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This study surveyed a specific group of special librarians from across the United States known as one-person librarians or SOLO librarians. These librarians work alone in a special library setting. The study ascertained the organizational placement of SOLO libraries within their parent organizations and analyzed the effect of that placement on the annual budget allocated to each library. No uniformity of placement was found to exist amongst the libraries of the survey participants. However, despite the dissimilarities, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their unique organizational placements. Satisfaction with organizational placement was found to be driven mainly by supervisory support and accessibility to users.

Headings:

    Special libraries

    Surveys – Special Libraries

    Budgets

    Placement of librarians

AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT ON THE
ANNUAL BUDGET OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES

by
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A Master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Information and Library Science
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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for the degree of Master of Science in
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Approved by:

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Advisor

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INTRODUCTION

I have been employed as a special librarian at General Electric Mortgage Insurance for the past ten years. During this time, I have reported to a number of different managers within a number of different departments, all at the same company. Examples include Marketing, e-Commerce, Sales Strategy and Analysis, Corporate Strategy and Analysis, and my current placement in the Sales Force Effectiveness department. It has always been interesting to me to note where my colleagues' libraries at other General Electric businesses report within the corporate hierarchy of their divisions. Why are there differences and what is the optimal reporting structure? To carry this question a bit further and beyond my own company, I would like to discover what department provides the best "home" for a special library, or if, indeed, there is a best "home". Where is it best for a special library to report in order to receive the greatest budget funding support?

Special libraries are indeed "special" in that they serve a highly specialized clientele. Many are located within corporations, making it imperative that the librarian understand not only the principles of librarianship, but also the operations of the business that supports the library. The librarian must be an expert on the industry in which he/she works. That means familiarity with industry terminology, key industry publications, competing companies and major drivers of the industry. In order to be a valuable asset to the parent company, the librarian must always work diligently to provide the best information to the right people in the fastest possible time.

According to the Special Libraries Association website, "In the information age, special librarians are essential - they provide the information edge for the knowledge-based organization by responding with a sense of urgency to critical information needs."

The amount of information that can now be accessed electronically by untrained professionals is staggering and multiplying daily. Unfortunately, the misguided perception that everything is free on the Internet, coupled with the recent downturn in the economy, has caused many businesses to downsize or close their special libraries. There is, however, one group of special librarians who have defied some of these odds – the One-Person Librarians, also known as SOLO librarians. These librarians work alone. They manage a library that may be virtual or actual; they do research; and they provide timely information for critical business decisions to the organizations that they serve. Many SOLOs, like myself, have worked this way for years. Other librarians may be experiencing this transition with trepidation. However, in today's tough economy, it is often easier for a business to justify one librarian, rather than an entire department of librarians.

SOLO librarianship is now regarded as a distinct specialty within the library community. According to a 1998 survey done by the Special Libraries Association SOLO Librarians Division, 53 percent of the membership worked in corporate libraries, 15 percent worked for non-profit agencies, 9 percent worked for governments, 6 percent were in the medical field, 6 percent worked in academia, 4 percent were in the law profession, 4 percent worked for associations and 1 percent were self-employed. Their main subject focus was found to be scientific/technical. SOLO librarians do everything in their libraries, averaging twelve different activities on a regular bases. Most spend

less than 10% of their time on any one activity. These librarians tend to be relatively

experienced, serve an average of 500 users and most make less than $50,000 per year.

Personality types drawn to this kind of librarianship are risk-takers, with the ability to

work alone without peer support. Relying only on themselves, they are constantly

challenged to do the best possible job of linking people with the information they need.

I have chosen to focus this study on SOLO librarians. The purpose of this study

is to determine if there is a meaningful correlation between the placement of a SOLO

special library within its parent organization and the total budget the library is allocated

within a fiscal year. I would like to be able to make recommendations to the SOLO

community as to the optimal placement in the corporate hierarchy for a SOLO special

library in order for it to be allocated the greatest amount of funding from the parent

company and the greatest influence with the company.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of organizational structure is a basic part of any management curriculum. New ideas and trends in organization structure have come and gone over the years, with no particular model working well for every organization over time. Just as it is in the smaller library universe, the optimal organizational structure is always dependent on the overall culture and climate of the organization in question.

Burton and Obel (1998) present an overview of six basic organizational structures. First is the simple configuration which consists of a top manager and individuals. Second is the functional configuration, which groups functions by departments. This is one of the most popular structures in many industries. Divisional configurations consist of organizational subunits grouped by products, markets or customers. General Electric is a classic example of divisional organization because each division is in a different business and the divisions are product or service based. This configuration is the second most common configuration, and is increasing in popularity as organizations become more product and customer focused. The Matrix configuration is more complicated because it is a dual-hierarchy configuration which uses functional and divisional configurations simultaneously. This configuration is often used in corporations and public organizations. An Ad Hoc configuration occurs when a group of individual experts assemble to work on a project and create their own structure, which is usually all on one level and very loosely tied together. Last is the Bureaucracy configuration. Its characteristics include a strong adherence to rules

and a very impersonal nature.

Nadler (1992) speaks to the importance of designing organizations that have good fit in his discussion of organizational architecture. His preference is the congruence model which "views organizations as constructed of components that interact" (44). Contextual factors which influence this model are the environment, resources and history of the organization. Even though these factors are discussed in the broad scope of an entire organizational structure, these factors are also important in the positioning of a special library within an organization.

While there is a great deal of literature that has been written on assessing the value a special library brings to its parent organization, not a lot has been written about where special libraries are located within the corporate hierarchy. Even fewer articles address the optimal location for a special library within its parent company.

In 1983, White (1984) estimated that 33.4 percent of all libraries in the United States were special libraries. He states that this was probably a conservative estimate because no one really knows how many special libraries there are, since "there is no automatic process by which a staffed collection of materials reaches 'official' status" (13). There is no obligation for corporate organizations to report their libraries, so many operate under the radar and are never counted. Today, with all the various names used by libraries, it is increasingly difficult to identify all those that exist, unless they identify themselves by becoming members of professional organizations such as the Special Libraries Association. A great diversity exists among special libraries so it follows that a great diversity also occurs in how they are placed within various organizations.

According to Ferguson and Mobley in their 1984 book, *Special Libraries at Work*, the issue of the placement of the special library has been studied about once every ten years from 1952. They conclude that there has been very little change in patterns over the years and that none of the studies found any uniformity in the placement of libraries. Indeed, they state that the reason for this could be that the operation of a special library is unlike the operation of any other department. The tasks performed by a special library do not fit into the same pattern as other company units. They also have the difficult job of placing a value on the intangible services they provide (98).

The earliest study noted in the literature was done by Strieby in 1952. Her research was the first to conclude that there was no uniformity of placement among special libraries. Later, in the early 1960s, Danny Travis Bedsole authored a dissertation titled *Library Systems in Large Industrial Corporations*, in which he found that there was "no one single type of library system which is universally effective or universally desirable for all industrial corporations" (323).

An often-cited study was done in the late 1960's by Elin Christianson and Peggy Wolf. This study looked at the libraries of the Advertising and Marketing Division of the Special Libraries Association. Even though all the libraries surveyed had similar subject interests, still no homogeneity was found. The results showed that 37 percent of all the libraries surveyed that were in non-manufacturing companies reported to a research unit (either market or media), 25 percent reported to general administration, 25 percent were a separate department and 13 percent reported to the public relations group.

MacDonald, in his 1983 study, looked at the attitudinal relationships between library managers and their corporate managers. Part of his study looked at the organizational placement of libraries within the corporate environment. His findings showed that special libraries were placed almost equally in research and development and general administration hierarchies – the only two placements considered. When the librarians surveyed were asked to indicate their optimal preferred placement, less than 25 percent chose the general administration placement. However, many of those respondents felt that this placement did bring them closer to those making the budget decisions. Almost 61 percent chose the research and development placement as their optimal placement, noting that it was there that the library had contact with its most frequent users and those employees who understood the value of good library service. The remainder chose neither and most of them stated that the placement should depend on the library's "circumstances within the environment" (39). Many respondents voiced the common theme that "where the library is placed in the organization is less important than the attitude of the manager or supervisor toward the library and/or the librarian" (39).

In 1997, Lambert, a student in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, wrote a master's paper entitled "An Analysis of the Organizational Position of the Special Library/Information Center." In it, she looked at the placement of special libraries within various organizations and looked at factors affecting positive or negative perception of these libraries. While her paper did not focus on one-person libraries, she reached a number of conclusions that are valid for any type of special library. Lambert's study shows that it is important to

focus on the primary users of the library when deciding where to place the library. Her findings stressed that open communication between the library and senior management is critical and that it is imperative for senior management to understand the function and value of the library and how it assists the organization in reaching business goals. The library "must have the support and understanding of management to provide the most value to the organization" (21).

Guy St. Clair describes the current information services worker as a knowledge management expert who is an "insourced" information specialist. This person functions best when positioned at the same management level as other important management functions, such as finance management or research management. Thus, he advocates the highest position possible in the organization for the library, but does not specify what that optimal placement would be.

Another interesting opinion was published in 1998 in the IRC Notes column of *Information Outlook*. In it, the unidentified author stated that "it probably does not matter [where the library is positioned in an organization] as long as you have someone important in the organization promoting your interests" (36).   Further, the author believes the information provided by the library is relevant to all departments in the organization, so the library does "not logically fit anywhere" (36).

Moira Duncan (1999), in her article "From Hairnet to Internet", describes a special library that reports through the Business Development department. However, the library is funded as part of company-wide overheads. This is another interesting reporting structure, that does not tie the budget to the reporting department at all.

A dissertation, titled *Information Technology (IT) and the Special Library: An Exploratory Study of Special Libraries in Western Pennsylvania* was produced in 1989 by Phyllis D. Freedman. Her study surveyed special librarians in Western Pennsylvania and found that "more libraries were located within the Administrative Services division of the parent organization than in any other division" (62). She also found that research libraries were most often assigned to the Research and Development group.

In the 1999 Special Libraries Association (SLA) Salary Survey, an open-ended question asked respondents to indicate the department to which they reported within their organization. Data was analyzed for five industries – Associations and Labor Unions, Federal Government, Health Care & Social Assistance, Legal, and Publishing. Most of the industries showed a great variety in their responses with no apparent pattern. Departments ranged from Marketing to Corporate Services to Administration to Research. Others mentioned included Information Systems, Strategic Development and Programs and Publications.

One of the factors affecting organizational placement of special libraries is the service sphere of the library. Harvey (1976) writes in *Specialised Information Centres*, that it is important that "the centres are located as near as possible to the group of people they primarily exist to serve" (20). Many special libraries serve an entire organization, while some only serve a specific department within an organization. No matter the service sphere, the library should be positioned where it can most effectively communicate with all the departments it assists. This will vary among organizations. Yates (1973) concurs in this opinion by stating that "the place of the information unit must be where the information is most meaningful" (430). However, some

professionals offer the opposite opinion by contending that the library should be placed where its services are *least* needed in order to prevent bias or favoritism towards specific department (Meltzer, 1967, 57)

In my own experience, I was first assigned to the Corporate Strategy and Analysis department because the manager of that group provided the original vision of a corporate library to the organization. Most of the work I did at the time assisted that one particular department. Later, my manager became my champion by supporting me and helping to promote my services to the entire organization. I learned to know and understand the needs of all my customers, not just those in one particular group, and over time, the departments to which I was assigned became less important than the support of my customers and the knowledge I was able to share with them. Today, I am able to add value to the business decisions of the organization through the research I do no matter where I report within the corporate hierarchy because I understand the needs of my customers and keep in close contact with them.

Aufdenkamp (1975), in *Special Libraries: A Guide for Management*, also discusses the importance of understanding the service sphere when planning for a new special library and states that "the organizational position of the library should be determined according to the *ultimate* goals for service" (34). They also discuss the possibility of multiple libraries within the same organization serving specific needs of customers. Libraries at pharmaceutical or chemical companies are given as examples where one library might be the science library and another might be the business library. Because they serve different groups within the organization, they should be placed closest to the customers they serve, in order to maintain the most open lines of

communication.   When starting a new special library, the authors also suggest that the

parent organization seek information about the organizational placement of other

special libraries in the same or similar industries. However, they caution that this

information should only be used as an aid for placement as all organizations function

uniquely. To conclude, they summarize some factors to consider when placing a library

within the corporate hierarchy. They stress that it is essential for the library to be

placed in a strategic spot within the organization and that "the library should serve all

departments with equal effectiveness" (35).

It follows then that there are some intangible factors that influence the success

or failure of a special library's organizational placement. A librarian at one company

may be very satisfied reporting to a manager of Research, while a librarian at another

company may be quite dissatisfied reporting to that same department. Mount and

Massoud (1999), in their text, *Special Libraries and Information Centers*, state that the

personality or degree of interest of a librarian can transcend any organization placement

that might not be considered optimal. Despite the fact that most experts contend that

the organizational placement of a special library should be as close to the ultimate head

of the organization as possible, it is more important that the library report to a manger

who is enthusiastic about the library than to a high-level executive who does not value

the library (59).

White (1973) assumed in "Organizational Placement of the Industrial Special

Library – Its Relationship to Success and Survival" that "special libraries operate more

effectively reporting through research than through management" (141). He contends

that many special libraries are quite content to report within the research and

development department because they feel closest to their client base and enjoy dealing with customers who value the importance of information. He argues that libraries reporting to research and development departments have benefited more fully during periods of corporate growth and expansion than have libraries reporting to administrative departments. One can assume that these benefits in support and status included increases in budget for these libraries. White concludes that the success of a library in avoiding budget cuts in times of corporate depression is not necessarily related to the library's organizational placement and believes that in times of trouble, a placement within the research and development department may actually be a disadvantage. In tune with other experts, he also urges special librarians to work constantly to make themselves indispensable to everyone in the organization.

Another factor affecting organizational placement is the climate and culture of the parent company. In some companies, it would be seen as a coup to be placed in the Information Technology (IT) department, because the IT department has a great reputation and has produced some very visible results about which the company is quite proud. On the other hand, the marketing department may have made a number of blunders in recent years and may be struggling to improve its image. The library would probably not receive as much budget if it were in the floundering marketing department as it might if it were in the heavily funded IT department, or vice versa. Although, it is often impossible to dictate or change the organizational position of the special library within the company, it is something with which librarians should always be concerned. It is good to remember, however, that sometimes it is better to be the star player in a struggling department than to be unrecognized in a very visibly, successful department.

A 1994 study by Primary Research looked at corporate library spending patterns and concluded that spending was becoming more decentralized. The budgets of special libraries were reduced by approximately 25 percent from 1990 to 1994. At that time, the study forecast that print expenditures would grow slightly and periodical expenditures would contract from 1994 – 1999. It also predicted growth of expenditures for on-line services and CD-ROMs. Obviously, CD-ROM technology became obsolete fairly quickly, while expenditures for online services continue to rise. Fidelity Investments increased its IT budget by 20 percent in 2001 to $2.3 billion. Even though more organizations want increased information, many are unable to pay for major purchases. The study advises that expensive products might be tried in small doses or that major expenses be shared among various corporate departments in addition to the library. It also warned against becoming a depository or warehouse-type library and encouraged special librarians to "inject information" into the day to day business processes of the organization (29).

Patricia Morrison (1991) gives advice to one-person librarians in her article, "Start-Up Information Centers: How to Keep Them in Business." Over the course of five years, she had the opportunity to create three new one-person libraries. She emphasizes the importance of reporting to the same manager for a minimum of one year to provide continuity of support from management. Although she did not state the optimal placement of a special library, she did assert that when a library acquires a less powerful manager, it can lose budget allocation.   A less powerful manager is often in a position of decreased visibility within the organization.

Thus, as we begin the twenty-first century, the literature still does not provide a definitive answer to the question of optimal organizational placement of the special library within the parent organization. The reason for this is best summed up by Ferguson and Mobley (1984) "special libraries are similar in their dissimilarities" (96). Fye (1998) concurs by stating, "our positions in business are unique and uniquely diverse" (42). Special libraries are similar only in their uniqueness. Often what works best for one special library in a particular organization would be totally wrong for another special library in a similar organization.

While the literature to date does not specify a "best" home for a special library within the organizational structure of its parent organization, it is important to examine this topic periodically to see if changes are occurring or consensus is developing.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study was gathered from one-person (SOLO) special libraries by means of an email survey. I chose this group of special libraries because I am a member of a listserv for SOLO librarians. The listerv supports a highly collaborative group of one-person librarians who are always willing to share ideas and help each other with various requests for information. The probable reason this group is so close-knit is due to the fact that everyone works alone in his/her library and has no other professionals onsite with whom to interact professionally on library issues. Also, due to the current economy, many special libraries have been downsized, so I felt the SOLO group was a fairly stable group to use for the survey.

The survey was posted on the SOLO librarians listserv along with a cover letter describing the purpose of the survey and an informed consent statement (see Appendix A) explaining the respondents' rights as participants in the study. Respondents were given three choices for completing the survey. They could mark their answers and reply to me using email; they could mail the completed survey back to me using the U.S. Postal Service; or, they could leave a message in a special phone mail box I set up specifically for the survey.

The survey (see Appendix B) addressed the following main topics:

- type of library (for profit vs. non-profit)
- organizational placement of the library in the organization to which it belongs
- the budget of the library

Question 2 asked for total annual revenue of the library's parent company if it was a for-profit company. This question was included to see if there was any possible correlation of organizational position of a very well funded library at a small company versus a low or moderately funded library at a very large company. Five choices were listed, ranging from less than $1 million to over $1 billion.

Questions 3 and 4 were used to ascertain the department to which the library was assigned within the organization. Due to the fact that department names can often be trendy and thus misleading, question 4 asked for the title of the librarian's supervisor to help clarify the name of the department to which the library reported. Question 5 moved from the specific to the general and asked for the function to which the library reported. Choices were listed as Human Resources, Marketing, Sales, Strategic Planning, Information Technology, and Other, with a request for specific information.

The last major topic to be addressed by the survey concerned the budget of the library. For the purpose of this study, the budget was defined as the total amount of money spent in the last fiscal year on books, subscriptions to print journals, subscriptions to electronic journals, subscriptions to online services (such as Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, DowJones Interactive), subscriptions to electronic databases requiring a password (such as Moody's, Fitch, S&P RatingsDirect) and the salary of the librarian and any part-time clerical assistants. Salary was not asked as a separate question, but was included in the total budget dollar figure. In order to encourage more participants to answer this question honestly, I did not ask for an answer as a specific dollar amount. Instead, I presented the possible responses ordinally, providing dollar ranges from which to choose. While this data was not precise, it was still useful and easier to

analyze by this method.   The ranges included were (under $100,000), ($100,000 -

$149,999), ($150,000 - $199,999), ($200,000 - $249,999) and (over $250,000).

Also included in the survey were two open-ended questions that were created to

elicit the librarian's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current organization position

of the library. Participants dissatisfied with their current placement were asked to

suggest an optimal position for their library.

Data from the surveys were compiled in a spreadsheet program for analysis.

Since many of the questions in this survey were open-ended questions, a qualitative

approach to analysis was more appropriate that a quantitative analysis.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The survey was sent to the SOLO librarians listserv which, on the date of delivery, had a total of 859 members. Forty-three surveys were returned and all were usable for analysis. Electronic communication is quickly becoming the norm. This was validated by the fact that 39 surveys were returned via email. Three were sent by conventional mail delivery and one response was received by telephone. While the response rate was only 5 percent of the population, the number of respondents was actually higher than in other similar studies done previously. The budget question could have been a deterrent to some potential respondents as some employers do not allow employees to divulge that information. Some recipients may not have had time to respond, given the many and varied activities of the SOLO librarian. It is also probable that even though the listserv has 859 registered members, not all members actively participate by checking messages regularly.

Profit status and Revenue of the Library's parent company

The first question asked for the library's for profit or non-profit status. Table 1 shows that 63 percent of the respondent's libraries were located at for-profit companies and 37 percent were at non-profit companies. This is not surprising as non-profits cannot often afford large libraries. SOLO libraries are common at this type of organization.

Table 1 - Distribution of for-profit and non-profit parent companies n=43		
Type	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
For-profit	27	63%
Non-profit	16	37%

Of the twenty-seven respondents working in for-profit companies, twenty-five answered the question about total annual revenue of the library's parent company. Two respondents expressed uncertainty and did not answer. The majority of parent companies reported over $1 billion in annual revenue, followed by seven in the $100 million to $499.9 million range and six in the $1 million to $99.9 million range. One company reported in the $500 - $999.9 million range and one reported annual revenue of less than $1 million.

Table 2 - Total Annual Revenue of Library's Parent Company (for-profit companies) n=27		
Annual revenue	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
over $1 billion	10	37%
$500 million - $999.9 million	1	4%
$100 million - $499.9 million	7	26%
$1million - $99.9 million	6	22%
less than $1 million	1	4%
Unsure	2	7%

Departments, Supervisors and Functions to which Libraries report

The next three questions on the survey requested the names of departments, supervisors' titles and functions to which the respondents' libraries reported. The name of the department and the title of the supervisor were open-ended questions and the responses were varied and often unique. The fifth question related to reporting function and provided five specific choices (Human Resources, Marketing, Sales, Strategic

Planning and Information Technology) and one choice labeled Other. The Other choice

was the most selected with widely varying responses.

What is the name of the department to which your Library reports?

Of the forty-three responses received, there was little similarity. While a few

responses, such as Administration, Human Resources, Operations and Information

Systems or Technology appeared more than once, most of the responses were unique to

the specific library in question. This accentuates that fact that special libraries are

indeed "special" and occur as one of a kind entities wherever they exist. The following

table summarizes the variety of responses received.

Table 3 - Names of departments to which libraries report n=43		
Name	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
Information Management/Systems/Resources	5	12.00%
Administration	4	9.00%
Communications	3	7.00%
Human Resources	3	7.00%
Engineering	2	5.00%
Operations	2	5.00%
Research	2	5.00%
Other responses	22	51.00%

Examples of the "Other" responses included Business Services, CAD/Document

Services, Collections Department, Corporate Services, Knowledge Center team,

Leadership and Organizational Development, Learning Services and Office of the

Chairman. This may represent a trend for new titles and departments within companies.

What is your supervisor's title?

Again, there was little similarity in responses. Most of the supervisor titles matched fairly closely with the department names, often with the addition of the words Leader, Director, Manager or Vice President. Some interesting titles included Bursar, Community Liaison Specialist, Curator of Ethnology, and Partner.

In general, to which function within your organization does your Library report?

Given the variety shown above, this is a more useful question. Six choices were provided as answers for this question – Human Resources, Marketing, Sales, Strategic Planning (including competitive intelligence), Information Technology, and Other. Once again, the "Other" category garnered the most responses. Table 4 presents the results of this question.

Table 4 - Functions to which libraries report n=43		
Name	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
Human Resources	4	9.00%
Marketing	2	5.00%
Sales	0	0.00%
Strategic Planning/ Competitive Intelligence	3	7.00%
Information Technology	3	7.00%
Other	31	72.00%

Since the number of "Other" responses was so large and varied, it is appropriate to look at them here. Table 5 shows the breadth of answers participants provided to the question concerning their reporting function.

Table 5 - "Other" Functions to which libraries report n=28		
Name	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
Administration	5	18.00%
Engineering Dept	3	11.00%
Operations	3	10.00%
Research/Development	3	10.00%
Business Services	1	10.00%
Cartographic Services	1	3.00%
Collections Dept	1	3.00%
Communications	1	3.00%
Division Director	1	3.00%
Ecosystem Council	1	3.00%
Finance	1	3.00%
General upper mgmt	1	3.00%
Grant for Family Resource Center	1	3.00%
Leadership & Org Dev't	1	3.00%
Market Research and Advertising	1	3.00%
Office of Membership	1	3.00%
Program Dept	1	3.00%
Training	1	3.00%

A few conclusions can be drawn from Tables 4 and 5. First, they show that

Administration is the most common function to which the surveyed special libraries

report. Engineering, Operations and Research/Development are also common reporting

functions.

Table 6 - Summary of top reported functions to which libraries report n=26		
Name	**Number of responses**	**Percent of responses**
Other - Administration	5	19.00%
Human Resources	4	15.00%
Strategic Planning/ Competitive Intelligence	3	12.00%
Information Technology	3	12.00%
Other - Engineering Dept	3	12.00%
Other - Operations	3	12.00%
Other - Research/Development	3	12.00%
Marketing	2	8.00%

The data collected in this study does not establish a firm conclusion as to where most special libraries report within the organizational structure. No generalization can be made to the larger population. However, it shows the diversity of special libraries and their ability to thrive in many varied functions within the organization.

Budgets of SOLO Special Libraries

What was the total budget for your Library in the last fiscal year? To arrive at this figure, please include your salary, the salaries of any part-time clerical assistants you may employ, the amount spent on books for the Library, subscriptions to print journals for the Library, subscriptions to electronic journals paid from the Library budget, subscriptions to online services (such as Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, DowJones/Factiva) and subscriptions to electronic databases requiring a password (such as Multexnet, Moody's, S&P RatingsDirect).

Five choices were given as answers for this question. Each answer was presented as a range in dollars in order to encourage participation from respondents who might be constrained by their organizations not to reveal a specific budget figure.   The ranges were (under $100,000), ($100,000 - $149,999), ($150,000 - $199,999),

($200,000 - $249,999) and (over $250,000). Table 7 shows the breakdown by respondent for each range.

Table 7 - Budgets of participating libraries n=43		
Name	Number of responses	Percent of responses
over $250,000	5	12.00%
$200,000 - $249,999	5	12.00%
$150,000 - $199,999	4	9.00%
$100,000 - $149,999	7	16.00%
under $100,000	22	51.00%

Twenty-two of the libraries participating in the survey reported budgets of under $100,000. This is not surprising when you consider the sampling frame was SOLO special libraries. Obviously, small libraries are not going to be as heavily funded as larger special libraries with larger staffs. Again, this budget data should not be generalized to the larger special library population. It was interesting to note that there were responses in each category and that the number of responses did not decline overall as the budget categories increased.

In order to ascertain which reporting function allocates the most funding to a SOLO special library, it is necessary to look at the data for both reporting function and budget. Table 8 shows the data for each budget category and the number of responses by function for each category.

Table 8 - Most common reporting functions within budget categories n=21		
Budget	**Function**	**Number of responses**
under $100,000	IT	3
	Other - Administration	3
	Marketing	2
	Other - Engineering Dept	2
	Other - Research/Development	2
	Human Resources	2
$100,000 - $149,999	IT	2
$150,000 - $199,999	no functions with more than one response	
$200,000 - $249,999	no functions with more than one response	
over $250,000	IT	2
	Human Resources	1
	Operations	1
	Other - General Upper Management	1

IT and Administration both received three responses for budgets under $100,000. Marketing, Engineering, Research/Development and Human Resources received two each. However, not enough data is available to conclude that a SOLO special library reporting to the IT department will always receive a smaller budget. This can be seen in Table 8 by noting that two libraries reporting to IT reported budgets of between $100,000 and $149,999 and two reported budgets of over $250,000. The categories with budget ranges of $150,000 - $199,999 and $200,000 - $249,999 did not have any similar responses. Each response was unique in each category. I have noted all the responses for the category 'Over $250,000' in order to show the functions to which libraries in this survey reported that received funding of over $250,000. Of the

forty-three libraries that participated, two of those with budgets in excess of $250,000 reported to IT departments and one each reported to Human Resources, Operations and general upper management.

A comparison should also be made between the revenue of the parent organization and the budget of the SOLO special library to determine whether greater revenue drives higher funding of the library.

Table 9 - Revenue and its relationship to Library budgets n=26		
Revenue	Budget	Number of responses
over $1 billion	under $100,000	1
	$100,000 - $149,999	2
	$150,000 - $199,999	3
	$200,000 - $249,999	2
	over $250,000	2
($500 million - $999.9 million)	under $100,000	1
	$100,000 - $149,999	0
	$150,000 - $199,999	0
	$200,000 - $249,999	0
	over $250,000	0
($100 million - $499.9 million)	under $100,000	2
	$100,000 - $149,999	2
	$150,000 - $199,999	1
	$200,000 - $249,999	1
	over $250,000	1
($1 million - $99.9 million)	under $100,000	3
	$100,000 - $149,999	1
	$150,000 - $199,999	0
	$200,000 - $249,999	1
	over $250,000	1
less than $1 million	under $100,000	1
	$100,000 - $149,999	0
	$150,000 - $199,999	0
	$200,000 - $249,999	0
	over $250,000	1

As Table 2 showed previously, thirty-seven percent of libraries responding reported parent organization revenue of over $1 billion. Funding of these libraries was distributed fairly evenly with one library reporting funding of under $100,000, two each reporting funding of between $100,000 and $149,999, $200,000 and $249,999 and over $250,000. Three libraries reported budgets in the range of $150,000 to $199,999. Interestingly, seventy percent of the responses were in the top three categories, ranging from $150,000 to over $250,000. This does support the conclusion that larger parent organization revenue is associated with increased funding for the library. In all of the other revenue categories smaller than $1 billion, the majority of the libraries were funded with lesser amounts of budget.

Thus, while it is difficult to draw explicit conclusions from this data, it suggests that parent organizations with larger revenue tend to provide more funding for their libraries. However, it does not suggest that there is an optimal placement within the parent organization where a special library might expect to receive the greatest amount of funding. Rather, in accord with previous research done on this subject, the special library is again shown to be diverse and dependent on its parent organization for much of its success. What works well for a special library in one organization or industry may not work well for another in a similar organization or industry.

Satisfaction of SOLO librarians relative to organizational placement

The last two questions on the survey were open-ended questions that asked whether the librarian was satisfied or dissatisfied with the current placement of the

library. They also asked for opinions as to the optimal placement of a SOLO special library.

Encouragingly, sixty-seven percent of the respondents reported satisfaction with their current placement within their organization. Only twenty-six percent were dissatisfied and seven percent were unsure, mostly because they were new to their positions. This high satisfaction rate again shows that while placement of libraries within parent organizations varies widely, the specific dynamics of an organization can lead to satisfaction for the librarian. Each organization is unique. What works for one organization may not work for another.

Many comments received from participants who were satisfied with their current placement corroborated some basic tenets of special librarianship.   Some stressed the importance of having a boss who was a positive advocate for the library, no matter where the library was positioned. Others mentioned the importance of being in a position to serve all their customers. That could mean placement in a broad functional area if the library serves all employees or in a specific department if the employees of the department are the library's only customers. Still others commented that it is important to be well known, trusted and respected and that is possible with any placement. It is something that can be worked on individually without regard to organizational placement.

The respondents who were not satisfied with their placement tended to raise the same issues which satisfied others. In their particular situations, they were not respected or treated as professionals. They often reported being too closely aligned with one department while their customers spanned the entire organization. One

participant was concerned because the library was not positioned "where information is regarded as important."

Suggestions for optimal placement within the organization tended to vary and were certainly influenced by specific conditions and dynamics of each organization. Ideas for placement included Marketing, Competitive Intelligence, Legal, Strategic Business Development, and Research Development. Most of these were captured in other questions of the survey, confirming that these are some of the most popular placements. While some libraries are positioned in these departments and are dissatisfied, others, unhappy with their current placement, feel these departments might provide better placement for them. These thoughts are relative to the specific situation of each library.

These responses again emphasize the variety within special libraries. While a particular placement works in one organization, it may be terrible in another. The answers to these questions did reinforce the idea that organizational position may not be as important to the success of a library as how well the library is aligned with its customers and how much positive support the librarian receives from the library's supervisor.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions reached by this study validate those reached in similar previous studies. There is still no optimal placement for a special library within the corporate structure of the parent organization. The placement of a special library continues to be most affected by the culture of the parent organization, the relationship of the special library to its customers and the support of management.

Since this subject was first researched in 1952, no studies have found any uniformity in the placement of special libraries within the parent organization. The results of this study continue to bear that out. MacDonald's 1983 study found that special libraries were placed almost equally in research and development and general administration hierarchies. Results from this 2002 study again show that administration is the function to which most respondents report. Research and development is a close second. However, there are many other unique functions to which special libraries currently report.

More than one half of the survey respondents reported budgets of under $100,000 annually. This is mostly due to the sampling frame chosen. One-person (SOLO) libraries will usually have smaller budgets, primarily because of fewer staff members. However, almost twenty-five percent of respondents reported budgets in excess of $200,000 per year.

It is not possible to conclude from this data where the special SOLO library should be positioned within the organization in order to obtain the most funding. While libraries with budgets under $100,000 reported to Information Technology or Human Resources, some libraries with budgets over $250,000 reported to these same functions. The data was insufficient to make valid recommendations for optimal placement.

The study did, however, reinforce many of the common themes presented in the literature. Experts have hinted over the years that perhaps the question of optimal organizational position of special libraries does not and possibly never will have a definitive answer. Respondents to this survey again emphasized the uniqueness and diversity of special libraries. Many mentioned the desire to have a supportive supervisor who advocates the benefits of the library. Others discussed the importance of being in a position where they were accessible to all the customers in their sphere of service.

Thus, perhaps funding should not be thought of as dependent on organizational placement within the organization. Rather, funding is more likely to be dependent on the value the special library brings to the organization. A special library will add value if it serves all its customers by providing them with the best possible information with which to make decisions. This study concludes that this task can be successfully accomplished from various positions within many different types of organizations.

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APPENDIX A - COVER LETTER

Dear fellow SOLOs,

I have been a member of this discussion list for many years and have always been appreciative of the things I have learned and the help I have received from you.

For the past five years, I have been working full-time and pursuing my MLS at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Once I complete my master's paper, I plan to graduate in May.

The subject of my paper is to study the effect a Special Library's placement within the corporate structure of the parent organization has on its annual budget. I would like to determine the optimal placement in the corporate hierarchy for a Special Library in order for it to be allocated the greatest amount of budget/funding.

I would appreciate your taking the time to complete the short questionnaire which appears below. Please note that all information you provide will be confidential and your name and any other identifying information will not be disclosed to anyone and will not be a part of the final report.

If you would like to do so, you may complete the survey in one of three ways:

1. Mark your responses on this email and forward it to me at leblb@ils.unc.edu.
    Please DO NOT REPLY to this message as you will send your responses to the entire list. Please use the FORWARD command and send your response only to me.

2. Print this email, mark your responses and mail it to me at:
    Barbara LeBlanc
    GE Mortgage Insurance
    6601 Six Forks Road
    Raleigh, NC 27615

3. Leave your responses as a voicemail in a special phone mailbox which I have set up.
    To use this option, please dial (phone number) and leave your responses as a phone message. You will not be asked to identify yourself or your organization.

If you would like to receive a copy of my final paper, please contact me via email at leblb@ils.unc.edu. You may also leave me a voice message at (phone number) to request a copy.

Should you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me at the email address listed below.   You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Evelyn H. Daniel, CB #3360 Manning Hall, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel

Hill, NC 27599, (919-962-8062), email: daniel@ils.unc.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a study participant, please contact Dr. Barbara Goldman at the Academic Affairs Institutional Review Board, CB #4100, 201 Bynum Hall, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, (919-962-7721), email: aa-irb@unc.edu.

Thank you very much for your assistance in completing this study.

Sincerely,

Barbara L. LeBlanc
Graduate Student
School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
email: leblb@ils.unc.edu

APPENDIX B - SURVEY

1. Is the parent company of your Library a for-profit company or a non-profit company?

    _____For-profit   _____Non-profit

2. If your company is for-profit, what is the total annual revenue of your Library's parent company?

    _____ over $1 billion

    _____ ($500 million - $999.9 million)

    _____ ($100 million - $499.9 million)

    _____ ($1 million - $99.9 million)

    _____ (less than $1 million)

3. What is the name of the department to which your Library reports?

    _____

4. What is your supervisor's title?

    _____

5. In general, to which function within your organization does your Library report?

____ Human Resources

____ Marketing

____ Sales

____ Strategic Planning (including competitive intelligence)

____ Information Technology
     (For the purposes of this study, Information Technology is defined as the
     department within a company that manages computer hardware,

computer software, computer services, and supporting infrastructure to deliver information to employees and customers of a company.)

____ Other – please specify _____

6. What was the total budget for your Library in the last fiscal year? To arrive at this figure, please include your salary, the salaries of any part-time clerical assistants you may employ, the amount spent on books for the Library, subscriptions to print journals for the Library, subscriptions to electronic journals paid from the Library budget, subscriptions to online services (such as Dialog, Lexis-Nexis, DowJones/Factiva) and subscriptions to electronic databases requiring a password (such as Multexnet, Moody's, S&P RatingsDirect).

_____ under $100,000

_____ ($100,000 - $149,999)

_____ ($150,000 - $199,999)

_____ ($200,000 - $249,999)

_____ more than $250,000

7. Are you satisfied with your Library's current placement within your organization? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. If you are not satisfied with your Library's current placement within your organization, what would you consider the optimal placement to be?   Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____