# CHECKLIST of Library Building Design Considerations

7th Edition | WILLIAM W. SANNWALD



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# Preface

he first edition of the *Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations* (referred to as the *Checklist* throughout) was published in July 1988 as a 75-page pamphlet by the Buildings and Equipment Section (BES) of the Leadership and Management Association (LAMA), a division of the American Library Association. The author was the chair of LAMA/BES at that time, and the pamphlet was a project that a committee distributed based on a manuscript produced by doctoral students in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University in 1983. The current edition of the *Checklist*, as well as the previous six editions, chronicle the evolution of the library building—and even of librarianship—over a 35-year period.

Good library service depends on three factors: 1) information of interest and value to users, 2) library staff to link users with the information resources of the library, and 3) a method or place to transfer the information from the library to users. This has been true since the first systematically organized libraries in the Middle East dating back to the seventh century BC, and up to the newest library opening today.

During the 35-year history of the *Checklist*, library service has changed greatly. In the 1980s, libraries were primarily places to house collections of print materials, where library users could access the collections with the help of library staff. Gradually libraries changed and evolved. Some print materials (primarily serials) evolved from a paper format to an electronic one, and bibliographic sources such as the card catalog and database search catalogs changed completely to electronic versions. The sharing of collections was enhanced by cooperatives, and a "last copy" policy enabled many libraries to effectively "cull" their in-library collections and use remote storage for materials that would be retrieved only when they were needed. Staff were even more valuable as a source for locating material acquisitions and helping with searches. Some of these changes created space in the library building for "other activities."

There were now all sorts of other activities to fill the library, based on the needs of the community served by it, and libraries became a place where people could go for a

variety of reasons, some of them not even considered before 1980. An academic library might have, for example, a computer center with banks of computers for student and public use, and a study center that students could use between classes. A public library might have a center for community activities and events ranging from cooking classes to senior yoga sessions. Seminar spaces sprang up in all types of libraries that could be used for small group interactions, study sessions, and civic and cultural sessions. A library might have a "makerspace" where budding entrepreneurs could congregate to create all sorts of materials. These examples illustrate that the library was evolving from its traditional role as a warehouse of materials into more of a social space fueled by interactions and involvement.

And suddenly things changed in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic made libraries suspend some of their new social activities because of the dangers of face-to-face contact. In some cases, entry into the physical building was curtailed or limited, and spacing inside the building was increased to provide the correct "social distance." Almost all users' interactions with library staff became virtual through Zoom, and some form of this virtual communication may continue into the future. And in the meantime, the march toward electronic resources has continued, which allows users to access the library's collections without even having to enter the building.

In the author's subjective opinion, one positive aspect of the changes in library buildings over the last 35 years is that they have become more exciting and attractive, not only in the United States but throughout the world. Talented architects and designers have used their skills to create three-dimensional works of art on campuses and in public libraries that invite users in and make them want to stay. Kudos to those administrators who realize that architects can only be as creative as the client allows and who demand and expect exceptional design.

### **Changes in the Seventh Edition**

All sections in the seventh edition of the *Checklist* have been reviewed, revised, and updated, and some of the major changes include:

- A revised format that continues to preserve aspects of the checklist style of the original publication, but now also includes an in-text narrative that provides introductions to sections, along with explanations.
- A new section dealing with the relationship between the client (the library and/or its political authority) and the architect and contractor based on a blog published by the California architectural firm of Wagstaff + Rogers Architects.
- A new list of recommended resources on building planning, including general guidelines and guidelines for academic, public, and school libraries.
- An expanded treatment of building addition considerations, building rehabilitation issues, and the preservation of existing historic buildings.
- A section dealing with virtual library considerations, as well as a fuller discussion of alternative library spaces.
- A new section dealing with site-safety issues.

- An expanded section dealing with sustainable design and the role that LEED and the U.S. Green Building Council play in helping to plan buildings within the confines of a budget.
- A brief discussion on how to improve indoor air quality to enhance protection against COVID-19 and other viruses.
- An explanation of the importance of roofing materials in making the building energy-efficient.
- Why inviting open spaces are helpful in inhibiting the transfer and spread of viruses.
- A question as to whether parking should be discouraged by the library.
- A list of safety equipment and tools if the library does provide a parking lot or garage.
- A list of different types of recycling containers required for the variety of waste materials created in the library.
- The chapter on the "Interior Organization of the Library Buildings" has a new introductory section dealing with how to reduce the risk of infectious viruses through increased ventilation.
- Recommendations for coping with viruses and infectious diseases in meeting rooms and gathering spaces.
- A new section on safe and shelter rooms to protect users and staff in case of natural disasters or violence in the library.
- Revisions to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) section, including additional background on the ADA, as well as guidelines to assist libraries in complying with the act's rules and regulations.
- A discussion of industry sources and standards for telecommunications, electrical, and miscellaneous equipment.
- A review of suggested equipment and procedures to reduce the transfer of viruses in interior spaces.
- A set of protocols for cleaning interior public service spaces and seating.
- A new section on the storage and distribution of electronic media.
- Suggested changes for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) to reduce the spread of airborne diseases.
- An updated discussion of the remote control of building systems, including HVAC, lighting, electrical, irrigation, safety, and others.
- A discussion of why flexibility in electrical design is needed because of constantly changing library floor plans.
- A discussion of how the internet of things (IoT) will influence electrical design.
- A discussion of the benefits of human-centric lighting.
- A discussion of suggested design and protocols for gender-neutral restrooms.

- A discussion that addresses the threat posed by people who are intent on doing physical harm to staff and users of the library.
- A section on the actions that libraries can take to lessen the threat of disease transmission.
- Additional suggestions on how to improve building cleaning.
- A new section on library site meetings for the owner (library), contractor, and architect during construction.
- A new section dealing with change orders during constructions, including what they are, why they occur, and how they should be handled.
- A discussion of the suggested procedures and protocols needed during ground breaking, dedication, and other ceremonial events to protect against the spread of infectious diseases.

### What These Changes Imply for Designing Libraries Today

- Flexibility is key in planning a building. A new library building is designed to last for at least 20 to 30 years without major renovations, and during that time period, the services and functions of the library will change. Thus it is important to have few fixed walls and spaces, and to have HVAC, lighting, and electrical systems that can be easily repositioned.
- Know the products and services your stakeholders want and need, and have the building designed to satisfy those needs. The mission of all types of libraries is constantly changing based on the changing needs of users, and it is vital to understand those needs because function should drive design.
- Have windows that open to enhance natural ventilation; the best way to prevent the spread of diseases is fresh air. For a period, buildings were "tight" to preserve heat loss and gain, and while this is still important, it does not rank as high as human health.
- ✓ "Sustainable design," or ecologically friendly design, will become more important than ever, and libraries will have to do a cost-benefit analysis of implementing sustainable design, weighing its costs against its benefits.
- Think about how your patrons will interact with library staff. The methods of staff-to-patron interaction changed during the pandemic, and several of those changes won't be reversed completely.
- Monitor developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and their possible impact on libraries and library buildings. AI can be either a disruptive or a promising development for libraries.
- Balance the cost of the real estate, construction, and sustainability required to provide parking for individual cars.

### Thanks

I would like to thank Anna Tatar and Margaret Kazmer, former colleagues at the San Diego Public Library, who always performed at the highest level of library professionalism, and who, along with Helga Moore, were instrumental in developing San Diego's new Central Library. Without their efforts, there would not be a new main library in San Diego. The new Central Library is on the cover of this edition.

I also appreciate the support I received from Patrick Hogan and Rachel Chance at ALA Editions. Publishing with ALA Editions has been a pleasure over the years, and I hope to continue this mutually productive relationship for many years to come.

# 1

# Building, Planning, and Architecture

Be uilding a new library or renovating an existing library building is one of the most significant decisions that any institution can make. Significant because it requires money, time, expertise, and patience. Funding is the key, and if sufficient funds are not available there is no building project. Some building projects require decades, from the realization of the need for an improved library building to the dedication of the new facility. Most of that delay is due to difficulties in obtaining financing or to a lack of political will on the part of decision-makers. Knowing what the library needs to meet its information mission, and translating those needs into a physical space, is the duty of the planning team that will guide the building project, so select the best team possible. And make sure you have a team, and not just a collection of talented individuals. Finally, patience is necessary because you will have setbacks, you will encounter people you find irritating, and unexpected events will occur that may not always be pleasant. But when the ribbon is cut for the new facility, all the irritants you experienced will disappear and you will rejoice in helping to make the new facility a reality.

### A. Indicators of Dissatisfaction with Existing Facilities

There are triggers that signal that it is time to consider remodeling an existing library building or constructing a new one. The need for a new or renovated space is not always obvious because library staff and users are in the building daily, and the need for improvement is not noticeable if you are familiar with it. Some of the indicators of the need for a change include: YES NO N/A

1. Has the mission of the library changed?	
2. Has the population served by the library increased or decreased?	
3. Have the demographics of the population served by the library changed?	
4. Has the library formed a partnership or alliance with another institution that requires a change in the physical building?	

### 2 >> CHAPTER 1

		YES NO N/A
5.	Are there problems with the physical condition of the building (outdated systems, inflexible floor plans, ADA problems, difficulty in installing technology)?	
6.	Does the existing building hinder the delivery of good service?	
7 <b>.</b>	Is there enough space for the products and services the library offers?	
8.	Has the mix of products and services offered by the library changed, causing a need to reevaluate the physical space?	
9.	Does the physical building have the required infrastructure to accommodate current and future technology?	
10.	In order to accommodate the growth of library collections, have seats been exchanged for stacks? This tends to be less likely for most libraries, as bound volumes are being exchanged for electronic serials and e-books.	000
11.	Is the library considering storing its book collections in compact shelving or in an off-site storage facility?	
12.	Is the atmosphere of the library pleasing for customers and staff?	
13.	Why and what is the need to increase physical security and/or safety for users and sta	aff?
	Comments:	

### B. Institutional Planning Team

The planning process is key to the final success of the building project, and planning works best with the talents and experience of a wide variety of stakeholders. It is usually best to keep the planning team small, but inclusive of major stakeholders.

1.	На	s an institutional library planning team been formed?	
2	W	to are the members of the library planning team? Is/are there	
	a)	A representative of the legal owner (university, school city, etc.)?	
	b)	A library representative?	
	c)	User representatives (faculty, students, citizens, etc.)?	
	d)	Other representatives with technical skills such as engineering, legal, financial, architectural, buildings, and so on?	
	e)	Representatives of the local or the campus building department? Having building officials as part of the committee may eliminate the need for changes made later because the planned building does not	
		meet the local codes.	
	f)	Others (Friends of the Library, library committee members, and so on)?	

		YES NO N/
3.	Will the architect hold a charrette for all members of the library planning team? A charrette is essentially a design workshop where designers, residents, developers, city officials, university representatives, planners, and other stakeholders come together to envision what the planners hope a	
	new library will accomplish.	
4.	What roles will members of the library planning team play:	
	a) Advising (gathering and disseminating information about the project)?	
	b) Innovating (suggesting new ideas or new ways to tackle old problems)?	
	c) Promoting ("selling" the project to interested stakeholders)?	
	d) Developing (assessing and developing ideas for practical implementation)?	
	e) Maintaining (ensuring that an infrastructure is in place so that the team can work with maximum efficiency)?	
	<ul><li>f) Linking (coordinating all work roles to ensure maximum cooperation and interchange of ideas, expertise, and experience)?</li></ul>	
5.	Who will be the spokesperson and chief contact for the institution on the proje	ect? It is <i>vital</i> that

5. Who will be the spokesperson and chief contact for the institution on the project? It is *vital* that only one person speak and make decisions for the institution during all stages of the building process.

Comments: \_

6. How will conflict be resolved on the building project?

Comments:

7. Who will make the final decisions on design, space allocations, costs, and change orders?

Comments:

### C. Determining Space Needs

The role of libraries is changing from the storage and access of library materials to serving as an interactive center for information, experiences, and knowledge. This change from a static center to a dynamic hub modifies the spaces required to support the new role.

For example, according to OCLC, print circulation in U.S. academic libraries has declined by 74 percent since 2004.<sup>1</sup> The decline of print collections, the use of compact shelving and/or book retrieval systems, the growth of electronic media, concern for healthy building hygiene, changes in the role the library plays in the campus or community, and many other factors make planning for the size and function of future library services challenging.

#### YES NO N/A

 Have the library staff and administration met to decide the mission and long-term vision of the library? Space allocations and needs should be based on the vision and mission of the library.

### $4 \gg CHAPTER 1$

	YES NO N/A
. Has a library building consultant been hired to help the library with its planning?	
. Has a building program been prepared that details the space needs, adjacencies, and unique functions and features of the proposed building?	
. Has the library building consultant prepared the building program, or advised staff on preparing the program?	
. What will be the useful life of the new building? Most building changes should accommodate the library for a period of approximately twenty years.	
Comments:	
. If a building change is planned that is an interim solution, how will this impact futu <i>Comments</i> :	are needs?
. What existing programs will be discontinued in the new building? <i>Comments</i> :	
. What new programs will be added in the new building (services like makerspaces, la intelligence, and so on)? Comments:	abs, artificial
What will be the growth or decline of staff over the next twenty years? Comments:	
$\Theta$	
. How will the service population change over the next twenty years? <i>Comments</i> :	
. What changes will take place in the size of the collection over the next twenty years increase or decrease? Will this cause a growth or decline of shelving?	s? Will it

Comments: \_

12. What will be the mix of the collection over the next twenty years? Will print and media be replaced by electronic collections?

Comments: \_ 13. What will be the growth or decline of the library's seating requirements over the next twenty years? Comments: 14. What technology will be required to support library programs over the next twenty years? Comments: \_ 15. In estimating the size of the new building, consider the following space-planning tools: a) Space estimating. How much library space is needed to support current and future programs? Plan to add up all the library spaces that will be needed based on the programs and activities that the library wants to undertake in the new building. The total of all spaces equals the ideal size of the new building or expansion. Comments: \_ b) Benchmarking. What is the size of the library buildings in similar institutions? It is valuable to have a database of 10 similar libraries that may be consulted not only for facility size, but also for other measurable aspects of library space. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. Comments: \_ c) Standards and guidelines. What do library association, regional, state, and other guidelines and standards call for as far as space guidelines? Comments: \_\_\_\_ d) *Budget*. What can the library afford? This is sometimes the deciding factor.

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Comments: \_\_\_\_

### **D. Joint Use Considerations**

The benefit of joint use is that efficiencies may occur when two types of libraries combine, like the San José State University Library and the San José Public Library. Generally, most joint use facilities function well if they are planned to accommodate the needs of both libraries. In many cases, the genesis for joint use comes from political leaders rather than library staff.

		YES NO N/A
1.	Is there another organization and/or department on the campus or community that might offer synergy to the library by sharing facilities?	
2.	Is there another library or other organization that might offer potential synergy for a joint use facility?	
3.	Do the missions of the libraries considering a joint facility have enough commonalities to enhance the chances of success?	
4.	Are there possible efficiency and cost savings by having a joint facility?	
5.	Can the quality and quantity of service be improved for both libraries through a joint facility?	
6.	If a joint facility is agreed to, has a joint interagency agreement been negotiated?	
7.	Have the following factors been considered in the agreement:	
	a) <i>Governance</i> ? A written agreement is strongly recommended, and the agreement should list the parties entering into the agreement. The agreement should provide a clear demarcation of responsibilities.	
	b) <i>Funding</i> ? Make sure that the financial responsibilities of each party are placed in the agreement; include not only capital costs, but operational expenses as well.	
	c) Ownership of assets? In the agreement, define the ownership of assets (assets can include items such as equipment and book collections), and come to terms with how ownership will be decided if the agreement is terminated.	
	d) <i>Hours of operation?</i> The agreement should list the hours of operation of both libraries, and if either partner has restrictions on use.	
	e) <i>Staffing?</i> The local staffing requirements for both types of libraries should be met because the combined facility is two libraries sharing a common space, and each library may require different certification	
	<ul><li>or licensing.</li><li>f) <i>Volunteers?</i> Some libraries rely on youth and parent volunteers, and the</li></ul>	
	other library may not use as many volunteers.	
	g) <i>Collections?</i> Care must be taken to develop collections that are responsive to the needs of both libraries' sets of users.	
	<ul> <li>h) Changes? How will changes in any of the above policies be determined?</li> <li>The agreement must be flexible enough to allow modifications as</li> </ul>	
	conditions change.	

YES NO N/A

i) *Termination of the agreement?* If for some reason a termination is desired in the future, the agreement should list the terms of termination.

### E. Selecting a Library Building Consultant

The role of a building consultant is to translate the space needs of the library into a document that the architect can use to design a building. The document created is the building program, and it is like a "cookbook" for the architect. Building consultants document the library's needs, and architects translate those needs into spaces.

		YES NO N/A
1.	Is there someone on the staff who has the necessary planning knowledge and experience of the functional needs and requirements of library buildings? If not, a library building consultant should be retained.	
2.	Has the consultant been retained at the very start of the building planning process so that he or she can take part in every step of the project?	
3.	Is the consultant listed in the Library Consultant List (www.libraryconsultants.org/index.html)?	
4.	Does the consultant have broad and diverse technical experience in planning new library buildings, renovations, and additions, and the conversion of other buildings into library buildings?	
5.	Does the consultant have the organizational and record-keeping skills needed to document and respond to key events and activities during the project?	
6.	Does the consultant have the personal characteristics, experience, and skills necessary to assist a library in its unique planning and building needs?	
7.	Does the consultant have the written and verbal communication skills required to interact with all stakeholders?	
8.	Does the consultant have the political skills necessary to listen and respond to the concerns of all who may have a stake in the building project?	
9.	Does the consultant have the ability to explain a point of view and to persuade others of the importance of carrying out the consultant's recommendations?	
10.	Will the consultant provide advice on the selection of the architect and other members of the building's technical planning team?	
11.	Is the consultant's schedule flexible enough for him or her to be available for meetings with the library's planning committee when required?	
12.	Is the consultant available by telephone, surface mail, or electronic communication to answer questions and provide guidance when his or her physical presence is not required?	

### F. Choosing an Architect

Architects configure the client's needs, wants, and dreams into built space for library users and staff, and the architect may also be responsible for creating an architectural symbol for the library. The building consultant and architect will be part of a library's life for two to four years, and the following should be considered in architect selection.

		TES NO N/A
1.	1. Does the library staff play a major role in the selection of the architect	?
2.	2. Has the group responsible for selection of the architect developed selection criteria?	
3.	3. Does the architectural selection process include:	
	<ul> <li>Announcement of the proposed project in an official publication us by the client organization, or in the general press?</li> </ul>	sed
	b) Issuance of requests for proposals and/or information?	
	c) Submittals by interested architectural firms?	
	d) Provision of standardized forms so that a uniform evaluation of architectural firms can be used during the evaluation process?	
	e) Evaluation of the firms based on the selection criteria developed b group responsible for selection of the architect?	y the
	f) Interviews with the "short list" of firms that the selection group had decided best meets the selection criteria?	as
	g) A tour of the site or facility organized prior to the final selection of architectural firm? It may be appropriate for the tour to be arrange prior to the short-listing process, or it may be considered more appropriate to delay the tour until after a short list is determined.	f the ed
	h) Ranking of the top firms to identify the best-qualified ones?	
	i) Selection of the top-ranked firm based on the interview discussion the selection criteria?	s and
	j) Notification of unsuccessful firms, and a debriefing as to why they not selected?	were
4.	4. While not necessarily recommended, does the selection process involv	<i>r</i> e:
	a) A limited or open architectural competition?	
	b) A design/build competition?	
	c) Bidding among various competitors?	
5.	5. Is the architectural firm an individual, partnership, corporation, or a jo	bint venture?
6.	5. Will the person who presents for the architectural firm be involved in	the project?
7.	7. Is the architect or architectural firm registered to practice in the state	?
8.	3. Is the architect of record registered to practice in the state?	

		YES	NO	N/A
9.	Are all key personnel and sub-consultants from the architect's office who are involved in the project identified?			
10.	Are the architect's support team members identified: the landscape architect, civil engineer, structural engineer, acoustic engineer, mechanical engineer, electrical engineer, ADA compliance officer, and any other key specialists involved in the project?			
11.	Does the architectural team have the required support equipment—CAD, 3D modeling, renderings in-house, and so on?			
12.	Are all members of the architect's support team part of the firm, or does the architect retain them as sub-consultants?			
13.	Can the architect's organization provide enough resources to devote sufficient time and energy to the project?			
14.	Does the architect have experience in working with public agencies?			
15.	Does the architect have prior experience in designing libraries? In some cases, it may be advantageous to have an architect who has not worked on a library building.			
16.	If the architect has not worked with libraries, does the architect have a plan to become knowledgeable about the library's needs? This may require a library building consultant, preferably one retained by the client.			
17.	Is the architect an empathetic listener, one who is willing to understand the library's needs?			
18.	Will the architect place the library's needs before design considerations?			
19.	Does the architect's workload allow the firm to devote adequate time to the project?			
20.	Does the architect have solid reference reports from past clients?			
21.	In projects completed by the architect:			
	a) Did the projects come in at or under budget?			
	b) Did the projects come in on time?			
	c) What was the extent of change orders in number and dollars?			
	d) If there were change orders, has it been determined whose fault they were? (Not all change orders are the architect's fault.)			
	e) What litigation has occurred against the architect?			
	f) What litigation has occurred against the architect's former clients by the architect?			
22.	Does the architect have the written and verbal communication skills required for interacting with all stakeholders?			
23.	Does the architect have the political skills necessary to listen and respond to the concerns of all external and internal building-project stakeholders?			

# About the Author

illiam Sannwald is a full-time faculty member in the Fowler College of Business at San Diego State University and works as a library building and administrative consultant. He was an assistant to San Diego's city manager and was the city's manager of library design and development from 1997 to 2004. Prior to that, he was city librarian of the San Diego Public Library. He has worked in public libraries in Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, and California. Sannwald received his bachelor's degree in economics from Beloit College in Wisconsin, an MBA degree from Loyola University in Chicago, and an MALS degree from Dominican University in Illinois. He has presented papers at national and international conferences and is the author of a number of books and articles on library architecture and management. The San Diego chapter of the American Institute of Architects presented him with their highest award, the Irving Gill Award, for his contributions to library architecture, and he received the San Diego design community's Ruocco Award for his contributions to urban architecture. During his career, Sannwald has been involved in the construction of more than fifty library buildings as either a consultant or owner's representative in the United States, Great Britain, Angola, Greece, and the United Arab Emirates. He was elected to the International Federation of Library Systems' Standing Committee for Library Buildings and Equipment for 2007-2011.

Sannwald teaches a variety of upper division undergraduate and MBA courses in the management department at San Diego State University's Fowler School of Business. He was selected as the most influential management professor and received the Outstanding Faculty Award in the Business School. In 2017 he received the Teaching Excellence Award from his peers. In 2022, he was selected as the first Glazer Outstanding Lecturer Fellow, which includes a generous stipend funded through private gifts.

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