

GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING
THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF A RESOURCE CENTRE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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WILSON CHARLES BANFIELD



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GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING
THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF A RESOURCE CENTRE

by

Wilson Charles Banfield, B.A., B.Ed.

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Memorial University of Newfoundland
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Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

Wherever resource centres are being planned there is a need for guidelines. They are as necessary in Newfoundland as elsewhere. Guidelines which have been developed at the national level in Canada and the United States can be considered unsuitable for the specific Newfoundland situation.

These guidelines grew from the author's awareness of that need. In the formulation of the guidelines several sources were consulted: the published standards of national and provincial bodies; people working with and in resource centres in Newfoundland schools; and, any available literature of a general nature dealing with the topic.

The guidelines are an attempt to satisfy the need for resource centre guidelines for Newfoundland schools.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Resource Centres: An Overview

The essential function of the school is to provide the learner with a variety of educational experiences that contribute to his growth as an individual. Communication of educational messages is central to these educational experiences. These messages and experiences may be transmitted directly by live communication or vicariously through recorded print, sound or images. The learner, then, needs access to a variety of recorded messages to broaden and extend the range of learning.

In much of North America, school libraries have long served this function with respect to printed materials. In recent years, mechanical and electronic advances have provided many new ways of storing and communicating messages. Today the term "library", with its connotation as a place for the storage and usage of print materials, is being replaced more and more often by the term "resource centre". The resource centre combines print and non-print materials, and facilities for the creation and use of educational messages in a variety of media. Thus, the resource centre now has available many new materials and services to supplement what used to be its basic educational medium, the book. (Evaluative

Criteria, 1969, p. 273).

For the purposes of these guidelines, then, a school resource centre is defined as a centre in which both print and non-print materials, and the equipment needed to make use of these materials, are housed so that they are readily accessible to students and teachers. The materials may be produced in the resource centre or bought from a commercial outlet. The resource centre's purpose is to provide the wide variety of media necessary for the advancement of education.

The significance of the resource centre is related to the type of teaching strategies that are used in the school. With the popularization of such methods of instruction as inquiry based teaching and individualized study, teachers and students are looking to the resource centre with even greater frequency and need. The importance of a place where a student can individually research or produce messages that are pertinent to a question is considerable when these methodologies are used. Where the didactic method of teaching has been and still is used, a resource centre may be looked upon as being expendible or unnecessary. As this method is replaced, the importance of the resource centre grows.

Resource Centres in Newfoundland

Until recently in Newfoundland, the school resource centre has not generally been considered a very important

or necessary part of the school. Few schools had a resource centre, or library as it was called, and even fewer had one with part time or full time resource specialists.

With few exceptions, it has only been in the last ten to fifteen years that the physical space (called a resource centre or library) has appeared in most new schools. Each year more schools have part time or full time resource specialists to organize and use that space.

To ensure that the resource centre fulfills its proper functions, it is important that experienced, trained personnel organize and maintain it on a full time basis, and provide professional services to teachers and students.

In this report a resource specialist is taken to be the person in charge of the resource centre. He/she should have professional preparation in educational media, that is, in children's and young people's literature, informational materials and reference services in the school resource centre, the organization of educational materials, the operation of the school resource centre, audio-visual services, and the local production of materials.

✓ It is not enough, however, to have trained people. The way in which the resource centre is planned can either facilitate or inhibit the carrying out of the proper services. It is therefore important that the resource centre be planned with care and with consideration given to the kinds of

educational activities that are going to take place in it.

Need For and Purpose of Guidelines

Wherever resource centres are being planned there is a need for guidelines. They are as necessary in Newfoundland as elsewhere. Guidelines have been developed at the national level in Canada and the United States by such organizations as the Canadian School Library Association, Educational Media Association of Canada, and the American Library Association. These guidelines can be considered unsuitable for the purpose of giving specific suggestions to planners in Newfoundland, however, in that they may be too general, too pretentious or outdated. It is necessary, then, to establish guidelines for Newfoundland schools.

The guidelines in this report were compiled to help the school board officials (such as district superintendents) and the architect who are responsible for planning the basic requirements of a new school resource centre. Specifically, the school board official and the architect should be able to determine:

- (1) The spatial requirement for the resource centre.
- (2) The spatial requirement for each component in a resource centre -- the resource specialist's office, the reading, listening, viewing area, the audio-visual storage area, the workroom, the local production area, and small group room(s).

- (3) The location of the resource centre in the school.
- (4) The location of each component in the resource centre.
- (5) The acoustical aspects to be considered.
- (6) The lighting aspects to be considered.
- (7) The thermal aspects to be considered.
- (8) The dimensions of furniture in the resource centre.

These guidelines should not be taken as the final authority in the design of school resource centres but are suggestions which can be taken into account when consideration is given to the needs of a specific situation. They were compiled for those who need guidance concerning the physical aspects of a resource centre, and can be used as a supplement to the School Planning Manual (1973) published by the Department of Education of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAPTER II

ASSUMPTIONS AND FUNCTIONS OF A RESOURCE CENTRE

The guidelines in this report are based on the following assumptions:

- (1) The commitment on the part of the school board, the school board officials, and the teaching staff of the school to teaching methods in a substantial number of courses that require a resource centre.
- (2) The guidelines can be used to develop a resource centre that can accommodate any educational programme or curriculum in use in Newfoundland schools.
- (3) The guidelines can be used to develop a resource centre that can contain any instructional materials.
- (4) The resource centre planned by users of these guidelines can fulfill the following functions:
 - (a) To provide facilities for the production of learning resources and class teaching aids by staff and pupils.
 - (b) To aid in the selection of a comprehensive collection of learning materials in different media for use by pupils individually and in small groups, and related both to curricular

and cultural needs in the widest sense.

- (c) To store such materials for use in individual and group study, as well as to store materials and equipment for use by teachers and pupils in classrooms.
- (d) To classify and index all resources available to the school, whether kept in the resource centre, in other parts of the school, or in the community beyond.
- (e) To advise and guide pupils engaging in individual inquiries, and teachers planning future work, and to enable both to learn how to use the resources and facilities of the centre.
- (f) To maintain a suitable loan service of materials to allow maximum and most convenient use by all.
- (g) To maintain liason with outside bodies and to be the co-ordinating centre with respect to the use of the community resources.
- (h) to be the co-ordinating agency for the maintenance and repair of all relevant equip-

CHAPTER III

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

These guidelines for planning resource centres are limited by the following:

- (1) Only variables concerning the physical aspects of a school resource centre are included in these guidelines.
- (2) The guidelines are for use by school board officials, and architects planning resource centres for Newfoundland schools.
- (3) The main determinant of the spatial aspects of the guidelines is the school enrollment.
- (4) The guidelines are for use when designing a resource centre in a new school and do not attempt to deal with variables concerning renovation in an old school.
- (5) The allocation of space in the guidelines is based on the functions of resource centre that is presented in Chapter II (See pp. 6-8).

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION OF THE GUIDELINES

This report grew from projects the author did as partial fulfillment of two courses in the graduate programme for Resource Specialists at Memorial University of Newfoundland-- Supervision of Instructional Media Services (C6410) and Instructional Development (C6521). Part of the course requirement for C6410 was to construct a floor plan of a resource centre. In attempting to do this the author realized that there were no standards available suitable for the Newfoundland situation. Part of the course requirement for C6521 was to develop a project which would fulfill some educationally sound objectives. At that time the author chose to formulate guidelines concerning some of the physical aspects of a resource centre.

Shortly after, it was decided that the problem could be further dealt with as the author's internship project.

Several sources were consulted in the formulation of the guidelines. First, the author consulted the published standards of national provincial bodies: Standards of Library Service for Canadian Schools (1967), [Resource Centre Standards] (1973), Library Resource Centres for Elementary Schools (1968), and the School Planning Manual (1973). Secondly, the author contacted and received recommendations from people working with and in resource centres in Newfoundland schools. Among them are an architect from an architectural

firm which has designed many schools in Newfoundland, a district superintendent, five district supervisors of instructional materials, and five school resource specialists. Thirdly, the author observed school resource centres, examining the extent to which they were functional. Fourthly, any available literature of a general nature dealing with the topic was read.

On the basis of the information received from these sources, a preliminary set of guidelines was developed. These were then given to other people, who were also in a position to have an informed opinion on the topic. These people included the Assistant Chief Superintendent of Newfoundland Schools, the Newfoundland School Construction Engineer, and the Assistant Director of Instruction of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, and the professors and graduate students involved in the Instructional Materials Programme at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Further revisions were made on the basis of recommendations received from these people.

CHAPTER V

PLANNING THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF A RESOURCE CENTRE:
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Components of a Resource Centre

There are six components of a resource centre:

- (1) A resource specialist's office.
- (2) A reading, listening and viewing area.
- (3) An audio-visual storage area.
- (4) A workroom.
- (5) A local production area.
- (6) Small group room(s).

The resource specialist's office serves as a consulting area easily accessible to the teaching staff, students and salesmen. Its location should provide easy surveillance of the major areas of the centre. It should be large enough to include a desk, chair, side chair, and telephone (items 2.6 and 4.2) ¹.

The reading, listening, viewing area is the core of the resource centre. It contains the card catalogue, materials and charging desk. Adequate space for traffic control in this area should be provided if the resource centre is to function effectively (items 2.1 and 4.1).

1. In this chapter "items" refer to the guidelines in Chapter VI.

The audio-visual storage area contains the audio-visual materials and equipment. It can also serve as a group or individual listening and viewing area (items 2.5 and 4.2).

In the workroom in-coming materials are received and processed and should provide adequate work space, a counter, drawers and cupboards (items 2.3 and 4.2).

In the local production area instructional materials, such as overhead transparencies, are produced by students, teachers or the resource specialist. It should provide adequate work space, a counter, a sink, drawers and cupboards (item 2.4).

Small group rooms should accommodate comfortably small groups of ten to fifteen people and should be separated by demountable or folding walls, which should be acoustically treated. Light control is necessary to permit small group use of projected media. In this respect, the electrical wiring should be arranged so that one small group room could be completely darkened at the same time that the room on the other side of the removeable wall is lit. There should be electrical outlets on all of the permanent walls (item 2.2).

Relationships Between the Components

In each of the six areas activities go on which relate to activities in other areas. Arrangement of these areas should be such that similar activities can be grouped near each other or activities that require using the same equipment can occupy the same or adjacent areas. Where possible,

storage areas should be located near the area or areas where their holdings will be used.

It is advisable that the teacher preparation room be as close to the resource centre as possible so that teachers can readily use the equipment and materials available there, as well as get help from the resource specialist.

Figure 1 shows the approximate size of the components in a resource centre, their location in relation to each other, and the traffic patterns between these areas.

The approximate relative size is shown by the different sizes of the circles.

The approximate relative location is indicated by the position of the circles.

The traffic patterns between these areas are indicated by arrows.

Resource Centres in Small Schools

In cases where the budget is too limited to permit inclusion of all six components, the educational programme should be considered to determine priorities. Non-essential or non-critical areas, such as small group rooms and a dark-room in the local production area, should be added as the money and space become available.

While in small schools one would not necessarily have six distinct areas or rooms, provisions should be made for at least most of the functions of a resource centre to take place. Several functions may be performed in the same area.

Basic Areas and Their Relationships (Size, Circulation, and Location)

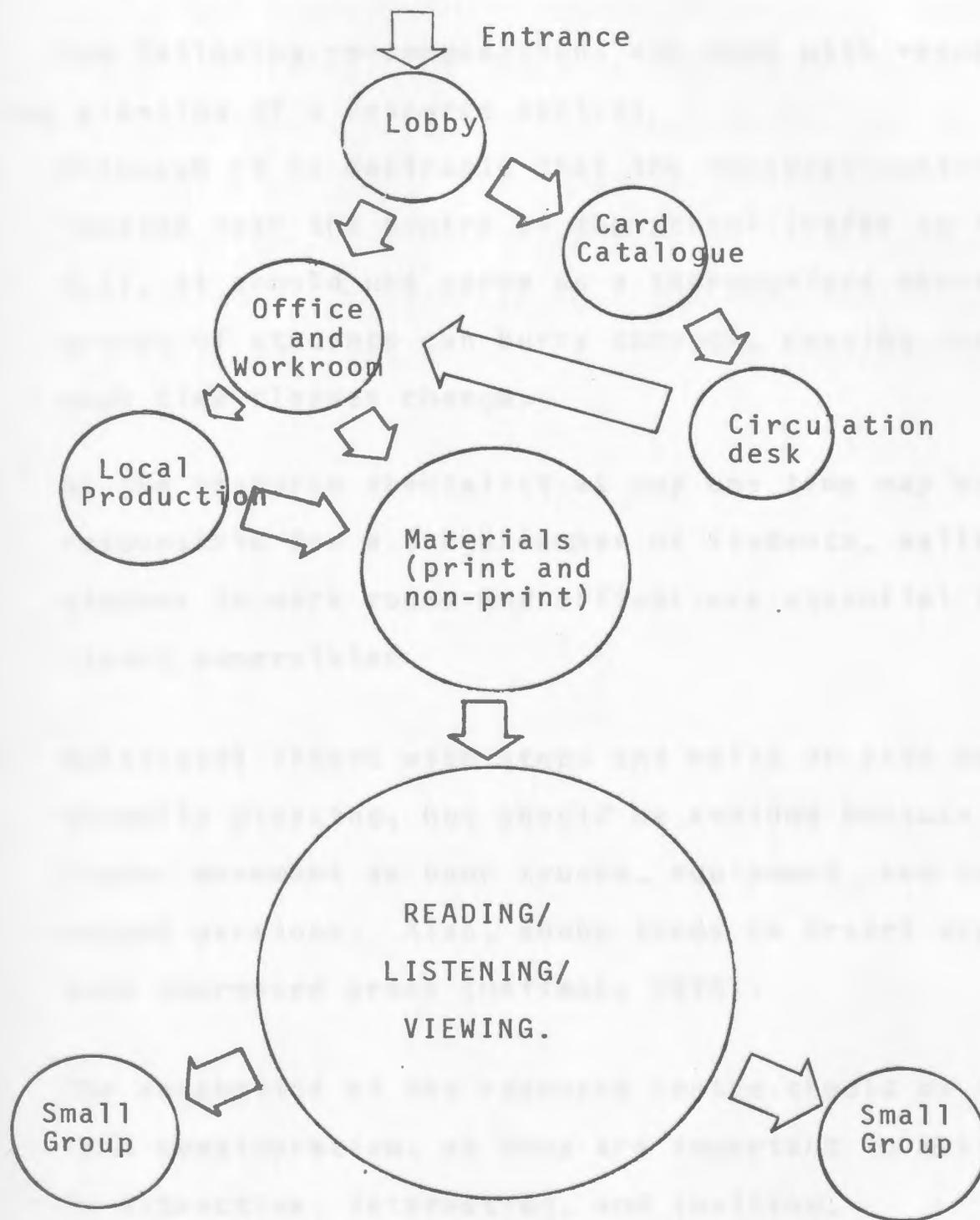


Figure 1

Adapted from:

E.M.A.C. - C.S.L.A. Joint Standards Committee, 1973.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with respect to the planning of a resource centre:

- (1) Although it is desirable that the resource centre be located near the centre of the school (refer to item 3.1), it should not serve as a thoroughfare where large groups of students can hurry through, causing confusion each time classes change.
- (2) As the resource specialist at any one time may be responsible for a large number of students, walls with windows in work rooms and offices are essential for visual supervision.
- (3) Multilevel floors with steps and wells or pits may be visually pleasing, but should be avoided because they hinder movement of book trucks, equipment, and handicapped persons. Also, sound tends to travel across such depressed areas (Hoffman, 1974).
- (4) The aesthetics of the resource centre should be taken into consideration, as they are important in making it attractive, interesting, and inviting.
- (5) Mistakes which should be avoided include the placing of thermostats and electrical outlets behind shelving, lighting control switches on the walls opposite the main entrance, and setting up individual study carrels without electrical outlets.

- (6) As in buying almost anything, quality is true economy. Price is not necessarily an index of quality. When the initial furnishings for resource centres are being considered, examination of the furniture is the best way to determine quality. The furniture should be sturdy, comfortable and suitable for use in the area for which it is intended. Multicoloured furniture should be avoided. Table tops should be light in color (item 6.6).

CHAPTER VI
PLANNING THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF A RESOURCE CENTRE:
GUIDELINES

Spatial (General)

1.1 The total area to be enclosed in the area considered as the resource centre should be at least seven square feet per student in the school. Included in the library resource centre will be several basic areas: reading, listening, viewing; conference; workroom; local production; audio-visual storage; librarian office; and general storage.

Spatial (Specific Areas)

2.1 The main reading, listening, viewing area usually houses the book collection, periodicals, picture and pamphlet files, bulletin board, display area, charging desk and card catalogue. It should be able to accommodate a minimum of ten percent of the student body at any one time, with at least thirty square feet per student. Fifty percent of the student space should be in individual carrels, which could be used for individual study, research, reading, listening and/or viewing (every study carrel should have an electrical outlet); twenty percent in small group areas; and thirty percent in traditional tables and chairs (in primary schools, part of this area could be a story-telling area).

2.2 As the name implies, small group rooms are used by small groups of individuals. The rooms should have a minimum of one hundred twenty square feet. Electrical outlets should be placed on each wall so that they can be used as audio-visual listening and viewing areas. (In this case, a degree of sound treatment is desirable.) (refer 5.4)

A folding wall could be provided to divide the conference room into two smaller rooms when necessary.

2.3 In a workroom new materials are received, checked, classified, catalogued, processed and other materials repaired. It should be a minimum of one hundred twenty square feet.

2.4 A local production (or multi-purpose) room should contain an area not less than one hundred fifty square feet. It should include materials and equipment used in local production. A darkroom could also be included.

2.5 The area in which audio-visual materials and equipment are shelved should be a minimum of three hundred square feet. This room could also serve as a viewing and listening area and should be sound treated.

2.6 The resource centre office should contain a minimum of one hundred twenty square feet. In smaller schools, the resource specialist's office may be combined with the workroom or work area.

2.7 A general purpose storage area, which could be used for shelving back issues of magazines, flat storage for display material and book storage, is desirable. A shelved room containing thirty square feet would probably suffice.

Location (General)

3.1 A resource centre should be in a central position in the school, on the main floor, so that it is equally accessible to people in all sections of the school. It should be located some distance from sources of distracting noises and odors, such as the gymnasium, music room, showers, cafeteria, boiler room, and industrial arts shop (refer 5.2). The resource centre should be situated so that expansion of quarters is possible, either by absorption of surrounding areas or by the addition of new construction. Plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems should be carefully planned to provide for possible future requirements. The desirability of access to the resource centre, when the school is closed (after hours and weekends), should be considered. The resource centre should be so located that users can obtain access to it but not to other parts of the school building when the occasions arise. However, an outside entrance directly into any resource centre should be avoided. In this regard, the resource centre should be built near the front entrance of the building.

Location (Specific Areas)

In planning the layout of the various components of a resource centre the general aim should be to group together the areas where there is a high level of activity, and separate these from the quieter reading areas with a barrier of book stacks, display panels, or walls, and still maintain an arrangement that is functional.

4.1 The reading, listening, viewing area is usually in a central location in the resource centre, and separated by walls from the other areas.

4.2 The resource specialist's office should be close to the charging desk, which, in turn, should be close to the entrance. The audio-visual materials and equipment storage area and the workroom should be close to the office. One suggestion is to place the audio-visual storage area and the workroom on either side of the resource specialist's office, so that they are easily accessible to him (her). Doors from each should lead into the reading area as well as to each other.

4.3 The conference room(s) need not be placed in close proximity to any of the other special areas.

Acoustics

5.1 If the school is located near areas of noise such as highways, factories, etc., the resource centre should be located away from the sources of the noise. Some of the outside

noise could be cut down if trees or shrubs were planted outside the resource centre's windows.

5.2 Within the school the resource centre should be located some distance from sources of distracting noises and odors such as the gymnasium, music room, showers, cafeteria, boiler room and industrial arts shop (refer 3.1).

5.3 The room surface coverings are important. The ceiling should have acoustical tile or panels. The walls should have bulletin boards and the floors should be carpeted. The windows should be fitted with drapes.

5.4 Areas where some noise is necessary should have added acoustical insulation. Such areas are study carrels, or conference or discussion areas (refer 2.2)

5.5 The layout of book stacks, displays and other furniture could also aid in separating areas, where a degree of noise is necessary.

Lighting

6.1 The best method of lighting in the resource centre is flourescent lighting.

6.2 Although it is desirable to dispel the feeling of being 'barred in', windows should be kept minimal because they cut down on wall space for shelves and study carrels. They also permit drafts in the winter and excessive solar heat in the spring and early fall. In this regard, they should be placed on the north side of the resource centre, if possible.

6.3 Lighting fixtures should be controlled by a central switch, but control switches for darkening particular areas is desirable (refer 6.7).

6.4 Lights should be arranged so that the main intensity in the stack area falls in the aisles between the stacks.

6.5 The level of light in the resource centre at working height should be a minimum of seventy foot candles.

6.6 The reflectance of the room surfaces -- the ceiling, walls and floor -- is determined by the color, the hardness, and the shine of the surfaces. In general terms, the ceiling should have a higher degree of reflectance than the walls, which, in turn, should have a higher degree of reflectance than the table tops. The floor should have the least reflectance of the surfaces. The proper reflectance of the floor would be ensured by a fairly dark rug. Satin finishes achieves the same purpose on the furniture. Light colored table tops are desirable to cut down the contrast (and thus eye fatigue)

between the light reading material and a dark background. Co-ordination of colors sets the atmosphere, as well as affects the reflectance.

6.7 Lighting control switches are useful in darkening particular areas of the resource centre. Drapes over the windows, apart from having acoustical merit (refer 5.3), are the best alternative. Venetian blinds tend to get dirty quickly and require considerable maintenance. Pull-down shades are inconvenient and unattractive.

Thermal

7.1 Electric heating is installed in most new schools today.

7.2 Ventilation should be available, either through windows, or, more preferably, by means of air conditioning.

7.3 A dehumidifier is desirable where there is carpet on the floor.

7.4 A temperature between 72⁰F and 74⁰F should be maintained in the resource centre.

Furniture

Furniture in the school resource centre should accommodate the instructional programme, suit the physical stature of the pupils who are to use the library, and fit the space available (refer 2.1).

8.1 Shelving should be functional.

8.11 Shelving should be adjustable. The shelves should be left open and not fitted with glass or solid door.

8.12 Under low windows shelving may be fitted with slanting shelves which can accommodate periodicals or large books.

8.13 Free-standing units are double-faced, and usually only counter-height.

8.14 Specifications

8.141 Maximum width of shelves is 36 inches.

8.142 Depth of shelves should be 8 inches to 10 inches for standard sized books. For reference and oversized books shelving should be 10 inches to 12 inches deep.

8.143 Total height of standard section should be 6 feet to 7 feet.

8.144 Space between shelves should be 10 inches to 12 inches.

8.145 In periodical shelving, the sloping shelf should be 14 inches long and the shelf space, top to bottom, should be 12 inches.

8.146 Phonograph record shelving should have a height of 46 inches.

8.147 In picture book shelving, the height of shelving should be 42 to 50 inches. The height between shelves should be 15 inches and the upright partitions should be 8 inches.

8.148 Height of free-standing counter section should be 36 to 46 inches.

8.2 Tables and chairs should be attractive yet sturdy.

8.21 The height of study tables and workbenches is 26 inches for primary and elementary schools and 30 inches for junior and senior high schools. Rectangular tables should measure 36 to 60 inches; round tables should have 48 inch diameters.

8.22 The tables for lounge area should be 14 inches to 18 inches high. If rectangular they should be 18 inches by 36 inches. If round they should have 30 to 36 inch diameters.

8.23 Chairs should be 14 inches to 16 inches high in primary and elementary schools and 16 to 17 inches high in junior and senior high schools.

8.3 Individual study carrels should contain a desk which is 30 inches high, 24 inches deep and 36 inches wide for junior and senior high schools, and 26 inches high, 24 inches deep and 36 inches wide in primary and elementary schools.

8.4 Charging desk should be 30 inches high in primary and elementary schools and 38 to 40 inches high in junior and senior high schools.

8.5 Card catalogue cabinets should be 40 inches high in primary and elementary schools and 50 inches high in junior and senior high schools.

CHAPTER VII

Samples of Resource Centre Floor Plans

Figures 2 to 6 are samples of resource centres. They include the components as recommended in the guidelines of the previous chapter.

In figure 2 a teacher preparation room is placed next to the resource centre. This arrangement is advisable because the teacher will have the resources available in the resource centre close at hand when he/she is preparing his/her classes. Also any student studying in the resource centre and needing assistance from a teacher will find him/her nearby.

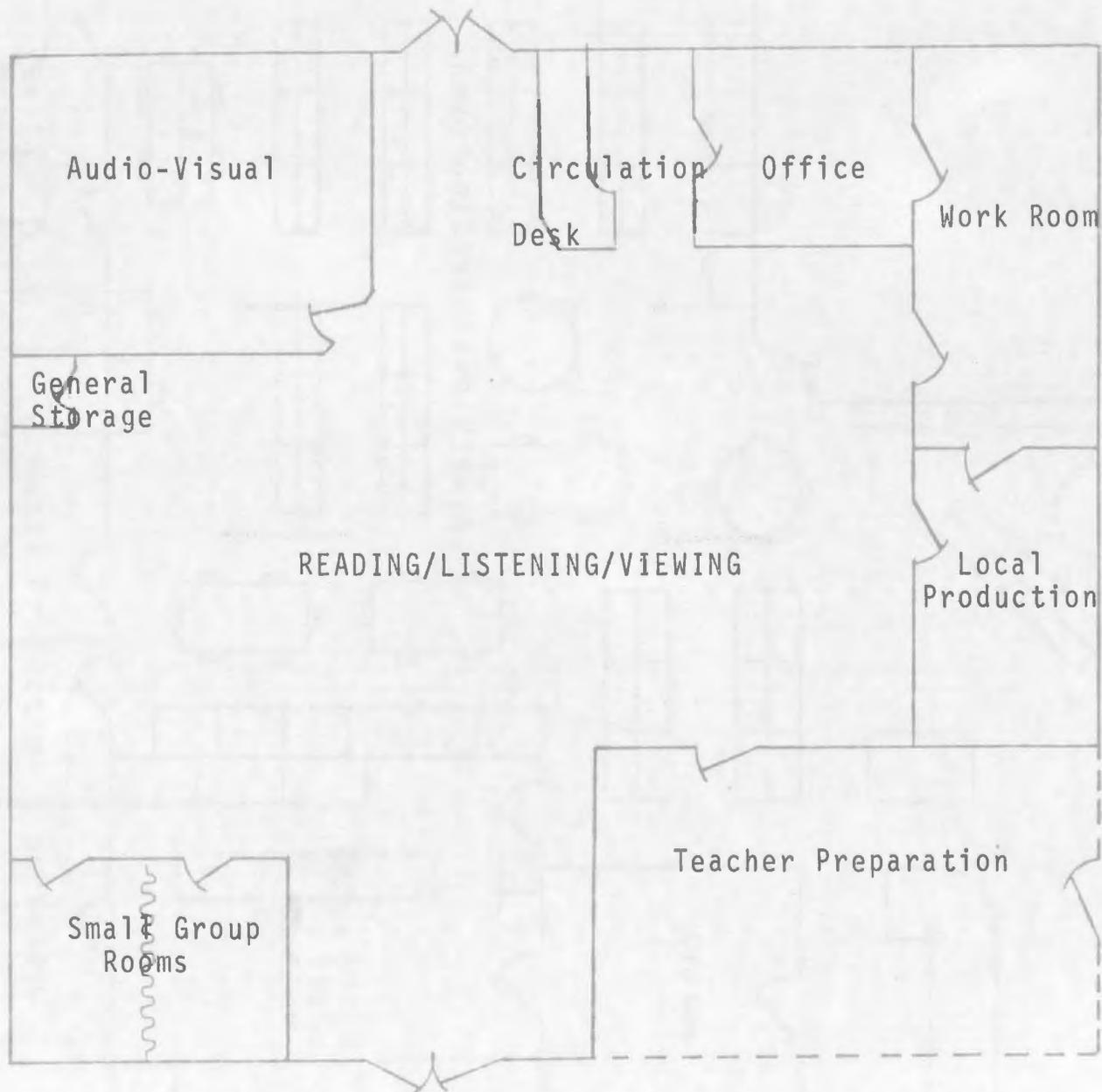


Figure 2. Floor Plan for a School Resource Centre.

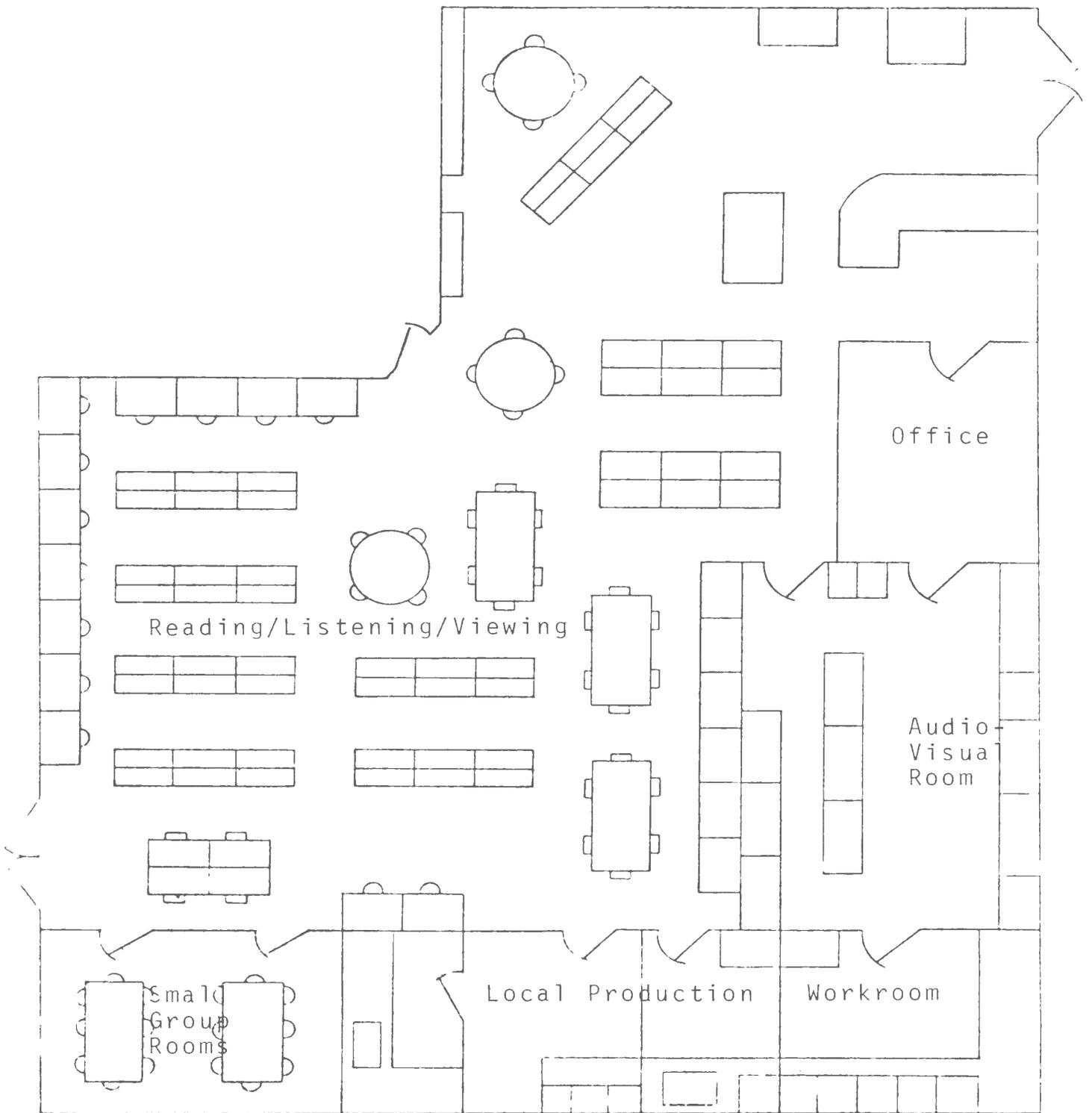


Figure 3. Resource Centre Floor Plan

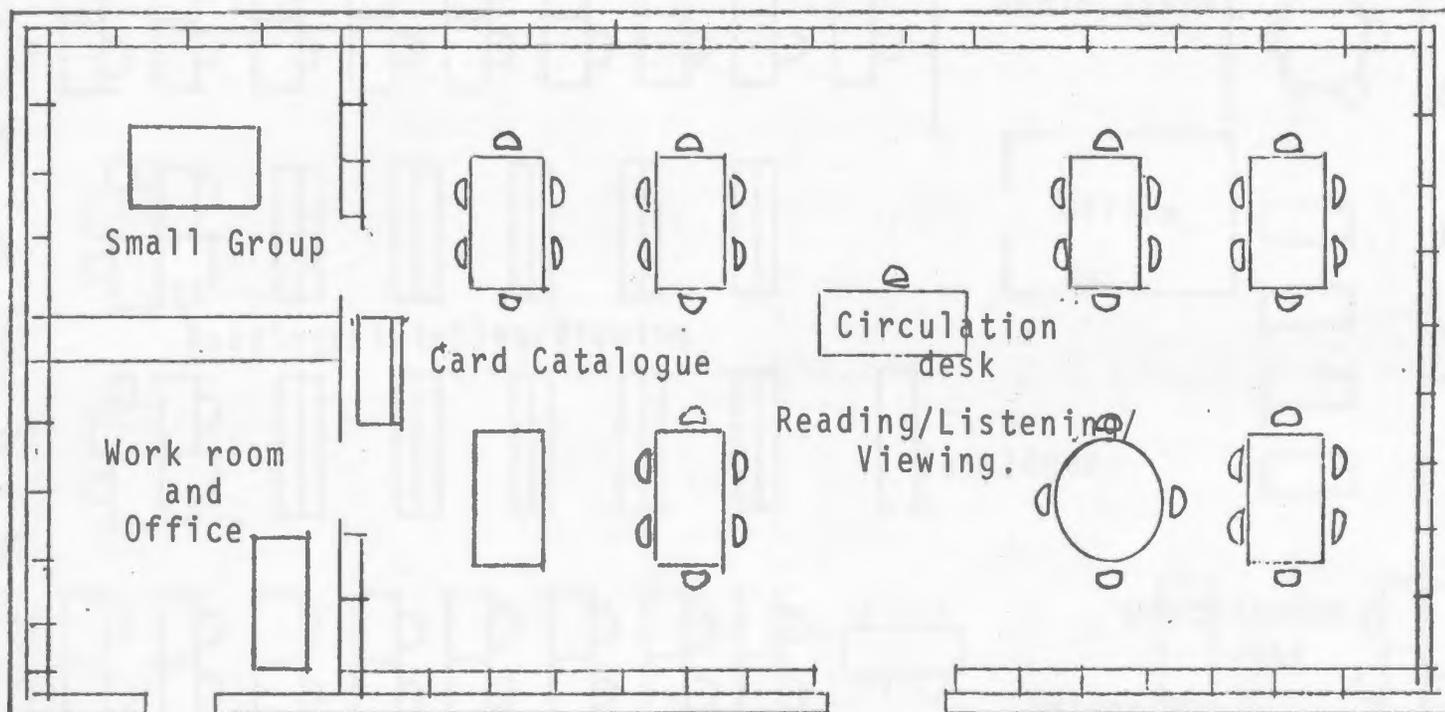


Figure 4.

Lay-out for a Small Primary School Resource Centre. Adapted from: Douglas.(1961) p. 85.

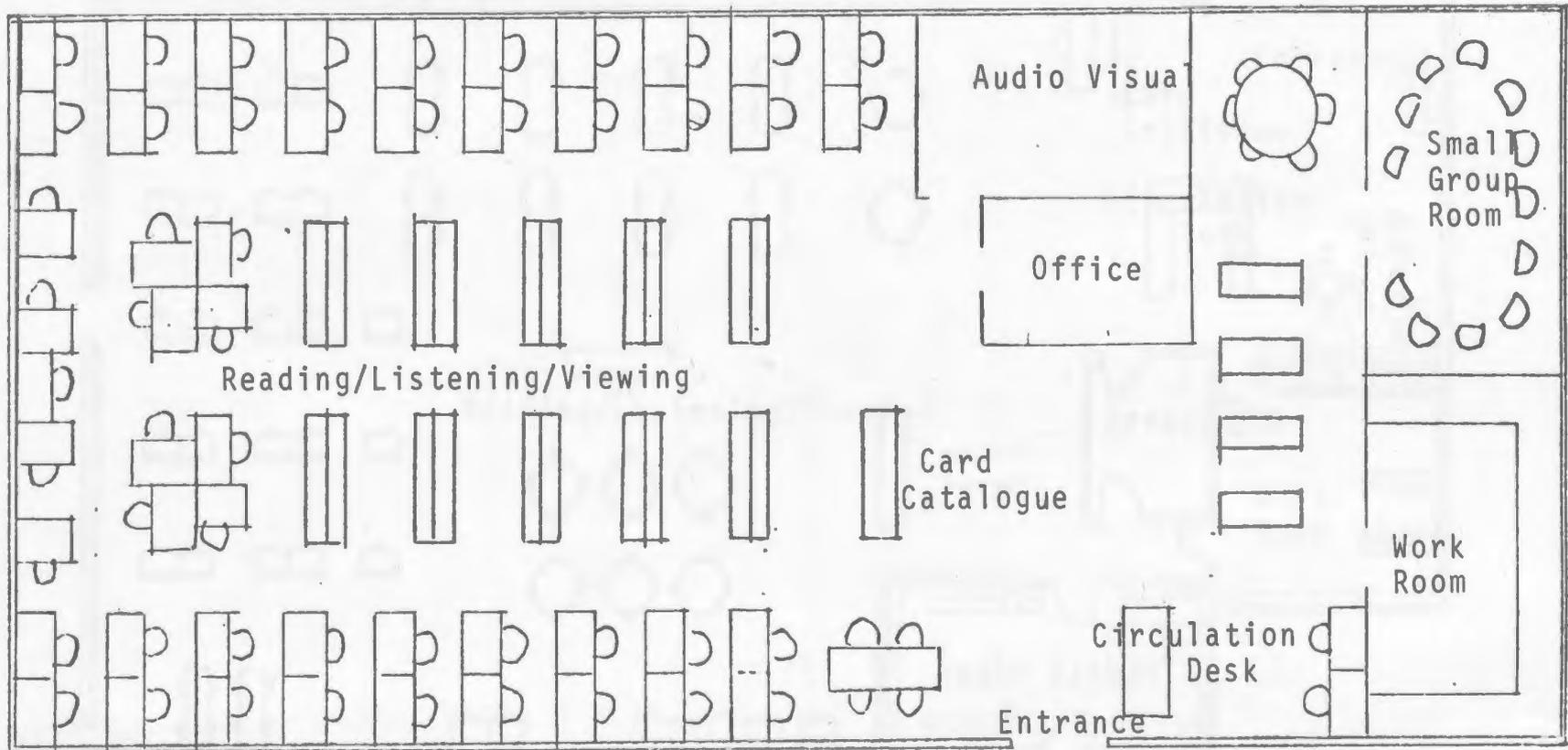


Figure 5.

Floor Plan For A School Resource Centre

Adapted from: The School Library (1968) p. 73

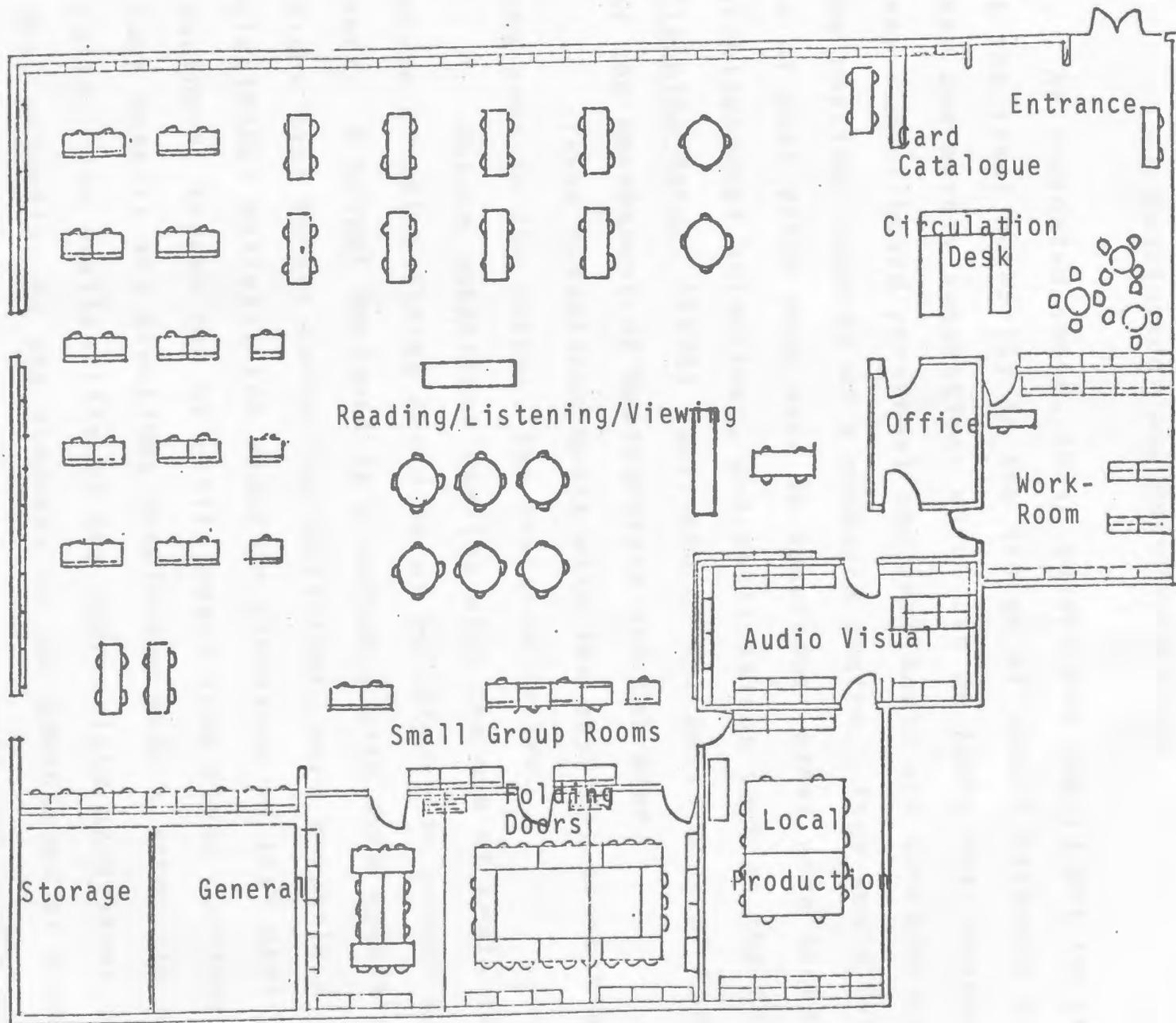


Figure 6. Adapted from: Resource Centre Guidelines (1972), p. 3

Conclusions and Recommendations

As indicated above, these guidelines should not be taken as the final authority in the design of school resource centres. They are merely suggestions which can be taken into account when school board personnel and architects are considering the physical aspects of a resource centre. They would probably be of most value when used to supplement other more technical architectural guidelines, and publications such as the School Planning Manual (1973) published by the Department of Education of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

These guidelines dealt with the physical aspects of one area in the school, the resource centre.

Future guidelines dealing with the use of media in the whole school building could be of assistance to school planners. A school designed in accordance with such guidelines might have better darkening facilities, more properly placed electrical outlets, and ramps or elevators so that book or equipment trucks can be easily moved from floor to floor. Such details are sometimes overlooked when a school is being built. The availability of the appropriate guidelines would draw attention to the planners to the advantages of such facilities and may indirectly promote more and better use of media throughout the whole school.

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