage the design elements within the library space to open and facilitate the development of multiple literacies.

Librarians did this by:

- Creating comfortable and flexible seating arrangements and areas, including cushioned window seats near natural light and views of the outdoors
- Integrating whimsical design elements that were aesthetically appealing additions to the space but that also served the purpose of visual cues for students looking for books amid the more expansive library space
- Establishing book displays that represented student learning inside their traditional classroom spaces
Making labels on books that offered more than text—color and icons were used to identify books for students emerging in literacy skill development

Limitations of This Study

The data collected and analyzed for this study is limited by scope and location. My research proposal included a second tier of research using a case study method to further investigate themes and ideas that emerged from my analysis of data collected from the week I spent researching schools in Boston. My research plan for the second tier’s more in depth case study research included follow-up interviews with all participants from the first tier, a focus group of teachers, and also engagement with students so that they took could represent their understanding, interaction, and value placed on the school library through photo elicitation. Students, especially students in early childhood, are often unabashedly honest. Students are also a school’s most important stakeholder, and the central figure in all of the literature guiding my conceptual framework. For this reason, capturing the students’ perspective was to help me better understand how they perceived their engagement with the school library and how they constructed an understanding of the space. Although it was an interesting perspective absent to and limiting this study, it is an important point to address in future research. Additionally, my week of intense research in Boston during the first tier of research gave me a wonderful amount of data to analyze and findings that I have presented in this paper represent my research questions well; however, my location 450 miles away from the
sites selected precluded a convenient time begin the case study research after my analysis of the first set of data collected.

Another limitation of this study was the focus on librarians’ roles as literacy developers in isolation from their other roles serving the school library as organizers of the collection. Curating the collection is no doubt important to the work of a school library, as this study explains; however maintaining the collection is also a large and often time consuming task for librarians. My research questions did not explore or probe the functional and organizational roles that librarians assume as custodians of the collection. Had I engaged participants during interviews about their roles in this capacity, it may have given me better insight into how libraries prioritize their own perceived responsibilities in comparison to my focused questions about their perceived role in supporting multiple literacy skill development in students.

While the findings of this study celebrates the symbolic and functional purposes of school libraries, a critical analysis of each of the school libraries engenders an critique of the libraries of this study as well. Specifically, elements of library science that this study does not capture is a limitation to fully understanding standard practices in the librarianship; each of the four schools intentionally and thoughtfully curated their collections based on the school’s constituents and mission, yet all of the schools maintained their collections differently and for different reasons. Country Day, for example, had a large collection of books that had not been maintained for years, thus the library collection failed to meet American Library Association’s (ALA) standards for weeding. Librarians from NES, on the other hand, mentioned weeding as a part of their
daily routine while reshelving books. Weeding is a term used in library science to “remove materials from a library collection in a systematic and deliberate way” and it is a consistent and ongoing part of the collection maintenance that ensure library materials are current and in a condition of quality (ALA website, 2017). In fact, conditions of quality are important to a school library and are predicated on whether or not the books are misleading in information (if information is outdated or obsolete), if books are in unfit physical appearance to entice students, are superseded by newer copies or too many copies of one book, if book titles are trivial or inappropriate in interest or reading level, and if books in the collection are not relevant to the curriculum at the school (ALA website, 2017). Curating a thoughtful collection was most certainly a characteristic shared by each of the libraries in this study, yet a standard on weeding a school’s library collection to maintain its accuracy and quality was not revealed in this study.

No school library in this study was an exemplar in illustrating how technology and libraries are fused in today’s time; while digital technology is undoubtedly ubiquitous in schools today, no school’s approach to integrating technology into their library program was clear from the data I collected. Therefore, data collection and analysis for my research question on how librarians perceive technology to impact their role and the function of the library was also limited in this study. Librarians seemed to quickly answer my questions about technology in the library by identifying it as a tool that helps them access information and books for students faster and quicker, but not as a central component essential to their roles as curators and facilitators of multiple literacy skill development. Three out of the four schools had large makerspaces and none of the
schools advocated converting the library space into technology rich spaces to support project based learning. Therefore, my analysis focuses more on the roles of librarians as they see themselves, as teachers and school leaders see them, and as I saw them after triangulating all of the data collected. My focus is also on the design of the library space and how students in early childhood and early elementary grades use the space to develop multiple literacies, with the discovery that librarians use digital devices to give students fast and easy access to information as the connection between the libraries and technology in today’s digital age.

Libraries take on new roles and serve new purposes for students today, yet the challenge to the traditional identity to these spaces for young children was determined to be less controversial than perhaps for older students who are already fluent readers. For my inquiry into how early childhood students interact with library spaces to develop multiple literacies could potentially inform school leaders and community stakeholders on how best to support students learning in a digital age, and could also support the call to keep early childhood libraries especially well-resourced and curated as important space for students to develop multiple literacy skills. Yet, this is also a limitation to the study as well: well-resourced libraries of independent schools are in stark contrast to the school libraries in some public school districts in the United States, a notion that brings privilege into the discourse of the findings of this study as well. While the findings of this study may be generalizable with other independent schools, they may not be so with the majority of public schools in America today. Moreover, the literature presented earlier in this study highlights the characterization of independent schools as schools for the
nation’s elite—places where the children of the scholarly go to receive an education from racially and economically privileged backgrounds.

The context in which independent school children live is comparably different to most children in the United States, especially those who grow up in economically disadvantaged communities. Neuman and Celano (2001) found that access to printed book in low income neighborhoods was one book per 300 children compared to middle income neighborhoods that boasted 13 books per child. The researchers also noted the absence of school libraries and public libraries in this study, highlighting that “other avenues of access [to books] were limited or lacking. School libraries in poor communities were closed and sometimes boarded up, unlike school libraries in middle income neighborhoods, which were thriving” (Dickinson & Neuman, 2001). The number of books children have access to is a predictor of reading achievement and academic success. Research by Evans, Kelley, Sikora, and Treiman (2014) found a correlation between the number of books in a child’s home with their academic achievement in 27 different countries in the world: children who grew up with access to more books in their homes attained higher reading achievement scores but also attained a higher level of education (Evans, et al., 2014). With these facts in mind, this study’s findings are narrowed down to be generalizable for a small percentage of students attending well-resourced schools and from economically privilege schooling and living contexts.
Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Future Research

Since these four well-resourced independent school libraries proved to be invaluable community spaces that enriched the teaching and learning community in unsuspecting ways, the implications of not having a school library in a school are particularly distressing to me as an educator. My own experiences at the School District of Philadelphia showed that school libraries were often the first spaces in a school to be cut when a budget crisis plagues the district. Libraries are usually one of the largest space within a school’s floorplan and they encumber a large percentage of the academic budget compared to other classrooms in order to maintain a quality collection. Pressure to regain academic time in classrooms in order to prepare students for the state standardized test meant that special classes including library time have been removed from student schedules completely. Herein lies the threatening future of schools without libraries: static and rote learning experiences mediated with paper and pencil resources that give no attention to the personal relevancy of the course content and which inherently stifles the possibility of creativity and imagination.

In 2015, the School District of Philadelphia had five media specialists serving in schools within a District of over 135,000 students. Why this also devastates me as an educator is because we as a country have legislated that every inmate in our prison system has the right to a certified librarian and a library collection, yet we do not legislate and expect the same for our nation’s children in school. I am not suggesting that we take away the freedom of information and the right that incarcerated men and women have to access a library, but rather highlight the disconnect in our thinking about education when
access to information and ideas is not prioritized for young minds. This study illuminates the power of the school librarian to shape a child’s knowledge of the world by facilitating access to information and ideas. This study also suggests that libraries can no longer be viewed as quiet places where silent reading and isolated research happens. On the contrary, school libraries are places young students especially go to wander, to talk about books and ideas, and to imagine their place in the world. The implications of the study therefore have an impact on specific school stakeholders both within and outside the independent school context.

**Implications for School Leaders Considering Closing a School Library.** The ability of librarians to curate relationships with students and teachers impacted the school’s culture around teaching and learning in this study. Library standards promoted by AASL were not the forces driving the school library’s purpose as a center for inquiry and imagination. Moreover, classroom teachers in early childhood centers depend on the school librarian to curate book selections based on their students likes and dislikes so that they can balance the rigor of reading instruction with the freedom of thought and imagination necessary to instill a love of reading and greater fluency in young students. Closing a school library could have dire consequences for a school if teachers are relegated to teaching reading with leveled libraries and without the support of a skilled librarian to supplement the development of traditional literacy skills. How do schools maintain the life and vibrancy symbolic of a place of learning without a school library to center and promote that mission? Abundance of resources is not an issue in the digital
age of information—at the very least, school libraries could maintain the online catalogs and resources that printed resources also provide if budgets are restrictive.

Style (1988) wrote that curriculum in schools should serve as a window and as a mirror into the lives of the students which it serves, noting that there are always plural ways of seeing and that students connect personally to mirrors but develop as global citizens when they are given a window into another person’s life experiences (Style, 1988). In this way, school libraries could be a one important way for a student to make sense of a mirrored life experience within a book, as well as an access point into the window of another’s life. This resonates specifically with me when I think of students I interviewed for a pilot study in Philadelphia and in an oral history interview I conducted with a history professor in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It follows then that if a school library must close then school leaders should consider advocating and facilitating the use of the city’s public library in order to keep pathways to literacy open and accessible to their students because classroom libraries are not sufficient in solely doing so.

My pilot study inquired into how African American male students narrated their learning experiences at one of the schools in the District that graduated the most students in their same demographic. My study sought to inform the District on ways they could replicate student experiences in schools that statistically defied the odds and graduated a significant percentage of students labelled nationally and by the District as “at risk” graduates. Two of the students interviewed mentioned that someone in their family took them to the public library to check out books and implied that they knew learning was important because of those experiences. Moreover, a history professor from Cambridge,
Massachusetts, who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, recalled the power of the Brooklyn public library to serve as a window into a world outside of his neighborhood. He recalled:

My mother would come home late Friday night, go to sleep, but then wake up early Saturday morning to get us all dressed and on the subway so that we could go to the Brooklyn Public Library. Books are really quite liberating... On our trips to the library, when I wasn’t old enough to read yet, my mother would actually show me pictures of colleges and universities... I think for that kid, and for a lot of kids actually, the power of books is important. I think for the men and women who are in the prison college program, books are the gateway to a world beyond those gates and those fences that they see every day. Books allow them to have at least some sense of control and influence over their destiny.

(Professor, Oral History Interview, October 2014)

Books are liberating. Literacy opens windows into worlds that are invisible to some students and adults, and both the history professor’s insights and the references the young men made during my pilot study affirm that books are the vehicle through which our imaginations explore new realities and potentials. I consider my own experience with books and libraries, too. As a young girl, I remember checking out books in the library about heroines that inspired me to pursue my own deep pathways towards literacy.

Books were a window into the lives of brave and courageous woman whose actions I hoped to emulate in my own life. Another impressionable memory is going to college with my adult mother when I was in middle school. I specifically recall visits with her to the university’s library, and I also remember the first time I saw one of her thick textbooks and realized that there was so much to learn about the world that books needed to be thick in order to attempt explaining it all. In this way, books had a spirit of freedom that allowed me either to explore the real world, or the imaginative world. Bishop (1990)
extends Style’s (1988) metaphor directly to books, capturing just how powerful of a tool books can be in the lives of people of all ages but most especially the impressionable and imaginative young minds of children:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (1990, p. ix)

But what if a child is not able to see themselves mirrored in a book, or what if certain cultural identities are left out of children’s literature all together? I then also implore educators who are considering closing a school library to revisit Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s (2009) powerful TEDTalk titled, *The Danger of a Single Story* in which she recounts her personal struggle as a young Nigerian girl to understand her place in the world because the literary window made accessible to her was dominated by white, European characters:

Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to. My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer, because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was. What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.
Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise. (Adichie, Speech, October 2009)

Adichie’s (2009) speech poignantly articulates the danger of exposing children to a single limiting narrative. I believe her speech also illuminates the danger of restricting access to books with diverse characters that represent, as Rose suggested, the diverse constellation of the personal and familial identities of a school’s students and families. Closing a school’s library may seem like a budgetary gain; however, the implications on student identity formation and the impact on the school’s culture around teaching and learning could suffer tremendously. However, if keeping a school library open is an impossibility for a school facing a severe budget crisis, I see the need to establish connections with the local public libraries near students at the school a critical component of their overall literacy development and aspirations as citizens of the world.

Another frame to view closing a school library is through that of the research on socio-economic class and student reading achievement. Closing
school libraries means that students lose access to books, or as this study has
found, students lose access to the essential windows and mirrors that books
provide as personal agency and identity builders for students. Closing school
libraries also then closes students off from access to knowledge and opportunity,
and furthermore as Nueman and Celano (2006) articulate, isolates children and
increases the knowledge gap between low income and middle income children.
The authors (2006) call for policy makers to “level the playing field” in order to
equalize access to resources for students in disadvantaged neighborhoods, citing
findings from a $20 million research project in Philadelphia to increase the public
library programs systems in the hopes of “improving the lives of disadvantaged
children and their families by closing the achievement gap” through increasing
access to printed and electronic knowledge available to the community. Neuman
and Celano (2006) posit from their earlier research in 2001 that the lack of access
to books in low income neighborhoods only isolates members of the community
further, and reduces their opportunities to gain social mobility. School libraries
then are an important factor to consider when policy makers and school leaders
debate how to allocate and prioritize funds to schools, especially Title I funding.
School libraries should not be relegated into the category of “luxury” for a school
especially in low income neighborhoods, but rather should be viewed by school
leaders and policy makers as essential and the one central place in a school that
can provide students with access to knowledge and resources to catapult them into
a narrative story of their own rather than isolate them into the single story of their neighborhood.

**Implications for School Leaders of Early Childhood and Early Elementary Schools in Resourced Schools.** The findings in this study can potentially influence the professional practice of school leaders of early childhood students in well-resourced school contexts as well. For the same reasons that this study influences leaders who are prioritizing school budgets and spaces, so too should school leaders not in such a predicament examine their own library programs to better understand how it impacts the school’s teaching and learning culture. Specific attention could be made to the school librarians themselves, and the emotional architecture of the space to determine whether or not the space is used to its most optimal and capable potential. Examining the library program at a school and how librarians collaborate with classroom teachers to complement their reading instruction is something that all school leaders should do if developing skillful readers who also love to read is one of their primary aims. Moreover, school leaders in with librarians should consider the positionality of their librarians; the school librarian’s ability to collaborate and support teachers and students for the entire school community, and their ability to access information and resources makes the librarian an important stakeholder and change-maker when it comes to potentially shifting or shaping school culture around teaching and learning.

**Redefining 21st Century Balanced Literacy.** I did not anticipate discovering how powerful a literacy program could be for early learners when the librarians and classroom teachers collaborate and communicate about student reading goals and
development. Balanced literacy as a literacy program that seeks to “balance” reading and writing literacy skill development in a classroom through a workshop model that engage students in specific reading and writing strategies like phonics and word study, guided reading, read alouds, shared reading, interactive writing and shared writing (Fountas and Pinnell, 2010). Missing from this balanced literacy workshop model for early elementary students is the joyful engagement of reading for pleasure and fun. This is in fact where school leaders have an opportunity to redefine our 21st century notion of balanced literacy to include the dimension that librarians in this study do so well—help students identify themselves in literature, and help students develop a love of reading that is not easily nurtured in classroom instruction focused on intense reading skill development.

Literacy development and engagement for students should not truncate with the end of the school day. Parents of students should use the library space to continue the engagement students have with books in the library and classroom at home as well, bringing Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) microsystem of people and places that influence students into a strong yet balanced frame for developing children; parents are an important constituent group to engage in literacy initiatives at schools. The librarians in this study welcomed parents into the library space and saw them as partners in developing literacy skills for students. I recommend that parents take a proactive role in contacting librarians and in visiting school libraries so that a child’s literacy development extends beyond the traditional school milieu and into other places and spaces in the real world.
**Recommendations for Teachers and Librarians.** Initially I thought to make separate suggestions for teachers and librarians, but ultimately I believe the findings of this study speak to the incredible potential to make meaningful and lasting learning opportunities for students when teachers and librarians collaborate. Many of the librarians in the study noted that they tend to push into classrooms in order to better understand what students are learning so that they can curate a list of books to support the teachers and students. Librarians should continue to push into classrooms, and to support the teaching and learning happening in traditional classrooms by serving as the information mediator, and by continually offering the library space as a welcoming environment free from judgement and assessments, and also a place where students have the space to move around, wander, and explore books and other resources. Similarly, teachers need to communicate with librarians in more ways than a brief conversation during book check out time at the end of a class’s library time. This communication between early childhood teachers and librarians is especially important as students need an outlet to balance the rigor of learning how to read with a love of reading and the intellectual freedom to be creative and explore new ideas.

**Recommendations for Media Specialists and Maker Space Advocates.** This study suggests that libraries and centers of technology are not synonymous. While technological tools like Mac computers, iPads, and projectors were present in every school library that I visited, only one librarian used technology during my research observations. Libraries used technology as a tool to access information, and librarians acknowledged the benefits it held in accessing large amounts of information quickly and
broadly across topics and themes. What differentiated technology use by early childhood students in this study was the mobile and dynamic way in which it enabled them develop a pathway towards informational literacy. This is to say that students used technology to mediate their experience in researching topics and ideas, and that research was not confined to fixed bank of desktop computers in a media lab or library. Rather, their technology was mobile, allowed them to move around to collaborate with peers or to connect with a teacher for guidance. I recommend that media specialists thoughtfully consider the digital tools they are giving students to mediate informational literacy skill development, and to question if access to information and ideas needs to be relegated to the confines of a room of computers. Furthermore, I encourage media specialists and technology advocates to initiate collaborative projects with classroom teachers so that informational and digital literacy skills are not cultivated through isolated learning experiences in the school library, but are instead connected to meaningful student learning across disciplines and in various settings.

Considering the argument that the maker space movement is a trend in independent school education today, and that one of the school’s in the study created a maker space in order to boost interest in admission to the school, I recommend that schools define how and what the difference is between maker spaces and libraries. In fact, I suggest that the purposes and roles of libraries and maker spaces are quite different; however, they are similar in that they allow students the freedom and space to cultivate multiple literacy skills: informational literacy, traditional literacy, digital
literacy and tactile literacy skills. Crestwood Academy’s I-Lab is one example of how a school library and a maker space collaboratively work to enhance student learning.

Children at Crestwood Academy research in the library but construct representations of their knowledge in the I-Lab. In the early childhood context, the findings in this study warrant a recommendation to keep innovation labs and libraries separate. Librarians serving early childhood students have the important role of curating a student’s identity as an avid reader while also providing a safe intellectual playground for them to grow as inquirers and thinkers. Innovation labs develop a tactile literacy that school libraries cannot perhaps rival; however, working in tandem a school library and maker space collaboration could prove rewarding for students as it has at Crestwood Academy.

Frank from Crestwood Academy is a teacher and department head who explained how the success of the school library and the I-Lab depend on one another. He, Jonathan, Elaine, and the technology specialists meet frequently to align expectations and to collaborate on projects and ideas. He sees the role of the I-Lab as facilitating meaningful and engaging student projects, but noted that students would not be able to implement design thinking and create solutions if they did not have the support and resources of the school library to research ideas and problems.

I think students are learning about creativity [in the Maker Space], and then collaboration and communication. When I first got here [to Crestwood Academy] six years ago, our students could not collaborate, they could not work together and group projects were a disaster. And now, we can move forward with a group project and it hardly ever runs into trouble. 90% of the time the groups work very smooth and there is very rarely a big issued that evolves, and I think part of that is being [developed] here in the I-Lab. And then I think the critical thinking piece,
understanding how to see the problem and understanding how to move forward to find the solution without quitting and without giving up and saying, “Do this for me.” Instead, thinking critically about what steps I need to do next in order to move past this “stuck” point. I think that’s the piece we’re still in progress in with a lot of our students… The “maker space” title is a misnomer because you don’t need a space. A maker space is about the framing of the project, the framing of the challenge, and then who you have facilitating that challenge, what adults you have facilitating that challenge, and are they trained in doing so and if you have that, if you have adults who ready to facilitate and the adults who can frame, then you don’t even need the space.

While the I-Lab at Crestwood Academy is brand new, the concept is thoughtfully designed to link the literacy development happening in classrooms directly to the library and I-Lab. I wonder what the impact could be on schools and the culture of teaching and learning is one space was set aside to accommodate project based learning opportunities as the I-Lab and lower school library at Crestwood have done. Although, as Frank suggests, perhaps a space is not actually needed and instead a school that cannot accommodate a project space first start by shifting teacher mindsets away from paper assessments and more towards design thinking and alternative assessments forms. Based on my preliminary findings from this research, I think a case study of a school like Crestwood Academy would elicit an even greater understanding of how school libraries and makerspaces work together or in tandem to support tactile and informational literacy skills in students. I do not believe makerspaces to be a trend as they exemplify the type of learning that students in early childhood have proven to need: to learn through play. A study investigating how school libraries today make connections to the makerspace as they did at Crestwood Academy might inform the field on the overall effectiveness of makerspaces as spaces for important learning and skill building.
Conclusion

I felt a flood of excitement at each site visit and reveled in the experience of investigating library spaces, spaces that I myself have personally loved since I was a child myself. Whether it was visiting NES and seeing Hannah pick up her guitar to entice the students to listen to the story of a new book, or Shannon brilliantly showing me the potential of teacher and librarian partnership, I walked away from each site transformed as a school leader. My friends at William Penn welcomed me and reminded me how important it is to curate a library collection that represents the students and their families, and they Elaine’s team at Crestwood Academy inspired me to think about new ways that libraries could link with maker spaces in early childhood settings. I am deeply committed to ensuring that all children in this country and around the world have access to a library of quality books and resources. It is clear to me that libraries have the profound ability to shape a community’s view and value on education and inquiry. More importantly, school libraries are places where people go to feel safe, to build meaningful relationships, and to explore the world around them.

At the end of this study I am left in awe and admiration of the important work that school librarians do with seldom appreciation or acknowledgment from school members. Their work is multifaceted and complex, and they serve all school community members not just students. Their impact on school culture, the school community, the local community, and even the spiritual health of individual impress upon me the leadership role that librarians have as custodians and curators of information and knowledge. At the end of this study, I am also also fascinated by the evident intersection of neuroscience
with social ecology theory: how we feel when we are in a space that feels inspiring and what impact that has on our ability to think, feel, act, and engage in any type of skill development as children and adults is prescient in a country with so many school buildings failing into disrepair and dysfunction. This weighs especially heavy on me as an educator working in a well-resourced independent school now, but whose initial interest and inspiration for this study was born while working in the under-resourced School District of Philadelphia. I cannot yet reconcile how every child in this country under the education system today does not have access to a school library when schooling is an integral and pivotal determinant of his or her success in adulthood.

This study and all that went into the research, analysis, and documentation of it has left an indelible mark on my identity as a teacher and school leader. Stretching my mind to organize large amounts of data, analyze and infer meaning, and to synthesize my thoughts into cogent words and impactful findings to inform the field of education was an honor and one I would do again. I am now a committed advocate for quality school libraries and talented school librarians in areas and school districts that are in most need of increasing literacy skills in both children and adults, a commitment that indisputably comes as a result of engaging in this research with the context of Philadelphia and Pine Ridge Native American reservation front in my mind.

The purpose of school libraries has changed in both the public and private school worlds, especially with the growth of 1:1 digital device programs and rapid access to information. While the traditional role of a school’s library has been one that promotes information literacy, reading for information, and reading for pleasure with paper books,
these spaces may not suit the needs of today’s twenty-first century digital learner. How should well-resourced school libraries today, historically bound to paper collections and archives, design learning spaces and allocate resources to support a generation of students born into the digital age? My conclusion is that they should continue to do this with paper books and in warm, safe, and visually exciting school libraries.

There is a current gap in research exploring the role of independent school libraries in the literacy development of young children in the United States. A significant body of literature on the topic exists in Australia and the United Kingdom; however, scholarly work in the area is sparse in the United States, especially for independent schools. In a national survey of independent school libraries by the American Association of School Librarians in 2005, 420 independent school responses were analyzed and compared to public school data. Cahoy and Williamson (2008) analyzed the data and concluded that in comparison to public school libraries, independent school libraries typically were open more hours per week, had high per student library budgets, larger collections, and larger library facilities (Cahoy & Williamson, 2008). If independent schools have more resources available to support library spaces, then this study can be used to help school librarians, school leaders, and teachers navigate how best to allocate those resources.
# APPENDIX A: Research Design Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I need to know?</th>
<th>Why do I need to know this?</th>
<th>What kind of data will answer the questions? (Methods)</th>
<th>Analysis Method</th>
<th>Potential Conclusions</th>
<th>Alternative Explanations (Validity Threats)</th>
<th>Methods to Investigate Alternative Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. How are four well-resourced school libraries designing learning spaces to support the development of multiple literacies in students?</strong></td>
<td>Because pre-literate and early childhood students need educational spaces to develop multiple literacy skills</td>
<td>Interview: structured and open-ended; observation and fieldnotes; Document and archival data analysis.</td>
<td>Coding: etic</td>
<td>Multiple literacies include traditional literacy skills, information literacy, digital literacy, and tactile literacy. Some libraries may have some “maker spaces.”</td>
<td>Participant does not feel comfortable revealing personal narrative with the researcher.</td>
<td>Use follow up clarifying questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students, teachers, or others may alter their interactions with the library space if unfamiliar researcher is present.</td>
<td>Check in with the participant to see if they have thought more deeply about the research questions asked.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Be mindful of my presence during the observations.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. How do teachers and students engage with the library space in order to cultivate literacy?</strong></td>
<td>Because if these libraries are designed in ways that make the development of literacy skills more engaging for students then the design should be replicated.</td>
<td>Observation and fieldnotes.</td>
<td>Group fieldnotes data into themes Coding: emic and etic</td>
<td>The school library is a purposefully designed space with a collection that has been displayed in innovative ways not typically suggested by the AASL or ALA.</td>
<td>Researcher bias influencing the interpretation of data or grouping of data into themes.</td>
<td>Take photographs to review the space and add alternative explanations or insights from my original fieldnotes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. How does technology impact the role of school libraries and the function of the library?</strong></td>
<td>Because if participants can narrate the impact of positive and strong teacher-to-student relationships or librarian-to-teacher relationships, then I can ask more probing questions to determine what aspects of the relationship</td>
<td>Interview: structured and open-ended; Document and archival data from position descriptions.</td>
<td>Group data into themes Coding: emic and etic</td>
<td>Teachers have a close relationship to students because of small class sizes, and both the small class size and the innovative space design lends itself to a more successful learning relationship</td>
<td>Participants may not relate their role as a primary one in the cultivation of literacy skills for students (rather, they may see that primary role the classroom teacher’s responsibility</td>
<td>Use follow up clarifying questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check in with the participant to see if they have thought more deeply about the research questions asked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were most influential on the development of literacy skills in students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. How do school leaders support the school library?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because school leaders can reimagine library spaces and book collections based on whether or not their library is used to its fullest capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview: structured and open-ended;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document and archival data from school website and official documents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coding:** emic and etic

School leaders and the school mission statement drive innovation in order to be competitive schools for local families; schools want to develop students that are equipped with the literacy skills needed in order to be successful graduates.

Participant does not feel comfortable revealing personal narrative with the researcher.

Use follow up clarifying questions. Check in with the participant to see if they have thought more deeply about the research questions asked.
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

TO PARTICIPANT:

1. Invitation to Participate and Description of the Project. My name is Anna Carello and I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania. My dissertation research is an inquiry into innovative library design, and I am specifically interested in better understanding how students, librarians, and teachers interact with the school’s library space in order to develop multiple literacies. I would like to help reimagine school library spaces so that they better serve students with the informational, digital, tactile, and traditional literacy skills that are required in the global economy today.

Your participation in the research study is voluntary. Your school’s leader has agreed to host my study at School X, so you will not face nor will you be at risk for receiving any consequence from the school for being part of the study. Before agreeing to be part of this study, however, please read the following information carefully. Feel free to ask questions if you do not understand something.

TO PARENT/GUARDIAN and STUDENT:

2. Description of Procedure. Description of Procedure. If you participate in this study, you will be asked questions for the purpose helping me to better understand the school dynamics that perhaps have influenced and contribute to the research topic and questions that I have shared with you.

Please initial in the box to the left if you approve of the interview participation.

Furthermore, if you, all information will be kept confidential by me (the researcher) using pseudonyms in place of the student’s actual name. Information will also be kept private in an electronic file that requires a password that only I will know.
information will not be used to harm you in any way now or in the future. The information will be used solely for my understanding literacy development in independent lower school school library spaces.

3. **Risks and Inconveniences.** If some at any time during the interview you become uncomfortable, you can do any of the following: choose not to answer certain questions, take a break and continue later, or stop the interview entirely.

4. **Benefits.** This study was designed to foster a better understanding of how independent school libraries can work towards serving the needs early childhood students. It will also provide you a chance to voice their opinion in a way that protects your identity.

5. **Financial (or other) considerations.** There is no financial compensation for participation in this study. Additionally, all interviewing will be conducted at a mutually convenient time so as to not disrupt academic or professional time.

6. **Confidentiality.** Your name will not be shared with anyone at any point. You will not be identified individually in any way as a result of your participation in this research. The data collected, including recordings and transcripts of the interviews, will only be used for the purposes of a final, unpublished, paper submitted to the University of Pennsylvania.

7. **Voluntary Participation.** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research. Such refusal will not have any negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in the research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences.

8. **Other considerations and questions.** Feel free to call me, Anna Carello, if you have any questions. The best time to reach me is after 5pm and on the weekends. I can be reached at [Telephone Number]. You can also email me at [Email]. Thank you for your consideration and willingness to help me with this important research study. You may also contact my dissertation research chair, Dr. Amy Stornaiuolo, at a [Email].

__________________________
Printed name of participant

__________________________
Signature of participant

__________________________
Date
# APPENDIX C: Observation Protocol

## Observation Notes

Spatial map/sketch of library lay-out (birds-eye view):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Site (check one):</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time of Observation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E</td>
<td>Date: ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Day of the week: ___________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Participants Observed:**

- Teachers: ____________
- Students: ____________
- Librarians: __________
- Others: ______________

**Jottings:**
APPENDIX D: Individual Interview Questions

### Interview Questions for School Leaders

1. How long have you been a leader at this school?
2. How many years of leadership experience do you have?
3. In what subjects have you chosen to earn a degree from a college or university?
4. What percentage of the school budget is allocated for your school’s library?
5. How long have you been a [role] here at [school]?
6. What do you see as the primary roles and responsibilities for your school librarians?
7. How would you describe your library program?
   - Probing question:
     - What office uses the library the most (for example, the Admissions Office for parent coffees, etc.
     - How frequently is the library used for school events during the school day?
8. How would you describe the physical space of the library?
9. Has the library changed or evolved since you’ve been a leader at the school? How so?
10. Can you tell me what you define as “literacy” skills for your students?
11. What does “digital literacy” mean to you?
12. How does [school]’s mission statement apply to the library?
13. How does [school]’s mission statement apply to your definition of literacy?
14. How are teachers and students using the library space?
15. Is there anything you would like me to know about your library?
16. Where does the inspiration or catalyst for change come from for you as a leader?

### Interview Questions for Librarians

1. How many years have you been a librarian?
2. How many years have you been a librarian here at [school]?
3. In what subjects have you chosen to earn a degree from a college or university?
4. Tell me about your position—what do you see as your primary roles and responsibilities?
5. How would you describe your library program?
   - Do you have a mission statement for the library?
   - Probing question:
     - Who uses the library the most?
How frequently is the library used for school events during the school day?
How many books do you have in your collection?
6. How would you describe the physical space of the library?
7. How would you describe the emotional “learning” climate of the library?
   • Probing question:
     o How is this library space different from other learning spaces?
8. In what ways do you collaborate with classroom teachers to support literacy, or to support the library?
9. What section or area of the library do you find students using the most? Why?
10. In what ways do you collaborate with classroom teachers to support literacy, or to support the library?
11. From your point of view, how are students born into a world dominated by technology engaging your school library?
12. How does [school]’s mission statement apply to the library?
13. How are teachers and students using the library space?
14. How are parents using the space?
15. Is there anything you would like me to know about your library?

Interview Questions for Teachers

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How long have you been a teacher here at [school]?
3. What grade-level do you teach?
4. How long have you been teaching this grade-level?
5. And what subject was your major in college?
6. How do you use the school library as a teacher?
   o How often do you plan a visit to the library for your students?
   o What is the purpose of these visits?
   o Do you stay with your students for these visits?
   o How many visits do you make without the students to the library?
7. How would you describe the physical space of the library?
8. How would you describe the emotional “learning” climate of the library?
   • Probing question:
     o How is this library space different from your classroom learning space?
9. How has having a classroom library in your own space impacted your use of the school library?
10. Can you tell me what you define as “literacy” skills for your students?
11. Tell me about your approach to literacy. What components of literacy do you teach?
12. What expectations do you have for students when it comes to developing literacy skills?
13. How does [school]’s mission statement apply to the library?
14. How does [school]’s mission statement apply to your definition of literacy?
15. How are other teachers using the library space with students?
APPENDIX E: Research Design

Research Design
An in-depth study of four schools with innovative library spaces selected based on selective criteria.

Methods:
1. Interviews
   - Librarians, Teachers, Head of School interview analysis
2. Observations
   - Fieldnotes and researcher memos analysis
3. Artifacts/materials/website analysis
   - Website analysis, printed literature analysis, survey analysis
Appendix F: The New England School Library Layout
**Appendix G**: Crestwood Academy School Library Layout
Appendix H: William Penn School Library Layout
Appendix I: Crestwood Academy School Library Layout
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