

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY SPACE

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

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ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND
ORGANIZATION VOLUME 36

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY SPACE

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2017

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78635-270-5

ISSN: 0732-0671 (Series)



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PREFACE: THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY SPACE

When online resources started becoming prevalent in the 1990s, some predicted that people would stop coming to libraries. They couldn't have been more wrong! Libraries have transformed their foci from being repositories for materials into thriving centers for their communities where people gather to learn, collaborate, and create. On academic campuses materials are being transferred to storage so that library spaces may be repurposed for services and learning. Students and faculty have the opportunity to collaborate in groups with technology-enhanced spaces or study in a quiet and reflective atmosphere. They not only have the means to create traditional written work but also media productions and 3D objects. Many libraries also offer GIS and data visualization laboratories. In addition, libraries partner on their campuses to provide spaces for all types of events.

Repurposing space is not just a matter of design, renovation, building, and furniture purchase. It is important to assess the needs of our users before making decisions and then conduct follow-up evaluation to see if the innovations are making a positive difference. These new services require different types of expertise which means training for staff and seeking these skills in new hires. Making these changes has implications for organizational structures and requires nimbleness and forward-thinking strategic planning. It is also essential to keep the lines of communication open so that transitions are as smooth as possible.

The chapters in this book address all of these issues. They offer a useful mix of theory and practical applications along with case studies of innovative projects and programs that brought new, cutting edge services to their communities. They also provide a vision for how libraries will look and operate in the future.

The volume begins with pieces that provide theoretical frameworks. In the chapter titled "The Right Place at the Right Time: Creative Spaces in Libraries," Eric D. M. Johnson provides an overview and history of the role of libraries in providing spaces and services for patrons to create all kinds of projects from videos to 3D objects. He also provides background on the importance of these creative skills in the 21st century and how

libraries help patrons gain them along with examples from his library at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Most of the chapters focus on academic libraries. In the chapter “The Library as Safe Space,” Rachel Wexelbaum reminds us that all libraries serve as safe places for diverse patrons with a wide variety of needs. She examines important documents such as the Codes of Ethics from both the American Library Association and International Federation of Library Associations and how they changed over time to reflect societal norms. These codes, however, do not address spaces specifically; thus, Wexelbaum offers recommendations on how libraries can provide safe spaces for their communities.

Kris Johnson introduces us to the concepts of service design in her chapter “Understanding and Embracing Service Design Principles in Creating Effective Library Spaces and Services” and applies them to libraries. She provides a history and literature review of service design and how the principles evolved to encompass a broad-ranging approach to planning for spaces and services. She also includes useful resources and suggestions on how libraries can utilize service design.

The next chapter, “Socially Constructing Library as Place and Space,” provides both theory and practical applications. Ardis Hanson and John Abresch present the concept of libraries becoming the “third space” for people and offer methods for assessing and planning for these spaces. They then offer a case study from their libraries at the University of South Florida with examples of how they developed these spaces for the USF campuses.

The volume then moves into case studies illustrating how libraries reconfigured space due to changing needs and external forces. In “This Space Wanted: How Four Academic Medical Libraries and One Joint Storage Facility Converted Libraries from Materials Warehouses to Usable Spaces,” librarians from each institution collaborated to remove thousands of low-use print volumes from their libraries in Texas and move them to storage. In doing so, they gained space needed for services and learning and reduced much duplication among their libraries.

In “‘From Library as Place’ to ‘Library as Platform:’ Redesigning the 21st Century Academic Library,” several librarians from the Mann Library at Cornell University assert that the library has become a central location for users to connect, learn from each other and create new works. These functions require not only new spaces but also reframed organizational structures and services. The authors describe several examples from their library where they made innovations to provide such platforms.

“Library Spaces Redefined: A Case Study at a Liberal Arts College” from librarians at St. Olaf College brings an important perspective from a smaller academic library. After establishing strategic guiding principles to respond to changes in higher education they examined services in their main library. The results included reorganizing public services to create a “learning hub” and establishing new digital and media services. They also thoroughly assessed the resources and services in their special collections and made improvements based on the evidence.

Many academic libraries have merged their reference and circulation service desks. Heather Groves Hannan in “Great Expectations: (Re)Design Motivator for Merging Traffic at the Service Desk” offers background on why libraries decide to merge and how they engage in the process. She also describes the steps at George Mason University when they evolved to the “one stop” service point concept at their four libraries.

Quiet and reflective study space is still very important for college students. Christy Goodnight and Eric Jeitner discuss this need in “Sending Out an SOS: Being Mindful of Students’ Need for Quiet Study Space.” At Stockton University, assessments indicated that their students were dissatisfied with the library’s quiet study areas. In response, they repurposed the area that housed current periodicals into a quiet space. It was very well-received by students.

Academic libraries often collaborate with partners on their campuses to develop new services in the library building. In “The Learning Theater: A Library Space to be Re-Designed by Patrons,” we learn how librarians at Teachers College at Columbia University responded to the need on their campus for space for workshops, programming, classes and other events. They created the Learning Theatre, a very flexible space with advanced lighting, audio, video, and data points to be used by offices and faculty for a wide variety of programming.

In “A Space for Everyone and Everyone in the Space: Re-designing Existing Library Space to Inspire Collaboration,” M. Catherine Hirschbiel and Julie Petzold discuss how they repurposed newly available space at Emerson College Library. They conducted a variety of assessments, including a Participatory Design Workshop, to learn what the entire campus community desired in a renovated space. Based on input they developed the CoLab which is a flexible study space and also often used for many student, campus and library events.

The Georgia Tech Library is undergoing a “Library Next” initiative that will completely transform their spaces and services. Emy N. Decker and Bruce Henson report on “The Library Store: A New Place and Space

within the Georgia Tech Library” which is part of this project. After examining different models, engaging a consultant and holding focus groups they developed the Store which will offer multiple services with roving staff rather than a traditional service desk.

Sometimes change occurs due to natural disasters. At the University of New Mexico, the library suffered several disasters including a fire and two floods. Their response was to employ the Building Back Better concept to their library. In “Building Back Better Libraries: Improving Planning Amidst Disasters,” their librarians provide background on this concept and how they applied and used the opportunity to improve their services.

The final chapter focuses on using assessment to develop library spaces, most particularly, developing personas. Holt Zaugg, in “Using Persona Descriptions to Inform Library Space Design,” provides an overview of the persona method and how they applied the method at Brigham Young University. They used the information to design and purchase furniture for several new study spaces and develop a creativity, innovation and design lab.

The Future of Library Space is an important contribution to the literature on how libraries are transforming their buildings, resources, and organizations in order to bring trendsetting services to their constituencies. It will stand for some time as an essential resource for not only librarians but also the campuses and communities they serve.

Kathryn Moore Crowe
Editor