

Spaces of Encounter:

Community and the Public Library

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The Space of the Public Library

Figured worlds

- Highly structured
- Multi-faceted
- Schema not shared by all users

Fragmented

- Subject sections
- Call numbers
- Children/YA/Adult

The World is Flattening

Multiculturalism
Digital Technology

Negotiating the Space

Low-intensive meeting place

- People are exposed to values and ideas different from their own
- “Promote[s] cross-cultural contact”

Third Space

- People redefine themselves in relation to dominant institutional culture
- “indeterminate and open space with the potential for adventures and surprises”

Community Encounters

- Individuals suspend participation in strongly focused worlds to which they “belong”
- Articulate identities relative to the library
- Cross-cultural meetings occur
- Identities & literacies can be shared or emulated, the process continues

Implications

Structure can be good
Categorical
Not Dictatorial

Library as place
Communal sense of place in spite of an increasingly diverse population

Libraries should take care not to be prescriptive with space

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