

# The evolution of the concept of hybridity in library knowledge: a discursive analysis

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## ABSTRACT:

This study sought to deepen the conception of hybrid libraries as equipment that reflects the use of analog and digital tools, considering the cultural sphere as an integral and participatory factor in the development processes within society. The research is qualitative, descriptive and bibliographic. The Discourse Analysis method was applied to some of the hybrid library concepts raised in the literature during the bibliographic research. Within the institutional space in which the discourse bases its statements, the hybrid library concept is understood as the convergence of technology

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in the infrastructure of libraries. The right to speak of hybrid libraries began with information professionals and expanded to the communities that such institutions encompass. The discourses on hybrid libraries are intended to delimit the importance of the information professionals who create and maintain library services to the use of technologies, emphasizing training needs for librarians. It is concluded that hybridity must be understood as a model of internal and external library management, therefore, it can and must be applied to all types of libraries, so that these institutions can follow the structural advances of society and remain relevant to their communities.

**Keywords:** Hybrid libraries. Concept of hybridity. Library management. Discursive analytical strategies.

### **La evolución del concepto de hibridación en el saber bibliotecario: un análisis discursivo**

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#### **RESUMEN**

Este estudio buscó profundizar en la concepción de las bibliotecas híbridas no solamente como instalaciones en las que se manifiesta el uso de herramientas analógicas y digitales, sino en las que se tiene en cuenta el ámbito cultural como factor de integración y de participación en los procesos de desarrollo de la sociedad. La investigación es cualitativa, descriptiva y bibliográfica. Durante la investigación se aplicó el método de Análisis del Discurso a algunos de los conceptos de biblioteca híbrida planteados en la literatura. Tomando en consideración el espacio institucional en el que el discurso fundamenta, en su mayor parte, sus enunciados, el concepto de biblioteca híbrida se entiende como la convergencia de la tecnología en la infraestructura de las bibliotecas. El derecho a hablar de bibliotecas híbridas comenzó con los profesionales de la información y se expandió a las comunidades que abarcan dichas instituciones. Los discursos sobre las bibliotecas híbridas pretenden delimitar la importancia de los profesionales de la información, que crean y mantienen los servicios bibliotecarios, en el uso de las tecnologías, poniéndose el énfasis en las necesidades de formación de los bibliotecarios.

Se concluye que la hibridez debe ser entendida como un modelo de gestión bibliotecaria interna y externa, y, por lo tanto, puede y debe ser aplicada a todo tipo de bibliotecas, para que estas instituciones puedan acompañar los avances estructurales de la sociedad y seguir siendo relevantes para sus comunidades.

**Palabras clave:** Bibliotecas híbridas; Concepto de biblioteca híbrida; Gestión bibliotecaria; Estrategias analíticas discursivas.

## INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to deepen the concept of hybrid libraries as equipment that not only reflects the use of analog and digital tools, but also considers the cultural sphere as an integral and participatory factor in development processes within society. This research was developed from a review of the literature in order to promote discussions on the subject. When dealing with hybridity, the involvement of technologies in hybrid libraries is commonly addressed. In this sense, this study involves not only technologies in hybrid libraries but also their contributions to the development of communities.

Regarding the uncertainty surrounding the hybrid settings, researchers in this area and librarians do not know exactly how to act. As a result, both may come to produce content and manage the institutions where they work through a limited view, focusing mainly on the technological aspects of information instead of the cultural sphere and the social inclusion of the community in which they operate.

This study is justified by the prevailing lack of updated literature based on the concept of hybridity and its current applicability. On the other hand, it can also be observed that the concept of hybridity is strongly linked to technology and addressed in the literature of the 1990s. Another essential point that must be highlighted is society's difficulty in introducing the existence of libraries into public management, which could promote not only the development of these institutions, but also the investment in these locales.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Considering that theory is built alongside social construction, the concepts were developed based on complex thinking, taking into account the perspective of network society given by Castells (2004). The social structure of network society is made up of social networks powered by information and communication technologies. By choosing this approach, the non-neutrality of this study is highlighted, since it sought to exemplify the research topic through the conceptual changes the concept of hybrid library has undergone over time.

The research was developed from the review of the literature, which was carried out in different electronic scientific databases, such as the Information Science database, the Library Information Science Abstracts (LISA), the Web of Science (WoS), SciVerse Scopus (Scopus), as well as the Sociology Research Database (SocINDEX). In addition, Parthenon and the Integrated Catalog and Discovery Service of different Universities were also used. The choice of databases was due to the comprehensiveness of the materials in the field of Library and Information Science, particularly the ones which are currently the most innovative.

The search was carried out by using the following keywords: “hybrid library” AND “development”, in Portuguese language (“hybrid library” AND “development”), in national as well as in international databases. Such words were delimited as “main issue”.

Secondly, based on Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, from Budd’s perspective (2006), and considering the terms found in the review of the literature, six categories were listed, as follows:

1. institutional space where the discourse states its allegations ;
2. to whom the right to speak is given, as well as situations that incited the statement;
3. the practical field in which the discourse is developed and positions in which the concepts place their subjects;
4. to whom the access to the statement is allowed;
5. what is recognized as valid and what the concept may exclude or emphasize;
6. and correlations between hybrid libraries, their typology, and the types of development (economic, social, human, cultural and sustainable) present in the public sector of societies.

It is noteworthy that, for Foucault (1971), Discourse Analysis seeks to understand an utterance in the singularity of its event, determining the conditions of its existence, setting its limits and establishing correlations with other utterances to which it may be linked. In view of this scenario, this study listed the discourse-interdiscourse relationship to participate in the data analysis procedure.

## ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Among the statements that make up the binary position of the hybrid library concept - technology convergence and types of development / education in the public sector -, are the historical changes that permeated the objective of these statements in relation to their users (to whom the author thought to give the right to speak) and the situations that incited the development of these discourses. That said, the first statement raised in the literature on hybrid libraries is undertaken in (Sutton, 1996); Orera-Orera's (2007) statement, which is located in the middle of the concept's historical trajectory; as well as Fowke's statement (2019), found in the bibliographic survey. The statements, together with their discursive analysis, may be presented as follows:

### *SUTTON'S STATEMENT (1996: 125):*

It defines a typology of library types ranging from the traditional to the digital in order to explicate shifts in human/machine intermediation and issues of access to both primary and secondary information. It frames developments in the emerging consultative, value-added model of service that will dominate the digital library in the context of the typology.

#### *Discursive analysis:*

*Paraphrase:* "The hybrid library is a typology of library which relies on both traditional and digital sources of information in order to explain the changes in the man/machine intermediation that occurred in society as well as the provision of information available in the public sector. The concept recognizes information access as a service to be mediated by librarians, aiming to enable individuals to interact in the context of digital libraries".

*Metaphors:* a) "The hybrid library is a typology of library which relies on both traditional and digital sources of information in order to explain the changes in the man/machine intermediation that occurred in society as well as the provision of information available in the public sector.". – This implies that the hybrid library is seen as a *type of library*, that is, an institution with specific characteristics, which should be constructed in terms of

meeting the needs of particular users. *The technology convergence should be highlighted as a key element of this space*, and emphasizes the need to develop products and services according to the information needs of the members of the community who use this space. b) “The concept recognizes access to information as a service to be mediated by librarians, aiming to enable individuals to interact in the context of digital libraries”. – Two particular elements should be highlighted in the context of hybrid library: *access to information and mediation of information by librarians*. Both of them are concerned with the need to enable individuals to use technologies.

*Production conditions:* a) The statement was produced in the United States of America (USA), by a professor in the area of Library and Information Science (LIS), whose research fields focus on technology-mediated teaching and learning, as well as on network information discovery and retrieval. b) The statement was written, not oral.

*Regarding the context:* The statement was produced by a professor who works at Universities in the United States of America, in the area of Library and Information Science (LIS). The professor also held the position of head at one of the universities where he worked. At the time, the US was undergoing an educational reform aiming to link education and employment. In this sense, it is important to bear in mind that conducting research is regarded as a job in the context of the United States. All of the author’s career and experience has enabled him to acquire further knowledge in terms of the area in regards to changes of paradigm from a traditional to a hybrid approach. Because he worked both with the technology convergence and teaching-learning, the author was able to expose, in his statement, the two ways in which the hybrid library appears in society.

*Right to speak:* The statement pointed out to university libraries and the ways in which the librarians deal with the different types of information resources available in society, in order to promote access to information in the institutional space. It is also observable that the statement addresses the fact that, at the time, information access in universities was restricted in terms of technology and databases. Therefore, there was a need to encourage these researchers to keep developing their studies in the field.

*What can be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* Coexistence of traditional and digital collections in libraries; reductionist view of the concept, in which knowledge, intelligence and innovation came from the convergence of technologies; economic development; the information professionals must help users in the adoption of digital tools; technological convergence for professional practice.

*What cannot be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* The concept was conditioned to the existence of computers in the library spaces, causing a divergence between the hybrid library concept and its practice; libraries are not related with the different types of development in society, as well as with the education processes.

ORERA-ORERA'S STATEMENTS (2007: 330):

For a library to be recognized as hybrid, there are some relevant aspects which need to be taken into account, as follows: - The new role of the librarian will be a matter of considerable importance due to both the surplus of information in society and how it is dealt with on the grounds of quality. The information management team requires a larger staff of employees with diversified training, viewing the ICT professionals as being more and more essential. Moreover, hybrid library management involves the training needs of librarians, which enables them to handle the changes in the context of the information society.

*Discursive Analysis:*

Paraphrase: For a library to be recognized as hybrid, there are some relevant aspects which need to be taken into account, as follows: - The new role of the librarian will be a matter of considerable importance due to both the surplus of information in society and how it is dealt with on the grounds of quality. – The information management team requires a larger staff of employees with diversified training, viewing the ICT professionals as being more and more essential. Moreover, hybrid library management involves training needs for librarians, which enables them to handle the changes in the context of the information society” (our translation).

*Metaphors:* a) “For a library to be recognized as hybrid, there are some relevant aspects which need to be taken into account, as follows: - The new role of the librarian will be a matter of considerable importance due to both the surplus of information in society and how it is dealt with on the grounds of quality.” – Bearing in mind two issues: not only the technology convergence, but also the importance of the role that the librarian plays in society in terms of handling information that is widely available in society. Based on the above, the hybrid library could be understood as a model to be followed in order to handle the great diversity of information types and resources, covering the treatment of both technological and human resources. b) “–The information management team requires a larger staff of employees with diversified training, viewing the ICT professionals as being more and more essential.” – The development of information management is highlighted. Far more than technology resources and qualified

employees, the concept of library is also concerned with the *management of both information and people*, seeking to improve the services offered by libraries. Among other things, it covers the *convergence of professionals* in hybrid locations, seeking to meet their objectives. c) “Moreover, hybrid library management involves the training needs of librarians, which enables them to handle the changes in the context of the information society.” – For a better understanding of the concept of hybrid library, the author shows how hybrid library management should be done, with an emphasis on the so-called information society, that is, *a society in which information is regarded as the main goods traded among individuals*, promoting the need for *training among librarians*. Since the available information is constantly changing, librarians have to be prepared to handle it.

*Production conditions:* a) The statement was produced in Spain, by a professor in the area of LIS and Documentation. His research focuses on the historical evolution of concepts in LIS. b) The statement was written, not oral.

*Regarding the context:* The statement was produced by a professor who works at a Spanish University in the field of LIS. The author works in the field of documentation and history of science, carrying out studies focused on the institutional development of libraries. The aforementioned statement specifically addresses the context of university libraries based on the guidelines of the Spanish education system, which brings in its parameters the development of flexible curricula and contextualized learning. It is understood, therefore, that libraries must act in order to promote quality products and services that also address the demand for information arising from the information society.

*Right to speak:* The statement pertains to the environment of university libraries, highlighting information management as the main resource to be worked on in hybrid libraries, in addition to human resources with an emphasis on training needs for librarians who work in these environments, providing support for the user population. The importance of blending the staff of hybrid libraries, accommodating people from different areas, is also addressed. Therefore, it can be said that the right to speak of the statement is based on librarians who work in these locales, focusing on both their expertise and the ways in which they deal with the user population in a professional context.

*What can be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* Hybridity portrays society by promoting technological and accessible spaces for the development of communities; the new role of information professionals, whose importance is increasing due to the large amount of information and its necessary management; information management requires diversified human



training; evolutionary process of social change; library systems based on globalization and cooperation among institutions; economic and social development; a sum of conventional elements of Librarianship together with information and ICT.

*What cannot be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* The concept does not have a focus on information literacy, design/architecture, and cultural development.

FOWKE'S STATEMENTS (2019: 236):

Library testimony highlights the ways in which libraries are hybrid, public/private institutions. Thus, in some areas (such as library funding or intellectual property), libraries are like private associations: They testify to protect interests that are library specific. In other areas (such as government information), libraries are more like governmental agencies: They testify as a partner and stakeholder in specific government programs, policies, and benefits. And yet in other areas (such as privacy), libraries are more like issue-oriented advocacy groups: They testify to engage their peers and patrons while organizing these constituencies to effectively advocate for public goods.

*Discursive analysis:*

*Paraphrase:* “Hybridity in libraries can be understood by the way these organizations combine characteristics of both public and private institutions. As an example, while a library is capable of receiving funding to work with specialized services, it can also be characterized as a government agency, that is, acting in line with government policies and actions. A library is a potential institution able to cover not only private collections but also public goods in its infrastructure.

*Metaphors:* a) “Hybridity in libraries can be seen in the way in which some characteristics of public and private institutions are linked in these spaces”. – It implies a new way of understanding the term “hybridity” for libraries, in other words, this term refers to those libraries whose characteristics are based on both public and private institutions. Moreover, other elements constitute this concept, such as the *type of funding, types of resources that are part of the collection and communities with which the library works*. b) “As an example, while a library is capable of receiving funding to work with specialized services, it can also be characterized as a government agency, that is, acting in line with government policies and actions”. – It deals with the exemplification of the elements “type of funding” and “user population of the library”. The author emphasizes that *the products and services developed by the hybrid library must be in line with its mission and vision*, that is to say, they must be linked to the information needs of selected individuals. c) “A library

is a potential institution able to cover not only private collections but also public goods in its infrastructure”. – Exemplifies the element “types of resources that constitute the collection”. the *technology convergence* (whether analog or digital), the financing of these materials, as well as the possibilities of information access offered by the library should be taken into account.

*Production conditions:* a) The statement was produced by the librarian of a university library in the USA, who works in the institution’s digital collection of Law courses. b) The statement was written, not oral.

*Regarding the context:* The statement was produced by a librarian at a US University. The author’s role, as a librarian, takes place in the digital collection of the institution’s Law School. The university is characterized by being public and, beyond a Law collection, it offers other types of materials, with an emphasis on other courses. Hybridity, in this way, can be understood as the convergence of private collections accompanied by the general collection of the university - complex thinking. It reinforces the idea that, in the US, higher education funding is mixed, that is, even if a university is public, the student needs to pay a monthly fee to be a registrant of the institution. This scenario impacts on the development of university collections and, consequently, university libraries, which can be designated as both public and private. The author of the statement works mainly in supervising collections and offering courses to train users in the handling of digital collections. In this way, the vision of technology convergence is given to the concept of hybridity by the author, in line with the ideal that hybrid libraries should impact the development of their communities, in accordance with current legislation in public management.

*Right to speak:* The statement focuses on the environment of university libraries, emphasizing the forms of financing for the development of products and services in these spaces – public and private. Throughout the text, the author highlights that the library infrastructure will impact the fulfillment of its mission and vision, which will show whether information professionals are achieving the proposed objectives. In addition to information professionals, the statement emphasizes the impact of the library on its communities in terms of developing institutional policies. Therefore, the user is an important subject when delimiting the concept of hybrid library in this statement.

*What can be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* New ways of using technologies in favor of an intelligent collective, encompassing complex networks of knowledge; hybridity must be understood beyond the physical structure of the library, as a factor of development of communities; an intergovernmental aspect in which libraries combine public and private characteristics; cooperative activities.

*What cannot be said/written about the hybrid library concept:* No mentions can be observed for team training, the librarian as a leader, information literacy, user interactivity and cultural development.

## DISCUSSIONS

Thus, it can be said that the statements mentioned above report several elements linked to the construction of the concept of hybrid libraries over the years. It should be pointed out that hybridity is recognized for the binarity between “technology” and “development”. Based on the binary position “technology”, the statements mentioned above reinforce technology convergence as the core element of the hybrid concept. The advent of this convergence is related to a wider vision in which the library, as an institution, should comprise not only analog but also digital resources in order to update its collection, offering services in terms of quality.

This perspective comes from the demands of the information explosion in the 1990s and which can be observed today. This information explosion is understood as the large amount of information produced by society, in different types of information supports. Sutton (1996), Orera-Orera (2007) and Fowke (2019) work in the context of university libraries; (Fowke, 2019) in specialized university libraries, institutions which should contain a wide range of information resources, providing possibilities in the development of science.

The binary position “development” shows the emphasis exposed by the statements in terms of the way in which libraries enable users to use technology and the information available. Sutton’s statement (1996) highlights the mediation of information by information professionals, seeking human development (ways in which libraries act in order to provide access to information and facilitate its use on the grounds of quality), cultural development (meeting the requirements of the user population) and economic development (products and services offered by the library and available in society).

Orera-Orera (2007) emphasizes human development when dealing with the learning process over the course of a life, as well as the need for professionals from different areas in the infrastructure of hybrid libraries. Fowke (2019) understands that hybridity is composed of elements such as type of funding and types of resources which are a part of the collection, and communities, that is, the user population of the library.

Thus, he points out that hybrid libraries must develop activities to socially include users, to enable them to use the library system (social development) and, above all, to promote valuable products and services in society

(sustainable development). As Fowke (2019) said, what permeates the scope of these developments are not the library technologies, but the ways of financing these organizations, which will affect the means of acquiring and using their information resources.

In this sense, it can be said that technology is more emphasized in Sutton's discourse (1996), in contrast to Orera-Orera (2007) and Fowke (2019) who, although they mention it, do not consider it as the main objective of their statements. That said, it can be posited that, over time, the concept of hybridity in libraries has undergone changes in its meaning. Initially, the focus of research on hybrid libraries was centered around the implementation of new technologies in the library environment, although the development of communities was already highlighted as one of the objectives of these institutions.

When this implementation began to be commonly accepted, other subjects came into consideration to compose this meaning. This is the case of studies on the impact these environments have on the types of development of the public sector, as well as the public/private relationship mentioned by Fowke (2019).

The relationship between hybrid elements in libraries, library types, and the impact on public sector development types are described as follows (Figure 1). The aim is to show that hybridity, as a support factor for development, is a management model that could be replicated in any and all institutions.

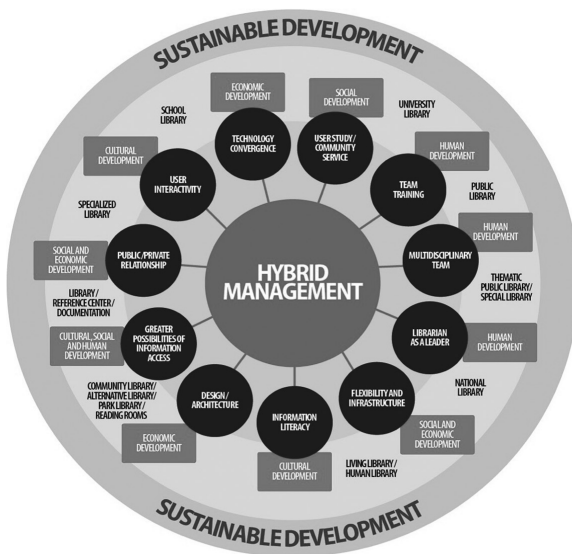


Figure 1 – Correlation between the concept of hybridity, the types of libraries and the public sector  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Based on *Figure 1*, relationships between the hybrid elements listed and their impact on the public sector may be understood in the following terms:

1. technology convergence: impacts on economic development;
2. user study and understanding the information needs of communities: impacts on social development;
3. training for general teams: impacts on human development;
4. multidisciplinary team: impacts on human development;
5. librarian as an institutional leader: impacts on human development;
6. user interactivity: impacts on cultural development;
7. greater possibility of information access: impacts on human, social and cultural development;
8. flexibility in infrastructure and environment management: impacts on economic and social development;
9. promotion of information literacy: impacts on cultural development;
10. differentiated infrastructure design and architecture: impacts on economic development;
11. public/private relationship: impacts on economic and social development;
12. and all elements and their relationships impact on sustainable development.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding the institutional space in which the discourse bases its statements, the concept of hybrid library is understood, for the most part, as the convergence of technology in the infrastructure of libraries. This vision comes from the institutional space in which these discourses are based, that is, from the technicist visions that permeate the structural development of these locations.

However, it is possible to observe a movement towards understanding technologies as tools to stimulate work with individuals in their process of participation in society. Such understanding is the result of countries that seek to reduce inequalities among their residents and that, in this way, join efforts to develop inclusive education, investing in research that promotes such meaning.

From this perspective, a paradigm shift can be seen in the early of 2000s, involving the meaning of the term “hybrid library”, in order to understand the impact of this institution on the types of development in society.

It can be said that the right to speak of hybrid libraries began with librarians and, later, was transferred to local users, until reaching the communities that encompass such institutions. The statements analyzed here showed that the discourse on hybridity in libraries was incited within the scope of academic libraries in developed countries, such as the United States of America and Europe. However, nowadays there is research on this subject focused on other types of libraries and in developing countries. Examples of this are the applied studies of Miranda, Leite and Suaíden (2007/2008), Cavalcante, Brito and Vlaxio (2016) and Silva and Caldas (2017), which address hybridity in Brazilian public libraries, among others.

Regarding the practical field in which the discourse is developed and the positions in which the concepts place their subjects, it was observed that the characteristic elements of hybridity in libraries are:

1. technology convergence;
2. user interactivity;
3. multidisciplinary teams of employees;
4. interaction between the library's internal and external environments;
5. wider possibility of access to information;
6. flexibility in infrastructure and environment management;
7. user study;
8. and promotion of information literacy.

In this way, hybridity in libraries can be understood as a model of flexibilization of infrastructure and management of both internal and external environments of these locations, in order to converge people and technologies as well as to promote citizenship through information access.

In the category "who has access to the discourse", an analysis was conducted on how the discourses on hybrid libraries are intended to delimit the importance of information professionals, who create and maintain library services, in the use of technologies, with an emphasis on training needs for librarians. The user population is the audience for whom such services are generated and developed, therefore, the hybrid library concept is linked to people, and the technology convergence is understood as the amplification of the strategic tools used when library activities are being performed.

Regarding what is recognized as valid and what the concept may exclude or emphasize, the sense of hybridity, for libraries, was born within the scope of university libraries in order to meet the information needs of researchers in regard to information access. Initially, the concept was understood as a way to introduce analog technologies in the daily life of these locations, but

after this establishment, the focus became the people and the way they (both librarians and users) handle the wide range of technological resources of information access and use as well as the widely available information, having been incorporated into other types of libraries.

Therefore, hybridity must be understood as a model of internal and external management of libraries which encompasses the convergence of ideals: technologies, people, architecture, and design. In this sense, the correlations between hybrid libraries, types of libraries and types of development in society stand out in the fact that hybridity can and should be applied to all types of libraries, so that these institutions can keep up with the structural advances of society, and promote its relevance to their users.

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