

Library Space Management in A Networked Society

B.G.SHIVAKUMARI

Assistant Librarian, University Law College,
Bangalore University, Bangalore-560056.
E-mail: shivakumari506@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: “It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”—Charles Darwin. In the 21st century, the digital revolution shows no signs of slowing. The goal of libraries has been to “develop an efficient and harmonious balance of all the elements that make up a library”. To remain continuously active and relevant in the present networked society, academic libraries must monitor and evaluate their presence in this digital world. This paper shows that by providing well designed library environment with modern facilities such as providing collaborative spaces, integrating physical and digital library and leveraging the mobile technology while delivering library services, users will utilize the physical space, and that the library will still be highly valued as a place to congregate and study.

Keywords: Space management, networked society, academic library, modern facilities, technological advances, library services, collaborative space.

1. Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries that are attached to Universities/Institutions to serve two primary purposes such as to support the colleges’ curriculum and for the research of faculty and students’. Its main functions include disseminating of knowledge through its various resources such as books, journals, projects, research papers etc. From these functions, the libraries have derived their objectives such as to support the curriculum to maximize each student’s academic potential. A key secondary objective is to support independent thinking so that students can learn to learn and also to support reading and literacy as a core life skill.

Academic library is capable of delivering physical content, text and multimedia content, commercial and free content, curriculum resources, reference and enquiry services, research and study skill programmes, literacy and reading programmes and finally study, reading and social spaces. All these services are delivered by timely, accurate and authoritative products and services, delivered in an open, accountable and collegial way and also delivered in the most cost efficient way with focuses on direct engagement with students and staff.

With the above said functionalities and roles, space management has become an everyday activity of many libraries. Academic libraries should be special and have an attractive space for staff and users while providing services and programming. The focus of the libraries while improving its space for better library experience should be on the students by providing certain modern facilities.

The modern facilities include different types of seating and study spaces, noisy collaborative spaces, varied and flexible spaces, integrating the physical and online library services, library services via mobile devices and Wi-Fi and power points.

2. Developing the New Library Space Using Modern Facilities:

With the need to develop Academic libraries, its needs to perform the following in order to develop an all new library space.

1. Environmental scan in a networked society.
2. Assessment of what Library needs.
3. Changes & Updates using Modern facilities.
4. Renovation process & planning.
5. Challenges of developing and protecting learning spaces.

3. Environmental Scan in a Networked Society

The library of the future is likely to be an amalgamation of current and new technologies, of traditional and cutting-edge services, and of digital and physical spaces. Many suspects that while mobile computing, networked materials, digital research processes, and other new technologies will dramatically alter certain library services; there will still be a need for books, shelves, tables and chairs, light and solitude, and community space. In fact, a national study of library use found that remote, online visits to public libraries appear to stimulate in-person visits to physical libraries. At the same time, many library professionals suggest that future technologies will enable greater flexibility in library spaces as physical collections shrink and more information is stored online. User needs and behaviours that drive the adoption of new technologies also will likely inform the physical spaces that provide access to those technologies, as well as traditional library materials. A number of experts and futurists are currently examining the evolution of the nation's economy from product-based to experience-based, and these conversations are relevant to the future of physical library spaces. In accordance with this concept, the future of bricks-and-mortar libraries will be less about what products a patron obtains at a library and more about the experiences the patron has while visiting. This notion is a more evolved version of what is seen today: libraries increasingly emphasizing their role as community centers with creative spaces suitable for a number of activities, only one of which is seeking and accessing information.

4. Changes and updates using Modern Facilities:

As the ways we access, process, and use information have changed, so too have the libraries that house the extensive collections of books, movies, music, art, and other media in which we find that information. Libraries are no longer just places to check out a book or to do homework; they're meeting places, media centers, digital repositories, and wonders of modern architecture and design. Academic libraries have to adapt to better meet the needs of the students and faculty who use them, adding amazing services and technology and creating spaces for students to study and meet that are sleek and stunningly modern. The modern facilities include different types of seating and study spaces, noisy collaborative spaces, varied and flexible spaces, integrating the physical and online library services, library services via mobile devices.

5. Different types of Spaces:

Outside the classroom, undergraduate students have a decided preference to use the library for their academic work. What are the characteristics of the academic library, particularly the renovated library, that motivate today's millennial students to choose it as their preferred learning space? Fred Kent, architect and founder of Project for Public Spaces, says that even though people no longer need to go to the library to have their information needs met, they will go if a library is a "desirable" place. Kent describes four characteristics which create desirability: access and linkages; uses and activities; sociability; and comfort and image (Kent & Myrick, 2003). Maslow's (1943) well known hierarchy of needs provides a framework to layer and consider these characteristics. Figure 1 superimposes Kent's terms on Maslow's framework and provides a schema which can be used by architects and librarians when considering the needs of today's library users in designing ideal libraries and learning spaces. The most basic characteristic is access and linkages at the bottom of the pyramid. Once this attribute meets the primary pragmatic needs of students, they will then look to see if the space also meets their ascending needs of varied learning and social activities. A learning space which not only has these attributes but also possesses the fourth and highest level attribute of comfort and feel will distinguish itself as an ideal learning space

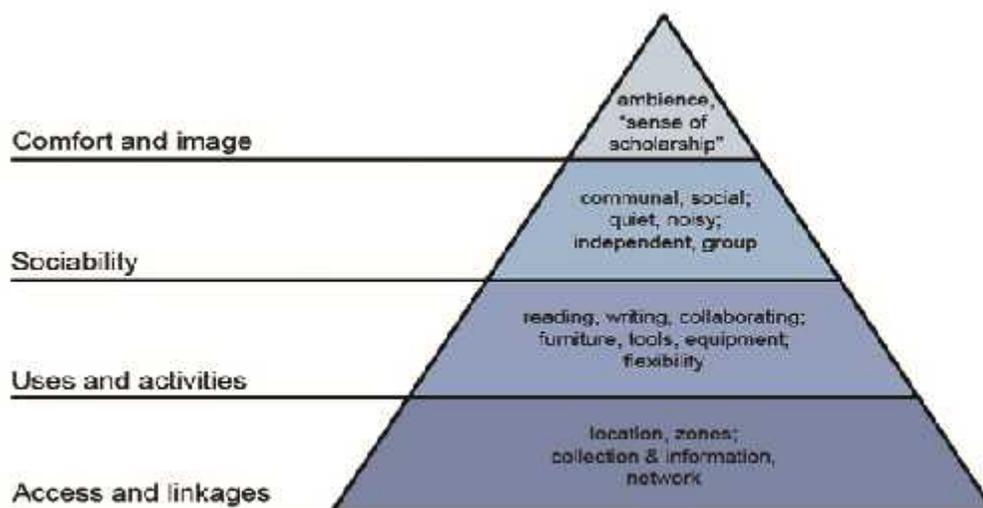


Figure 1. Hierarchy of learning space attributes

In order to cater to the needs of maximum number of students, library cannot merely be a place of book shelves and study tables in a large room. The library needs to have various spaces to meet the requirements of varieties of students and staffs as well. Academic libraries have long realized the need to examine the impacts of transformation of spaces as this element is often lacking in the evaluation of library space redevelopment projects. While the refurbishment of library spaces is invariably followed by a sustained increase in student visits, an accessible framework for evaluating components of newly developed spaces and the possible impact of transformed spaces on students' experience has not been available. Understanding what makes the right balance of space types is important i.e. formal and informal spaces, quiet individual

study spaces, collaborative group learning spaces and technology-rich project rooms, spaces for collection and spaces for people.

6. Various Spaces include:

1. **Collaborative spaces:** The most visible manifestations of academic libraries creating spaces and organizing services to combine support for technology and collaborative work are Information Commons. Library's collaborative spaces will be used to support both curriculum-initiated and student-driven collaborative learning, and that the library's collaborative spaces are the primary location for this activity on the campus. The collaborative spaces at the study site will be heavily used and highly valued by the people who use them. Students view these spaces as essential infrastructure to support project work. The library will be viewed by those who use it as a key resource to support their learning, and this perception is supported by frequency of visitation and time spent in the facility.
2. **Quiet study spaces:** In all libraries consideration should be given to others nearby. Each library should have areas for quiet study where personal or cell phone conversations and audible music are not permitted.
3. **Group study spaces:** Group study rooms provide library space for faculty and students to hold small group discussions.
4. **Research support spaces/Project spaces:** These spaces provide for research oriented purposes.

6. Integrating Physical and Online Library Services

Library users face several key impediments to completing tasks involving library resources. Users often need to know which kinds of resources exist or are relevant to their task before they can access them. Once users have some information, they may have difficulty finding related information located outside the current system being searched. These impediments arise because library resources are not integrated adequately. Users need to go to specific resources individually to find information. Academic libraries must integrate the physical space with the digital world. The digital library complements the physical library and substantially expands its possibilities for serving an audience that is physical distant from its location. The digital library is also a key tool for users in the physical building, offering online services and convenient access to its contents. The library will continue to maintain physical items and will even enlarge and renew its collections, particularly with items that are rare or unique. However, it will give increasing priority to digital formats- in new acquisitions and in developing digital content.

The Library should build a comprehensive technological infrastructure, expand the technological staff and implement information technology in all aspects of operation. The library services available in the building (search aids, reserving books, consultation, exhibits, etc.) should also be provided online. The Library should continually add its collection of digital materials by digitizing materials from the Library's collections, collecting materials that were born digital and by facilitating access to materials from the collections of other institutions under collaborative arrangements with them. The content will be displayed free of charge if the

copyright laws allow. The Library should also install advanced search and display tools, including a federated search engine that will simultaneously scan all of the collections, media and formats; subject-specific portals that aggregate information on a given subject for a specific target audience; as well as content tools that enable users and scholars to add content.

7. Renovation Process and Planning

After understanding the needs and requirements to develop a new library space, the next step is to develop recommendations for the next phase of library renovation and planning, including the possibility of integrated space that may enhance teaching and learning support in the library.

The way in which we plan libraries today has changed significantly. Planners and designers define space in response to anticipated user patterns, identifying the physical characteristics of this space and the specific value it will add to the educational mission of the institution as a whole. Previously, program requirements were developed in response to carefully defined comparative library standards, such as the number of books to be housed, the number of seats for a particular style of study, or the number of square feet required for a specific technical support function. The quick and easy solution to any perceived need was formula driven—always to add more space. Very often, this was the wrong response. Too much space has already been built in the name of library "needs" without any real understanding of the true value or contribution of expanded or renovated facilities to the institution's long-term future. The library today must function foremost as an integral and interdependent part of the institution's total educational experience.

With this in mind, the architect and the institution need to develop a partnership, sharing a vision and goals. It has often been said that an architect cannot create a great library without a great client.

8. Challenges of Developing and Protecting Learning Spaces

Libraries are increasingly being asked to play an important role in the development of more effective arrangements for managing, curating, sharing and preserving data created or gathered by researchers. Such a role requires libraries to develop new skills and services. If libraries are to remain dynamic, the spaces that define them and the services they offer must continually stimulate users to create new ways of searching and synthesizing materials. Patron expectation is increasing due to which Academic Libraries have to deliver more especially more technology and more online services.

9. Conclusion

The academic library as place holds a unique position on campus. No other building can so symbolically and physically represent the academic heart of an institution. If the library is to remain a dynamic life force, however, it must support the academic community in several new ways. Its space must flexibly accommodate evolving information technologies in this networked society and their usage as well as become a "laboratory" for new ways of teaching and learning in a wired or wireless environment. At the same time, the library, by its architectural expression

and sitting, must continue to reflect the unique legacy and traditions of the institution of which it is part. It must include flexible spaces that "learn" as well as traditional reading rooms that inspire scholarship. By embracing these distinct functions, the library as a place can enhance the excitement and adventure of the academic experience, foster a sense of community, and advance the institution into the future. The library of the future remains irreplaceable.

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B. G. Shivakumari

B. G. Shivakumari is presently working as Librarian in University Law College, Bangalore University. She has more than 28 year of experience in the library profession. She has participated in many national and International seminars and conference and presented papers in various international and national conferences. She is a life member of ILA,KALA and KASULA.

To,

Dr Jose Nandhikkara CMI

Academic Coordinator, IC.LISCOM-2014

Chief Editor, Journal of Dharma

Bangalore 560 029, India

Mob: +91-9448832280

Email:academics.liscom@gmail.com,

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Name: B G Shivakumari
Address: 506/A, 92nd cross,
Telephone Exchange road, 1st Stage,
KumaraSwamy Layout, Bangalore-560078.

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