

The Physical Library and Beyond

the Library as Place and the Library in Cyberspace

by Joan deBeer, National Library of South Africa

The IFLA satellite meeting of the Standing Committee Library Buildings and Equipment and Reference Work Sections was held in Jarvenpää, Finland on 11 and 12 August 2005. It was co-organised with the Finnish Library Organisation. The almost 100 participants were particularly interested in the theme "the physical place/position of the library".

"Third Place"

Most interesting lectures were held on the meaning/value of the physical library in the local community, in the large cities as well as in rural areas. In all lectures it became evident that next to home and the workplace, the library takes third place as a source of information gathering. Examples of other third places include cafes, municipal offices, clubs and pubs. They all are places where people meet and discuss issues of importance to them. In all lectures it emerges that the library would need to do much in order to secure its third place in future. In his presentation the architect of the Sendai Mediatheque, situated 100 kms from Tokyo, showed/reflected upon how this library has taken up its place in the community and how virtual services are being manifested. This library is an impressive architectonic creation which combines the physical with the virtual. Maya Zumer of the University of Slovenia indicated that the library needs to develop itself from a physical to a virtual "third place". In Slovenia this is partly done by developing websites for all public libraries. The Netherlands, with bibliotheek.nl, serves as their great example. Jeanine Schmidt, Director of the University Library Montreal, gave a lecture on the changes scientific libraries have experienced during the past decade, particularly in the field of ICT and new methods of teaching. Due to this, the way in which services are rendered to students has also changed. This is also reflected in the library design.

Organising/furnishing

Frans Meijer, former Director of the Rotterdam City library, gave an impressive lecture on the value of the library to the Rotterdam community, as well as the consequences thereof for the design of the library. Rieke Overbeeke, Director of the library in Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel, gave a presentation on the topic Libraries in their communities; the role and importance of the physical library. She emphasised the value and meaning of the library in smaller communities on the basis of the points of departure of the library, societal developments and changes resulting in the emergence of a different information need. This development manifests itself in the furnishing/spatial design of libraries. She showed how architects Aat Vos, Ingeborg Kleijnjan and Wim Lafeber have put into spatial design new forms of information, such as information on health, youth information, municipal information and media education in the libraries of Barneveld, Floriande (Haarlemmermeer), Rijswijk and Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel. Friso Visser of the Society of Public Libraries showed how the virtual library is given shape through bibliotheek.nl and discussed whether this represents an additional service or if it could be seen as a service in the place of physical information. It was inspirational to hear so many stories from different countries on how one wish to secure the library's third place, coming particularly from people who share the same interest in the library as a physical and virtual institution.

Dynamic Engines for the knowledge and information society

Seoul, Korea, 20.-24. August 2006

by Karen Latimer, Queen's University Belfast

IFLA Library Buildings & Equipment Section Open Session

Libraries in multi-functional complexes: facilitating the sharing and exchanging of learning, knowledge and information across different types of institution through synergy and design.

The 72nd IFLA General Conference in Seoul, Korea promises to be a memorable and dynamic event as indicated by the overall title. The Library Buildings & Equipment Section has lined up an enticing quartet of papers on the theme of design implications of libraries in multi-functional complexes.

The opening paper gives pride of place to a local librarian, Dr Young-seok Kim, who will give a paper on "Opening small public libraries in underused local shopping malls to boost local businesses in Goyang, Korea." This will be followed by a case study of an academic library, the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. Dr Harish Chandra will look at "Planning, design and construction of the central library building as a dynamic engine and multi-functional complex facilitating the sharing, interaction and exchange of learning, research, knowledge and information to achieve academic excellence."

The third paper in the session will be given by Sohair Wastawy, Chief Librarian of the Library of Alexandria, who will address the issue of "Libraries: the learning space within." Dr Wastawy will look at new and different elements in library design drawing on the experiences of the much-publicised library at Alexandria. The authors of the final paper, "Multi-functional library design and sustainability: Learning Resources Centres in Vietnam" will discuss a number of innovative library development projects in Vietnam. Michael Robinson and Prof Dr Huynh Dinh Chien will look at how the need to generate income to augment limited funds has been incorporated into the design and layout of buildings.

The Open Session promises to be informative and lively and, as an additional bonus, Hellen Niegaard will give attendees an update on progress with the IFLA Library Buildings Guidelines.

Put the dates in your diary now and start planning a visit to Korea's 600 year-old capital.

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Section on Library Buildings and Equipment

Library Buildings in Oslo

a personal informal perspective

by Janine Schmidt, Trenholme Director of Libraries, McGill University

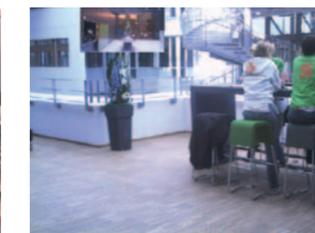
The IFLA conference held in Oslo last August provided an opportunity to absorb a little of Norwegian culture and life and in the few free moments in between attendance at conference presentations to visit some of the libraries in Oslo. There were several libraries of particular interest to me.

The first of these was the Faculty of Law Library at the University of Oslo. It is located in downtown Oslo in the historic part of the city, on the Karl Johans Gate, adjacent to the National Gallery and the National Theatre, occupying the former site of the University of Oslo itself, then known as the Royal Frederick University. The University was re-named the University of Oslo in 1931 and much of it re-located over a number of years to Blindern, a suburb of Oslo (<http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/english/>).

The building occupied by the Faculty of Law Library was constructed in 1852. The Faculty of Law Library has been restored painstakingly over several years with much of the original flavour retained. There is a Main Library in the Domus Bibliotheca building (pictured above) and there are various sub-collections and sub-libraries which are also part of the Faculty of Law Library (<http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/english/>).

Some of these sub-libraries are located in the Domus Bibliotheca and others are located elsewhere in Oslo. Included in the building is the History of Law Library (pictured above). The use of darker timber finishes relates well to the type of material stored. The desks provided also suited the kind of use made of the collections.

Inserting computers into buildings of this kind is challenging. Maintaining the atmosphere and integrity of the older original building and matching it with the functionality now required of libraries is not always easily or appropriately achieved. An imaginative installation of computers into large desks ensured both an appropriate atmosphere and easy use. The splendid art work and wall decorations contributed to the development of an appropriate learning and study atmosphere as well as an attractive space. Well-designed exhibition cases enabled the display of materials appropriately. Pictures appear below.



A visit was also made to the Library of Humanities and Social Sciences also at the University of Oslo (<http://www.ub.uio.no/uhs/english/index.html>), but located at Blindern. This library building was constructed in 1999. There is a spectacular entry, both from the external approach and also from the internal aspect of the building. Pictures appear below.

There were several other noteworthy features in the Library. These included use of large plasma screens to convey information in relation to such matters as use of mobile/cell phones. There were also excellent uses of automatic discharging systems, with placement of discharged books into book-trucks which could be easily moved to appropriate floors for re-shelving. Both natural and artificial light were well used. (Pictures below) Another visit was made to the National Library of Norway (<http://www.nb.no/english>). A new multimedia library had been established in an historic heritage building. A spectacular reception area and coffee shop were contained in the middle of the building, adjacent to the new area. There was an excellent combination of the old and the new. Computers were again in this context integrated imaginatively, with some stand-up facilities for quick and speedy access and other sit-down facilities for working for a longer period of time. The last library I visited was in the spectacular new Norwegian School of Management. The Library had just opened and was still being completed (http://www.bi.no/templates/bibliotek___14379.aspx). The building was open and friendly. Natural light abounded. A central atrium allowed one to see right throughout the facility. The building was very high tech throughout. At the same time, many informal spaces for students were provided. The Library used colour imaginatively. What one has come to accept as the best of modern Norwegian architecture was present.

All the visits provided new insights into library design and offered excellent examples of new approaches to both new facilities and refurbishment projects.

Library Buildings and Equipment

Open Session, Oslo 2005

by Ingvild Monsen, Bergen University College & Kjartan Vevle, Biblioteksentralen AL



Design for diversity - redesign and new typology for reaching new user groups

was the title of the successful session held at the IFLA Congress in Oslo, Wednesday 17 August. Approximately 240 delegates attended the session which was interesting and informative and provoked much discussion. The session was chaired by Andrew Cranfield and papers presented were:

- The new Oslo Public Library project
LIV SAETEREN (Oslo Public Library, Oslo, Norway)
 - New trends in Danish Library Architecture
JENS LAURIDSEN (Tårnby Public Library, Denmark)
 - Guidelines for Library Buildings
HELLEN NIEGAARD (Section for Library Buildings and Equipment, Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Liv Saeteren: Oslo Public Library project

Liv delivered a lively account of the vision for the new Oslo Public Library which is to create a brand new type of library moving away from the traditional use of shelves and counters which are seen as the largest obstacles for a new type of library and maintain the old myths.

The new library will be located on a site which was part of an old railway station, and a plan has been made for the regulation of this area. The whole area is about 150.000 m², and the new library will be about 15.500 m². An architectural contest has been held, and OMA (Office of Metropolitan Architects) was the winner. As the regulation plan has not yet been adopted by the City Council, there has been no progression in the work. Meanwhile, there have been several ideas about how to use the area. Some of them might be in conflict with the library's wish to be open and accessible for the public. The architect's vision is to make the library "...an agora for the city". To locate the library together with, for example, the Munch Museum, with their strict security needs, will make visions difficult to realise.

The intention and wish for the library is to be a meeting place, and to change focus from the collections to the users. To do that the focus will be on:-

- new efficiency and rationalization
- new functions and services
- new organization of functions and staff

Jens Lauridsen: New trends in Danish library architecture

Jens put forward the idea that architects have to look for something that has never been seen before. As the information world continually changes, a new library has to be a dynamic project and it must promote information, education and cultural activity.

New libraries have to focus on all possibilities and all new media, or else their plausibility will be undermined. New libraries today do not often reinvent or modernize the traditional institution, they merely package it in a new way. It is vital that the hybrid library is fully expressed in the physical library.

The challenges facing new library architecture are embodied in conservative politicians, conservative architects, conservative library staff and conservative library executives.

The speaker used Albertslund library and Næstved library as examples of bad and good architecture for libraries and made the following points:-

Albertslund library:

- the exterior does not show that this is a library
- there is a lack of vision – distinctness
- it has a very traditional exhibition area and children's department
- no priority is given to computer work places
- it has a traditional counter area, making a sharp distinction between the librarian and the user
- there are no integrated learning facilities
- there is no focus on the library as a meeting place

Næstved library:

- the focus is on communication, not on books
- it has open, transparent shelves

His conclusion was that Danish library architecture is not particularly good. Flexibility has to be defined to be of any use. The aim must be on access, not collections, and on communication not on storage. In the future we have to ask the users what they need and what they wish to do in the library, so we can make library buildings that work for both the users and the staff.

Hellen Niegaard: Guidelines for library buildings

It is hoped that the new guidelines will be ready in 2008. It is important to give the professionals (architects, planners and others) input to make good, hybrid libraries. The main challenge is how to incorporate the new media. Other challenges will be globalisation, the information society and the knowledge society. It is important to use other professions in the work of designing a library.

The format of the guidelines will be:

- introduction
- template – how to do it
- basic text
- encyclopaedic text.

New Library Buildings

by Karen Latimer, Queen's University Belfast

Have you visited an exciting new library recently? We would like to showcase new library buildings from around the world in the Library Buildings and Equipment Section Newsletter so please send in your contribution and publicise successful examples of good library design in your area. The series kicks off with an account of the Brighton Jubilee Library in the UK.

Brighton is a lively city on the Sussex coast in the south of England only about an hour's train journey from London. The city council wanted to regenerate a rundown area in North Lane to the north of the famous Brighton pavilion designed by John Nash. The plan is to develop it as a cultural quarter with the library as the main focal point. The Jubilee Library cost £14million to build and it makes a very positive statement about the role and importance of library buildings in the community. The main façade of the building is a wall of glass facing in to a new square and flooding the interior with light. It is both striking and enticing, and the public are visiting their new library in droves. Within, the building is cleverly planned with a dramatic, light, bright and airy central space separated from surrounding offices and specialist spaces such as rare books, music, and the teenagers' zone. The children's library is, for obvious reasons, the most remote but the acoustics are excellent and the library manages to combine lively, buzzy areas with quiet ones where library users can study undisturbed. The spacious main central area is buffered by the perimeter areas, which has environmental as well as practical space planning advantages.

The Jubilee Library was designed by Bennetts Associates with Lomax Cassidy and Edwards and is a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) building which in the UK has not always been the byword for high quality design. In the case of the Jubilee Library however, the quality is excellent, the exterior is dramatic and the interior, with its large exposed sculptural columns and timber-clad walls, is attractive. Both as a piece of architecture and a well-functioning library, this building is a success. In 2005 it won the Prime Minister's Best Public Building Award, the Best Design-Led Regeneration Project Award, and was runner-up for Britain's most prestigious architectural award - the Stirling Prize.



Photos of Brighton Jubilee Library (Bennetts Associates)

