

SHOW US WHAT YOU'VE GOT

For this issue of INCITE we asked members to share stories and pictures of their evolving libraries. We were inundated with spiffy pictures and news of projects ranging from brand spanking new buildings to modest refits and inspiring tales of marrying the finer points of the old with the exciting aspects of the new.

There are strong themes through the contributions you will read here from 'survivors' of projects of just about any size and they are echoed by the experts. INCITE spoke to library designer Kevin Hennah for our OPINION column and in collating these contributions we also contacted a number of designers. In terms of what goes in the building, it's to be expected that current interior design trends will be showing up but the extra challenge for library-specific design of course is that it's multi-use (and heavy use at that) and only rarely do we get a blank canvas to play with. Often there are heritage issues involved (and some of our contributors this month have shared a few tips about managing those challenges). Big dollar budgets are even rarer. We've had to be clever.

CK Design's Cecilia Kugler summed up the key trends she is seeing after 23 years in the business for us – they include redesigning



service areas and spaces for multiple functions and using moveable, flexible configurations to allow for future change. She also highlights transparency as a critical aspect of a successful design. Transparency, in this sense, is about engaging with our patrons by opening up areas to showcase our collections and services inside the building, but it's also about what happens before they even get in the door.

"It's important to connect with your streetscape," she says. It's all about enticing the passersby to join in. And it's all about taking away the barriers. In almost every library refurbishment described in this issue you will read about the old forbidding and formal service desk disappearing in favour of a communal place for staff to sit with patrons. The functional aspects, such as returns, are being tucked out of sight, says Cecilia. They have to be there and they have to work but they are no longer the focus of attention.

"For years the focus of library design was on the quantitative," Cecilia points out. "It was all about how many books and how many bodies. Now library design is people-centric. We know more isn't better and we're designing spaces for people first and then for formats."

The design brief is where it all starts. Cecilia says a good brief is not only about the attributes you want your library to have but is also clear about how you will measure your success.

In the infamous 'bigger picture', this trend towards what patrons want from us coming before our logistical considerations is a natural partner to the technology that is giving us multiple format options and new ways to access them. Unleashed from the confines of format, the modern library can truly be a hub for its community with powers to rival the Tardis. That's real evolution.

Note: Space precludes us from including all of these submissions this time but we especially want to thank everyone who responded. The topic has been so popular that we're going to revisit it in 2012.

LIBRARIAN MEETS ARCHITECT – A FORUM FOR ALL

Over 130 library and local government managers and design professionals gathered at The Edge, State Library of Queensland's digital culture centre, on 29 September for a forum focussing on the latest trends in public library design.

A highlight of the forum was the opportunity for interchanges between librarians and architects, which everyone agreed was mutually beneficial. As one Sydney architect noted, "It was a very good insight into the world of library and library design", while one of the librarians present called the event "an excellent mix of inspirational and practical content" and said they wished for an opportunity to go through the details of the ten 'new landmark' libraries with both library colleagues and architects of their current building project present.

Louise Schaper, who led the *Library Journal's* New Landmark Libraries project in the United States, provided a tour of the very best public library projects of the last five years. Louise opened discussion on several themes that would recur during the day, including green design, refurbishing for new models of customer service, and improving useability through effective wayfinding and branding.

New libraries in Gungahlin in the ACT and Cooroy in Queensland were highlighted and there were presentations on developing learning spaces, design briefs, marketing, design for small communities, and the impact of natural disasters on library design.

It was the first chance that many of the interstate and New Zealand visitors had to see State Library's The Edge and the Asia Pacific Design Library, where the forum wound down with drinks after the final session. A bus tour of four outstanding Brisbane library projects included Brisbane City Council's Fairfield Library, which was destroyed in the January floods and reopened by June.

Presentations will be available on State Library of Queensland's website soon at www.slq.qld.gov.au and design information is also available at www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/build.

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