

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., CEFP, AIA

**B**ecause you can find them everywhere, this column is dedicated to libraries and planning for libraries and other similar, central functions.

### PLANNING OPTIMAL LIBRARY SPACES: PRINCIPLES, PROCESSES, AND PRACTICES

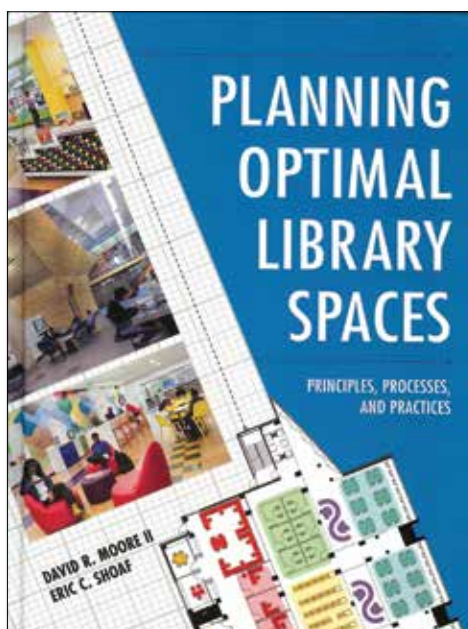
David R. Moore II and Eric C. Shoaf, Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 196 pages hardcover, \$85; Kindle, \$80.50

My many years in higher education facilities have exposed me to dozens of different libraries, but more importantly, they have showed me the significance of a library's transformation from a repository for books to an effective learning center. When asked to describe a high-quality college or university library, older facilities officers may reference a building like the Firestone Library at Princeton, the Yale University Library, or many other university libraries that mimic these icons.

They are large structures of stone, brick, and wood constructed as temples to the written word. Their high, vaulted ceilings span reading rooms furnished with heavy wooden tables and chairs. It was once difficult to be quiet in these spaces because of their hard surfaces and enduring echoes. The reading rooms were designed to invoke the character of a cathedral, to inspire awe and majesty. Around these large reading rooms were arranged various spaces designed to hold and preserve the thousands of volumes that would be studied in these "temples to the book."

#### STORING BOOKS

The bulk of library space was allocated to the storage and reading of books, neatly arranged in row upon row of bookcases and tables. In some cases, a variety of storage systems were developed. Dedicated stacks for books integrated the shelving



system with the structure that held that system. These were low-ceilinged spaces with narrow aisles between bookcases, and narrow stairs squeezed into the shelving units. Take away the stacks and you had a big room, several stories tall. In some cases, the stacks were isolated from the public, as in the main New York Public Library. Runners would receive requests for books, diving into the stacks to retrieve the requested book that they located based on a detailed classification system (Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress). This system of

isolating books from the public and maintaining a "sacred" reading room to study them did highlight the value of information, but also turned the library, which was often at the center of the campus or community, into a very formal setting.

After World War II, readers saw the entrance of technology with storage of microfilm and microfiche, photographic images of book or journal pages; the library remained a repository of information requiring students to make a "pilgrimage" to accomplish their work. Researchers who didn't want to walk across campus to the main library developed their own collections. At large campuses, academic libraries were subdivided into specialized fields for agriculture, architecture, business, engineering, law, literature, medicine, music, and science, among others. These subject-focused libraries were more convenient for

large campuses, but they frequently maintained a “chapel-like” setting.

As campus collections grew, planners and librarians developed formulas needed to design and manage new library facilities, controlling the amount of space dedicated to books and limiting the total facility size. The number of volumes held was used to determine the linear footage of bookshelves in the library, and a periodic census of users was used to determine the number of seats in the reading room or study carrels. Planning remained focused on the books. Even interlibrary loan programs focused on books, moving them from storage to the user and back again. As the demand for more library space grew, remote storage facilities were developed and little-used books transferred to a more economical location and facility.

### THE ELECTRONIC AGE

In the early 1990s, the Internet was born and things started to change. First, interlibrary loan books and journals were transmitted electronically (usually by fax). Google initiated its digital library project in late 2002 and launched it in 2004 as Google Print. By 2007, Amazon introduced the Kindle, an e-reader for books. As publishers and book dealers struggled to deal with e-books, some stores disappeared (e.g., Borders). At the same time libraries and authors struggled with Google. Simultaneously, user demand to access information changed the library from a temple to the book to a workspace for readers, creators, and collaborators.

As a result, the university library has become something very different from the great book temples of the past. On the outside, the building may still look like a church, and the main reading room may still have high ceilings, but the heavy wooden tables are being replaced by soft furniture and collaborative work areas. Individual study rooms are becoming coworking and creative spaces. At my university, the new “library” is really an active learning center, where books are available but mostly digitally. The building now teems with students and with instructional spaces where the professor is a “guide on the side,” not a “sage on the stage.”

*Planning Optimal Library Spaces* addresses methods to deal with these and other imminent changes, for both public and college/university libraries. The authors don’t dwell on history as much as on the changes that have occurred, and on preparation for future uses that may not yet exist. The authors describe the processes needed to plan a new library

facility, to learn what the target audience wants to see addressed, and to solicit and seek ideas, organize and prioritize desires, and create a facility that is responsive to the new paradigms of information handling.

The authors provide numerous examples of libraries that are unlike traditional libraries, such as creative spaces where wood and other 3D models are developed, or where videos are produced, developed, edited, and presented. These are no longer the typical study facilities (NCES-FICM classification 400) one expects to find in a library. The library is becoming a different kind of campus hub.

### THE MASTER PLAN

Different does not require a different approach; it just requires a different set of players and thinkers providing guidance to the process. Wisely, the authors identify a “master plan” for development of new or renovated library facilities. The master planning process is an excellent way to gather input and organize goals that are campus-wide rather than focused on a single building or subject. They still reference the formulaic norms for calculating space to store physical books, but they also offer creative ways of looking at campus/community expectations for a library building and its contents.

Additionally, they present six case studies of different library projects. These studies are examples of how to think about a new library, offering a fresh perspective on the traditional library and how different communities are reshaping the concept of the library.

Even if your campus is not planning a new or renovated library, *Planning Optimal Library Spaces* is an excellent, affordable reference for developing a master plan for the center of your campus. It is accessible to librarians, architects, and planners, and is also an important tool that can be applied to other campus-wide resources and allow for creative reuse of costly campus facilities. Moreover, the outline and planning concepts for libraries can be applied to any major capital project on your campus. This is a valuable reference for every institution. ☛

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