Collection Analysis:
Hillsborough Public Library

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Information about the Hillsborough Public Library

The Hillsborough Public Library (HPL) is the second largest in the Somerset County Library System (SCLS), which consists of seven additional libraries and two reading stations, serving a county population of 323,552 (New Jersey Associates, 2008). The HPC, open since 1966, serves a community of approximately 37,897. It claims 107,000 titles, with subscriptions to 200 periodicals, and circulation of resources numbered 450,155 (American Library Directory, 2010). Hillsborough is located in Somerset County, which regularly lands on lists of the top wealthiest counties in the nation. It is an affluent area with a high percentage of well educated residents, but the cost of living is also very high (New Jersey Associates, 2008). Hillsborough Township, made of a cluster of small villages, received its formal charter in 1771. Farms were a large part of the Township’s profile until after World War II. At that point, large tracts of land were sold and formal town planning was put into place, particularly in the area surrounding the library. The HPL shares building space with the Township’s municipal and police offices. The area’s high school is located nearby as is the post office.

Hillsborough is bisected by state route 206, which serves as major conduit between Somerville and entries to interstate routes 22, 78 and 287, and entry into the Princeton area. Most of the township’s major businesses and shopping hubs are located either directly on route 206, or very near by. At the Northwestern corner of Hillsborough sits the largest privately owned tract of land in town, the 2,700 acre Duke Estates, the late country home of the tobacco heiress Doris Duke. Larger area employers include Princeton and Rutgers University, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi Aventis, and Church & Dwight, among others.

The mission statement of the library system is “Making a Difference in People’s Lives” (Somerset County Library System, 2004). The entire SCLS is set up as a governmental entity,
with a board of overseers chosen by Somerset County Board of Freeholders. It depends almost exclusively on county funding. 96.3% of the system’s $13,913,797 budget comes from local taxes while 3.6% of the budget is derived from donations and revenue from sources such as fines (Institute of Museum and Library Services, Search for public libraries, 2009). In 2009, the state allocated $4,530,049 to New Jersey libraries (Institute of Museum and Library Services, State allotments 2009). But, in a press release from March 1, 2010, New Jersey State Librarian Norma Blake alerted the state’s public library directors that: ”As you may have heard, another $721,000 was cut from library funding at the state level for this fiscal year, FY2010. Libraries lost $1.9 million dollars earlier this year, which brings the total loss to $2.7 million” (New Jersey Library Association)

**Information about the Subject Areas to be Mapped**

Art provides many things to people and is a very important part of a community. Artists use their medium to try and convey a wealth of ideas, concepts and feelings to their audience. A work of art can be a statement on the political or societal norms of a time. It can be used to evoke emotion or to inspire. It enables us to appreciate and understand different cultures and eras. In sum, art can do many things and is just as important as the written word when it comes to educating and informing.

Because art is so important, it is good for a library, especially a public one, to have a solid collection of materials about art. Some of the most recognized names in history are those of artists; Michaelangelo, DaVinci, Picasso, Warhol, etc. A good library collection will cover a variety of artistic mediums and time periods and will contain content about those who create art. The library states in their strategic plan that there are several cultures that they intend to try and
serve better. The vision statement also notes that the library is trying to reflect the diversity and culture of the communities it serves. One of the objectives in the plan is for the library to develop collections that respond to the diversity. Focusing on the arts would be a means to do so.

Art is also an important creative outlet and many people turn to art to express themselves. Having resources that provide instruction in creating arts is a necessary part of a public library arts collection.

For the purposes of this collection analysis, the category of arts was limited to those materials possessing a Dewey decimal number between 700 and 779. While music and sports are also included in the 700’s, they were omitted because of them being deemed unique areas of study.

More so than an academic library, the arts collection of a public library needs to be diverse. In addition to having materials on the great artists and their works, a public library needs to have “how-to” materials for individuals who might want to learn about different art forms as a hobby, occupation or creative outlet. For this reason, in terms of assessing the strength of the collection, focus will be on both the historic and creative aspects.

The subject area we chose to analyze was history. According to the Dewey Decimal Classification system, History is located in the 900’s, which is called Geography & History. The subject includes broad subclasses such as World History, more detailed history of specific countries, and biographies of historical peoples. In order to evaluate the collection we used the subject search term "history" in the HPL public access catalog. We chose this subject for two reasons. First, history is a subject area that usually has a strong collection in public libraries. Second, we chose History as a subject in order to compare and contrast the general subject of History with the Hillsborough Library’s special collection of town history. Does Hillsborough...
collect more thoroughly in local history than in other areas or is the collection balanced? After conducting a search in the Hillsborough Library OPAC, it was determined that the library owns 2,720 items with the subject history.

The special collection at Hillsborough public library is information on the town’s history. This collection contains material on the history, architecture, municipal ordinances, newspapers, description and travel and high school yearbooks. Most of the collections resides in the 900’s and 300’s which is in the Dewey Decimal system of classification. Currently the HPL serves 37,897 patrons. As of now, the collection on the town’s history consists of 13 items which reside in the Hillsborough branch. Many of these items are multiples of the same books. There are six items on Doris Duke, who is a prominent figure of Hillsborough, as she is the tobacco heiress and three items on her father, James Buchanan Duke. I had to search under Duke Estates to find information on her. The reason we chose this collection was that it one of the only special collections that the library owns. Also, with being a collection on the town’s history it will be interesting to see what the collection contains and if it is a well rounded collection.

**Internal Analysis of the Mapped Subject Areas**

In the subject area of art, four general emphasis areas were examined as well as a trio of specific emphasis areas. These were selected based on the perceived importance to the community. In the general emphasis area books that are overviews of art (700’s), or about sculpture (730’s), drawing and decorative arts (740’s) or painting (750’s) were chosen. Overviews are important for general research purposes such as school papers. Drawing and painting cover both the creative and historic sides of art as does sculpture to a lesser extent (lack
of availability of materials for sculpting make it more restrictive than the other areas). Sculpture is primarily included because of the recognition of it being a primary art form of the Greeks and Romans.

The specific areas are drawing and drawings (741), decorative arts (745) and historical texts related to painting (759). Drawing is the simplest and most accessible of the art forms and one that many turn to when looking into art instruction. Decorative arts cover scrapbooking, quilting, sewing and other forms that many people, especially adults, engage in. Painters are the most recognized of the historic artists and tend to be the more studied of historical artists.

With an overall collection size of 107,000 items, the arts collection at the Hillsborough Library comprises just 3.6% of that number. This averages out to about one book on the arts for every ten patrons. Granted, by the Wisconsin standards, Hillsborough’s library fails to meet the basic standard for overall collection size indicating that the overall collection is substandard in quantity. As such, it can be expected that the numbers would be substandard for all areas of the collection.

Within the arts, though, there are some bright spots, particularly if you make some assumptions about how the library is used. The size of the arts collection at the library may be representative of the community’s interest in the subject. If this assumption holds, then we can assume that 3.6% of the patrons use the arts collection. Using this smaller denominator, there are almost three books on the arts for every patron who uses the art collection. This is higher than the overall collection rate of 2.8 items per patron.

The collection is strongest in drawings and decorative arts with one item for every twenty patrons or just over one item for every one of our theoretical “arts patrons”. The majority of those books do focus on the decorative arts. In fact, nearly half of the arts collection is comprised
of books that fall under the decorative arts heading. Painting is also relatively strong with one item for every two art patrons.

The collection is surprisingly lacking in art overview books with less than one book per one hundred patrons. Sculpture is represented even less but is not as much of a concern as overview books do tend to get used more.

The history class of the Hillsborough Public Library can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. In order to measure the quantitatively, we decided to measure the amount of items owned for a given subject per patron the library serves. By conducting a subject search for history in the online public access catalog, we determined that Hillsborough Public Library owns 2,720 titles related to history. Dividing the number of titles by the service population of 37,897, we found that HPL owns 0.0718 items on history for every patron they serve. According to Loertscher, this amount does not meet the minimum requirement of .30 items per patron for a General Emphasis Area. However, we should keep in mind that this requirement is intended for school libraries. In line with Wisconsin Library Standards, a public library should have 4.1 items in the entire collection for every patron. We discovered that the history collection is 0.0254 of the whole collection. Multiplying that number by the ratio 4.1:1 for print volumes per capita in a basic collection, we discovered that there should be 0.1042 history items per patron. Again, HPL fails to meet the basic requirements for a collection of its population size.

On the other hand, measuring the collection by qualitative standards, the history collection at Hillsborough Public Library exhibits more strengths than weaknesses. A qualitative way to measure the collection is by the content of the material. Is the material appropriate for its intended audience? Out of the 2,720 history items in the collection, 1,998 items are United States history. That leaves 722 items in the collection falling under the subclass of world history
and other subclasses. The library has its strongest focus on U.S. history, fitting for a public library. Browsing the catalog, it appears that Hillsborough Public Library is meeting the educational, informational, and entertainment needs within the subject of history with titles ranging from *America, empire of liberty: a new history of the United States* to *Mona Lisa Smile*. Also, it appears that HPL has struck a balance in the scope of the history collection. The collection has great breadth and depth. Currency is also a major issue in public libraries. We subjectively chose published within the last 10 years as being “current.” Over 50% of the history materials owned by HPL are current by those standards. As 12.5% of history items are currently checked out, it appears that Hillsborough Public Library is satisfying its patrons’ needs, complementing its mission goal.

With the special collection there seems to be more weaknesses than strengths. One of the strengths is that they have yearbooks in their catalog from the Hillsborough township high school. They also have municipal ordinances on file as well. The mission statement seems broad, “Making a Difference in People’s Lives” so therefore the weaknesses are an assumption. One thing I noticed was that there were only six items on Doris Duke, even though she seems to be a prominent figure in Hillsborough County. Upon further investigation, it turns out there is a separate collection at Duke University. “Upon her death in 1993, Duke left the majority of her estate to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The Foundation recently gave its historical archives to the Duke University Libraries” (Duke University Libraries, 2009). They also only have a couple of books on file about Hillsborough history. The catalog states that they have 13 items, however, some of these are duplicates, in some cases having 3 of the same book, which actually makes the collection smaller. Counting all subject areas in the special collection, the HPL has a total of 22 items and is serving 37,897 patrons which means .000686 item per
person. The Loertscher article states that a special collection should have .10 items per patron for a special collection to be considered fair. HPL does not meet this standard. According to the Wisconsin Library Standards, having a basic collection means that the library should have at least 4.1 items per person. You get this number by dividing the number of items in a collection by the total number of books. Since the HPL currently has 107,000 books in their collection, this means that HPL has .0002 items per patron. Again, this number is weak compared to Wisconsin library standards.

External Analysis of the Mapped Subject Areas

North Brunswick Library was selected as a comparison library to Hillsborough. By looking at a library similar in collection size and population served, we can better assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Hillsborough collection. North Brunswick Library currently has 119,908 books in their collection. They currently serve 36,287 patrons.

North Brunswick Free Public Library serves a community of 36,287 residents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Located in Middlesex County, directly south of New Brunswick, North Brunswick was one of New Jersey’s early townships incorporated by the New Jersey State Legislature in 1779, although the area had its first settler around 1683 (Rutgers Cartography Services, 2010).

The North Brunswick Free Public Library is a part of The Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium (LMXAC) which consists of 27 public libraries and one community college library. The LMXAC was created in 1986 and went to an on-line, in 1989. The affiliated libraries share an OPAC and numerous subscriptions for research databases. Anyone holding a library card at one of it’s member libraries has open lending privileges available to
them at all of the consortium’s facilities (The Libraries of Middlesex Automation Consortium, 2010).

Compared to North Brunswick Library, Hillsborough has a vast arts collection. Only 1.3% of North Brunswick’s collection is comprised of books on the arts. As a percentage of overall collection, Hillsborough’s collection is almost triple that of North Brunswick. Interestingly, within the arts collections, both libraries are similarly distributed across topic areas. The representation of materials on painting and drawing is greater at Hillsborough than it is at North Brunswick which reinforces the internal analysis that those areas are a strength of the Hillsborough collection.

North Brunswick has a slightly higher percentage of overview books than Hillsborough does and their sculpture collection makes up over a tenth of their arts collection. By contrast, the Hillsborough sculpture books make up a little over five percent of the materials in their arts collection. This suggests that perhaps the sculpture collection at Hillsborough is much weaker than previously thought and it would be good to focus on adding to that portion of the collection as well as bump up the number of volumes in the overview area. Comparing Hillsborough Public Library’s history collection to the history collection at North Brunswick Public Library makes HPL’s collection look scantier than it did standing alone. North Brunswick Public library has a total of 10,202 items that fall under the 900 history classification. When divided by the number of residents, 36,287, we discovered that NBPL has managed to achieve 0.2811 history items per resident. According to Loertscher’s collection mapping standards, this is a “fair” collection in a general emphasis area. We also measured the NBPL library by Wisconsin Library standards, finding that the history collection is 0.0851 of the total collection. Multiplying that number by the ration of 4.1:1 for print volumes per capita, we discovered that NBPL should have .3488
history items per patron. While NBPL does not meet Wisconsin standards for a “basic” history collection, it comes closer to doing so than Hillsborough Public Library.

Comparing HPL to North Brunswick Public Library by more subjective standards, we again considered currency to be one of our highest priorities. In the NBPL collection 8,086 of the 10,202 items were published since 2000, almost 80% of the history collection. North Brunswick Public Library and Hillsborough Public Library were similar in terms of appropriateness of material, depth and breadth of the collection. No noticeable difference appeared in their ability to serve the educational, informational, and recreational needs of their patrons interested in the subject of history.

Next, we compared the special collections. A search using history and North Brunswick and history and Middlesex County turned up 3 books in the library. However, a keyword search of Middlesex County turned up 83 items. These items include history, photographs and municipal documents of Middlesex County. These items were in the 300’s (Social Science), 700’s (The Arts) and 900’s (History and Geography). This leads to a special collection of 86 items. Taking these 86 items and dividing them by 36,287 patrons gives the library .0023 items per patron. This is below the .10 items per person that the Loertscher article considers as a fair collection. According to the Wisconsin Library standards, a fair collection would have 4.1 items per patron. The North Brunswick Library contains .0716 items per person in their special collection. This again, is still below what is considered a fair collection. Even though this is still low, it is slightly better than the Hillsborough Public Library’s special collection.
**Group Strategies and Responsibilities**

For this project, we relied heavily on Lisa’s local expertise for the demographic information about the Hillsborough Public Library. She wrote that section, as well as found the demographic and library information for the North Brunswick Public Library. Jon, April, and I each split up the mapped subjects, including the summary of the subject, the internal analysis, external analysis, and the worksheet and map. Jon was responsible for art, I for history, and April for the special collections on local history.

This project ran much more smoothly than the last one. Rather than waiting until the last minute, we jumped the gun and spent two weeks working on it. This made things much less stressful, as well as allowed us more time to communicate and make necessary changes. Lisa and April were both very available for communication with me, and we bounced ideas about how to approach things off of each other. While Jon did contribute his work, which is obviously a thoroughly constructed analysis, he was not as available for communication. He did not respond to discussion board at all or make any phone calls; we only heard from him on our two planned chat sessions. Still, at the end of this project, I am happy with the end product and feel we have all developed a good understanding of collection mapping.
### Appendix

Library: Hillsborough Public Library  
Population: 37,897  
Collection size: 107,000  
Collection size per capita: 2.823

| General Collections | Total | 700 (Overviews) | 730 (Sculpture) | 740 (Drawing and decorative arts) | 750 (Painting) | 741 (Drawing and drawings) | 745 (Decorative arts) | 759 (Historical painting) | Items per capita |
|---------------------|-------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Art                 | 3,875 | 345            | 219            | 2,019                            | 660            | 333                      | 1,535               | 501                   | 0.102          | 0.009       | 0.006                    | 0.053           | 0.017 | 0.009                    | 0.041           | 0.013 |

**Hillsborough Public Library Art Collection Map**

- **700 (Overviews)**: 0.010
- **740 (Drawing and decorative arts)**: 0.010
- **750 (Painting)**: 0.010
- **741 (Drawing and drawings)**: 0.010
- **745 (Decorative arts)**: 0.010
- **759 (Historical painting)**: 0.010

Items per capita:

- 700 (Overviews): 0.010
- 740 (Drawing and decorative arts): 0.010
- 750 (Painting): 0.010
- 741 (Drawing and drawings): 0.010
- 745 (Decorative arts): 0.010
- 759 (Historical painting): 0.010
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**Hillsborough Special Collection**

![Bar chart showing items per capita in different categories: History, Arts, Social Science, Religion. The highest items per capita is in History, followed by Arts and Social Science, with Religion having the lowest.]
Bibliography


