



LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS

An examination of library resource goals
and alternate service scenarios

Converse County Library
Douglas, WY

Library Planning Associates, Inc.

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Library Planning Associates, Inc. was retained by the Board of Trustees of the Converse County Library to examine prospective future service goals for the library and the implications of those service goals on library space needs.

Anders Dahlgren, principal with LPA, was assigned to conduct the study. An initial site visit was held on August 29-30. This visit afforded Dahlgren an opportunity to tour through the existing two facilities, to meet with library staff, library trustees, and other local officials to review a preliminary data analysis based on materials conveyed to LPA prior to the visit and to confirm the study's scope of inquiry. During the second and third site visits – October 2, 2005 and January 10-11-12, 2006 – a series of group interviews were conducted with residents from Douglas and Glenrock. During the third site visit, Dahlgren met with staff from both facilities to discuss potential systemwide service goals. At the fourth site visit, on February 13, 2006, Dahlgren reviewed with staff and board members a preliminary finding of space needs. And at the fifth site visit, on March 20, 2006, Dahlgren reviewed a completed draft report on the service goals and space needs of the Converse County Library. Based on the comments received during those discussions, this complete and final draft was prepared and conveyed to the library.

The following individuals contributed directly to the direction of the study, and their efforts are noted here:

Bob Shinmori
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President, Board of Trustees
Vice-President, Board of Trustees

Dennis Switzer	Secretary-Treasurer, Board of Trustees
Ellen Vinnola	Board of Trustees
Carolyn (Candy) Zechiel	Board of Trustees

Karen Hopkins	Library Director
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Douglas Library staff:

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Cinnamon Hopkins	Patron Services
Laura Smathers	Children's Services
Ian Lindeman	Young Adult Services
Lisa Daly	Business/Communications Manager
Nicholas Mendoza	Library Clerk
Brenda Hemberry	Children's Services (retired)

Glenrock Library staff:

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Trudy Martinez	Circulation/Technical Services
Rita Heath	Children's/Young Adult Services
Debbie Sweet	Library Clerk

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Current conditions / scope of the study

The Converse County Library presently delivers service to county residents through two buildings, one in Douglas and the other in Glenrock. The Douglas facility is roughly 9,850 square feet in area, while the Glenrock facility is roughly 3,800 square feet in area.

Over the years, the library has slowly grown into its buildings. At both facilities, spaces that were originally designed to support meeting and program functions have been taken over by other library uses – collection display and reader seating, among others. By turning meeting space over to other uses, the library has necessarily created an impediment to community events that it sponsors (lectures, readings, and so on), the better to promote use of the library’s core collection resources. This is just one simple illustration of how the two buildings have come to reach (and exceed) their functional capacity.

Today, at both facilities the library is challenged to keep up with patron demands for an increasingly diverse collection. The two buildings were designed in an era when a typical public library’s collection was comprised predominately of print volumes. But today, the print collection remains an important component, but it is just one piece of a more wide ranging collection resource.

In addition to traditional print materials, the library now supplies a variety of nonprint collections – including music CDs, audiobooks in CD and tape

formats, and videos recordings in both analog tape and digital formats. These nonprint resources have been added to the library's collection mix without any significant, corresponding decrease in demands for print holdings.

In a similar fashion, the addition of electronic information resources and the computer equipment needed to access those resources have tended to come as an *added* service demand rather than something that supplants an existing resource.

Within its limited space in both buildings, the Converse County Library has faced an increasingly difficult challenge to keep up with these increasingly diverse demands from its community.

The library sought an independent examination of its current service delivery strategies, and an assessment of the library's service and space needs in the future. The findings that emerge from this study will inform the continuing evaluation of expansion strategies by the library board and staff.

Among the issues to be addressed by this study are:

- What services, collections and resources should the Converse County Library provide to meet the community's needs for library service over the coming generation?
- Based on those goals for services, collection development and resource development, what are the library's space needs over the next twenty years?

- What strategic planning issues emerge as a result of developing this estimate of the library’s service goals and space needs?

1.2 Summary of findings

A review of the library’s essential service and resource inventory goals found that the library should provide a facility sufficient to house the following resources (listed as a combined system-wide inventory, then divided into resources to be held at Douglas and at Glenrock):

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Douglas</u>	<u>Glenrock</u>
Volumes held	90,000	63,000	27,000
Magazine titles	139	98	41
Nonprint held	18,000	12,600	5,400
Public computer terminals	50	35	15
Reader seats	110	78	32
Staff work stations	29	20	9
Meeting / program room to seat		150	100
Storytime room to seat		35	
Conference room to seat		20	15

Applying conventional unit space allowances for all of these resources produces an estimate that the Converse County Library should plan for a building of some 30,000 square feet in Douglas and 14,000 square feet in Glenrock.

There is a clear need for expanded facilities in Douglas and Glenrock. The library board and staff now needs to work closely with local officials and with the community at large to advance expansion strategies that will meet these needs.

In light of these observations and findings, Library Planning Associates, Inc. recommends that the Converse County Library:

- **reaffirm the underlying service goals that lead to the space need for an expanded library facility of 30,000 square feet in Douglas and 14,000 square feet in Glenrock;**
- **build consensus within the community regarding the library's service goals and space needs and the need to expand the existing buildings or provide new buildings;**
- **initiate a feasibility study (possibly with an architect's assistance) to assess the ability of the present buildings and the present sites to support an expansions of the necessary scale and determine the most effective strategy for expansion; and**
- **when ready to proceed to the design of an expanded building, authorize the development of building program statements describing the library's spatial and environmental requirements in the context of two expanded buildings**

2 ESSENTIAL PLANNING CONCEPTS

The following sections discuss a variety of broad concepts that form a foundation for the subsequent examination of service goals and space needs for the Converse County Library. Included among these concepts are:

- 2.1 Service goals determine a library's space need
- 2.2 The planning horizon defines a long-range timetable
- 2.3 Design population defines a context for future library
- 2.4 The library's mission and role in the community condition its services
- 2.5 Recent trends in services and inventory establish a foundation for future growth
- 2.6 Comparative benchmarks provide a perspective for assessing library service
- 2.7 Community input offers additional direction for future service goals
- 2.8 Digital information resources will affect library collections

2.1 *SERVICE GOALS DETERMINE A LIBRARY'S SPACE NEED*

For the purpose of developing an estimate of a library's space need, Library Planning Associates, Inc. recommends a methodology that identifies six kinds of floor space found in most libraries, regardless of type:

- *Collection space:* to house the library's basic print and nonprint collection.
- *Reader seating space:* to provide a variety of comfortable seating for library patrons to use the library's resources in-house.
- *Staff space:* to provide staff work stations as needed to support the library's various routines and operations (circulation, technical services, public services, administration, etc.).
- *Programming / meeting space:* to accommodate library programming for the general public, meetings of the library board and/or staff, as well as meetings of other community groups.
- *Special use space:* to house those pieces of unique library furniture or special library functions that have not been accounted for in previous types of space (e.g., photocopiers, pamphlet files, microfilm readers, public typewriters, public lounge or coffee bar, staff lounge, etc.).
- *Nonassignable space:* to house those spaces which must be provided

to support a functioning building but which cannot be assigned directly to library purposes (e.g., vestibules, restrooms, stairwells, furnace rooms, etc.).

Regarding each of these six types of space, the library's program of service together with comparative benchmarks from peer libraries and standards documents issued by a state library agency or state library association are used to determine what that library's needs are, and a formula can be applied to translate those service needs into the corresponding spatial requirements. To vastly oversimplify the equation, all other things being equal a library will require more floor space if it establishes a service parameter to develop a collection of 250,000 volumes than would be the case if its collection development goal was 100,000 volumes; all other things being equal, a library will require more floor space if it establishes a service parameter to provide 200 reader seats than would be the case if it were to provide 120 reader seats.

2.2 *THE PLANNING HORIZON DEFINES A LONG-RANGE TIMETABLE*

Library space planning usually results in a capital project of significant scope and expense. In order to achieve the highest possible return on the community's capital investment, local authorities should strive to meet not only the present service needs of the community, but its future needs as well. A library should grow into its facility, with sufficient space provided for shelving and other resources so that the setting does not become too soon overcrowded.

The conventional planning timetable for library facilities planning is twenty years. Over the years, library planners have come to agree that a building designed to meet a twenty-year need will provide a suitable return on the community's investment, building to meet tomorrow's needs at today's pre-inflationary construction costs.

For the Converse County study, the planning horizon is set to the year 2030. While this results in a period somewhat longer than the conventional twenty years, it assumes that the implementation of the plan that emerges here to address the long-term needs is some time in the future. If that plan is completed by 2010 – or at least well underway – a planning horizon of 2030 will allow the community a full twenty years' occupation and use in the resulting facility.

The recommendations presented here are intended to define an environment from which the library may respond to the needs of the service community during the years to come, acknowledging that change is occurring so quickly – socially, technologically, in every way – that the best strategy for

2.3 *DESIGN POPULATION DEFINES A CONTEXT FOR FUTURE LIBRARY SERVICES*

The design population defines a key parameter for planning future library services. By identifying how the library’s service community is expected to grow, a context is provided for the establishment of future library service goals and future space needs.

If a needs assessment is to identify a library’s future service goals, it is critical that the design population represent a *projection* of the size of the library’s service community.

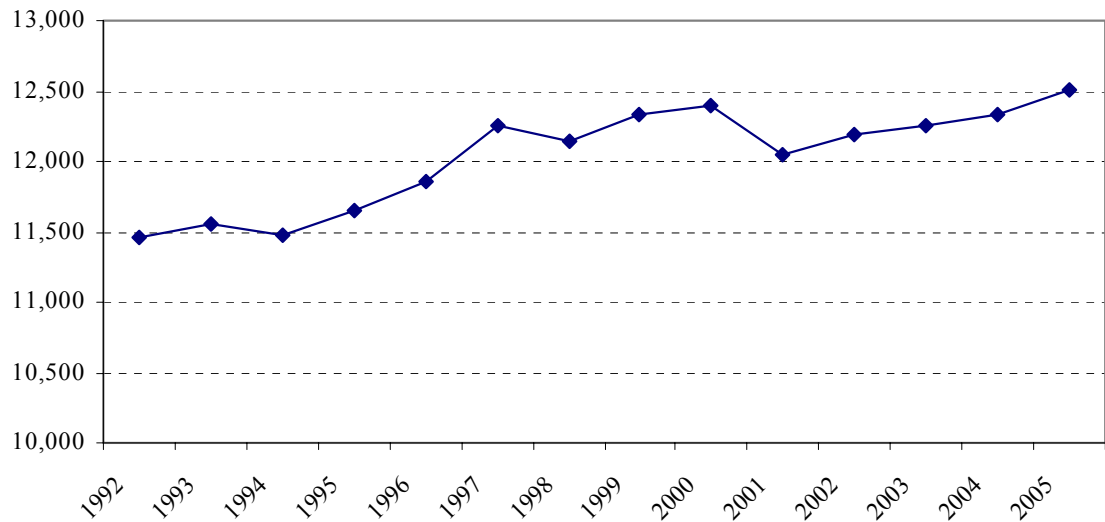
The current reported service population of the Converse County Library is 12,515. Of that, roughly 5,500 live in Douglas, 2,200 live in Glenrock, and the balance – about 4,800 – live in smaller communities and the outlying county.

Population forecasts for Douglas County are not readily available. In part this is due to the recurring cycle of boom and bust that has marked the area’s economy. Residents of Glenrock observe that the population of that community has in the past been more than twice the current population. Over the past 10-15 years, the county population has fluctuated from year to year, but on the whole the population has generally grown (see Figure 2(1), next page)

In discussions with library staff and board members and other local officials, there was broad consensus that the county population will grow, albeit by some undetermined amount. Many felt that the population is poised to grow by some 10% over the next ten years. If that broad growth rate were extended to

**FIGURE 2(1)
 CONVERSE COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Pct change</u>
1992	11,457	
1993	11,560	0.90%
1994	11,470	-0.78%
1995	11,650	1.57%
1996	11,850	1.72%
1997	12,260	3.46%
1998	12,150	-0.90%
1999	12,337	1.54%
2000	12,396	0.48%
2001	12,052	-2.78%
2002	12,186	1.11%
2003	12,258	0.59%
2004	12,330	0.59%
2005	12,515	1.50%



the year 2030 – the conclusion of this study’s planning time frame – it would lead to a population of 15,143.

A projected service population of 15,143 results in an annual rate of growth that averages a little more than 0.75%. Population growth forecasts are discussed further in Appendix A.

2.4 *THE LIBRARY'S MISSION AND ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY CONDITION ITS SERVICES*

The library's current long-range plan highlights a variety of developmental goals for the Converse County Library in the coming years. As part of that plan, a mission statement was formulated to define the overarching purpose of the Converse County Library:

The mission of the Converse County Library System is to uphold the public's freedom of access to information by providing educational, informational, cultural, and entertainment services and materials in a variety of technologies and formats.

These seven goals form the core of the library's current strategic plan:

- Residents of Converse County will look to their local library as their FIRST source of community information.
- The Converse County Library will provide the resources, assistance, and tools to enhance and further the educational progress of students as well as adult learners.
- Converse County Libraries will reach out to those with special needs by developing and sustaining community outreach services.
- The history and heritage of our communities, in partnership with local agencies, will be collected, organized, and preserved, for the

**2.5 RECENT TRENDS IN SERVICES
AND INVENTORY ESTABLISH A
FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE
GROWTH**

A review of the library’s annual reports to the Wyoming state library agency provides an overview of the current status of library services at the Converse County Library and an understanding of recent trends in the development of the library’s resources and use.

2.5.1 Collections

According to the latest available annual report data, the library maintains a collection of 51,291 volumes, 3,150 audio recordings and 2,838 video recordings.

**FIGURE 2(2)
VOLUMES HELD**

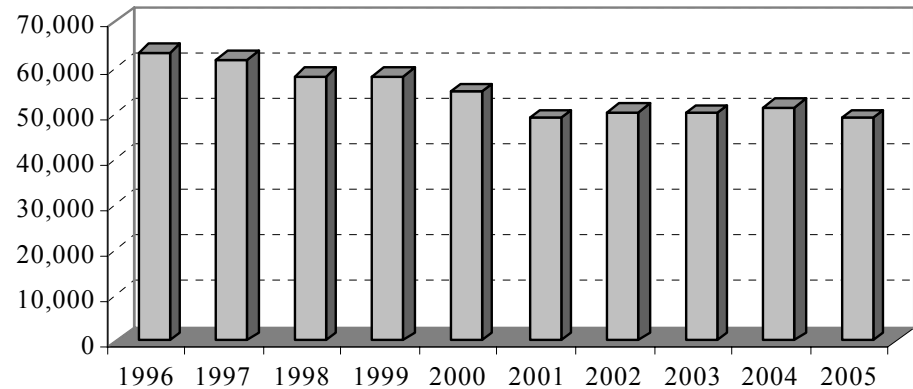
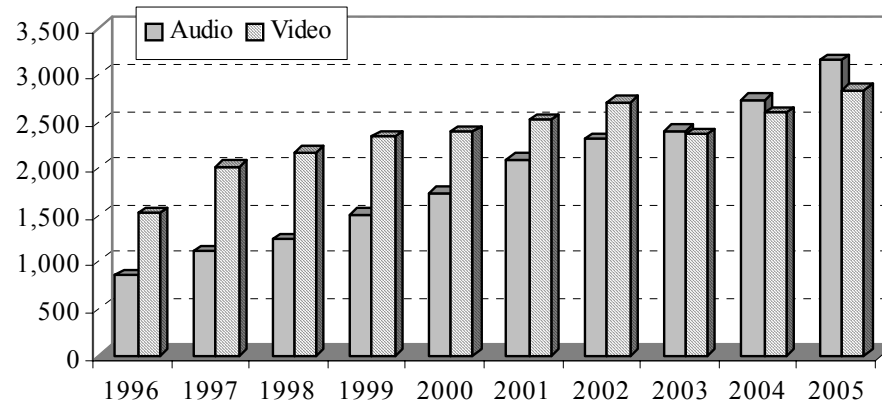


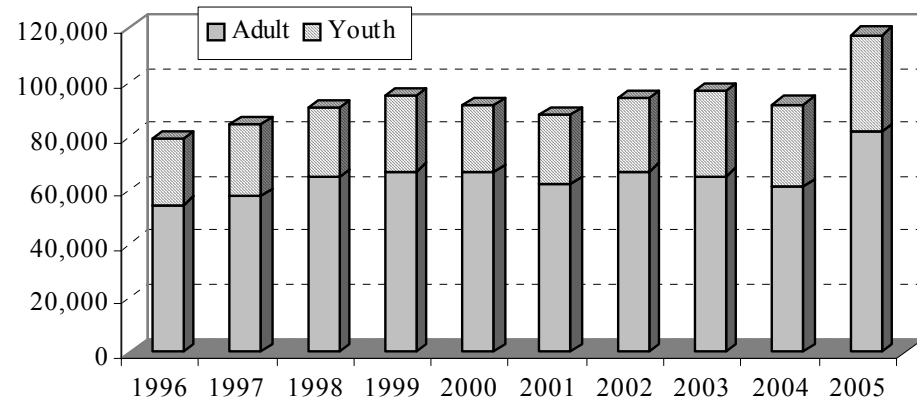
FIGURE 2(3)
NONPRINT HOLDINGS



to 3,100+ items; video recordings have increased almost three-fold, from 900+ items to 2,800+ items.

The balance of the library's holdings has experienced a notable shift over time with the development of the nonprint collection. In 1992, the ratio of nonprint holdings to print holdings was 3.6% – for every 100 items in the print collection, there were 3.6 nonprint items held. By 2005, that ratio had increased to 10.4%. Within the nonprint collection, a more subtle shift has occurred. In 1992, video holdings represented 39.4% of the nonprint collection; by 2004, video holdings had come to represent 48.7% of the nonprint collection (although the video collection has represented as much as 60+% of the library's nonprint

FIGURE 2(4)
ANNUAL CIRCULATION



holdings from 1996 to 1999 – the composition of these collections are quite volatile as public demands shift).

2.5.2 Collection use

Circulation is the traditional measure of library use (see Figure 2(4)). At the Converse County Library, use increased sporadically during the 1990s, increasing some years, decreasing others. A complete summary of the library's circulation measures is presented in Appendix B.

In the early-to-mid-1990s, circulation declined from 97,100+, reaching a

low of 76,600+ in 1995. Total circulation grew through the balance of the 1990s, then declined again in 2000 and 2001. Since then, total circulation increased in 2002 and 2003, decreased slightly in 2004, then rose significantly in 2005. The increase in 2005 marked a record high – 117,600+ transactions – and a 28+% increase over the previous year.

It is interesting to note, albeit coincidental, that the library reported decreases in its service population at roughly the same time that the two plateaus in use occurred, in 1994 and 2000.

Circulation per capita can be interpreted as a measure of overall activity levels at a library. Noting that in general, total circulation tends to increase as a library’s service population grows, circulation *per capita* is often highlighted to balance or leaven the broad impact of population growth on circulation trends. At Converse County, this measure has grown to 9.4 in 2005 (over 7.4 in 2004 and an average of 7.6 since 1992).

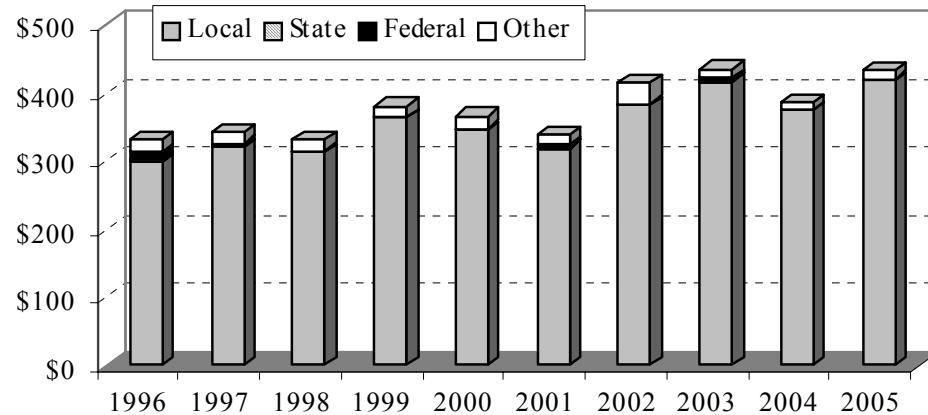
Circulation per volume held is sometimes interpreted as a measure of the responsiveness or efficiency of the collection – the average number of times each volume in the collection has circulated in a year. Presumably, a higher rate of circulation per volume held (otherwise called “turnover rate”) indicates a higher rate of use within the collection. At Converse County, this measure has grown to 2.4 in 2005 (over 1.8 in 2004 and an average of 1.6 since 1992).

The balance of circulation between the library’s Douglas and Glenrock facilities has been fairly constant since 1998, when that data was first recorded on the state library’s annual report forms. On average, circulation at the Douglas

facility has represented just under 70% of total circulation, ranging from a high of 73.5% to a low of 64.8%.

Likewise, the balance of circulation between adult material and children's material has been fairly constant since 1998. On average, circulation of adult material has represented just over 70% of total circulation, ranging from a high of 73.1% to a low of 66.9%. Circulation of adult material has represented a slightly higher proportion of total circulation at the Douglas facility than at the Glenrock facility. At Douglas, circulation of adult materials has represented, on average, 71.4% of total circulation at that location. At Glenrock, circulation of adult materials has represented, on average, 66.8% of total circulation.

FIGURE 2(5)
REVENUES BY SOURCE



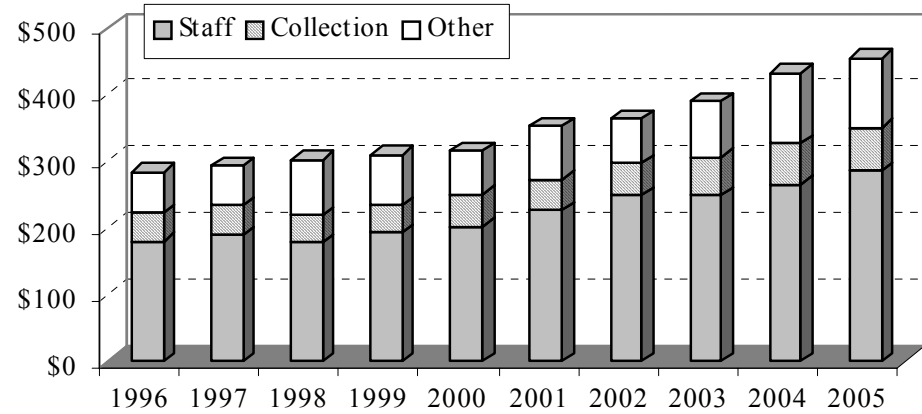
2.5.3 Revenues and expenditures

Since 1992, revenues have generally tracked upward for the Converse County Library, growing from \$272,000+ to over 434,000+ in 2005 (see Figure 2(5), preceding page). The relative balance among revenue categories – local, state, federal, and “other” sources of income – has shifted as the overall budget has increased.

Generally, “local” tax revenue has constituted something in the mid-90% range of the library’s total operating revenue. The only notable exception to that broad observation occurs in 1994, 1995, and 1996, when the library received an uncharacteristic distribution of grant funding from federal sources. During that period, local tax revenue sources fell below 90% of total revenue. Over the last three years, local sources have averaged 96.5% of total revenue. State sources have averaged less than one-half of one percent of total revenue. Federal sources have averaged less than 2 percent of total revenue (even factoring in the shares of 5.1%, 11.2% and 3.2% between 1994 and 1996 – an indicator of how negligible federal sources are in the library’s overall funding picture). “Other” sources – being fines and fees and gifts and other miscellaneous sources – constitute, on average, less than 5% of revenue sources.

Revenue growth has kept pace with the growth in expenditures. Operating expenditures have grown from \$244,000+ in 1992 to \$454,000+ in 2005 (see Figure 2(6), next page). During this period, expenditure categories have varied as a share of total expenditures within the operating budget. Personnel costs have represented, on average, 64.3% of total expenditures, ranging from a high of

FIGURE 2(6)
EXPENDITURES BY TYPE



70.1% in 1993 to a low of 58.8% in 1998. Materials costs have averaged 14.3% of the library's total expenditures, ranging from a high of 18.6% in 1994 to a low of 12.7% in 1993. Material expenditures per capita have increased from \$2.75 in 1992 to \$5.27 in 2005.

2.6 *COMPARATIVE BENCHMARKS
PROVIDE A PERSPECTIVE FOR
ASSESSING LIBRARY SERVICE*

In cooperation with state library agency data coordinators across the country, the National Center for Education Statistics assembles annual report data from every public library into a combined database of public library use statistics. The most recently issued database includes public library annual report data for 2003. A complete summary of this analysis is presented in Appendix C.

This database was used to draw several comparative samples to establish library service benchmarks or “norms” for assessing the current status of the library service at the Converse County Library and projecting potential service goals.

- All Wyoming libraries
- Wyoming libraries / 10,000 to 25,000 pop (more or less bracketing the library’s current and projected population)
- U.S. libraries / 12,000 to 13,000 pop (more or less bracketing the library’s current population)
- U.S. libraries / 14,000 to 16,000 pop (more or less bracketing the library’s projected population)
- U.S. county libraries / 11,000 to 14,000 pop (more or less bracketing the library’s current population)
- U.S. county libraries / 13,000 to 17,000 pop (more or less bracketing the library’s projected population)
- All High Plains regional
- High Plains regional libraries / 10,000 to 25,000 pop (more or less

bracketing the library's current and projected population)

For purposes of this analysis, the "High Plains" region was defined as the state of Wyoming and the six states that touch Wyoming – Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah.

Using the NCES data, the following observations are made:

- *The relationship of the subject library to the rest of the sample is crucial to the interpretation of the comparative result.* "Gross" or overall measures of library service (total collection size, total circulation, total staffing) tend to follow the population of the library's service jurisdiction. Generally, a library's total holdings, circulation, staffing and funding grows as a library's population grows. If in comparison with a given sample, a library's population falls at or about the median of the sample, one would expect that the library's total holdings, circulation, and the like will also tend to fall at or near the sample median. If the library's population falls at the upper quartile, these other measures of overall / total service should tend to fall toward the upper quartile of the sample.

With this in mind, note the following percentile ranks for Converse County on the measure of service population in the context of these "current peer" samples:

- Wyoming libraries serving 10,000 to 25,000 population: 33rd percentile
- U.S. libraries serving 12,000 to 13,000 population: 40th

- percentile
- U.S. county libraries serving 11,000 to 14,000 population: 40th percentile
- Libraries in the High Plains region serving 10,000 to 25,000 population: 29th percentile
- *Against its current peer groups, Converse County compares variably with regard to its core book collection.* In comparison with all libraries nationwide, as well as the subset all *county* libraries nationwide, Converse County's book holdings compare favorably. In the sample of public libraries nationwide serving 12,000 to 13,000 population, the library's service population ranks it at the 40th percentile, while its book collection (reported at 49,800+ volumes for the NCES comparative analysis) ranks it above the 60th percentile. In the subset of county libraries nationwide, the library's population ranks at the 40th percentile, but its reported collection ranks at the 72nd percentile. Among libraries in the High Plains region serving 10,000 to 25,000 population, the library's service population ranks at the 29th percentile, while its book collection ranks at the 54th percentile.

All of these results are indicators that the library's current book collection is larger than one might ordinarily expect, given its service population. On the assumption that the collection is current (and not overloaded with dated, comparatively questionable materials), this would typically be a positive finding.

It's a somewhat different picture when the library is refracted through a more localized lens. Against libraries in Wyoming

serving 10,000 to 25,000 population, Converse County’s population ranks it at the 33rd percentile, but it’s book collection ranks at the 16th percentile. The differential at the state level may have to do with the fact that the state sample is relatively small (just seven libraries reporting) and therefore difficult to manipulate statistically. Or it may have to do with the possibility that all of Wyoming’s public libraries are organized on a county basis (while other libraries in other parts of the country can be organized on a smaller governmental / geographical unit, which may in turn require a more modest resource: perhaps libraries in Wyoming need to respond to their larger geographical service area with larger collections). Or it may have to do with the possibility that Wyoming simply has a stronger heritage for library service than do other parts of the country.

- *The Converse County Library has made a significant commitment to nonprint resources.* In contrast with the comparative analysis for print holdings, the library’s nonprint collections are consistently ranked above the library’s “expected” level, with percentile results for population, audio, and video summarized as follows:

	<u>Pop</u>	<u>Audio</u>	<u>Video</u>
WY libraries 10,000 to 25,000 pop	33 rd	50 th	33 rd
U.S. libraries 12,000 to 13, 000 pop	40 th	73 rd	74 th
U.S. county librs 11,000 to 14,000 pop	40 th	80 th	87 th
Regional librs 10,000 to 25,000 pop	29 th	75 th	69 th

According to these rankings, the Converse County Library has a notably larger nonprint collection than would ordinarily be expected of a library serving a population of 12,400+ – across all samples, the library’s percentile rankings for audio holdings and video holdings are consistently higher than its percentile rankings for population.

Even so, a pattern similar to that discerned with print holdings can be found: the library appears to compare more favorably among the two national samples and the regional sample than it does against in-state libraries, in that the variation between population ranking and audio / video ranking is greater in those three examples than it is in the in-state sample.

- *The apparent strength of the library’s nonprint holdings is further supported by the measure “nonprint holdings as a percent of print holdings.”* According to the data set used for the comparative benchmark analyses, Converse County has a nonprint holdings ratio of 9.56%, which places the library at the following percentile rankings:
 - 81st among all Wyoming libraries
 - 83rd among Wyoming libraries serving 10,000 to 25,000 population
 - 73rd among U.S. libraries serving 12,000 to 13,000 population
 - 85th among U.S. county libraries serving 11,000 to 14,000 population

attention on samples that zero in on Wyoming libraries as the most relevant point of comparison. The samples at the national and regional levels seem to suggest that as a group, libraries in Wyoming seem to deliver a somewhat more assertive level of library service. This, together with the prospect that local library users are most likely to experience other public libraries in the immediate area and use those libraries as a point of comparison in their own informal assessments of the Converse County Library, strengthens the case for relying on a more localized sample as the primary benchmark. At the same time, it must be noted that the state-level sample of libraries serving a population comparable in size to that of the Converse County Library is a small sample (n=7) and as a result, any inferences drawn from that sample may be subject to a greater possibility of error.

2.7 *COMMUNITY INPUT OFFERS
ADDITIONAL DIRECTION FOR
FUTURE SERVICE GOALS*

During the second and third site visits, a series of group interviews were conducted with area residents. The groups included both invited participants and individuals who volunteered to attend. All of the groups were general and heterogeneous in nature – none of the groups attempted to focus on a specific demographic characteristic (such as age or gender). A prepared script of questions was put to all of the groups. In all, roughly two dozen individuals participated in these interviews.

On the whole, the group interviews were largely consistent in their responses. From that discussion the following key themes emerged.

2.7.1 Community characteristics

In characterizing the service area, several of the same descriptors were employed by different interviewees. The county was described as growing, although subject to cycles of boom and bust. Currently the county population count is on the upswing, and most participants saw that trend continuing for the near future. Over the long term, interview participants saw the county population going through the kinds of cycles that have been witnessed in the past, but overall increasing. None of the participants could report having heard any specific forecasts for future population growth.

The demographics of the county are changing. Some participants noted a dearth of young people in the community. One noted that the population of

Wyoming in general is aging and that within ten to twenty years Wyoming is expected to rank second only to Florida in terms of the proportion of the population over the age of 65. Glenrock is perceived as having a higher proportion of senior population than is the case in the rest of the county. Some participants commented on the resources available in the county that cater to the needs of seniors – the senior center in Douglas, the good medical facilities, the general cost of living.

Douglas was described as a more self-sufficient community than Glenrock. Glenrock, because of its proximity to Casper was described as more of a bedroom community. Douglas was perceived to have a higher level of educational attainment than the rest of the county. Glenrock was perceived to have a higher proportion of its population living at or below the poverty line.

Perhaps the most consistent descriptor of the county was that it is “a good place to raise a family.” Because this phrase is commonly offered as a descriptor of many of the communities that LPA has worked with, respondents were asked to elaborate on what that meant. Among the phrases that were used to elaborate the theme that Converse County is “a good place to raise a family” were these:

- A positive attitude in the community
- Good schools
- A safe community – low crime rates
- A variety of organized activities for children to get involved with
- “There are only five traffic lights in town”
- There’s a sense of community

Another important and closely-related theme that emerged was the importance of supporting children in the community. Participants described the value of intervention programs for children who are at risk. Another said, “If it’s for a child, there’s a lot that people will do.” Obviously, there’s a clear connection to the public library in this theme.

2.7.2 What the library does well

Participants reported using the library for a wide variety of reasons. These include the genealogy collection, Internet access, children’s programming, programming for adults, audiobooks, and the copy machine, among others.

The library’s role as a provider of electronic access was highlighted. Because of limitations in access to land-based, high-speed Internet access and the cost of Internet access via satellite, one respondent observed: “We need help just trying to keep up with technology.”

Interlibrary loan service – the ability to move holdings from one branch to the other to meet patron needs as well as the ability to get requested items from other libraries in Wyoming and across the country – was cited as an important library service. Respondents noted that the library’s participation in electronic resource-sharing consortia supports this capability.

But far and away, the most frequently cited strength of the library was its staff. They were described as “resourceful” and “accommodating.” One participant simply said, “They do amazing things.” Another said “They really do care.”

2.7.3 What the library can improve upon

Even though participants reported a high level of satisfaction with the library's services, they were not hesitant to offer suggestions for improvement. Among the services or collections that could be improved were the following:

- more storytimes
- a larger genealogy collection
- more outreach, improved access and services for remote parts of the county
- continue to develop the DVD collection in favor of the VHS collection
- more audiobooks
- more computers for people to use
- a drive-up book return
- adequate staff work space
- expanded hours to improve overall access, including Sunday hours
- more programs for seniors
- program rooms – at both facilities – was highlighted as perhaps the most significant service improvement to pursue

2.7.4. Top priorities over the next 5-10 years

Simply put, the single most important priority cited by respondents, the more frequently recurring theme, was the need to develop adequate programming and meeting facilities in order to make the library a true community center.

2.8 *DIGITAL INFORMATION RESOURCES WILL AFFECT LIBRARY COLLECTIONS*

There are some who argue that libraries and books will no longer be needed in a digital age. For some, this calls into question any need for expansion. As libraries have connected to the Internet in increasing numbers over the last five to seven years, experience belies the popular notion that soon “everything will be on-line.”

Recent experience demonstrates that access to information in digital form changes the characteristics of access and changes the nature of the information itself:

- *Digital information allows the creation of new approaches to the presentation of information.* Computers facilitate the combination of media and formats. Print information can be readily combined with pictorial information. Still pictures can be combined with motion pictures to better illustrate topics.
- *Digital information allows the user more options for how to use resources.* Traditional formats are linear in nature and are often presented sequentially. Digital information resources can more readily be presented in a manner that lets the user determine the sequence of the access.
- *Digital information allows the user more points of access.* Many digital information resources are more thoroughly indexed than

traditional resources and allow the user to combine index terms with more direct control.

- *Digital information can be readily duplicated.* The technology to duplicate digital information is more economical and more readily accessible to users, thereby creating a greater opportunity for individual users to make multiple copies of digital records.
- *Digital information can be transmitted instantaneously.* Once captured in digital form, information can be transmitted from one location or user to another virtually instantaneously by way of phone connections made between two computers.

These characteristics make information in digital form considerably different than information presented in more traditional forms. Digital information resources hold the promise to give individual users and readers greater control over the creation and alteration and dissemination of information. They allow the presentation of information in a different fashion, which is not to say that books are suddenly no longer needed. Each format has its strengths, and each has its shortcomings.

Electronic resources are excellent for producing *current* information on a topic. For the present, they appear more suited to shorter bursts of information. They benefit from an apparent efficiency in storage density. As noted above, they support the combination of text, graphics, motion, and audio. The relative ease with which one can publish and disseminate information via the Web is certainly an advantage, but it carries the risk that literally anyone can now publish things

films, microforms, and framed art. Today's library houses videocassettes, DVDs, compact discs, books on tape, and microforms in addition to its conventional print collections.

Because of the durability of traditional forms and because of the complementary nature of traditional and electronic information formats, it is the premise of these collection projections that traditional print material will continue to be a primary resource for the public library, but that digital information resources will complement traditional resources and greatly enhance the ability of each individual library to provide timely access to information needed by its patrons.

In short, an important assumption underlying this study is that books will survive as a viable format for the coming planning generation. They will be complemented by nonprint resources, and newer electronic resources. The result, then, for this coming generation is likely to be a library that combines traditional collections with the improved access and enhanced capabilities afforded by digital information resources.

3 *LIBRARY SERVICE GOALS AND SPACE NEEDS: A PLANNING MODEL*

This section outlines a methodology for calculating a library's space needs based on its projected service goals. The methodology is outlined around six types of floor space:

- 3.1 Housing the collection
- 3.2 Supporting readers using the library
- 3.3 Supporting staff work routines
- 3.4 Supporting library program activities and meetings
- 3.5 Providing for "special use" support functions
- 3.6 Providing for "nonassignable" support functions

Given the establishment of essential service parameters for any library, an estimate of the library's space needs can be developed. This section of the report will discuss environmental factors and choices that affect a library's need for space – a decision to employ a 36" aisle in the library's bookstacks versus a 42" aisle, for example – and describe how service goals can be translated into space needs.

When a library presents unusual or extraordinary conditions, this methodology should be adapted to reflect the practical impact of those special conditions. A library wishing to house its collection on compact, mobile shelving could reasonably expect to achieve a higher collection density and require less square footage for its collection than would be calculated ordinarily when using this methodology. A library that plans to support long-term / day-long research

use might plan on providing all of its seating in oversized study carrels to accommodate the needs of researchers, and could reasonably apply a larger space allocation per reader seat than is recommended here. A library that needs to incorporate a garage could add a special allocation to the calculations for that feature, to reflect the fact that including a garage would skew the routine determination of nonassignable space.

3.1 HOUSING THE COLLECTION

The space needed to house a library's collection is determined by the size of the collection and a series of environmental parameters that define the shelving environment, including the type of material to be housed, the height of the shelves, and the width of the aisle.

3.1.1 Books

Library books can be housed in a variety of shelving environments. Some are more space efficient than others, ranging from 5 volumes per square foot to 30 volumes per square foot, depending on such factors as the type of material being housed, the height of the shelving unit, and the width of the aisle in the bookstacks. Compact shelving units can accommodate even more material in the same amount of space.

An optimum estimate of library shelving capacity is 10 volumes per square foot. Ten volumes per square foot supports a setting that allows an aisle wider than the bare minimum 36" required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Shelf units may be somewhat shorter than might otherwise be found in a library, so that all of the shelving can be more easily reached. Each individual shelf will be planned with a more generous "working capacity" – meaning that more of each shelf will be reserved to accommodate day-to-day shifting and use of the collection, which also makes the stacks easier for patrons to use. In general, this optimum allocation of 10 volumes per square foot establishes the best possible balance between a setting that provides a reasonable collection

capacity while maximizing patrons' ease of use.

If the library elects to pursue more assertive strategies to house its collections, the library can certainly increase the number of volumes per square foot that it will accommodate. A moderate estimate of collection capacity is 11.25 volumes per square foot, while a minimum estimate is 13 volumes per square foot. (Although the label "minimum" is applied to what seems to be the "maximum" measure described here – 13 volumes per square foot instead of 10 or 11 – the resulting space allocation calculated at 13 volumes per square foot is smaller than that calculated at 11.25 or 10 volumes per square foot.)

As the library's collection capacity per square foot is increased from the optimum level of 10 volumes per square foot, the library is backing off from that optimum physical shelving environment. As the allocation of volumes per square foot increases, the library is less and less likely to be able to achieve a 42" or a 48" aisle, and is instead more and more likely to house its collection in bookstacks that have only the bare minimum 36" aisle required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. As the allocation of volumes per square foot increases, the library is likely to need taller and taller shelves to achieve its capacity goal. Instead of 84" full-height shelving, the library becomes more likely to need 90" full-height shelving – which becomes more difficult for more of the library's patrons to use.

For any larger collection (defined as holdings in excess of 100,000 volumes) it is also important to acknowledge that a portion of the collection will be in circulation at any given time, thereby relieving the library of the need to provide shelf space for that material. Allowing for seasonal variations, it is

library should plan to provide all five in the short term. There is clear evidence that digital formats are driving analog formats out of the marketplace – DVDs in favor of VHS video recordings, CDs in favor of audio tapes. In the meantime, newer formats appear on the market and vie for the public’s attention. Flexible storage and display strategies are essential if the library is to support these varying media formats.

On average, libraries can store recordings at an average of 10 items per square foot.

One key issue regarding the space needs of a nonprint collection is whether the library elects to display the collection in a single-box or double-box fashion. In a single-box display strategy, the item itself is placed on the open public shelf in its display case or plastic jacket. Patrons can then browse through the collection and make their selections directly. In a double-box display strategy, the library keeps the original videocassette or the CD secure behind a staff service counter while a “dummy” for the item is placed on the open shelf to indicate that the original is available for loan. The patron takes the dummy copy to the service desk, where it is exchanged for the actual item and charged to the patron. A double-box system is employed when the library has a concern for the security of the collection. Obviously, a double-box storage and display system for nonprint materials has an impact on the library’s space needs because an allowance must be made to store both the original and the dummy copy. A double-box storage and display system also demands more staff time for the retrieval of material at the patron’s request.

bring additional print resources to these stations and work for an extended period of time.

In this planning model, a library that allows on average 30 square feet per computer network stations is either one that anticipates it will choose to provide the great majority of its computer network stations in a standing setting or one that anticipates providing such an inventory of stations that it will be able to achieve economies of scale in the layout of this equipment. A library that allows on average 50 square feet per station is either one that anticipates providing the great majority of its computer network stations in a “study” setting or one that anticipates providing such a small inventory of such stations that economies of scale in the layout are unlikely. An allocation of 40 square feet per station anticipates a middle-of-the-road, moderate approach.

3.3 *SUPPORTING STAFF WORK ROUTINES*

The space needed to support individual staff work routines varies depending on the nature of the work being performed at any given station:

- public service desk work stations are allowed an average of 150 square feet each, an allocation that provides space for the staff chair or stool, the desk, modest associated file space and, notably, surrounding space where patron queues can form
- staff work stations in work rooms and offices generally follow a space allocation model that allows 80 to 100 square feet for a clerical station (sufficient for a desk and chair, a PC and phone, some modest attendant file storage, either in a cabinet or on shelves, and adjacent corridor space to approach the station)
- 100 square feet for a station to support a librarian (the larger area typically required for additional files and storage for those positions)
- 125 square feet for a supervisor / department head's station (the still larger area typically required to accommodate additional files *and* to better accommodate an enclosed office to provide the privacy a supervisor sometimes needs to deal with personnel and other issues)

The space required for each staff work station will vary, depending in part on how assertively or efficiently the library's space plan will need to be. In an optimum environment, allow 150 square feet per staff work station. In a

3.4 *SUPPORTING LIBRARY PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS*

Any given library may provide a variety of programming and meeting spaces, depending on the library's agenda for such programming and the community's needs. These spaces can take the form of a public programming room, a children's programming room (or storytime room), a conference room (or board room), or a computer training room. Depending on local needs, a library may provide one or more of all of these types of meeting spaces or just a single, multi-purpose public programming room.

The space needed for a *public programming room* will depend on the maximum audience size to be supported in the room. An allocation of 10 square feet per audience seat is usually made for a conventional meeting room with movable seats arranged in a theatre or lecture hall setting. Additional allocations can be made to support a speaker / presenter, projection equipment, and the like.

Space for a *children's programming room* typically is allocated at 10 to 20 square feet per seat, depending on whether children's programming activities typically accommodate a craft activity in addition to the more traditional storytime. The smaller allocation is appropriate if children's program activities are limited to storytimes, while the larger allocation is suited to an environment that will support crafts and other activities in conjunction with storytimes. The larger allocation allows staff to set up small work tables for the children and to support supplies storage and a sink and clean-up facilities, as needed.

Conference room space is typically used by the library board for its

regular monthly meeting and any committee or other meetings that might be necessary between the board's regular meetings. A conference room would also be used by staff for planning and coordination meetings. A conference room would be available for use by small community groups when not being used by the library. Space for conference rooms typically is allocated at 30 square feet per seat, drawing its allocation from an environmental similarity with general reader seating at tables. Additional allocations are made to support a gallery or audience, as well as projection equipment and the like, as needed.

Space for a *computer training room* typically is allocated at 50 square feet per seat (in an optimum setting), in order to accommodate not just the trainee at a desk or table but the computer equipment that the trainee will use in the class. In a moderate setting, an allocation of 45 square feet is needed. A low allocation of 40 square feet, and a lower allocation is 35 square feet per terminal. In any case, an instructor's station needs to be larger than the other stations in a classroom because the instructor's station usually needs to support additional equipment, such as an overhead projector.

3.5 *PROVIDING FOR “SPECIAL USE” SUPPORT FUNCTIONS*

Typically, special use space in a public library constitutes an area equal to 10-15% of the projected gross area of the building. The amount of special use space a library needs will be determined by the number of photocopiers or microfilm reader-printers the library wishes to provide. It will be determined by the number and size of small group study rooms that the library wishes to provide. It will also be determined by factors like whether or not the library wishes to provide a public lounge or a coffee shop within the library.

In an optimum setting, a library should reserve 15% of its gross area for special use purposes. A library that plans to provide a public lounge or coffee shop likely falls at this end of the spectrum. In a moderate setting, a library should reserve 12.5% of its gross area for special use purposes. In a minimum setting, a library should reserve 10% of its gross area for special use purposes.

3.6 *PROVIDING FOR
“NONASSIGNABLE” SUPPORT
FUNCTIONS*

Nonassignable space is defined as “those areas or rooms of the library necessary for the general use and operation of the building but not serving specific library functions, such as foyers, vestibules, corridors (but not aisles in bookstacks or other furnishings), stairs, elevators, toilets, janitor rooms or closets, ventilation ducts, and mechanical equipment areas” (from *Measurement and Comparison of Physical Facilities for Libraries*, ALA, 1970).

Nonassignable space needs for mechanical systems are determined largely by engineering requirements. Design specialists will direct how large certain pieces of equipment need to be in order to meet the environmental specifications for the library. Other nonassignable space needs will be determined by local codes. The number of fixtures needed in each restroom will likely be determined by code, and the number of fixtures will determine the space needs of those facilities (as will the accessibility regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act).

In an optimum setting, a library should reserve 27.5% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes. In a moderate setting, a library should reserve 25% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes. In a minimum setting the library should allow 22.5% of its gross area for nonassignable purposes.

Note that if the library is planning a small facility or if the library plans on an expansion strategy that incorporates an existing structure (an addition to the present library or the conversion of an existing structure from a prior use into a

new use as a library), there is an increased likelihood that the proportion of space devoted to nonassignable space will be at the higher end of this range, and possibly even at 30.0% of the building's gross area. If the library is planning a large facility or anticipates new construction, the proportion of gross area that will be used for nonassignable purposes will likely be at the lower end of this range.