PUBLIC LIBRARY BUILDING
An Appraisal of Its Relevance in the Information Communication Technology Era

by

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HT004041M

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Architecture on 14th December 2001 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MASTER of ARCHITECTURE

Abstract

In recent decades, the overwhelming flood of digital information and the dominance of information communication technology have triggered radical changes in the society. Threats are posed onto different building typologies such as shopping malls, educational institutions, office towers, etc with the surfacing novel concepts of e-commerce, distance learning, telecommuting. Similarly, with the emergence of digital forms of library, public library buildings are not spared from the prediction of its demise in this era.

This dissertation is about an investigation of the relevance of physical public library in the present digital age. Through examining the strengths and weaknesses of both the physical and digital forms of public library, the dissertation attempts to prove that both components are indeed essential in fulfilling the societal expectation from the public library. The existence of public library building is therefore valid.

The first chapter gives a background of the dissertation by chronicling the historical development of the public libraries and the past arguments voiced out from different standpoints over its relevance in this digital age. The second chapter examines the strengths and potentials of what digital revolution has promised in the area of information and its retrieval. The third chapter, in contrast, demonstrates series of phenomena occurring presently, which ironically implies the immortality of physical public library. Having understood the controversial evidences in the previous chapter, the fourth chapter unveils the limitations of digital form of public library. The fifth chapter, in turn, manifests how different aspects of users’ needs – emotional, social, physical - can only be fulfilled in the physical public libraries. The closing chapter will conclude, with a corrected perception of public library, that physical public libraries’ existence are definitely relevant in this digital era.