Lisa--We renovated our old library building in 2012, doubling its size and adding a second story Children's Room. I don't think it has affected adult circulation. And I think it's great that the noisy kids activities are on their own floor.   
  
We have one woman in town, very vociferous, who decries to anybody who will listen the insanity of having a kids' room on the second floor. Kids are gonna be falling down the stairs! After 4 1/2 years, nobody has yet.   
  
Make sure architects designing any railings, etc. on the upstairs floor are familiar with how narrow they have to be. We had to change them after our first inspection, before opening, because they were something like one inch too wide.   
  
I think the parents are quite happy with the upstairs room. After checking out up there, they come down here and get their own books and movies.  
  
Good luck, Tom C.

That's exactly the arrangement we had in my first public library job.  We had 2 circ desks--one on each floor.  The chief problem was that we didn't have the ability to fully staff two floors so the children's room was only open after school, evenings, and Saturdays, which was too bad for people wanting children's books mornings or early afternoons.  It was open all day during the summer.  I don't remember what we did during school breaks.    
  
Moving to the new single-floor facility was great.  Children's stuff always available and with an open floor plan the adults could browse on their side while the kids did the same on theirs.  
  
I once attended a meeting in another library which had the children's room in the "lower level" (i.e.: basement).  I shuddered when the director said they kept the children's room open but didn't staff it for long lengths of time.    
  
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Hello, Lisa,

I am the Director of a library that has this configuration that you have mentioned.  I like that children’s services is on the second floor, but there are some issues with this that you really need to consider.

First, take into consideration the design of the stairway itself. Ours is not kid-friendly, with metal bars all over it that project sharp points, and this is a constant concern of library staff. Also, there is a second story balcony with open spindles that children liked to poke their heads through.  We ended up covering the gallery area with plexiglass which prevents the children from doing this, but is also a real pain to keep clean.  So – pay close attention to the design of the stairway and the upstairs stairway access.

Another issue is to make certain your library can commit to adequate staff coverage at all times…you cannot afford to have this area uncovered when it comes to supervision.

Overall, I would not want to move our youth department, but I would pay very close attention to the design of the space.

Best of luck,

Lori

Lori Ward Barnes

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**Library Director**

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“Inspiring Ideas, Enriching Lives, Building Communities"

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We have our Children's Room on the second floor. Positives are that kids can be noisy without disturbing adult services. It's also in the older original Carnegie part of our building, so it has high ceilings and great windows, making it cheery. The main issue is with parents wanting to dump small kids there and get on the downstairs computers. We have Chromebooks they can check out and take upstairs though. It does require a lot of policing the parents to make sure they are keeping an eye on kids and stairs.

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We have a two-floor library. Upstairs is the main floor with the entrance. We have our Circ desk, fiction, media (dvds, audiobooks, etc...), children's dept, admin offices and meeting room on that floor. The children's dept is always staffed, but everything checks out at the main circ desk. This means the librarian/aid is free to do readers advisory/reference/computer help, etc... and work on program "stuff" at the desk.

Downstairs (half-basement) is the nonfiction collection, all the public (adult and teen) computers, the teen room, and the study rooms/conference room. Also staff areas. The reference desk is downstairs, but again, there's no circulation done at the ref desk. So we're free to spend our time doing reference/teen Reader's advisory, computer help, etc...

The only flaw with this system/layout is that we professional Librarians don' t get to do adult reader's advisory, which I love. But we have a very good circ staff who have taken to doing the RA like ducks to water, so it works out. They LOVE not having the adult computers 10 feet from their desks.

Oh, and I sometimes worry about small kids escaping from their parent and heading straight out the doors - which are, of course, automatic opening. At our busy (one story) branch, we actually had a child get across the parking lot and out into the street, once, before they caught up with him. If children's was on the lower floor, it would be harder for that to happen.

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I personally wouldn't do it. ADA, hard to "police" two areas, have to have elevator (I mentioned that in ADA)... If you have to have a second floor, I would put the staff functions there.  How easy/hard would it be to evacuate the second floor in case of an emergency?  
Glenda Pate                                      (|\_\_/)  
County Librarian                                (='.'=)  
Cedar County Library                          (")\_(")  
Stockton and El Dorado Springs, MO  
[www.cedarcountylibrary.org](https://webmail.greenfield-ma.gov/owa/redir.aspx?C=8gcC3k91-0KZA2m62x2ifThnxGG-ntRIKotS0n9HjGxzztao07LxDavUTsfDmoKUS22jXLLEymo.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.cedarcountylibrary.org)

I am in adult services so can't speak to the children's issue. But I will recommend that you get your entire adult collection on one floor. I once worked in a building with adult fiction on the first floor and adult nonfiction on the second floor. Many people didn't know we had a nonfiction collection! The reference desk was up there too, and reference staff was similarly invisible (and had no opportunity to do readers' advisory).  
  
Becky Schneider

We have this configuration and have a few lessons learned.

Our children’s department only takes up half the upstairs so the downstairs area (where our computers are) have soaring ceilings.  We have cool glass walls that overlook the downstairs and the kids mostly love it.  BUT, fire marshall said those glass walls couldn’t go to the ceiling so sound carries something awful from our play area to the computer area downstairs.  Don’t make that mistake!

Also, when our elevator goes out, we sometimes have to carry strollers upstairs.  This doesn’t happen too often but enough to note it.

The big thing is that this configuration really requires more staffing.  I think that would be true for any second story but really, you don’t want to leave ONE librarian by themselves in the children’s area.  With an open one floor design, as long as you have reasonable sight-lines, you can get away with much less staffing during quiet times.

Sometimes parents complain about having to climb upstairs and I do think they are less likely to check out things for themselves. (in fact, that gives me an idea…should do a display in children’s of adult light reading)  But mostly parents are happy that their kids are out of the stream of things and have their own place.

Some people NEVER see the children’s area because they don’t need children’s books which is too bad because it’s a GREAT space with lots of interesting interactivity.  I think it would increase people’s appreciation of what the library does for its community if they saw it.

So…mixed blessings…overall I would say a one story building is best unless you have maybe all meeting rooms and admin/workspace/tech… downstairs and people enter 2nd floor and have to go through the bulk of the library to get to the meeting rooms.

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Hi Lisa,

I work at the Torrance, CA public library. Our building was built in 1969 with the children’s area on the 2nd story. We have two staircases leading up to the 2nd floor, one rather grand affair which is wide and in the open and one smaller staircase that is closer to circulation and the exit. We have only one, small creaky and often out of order public elevator.

The biggest disadvantage to a children’s area on an upper floor is access. If the elevator is not working than toddler time is a parking lot of strollers downstairs while not to happy mom’s lug their love ones upstairs. Also, kids love to jump stairs as they charge to circulation to check out books. We have had many near misses between slower seniors and faster kids (adult fiction is also upstairs). While the upstairs YA area does help keep the noise down, we find that the kids and tutors overflow into adult fiction much to the regret of adult readers.

Most of the newer libraries in our neck of the woods are putting the YA and Children’s areas downstairs close to the entrance of the building. Those that don’t tend to have wide escalators leading upstairs. The area close to the exit is great, particularly if you have a greensward where outside story time can be held (practical in Southern California but, perhaps, not so much in Massachusetts) and rambunctious patrons can run off some steam. Also, the newer libraries have more closed off, usually with glass partitions, youth service areas to control the sound (but I’m happy I don’t have to deal with the nose and handprints).

I hope this helps, good luck with your new library.

Mike

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I have always liked "patron," redolent as it is of a more courtly age, with its suggestion of support of higher civilization.  A customer buys a Big Mac or a pair of Dockers; a patron supports the mission of the library.  And the mere act of reading supports us . . . and civilization. –Joe Schallen