The Challenges & Opportunities of Designing a Public Library

Kim Gile, Kansas City Public Library
Matt Glawatz, The Clark Enersen Partners
Introductions: Kim Gile

- Community Reference Manager
- Kansas City Public Library
- 14 years public library experience, including building projects!
Introductions: Matt Glawatz, AIA

- Architect – Library Designer
- The Clark Enersen Partners
- 10 years of Library Design Experience
- 20 Library Projects in Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri
- 2018 AIA/ALA Library Building Award Winner: Hastings Public Library
So you are ready to design a Library!
Don’t get ahead of yourself…

- Identify need
- Feasibility Study
- Build consensus
- Identify funding mechanism
You’re ready to design!
…..now what?
selection
step 1: finding your match
selection
step 1: finding your match

communication
step 2: communicate your needs
selection
step 1: finding your match

communication
step 2: communicate your needs

management
step 3: seeing it to completion
selection

step 1: finding your match
The Natural Enemy of the Librarian

by Marvin J. Taylor with Andrea Geyer

Uplifting monument or waste of space? Philip Johnson’s Bobst Library and a conflict between professions, a shift from book warehouses to social hubs. Photographs by Andrea Geyer.

1.

I have worked in Elmer Holmes Bobst Library and Study Center, New York University’s main research library, on Washington Square Park, for twenty-four years. I have always found the design of the building beautiful—more so than just about any other library building I have been in. Every day I walk through the revolving doors and gaze immediately upward toward the soaring interior space, which fans out from the main lobby into a forest of tilted columns and a ribbed ceiling. It is a place that demands attention, a place like no other I have visited.
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RFP and/or RFQ
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PROPOSALS = QUALIFICATIONS
RFP and/or RFQ

QUALIFICATIONS =
RFP and/or RFQ

QUALIFICATIONS = QUALIFICATIONS
RFP and/or RFQ

• The RFP and RFQ are about the architects, not about you
• You should read this. Seriously.
It’s all about identifying **Specialization**
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- Look at their portfolio
- Look at their website
- Have they designed a library before? or 2? or 10?
- What do their past library clients say?
- Do they speak the library language?
- Did they do their homework?
- Where are they based? Travel is a cost.
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  • Where are they based? Travel is a cost.
  
  Although...Expertise > Travel Cost
The Flip Side...

• Specialization may lead to less innovation
• You may miss new ideas
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The Interview

• Stay awake. Seriously.
• Look for personality. You’re going to work with them a lot. ...YEARS!
• They should ask you questions.
• Are they interested in your needs or their design?
• Are their examples relevant? Do they meet your expectations?
• Do they make it about you or about them?
• Have a Q&A session and ask questions.
  • And modify your questions based on what they presented
• Smile.
The Decision

- Ranking System
- Who do you think is most qualified?
- And remember: Who can you work with for the next YEAR or TWO?!
Select your architect

- Get your contracts together
- Share your choice with your staff and community
- Introduce them to people when you’re walking around the library
design

step 2: communicate your needs
Form your Steering Committee

Pre-Funding

Post-Funding
Form your Steering Committee

Pre-Funding

• Are your stakeholders present?
• Surround yourself with people who can make decisions.
• Members should be connected
• Engage local governance
• Access to $$$

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Post-Funding
• Staff and community members
• Friends/Foundation
• Library users
- You’re going to spend a lot of time with certain people
- Clearly define roles within your Team. Document them.
- If you have multiple projects, keep the same team. The learning curve is steep.
Idea Generation

- Consider what you want
- Communicate that
- Be open to suggestions
- Utilize expertise (like, from your Architect!)
- Share examples of spaces you like
- Think “pie in the sky”
Idea Generation

TRUST

All ideas must be received safely
Solutions vs Problems
- This process isn’t about finding solutions
- It is about talking about the problem
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Sometimes you can make great leaps *without* spending any money!
Organizational Recommendations

- What standards do you have?
  - Storytime spaces should be X square feet
Organizational Recommendations

• What standards do you have?
  • Storytime spaces should be \( X \) square feet
  • Collections should take up \( X\% \) of space
Organizational Recommendations

• What standards do you have?
  • Storytime spaces should be X square feet
  • Collections should take up X% of space

Ask your professional community.
Design Process & Considerations

1. Program
2. Budget (have one w/contingencies!)
3. Site Selection (if applicable)
4. Space Plan & Adjacencies
5. Preliminary Plans and 3D images
6. Technology
7. Furnishings
Things to consider…

- How is your library used? What programming spaces do you need? (exercise classes w/ventilation needs, Storytime room, access to power)
- Collections
- Wayfinding
- Connectivity
- Flexibility
- Natural light
- Accessibility/ADA
- Think long term and how your needs will change (again…. Flexibility)
You tell the architect what you want. They’ll tell you how to make it happen.

• Think big picture **AND** in the weeds—**it is all important**
  
  o Big picture—what is your community all about?
  
  o Weeds—need flat thresholds for carts

• Take note of what people tell you at brainstorming sessions—you’ll want to compare accounts to ensure things weren’t missed

• Be prepared to have **long days** of meetings during design phase—give people breaks, coffee, etc.

• A big table is helpful
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- A big table is helpful…**with donuts**.
Overload!!!!

- Don’t try everything at once with your building
  - New Technology
  - New Workspace Model
  - New Service Model
  - New Delivery Model
  - New…
  - New…
  - Knew…
  - Pneu…

Are you tired yet?
Flexibility will go a Long way.
When to stop

- When does the time for input stop?
- Commit to that, and say it out loud
- Feel confident in what was gathered and how it will be realized within the design
New Construction vs. Renovation

- Costs
- Will you close the building? Go in phases? Pull your hair out?
- Where will you go if you’re closed? Rent? Partnership Opportunities?
Engaging Staff

• Keep staff involved, but not in the weeds
• Are some staff included in the design process?
• Are the remaining staff informed?
• Can they answer questions from patrons?
• Can they provide valuable input to the process?
• Are they going to use the space? (yes)
• Communicate!!!
Engaging the Public

- Press releases
- Video content
- Social media
- Local news interviews
- Townhall Meetings
- Planes with Banner-thingys?
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- Your steering committee should be integral in this process
Common Obstacles

- Staff who are stuck in their ways
- Architects who are stuck in their ways (wait…what?)
- Imagining what the library will be like in 15 years, 20, 50…
- Collections: hanging on to the collections that don’t circ
- Not keeping people informed
- Being afraid to challenge your Architect during design process

- Get out of your own way
Enjoy the process!

• You may only get the opportunity once.
management

step 3: seeing it to completion
Starting Construction

• Your job is not over. Get a hard hat.
• Library staff must stay involved throughout
• Meetings with Architect will reduce, but they are still working for YOU!
• Contractor/Construction manager will step up
• You’re must prepare for everything that will be different.
  • Service models
  • Collections
  • Promotional pieces (hours, locations, website…)
Telling The Story

• Take lots of photos throughout construction
• Videos are great
• Share these with your community
Your New Library

- Be ready for full service on opening day
- Have a ribbon cutting and a celebration
- Keep it clean
- Keep it free of clutter
- Fight hoarding habits
Whew!
Library Advocacy

Every Library

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Thank you!

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Questions?

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