
KHAN, Ayub. *Better by design: an introduction to planning and designing a new library building*. London: Facet Publishing, 2009.

xix,195 pages. ISBN 978-1-85604-650-3. £44.95.

The author, Ayub Khan is a professional librarian who has previously worked in school, public and college libraries, and currently works in local government. He is Head of Library and Information Service (Strategy) with Warwickshire County council where his main roles include service, quality and design, strategic collection management and setting standards. He has been responsible for several refurbishment projects and now shares his knowledge and experiences of planning and designing new library buildings in this book.

The book is aimed at all library sectors including educational, public and corporate, and is useful to all those involved in either refurbishing or re-designing a library, or designing a completely new library building.

I found the book to be very informative, both as a professional librarian who has been responsible for moving and redesigning corporate libraries, and also as a librarian working in an architects' practice that has designed many libraries. I purchased a copy of this book for one of our offices with a project to design a new library, but had not read it until recently. I am glad I did.

Designing a library is not something librarians do every day and the pressure is on to get it right, so assistance from someone who has been through the process is greatly appreciated.

The book covers all the required elements of planning and designing a library effectively and in just the right amount of depth. The extensive bibliography, with websites, allows the reader to do his or her own further research on specific areas of interest.

The chapter headings are

- twenty-first century libraries
- developing a business case
- project management
- the design/project team
- selecting an architect
- partnership and community engagement
- the design brief
- design quality
- space planning and access
- occupancy and post-occupancy evaluation
- building libraries for the future.

There are many useful checklists, examples and tables that make this book very practical. It is set out in such a way as to aid librarians in getting to grips with the

very complex task of specifying and designing a library, from the very beginning to completion, including awareness of funding, contracts and legal requirements. There is a helpful summary of the major points at the end of each chapter.

The chapter on '21st century libraries' highlights the changes that have developed and continue to influence the design of libraries in the modern world, in the way that the user and technology and the need for flexibility in terms of space and technology are now foremost in a designers' thinking. I found the chapter on developing a business case very informative, and the chapter on project management was an excellent reminder for managing any type of project. The appendices include a very useful 'Top ten tips' that are clear and concise, and distil real experiences into simple points to remember.

This book is both practical and accessible and I would recommend this to any librarians who have been given the responsibility for a major refurbishment project or the design of a new library. I would also recommend it to any architects involved in designing a library to help them understand the project from a librarians perspective, and to better appreciate the extent of their clients' experience, knowledge and expectations.

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