



WF Education Group

supporting educational outcomes

Designing Libraries

A brief guide to successfully managing the process of planning and implementing a new or refurbished library interior.

"Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities."

Professor and Director of the School of Library & Information Science at the
University of South Carolina, R. David Lankes

YOUR SPACE. YOUR DESIGN.



Designing libraries and learning spaces has become more complex over recent years with introduction of shared services, self-service, merchandising and e-books, and accepted requirements for spaces for collaboration and to enhance wellbeing.

The scope for designing a library space is broad (and will only get broader!) and needs to take a considered, strategic, collaborative approach.

A successful outcome for any project depends on sound detailed planning and consultation during the preliminary stages, good communication, and then adhering to these plans as much as possible..

Your project team may be required to learn new skills such as:

- reading plans and scale
- interpreting drawings
- producing and distributing relevant meeting notes
- scheduling timeline meetings and communicating across sometimes multiplatform channels

The more you know now, the more you will be able to stay in control later!

Your library designer wants to create the perfect space for your needs and so will be happy to help you through the process.

Before creating your design brief

The team

Forming your team is key.

Each team member should:

- know the project objectives
- be aware of his/her responsibilities within the team
- understand the commitment required e.g., time, meetings, visits
- have clear expectations of their role
- be introduced to contractors and suppliers and any consultants

In a small project e.g., a school library refurbishment, you may only be a team of 'one', so you will need to be clear on who you will be reporting to, who (however informally) will be your support and how often you will need to update key stakeholders in the project.

On larger projects, there should be a dedicated project team in place which will include your external library design company, contractor team and architects. There may well be many other stakeholders involved in the project, so it is important to determine from the very beginning who is responsible for what.

Finally, identify the person with the 'power of sign off' (if it is not you) and arrange to regularly keep them updated on developments and progress.





Budget Planning

The success of any project depends on understanding who controls the budget, how it can be spent and on what.

If you need to build the budget, as part of your team's remit, remember that many suppliers will help you with estimating costs. They have relevant experience and will be able to advise on inflation; 'hidden' costs you may not have considered; trends that may influence the cost and future-proofing.

Be aware of the relationship between the building of the budget and the development of the design brief. If you or even another department holds (i.e., has authority to spend) the budget, your planning and managing start here. Guard against running ahead with your design brief. Creating a brilliant design and selecting your furnishings early on can be frustrating and very disappointing if you find out later, they do not fit within your internal guidelines.

Make every effort to understand your internal procurement processes. Take time to understand and get to know the person (or department) who authorises and/or places the orders.

Learn the rules that govern procurement within your library. Only by knowing the procedures will you be able to exert influence as to how money is spent.

Make sure to be aware of: any additional costs, such as:

- installation costs
- delivery costs
- non-standard colours and finishes



Funding for schools

Schools are under pressure to deliver an outstanding educational provision for students in an increasingly tough financial environment.

Additional pots of money are available in the form of grants from trusts and foundations, as well as specific government departments.

Navigating the mass of information and differing criteria and application processes can often mean that eligible schools are not receiving money that they could be entitled to

There are many grants available in the UK which may be relevant to your school...

Guidance for applying

Check the latest grant information on the relevant website

Check for full eligibility for your organisation and proposed project

Read all guidance and supplementary documentation

Contact the grant provider directly to clarify any questions or issues

Apply for the grant, ensuring that all steps are followed



Consultation

Consultation is key.

It eliminates guesswork and personal preference and throughout the design process, it is important to ensure that you are designing a library based on genuine needs and a vision for the future.

You can carry out any consultations yourself or look for an external supplier who has experience in planning and implementing library projects.

You may find that one of your suppliers or contractors offers the service as an add-on to their core services.

The principle behind consultation is to:

- engage stakeholders in the design process
- listen to end-users through creative focus groups
- work with library teams and staff at all levels
- fulfil the consultation process to meet budget requirements
- analyse and feedback for actionable conclusions
- create a relevant library interior, based on all the feedback

Your library designer will be able to help you with this and share insights from previous client's successes and their own discovery interview process.

Before a consultation meeting, remember to have everything you need. This may include:

- drawings/dimensions
- colour palettes
- book stock numbers
- specific requirements or zones
- inspiration / mood boards





Timing and planning

Smaller projects can sometimes be more demanding than larger ones!

With larger projects, you may have a whole support team around you (premises managers, designers, suppliers, contractors, architects, builders,) but on the smaller projects, you may be doing it on your own

You may need to consider:

- Project planning and timing i.e., the exact sequence of events.

These will differ from project to project but may include:

- book removal and possible off-site storage
- cataloguing and selecting book stock
- removal and storage of re-useable items
- manufacture of furniture or bespoke items
- structural and other works (e.g., electrical, cabling)
- other contractors (e.g., RFID/self-service; decorators; IT (Information Technology))
- flooring and carpet fitting
- installation time for new furniture
- snagging
- RFID and self-service implementation
- stocking the library
- signage and wayfinding
- the finishing touches!

"I work backwards from the launch/opening day. I look forward and work backwards!"

Meryl Jones, Assistant Head of Library and Heritage Service



Creating a timeline



This is a powerful tool and will become your best friend as a project gets underway.

You are responsible for meeting that key opening date and realistically planning each stage of the project will help to keep you on track.

Include within the timeline all landmark events; start with the end (usually the public-opening day); back through stock going on to shelves; signage installed; carpets fitting (essential before the furniture arrives!); back to placing the original order.

Your library designer will assist you to liaise with external suppliers, the supply chain, especially where specific fabrics or materials are specified, can often be long, and it is important to be realistic when factoring hex elements into your plan.

Builders, architects, designers, and other contractor-suppliers will also have their own timelines, so it is important to 'stay connected' and be able to share your master plan and manage expectations.

For many projects there will be a mix of internal and external contractors - the time plan should also take this into account.

Creating the design brief

Know your user!


LMS data will help to identify trends, demographics, and usage, plus findings from any consultations/focus groups/surveys and access to previous data on usage, behaviours, and expectations.

Local communities, heritage groups and neighbourhood groups will want to have their say and considering the wider views when preparing the design brief can reap dividends later.

"It was a significant challenge to get the amount of shelving needed for all the stock, allow space for furniture and circulation but the finished result more than exceeds our expectations."

The excellent design really complements the building and throughout the project, WF Education had a keen eye for detail. In the Kent History and Library Centre, we have a building we can all be proud of."

James Pearson, KCC Project Manager,
Libraries, Registration & Archives



"Library designers are a great source of information that you can use when preparing your initial design brief."

We are always happy to provide specs, literature, samples and arrange visits to other libraries or our offices."

Michaela Lancaster, Head of Design,
WF Education Group

Key principles of the design brief:

- a written document with accredited authors (who and when it was written)
- sets out the aims and objectives of the project and records expected outcomes
- acts as a specification for any third parties
- a referral point for everyone involved in the project
- records strategic decisions
- must be an agreed document by all on the project team and senior management

Design brief content

You may want to consider some of these headings for your design brief:

- hard data - stock levels, occupancy rates
- project plan - dates, responsibilities, contractor details
- style, look and feel for the new library
- stock policy if it affects layout issues
- services points (their purpose and function)
- seating (types, style, purpose)
- shelving (mobile, fixed, bays, colour)
- accessibility
- security including RFID self-issue/return machines
- cafe - what are the implications of providing catering; to what level is provision required?
- consultant's appointment – what outside help you may need and possible fees; what skills are not available within your team – for example creating 3D walkthroughs, scale drawings etc.
- general information, drawings, and plans
- budget – consider whether the money available is declared within a tender document or in briefing documents to potential suppliers



The Team - internal and external

Internal team

Consider the potential demands of the project, and if in-house skills can happily meet those demands.

Record the minutes of any meetings and share them amongst your team with clear action points and identified responsibilities.

External team

Main Contactors

Understand the role of your main contractor. If the order for internal furnishings is being placed by the contractor, they must be kept in the loop.

Understanding their role and working with them to achieve the desired outcome is key.

Architects

Work with your architect and develop the relationship, the better they understand your vision the better the designs will be. Combine your own professional skills and your knowledge of your end-users and their requirements with their expertise. Draw on the consultation work you have prepared and share the outcomes.

The library designer

Your translator! Include your library designer/furnishings supplier from start to finish. With their experience, they will be a useful resource for you.

They will empower those with the responsibility for shaping physical spaces to design future flexible, fit-for-purpose environments that are engaging and inspiring.

Suppliers have a wealth of experience in designing libraries so can give you a lot of support. They will explain any architect's plans, initial designs, and layouts to you. Ask if they would be happy to give your team a workshop on topics such as:

- understanding the plans
- scale - how the space will work
- colour schemes
- details such as elevations, isometrics, drawing protocol

Understanding, checking and evaluating quotations

Once quotations for designs and furnishings come in, you and your team will need to assess them across some of the following criteria:

- does the quote correspond to the layout plan?
- do the quote and plan correspond to the design brief?
- verify the specification (literature, visuals, etc)
- check quantities and arithmetic
- read any terms and conditions (i.e., the terms under which the supplier will trade with you - for example when they will expect payment)
- compare proposals to ensure the best value







Co-creation workshops

An alternative approach to designing libraries is to adopt a co-creation approach.

This calls for the input of specially selected groups of people to develop insights that the fuel interior designs, layout, and the new product development.

Co-creation can bring a unique perspective to the design process and your library designer will be able to use the co-creation process to produce 3D visualisations, sketch-ups, and walkthroughs.

Learning from others

One of the best ways of approaching your library design project is to learn from others. Your library designer will have a wealth of case studies they can show you and will be happy to take you for visits to other projects.

Other libraries are always happy to talk about their experiences and supplier websites will be an extremely useful source of information.

Keep up-to-date with current trends and research to gain a better understanding of expectations, from remote services to merchandising to flexible spaces.

Meet Michaela, WF Education's Head of Design



Our design team can help you create your next amazing library space, using our truly turnkey in-house service - dealing with one friendly team, from render to reality.

Our specialist design team will work with you and your colleagues to make layout suggestions which will maximise your space and budget.

We have taken care that the elements we offer are robust and appropriate for use and we place great importance on providing quality furniture, equipment, and resources, that will stand the test of time.

For full fit-out projects or multiple spaces we will illustrate our ideas using CAD drawings and, if appropriate, 3D colour renders to help you visualise the proposed space.

"My position is to oversee and drive the design of amazing spaces. The essence of engaging design will always be about people - how they use a space and how it makes them feel. It is about the realities of what makes for an attractive, inspiring, and meaningful environment, not about passing fads or fashion. It is rewarding to work closely with our clients to identify their vision and then translating that into full design solutions".

Michaela's Top Library Design Tips

- Identify and agree activities within the space, list priorities and what is non-negotiable
- Take account of containment and natural light
- What types of books are to be displayed and how?
- Arranging stock - making your book collection a special attraction
- Reading spaces - make them cosy, secure and welcoming for all ages
- Combine practicality and creativity
- Aesthetics, mood and feel - think colour schemes and mixing materials and finishes
- Think about access and ownership

Discuss your space

Together we can create amazing libraries...

Whether you require a full fit-out in a new build, to upgrade part of an existing library or refurbish a whole new learning space, we offer you a complete turnkey service including:

- Preparation of library designs and 30 layouts
- Consultancy on space planning, library furniture, equipment, and associated installations
- Expert Project Management
- Quality and Safety Management

We will provide you with all the help you need, from planning your library layout design right through to installation, aftercare and maintenance.



At WF Education Group, we focus our efforts on supporting outcomes and empowering you to design the right space for your needs.

We think differently and add value by bringing easy-to-configure solutions and expertise: whatever the size, space, or the activities you plan within it.

Contact us



hello@wf-education.com



+44 (0) 1743 812 200



Phoenix House
Battlefield Enterprise Park
Stafford Drive, Shrewsbury,
SY1 3FE

