Developing Guidelines for planning library buildings

By Hellen Niegaard, chairing the working group on Guidelines and chief consultant, Danish Library Association

According to IFLA's overall professional priority – promoting standards, guidelines and best Practices a working group developing guidelines was established a couple of years ago. The idea is to have a set of guidelines ready in 2006/2007 meeting the growing need and demand for updated guidelines for planning the new physical framework for the modern 21st century libraries. Combining the classic book-house with the e-library.

As the Section considers all matters concerning the design and construction for all types of libraries in all parts of the world, including their furnishings and equipment the members of working group were selected from the Section Committee, see whom they are below.

Currently it is the intention to introduce the first part of the guidelines at a session in Oslo. The Guidelines will consist of two text parts – Basic texts and Directory – plus of course references.
To establish the decisive "joint touch" the group will go deeper into the matter together at a working meeting first scheduled for this spring but now for Oslo. Thereafter sometime next autumn the first part of the guidelines will introduced to and discussed with the rest of the Committee members – for their perspectives to be included in the recommendations.
Between Oslo (2005) and Seoul (2006) the working group will prepare the second part of the guidelines – that is a kind of encyclopaedia directory (on light, cabling, security, etc) in order for the full text to be introduced/discussed in Seoul. Where after it should be finalised and publicised during the autumn 2006/winter 2007.

Existing national Guidelines
Please send information now! All SC members are invited to forward copies of existing national guidelines/ standards on library buildings to Hellen Niegaard (hn@dbf.dk) before August 1st this year.

Members of the group, which are all present or former members of the section committee:
Anders Dahlgren, USA – Library advisor attached to ALA
Andrew McDonald, UK – University Library Director
Hellen Niegaard, Denmark – Chief Consultant Danish Library Association
Joan de Beer, South Africa – National Library Vice Director
Lisbeth Tangen, Norway – Public Library Director
Marie-Francoise Bisbrouck, France – University Library Director

The Physical Library and beyond. Library as place and the library in cyberspace

11-12 August 2005 in Järvenpää, Finland

Along with a host of organizers including IFLA's Reference and Information Services Section we are greatly looking forward to this satellite meeting in conjunction with the IFLA World Congress in Oslo. Hopefully the programme will address many issues of interest to those who wish to work towards understanding and designing physical libraries in an age where more and more library services are becoming online and the role of the library as mediator has changed significantly over the last ten years.

Speakers from among other countries Canada, Slovenia, Denmark and Finland will talk about virtual library services, local services in a virtual age, demands on modern library architecture thinking and libraries in a social environment. There will also be the possibility of visiting a number of interesting libraries as a part of the meeting and the opportunity to be inspired by the famous Finnish architecture.

For more information about the satellite meeting, full programme and how to register please visit

http://www.fla.fi/PHYSICALvsVIRTUAL05/

We look forward to seeing you in Finland.

On behalf of the organizers
Andrew Cranfield

Editorial

In recent years there has been renewed interest in library architecture and library buildings This in an age where more and more library services are becoming electronic and digital information can in theory be accessed from any computer anywhere in the world. This shift from traditional library collections held in physical buildings to libraries providing access to information held outside the library itself is – or certainly will be in the future – a challenge for the library community. Recent years have shown us much innovation in how we provide library materials to our users, how we present them and a change in focus on what a library in essence should be. However we still see many, too many perhaps, libraries that have not woken up to this new reality and go about there business as though nothing is changing. A reluctance to accept that the book is no longer necessarily the primary medium for information and entertainment can in the end result in a reduced position in society for libraries.

This development can also be seen in new architectural concepts and design of libraries where we have to be aware that an old fashioned and historic approach to building and designing libraries will hardly be attractive to users in the years to come. We have to learn from the retailing industry and the commercial world to create the sort of vibrancy and relevance that all public institutions need in order to survive.
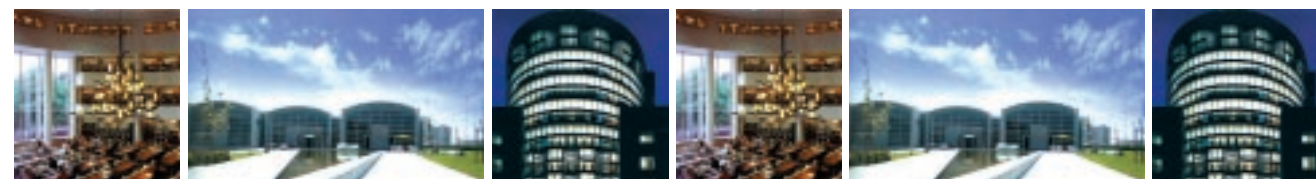
An excellent example of this kind of thinking is the *idea store* concept in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. Here we see modern design thinking going hand in hand with ideas of urban renewal, social inclusion and life-long learning. Visiting the *idea store* at Bow provides one with a very different image of a library and not least the atmosphere of the library. A café placed centrally in the lobby greets one upon entering the building and the image is not so much that of a library as a busy department store or an airport terminal. What strikes one most is the life and bustle of the place where small children, those getting help to apply for jobs, students and old age pensioners all seem equally at home. In this respect the *idea stores* are truly democratic and inclusive. The *idea stores* are replacing the 12 more traditional libraries in the borough and which had difficulty in attracting visitors. The *idea stores* may not be to everybody's taste but the figures speak for themselves – the two *stores* that have opened since the concept launch attract three to four times the number of visitors than the libraries they replaced. As a strong factor in helping to revive urban areas, provide education and information, generate space for social interaction and improving the quality of life the *idea stores* must be viewed as a success. By utilising the design concepts of the shopping mall and the high street it has been possible to renew the library concept and create a series of relevant and dynamic institutions for a heterogeneous population.

Another lesson to be learnt from the *idea stores* is the advantage of having a strong brand – the strategy and ideas behind have been strongly formulated and communicated. This gives the whole idea political legitimacy and broad support from interested parties. The strong brand ensures the general public and those who provide funding have a very sure idea of what they are supporting.

The *idea stores* of Tower Hamlets prove that having a strong design concept and a new way of rejuvenating the image of what a library can look like provides new energy for the delivery of library services, traditional as well as modern. The *idea store* concept must obviously be seen in the context in which they have been devised and we have to recognise that this type of "library" might not work in different conditions, but as an example of rethinking the design and provision of library services it can only be an inspiration for those who see real opportunities for the libraries for the future.

Andrew Cranfield
Chair, Library Buildings and Equipment Section

Designing Libraries
(www.designinglibraries.org.uk)
by Karen Latimer

The Designing Libraries project in the UK came into being in 2003 as part of the government's strategy for the future development of the public library service in England over the next ten years. *Framework for the Future* was issued in February 2003, its object being to create a shared sense of purpose amongst key stakeholders and to identify areas of activity that were critical to the future success of the public library service. The intention was to enable the service to build on existing strengths whilst developing innovative projects for the future. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport charged Resource (now renamed the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) with producing a three-year action plan to implement *Framework for the Future* and this was produced in October 2003.
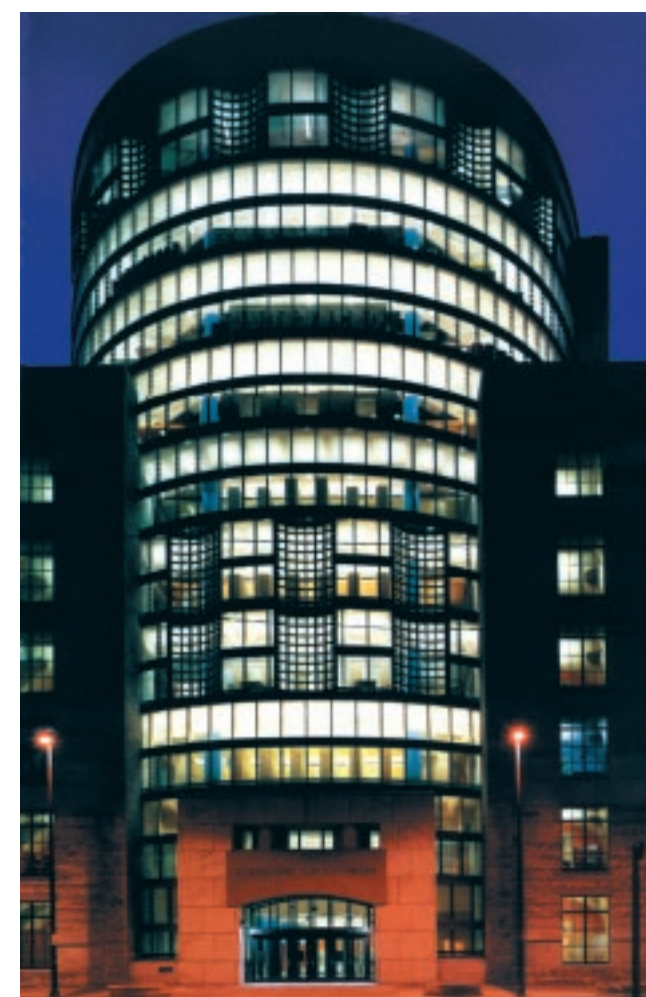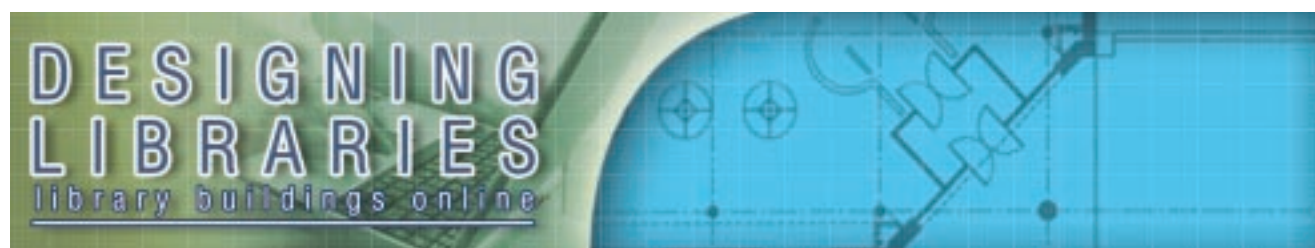
The state of the public library building stock in the UK has been of considerable concern for some time and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) had mooted the idea of a library buildings portal or database at a seminar in May 2003. *Framework for the Future* had highlighted the need to design attractive new buildings, or renovate the old, in order to deliver a relevant and useful service in the 21st century. Resource recognised the need for a source of information along the lines of that proposed by CILIP so the scene was set for a fruitful collaboration between the two bodies. A pilot project was run in 2004 under Work Package 4 of the Framework for the Future Action Plan 2003-2006 "Community and Civic Values" and addressed strategic objective 10 to "provide library premises that meet the needs of the twenty first century". As well as the setting up of a database/portal, the work package also included an audit of the state of public library buildings in England and a series of regional seminars on designing interior space in libraries which were held between March and July 2004.

The pilot website has now been granted funds from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to go live. The project is being carried out by the Information Service department of the University of Wales Aberystwyth under the direction of CILIP's Library Buildings Project Steering Group and is already well under way. The Designing Libraries website (www.designinglibraries.org.uk) provides a database of descriptions and images of recent UK public library building projects, a resource for sharing expertise on library planning and design, and links to useful web resources and bibliographic references. The 1995-2003 entries for the UK Public Library Building Awards are included on the database. Entries for the 2005 awards are soon to close and they, too, will in time appear on the site. There is also a link to the AIA/ALA library building awards.

The Designing Libraries database can be searched by local authority, county, size and type of library, and by project whether it be a conversion, an extension or a new building. Entries include illustrations, information on special features and services, details of costs, the source of funding, the name of the architects responsible for the work and awards won. The focus is on public library buildings but the information should be of use to anyone involved in the process of building a new library or of renovating an existing one. With the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL) database also available on the web (www.sconul.ac.uk/lib-build/), those fortunate enough to have bags of gold to spend on building new libraries or on fizzing up old ones should have no excuse for not availing themselves of existing information or checking up on best practice elsewhere.

Kris Lambert, Public Library Oostende (above), Cleveland Public Library (left), Economics Library, Göteborg University Library (below). All illustrations are from the 2003 edition of New Library Buildings of the World, edited by Dr. Wu Jianzhong, Director of the Shanghai Library, China. The book presents library architecture from around the world, is superbly illustrated and gives us many images of the library of today and tomorrow.