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# Introduction

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The history of information and communication technology (ICT)—from prehistoric cave paintings and smoke signals to television and the Internet—shows that innovations rarely consign established technologies to oblivion immediately. The past pattern of development and use of technologies is one of overlap (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 6). It is no surprise, therefore, that oral culture, manuscript writing, print, film, radio, and television have not only survived into the digital age but have adapted to, and been enhanced by, digital technology. Another ICT that has negotiated the digital age—with some flair it has to be said—is the library building. In all kinds of ways the physical library has embraced the computer. The era of the hybrid library has arrived. The marriage of the traditional library to the “library without walls” is progressing happily, it seems, even if die-hards in each camp remain: those who regard the computer with suspicion; and those who see the future of library provision as purely digital. Throughout history, library buildings have adapted to society’s beliefs, precepts, and aspirations. This adaptability has also been evident in the digital age. Library domains have been rebranded—as idea stores, learning cafés, discovery centers, media spaces, and learning resource centers, to give just a few examples. Further, while it is true that the emergence and increasing sophistication of digital ICTs has sharply increased fears of a library- and print-culture Armageddon, the physical library building has accommodated, with some success, the proliferation of virtual technologies (Bahr, 2000). Indeed, the computer has in many respects enhanced the operations of the traditional library, bestowing upon it a new flexibility, not least in terms of greater opportunities and creativity in the organization of physical space, as materials are miniaturized and digitized (Pomerantz & Marchionini, 2007; Taylor, 1995; Webb, 2000).

The physical library refuses to go away. Indeed, in the past twenty years there has been a renaissance in library building (Mittler, 2004), including a great deal of sympathetic and inventive library renovation (Martin, 2003). The explosion of digital technology has been accompanied by a large-scale investment in the physical library, in new and renovated library spaces “that delight” (Sannwald, 2006). The radical renewal of library services has not been at the expense of physical spaces where access can be gained to physical formats as well as cyberspace. When the social power of the computer first became apparent in the 1960s, for many the survival of the traditional library appeared mortally threatened. Writing in the UK’s *Times* newspaper in 1970, Peter Harvard-Williams, Librarian of Queen’s University Belfast, predicted that partly due to the growth of “computers, tele-terminals, and more up-to-date forms of communication,” there would be “an all-out attack” on libraries in the next ten years; libraries, he warned, would become simply “posting stations” where information is merely passed on. Harvard-Williams was wrong in his prediction.

Notwithstanding the optimism that surrounded the fresh, modern library styles of the 1960s, not since the explosion in library provision around a century ago—in this regard, and especially in the public library context, the gifts of Andrew Carnegie and other philanthropists were critical—has interest in library design been so high. This issue of *Library Trends* seeks to tap the enthusiasm we have recently been seeing for debate about, and innovation in, library design (we use the word *design* because it connotes coverage of both architecture and interior design). Furthermore, this issue adds to the growing body of work on the *history* of library design. In contributions that address both the current scene and historical subjects, attention is paid to the proposition that buildings are rooted in society, that built forms are informed by social forms (King, 1980; Markus, 1993). We thus acknowledge the inventive methodologies that have begun to emerge in the interpretation of current and past library design where, complementary to written sources, observation of the material culture of the library is encouraged and where inferential evidence is freely admitted.<sup>1</sup>

Over the decades *Library Trends* has reported the response of libraries to technological developments and shifting patron demands in terms of changes to the library built-form. In addition to the occasional articles that have addressed—whether in whole or in part—the physical library environment (e.g., Allen, 1976; Peterson, 1972; Weber, 1969), *Library Trends* has periodically devoted an entire issue to the topic. It is interesting to examine previous issues of *Library Trends* that have reflected on the changing ideals of library planning, architecture, and design. As tertiary education mushroomed in the 1960s, the subject of university library buildings found its way into the journal (Weber, 1969). In the 1960s, and for a number of years following, library planning was dominated by “modular” thinking, keywords associated with this concept being “flex-

ibility,” “functionality,” and “modularity.” At the same time there was great interest in developing standards for buildings, shelving, materials, bibliography, and staff. In the 1970s and 1980s, *Library Trends* thus published issues on library standards (Hirsch, 1972; Weech, 1982). Terry Weech’s (1982) issue gave a comprehensive overview of standards for various types of libraries—including college, university, public, and state—and also covered Canadian, British, and international standards. In a 1997 issue of *Library Trends*, Herbert Goldhor and colleagues, in the wake of the advent of the World Wide Web, commented on the effect this and other nonbook formats was having, and was likely to have, on libraries, including their built form. They did this in the context of the report on libraries in the digital age, *Buildings, Books, and Bytes* (1996), funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and undertaken by the Benton Foundation.

The whole of the fall 1987 issue of *Library Trends*, edited by Anders Dahlgren, was devoted to the subject of library buildings. Articles covered various library types as well as topics such as media facilities, lighting, environmental design, the reuse of library space, and the library building of tomorrow (Dahlgren, 1987b). In his introduction, the editor emphasized the importance of the radically new information technology that was emerging at the time: “Obviously, the introduction of computer technology has changed the way we deliver library services and the facilities we create to house those services. Automated equipment imposes specific electrical and environmental demands on our library buildings” (Dahlgren, 1987a, pp. 261–262). Environmental design, a relatively new topic at the time, was discussed by Lamar Veatch (1987) in connection with environmental psychology, personal and social space, and ergonomics. The final article was by Richard Waters (1987) who speculated about what American society, public libraries, and their buildings would be like in the year 2000. By this time, he believed, society would have undergone radical change. For example, the dominance of the typical American “nuclear family” would have become a thing of the past. Radical change would also have been experienced in the world of public libraries. Reference books would have faded away, and would have been replaced by electronic books. Indeed, given the growing influence of electronic communication, Waters was prompted to ask: “Will there be a future for the library?” Despite the changing library environment, his answer was in fact very optimistic. For example, the *public* library, he believed, would remain an important physical place for social interaction. “The human factor is the real future of libraries, librarians, librarianship,” he argued confidently (Waters, 1987, p. 459). At the end of his article he pays an imaginary visit to a small community library of the future, a place replete with computers but also vibrant with people and activities; and at the end of his visit he notes that: “As you turn to leave, you become aware that you have just been in a true learning environment, a true community center. You are aware that here,

in this small building, you could access the whole of man's knowledge, and that no one would question you as to why or what you were doing, and it is such good feeling" (p. 473).

Waters' confidence, expressed nearly a quarter of a century ago, in the future of the library as a physical social setting for personal emancipation and improvement is as true today as it was then (Goulding, 2005). The perception of the library—all kinds of library—as "place" is an historic, enduring, and resilient one (Buschman & Leckie, 2007). Popular libraries have come to accord with Oldenburg's (1999) concept of the "third place"—a place distinct from the other two main "sites" of human existence, namely work and home. They have strengthened their traditional role as "hangout" institution, alongside other such neutral and levelling institutions as the coffee shop, bookstore, and community center; and this has been reflected in a flood of exciting new designs. Spectacular new libraries have helped rejuvenate the downtown areas of major cities, from Seattle and Vancouver in North America, to Amsterdam and Vienna in Europe, and Shanghai in China (Crosbie, 2003, pp. 158–161; Jianzhong, 2000; Jo Conen & Company, n.d.; *Main City Library Vienna*, 2005; Mattern, 2007a). As economies around the world have reacted to the shift away from manual labor and toward knowledge work, institutions of higher education have invested heavily in new library premises. Academic library environments have become more relaxed, in response to mushrooming and more diverse student populations around the world (Bazillon & Braun, 2001; Crosbie & Hickie, 2001; Edwards, 2000). Partly through architectural expression, national libraries have signalled their desire to shift away from an esoteric, narrowly academic posture: spectacular, ambitious, and, in some cases, controversial new designs for national libraries have appeared in places like Copenhagen, Denmark; London, UK; Paris, France; Frankfurt Am Main, Germany; Alexandria, Egypt; and Astana, Kazakhstan (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, 1996; Carr, 2000; Crosbie, 2003, pp. 12–15; Dawson, 1998; Kadragic, 2010; Renoult, 2000; Royal Library Copenhagen, 2009; Stonehouse & Stromberg, 2004; Wilson, 1998).

In parallel with such projects, an extensive literature on the subject of library design has been generated, only an indicative sample of which can be noted here.<sup>2</sup> Online databases of new library designs and design advice have been constructed.<sup>3</sup> International organizations have been active in the promotion of library design.<sup>4</sup> A large number of studies on library design have been historical in nature, including a number that have attempted to link the present to the past—again, there is room for only a small selection to be noted here.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, many of these historical studies have addressed the "commonplace" library as opposed to the great libraries of state, church, and university. This is in keeping with the shift in architectural history away from the study of structures as works of art, toward the study of them as socially constructed texts. Such a

methodology invites design histories of “everyday” building types; for example, shopping arcades, social housing, workhouses, funerary structures, coffee shops—and, indeed, libraries.<sup>6</sup>

This issue of *Library Trends* builds on this burgeoning body of literature. Both the geographical reach represented by the sum of the articles and the range of libraries covered is extensive. Whereas other issues of the journal devoted to library planning, standards, and design have focused on the present and the future, this issue, recognizing the importance of the past in understanding the present, links the present to the past. The arrangement of the articles into three parts—the past; past and present; and the present—reflects this. Purely historical articles are offered by Lucy Gwynn, Simon Pepper, and Alistair Black; as well as by Nan Dahlkild who, although providing an historical overview of library design that stretches from the Enlightenment into the present, is overwhelmingly concerned with historical subjects. The middle set of articles, by Karen Latimer, Brock Peoples, and Pentti Mehtonen, pay distinct attention to past *and* present (in which is included the recent past). The third group of articles, by Hellen Niegaard, Brian Edwards, John Moorman, and Fred Schlipf are focused exclusively on issues facing library designers today and the work designers are undertaking in response to these.

## NOTES

1. Good examples of the employment of this methodology, which include approaches that might be described as “semiotic,” are: Kelman (2001); Mattern (2007a); Mattern (2007b); Thomas (1996); Wagner (1992). Good examples of historical studies in this context are: Black, Pepper, and Bagshaw (2009); Dahlkild (2009); Knight (2009); Mak (2007); Manguel (2006); Van Slyck (1995); Van Slyck (2007). On inferential evidence in architectural history, see Groat and Wang (2002, p. 157).
2. Studies, other than those already cited in the text, which have examined recent projects include: Arets (2005); Crosbie (2003); Dewe (2006); Dewe (2007); *Exhibition of Drawings* (1993); Futagawa (2006); Harrington (2001); Hastings (2008); Höffer (2005); Hurt and Findley (2010); Kahn (2009); Kito (1995); Larson (2010); Lushington (2008); McCabe (2000); McCabe and Kennedy (2003); Monié, Modigh, and Ehlin (1990); Netherlands Architecture Institute (2010); Niegaard, Lauridsen, and Schulz (2009); Romero (2008); Smith and Flannery (2007); Thorhauge (2002).
3. The United Kingdom’s Designing Libraries database, begun in 2004 with funding from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport’s *Framework for the Future* program, is a good example in this regard. It was initiated by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC), in association with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), with the aim of obtaining best practice in library design. It was made a working reality by the Department of Information Studies, University of Aberystwyth, the product of their work being the Designing Libraries website: <http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk>.
4. The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has a very active Library Buildings and Equipment Section, which sponsors papers, meetings, and publications. The Sections’ outputs include: Bisbrouck, et al. (2004); Cranfield (2011); and Latimer and Niegaard (2007). Similarly, the Architectural Group of LIBER, the Association of European Research Libraries, is a body that brings together architects and librarians from around Europe, usually every two years, for a major seminar; and publications flow from these events: see, for example, Mittler (2004).

5. Historical studies, other than those already cited in these notes, include: Barber (1995); Beeson (2006); Benidt (1984); Breisch (1997); Byard (2008); Brown (1989); Buschman and Leckie (2007); Colvin (1995); Dahlkild (2002); Dahlkild (2005); Dahlkild (2010); Dierickx (1996); Graham (1998); Grimes (1998); Jones (1997); Kaser (1997); Oehlerts (1991); Pepper (2006); Port (2006); Sherriff (2005); Van Slyck (2004). For a selective coverage of less recent literature on the history of library design, see Allen (1987). Studies linking past and present include: Bieri and Fuchs (2001); Brawn (1996); Cranfield (2011); Edwards (2009); Garrett (2004); Hoogstraten (2007); *Library Builders* (1997).
6. In these regards, see Curl (2002) on funerary and commemorative structures; Hess (1985) on the postwar coffee shop; MacKeith (1986) on the shopping arcade; Morrison (1999) on the workhouse in England; and Swenarton (1981) on social housing. These historical studies are complemented by the increasing inclination to study contemporary "everyday" architecture and design, as in the case of the design of the public toilet (Schuster, 2005); mass entertainment, from the theme park to the shopping mall (Herwig & Holzherr, 2006); the fast-food restaurant (Langdon, 1986); a whole array of vernacular structures in the American MidWest (Lanier & Herman, 1997); and of spaces for children (Gutman & de Coninck-Smith, 2008).

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