

## Book Review:



### *Creating the High-Functioning Library Space: Expert Advice from Librarians, Architects, and Designers*

Marta Mestrovic Deyrup, Editor.  
Santa Barbara, California: Libraries Unlimited, 2017.  
158 pp. \$70. ISBN 978-1-4408-4058-6

If you have ever been part of a building project and sat around a table of administrators, designers and contractors who have vision and expertise in the project you are about to embrace, then this book will have a familiar feel. Reading this book gives you the excitement of what will come in the form of a new building, renovation or design, along with the humility of knowing that you need these experts at the table to make the project successful.

The thirteen chapters in this book are written by experienced practitioners in the field with different expertise and backgrounds, all related to designing spaces in libraries. The book is written to provide a practical foundation for planning a large-scale project such as an expansion, major renovation or new building from scratch. It has been edited to provide answers to not only individual topics as needed but also combines themes into helpful advice answering anticipated questions within the process.

In my realm of experience, which has been to coordinate multiple renovation projects and sit at the table with these types of experts for planning purposes, I find a very unique trend flowing in this book. That is, that all types of libraries

form a community with a vision for how their spaces are perceived and how those spaces support a profession of information providers. I found that this book collectively addressed those professional concerns and applied problem solving techniques that could be shared by all.

Starting with the introduction, by Henry Myerberg, the importance of space and its influence on what librarians do and how stakeholders interact, becomes a driving mantra for the succeeding chapters. And Myerberg even provides the formula for success in advocating for organizations to support and develop the means and investment for libraries to have proper spaces. This carries forward in the first chapter which outlines the history of library design and provides justification for this investment in planning early in modern society.

The next two chapters provide detailed consideration for the process of turning a vision for space into those that stakeholders will need, use and support. Whether it is a new building or a renovation to update or expand existing facilities, the processes taken and the stakeholder buy-in become critical factors for ensuring successful development of a vision that can then be presented to design professionals and experts to apply a realistic scope and set of standards to move forward with the planning.

Chapters 4 and 5 take you through this process of bringing into the project the professional services needed to turn the vision into reality. The authors explain in detail how the execution of planning and selecting these services are critical to stakeholder satisfaction and ultimately the success of the project. For those of you who are new to renovation projects, these chapters are also very important in helping understand what to expect, especially once services are engaged and before any type of construction gets started.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 provide a smart view of how selecting a contractor who relates to your priorities makes a huge difference. Understanding the programming needs of the space is also critical at this stage; it is easier to change a plan than move a wall once it's built. These authors share details and issues not always thought of, in order to help readers understand the relationship between building the space and using the space once it is done. That includes how the space is designed and what is expected to go into the space once it is finished; all of this impacts how efficient the space will function in the future.

Today's social culture calls for us to be aware of environmental issues and the impact our buildings and functionality has on environmental concerns. Chapter 9 is on sustainable design and provides excellent details on requirements, but also sustainability desires that should be within any projects consideration. The list of resources from this chapter is extremely useful in tracking detailed analysis

of sources related to legal and civil requirements and expectations of sustainability issues.

Chapters 10 and 11 address fundamental issues of lighting and technology. The authors not only present a holistic view of how these areas are fundamental, but also how they are likely to change in the future as evidenced by the changing nature of libraries we have already seen in the more recent past. And while they cannot predict the future, they do speak to the need to be flexible in designing for unknown advances in technology going forward.

The final two chapters deal with special areas and should not be overlooked, even if you don't have the immediate need. Chapter 12's focus on security concerns, including special collections areas, is useful and thought-provoking for decision making. Chapter 13's view of remote storage options is also on point and can be useful if such decisions are forthcoming. These topics often are now considered thoroughly and require additional effort later so it is a bonus to have them included.

Collectively, this edited monograph provides a strong and clear path to designing and ultimately building new and/or renewed spaces and gives the reader expert advice on what to expect and how to handle the process and a variety of important decisions that will need to be made. The editor has done a great job of weaving these multiple voices into a comprehensive series of instructions and "what ifs" for ensuring projects are completed properly and honors the intention of the stakeholders. Each chapter is well written, some with illustrations and graphs, and provides a set of guidelines that can prove useful and reliable in the building process. The book is also well resourced for additional details if needed.

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