The qualities of good learning space

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An increasing diversity of imaginative new academic libraries are being constructed around the world, successfully combining exciting architectural expression, inspiring internal spaces and good functionality. Library managers must have a strong vision for the new library and this should inspire the design and the whole building process.

This paper explores the key qualities of good learning space, whether in new or refurbished buildings. It is suggested that, ideally, learning space should be functional, adaptable, accessible, varied, interactive, conducive, environmentally suitable, safe and secure, efficient and suitable for information technology. New space should also have "oomph", capturing the minds of users and the spirit of the university. These indicative issues should be discussed in the brief and throughout the planning process, and the priority given to them will depend on the mission and culture of the library.

Greater attention is being given to daylight, natural ventilation, cultural artwork, noise management, security, disabled access, information skills training and provision for e-services. Planning is increasingly centred on people or the learner, emphasising the need for social, interactive and collaborative learning spaces as well as for traditional spaces for quiet study and reflection. Some libraries are joined-up with other services.

The academic library is an enduring physical 'place', providing a blended, hybrid environment of traditional and electronic services crucial for the future of our universities and their communities.

BRIEF CURRICULUM VITAE

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Andrew is Director of Library and Learning Services and Head of Lifelong Learning Centres at the University of East London. Previously he was Director of Information Services and Professor of Information Management and Strategy at the University of Sunderland, and before that Deputy Librarian at Newcastle University. He has planned award-winning new libraries at both latter institutions.

At the University of East London, Andrew is currently developing a new service strategy, leading cross-sector learning partnerships within the community and creating new library buildings. As well as developing new lifelong learning centres in London, he chairs the *M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries* Working Group on Student-centred Services.

At national level, he chairs the International Panel of the *Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals* and the *Society of College, National and University Libraries* Working Group on Space Planning. Other national activities include the *Higher Education Funding Council's* Space Management Group and the *Department of Culture Media and Sport's* Inspiring Learning for All Group. Currently he is Director of a JISC-funded project concerned with the strategic management of ICT in colleges and universities, and he has acted as a new library consultant for numbers of universities in the sector.

Within the *International Federation of Library Associations and Institution's*, Andrew is a member of University Libraries and other General Research Libraries Section and continues his involvement with its Section on Buildings and Equipment. Director of several international seminars for The British Council, he has undertaken training and consultancy work all over the world, most recently in China, Mexico and Lithuania.

Publications, conference papers and research work embrace digital libraries, strategic planning, quality management, distance and lifelong learning, information skills, staff development and library planning and design.

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