

Editorial

„The Effective Library – Vision, Planning Process, and Evaluation in the Digital Age” was the theme for the 2002 Seminar of the LIBER Architecture Group. The conference, the proceedings of which are published in this issue, considered library planning and design in the context of broader strategic developments affecting teaching and research institutions. The programme reflected on the future role of university libraries, the planning process, and the relationship between librarians and architects. Special emphasis was put on post-completion evaluation programmes – what did reality do to your vision? Did the findings influence further projects?

How valuable post-occupancy evaluation of library buildings can be is illustrated by the detailed descriptions from France and the United Kingdom. Marie-Françoise Bisbrouck and Suzanne Enright outline the advantages of evaluating library buildings after completion with the help of standardized methods or a questionnaire. In how far does a library building meet the original design brief or performance specification? What is the practical experience of actually using the building from the library staff and user viewpoints? Answering questions like these is extremely helpful to specify a set of qualities or criteria for the evaluation of library buildings such as functionality, adaptability, accessibility, variety, interactivity, or efficiency. What is more, the assessment process helps both librarians and architects facing the challenge of building a new library to avoid at least some of the mistakes made in the past.

Obviously, mistakes have been made. One of them has been the rather common disregard of the user’s viewpoint. Both Bernard Fabian and Maurice Line indicate in their articles that architects and librarians have not always been successful in taking into account the expectations and the needs of the users. This task, however, is up to a certain extent a “mission impossible”, as can be seen from Maurice Line’s disillusionizing “user’s hate list” including items such as over-heating, under-heating, very hard seats, very soft seats, or toilets that are far from where I am working.

As usual, there were interesting presentations on the latest building projects from across Europe. In the documentation for the 2002 Leipzig Seminar on “The Effective Library” about twenty-six new buildings in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Spain are described in detail, showing, in the words of Elmar Mittler, “the vitality and diversity of European librarianship.”

The documentation (see Appendix 1 and <http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/aw/gbs/gbs_20.pdf>) is available from the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, Platz der Göttinger Sieben 1, 37073 Göttingen, Germany for 85 Euro plus shipping.

Peter te Boekhorst
Ulrike Scholle