



Library Buildings and Equipment Section
with
Metropolitan Libraries Section

Report of Session 116
IFLA World Library and Information Congress 2008, Québec, Canada

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13.45-15.45, 2000a

Renovating and renewing libraries: the wow factor
Followed by an open forum on library design issues with a panel of speakers

The session was opened and chaired by Andrew Cranfield, Chair of the Library Buildings and Equipment Section. He announced some changes to the printed programme: two of the papers, a case study and a theoretical presentation, could not be presented. These were:

- Restoration and rehabilitation of Palacio Davalos for the public library of the state of Guadalajara, Spain - JOAQUIN BAU MIQUEL (Ministerio de Cultura, Spain)
- Transforming building renovation to exceed user expectation - PATRICIA ALBANESE and PETER GENOVESE (Global Library Consulting, Rochester, USA)

The programme was therefore changed to include two presentations:

- A tale of two libraries - JOHN PATKAU (Patkau Architects, Vancouver, Canada)
- Toronto Public Library case studies - ANNE BAILEY (Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Canada)

... followed by short presentations on current issues in library design and a panel discussion, chaired by the Section Secretary, Karen Latimer. Issues covered included what constitutes the wow factor, particular challenges of renovation as opposed to new build projects, the balance between usefulness and aesthetics in public architecture, and a short overview on the ongoing UMKC (University of Missouri Kansas City) library robot project. The session was opened to the audience who addressed questions to the panel of experts including John Patkau, Anne Bailey, Janine Schmidt, Sharon Bostick and Anders Dahlgren.

A tale of two libraries

JOHN PATKAU (Patkau Architects, Vancouver, Canada)

Powerpoint accessible at : <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/Programme2008.htm>

The keynote presentation made by John Patkau from Patkau Architects, Vancouver, Canada, described two of his practice's library building projects: the new Grande Bibliothèque du Québec in Montreal, Canada, and an extension and renovation of the Winnipeg Public Library in Winnipeg, Canada. Patkau Architects have 30 years experience of working in the US and Canada and the Grande Bibliothèque du Québec and the Winnipeg Public Library were their two most recent large public library projects and the paper focused on aspects of designing this type of library. At the end of the presentation, John Patkau highlighted the major characteristics of such libraries, and identified the key issues in designing them.

The following part of the report is detailed since the presentation was based on photographs and graphics and there is no written paper.

John Patkau opened by commenting on photographs, sections and elevations of The **Grande Bibliothèque du Québec** in Montreal, Canada. He discussed the library and its two components: the general collection and the special collection, each of them designed in accordance with public expectations and behaviour and the specific needs of the collections. As shown on the photographs, after entering the great hall through one of its four entrances – one for each side of the library – the user can choose between several routes: he or she can go directly to the heart of the library (the special collections) or move up and down through five levels into more open spaces (the general collection, the children’s collection, the administration offices). The general collection is organized as a largely public space, accessible in numerous ways with the reading areas next to the large windows and surrounding the book collection; whereas the special collection is designed with a more traditional and private layout with the readers seated at the centre of the room surrounded by the collections.

Circulation is varied: the corridors, stairs and lifts follow the spiralling design of the reading spaces and storage areas. The routes were designed in order to reduce circulation for both users and staff: open and well-lit spaces combined with optimum circulation are a key element in large public libraries. The circulation system design was influenced by the Phoenix library.

John Patkau commented on the layering of buildings, the play on light and solidity emphasized by the use of glass, copper and wooden materials inside and outside the building as well as by the light-filled entrance area with an inner garden and below ground area.

He then highlighted access and security issues. This project embodies the contradictory requirements of access and security in public libraries, since this library needed to be open on to the street but also accessible from the underground streets filled with shops, restaurants and services where a great part of urban life takes place, especially in winter. John Patkau stressed the danger of the library breaking up the urban connectivity. He showed some pictures taken from outside the building to illustrate the way they had integrated access to the library into the urban environment and incorporated the urban cultural elements (e.g. the very lively students’ district and the booksellers or *bouquinistes* sited in the nearby street). He indicated that the library building itself was part of the urban connectivity – the library is secure and the collections are perfectly safe, but some other spaces are dedicated to a more open circulation bringing cultural life into the building, and connecting to the street life by providing meeting rooms, cafés, shops, an auditorium etc. One of the key issues in designing this large public library was to integrate into the life of the community.

Some links

- http://www.banq.qc.ca/documents/a_propos_banq/nos_publications/nos_publications_a_z/Here_is_your_Grande_Bibliotheque.pdf
- http://www.banq.qc.ca/portal/dt/a_propos_banq/renseignements_generaux/grande_bibliotheque/Plan_etages/plan_etages.jsp?bnq_langue=en

The Winnipeg Public Libray was a renovation and extension project. The former library, as illustrated, was built over and partially enveloped by the extension. The aims were to enlarge the spaces and to open the building out into the gardens and surrounding landscape and to bring natural light and views to the interior spaces.

The new spaces were connected to the old ones, and a large hall was created by transforming the existing one so that it connected the library entrance to the footbridges that people use to move around the city because of the climate, especially in wintertime. The hall has been enlarged and extended and its glass façade links the library to the surrounding gardens. The

fact that this was an extension and not a new building is important since the trees were already established; the architects didn't have to create a new garden, but the aim was to integrate the renovated library into the existing mature landscape.

The reading rooms and the circulation corridors, stairs and lifts have been entirely removed from the original building and located in the new extension: as a result the users can read in, and walk through, naturally lit spaces, and have a nice view.

John Patkau commented on the photographs of the Winnipeg project and then turned to the conclusion of his speech, underlining nine key issues for designing large public libraries pointing out that this involves reflecting on the present, future and above all the evolution of libraries, and their place and role within the urban environment.

Toronto Public Library case studies

ANNE BAILEY (Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Canada)

Paper and presentation powerpoint accessible at :

<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla74/Programme2008.htm>

Anne Bailey from the Toronto Public Library in Toronto, Canada, presented and described renovation projects for three local and community libraries that are branches of the Toronto Public Library. She presented the budget issues and development of the projects, and stressed the importance of getting community feedback on the existing buildings that were to be renovated.

Her presentation focused on three buildings that had been renovated one after the other. She highlighted the concerns of the communities, their affection for the old buildings and expectations for the renovated ones, and described the process, the budget issues and the key elements of each of the buildings that were preserved or modified.

Anne Bailey also discussed the reactions of the public after the renovations and the importance of such projects for the libraries themselves but also and above all for the public and for future funding as well as to ensure that local authorities pay closer attention to the libraries and their activities.

The powerpoint complemented the presentation by showing the old and renovated spaces, entrances, circulation areas, views, materials, and the "wows", resulting from the completed project or from some well-thought out high quality details that had a special meaning for the local community or were of importance to the local authorities. Anne Bailey commented on the photographs to help the audience put them in context.

She concluded by stressing the importance of keeping funding organisations aware of the project, the ongoing works, the effect of the new buildings on the use made of the library and on the improvement of its services. She advised the audience to be flexible during the project because of the possible need for project and /or budget modifications.

Open forum on the role of the "wow factor" in library design issues, with a panel of speakers

Karen Latimer, Secretary of the Section, chaired the open forum. She reminded delegates that they could order copies of the *IFLA Library Building Guidelines* before going on to highlight some of the key issues in renovating a building for library use rather than embarking on a new

build project, referring to issues associated with working within limitations of existing structures, the location, landmark building, historic buildings legislation, fundraising, and community and local involvement. She stressed that much can be achieved with little funding and a lot of imagination.

She then introduced the panel of experts which included the two speakers and three Standing Committee members with recent experience of library planning and invited them to make three brief presentations before opening the discussion to the floor.

- The wow factor – JANINE SCHMIDT (McGill University Library, Montreal, Canada)
Janine Schmidt outlined various meanings of "wow", including "incroyable" and "fabelhaft", and some of the feelings - awe, inspiration, amazement, surprise, sheer impact and wonder - created by library buildings with "wow". She showed photographs of different library interiors and exteriors to explore the concept. "Wow", like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Clients, architects, potential donors, funding authorities and librarians all have differing perspectives. Various aspects of library buildings contribute to "wow". An imposing or unusual exterior appearance, a majestic entry, an attractive internal layout, the use of bright colours, exploitation of natural light, innovative equipment, well-designed furniture, outstanding use of new materials e.g. silk fabrics for walls or glass dividers, appealing decorations, well-matched balance of the various features, appropriate marrying of form and function, impressive aesthetic features and outstanding utility are but some of the characteristics of library buildings which cause us all to say "wow"! In response to questions, it was highlighted that it was often the "wow" factor which persuaded political and funding authorities to initiate and support a building project, whether it be a new building, a renovation or a restoration.

- The balance issue between usefulness and aesthetics in public architecture – ANDERS DAHLGREN (Library Planning Associates)
Anders Dahlgren, a library planning consultant, asserted that every building must have something that makes it a "special place". The building must give life and soul to its neighbourhood, to the community where it is located and of which it is a vital part. He pointed out certain building types that often employ a "wow" factor in their design. Sacred architecture in churches and places of worship is typically intended to inspire those who visit. Increasingly, a "wow" factor is found in museum design -- such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or Santiago Calatrava's expansion of the Milwaukee Art Museum. These buildings are meant to impress the visitor and to arouse his or her admiration.

Good architecture and especially good public architecture (i.e. spaces that are shared by communities like schools, libraries, stations, post offices, universities etc) should inspire the public that uses them. Although such structures may be large and elegant, there must be something more. Anders Dahlgren used examples of buildings which aroused the admiration and fascination of the public such as the white east wing of the National Gallery in Washington DC, where a barrier had to be erected in order to stop the public damaging the white wall by constantly touching it. He also mentioned the effect that a view from a building can have such as the view over the Michigan Lake from the Milwaukee Museum of Art. Provoking such feelings is a worthy aim for our public buildings.

Anders Dahlgren concluded his brief talk by analysing the pros and cons of the St Jean Baptist Library which is located inside St Mathew's church in Quebec City and invited the

audience to consider these issues and draw their own conclusions about what it is that makes a library special.

- A Robot in the Library: Increased Efficiency, Maximized “Wow” – SHARON BOSTICK (University of Missouri Kansas City)

Sharon Bostick gave a short overview of the expansion project at the University of Missouri Kansas City. Part of this project is an onsite Automated Storage and Retrieval System, which is a robot that provides high density storage for books and other items. The items are then retrieved via the online catalog, a process that takes about five minutes. The Robot, as they call it, not only releases valuable space to use for collaborative learning and study, it is also an architectural feature in its own right. More information can be found on their building expansion website: <http://library.umkc.edu/newmnl>.

Questions from the audience to the panel

How do you convince funders to invest in the wow factor?

Can you tell us about managing renovations when the building or some parts of it are listed as of historic importance?

Discussion about the renovation of ‘sanctified’ spaces and reaction of the public

Potential influence of the wow factor in an architecture competition

In closing the session the Chairman drew delegates’ attention to:

- A publication by the Netherlands National Library in collaboration with the section
- The satellite meeting in Turin to be held before next year’s conference
- The next open session in Milan 2009 which would take as its theme designing library spaces for children and young adults.