

## LIBRARIAN'S CONCEPT.

The building we are planning is a library not a monument, a cathedral of learning nor, though it has some of the characteristics, a warehouse.

While it will be the building on the campus that will attract more people for longer hours than any other single building it should not, by its architecture, give the impression that it is something separate from the university. Because of its universal use by all people and all segments of the university population and because of its close relation to all activities carried on by the university it will naturally be a focus of university life. It should not give the impression of being apart or of being exclusively for some. Even the gardeners should feel that it is a place for them. This requires that its location be in the centre of the university; not only in the beginning but also, so far as it can be predicted - when the university has reached its ultimate size.

Both at the threshold and within there should be the least possible impediment, either physically or psychologically, to entrance and use. Readers should not have to mount stairs as to a monument. While quiet and order are necessary for the work of those within, visitors should not gain the impression of admonitory sanctimonious hush as in a cathedral. Neither should readers feel that they are entering an airport, hospital or warehouse by the absence of anything looking like a book, by clinical asepsis or by the presence of banks of steel lockers. It should be clear even from the approaches that the building's purpose is learning and that it achieves this through books and "para-books", to coin a phrase as an alternative to the negative and imprecise "non-book materials". The purpose is learning; the materials are all the artifacts for recording information.

The most important element in the building is the reader. Whatever is conducive to his learning is paramount; his comfort, his understanding, his ease, speed and thoroughness in using the facilities, in finding the exposition and fact he requires.

The building itself should be "educational" by evidence of clear, logical plan and layout, by reduction of the superfluous, by the absence of tortuous traffic lines and clutter, by the integrity and honesty of its structure and design. Decoration should not be there to disguise what is as what is not. There should be an absence of deceiving "features". The building itself should be interesting and should entice reluctant students into its precincts. Decorative objects should help to develop aesthetic awareness and, without being didactic, should contribute to the learning process and the general store of illustrative information which is the stock of the library.

The library can still represent on the campus the wholeness of knowledge, the inter-relatedness of its parts. It should put no barriers between the books and the readers for interdisciplinary explorations whether determined by academic design or by the fortuitous ramblings of a creative mind. Neither should the library, by its plan or policies, impede the explorations in depth of a student in his field of the moment or of his chosen course. Any student should be able to penetrate into the rare and erudite explications of his subject should he so wish. Though the university will not teach in all subjects and will neglect some or mention them only in passing the library should provide some materials so that at least basic questions can be answered and at least a nodding acquaintance of them can be had. While the notion of the education of the whole man may no longer be tenable it is desirable that, besides the intellectual-factual side of a student's development and studies, the student should have the opportunity to develop and be aware of the aesthetic-emotional side. It follows that the library should provide and make provision for the materials which will contribute to this.

Libraries have traditionally dealt with "books". Books are now no longer necessarily objects of bound pages of paper. Pictures, photographs, slides, tape and disc recordings, maps, posters, charts, motion-picture films, micro-film, micro-fiche, punched cards, video-tapes, computer discs, strip-films, film-loops, even three dimensional replicas and models are all books (but they are not codices.) Non-book materials seems a negative, poor-relation kind of term; Audio-visual materials seems to me to reduce them to mere sensory apparatus; information media and educational resource materials seem to be either too general or too

dehumanized. I propose to use the term para-books for these things. I do not want para-books to be looked upon as something extra or special. So far as it is possible, physically, I intend to shelve and handle them as books. It follows that the building will not emphasize a special area for them but will, instead, make provision for their reading throughout the building. There will thus be no specific, segregated area for para-book activities. There will be a need for some group use of some of these para-books and in some cases this is almost dictated by their nature. The Library should, therefore, make provision for a small theatrette, auditorium and exhibition room. I am not suggesting that these should be the only spaces of their kind in the university but I think that it is desirable and appropriate that provision should be made within the library for them especially, but not solely, where the themes are not directly orientated to course-work and where the initiative derives from the library itself or from small, perhaps ad hoc, student or staff groups in response to some sudden impulse. In time I would like to see continuous programming in all three facilities. Because of the traffic, sound and the general intention to entice people into these group para-book facilities so that some diversion of positive value, some re-creation, some broadening of horizons, some open-studies, might ensue I think it necessary that these facilities should be placed not in some remote corner of the building but in an area which all must pass near the front of the library and so that users of them, particularly of the film theatre and sound auditorium, need not have to pass through the control points to the library (book part).

Associated with this group para-book area might well be a coffee shop. Many people spend long hours in the library and there is some need for relaxation and refreshment at various times. There is also a need for quiet talking and discussion either for legitimate social purposes, for recuperation after or during periods of sustained reading or for discussion of what one is reading. This latter, particularly, is important as it is questionable how useful reading is until some kind of dialogue has taken place and not everyone, all the time, has the ability to "internalize" this dialogue. It is not only pleasant, but useful, to enter into a discussion on a film just seen, a play just heard or an exhibition just attended and since their invention coffee-shops have provided the venue for this dialogue.

Necessarily the restraints of economy force compromises on one's ambitions and beliefs and I realize that the fulfilment of the above involves some conflicts. The results of our planning will show how far we can overcome the restraints imposed by the economies and the conflicts.

By 1977/78 when I presume the library will have access to the third floor (at first occupied by the administration) there will be enough space for all the requirements laid down for 1980. The trouble is to get the more permanent non-expanding facilities e.g. exhibition, theatrette, auditorium, into appropriate places during the first phase when we are to occupy only two floors and, at the same time, provide proportionate space for the expanding, more flexibly located elements (books and readers). You will see that I have eliminated the coffee-shop and reduced the exhibition space (until at least 1977/78).

Above all we must keep in mind that the library acquires, organizes, prepares for use and services recorded information to support the curriculum, research, administration and to encourage open and free enquiry developing out of student and staff studies and curiosity. This requires a wide variety of materials and should take advantage of modern technology in information storage, presentation and retrieval. With the least necessary concession to the needs of security and preservation there should be no impediment to the use of the library. This will require the simplest possible layout, the least number of sequences in the organization of books, the fewest possible number of books with restricted access. We shall recognize that learning is enhanced when there is reinforcement of one medium by another and that different students make different responses to different media.

W. George Buick,  
Librarian.

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