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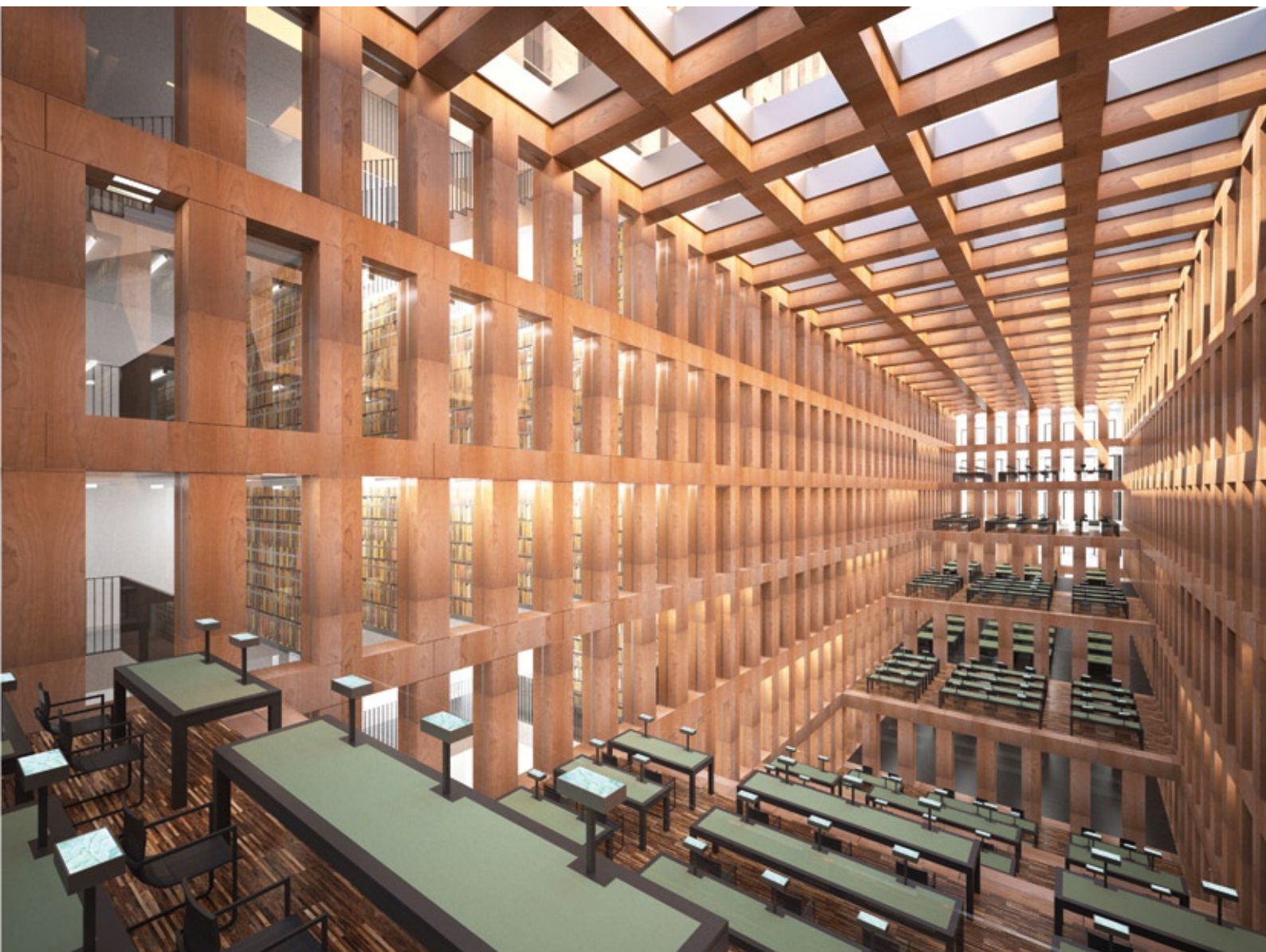
EDITORIAL

Libraries and Learning Centres; Current Approaches

by Olaf Eigenbrodt, Universitätsbibliothek der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Talking about the library as a learning space or learning centre turns out to be somewhat difficult because there is no common definition. A lot of different concepts and theories have been developed by librarians and scholars. IFLA's Library Buildings and Equipment Section wants to present some of them in this special issue of the Newsletter. Our goal is to bring forward the discussion about the public and academic library as a learning space in the context of deliberations about new concepts for library buildings in the 21st century.

THE LIBRARY IS A COMMUNAL
LEARNING PLACE: Humboldt-Universität
zu Berlin, Germany: Jacob-und-Wilhelm-
Grimm-Zentrum (University Library and
Computer and Media Services); perspective
of the reading terraces; architect: Max Dudler



Before going into practice we want to share some reflections about the concepts behind the spaces with the reader. Traditionally libraries are not only storages for information but they make it available at the same place. At least since the 18th century they have turned out to be meeting places for a certain community sharing the same information needs as well. But the digital revolution has been the cause for an ongoing discussion about the space of the library. Especially academic libraries are considering their substantiation as a physical space within the campus or institutional complex. Some scholars argued that the digital library would replace the 'brick-and-mortar-library' which would then become outdated. Since the turn of the century these voices have become more silent because of the so called 'renaissance of the library space'. At the same time the rise of the knowledge societies has been bringing out new learning habits which require new space for learning both in the public and in the academic libraries.

Added together there are at least three aspects considering the library as a learning space:

- based on its traditional role as a place for storing and sharing information the library has been a learning space since the times of enlightenment;
- the digital revolution has transferred the old fashioned brick-and-mortar-library into a high-tech information environment which offers multimedia learning infrastructures;
- due to the changing learning habits in the knowledge societies, libraries will become centres for lifelong, self-paced learning.

1 The library is a communal learning place

In 2008 Jeffrey T. Gayton differentiated the social and the communal space within the library. Arguing that the new approaches to the library space are considering exclusively the social aspects, he advised against the possible loss of the traditional functions.¹ For the author a social space is being constituted by activities like teamwork, informal communication and instruction; the communal space is an environment where people are studying in common but not together. The example is the traditional reading room where all users of the library are reading there materials in silence. The atmosphere gives them a feeling of affiliation to a community of learners. Gayton argues that the social activities are disrupting this communal atmosphere by making noise. This would turn out to be fatal because the communal experience is one of the core competencies of the library. Subsequently the library would become a blown-up seminar room without individual ambience.

The special atmosphere of the reading room has been stated by other scholars like Freeman as well.² The communal learning space requires a silent, concentrated room with traditional elements like study desks and perhaps wood panelling.

THE LIBRARY IS A HIGH-TECH LEARNING CENTRE: Openbare Bibliotheek, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; inside view, architect: Jo Coenen.





THE LIBRARY WILL BE AN OPEN LEARNING SPACE: Idea Store Whitechapel, London, United Kingdom; outside view, architect: David Adjaye.

2 The library is a high-tech learning centre

Does the digital library still require a physical space? It does because there is a need for places where

- those who don't have access at home or work can use digital resources,
- information competence can be shared and taught,
- people can possibly work together, and
- digital and printed documents can be combined on demand.

In this sense libraries are being transformed into technical learning infrastructures with lots of computer workstations, e-learning and multimedia applications and instruction rooms. The digital library has to operate this physical place as well as the virtual space in an integrated environment. In its training strategies, technical skills and learning resources it has to consider both spaces.

But there is another aspect of technical infrastructures in the library. Since digital technology is becoming more and more mobile new devices are replacing the 1980s PC or Mac and other bulky and stationary equipment. WiFi and UMTS are expanding the operating range of digital devices. The access to digital technology alone is becoming a weak argument for the physical library space these days.

Communal aspects like the encounter and face-to-face communication with other people sharing the same interests or information needs are crucial for the choice of a certain learning place today.³ Economically speaking there has to be an added value for the users of the physical library.

Not only academic but also public libraries tend to offer learning spaces with a smart integration of digital devices, wireless access and an inviting atmosphere.

3 The library will be an open learning space

The discussion about the future of the library space is characterized by terms like open, low-intensive, accessible. They refer to a certain concept described by different LIS scholars in the last years.⁴ In the knowledge societies libraries have to consider new ways to satisfy their communities' information needs. Lifelong self-paced learning is one of the core concepts of the knowledge societies. Not only students but also adults are searching for formal and informal learning groups sharing their interests and qualifications. Individual and common learning becomes more important for professional careers, social participation and even leisure-time interests. Besides the growing importance of Web 2.0 environments for sharing information and e-learning resources, there is also a tendency to meet in physical spaces for face-to-face communication. These meetings may be formal, for example in adult education institutions, or informal at conventions or in public spaces.

Therefore the possible role of the library as a learning centre for the community can be active as an institution of education and training and at the same time passive as an open space for self-paced learning and informal communication.

4 Conclusion

A reflection on the library as a learning space results in different perspectives of the topic with

additional regional, cultural and social differentiations. In some countries the library may be the only physical space for learning and sharing information in a non-institutional context. Other societies offer a wide range of possibilities and it becomes crucial for libraries to deal with different partners in lifelong learning and education.

In the end all three perspectives mentioned above play an important role in the concept of the library as a learning space. The communal, silent study environments may look a little bit old-fashioned but they are serving requirements for solely study without staying home alone. High-tech learning centres have the potential to become attractive working environments for the internet generation when they integrate technology in an appealing overall picture with communal and social spaces. The open learning space at last can serve the knowledge societies by offering low intensive and collaborative meeting places for their communities. The ideal way would be a comprehensive, multifunctional space combining all three approaches beneath the same roof. A library built and organized with this in mind could become an attractive place for informational participation and lifelong self-paced learning.

¹ Gayton, Jeffrey T. (2008): Academic Libraries: "Social" or "Communal"? The Nature and Future of Academic Libraries, in: *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 34/1, S. 60-66.

² Freeman, Geoffrey T. (2005): The Library as Place: Changes in Learning Patterns, Collections, Technologies and Use, in: *Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space*, hg. v. Council on Library and Information Resources, Washington D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, S. 1-9.

³ Eigenbrodt, Olaf (2006): Living Rooms and Meeting Places - Current Approaches to the Space of the Library, in: *Die Bibliothek als Öffentlicher Ort und Öffentlicher Raum - The Library as a Public Place and Public Space*, hg. v. Paul S. Ulrich, Berlin: BibSpider, S. 137-149.

⁴ Audunson, Ragnar (2005): The public library as a meeting place in a multicultural and digital context: The necessity of low-intensive meeting places, in: *Journal of Documentation*, 61/3, S. 429-441.

Oslo University College Learning Centre

By Lars Egeland, learning centre director OUC.

Photos: Aslak Ormestad

The learning centre at Oslo University College consists of the traditional library, ICT-service (instruction and support) for the students and a department for Audio-visual technology. The learning centre aims to provide support for the students learning – by offering knowledge and information and learning space - both analog and digital.



Oslo University College has app. 12.000 students and a staff of appr. 2000. We have three physical learning centers. Last year they had almost 900.000 visits. The students are busy users of the facilities. We have 43 seminar rooms which they can book on the net. Most of the seminar rooms have a PC-screen on the wall, it is usual to see groups of two to five students sitting by a table working together on a text on the wall-screen. It seems like it can never be enough seminar rooms! They are in use all the time!

It is app. 200 PC work-stations for students. But more and more we see that the students bring their own laptops. They can connect with the university servers through the wireless LAN in the learning centers. If you do not have a laptop it is possible to lend one for a day. Students and staff can also lend video cameras and other AV-equipment.

The students complain that it is not enough readingroom places! We have a huge reading room that is located in another building, but the students want to have reading places in the learning centre where everything else does happen.

We also offer rooms where the students can practice on presentations using the same AV-equipments as they will find in the big auditoriums.

All the learning centers at OUC has been converted from either offices or lecturing areas. That makes it necessary to make a lot of compromises. But the ideology behind the learning centre is to mix technology, library and pedagogy in the meaning of promoting support for the students learning in the term of guidance and physically resources.

All three of the learning centers have rooms for lecturing and teaching of library skills. The learning centre is responsible for an extensible teaching of information competency and information skills. The problem is still though that many of the students do not attend the teaching because it is not compulsory. One of the main goals for the learning centre is that the learning of information skills has to be a compulsory part of the curriculum for all students. It will improve the quality of the education and also relieve the pressure on the library staff from students who does not know how to find information in databases or in the library.

The AV-department in the learning centre is responsible for the maintenance of AV-equipment in auditoriums and teaching rooms. But they also teach students in making and editing films, and they produce audio-visual learning materials.

There are many definitions of the term learning centre. I like the wide definition that says that a learning centre is everything which contributes to the students learning, except lecturing: Reading rooms, books, seminar rooms in all sizes etc. But the truth is that the learning centre also offers lectures: We have started an international summer school which we call LATINA – learning and teaching in a digital world. The digital world has not only changed the way we acquire information, but the digital technology is also transforming the way we learn and the way we teach. Traditional education takes place in a closed physical and social space, with limited technical resources, and with a single person in charge. In countries where web access is widespread, teaching and learning can take many other forms. We stress creative learning and challenging teaching. In the learning centre and in the way we look upon pedagogy we are committed to change. The international summer school has now been expanded to a whole year course and a professional doctorate for librarians.



The Saltire Centre

Glasgow Caledonian University

The Saltire Centre is located in Glasgow Caledonian University in Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom. The Centre was awarded the National Lighting Design Award in 2007.



The building is designed as the Glasgow Caledonian University hub

Report on a visit by Cecile Swiatek, Chief Librarian, Bibliotheque Saint-Antoine, UPMC, Paris (France) based on a presentation given by Jan Howden, MA DipLib MCLIP MPH FHEA, DipLT, Associate Director, Learner Support, The Saltire Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University

The Saltire Centre is a new building, built on the former Glasgow Caledonian University Campus parking lot, in the middle of the University Campus. It is directly accessible from the Campus entrance by a ramp. Potentially 16.000 students enrolled in vocational courses¹ might enter it every day.

The Centre opened in January 2006. The construction works started in 2003 and the Centre was designed from the beginning as the University hub. It gathers together all the University services for students: Enrolment services, Funding, Cafeteria, Disabled Students services, IT and... the Library². It took 7 years to bring this project of gathering all the services together to fruition and it wasn't without its difficulties. The Centre also connects the various University buildings with corridors on each level. The public can go from one University building to another using one of the five entrance/exit paths of the Centre.

In 2001 an Internet Café opened which the students loved. From this came the idea of creating a place in the University responding to students' needs and conducive to them.

The Saltire Centre has the same area as the previous Library, but it is organized in a very different way. It aims to respond to the students' needs: all the university services to students and a cafeteria are gathered together in huge open spaces in the Centre. The building is open 24/7 and the services stay open till 11 p.m.; Wi-Fi is everywhere, 200 laptops can be borrowed for 24 hours and taken out of the Centre, 400 computers are accessible with personal log-ins, food and beverages are allowed, different kinds of furniture are provided in flexible spaces – sofas, large individual and group study tables, group study places with or without computers and giant plasma screens/smartboards, projectors, cameras, silent areas, etc.

At the same time, the Centre provides a social aspect to studying, and meets the growing need to work and study with electronic resources. Since there are only 500 PhD students at Glasgow Caledonian University and they all have their own personal office with all the electronic resources available, PhD students' needs are addressed essentially through ICT³ skills seminars and workshops, by mail or through appointments in small consultation rooms.

These rooms are an intermediate space between the public spaces and the professional office.

The Saltire Centre has a staff of 250 since the IT staff work for the whole University. Lots of students have a part-time job there. The Library staffing complement is 25 professional staff: 12 user services staff, 8 subject librarians, 4 e-services librarians and 1 manager. Duties differ from the traditional librarian tasks: the staff respond to a lot of e-mails from users of the "Ask a Librarian" online service, and are involved in the very important ICT skills service.

Awards:

- UK Civic Trust Award (2008)
- SCONUL Award (2007)
- National Lighting Design Award (2007)
- Scottish Design Award (2007)
- RIAS Andrew Doolan Award for architecture (2007)
- Glasgow Institute of Architects Design Award (2006)
- BDP Award (2006)
- RIBA Award (2006)

¹ Glasgow Caledonian University offers courses in health, social care, life sciences, engineering and computing, law programmes: only disciplines leading directly to a profession.

² Library and IT services very often have the same manager in UK Universities.

³ Information and communication technologies



Muffling the noise and lighting the spaces were very important issues, addressed with major, various and complementary solutions.



Everyone should be able to find the place that fits her/him.

DEFINITION OF THE SALTIRE CENTRE

Jan Howden asserts that the Saltire Centre is not a «Learning Centre», but an experiment that doesn't meet any a priori definition. It is a place that doesn't reproduce a pattern, and it is not to be considered as a model that can be duplicated elsewhere identically. The Saltire Centre is very new site, under constant and pragmatic modifications, to match the various needs of its users. Jan Howden expects the Centre to undergo further evolutions. It is a study and social place which is always accessible and provides student-focused services.

Differences between the Saltire Centre and the former library:

- Services directed to students gathered in one place
- IT and documentation
- More seats and more visits made by users
- New kind of places, especially for working in groups
- Food and drink allowed – cafeteria inside the walls
- Accessibility H24, 7 days a week
- Silence = only in specific areas, and not the rule

Which special facilities and spaces are offered?

- Careers
- Funding
- Wellbeing services
- Nursery
- Chaplains
- Cafeteria
- IT everywhere
- Flexible spaces
- Tables and space for working in groups
- Specific silent reading rooms
- Consultation rooms (individual appointments)
- Water dispensers on every floor in the reading rooms

How is the place being used by the students?

The Centre is designed and used by the public as a social place: students like being here, to work in groups or individually, or simply to meet with their friend or have lunch. They come to the Centre everyday, day and night.

The Librarians were concerned about opening working and reading rooms with 100% more seats, since they had only 45% occupation in the old Library but the gathering together of services, the comfortable furniture and the sensation of freedom in the new Centre mean so much to the students that the occupation assessment of the place gets up to 90%! At night, many foreign students use the Centre as an information and communication place. They gather there to meet their friends and use the Internet a lot to contact their families.

Assessment methods of the uses of spaces and services by the public

An enquiry that shows global satisfaction results has been conducted by an external service. But no assessment has been made by the Saltire Centre staff. The Centre teams are nonetheless observing their users and draw some conclusions.

Further information:

General information:

www.caledonian.ac.uk/thesaltirecentre/

About the building:

www.gcal.ac.uk/thesaltirecentre/building/index.html

REVIEW

Khan, Ayub

Better by Design: an introduction to planning and designing a new library building

London, Facet Publishing, 2009

By: Karen Latimer, Queen's University Belfast

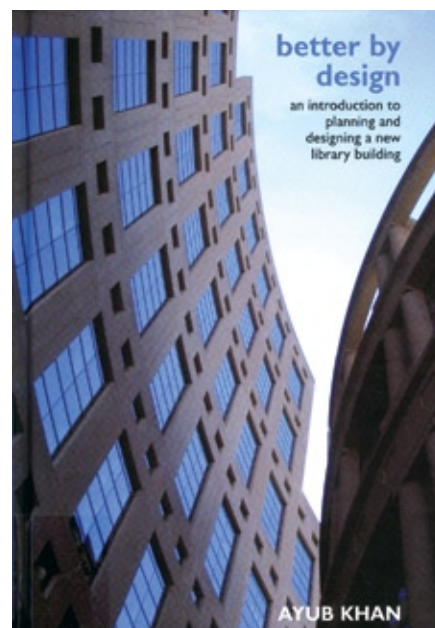
Ayub Khan's new guide to library planning takes the reader through the various stages of the process in a clear and concise manner. The book opens by summarising the main types of libraries and then looks at recent library trends most notably the shift from print-based to mixed media, in particular electronic, collections. These trends have a major impact on the way libraries are designed as new buildings reflect the need for both study and social space and the need to manage the balance between them.

The author then goes on to look at developing a business case and managing the project itself before tackling the topics of the composition of the design team, the selection of an architect and the involvement of partners and the community. The nuts and bolts of the design (underpinned by the design brief) and space planning issues are dealt with in chapters 8 to 10 and provide very helpful guidance on fitness for purpose, site location and interior design as well as on space requirements and adjacencies. The final chapters of the book look at occupancy and post-occupancy and at building libraries for the future.

A detailed bibliography of texts and websites is provided as well as a glossary of terms, a discussion checklist relating to ambience, the top ten tips for ensuring communities and individuals engage with new library spaces and a space adjacencies diagram.

Much has been written on new libraries and the design process recently but what this book adds to the body of literature is a very helpful guide to preparing the business case for a new library, and new information on dual-use buildings highlighting the different funding opportunities this opens up. In addition Ayub Khan has rounded off his book by drawing attention to the crucial but often overlooked issue of post-occupancy evaluation, something near and dear to this reviewer's heart. He points out that it is important to evaluate both the management of the project and the experience of users and staff in using the end product itself – the new library building. It is too easy to heave a sigh of relief when a project is completed and not take that extra step of measuring it against the original aims and objectives but it is just such studies, as Khan states, that are so crucial in ensuring that future projects build on the successes and failures of those that have gone before.

It is pleasing to note that the author has drawn on, and acknowledged, the IFLA Library Building Guidelines (K.G.Saur, 2007) throughout the book and the two complementary publications should provide the library professional setting out on the task of planning a new library building for the first time with invaluable information and guidance.



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