IFLA Library Building Guidelines: Developments & Reflections

Edited by
Karen Latimer
Hellen Niegaard

K. G. Saur
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CONTENTS

Prologue................................................................................................................................................. 7
Introduction: A New Tool for Planning Library Buildings......................................................... 8
Hellen Niegaard and Karen Latimer (editors)

I. DEVELOPMENTS & REFLECTIONS

1. The Top Ten Qualities of Good Library Space................................................................. 13
   Andrew McDonald, UK

2. Reinventing the Physical Library: Libraries in a New Context............................ 30
   Hellen Niegaard, Denmark

3. Investigating the Need for Space .................................................................................. 47
   Anders C. Dahlgren, USA

4. Unlocking the Library:
   Library Design from a Marketing Perspective .......................................................... 55
   Janine Schmidt, Canada

5. Users and Public Space:
   What to Consider When Planning Library Space ...................................................... 68
   Karen Latimer, UK

6. Configuring Internal Staff Areas .................................................................................. 83
   Marie Françoise Bisbrouck, France

7. How Was It For You? The Building Process in Practice .......................................... 96
   Andrew McDonald, UK

II. GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING THE PROCESS

8. The Building Process Including How to Choose an Architect...................................... 119
   Marie Françoise Bisbrouck, France
Contents

   Anders C. Dahlgren, USA

10. Interior Design Considerations and Developing the Brief ................... 144
    Cecilia Kugler, Australia

11. A Library Project from an Architect’s Point of View .......................... 172
    Santi Romero, Barcelona Province, Spain

12. Green Building Management and Sustainable Maintenance ............... 203
    Sean Wagner with contributions from Jeffrey Scherer, USA

13. Reading Plans for Library Professionals .............................................. 215
    Olaf Eigenbrodt, Germany

14. Renovating Historic Buildings ............................................................. 219
    Santi Romero, Barcelona Province, Spain

15. Site & Location ...................................................................................... 229
    Hellen Niegaard, Denmark

    Marie Françoise Bisbrouck, France

APPENDICES

National Standards – Introduction.............................................................. 247
France ........................................................................................................ 248
Spain (Barcelona Province) ....................................................................... 254

List of Contributors .................................................................................. 258
Acknowledgements .................................................................................... 259

Index ......................................................................................................... 261
PROLOGUE

“As new media emerge and gain currency – the library seems threatened. The library stands exposed as outdated – at a moment when free access to knowledge is crucial.

The Library is no longer exclusively dedicated to the book and must change. From a book-fortress to a local community centre with lots of activities – *all* giving access to information and culture!”

*Rem Koolhaas OMA – Office of Metropolitan Architects*

When designing Seattle Central Library (2004)

*Seattle Central Library. Photo: Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA)*
INTRODUCTION: A NEW TOOL FOR PLANNING LIBRARY BUILDINGS

Hellen Niegaard & Karen Latimer, editors

This publication provides guidelines on the process of planning and designing library buildings and it also reflects on developments which should be considered when planning new library spaces. The guidelines provided are not a traditional set of recommendations to be rigidly adhered to since this would be unrealistic in today’s fast-changing and international library world. Rather, key issues and stages in the planning process are identified and discussed. Library managers and architects should relate these to their own countries and circumstances and make the relevant local adjustments.

The recommendations given throughout this publication have been developed to inform, improve and stimulate the library building process. The focus is on planning with the intention being to assist library managers and architects to build “best-of-their-kind” libraries, to design tomorrow’s top modern libraries and at the same time include the best traditions of yesterday’s classic library buildings.

The publication is in two parts. Part I discusses general and current trends including changes in the concept of libraries. Part II gives more specific recommendations on how to proceed with the library brief and estimate space needs and looks at issues such as interior design, reading plans, renovating historic buildings and selecting a site. Appendices give some examples of national library building standards and some sample plans.

Although every effort has been made to avoid duplication there are major themes such as the growing role of libraries as social spaces and approaches to writing the brief for a new library building that recur throughout the various contributions.
Any recommendations given in any of the chapters reflect the opinion of the individual author and his or her country of origin. For specific professional issues it is recommended that the guidelines of the relevant IFLA Section be consulted.

**Change in focus calls for new buildings**

Three things have led to this publication. Firstly, the fact that designing and constructing a new library is an art most library directors and professional librarians only experience once or only very occasionally in their professional lives. The same is also often true for the architect. Secondly, the need for a publication which brings together in one place information required by library managers, planners and architects in any library building process. Thirdly, the context in which the physical library is undergoing a major transformation from collection-dominated to user-centred in line with changes in society and technology. At the beginning of the 21st century the concept of the library is shifting in focus – from collections to connections/communication and from storage to access in order better to respond to challenges posed by an increasingly digitised and networked information-based society.

The information or the knowledge society, also known as the electronic age, is about to change library buildings and their focus radically. In the years to come we will see an increasing development from book-and-shelving dominated libraries to hybrid libraries, a combination of physical and digital services.

Libraries must provide access to information not only via printed and other physical materials but also electronically. Increasingly encyclopaedias, dictionaries, non-fiction, articles, music, film and other multimedia materials will be provided on a digital basis. In addition these services will be available 24/7, (24 hours and 7 days) in your home, at your job, on campus or elsewhere via computers of various kinds including handheld devices like cell phones.

What will this development mean for the physical library building? What does it take to create the modern library building of tomorrow? Nobody seems to have all the answers to these questions but one thing is certain – all library stake-