Building the information frontier: new libraries
Edited by Logan T. Ludwig

CONTENTS

Introduction
Logan T. Ludwig

Tomorrow's library: will it all be infrastructure?
Logan T. Ludwig

From brick face to cyberspace
Lucretia W. McClure

The building-planning process: tips from the UMAB experience
Frieda O. Weise and M. J. Tooey

Ergonomics in the electronic library
Patricia L. Thibodeau and Steven J. Melamut

A new hospital library: a marketing opportunity
Mary Edith Walker

Technical scale and high-level detail: Vanderbilt’s award-winning Eskind Biomedical Library
T. Mark Hodges

Building a digital library for the health sciences: information space complementing information place
Richard E. Lucier

An architect’s perspective on contemporary academic library design
Steven M. Foote
INTRODUCTION

Technology has produced a time of great challenges and momentous opportunities; it has also produced a time of trepidation, anticipation, anxiety, and dread. The library’s mission is not the same as it was in Pergamum and Alexandria or as it will be tomorrow. The articles in this Bulletin “Building the Information Frontier” symposium illustrate practical and enlightened responses to major environmental changes encouraged by new technologies and new information management challenges associated with redefining existing physical space and adjusting to rapidly altering service models. They also describe the process needed to achieve an effective and efficient building design without the benefit of accumulated knowledge applicable to the current library environment and to cope with the coexistence of print collections and electronic resources.

The definition of the library as a place has changed over time and continues to evolve. Certainly, any definition of the library as simply a collection of books and a place to study is too narrow in an age of electronic information transfer and distance learning. As one building symposium author points out, libraries have been an integral part of our culture in all ages, sometimes responding to change and at other times creating change.

The meaning of the library within our culture and to any given institution has also changed. In some ways, libraries in the United States are by-products of the United States’ manifest-destiny thinking. The library has always had a strong symbolic meaning to the academic community. The library’s location and appearance also tend to be communal in nature, which may offer one explanation for the distributed decision-making process often employed in its design and why institutions frequently attempt to kill multiple birds with one building stone. Still, a few individualists, capitalists, and great thinkers have influenced library design.

Few people outside the library field realize how complex a library is. Even librarians who may not have been involved in a new building project may not realize the many aspects of the physical building that will affect the building’s success for both staff and user. Intelligent preplanning research for new library buildings should include, in addition to reading, visits to other buildings, particularly new or recently completed buildings of similar size. However, when evaluating a new facility, one must look beyond the handsome facade and new furniture to the details that make up the total project.

Reengineering a library at a time when future library functions can be defined with less certainty is not easy, and there is no one way to reengineer. As evidenced by the Annette and Irwin Eskind Biomedical Library, the University of California at San Francisco Biomedical Library, and the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Library, each institution has its own particular situation that must be accommodated. Reengineering is interactive, and mistakes will occur; but attention to design flexibility helps to keep what works and to abandon the rest.

The missions of libraries and of other campus departments that may have once been viewed as dissimilar are becoming inextricably intertwined in a stressful, increasingly competitive, complex, and knowledge-intensive world. New flexible organizational structures and building structures are required that can respond to a rapidly changing environment. The transition will not be smooth, because there are cultural differences, traditions, and mistrust between organizations to overcome. If libraries of the twenty-first century were those of monuments and places set apart, libraries of the twenty-first century need to be laced with innovation and collaboration. Their nature may not be so clear to us now, but their necessity is.

Logan T. Ludwig, Ph.D.
Associate Editor, Building Projects Bulletin of the Medical Library Association
Director, Medical Center Library / Media Design & Development

Loyola University of Chicago
2160 South First Avenue
Maywood, Illinois 60153