

Lillian H. Smith Library is a Toronto Public Library branch located at the intersection of College St and Spadina Rd. It is situated in proximity to the University of Toronto campus and the Kensington-Chinatown neighborhood. The two neighborhoods contained a wide variety of facilities and institutions catered towards its mixed group of population. This paper investigates the role of a public library in such a diverse urban setting. As shown in Figure 1, this paper's study area falls within a circle of 1 km radius with the Library at the center. Everything in the study area can be walked to within 10 to 15 minutes. After noting the diverse population of the surrounding neighborhood, this paper focuses on how visitors from different age groups are using the library. The visitors are divided into four age groups: children (0~14 years), youths (15~24 years), adults (25~65 years), and seniors (65+ years). The investigation is based on site visits and observations of the activities that took place in the library, as well as research on the library's facilities and programs. A set of maps are created to visualize visitor's movement and space-time occupancy to make sense of each age group's pattern of use of the library.

As shown in Figure 1, the Library is situated in an intricate urban network of facilities and institutions. Specifically, it highlights the transportation routes and key buildings in the study area. Overlooking the CAMH Ursula Franklin Site across the street, the Lillian H. Smith lies on the corner of the street block. The exterior facade resembles a medieval castle that often appears in fantasies. The entrance of the Library is guarded by a winged lion sculpture and a gryphon sculpture on each side. The Library's distinct architectural style allows it to stand out from the neighboring buildings and adds a whimsical spirit to the streetscape.

The Library was founded in 1912, at the time known as the Boys & Girls House. It began as the first Toronto Public Library branch that's dedicated to children's collection (TPL, 2023). After a series of developments, the Boys & Girls House moved to its current address in 1995 and changed its name to Lillian H. Smith Library to recognize Smith's effort in expanding children library services in Toronto. After 100 years of history, the Library remains a key provider of children's service to the community through its ongoing children programs and its wide collection of children's books. In addition, the Library has collections of books for grown-ups. The Library welcomes the whole neighborhood by holding programs for all ages, accessibility features, as well as services to visible minorities and new immigrants (TPL, n.d.).

To provide a spatial investigation of the visitor's usage of the Library, the visitor's movement paths and space-time occupancy were observed and recorded during the site visit. The data only consists of the ground level and the second level

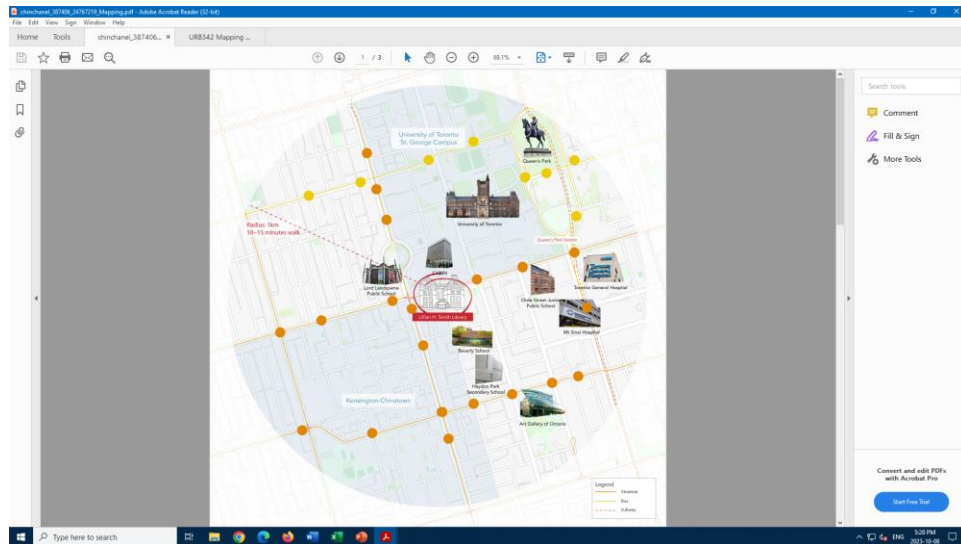
because the upper floors are mainly used as office space. As shown in Figure 2 and 3, the movements are being represented by arrowed paths that span across the Library's floorplan. The visitor's occupancy of a certain space is represented by dots of varying size, indicating the time of staying. The representations are being color-coded into the four age groups. By visualizing the visitor's time-space occupancy of the library, the maps help make sense of how visitors of different age groups are using the library facilities. All of the observations were made on Tuesday, February 7, 2:30 - 4:30 PM.

The maps visualize the different experiences one could have in the Library coming from a different age. As shown in the yellow notations in Figure 2, the majority of children's activities are clustered on the left side of the floor, where most of the children's collections are held. Most of the children observed appear to be between 3 to 8 years old, so the accompanying parents are also visible in the area. The observed youth visitors are usually occupying the second floor, where most of the tables are set up. As shown in Figure 3, the youth activities are more stationary rather than in motion. Most of the observed youths are using the library as a study area. Little youths were spotted in the book racks or at the borrowing table. Most of the adults observed during the site visits appear to be between 35 to 65 years old. Except for the children's parents, younger adults are rarely seen in the library. The observed adult activities are more evenly spread out in the library than the children and youths. However, most of the adult occupancy of space is happening in the computer stations or the Learning Center on the second floor. Similarly, the seniors are generally observed at the computer area or at the fiction collection on the second floor. It's worth noting that most of the seniors travel across different floors using elevators, instead of the staircase.

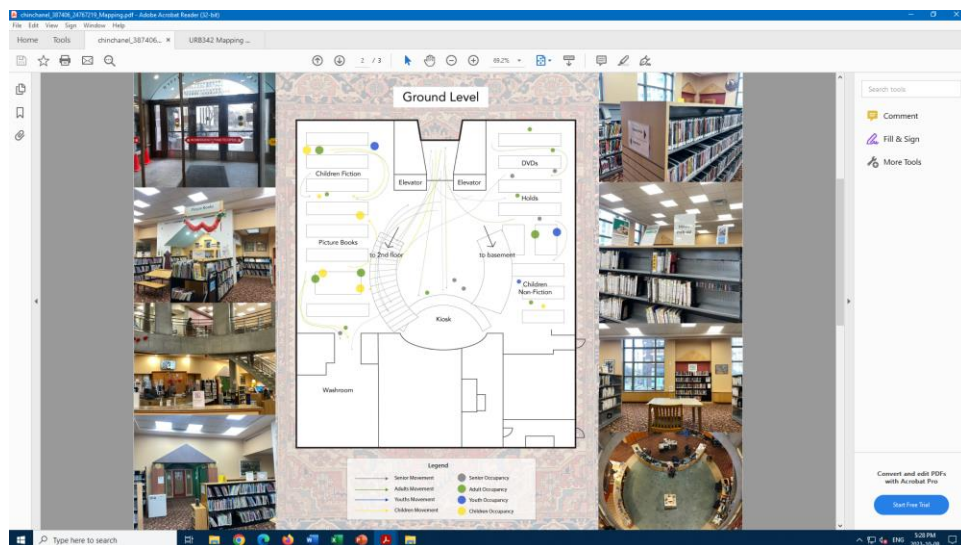
In the above findings, each age group's pattern of use of the Library can be linked to the Library's interior design, facilities, and services. For example, the placement of children's collections in the left side of the ground floor allowed for easy access and a sense of seclusion (in comparison, the right side has full-length windows that makes the space appear to be more public). The teens/young adult section was placed on the second floor with studying tables inserted within the book racks. Furthermore, the computer stations were placed next to the Learning Center in the corner to avoid disruption to other readers.

On another perspective, the overlapping of the different age groups' activities on the maps suggests that experience within a Library is not always distinct, but sometimes interconnected. The findings of this spatial investigation leads the future research into two directions. One examines the visitor's experience as an individual response to the Library's physical environment and services. The other suggests the influence of other visitors on individual experiences. The first conceives the significance of public libraries as a contribution to urban diversity, serving visitors

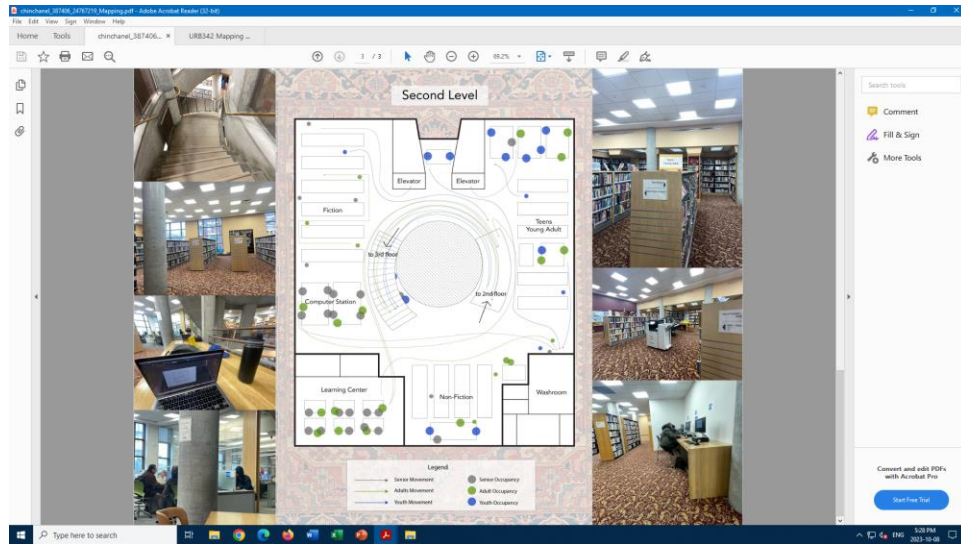
Maps



Map of the study area, bounded by a circle of 1 km radius with Lillian H. Smith in the center.



Map of the ground floor. The activities of different age groups are analyzed through visualizing their pattern of use across the library. The arrow paths represented the observed movement of each age group across the space. The dots represent the visitors' time-space occupancy. The bigger the dot, the longer the visitor occupied the space. Photos are inserted on the sides to better visualize the experience.



Map of the second floor

References

- 100 Years of Boys & Girls House: Children's Library Services at Toronto Public Library. (2023). Retrieved 6 February 2023, from <https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/local-history-genealogy/2022/09/100-years-Of-boys-girls-house.html>
- Lillian H. Smith. Toronto Public Library. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2023, from <https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/lillianhsmith/>