Trends in Library Design
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Introduction

• Trends: opportunities and threats
• Changing typology – or not?
• Some key trends
• Available resources
• What next?
Trends: threats and opportunities

• Trends are trendy – they come and go
• One size does not fit all
• Have a clear vision for your library
• Know your users

but

• Some trends are always with us in some degree
• Need for futureproofing in a changing world
• Look at successful libraries/learn from others
• Strategic alignments – educational trends etc
Library Buildings: changing typology
The library is the typology that refuses to die
(Richard Murphy)

20th century
- Imposing
- Stability/permanence
- Solitude/Quiet
- Status quo
- Collections

21st century
- Welcoming/relaxed
- Flexibility/transience
- Communal/Choice/Zoning
- Innovation (IT/AI)
- Connections
- Sustainability/Re-use
- Wellbeing
Recent Trends

- Placemaking, aesthetics, quality
- Supporting and enhancing learning
- Engagement: meeting all users’ various needs
- Collaboration, partnerships, co-location
- Operational efficiencies/ flexibility
- Integrating technology – the I generation
- Special Collections – USP
- Wellbeing : staff and users
- Indoor/outdoor connections
- Sustainability : environmental issues; reuse
1. Placemaking: aesthetics/quality

• Quality is timeless: an ever-developing trend

• An academic library, the intellectual hub of a campus, must be a magnet, a beacon – and must convey quality, community, innovation and the value and legacy of learning. (Carole Wedge)

• Siting: integration, light, noise, climate, visible entrance

• Transport links: accessibility, parking, bicycle racks etc
Magdalene College, Cambridge. Niall McLaughlin. On a starry night, this warmer glow meets the eyes of those emerging from dinner as a lure to scholarship.
2. Libraries Supporting & Enhancing Learning: how physical space impacts on learning

• Early emphasis on undergraduate space and social spaces
• The discussion about libraries and learning centres developing into an acceptance of blended learning
• The 3Ls: lecture theatre, laboratory and library deliver together
• Makerspaces and sandpits
• Growing awareness of need for postgraduate space and silent study

*Trinity College Dublin mission statement:*

*We have a social responsibility to make library spaces places that reflect different styles of learning, teaching and research*

*RCSI design goal: Put all learners at the centre*
Royal College of Surgeons Ireland
HJ Lyons

- A bold and visionary brief
- Benchmarked against best
- All users at the centre
- Grasped how to express digital space
- Key books + antiquarian collection close by
- Future-proofed / Flexible spaces
- Wellbeing
Sitterwerk Library St Gallen
precise research or inspiring browsing
3. Engagement

• Library users become observers, listeners, planners, networkers
• Integral part of the process – champions
• Create places at the heart of their communities both physically and symbolically
• In library space planning high quality space and good service are inseparable
• Constantly evaluate and seek to establish strategies which are based on identified user needs

Inclusive buildings are designed for the entire community rather than for the loudest voice in the room (Traci Lesneski MSR)
4: Collaboration/Partnerships

• Strategic alliances within organisations and beyond: align with wider goals & strategies

• University partnerships – student services; English/Maths teaching spaces

• Public and academic libraries working together

• Community and cultural hubs – working with the wider city, town or campus planners
Public benefit ground floor

A public ground floor:
- No barriers or gates
- Atrium space
- Cafe and terrace
- Two exhibition spaces
- Events space
- Cultural collections
- Reading rooms
- Creative Lab
- Changing Places WC
The Word, South Shields
FaulknerBrowns

• Key location
• Façade fans out like a book
• Transforms a visitor’s perception of what a library can be

An architectural report from the front line, a pointer to the future of this building type (Hugh Pearman)
5. Efficiency/Flexibility/Variety

- Another trend that is always with us but developing
- Digitisation has freed up space and will continue to do so
- Variety – users want a choice of study spaces from individual to group to large event spaces
- Accommodate diversity in learning styles and changing needs
- Get the adjacencies right
- Layout of spaces and collections intuitive, colour delineated
- Emphasis on self-service
  - borrowing, returning, book-sorting, automated storage & retrieval systems
  - all reduce staff/student contact
- Fewer hard walls, movable stacks and furniture
- Shared staff spaces reflecting home working
6. Integrating Technology

- Digital natives to the I generation
- Libraries as places where people can work/study, connect with excellent wifi and technology
- Rapid change so get expert advice
- Flexibility in wiring and wireless - users can connect how and where they like
- Interactive digital walls
- Robots
- AI – talking to books and interacting
- Unplugged – growing awareness of digital wellbeing means libraries also need to provide nature-enriched spaces for users
University of Delft (Mecanoo)
7. Special Collections

• Your library’s unique selling point
• Creating as well as curating content
• Engage with inspirational core texts
• Holdings are relevant across the disciplines
• Relevant to UG, PG and detailed academic research
• Share innovation and knowledge
• Connect academic research with society
8. Wellbeing/Biophilic design

• Embryo trend that took centre stage after Covid
• Enable social distancing
• Sensory rooms
• Attractive, well-designed staff work areas
• Better ventilation, more fresh air, outside space
• Touchless lights, taps and doors
9. Indoor/Outdoor Connections

• Planting indoors and outdoors
• Green walls
• Roof terraces
• Outdoor walkways linking spaces
• Views
10. Reuse & Sustainability

Lacaton & Vassal

• Demolishing is a decision of easiness and short term. It is a waste of many things – a waste of energy, a waste of material, and a waste of history. Moreover, it has a very negative social impact. For us, it is an act of violence.

• Commitment to a restorative architecture that is at once technological, innovative, and ecologically responsive can be pursued without nostalgia.
New Libraries in Old Buildings

- Environmental responsibility: embodied energy
- Placemaking, sense of place, strategic locations
- Urban and social continuity at the heart of communities
- Identity and memories
- Experience history and physical space in the digital world
- The Wow factor!
Luxembourg Learning Centre
Storyhouse Chester 1930s Art Deco Cinema
Evaluation and resources

- Post-occupancy evaluation: does the new library meet the brief - enough of the right spaces in the right places?
- Library visits: learning from others’ successes and failures
- Continuous loop of improvement

Resources
- **Designing Libraries (CIC)**
  [www.designinglibraries.org.uk](http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk)

- **LIBER Architecture Group**
  [http://libereurope.eu/architecture-forum/](http://libereurope.eu/architecture-forum/)

- **IFLA Library Buildings & Equipment:**
From 10 Trends to 10 Deadly Sins

- Wrong location
- Inflexible spaces
- Poor lighting
- Poor acoustics
- Too few electrical outlets
- Insufficient workspace
- Complex maintenance
- Security issues
- Inefficient HVAC
- Water features!

For any library larger than a bicycle shed you need an architect. Fred Schlipf
Qualities of good library space: Faulkner Brown, McDonald et al

- Functional
- Adaptable
- Accessible
- Varied
- Interactive
- Environmental

- Safe and secure
- Efficient
- IT rich – flexible provision
- Sustainable
- Wow factor

Vitruvius - firmitas, utilitas, venustas