

How Does Poor Ergonomics Affect Your Library?

Poorly designed library spaces, workstations and service counters have a direct and negative impact on the health, safety and well-being of library staff. Poor design reduces the quality and efficiency of service delivery and may lead to frustration and dissatisfaction for both patrons and staff alike. Poor design also increases the costs of operating a library. Every year, Canadian libraries spend **millions** of dollars to cover the costs of injuries related to poor design. And **thousands** of work days are lost because of the mismatch between the worker and his/her work. This has a direct effect on the quality of service delivery. Finally, poor design makes it more difficult for library patrons to quickly and efficiently use the available library services.

How Can Ergonomics Improve the Performance of a Library?

While there are many ways in which ergonomics can help improve the organizational performance of any library, one of the key areas is related to the prevention of work-related muscle strains and pain. Library staff report high rates of these disorders and research shows that these disorders are related to the design of jobs, workstations and equipment. Poorly designed book handling carts, service counters, computer workstations, shelves, etc. can all put library staff at an increased risk of injury. And injury risk is also increased when job tasks are designed or organized so that they expose staff to physical or psychosocial stressors.

Other areas where ergonomics is important include:

- Workflow and layout of library departments
- Design of service counters to enhance quality of service delivery to all patrons (adults, children, disabled, etc.)
- Design of patron areas (computer workstations for adults and children, reading / study areas, etc.)
- Design of work spaces to reduce workplace violence
- Signage and way finding for patrons
- Usability of library software, information systems, and websites

Good Ergonomics is Good for Libraries!

Good ergonomics is more than providing adjustable chairs. Good ergonomics means ensuring the library is designed, set up and organized for staff and for patrons. For staff, work system components should be designed to maximize comfort, allow for good working postures, promote movement, and enhance performance. For patrons, library spaces and services should be designed to enhance both comfort and ease of use.

Good design is the key to a safe and cost effective delivery of library services. It helps to eliminate exposures to design-related hazards that can result in costly accidents and injuries. It helps to ensure that equipment, technology, and workspaces are designed to enhance service delivery. And it helps to retain and protect the health and well-being of an aging workforce. Significant cost savings can be realized by designing libraries to maximize human performance and well-being.

ESA is one of Canada's leading human performance consulting companies specializing in ergonomics. Our Certified Professional Ergonomists have more than 30 years of experience assisting workplaces in all sectors solve their ergonomics related design problems and improve their overall performance!

ESA's goal is to help improve the performance of your organization. We do this by identifying design issues that negatively affect performance, lead to discomfort and injuries, and increase the likelihood of errors. We then recommend practical and effective solutions that improve the design, set-up and organization of work systems, spaces, equipment, and tasks. This lowers costs for the organization, improves worker health and well-being, and enhances service delivery.



ESA Can Help Improve the Ergonomics of Your Library

Our consultants are experts in the identification and assessment of ergonomics-related design issues. By applying our expertise, ESA can help improve the health and safety of library staff, help improve service delivery, and reduce costs. ESA provides high value, cost effective ergonomics consulting services that will improve the performance of any library. We can also provide awareness and applied training sessions designed to increase in-house knowledge and skill related to the recognition and elimination of ergonomics-related design issues.

Ergonomics Assessment of Computer Workstations

ESA's computer workstation assessments include a detailed examination of the set-up and design of all workstation components, work tasks performed, and postures adopted. We identify design, task and organizational issues that can contribute to worker pain and discomfort or result in reduced performance. You are provided with a report that clearly describes the hazards identified and the design / organizational factors that create them. The report includes a list of prioritized hazards, solutions, and an action plan that can be used by the employer to address any issues that could not be corrected during the assessment. The assessment requires approximately 1 hour/ worker.

Basic Computer Workstation Ergonomics Awareness (1 hour)

This session provides staff with an overview of computer workstation ergonomics issues, focusing on work postures and the proper set-up of chairs, monitors, keyboards, mice, and work surfaces, and on how simple changes to their workstation and equipment can reduce their discomfort and improve performance.

Service Counter Design and Layout Assessment

ESA's assessment process provides a detailed examination of the set-up and design of customer service counters, work tasks performed, postures adopted, and the match between the counter design and the requirements of the patrons. We identify design, task and organizational issues that can contribute to pain and discomfort for staff, reduced productivity, and negatively impact customer service. We will work with library staff to identify design solutions to increase health and safety, and enhance service delivery.

Job Demands Analysis

ESA's job demands analysis (JDA) process provides the detailed information needed to identify safety issues and process improvement opportunities, and assist with early return-to-work, job assignments, and accommodation. ESA's approach is not checklist based. We quantify all key job demands so that managers, employees, human resources staff, and health care professionals have a clear picture of the demands required. We will then work with your staff to identify, evaluate and select solutions that enhance performance and reduce the risk of injury.

Workstation, Equipment, and Software Purchasing Decisions

Whenever you are looking to purchase new workstations, equipment (e.g. book carts), software, etc/ ESA can help! We can provide you with expert design and usability advice so that you can make informed decisions, saving you money for years to come.

Library Design and Set-up

Planning a new library, replacing your existing customer service counter, moving staff offices? If so, give ESA a call. We can help to make sure that ergonomics design issues are identified and addressed during the design, construction and commission stages, greatly reducing the likelihood of staff discomfort or design related performance problems, while helping to improve the quality of service delivery, enhancing the patron's library experience, and reducing costs for the long term.