

IDENTIFICATION OF REQUIREMENT FOR A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY BUILDING

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Abstract

The central library is the main focal point of a university. Most universities may have developed from campuses that had previously functioned as technical or affiliated colleges or may be in the planning stage of an entirely new university to be set up. In both cases identification of functions and space required for different components of the library become the responsibility of the librarian. When the architects plan the layout and while the quantity surveyors plan the cost involved, they will depend on the librarian for the requirements. This paper facilitates on the issues that may surface and some strategies that have to be adopted by the librarian when identifying the requirements for implementation in a university library building.

KEYWORDS : Library Building, University Library, Library Space,

1. Introduction

Identification of requirements for a university library can be seen as a research project similar to one that will produce a Post Graduate Level thesis. What is more important here is that every aspect of the requirement report has a great chance of being implemented.

As in most research projects, the activities should commence with a literature survey which further provides guidelines to plan a university library. It is also important to seek views of shareholders. That could be done in two ways. Firstly it is important to bring about awareness which could be done by the use of newsletters, general notices and the university webpage by giving the information and seeking for views for the development of the library building. Secondly it is important to inform by letter and request for requirements and others from the faculties, unions including the student unions for this a deadline should be given, although they are not strictly imposed in the local context.

Some universities are set up for specific purpose too. For example General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) caters for both military and civilian personnel, and the Buddhist and Pali University focusses on clergy and layman for their studentships. Therefore, a special attention should be given for the users under such circumstances.

The role of the librarian has to be viewed in the Sri Lankan context. In the terms of the Universities Act of 1978, the Librarian is a Member of the University, as the Vice Chancellor, the Deputies, the Deans, the Directors, the Registrar and the Bursar. The librarian can be called up by the Governing Council at any time, and the librarian is also an academic enjoying the status of a Professor. Thus, the librarian is a member of the Senate and also becomes a member of all Faculty Boards. Since a library is the centre for all academic activities, it will be open to criticism by all senior academics and even by representatives of junior academics and student, who are members of respective faculties, at meetings of the bodies. Most important aspect of the exercise is to make an initial estimate of the cost, which will be discussed in section 2, while section 3 will deal with the identification of the space and functional requirements. Section 4 will be about ancillary requirements and section 5 will be about the books, journals and other requirements such as furniture.

A modern library should also look for aesthetic beauty, to cater for handicapped persons and also look forward to environmental issues including energy saving. Such miscellaneous items will be taken up in section 4.

2. Seeking an initial cost for the building

Main pothole in the project is the cost. The governing councils and the vice chancellors are mindful of



the costs in view of other requirements competing for the total capital grant. The librarian has the important role of planning the library building, giving an estimated area and cost for the university strategic plan at the earliest opportunity.

If the librarian insists on a large share, there are chances to submit it for the next plan and manage with existing facilities. If on the other hand the librarian asks for less, chances are that a new building may be provided but the library will be saddled with problems in years to come. The librarians should be armed with the space area required and of course the cost of buildings per unit area, which of course may highly be vary with respect to time. This is why the librarian has to act fast. The actual cost will be decided by the quantity surveyors once the conceptual design plans are prepared by the architectures.

On behalf of the American Library Association, Lanham, MD. (2011), had provided vital information on all stages of a library building planning, while Philip et.al. (1999) had presented views more suited for university libraries.

It is sound practice to analyze information quantitatively as well especially for projects involving high cost. The problem here is to forecast for future needs up to 10 years or more. It is very important to be mindful of the fact a university keeps on growing by addition of new courses, faculties and new programmes. All these developments will have an effect on the library.

For institutions that had existed, annual student numbers of full time courses can be taken as a realistic and a practical indicator that will strongly correlate with the requirement of space of a university library. What is suggested here is to use existing student numbers over a sufficient period if available and to forecast these for 10 years or so for the future using time series analysis. Taking the current space area available for library use, the space requirement can be estimated proportionately for the student numbers forecasted.

For a university that is being newly set up entirely, there would be expected student population for a future period of five years or so in the project proposal. Those figures can be used for forecasting number of students as library users. Space required for the library has to be worked out in comparison to figures of a university library in the neighbourhood.

What will be the situation beyond the 10 year planning period? Any university, especially in the developing world could be expected to grow with the addition of new enterprises and innovations. The optimal strategy to be adopted at the current stage of planning is to request the authorities as well as the architects to make the building to be modular. In other words, provision should be made to add new features or even remove some in the years to come.

3. Planning for space

Focus of the previous section was on getting over the first barrier of providing a realistic estimate of total space area and an initial cost estimate to get the building project approved by the governing council and if necessary by the ministry in case of government organizations. In the case of government universities since the cost will be substantial, the proposal has to be accepted by the ministry concerned and finally by the cabinet of ministers who will appoint a tender board to first appoint a consultant architect and then an engineering firm.

Most Sri Lankan government universities cut short the process by first appointing a government organization such as the State Engineering Corporation (SEC) or the Central Engineering Consultancy Board (CECB) to provide the architectural design, to make detailed cost estimates and also to prepare tender documents for the purpose of appointing a contractor for the construction.

The architects will have to depend on the client to provide space and functional requirement of the library in



greater detail. Even though Vice Chancellor is legally the client, in actual practice it will be the librarian who will fill that role.

Main components of any university library are the lending, reference, journal and administrative sections. However, with the advent of technology there are needs for users to study with their own computers or with these to be provided by the institutions. There is also need for photocopying and other needs. For instance, the users may want to have canteen facilities very close to the library.

Since quantitative planning is very much essential the total space required after around 10 years can be projected to estimate for different sections based on the proportions of the sections at the time of planning. In this case too it would be necessary to call several meetings of user groups to arrive at realistic figures, thereby creating transparency as well. Boyden, L., et.al, (2001) had given guide lines for such purposes.

4. Planning for ancillary requirements

In the ultra-modern world the proposal for a building has to be given a variety of considerations. These can be described as environmental, social, ethical and even moral. On the top of these are the cost constraints where the moral obligation is not to be too demanding in the face of other requirements competing for funds. For instance, the librarian has to keep in mind that while his/her building is important, others such as class rooms, hostels, etc. are equally important too.

The other moral aspect is that one should not add a burden to the recurrent expenditure of the building. For instance, if the librarian requires the entire building to be installed with air conditioning and free use of lifts for every user s/he should think not only about the cost that will be caused to the university but also to the energy requirement of the country. A concept that is still to be tried in Sri Lanka is to have solar panels installed on roof tops. This will provide electricity to the building and even bring some saving of the revenue on days that library may not be used fully.

This sort of requirement calls for the green concept on which there is considerable literature available, including that of companies dealing with these aspects. The following resources may prove helpful in space planning (Boyden, 2000, Brown, 2003, Carr, et.al., 20013, and Carr, 2013). At the same time the librarian has to be concerned of the comfort of users and the security of books and other material. Provision has to be made for disabled persons to use the library in some degree of comfort.

Due consideration has to be given to the aesthetic view of the library building as this is going to be the focal point of the university. The traditional cultural aspects have to be considered as initiated in Sri Lanka by those who had designed the library building of the University of Peradeniya. It is now becoming fashionable as found in Singapore buildings to have green plants grow by the side of buildings even at higher levels.

Architects too want to know from the librarian about needs for communication, lighting, etc. Even though architects are responsible for these layouts they will depend on the librarian and staff for this. This will call for many meetings between architect and library staff members. If for some reason these relationships break down it will be to the disadvantage of the librarian and the building

5. Planning for staff, books, furniture & other requirements

Even though the preliminary work and the actual construction will take some time, it will be the librarians' responsibility to request for books, furniture, computers, etc. to move to the new building. The work of the library would be conducted in several places and with some books, furniture, etc.

When the library is moved to a brand new building, a severe shortage of staff, books and furniture will be observed. Appearance of some furniture may not fit the new building. Either they have to be re-furnished or discarded in advance by taking the accepted procedures of the university. It is natural to have an opening



ceremony and when the chief guest and other dignitaries walk round the new building with the librarian it will be a great embarrassment to note these deficits as such proper planning and implementation have to be done prior to the inauguration.

Conclusion

In this paper it was attempted to express views on planning a university library in the local context as a developing country. The librarian will be required to play a very complex role with many pit holes. However, s/he could feel happy if the project could be satisfactorily completed and even make use of this in the years to come.

The initial task the librarian has to perform is to prepare a preliminary proposal discussing the current situation and the issues and most importantly by providing the estimate for space requirement and the approximate cost. For this purpose it is proposed to use student numbers of past years to forecast up to 10 years. Current student numbers and library space available are used to determine the space requirement after 10 years. The product of this space area and the current cost of a single unit of space for major buildings are taken as the estimated cost. Of course, the planners have to be told to make designs flexible in order to add or subtract new facilities.

Once the project is approved it will be the responsibility of the librarian for speedy implementation which will be initially to appoint an architectural consultancy firm. This can be done by getting assistance from a government organization such as SEC or CECB to fulfil the targets for this purpose. The architects will then need the requirements from the librarian who has to demonstrate openness by seeking views of the stake holders concerned as well as giving considerations for handicapped users, energy requirements and recurrent cost efficiency, aesthetic beauty, etc.

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