Building a New Library: Forget the answers, Remember the Questions

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Building a New Library: 
Forget the answers, Remember the Questions

- University of Cyprus Library: a case study
  - Figures, dates and pictures for the new building of the UCY Library
- Some dilemmas in the form of questions
- **Mission**: the university or the surrounding context?
- **The principles to be fulfilled**: how it appears impossible to defend them
- **Volume and size**: needs of the present or approaches for the future? Which future?
- **Size and time**: never in time, too early vs. too late,
- **Users (librarians) participation**:
  - how many? and when?
  - How? organisation structures or team works, or both?
- **User centricity**: a question of building / services / people or all?
Brussels: the centre of Europe

Cyprus: the centre of the world
The Library within the UCY campus
The Library of the University of Cyprus
“Stelios Ioannou”

calendar and plans by Jean Nouvel
The Library of the University of Cyprus “Stelios Ioannou”

- Total cost of construction: 29 m€
- Donation: 9 m€
- Architect: Jean Nouvel (AJN, FR), hired and funded by the donor
- The concept of the Architect: the nearby Aronas hill, monumental
- The concept of the librarian: a “hybrid” building for a “hybrid” library
- Concept accepted by UCY: March 2003
- Complete draft plans: January 2004
- Final plans: 2005 (approved by international committee)
- International bid for the construction: completed May 2011
- Constructions started: May 2012
- Expected/planned completion: December 2014
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• Total surface: 15,700 s.q.
• Students population: 10,000 (plans for 2020)
• One roof for 4 services:
  – the Library,
  – Information Systems Service,
  – Educational Technology Centre,
  – Languages Centre
• Library: distinct separate areas
• Sharing spaces for common use: training rooms, laboratories, controlled entrance, data centre
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- Five levels, “one stop studying”
Forget the answers, Remember the Questions
Some dilemmas in the form of questions

Mission

• Is it really a University Library, (departmental, faculty)? Or something more? Define it.

• Will it serve only the students, the professors, the researchers of the university or the whole scientific community of the surrounding environment, that lacks of a similar library

• What are the data proving?
  – In the country # libraries, volumes books, journals, databases librarians per habitant, user, students

• Is it really a university library (departmental, faculty)?
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Mission
• The first library with currently more than 300k books perspectives for 600k in 20 (?) years
• 30,000 e-journals
• 50,000 e-books
• No real national library collection and operation (1.6 books per 10 habitants) other countries 16-36 per 10 inhabitants)

Mission
• National research library open to the scientific community
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The principles:

• Believing that the UCY had to gain from the imagination, creativity and experience of the architects, the library tried not to restrict them but to concentrate only to basic principles, concerning rather the approaches and philosophy of practical issues that were implied ...
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The principles: communication with the architects

• Identification of the relative standards to defend the principles
• List all the routine tasks, all the every day operations, all the repeated functions
• Walk on the library plans as a particular user
• Then as another particular users,
• be your users
• Convince the architect for the needs
Forget the answers, Remember the Questions

Some dilemmas in the form of questions

The principles: communication with the architects

• The users (librarians)
• The architects
• and the “god” The Architect
• Usually the a “god” is more listening (prays, claims, requests, user needs) than speaking about them
• Achieve common sense, language, keywords, not just terms
• Refer to the standards (e.g. #seats,)
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The principles:
The following basic principles had to be commonly understood, agreed and finalised

1. **zones of use:** clarity and orientation
   - Minimise the questions where is, how can I go to

2. space expandability, space use flexibility and modifiability
   - Restrictions of the shape, expansion is not the applicable

3. locations uniformity and familiarity

4. services synergy and integration
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Sizes and volume:

• **Current needs** vs. **visions** of library development
  – Covering the pressing present or approaching the future user needs
  – How to foresee the future user needs????
• Forecast for linear or exponential increase of the material
  – Projection of the past or discontinuation of the future
  – known needs of old departments vs. unknown needs of future departments and courses
• P-books of e-books for how many years
• Books or journals (replied)
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Time

• Which is the life cycle of the new library building
  – 15, 25, 30-50, 50-100 years?
• The decided size never in time, either too early vs. too late,
• Expandability vs. flexibility of space use
• Team work vs. single study spaces or modifiable
• Spaces for open stacks or study areas
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Users (librarians) participation:

• Participation vs. (wo)man-hours saving, how many, all or some
• organization structures or team works, or both?
• When users (librarians) participation adds value
• What if the first plans are to change 80%
• Before the final drafts
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**User centricity:** a question of

- Building
- Services / tools
- people
- or all plus philosophy
- There are no general or average “users”
- How to cover the dynamic individual needs of each user personally
- How to exploit the natural characteristics of the information
- One stop studying approach for the building, the services / tools, the people
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User centricity: some examples

• Journals has to be in different places from books. Why
  – There are sciences where books are uses more heavily than because
  – one stop studying principle: A undergraduate student of the socials science needs a dictionary and a journal and a database and a book and they have to be in a ... walking distance.
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User centricity: some examples

• Why rooms for team work cannot be transformed into rooms for personal study or vice versa if necessary

• Relocation of the uses

• Flexibility principle:

• It is not guaranteed that in 10-25 ... years the needs will be the same as when the questionnaires were filled in by the today (already yesterday) students.
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Thank you!