

Sound Advice

Helpful Information from *Stewart Acoustical Consultants*

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LIBRARIES AND MEDIA CENTERS

Libraries and media centers often contain lobbies, offices, conference rooms, auditoria, and other areas common to other types of buildings. However, the unique features are reading rooms and stack areas. The primary need in these areas is to minimize distraction for users. This means you want to control the generation of distracting sounds, encourage people to speak softly, minimize the transmission of speech over long distances, and mask distracting sounds with steady, non-distracting sound. Carpet is useful to prevent the generation of sound. Appropriate absorption on the ceilings and sometimes walls can help prevent the transmission of sound by reflection. Seating should be in small groups spread apart and interspersed with bookcases to maximize distance between groups of talkers and provide some blockage of the direct sound paths between groups. The ventilation system should produce a pleasant masking sound. Making the ventilation system too quiet can be a major mistake as that can make voices and other distracting sounds more easily heard. However, the sound should be pleasant and not rumbly or hissy.