DESIGN EXCELLENCE FOR THE FUTURE

The relationship between libraries and architecture has a long history. Over time, this relationship has evolved; from a focus on architecture to house collections to our current emphasis on architecture for enhancing community experience. FIONA SALISBURY reports.

Design of flexible space for discovery, collaboration, innovation and learning activity is resulting in breathtakingly beautiful new library spaces in all corners of the globe – spaces that will have a lasting impact on how our communities experience libraries.

Understanding how our communities use library space and what influences individuals' spatial choices plays an important role in designing and evaluating library spaces, even for small-scale renovations and refurbishments. Cha and Kim's (2015) research about what matters for students in academic libraries is an example of a study that explores library design from the perspective of users. They compared data about students' preferences for specific space attributes to student characteristics and their library activity profile. This detailed analysis identified five attributes that most influence spatial choice and attract students to the library (for example, amount of space, noise, crowdedness, comfort, cleanliness). The results reinforce fundamental environmental aspects that are important to students and contribute to efficient space planning and design.

The outcomes of this research highlight key design inputs that should be considered routinely. The results will be of interest to librarians in academic libraries, but I find co-design to be a much more compelling process for designing fit-for-purpose spaces in libraries. Asking users about their needs contributes to improved library design, but even better is designing with the users.

Tevaniemi et al. (2015) report on a case study at Tampere University of Technology that experimented with co-design to redesign library spaces as part of an experimental co-design course. Offered through the Faculty of Architecture, the course was constructed around redesigning library spaces in a collaborative way. The project brought together librarians, students, teaching staff and architects. It was based on the idea that 'all parties are essential parts of the outcome rather than commentators on ready-made designs or only providing background information' (p.309). The library also conducted a student survey and there is overlap with Cha and Kim's (2015) results in terms of important design attributes. However, the outcomes of the co-design process evidently achieved much more than an understanding of the users' viewpoints about space. Co-design has huge potential to link library space to institutional pedagogical frameworks from the outset, and it also promotes collaborative learning for all parties and ongoing improvement of space.

Even though Cha and Kim's (2015) article is not in our collection, I think it is well worth following up. For an equally inspiring article about co-design that is in our collection, I would recommend Sanders and Stappers (2014) article that advocates co-design as the key to ensuring 'what is designed makes sense in the future lives of people' (p.25). While not specifically related to libraries, this article provides a conceptual understanding of co-design, if you are interested in this notion and its history, as well as a glimpse into where co-design could take us. It makes a lot of sense, not just for space design but potentially for service design as well.

Finally, the 2015 library design showcase assembled by Phil Morehart for American Libraries brings together 20 examples of innovative new architectural designs from across the sector. It's a stimulating starting point (with photos) if you are looking for ideas, and ranges from new buildings to renovated and repurposed spaces – all different but all with a certain wow factor.

FIONA SALISBURY, AALIA
LIS Investigations
Member of ALIA Research Advisory Committee
Deputy Director, Learning and Teaching, Library
La Trobe University
f.salisbury@latrobe.edu.au

From our collection:
Cha, Seung Hyun and Kim, Tae Wan. 'What Matters for Students' Use of Physical Library Space?' *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41:3, (2015): 274–79.

Morehart, Phil. 'From the Past, the Future', *American Libraries* 46: 9–10, (2015): 40–47.

Sanders, Liz and Stappers, Pieter Jan. 'From Designing to Co-designing to Collective Dreaming: Three Slices in Time', *Interactions* Nov–Dec (2014): 24–33.

Beyond our collection:
Tevaniemi, Johanna, Jenni Poutanen, and Riitta Lähdemäki. 'Library as a Partner in Co-Designing Learning Spaces: A Case Study at Tampere University of Technology, Finland', *New Review of Academic Librarianship*. 21:3, (2015): 304-324.