QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT LIBRARY BUILDINGS
(CHARACTERISTICS - OPERATION – EVALUATION)

INTRODUCTION

In the planning process much can be learned from existing buildings. The importance of the library visit is widely accepted and the *IFLA Library Building Guidelines* book published in 2007 includes a checklist of what to look for when visiting library buildings prior to starting out on a new project. Equally important in the process is evaluating such buildings sometime after they open to assess whether they meet the original expectations and are performing well. Much can be learnt from both the successful and the unsuccessful solution as well as from the changes that had to be made.

The purpose of this post-occupancy evaluation questionnaire is to enable library managers and the library design team to identify good practice, learn from mistakes and feed what they have learned back into the loop to ensure that the next generation of new library buildings continue to represent the best in design and practicality in order to provide the right environment for users and staff alike.

The intention is that those using the questionnaire can adapt it to suit their own circumstances and purposes. It may not be necessary to include all questions for every building. The questionnaire can also be used in preparing reports for funders and organisations, to assess levels of user satisfaction or to inform future alterations, expansion or new-build projects. Some questions are relevant to public libraries, others to academic libraries but the majority are relevant to any type of library (academic, public, school, special and national).

The questionnaire is arranged as follows:

General	Building		Services	Conclusion
Facts and figures	Entrance area	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	Service Areas	
Location	Materials		Shelving	
Accessibility	Flooring	Installations fed through a wiring system	User areas	
Sustainability	Ceilings		Children's Area	
Safety and Security	Acoustics	Data	Young Adults	
Flexibility	Openings	Sanitary areas	Staff Areas	
	Lighting		Automation	
	Furniture		Maintenance	

THE EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

General

Facts and Figures

- Type of library (academic, national, public, school, special)
- Location (address, website)
- Is it a new building, a restoration, an adaptation of an existing space or extension?
- Gross building area
- Number of floors allocated to the public
- Number of users
- Number of staff
- Size of collections
- Total number of user seating spaces and types (group study rooms, training rooms, carrels etc.)
- Building costs (national currency)
- Opening date of the building (on schedule?)

Location

- Does this location work for the purpose/ for your customers?
- Is the library well integrated within the city or campus?
- Did the shape of the site have a negative influence on the organisation of the building?
- Is the building well oriented in relation to light, noise and climate?

Accessibility

- Can the library be reached by public transport?
- Are there sufficient parking spots for users (car, motorbike, bicycle)?
- Are there any physical barriers for people (users and staff) inside the library?
- Have the building and the interiors been designed to permit and enable the autonomy of disabled people?
- Does the library have an access control/ electronic alarm system?
- Does the furniture have architectural hindrances? Does it impede or reduce the mobility of users?
- Does the library have an internal information system?
- Is information in the building available in a number of languages?
- Are there multimedia devices for information and orientation?

Sustainability

- Does the shape of the envelope design of the building support energy efficiency?
- Does the library design take the local climate into account?
- Was the site's potential analyzed before the construction including, for example, a soil survey, solar exposure, and wind and rain studies?
- Does the library use renewable energy (geothermal, solar, etc)?
- Which systems enable the saving of electricity (light regulators, occupation sensors, computer cut-off systems, etc)?
- Does the library have a policy for the reduction of energy use in the operation of the building?
- Which systems enable the saving of water (self-closing taps, rainwater tanks, etc)?
- Does the library use materials with low embodied energy?
- What devices are used for the building to avoid thermal exchanges and to provide sufficient insulation?
- Is the use of natural light possible? If not, is artificial lighting energy-saving?
- What measures are taken to optimize sunlight? (Thermal panels, light shelves, skylights, solar tubes etc)
- Is the building conducive to the use of natural ventilation? (Use of Canadian/ Provencial wells, ventilation shafts or towers, solar chimneys, etc)
- Are there any other sustainability features of note?

Safety and Security

- Have there been any safety problems with the library?
- Is there a problem with vandalism?
- Does the library employ security staff?
- Does the library provide safety instructions and devices in case of fire or other hazards?

- Are emergency exits to escape the building in case of fire and other dangers clearly visible?
- Do emergency exits have an acoustic and visual alarm to avoid robbery? How are these alarms connected to staff work places to enable them to take appropriate control and - if necessary - action?
- Does the library have an alarm system? Is it connected to the local fire brigade? Is fire security above national standard?
- What fire extinguishing systems are in use?
- Have there been any false alarms?
- Are fire drills and evacuation practices carried out regularly?
- Is there an anti-intrusion alarm system in the building?
- Does the library work with one access control at the entrance or are there multiple control points?
- Are there security measures in place for the collections?
- Which antitheft control does the document collection have?
- Are lockers available for bags and clothes? Do they need video surveillance?

Flexibility

- Are spaces flexible enough to allow for change?
- Does the building allow you to provide a variety of services?
- Is it possible to extend the building at a future date?
- Is it possible to use some areas of the library outside of normal opening hours for other activities (multipurpose halls, classrooms, etc.)?
- Are there external areas pertaining to the library? If this is the case, is it possible to enter them without going through access control (electronic alarm system)?

Building

Entrance area

- Is the entrance to the library visible enough?
- Is the door system adequate and functional for all users?
- Are access doors automatic?
- Does the door system prevent draught in the entrance area?
- Is the size of the entrance area adequate?
- Is there a visual relationship between the interior and exterior of the building?
- Is the organisation of the building clear and comprehensible from the entrance area?
- For multifunctional buildings: are all main facilities represented in the entrance area?
- Is the library well organised and is it easy to get to any area from the entrance area?
- Is free movement possible through all spaces in the library (exterior and interior) with only one access control (electronic alarm system) point at the entrance?
- Is vertical circulation (stairs and lifts) visible from the entrance area?
- Is there an accessible (24 hours a day and 7 days a week) and well-located book drop? If not, should there be one?
- Are there machines for self-service loan and return? If not, are they considered necessary?
- Are there general meeting areas (armchairs and tables –vending machines, etc.)
- Are there lockers for users' personal belongings? If not at the entrance where are they?

Materials

- Are the building materials appropriate for the location where the building is built?
- Are the materials used in the exterior envelope designed to be easily remodelled?
- What material are public stairs made of (metal, concrete, wood, etc)? Are they noisy?
- Will the materials used for the building remain in good condition over time?

Flooring

- What kind of flooring is there at the entrance of the building?
- What kind of flooring is there at the ramps and stairs?
- What kind of flooring is there in the public areas of the library (entrance area, general area, children's area, etc)?
- Has it remained in good condition over time?
- What opinion do you have regarding durability, ease of cleaning and acoustic absorption?

- What material is used for access hatches on the floor?
- What is the overall assessment of the flooring.

Ceiling

- Are the ceilings equipped with acoustic insulation material?
- Is it a suspended ceiling or is it fixed?

Acoustics

- Does the insulation of the building keep out noise pollution?
- Do users complain about noise generation inside the building?
- If yes, what are the sources of that noise?
- What alternatives can you offer to cell phone calls?
- Is the noise separation between areas well thought out?
- Are the functions within the building and the usage of it organized in way that customers access dynamic, noisy areas at the beginning and move then towards silent areas?
- Are there special acoustic absorbers in ceilings, wall cladding, flooring, draperies and/or furniture?

Openings

- Do openings provide good and sufficient natural lighting?
- Are there sunlit entrances that cause glare?
- Are there protection systems from sun rays (cornices, blinds, curtains, sun sheets, etc)?
- Do dimensions and location of openings cause thermal problems?
- Do dimensions and location of openings cause acoustic problems?
- Do dimensions and location of openings guarantee security against accidents?
- Is it possible to have natural ventilation?
- What is the opening system (handles, remote control, etc)?
- When the opening system operates with handles, can they be locked to make sure users cannot open them?

Lighting

- Is there a sufficient level of lighting?
- Is it located in the ceiling and/or the walls or is it built into the furniture?
- What is the "colour" of the light (warm, cold)?
- Can staff control it independently (switch on and off the lights in every area)?
- Is there some control system which depends on natural lighting?
- Does it provide different and comfortable atmospheres?
- Does lighting in the toilets work with occupation sensors?
- Is it possible to switch all the lights on/off from a single point?

Furniture

- Is the library equipped with new furniture?
- Does the furniture provide the basic requirements (quality, durability, functionality, mobility, ergonomics, aesthetics, etc)?
- Is the furniture well-designed (quality, durability, functionality, mobility, ergonomics, aesthetics, etc)?
- Is the furniture suitable for all users?
- Is the furniture sturdy and wearing well in use?
- Is the size of tables, chairs and other furniture adequate and ergonomic?
- Is the library short of any kind of furniture (display stands, etc.)?
- Is the furniture custom made / designed by the architect or bought through a supplier?
- What is the opinion about the materials used on chairs, armchairs, tables, etc?
- Are basic distances between the different types of furniture adequate?
- Is there a sensation of visual fatigue (organisation of the furniture, size of the furniture, colour, material, etc)?
- What is the general impression on aesthetics of the set up furniture (colour, material, etc)?

Heating, Ventilation and Air conditioning

- What kinds of air-treatment are provided: heating/air-conditioning?
- Do these systems work differently in independent areas or is there one system for the whole library?
- Does the heating/ air-conditioning system provide a comfortable working environment (uniformity of atmosphere, noise, air renovation, etc)?
- What is the overall assessment of HVAC?

Installations fed through a wiring system

- Where is the computerized distribution box? Is it inaccessible to the public?
- Where are ductworks located (ceiling, under the flooring, walls)?
- Is it easy to access the ductworks (repairing, extending)?
- Do ductwork systems offer the possibility for extension?
- Is the quantity of plugs sufficient (normal current plugs, computers, etc) for both library staff and users. Is the wiring tidy and well protected?
- Is the equipment in the auditorium sufficient for all the planned activities to be carried out?
- What is the overall assessment of installations fed by a wiring system.

Data

- Where is the server /server system located?
- Does this space have stable temperatures or is it in need of air-conditioning?
- Will the data infrastructure support an increased use of mobile devices?
- Is the library supported by back-up services providing additional security of data?
- Is there a public-address system for the whole library?
- Does the library provide W-LAN access?

Sanitary Areas (cleaning, lavatories, etc)

- Are there enough toilets?
- Are they well located?
- Are there enough adapted toilets for disabled persons?
- Is there vandalism by the users?
- Are toilets correctly equipped (soap dispensers, hand dryers, changing mats, hygienic paper, hangers in the toilets, etc)?
- Do they often break down (toilet chain, drain blockage, etc)?
- What kind of flooring is there?
- What material have the walls been covered with?
- What kind of ceiling is there?
- What material are doors made of?
- Is there a cleaning facility on each floor?
- What is the overall assessment of materials used for the finish?

Services

Service Areas

- What areas inside the library are designed for interaction with customers?

- What form of self-service do you employ?
- Do you have centralized loan services?
- How do customers check-out materials?
- Does the library need/ have a reception counter?
- Is the reception counter an adequate size for the needs of the users?
- Is there a centralised loan service at the reception counter?
- Is there a specific service point for reprography (i.e. copy, scan, print, download stations for digital media)?
- Do you have help desks and/or information points throughout the building?
- Are all service areas properly located and connected?

Shelving

- Is the shelving suitable for storing the collection?
- Do you have the right mix of shelving for the kinds of collections you have? Is there sufficient room for open or closed shelving?
- Do you have specialized media areas/ special collections? For what kind of media?
- How do you display or present different kinds of media/ special collections?
- Is there sufficient shelving for all the planned collections?
- Are distances between shelf aisles adequate according to norms?
- Is compact shelving used for a) storage; b) open access?
- Does it work well?

User areas

- Is there a sufficient number of seating places?
- Is there enough variety of seating? Please describe the types of seating (e.g. standard, IT-workplace, study booth, single place for reading and listening, place for information and quick consultation, group study, training rooms, carrels, multi-media workplaces, lounge space, table with armchairs, seat in an auditorium)
- Are there enough group study areas?
- Are there quiet areas designated for concentrated reading / studying?
- Is it possible for users to rearrange furniture as required?
- Is there suitable separation between the different types of seating areas?

Children's Area

- Is it organized as a separate room or special zone?
- Can it be accessed from the entrance area?
- Are there toilets near it? Do they offer changing tables?
- Are there parking spaces for prams?
- Is the children's area intended to serve both babies and toddlers? If yes, is attention given to the design of ceilings (the primary view for babies)?
- Does it have specific places for different activities and noise levels (meeting, reading, storytelling, physical exercise, fun areas, etc.)?
- Is it acoustically insulated from the rest of the library?
- Does it have natural light?
- Is the furniture themed? Are there theme corners that serve as places for inspiration?
- Does it have furniture for accompanying adults?
- Do shelving and furniture correspond to the height of children?
- Are there lending machines adapted for children?
- Does the area offer spaces for both boys and girls? Should some spaces/corners be reserved for separate interests?
- Is there enough space for programmes with groups of kindergarten children or school classes?

Young Adults

- Is the size appropriate for the community/ student population?
- Is it organized as a separate room or area?
- Is the space set apart from the children's area?
- Is it closely situated to the area for adults?
- Is the furniture appealing and does it meet the taste and requirements of young adults?
- Does the shelving suit a variety of media formats (e.g. nonfiction, music, DVD, books on CD or MP3, magazines, comic books, graphic novels)
- Does the space provide a positive, safe environment for studying, socializing, and leisure activities?
- Have the young adults been included in the planning, design, implementation, maintenance and marketing of the space?
- Is the space comfortable and colourful meeting the visual tastes of young adults?
- Does the design and equipment differ from other parts of the library?
- Is it interactive, flexible in design, and offers a variety of technology?
- Are special effects included in order to attract the target group?
- Is a variety of seating and work spaces offered?

- Do spaces allow group work, single study, sitting on the floor, private time?
- Is there enough space for programmes with groups?
- Are music and art (important elements of teen culture) incorporated into the design and service?
- Is the floor covering highly durable?

Staff Areas

- Are they properly located to provide services?
- Do the staff areas work for the purpose intended?
- Are the staff areas large enough?
- Do they have the right amenities (eg a lounge, break area, kitchen)?
- Are there separate lavatories for staff?
- Does the layout (open-plan, landscape, separate offices) work?
- Are the staff working spaces ergonomic and functional?
- Does the staff area have natural lighting?
- Is there a separate staff entrance? If this is not the case, should there should be one?
- Does the library provide parking spaces for staff?

Automation

- Is the circulation (check out, return) automated?
- Are sorting and book transport automated?
- If yes, is there a comprehensive logistical plan?
- Does the library have an automated storage and retrieval system?
- Are the systems well integrated and working correctly?
- Are there any other automated systems?
- If not, what other means of transportation of media/material are used?
- Over all do automated procedures work?

Maintenance

- Is the building easy to clean (flooring, toilets, etc)?
- Is the maintenance adequate (cleaning, replacements, checkups, etc)?
- Do dimensions and location of openings cause cleaning problems?
- Are the installations easy to access?

Conclusion

- Fairy question: If you had three wishes concerning the building, what would they be?
- Is there anything you would change?
- Anything particularly successful?