

NATIONAL DESIGNING LIBRARIES CONFERENCE

10am - 4pm - Wednesday 17th June 2026

Swiss Cottage Library: 88 Avenue Road, London NW3 3HA

Designing
Libraries



Shape the future of library design

Join library leaders, architects, designers and technology specialists at the landmark event to explore innovative, inclusive and sustainable design in libraries.

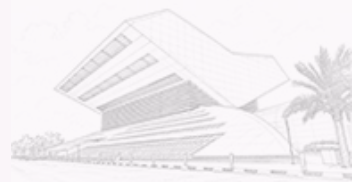
Connect, learn, and network with industry experts. Open to all involved in planning and designing new or refurbished libraries.

Themes

- Innovation in library services and spaces
- Technology that transforms user experiences
- Sustainability and environmentally conscious design
- Inclusivity and co-design
- Key trends driving modern library design

Highlights

- Showcasing design innovation and best practice
- Discussion of the Libraries Improvement Fund
- Sponsors showcasing new products and services



Foreword from the Chair



It is a pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural Designing Libraries Conference. This event brings together colleagues from across the sector to explore the critical role that design plays in shaping modern library services.

Across the UK we are fortunate to have some of the most innovative library design in the world, demonstrating how thoughtfully planned user-centred spaces can transform both services and communities.

For me, design is about impact. Well-designed libraries create welcoming, intuitive environments that support excellent customer service, enable efficient delivery, and most importantly, ensure that services are inclusive and accessible to all.

One of the strengths of our profession is our ability to learn from each other. This conference brings together public, academic, school and specialist libraries, and I firmly believe that by sharing ideas across these different contexts, we can continue to innovate and improve.

I am also delighted that we are joined by international colleagues who will share global perspectives and good practice. Library design is a global conversation, and these insights are invaluable as we respond to changing needs and expectations.

Libraries remain one of the most trusted and inclusive public services, and the way we design our spaces will shape how we continue to serve our communities in the future. I hope you find the conference inspiring and valuable, and I look forward to the conversations it will spark.

Ayub Khan MBE, FCLIP, FRSA
Conference Chair, Designing Libraries
<https://designinglibraries.org.uk/>

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MEDIA PARTNER

Rob Green

Editor in Chief, Information Professional



Information Professional

Rob Green is Editor in Chief at CILIP, the Library and Information Association. He has been part of CILIP's editorial team for over a decade overseeing the launch of Information Professional magazine, Pen&inc. magazine, and a re-designed Buyers' Guide.

During his time with Information Professional, Rob has worked closely with the Designing Libraries team on editorial content for the magazine and has kept a close eye on the latest developments in design.

Before joining CILIP Rob worked in a variety of media organisations delivering news, features and communications strategy.

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OUR COMMITMENT

We are committed to creating a conference environment where everyone feels welcome, safe, and respected.

Respect and courtesy

All participants are expected to treat one another with professionalism, courtesy, and consideration, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, or background.

Inclusion and belonging

We aim to foster a positive and inclusive atmosphere free from harassment, discrimination, bullying, or offensive behaviour. We value diverse perspectives and encourage all participants to contribute and engage respectfully.

Professional conduct

To help ensure a successful event for everyone, participants are expected to follow event guidelines, respect speakers and fellow attendees, and adhere to conference schedules and instructions.

Photography

The event will be photographed. If you do not wish to appear in any photos please let the organisers know.

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CONFERENCE AGENDA



10:00am - 4:30pm | Wednesday 17th June 2026



MORNING SESSIONS

10:00 - 10:30



Registration and Coffee

10:30 - 10:35



Welcome from Councillor Francis (Cabinet Member for Jobs Young People and Culture, Camden)

10:35 - 10:45



Ayub Khan (Designing Libraries)
Introductions

10:45 - 10:50



Sponsors Spotlight (A big shout out to our Sponsors)

10:50- 11:00



Sonia Ramdhian (Chief Development Officer CILIP)
Design matters – our spaces can be as powerful as our services

11:00 - 11:20



Karen Latimer (Chief Adviser, Designing Libraries)
Key Challenges in Library Design

11:20 - 11:40



Laura Dyer (Deputy CEO, Arts Council England)
Libraries and Place Making

11:40 - 12:00



Spotlight: Jan Kattein (Director JKA)
Architect for Swiss Library Refurbishments

12:00 - 12:15



Melissa Turgut (PhD Student) and
Patricia Aelbrecht (Supervisor) Libraries as Critical
Social Infrastructure PhD Cardiff University

12:15 - 13:15



Lunch and Exhibitor Networking

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CONFERENCE AGENDA



10:00am - 4:30pm | Wednesday 17th June 2026



AFTERNOON SESSIONS

13:15 - 13:45



Philip Kent

International Perspective
(Chair of IFLA Library Design)

13:45 - 14:00



Emily Peasgood & Ben Allen

Inclusive Design and Co-Production

14:00 - 14:15



Ed Fay (Director of Bristol University Library)

Planning for a new Bristol University Library:
Highs and Lows

14:15- 14:45



Coffee Break

14:45- 15:45



**Panel Session - Emerging Trends in the Sector -
Chaired by Sharon Memis (CEO and Secretary General IFLA)**

- **Isobel Hunter** (Libraries Connected)
- **Tina Morton** (The National Archives)
- **Tabitha Witherick** (Libraries Rising)
- **Ben Meunier** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)
- **Emma Thompson** (Manchester Metropolitan University/SCONUL)

15:45 - 16:00



Closing Remarks

Luke Burton (Director, Libraries ACE)

16:00 - 16:30



Optional Tour

Fiona Tarn (Head of Camden Libraries)

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SPEAKERS

Sonia Ramdhian

Chief Development
Officer at CILIP



Sonia Ramdhian is Chief Development Officer at CILIP, the UK's library and information association. She leads strategic partnerships, collaborative initiatives, and the development of products and content that strengthen CILIP's role as a thought leader and trusted voice for the profession.

Holding an MA in Librarianship from the University of Sheffield, Sonia brings extensive experience as a library and information professional across multiple sectors. She is committed to supporting current and future professionals and is a Chartered member of CILIP.

Karen Latimer

Chief Adviser at
Designing Libraries



Karen Latimer is a retired academic librarian and library building consultant with extensive expertise in library design. She is a past Chair of the Designing Libraries Advisory Group and the IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Standing Committee, and a former Secretary of LIBER's Architecture Group.

Karen serves as a trustee of several heritage organisations and has authored more than 50 publications. She has judged major architectural and library design awards internationally. A CILIP Fellow and honorary member of the Royal Society of Ulster Architects, she received an IFLA Award for library design and was appointed OBE in 2007.

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SPEAKERS

Laura Dyer MBE,
ACE Deputy CEO,
Places, Engagement,
and Libraries



Laura Dyer MBE leads on the growing agenda around local government, devolution and place-making, as well as overall leadership of all five of the Arts Council's area teams and our library development team.

Before joining the Arts Council, Laura was Chief Executive of East Midlands Arts Board. Until 2010, when she became Executive Director Midlands and South West, she held the post of Executive Director, East Midlands. During her time in the East Midlands, Laura led a capital development programme which transformed the region's cultural landscape, with a total investment of over £130 million creating six new arts and cultural facilities.

After postgraduate studies at Essex University, Laura started her career in the arts in a number of theatre and community arts companies before moving into large outdoor events programming at the Garden Festival Wales. She went on to work for local authorities in Norfolk and London.

Laura joined the Arts Council in 2003. She is a member of The Arts Council Executive Board.

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SPEAKERS

Jan Kattein (Sponsor)

Director
Jan Kattein Architects
<https://jankattein.com/>



Jan Kattein founded JKA in 2004 with a commitment to collaborative design. His work spans architecture, design, urbanism, theatre, writing, and public engagement, developing methods that cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. He is the author of two books on collaborative design practice:

The Architecture Chronicle (2014) and Londoners Making London (2024). Jan teaches and lectures internationally, holds a lectureship at UCL, and serves on the Institute of Place Management and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Quality Review Panel.

Melissa Turgut
(PhD Student) and
Patricia Aelbrecht
(Supervisor)



Melissa Turgut is a Doctoral Researcher in Human Geography in partnership with Camden Libraries.



Patricia Aelbrecht is associate Professor in Urban Design and Intercultural Studies at Cardiff University and Co-Founding Director of Public Space Observatory Research Centre.

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SPEAKERS

Philip Kent

Chair of the Library
Design section at IFLA



With more than 40 years' experience in university and research libraries in Australia and the UK, he has developed expertise in leadership and change management. His career has also included senior responsibilities in knowledge and information management, IT, risk, and audit at Australia's national science agency, CSIRO.

At the University of Melbourne, he oversaw cultural collections, while at the University of Bristol he led the development of a new library featuring galleries, events, and research facilities open to the public. At the University of Sydney, he led a major library restructure to align services with institutional strategy.

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SPEAKERS

Dr Emily Peasgood

(Sponsor)

Artist, composer and founder of Emily Peasgood Studio

<https://emilypeasgood.com/>



Dr Emily Peasgood began her career in sound art and music before focusing on the co-design of inclusive public spaces with communities, local authorities, and cultural organisations. She holds a PhD exploring collaboration and participation in inclusive projects and is known for creating large-scale sound sculptures and socially engaged public artworks.

Her work has received recognition from the Ivors Academy, the Sound of the Year Awards, and the PRS Foundation. Recent projects include Haydock Library with Studio Ben Allen and a space-age musical pavilion commissioned for a public park in Stevenage.

Ben Allen

(Sponsor)

Architect and founder of the Studio Ben Allen

<https://www.studiobenallen.com/>



Ben studied architecture at the Mackintosh School of Architecture and worked with Fletcher Priest Architects, Jonathan Tuckey Design, and artist Olafur Eliasson, contributing to projects including Reykjavik's award-winning Icelandic National Concert Hall. Through Studio Ben Allen, he creates distinctive, collaborative spaces using simple materials in innovative ways.

The practice was named one of Dezeen's top 20 emerging architects globally in 2018. Its projects have received major recognition, including Europe's first WELL-certified workplace for Cundall, the 2021 Don't Move, Improve! award for House Recast, and the 2022 Royal Scottish Academy Architecture Prize.

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SPEAKERS

Ed Fay

Director of Library Services
at the University of
Bristol



Ed Fay is Director of Library Services and University Librarian at the University of Bristol, responsible for Library strategy, University learning environments, and the Centre for Cultural Collections.

He has a decade of experience in higher education leadership and has developed a consciously human-centred approach to community and service development.

He has been variously responsible for open research, hybrid learning, and digital scholarship and has a particular interest in progressing the civic mission of universities.

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PANELLISTS

Sharon Memis

Secretary General and
CEO of IFLA



Sharon took up the role of Secretary General and CEO of IFLA in June 2023. Sharon's background is in international cultural relations and higher education. She is a passionate internationalist and speaks several languages.

Sharon spent most of her career with the British Council and held senior leadership roles in Europe, North America and Asia promoting UK Education and Culture. She has also worked for a range of organisations as a consultant in international strategy. Prior to joining IFLA, Sharon was Chief Operating Officer at the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Isobel Hunter

Chief Executive of
Libraries Connected



Isobel Hunter MBE is Chief Executive of Libraries Connected, the membership and advocacy body for public libraries in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Crown Dependencies. Since 2018, she has led the organisation's growth as a national voice for public libraries, providing evidence, analysis, and policy insight to government and partners. Her work focuses on reading, literacy, learning, and the role of libraries in tackling inequality and supporting communities.

Previously, she held senior roles at The National Archives and Arts Council England, working in cultural policy, public investment, and sector reform. She was awarded an MBE for services to public libraries.

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PANELLISTS

Tina Morton

Head of Archive Sector
Leadership at The
National Archives



Tina Morton is Head of Archive Sector Leadership at The National Archives. A qualified archivist since 2002, she has worked in local and central government, including roles as Borough Archivist and Head of Heritage for a London Borough. She later joined the MLA Council, managing major cultural improvement and grant programmes.

Since 2012, Tina has focused on archive sector leadership and development, most recently as Head of Archive Sector Leadership. She serves on the steering committee of the Community Archives and Heritage Group and is a board member of Archives for London and Friends of the Nations' Libraries.

Tabitha Witherick
Chief Executive of
Libraries Rising



Tabitha Witherick Macaulay is Chief Executive of Libraries Rising, the national network for leaders in children's public and schools library services. The charity works in partnership to create libraries for today's world; safe, inclusive spaces where children and young people feel understood, empowered and inspired.

She brings 25 years experience working in libraries across local government and the charity sector, with a background in service development and senior leadership..

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PANELLISTS

Benjamin Meunier

University Librarian at
The Chinese University of
Hong Kong



Emma Thompson

Deputy Director,
Manchester
Metropolitan
University Library



Benjamin Meunier (文奈尔) is the University Librarian at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Ben serves as Secretary of the IFLA Library Design Section. He was Secretary of the LIBER (Association of European Research Libraries) Architecture Group, between 2018 and 2023.

Before joining CUHK in 2023, he was Director of Operations at UCL Library, Culture, Collections and Open Science, overseeing Estate developments and contributing to the strategic development of 16 libraries, 4 museums and the university theatre.

Ben led the construction of the £69m UCL Student Centre and the development of library services in UCL East.

Emma Thompson is Deputy Director, Service Transformation & Experience at Manchester Metropolitan University Library & Cultural Services. Her first library post was as a teenage Saturday assistant in a Belfast public library, but most of her career has been in Higher Education. Her experience in four university libraries includes partnership with business schools to achieve accreditation, leading on open research and launching a student-centred learning development service.

At Manchester Met, Emma has responsibility for user experience, insight and innovation and is working on a major capital project to transform the university library for the 2030s and beyond.

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CLOSING REMARKS

Luke Burton

Director, Libraries at
Arts Council England



Luke Burton has been Director, Libraries at Arts Council England since November 2022 where he works on projects, advocacy and partnership building as part of the Arts Council's role as the national development agency for public libraries in England. Prior to his current role he worked in public and prison libraries.

He began his career working in local studies in Gateshead and prison libraries across County Durham before becoming a librarian in Newcastle in 2010. He spent 12 years in Newcastle in various roles including managing their Business & IP Centre and leading on digital projects as Digital Development Manager, before becoming Service Manager in 2019, leading the team there through the Council's Covid response.

He is passionate about the value and role of libraries with a particular interest in emerging technologies, literacies, data and reading for pleasure.

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**Technology built for
modern library operations**

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Across 30.000 libraries globally, Bibliotheca stands as the unrivalled leader in library solutions. From cutting-edge software to seamless automation, we innovate to enhance library operations. Committed to collaboration and global standards, we put libraries first, ensuring they stay at the forefront of progress. Join us at Bibliotheca where library excellence begins. It's not just about what we deliver; it's about how we empower libraries to thrive, evolve, and remain indispensable pillars of knowledge in their communities.

thedesignconcept



Innovation Breeds Inspiration

<https://thedesignconcept.co.uk/>

At thedesignconcept we believe in constantly evolving and innovating to meet the demands of the ever-changing library landscape. We employ passionate design professionals who deliver new and inspiring solutions and who are dedicated to looking after each stage of the design process - from enquiry through to installation.

We are proud of our continued success within the library sector and put this down to our fresh and uninhibited approach to design and branding, considering the end user throughout the design process, as well as the support and attention to detail we offer our clients.

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fglibrary

We create exceptional library spaces where passion meets professionalism, and innovation thrives

<https://fglibrary.co.uk/>

We pride ourselves on being a people-centric business. Our dedicated, passionate, and dynamic team sets us apart, enabling us to provide an unparalleled service that transforms libraries into exceptional spaces.

Our approach is sympathetic to the changing expectations of a modern library and our solutions are designed to offer a versatile and future-proofed space at the heart of a community, with consideration always made to the environmental and social impact of any project.

Our reputation has been built over many years by listening closely to our clients and working with them to bring exciting new solutions to the market.

Gresswell

Shaping futures, one library at a time for over 80 years

<https://www.gresswell.co.uk/>

Gresswell is a trusted partner in creating library spaces that are intuitive, inclusive, and deeply connected to the communities they serve. Combining expert design, quality resources and full installation support, we offer everything you need, all under one roof. Our in-house specialists draw on decades of experience, taking the time to understand your vision and translate it into adaptable environments that inspire learning and connection.

Designed with flexibility, local identity and the potential to grow, adapt and generate income, every space is carefully considered. From family-friendly areas and intuitive zoning to smart bookstock management, we work with you to create inclusive, sustainable and welcoming environments.

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opening the book

We help libraries move from passive provision of books and resources to actively engaging the audience

<https://www.openingthebook.com/>

At Opening the Book we have studied the way people move through a space, what causes them to pause and linger, what makes them pick up a book. We apply this knowledge to create a unique discovery layout for every library we design.

As well as being book promotion experts, we create libraries as successful 'third spaces' for different kinds of activity – learning, making, collaborating – from business advice to wellbeing hubs.

Opening the Book has trained more than 20,000 library staff across 5 continents. This daily interaction with libraries on the ground informs the practical flexibility of our designs. We are passionate about libraries and their future development – please get in touch if you are too.

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<https://bruynzeel.co.uk/>

Bruynzeel Storage Systems builds on a heritage dating back to 1897 and has been developing storage solutions since 1953. Today, the company is a European market leader in space-creating storage systems, helping organisations worldwide use space more efficiently and effectively.

Bruynzeel designs and manufactures high quality storage solutions for sectors such as libraries, archives, museums, offices and healthcare. Its storage solutions are used by leading institutions around the world and are designed to optimise available space, improve accessibility and support the safe storage and preservation of valuable assets.

Driven by continuous innovation and a strong focus on quality and reliability, each solution is tailored to the specific requirements of the space, collection and its users. Sustainability is an integral part of this approach, with climate neutral operations (Scope 1 & 2) and responsible material choices embedded in the design and production process.

By maximising storage capacity within existing buildings, Bruynzeel storage solutions help organisations reduce their physical footprint and associated environmental impact, while ensuring that collections remain accessible and well protected for future generations.

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CONSULTING LTD

<https://mckenzierogers.com/>

Mckenzie Rogers Consulting Ltd is a consultancy specialising in library and heritage services. Formed in 2015, the company has a wealth of experience across the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the Middle East. We have a core team: Sue Mckenzie Director and Ted Rogers – Director. We also have a wider team of associates, each of whom offer specialist skills and experience.



Peters

The one-stop-shop for inspiring library spaces

Email designservices@peters.co.uk or visit peters.co.uk/furniture to find out more.

A leading specialist supplier of both books and furniture to schools and libraries across the UK and beyond, Peters is a one-stop-shop for inspiring library spaces.

From cosy reading corners and inviting book nooks to dynamic, multifunctional learning zones, our team of qualified interior designers brings extensive expertise in creating inspiring library environments. We design for primary and secondary schools, public libraries, nurseries, and community spaces—both indoors and outdoors—crafting impactful areas that foster learning, creativity, and connection.

Take advantage of our bespoke interior design consultation service to create your own inspiring reading or learning space. Let us know your requirements and we'll visit you on site, or work from digital plans and photographs to create a 3D CAD design and quotation. From small reading corners to large libraries, our team can bring your vision to life.

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lorensbergs

<https://www.lorensbergs.co.uk/>

Lorensbergs works closely with libraries to improve access to services and resources. Our market-leading solution, Netloan PC booking provides a comprehensive session management system for greater control and accessibility to library PCs, together with self-service print payment and release. Netloan Wi-Fi print gives users the opportunity to print from their own devices in the library and from home. Netloan integration on self-service payment kiosks achieves a number of further benefits. It provides library users with the ability to make PC bookings and self-service print or PC payments at the same point as carrying out book-related transactions. Staff have better availability to help and engage their users, and more time to run activities. It can even support longer opening hours.

Why talk to us today?

The Netloan portfolio gives you the technology and data to manage internet access and printing with ease. It supports your libraries in being dynamic and welcoming spaces for all, with vital infrastructure that helps your library services and digital offer to reach new possibilities. It's a great starting point when planning your next big library project. Talk to Jo Slade at the Designing Libraries conference. Call 01992 415500, email enquiries@lorensbergs.co.uk, or visit www.lorensbergs.co.uk.

Solus

<https://www.sol.us/>

Think of us as a library-loving tech collective spread across the UK, Australia and the US – fuelled by super fast broadband, coffee and curiosity, as well as a genuine passion for re-imagining library experiences.

We're a tight-knit group of professionals who work hand-in-hand to build tools that anticipate what libraries and patrons need next.

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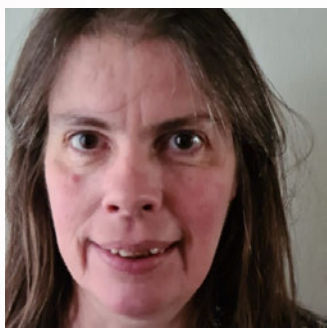
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THANK-YOUS

Fiona Tam

Head of Libraries,
London Borough of Camden



Fiona has worked in the libraries sector for 37 years. She has worked in public and further education college libraries.

Fiona is proud to be the Chair of London Libraries and has worked in 7 London Boroughs during her public library career, enjoying the variety of developing library services to support residents.

Fiona's current role is Head of Libraries in Camden which is a vibrant place to work and allows a focus on libraries and the local studies and archive service.

Thank you to our advisory board from the following organisations for their valued advice and support.



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
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The library
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association



**IFLA Section
Library Design**



**Libraries
Connected**



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GETTING THERE



Address:

Swiss Cottage Library,
88 Avenue Road,
Camden. London
NW3 3HA



Tube: Swiss Cottage



Bus: 31, C11



Car Park:

97 Avenue Road,
London NW3 5EG

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CONTACT THE TEAM



Mag Astill

Content Creator

mag.astill@designinglibraries.org.uk

**Designing
Libraries**



Carol Brown

Project and Business Support

carol.brown@designinglibraries.org.uk



Nick Cave

Digital Officer and
Social Media Engagement

nick.cave@designinglibraries.org.uk

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Designing Libraries

Your Ultimate Resource for Library Design and Innovation

- **Freely Accessible:** explore a wealth of information on new build, refurbishment or extensions for all types and sizes of libraries.
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