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Qualities of Good Library Space

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Abstract

Globalization and information communication technology have changed the classical library and its building. The changing media landscape and ongoing technological innovation are influencing the physical library premises creating a communication based library rather than a collection based one. The information society implies new web based library services, access to electronic resources and information rich products that require new forms of mediation. Library space needs to be well-planned and attractive as the role of the physical library and the needs of users change in the 21st century. Public spaces should be accessible to all, flexible and able to cater for a wide range of users with a variety of information needs and reasons for using the library.

This paper explains the qualities of good library space. These qualities help us to enhance our creativity in designing wonderful new spaces to meet the changing needs of our users.

Keywords: Library building, Library space, quality, library facilities, ICT

1. Introduction

For the efficient working of a library a right type of planning is necessary. Planning of a library building requires a thorough understanding of needs of the users. As library buildings are becoming expensive to build and maintain, cost factor should be taken into consideration at each stage of planning. The aim being to plan the ‘best possible building’ within the given amount to meet the requirements. With such scope the library needs proper planning as the fundamental necessity for proper development.

Some suggests that libraries as physical spaces are as good as “dead” because of increasing digital and web based information. Others are equally confidently planning and providing new facilities and services such as interactive library spaces and libraries without books.

Library building should have functional design rather than a monumental one. Thus functional requirements should get preferences. The building should be planned and design to be appropriate and adequate for the special type of library work to be done and the community to be served.

The library should have adequate space to implement the full range of library services that are consistent with the library’s strategic plan.

2. Qualities of library space

The building plan must be enough space to accommodate modern library equipment, furniture, collection, other library holdings, space for library staff etc. The library building itself place an important and significant role of bringing library material into the life and thinking of those who normally might not make use of this treasure house of knowledge.

1. Functional

A library building should have functional design rather than a monumental one. We should aim to design libraries which are functional, easy to use and economical to operate. The functional requirements should get preference over the other things. Space must enable the library to fulfil its role and facilitate the delivery of high-quality services. The design should recognize the crucial importance of users, books and information technology and the complex and dynamic relationships between them.

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2. Extendable

The library building should be planned possibly for next 20-25 years keeping in view of rate of stock development, number of users, future use of information technology, new sections. The building should be extendable to allow for future growth with minimum changes or alterations.

3. Flexible

The size and nature of buildings required for the future will be influenced by our view on how library services will be delivered in the emerging information age.

One of the few certainties in planning new libraries is the almost guaranteed uncertainty about future use, particularly in relation to information technology and organizational structure. In case of change in library functions takes place, than it should be possible to adjust the layout without carrying out major structural operations. It is therefore, important to achieve a high degree of flexibility in the building so that the use of space can easily be changed with the minimum of disruption, merely by rearranging the furniture, shelving and equipment.

4. Provision of areas

While planning a library building, there should be a provision to be decided well in advance for documents, users, staff, library equipments, services areas etc.

5. Accessible

The library is the heart of the Institution and plays a strong role in the learning, teaching and research processes within the institution. It should be as accessible as possible, encouraging and inviting people to make full use of the services it provides. It must cater for the growing number of increasingly demanding users and their diverse learning and research styles and for both traditional and electronic modes of delivery.

6. Varied

Users should be encouraged to seek information at their own pace and in their own time, with provision not only for quiet study and independent learning, but also for group work and interaction. We should provide a variety of study environments to suit the growing diversity of our users and their different styles of learning. The "hybrid library" must, provide access to both traditional and electronic resources, and an increasing amount space is devoted to IT services.

A variety of spaces can be created using different furniture, lighting, noise levels.

7. Interactive

We must achieve an appropriate balance between the space for collections services, readers and information technology. The well-organized library not only makes optimum use of the space available, but also promotes interaction between people, and encourages the use of its services. The main counter, enquiry points, group study spaces and information skills rooms are all key areas of interaction in modern libraries.

8. Conducive

As the heart of the Institution, the library should convey a sense of quality, value and place. The ambience should be conducive to study and reflection, and should encourage and inspire its users. Readers, many of whom study for long periods and in increasing numbers, should feel comfortable and safe.

9. Environmentally suitable

Suitable environmental conditions are required, not only for the comfort of users, but also for the efficient operation of computers and the preservation of library materials. Ideally, temperature, humidity, dust and pollution levels should all be controlled.

10. Secure

There are security risks associated with the building, its users, collections, equipment and data. Particular attention should be paid to the design of workstations, to securing IT equipments.

11. Efficient

Libraries must operate as efficiently and economically as possible.

12. Suitable for information technology

New space must allow the library and its users to benefit fully from rapid advances in information technology. More space is now devoted to ICT services and support, and to information skills training.

13. Economic

Design should be economical and carryout the result in a library building which can be maintained with minimum of staff and finance.

14. Ambience

Library space should be welcoming and attractive. The use of the colour, lighting, interior design and the artwork play a big part in creating a particular ambience. Even in this electronic age, most of the libraries hold collections of printed material and these, too contribute the overall effect.

3. Conclusion

The building should be planned and designed to be appropriate and adequate for the special type of library work to be done and the community to be served. Users space need to well-planned and attractive as the role of the physical library and the needs of the users change in the 21st century. Public spaces should be accessible to all, flexible and able to cater for a wide range of users with a variety of information needs and reasons of using the library.

Effective planning relies on the combined wisdom and experience not only of architects and librarians, but also of computer experts and networking specialists. Future libraries will look very different places from previous buildings. An understanding of the essential qualities of good library space continues to inform the planning and design of successful new buildings which, as ever, encourage even greater use, inspiring future generations of learners and scholars.

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