

Introduction

The major part of this book consists of 16 case studies of building renewal, mainly in the UK, and covering a range of libraries serving a wide variety of readers and communities. The buildings concerned date from the late Victorian period to the latter half of the twentieth century, notably libraries of the 1970s. The buildings include:

- a national library
- three university libraries
- libraries of 11 public library services, of which two are from the Republic of Ireland and one from Sweden
- an independent library.

Each case study, as will be seen, has its own distinctive project characteristics: it may involve more than one building in the case of some public library services. Contributors, however, will usually cover a number of common themes. These include:

- reasons for the refurbishment
- the planning, design and refurbishment process
- the design solution that was eventually proposed and adopted
- an account of the library service and design outcomes that were finally achieved
- any problems, delays and difficulties that occurred during refurbishment
- an evaluation of the refurbishment and its impact on the library community.

The case studies in this book, discussed in Chapters 2 to 17, are arranged in five categories (Parts 1 to 5). In devising these categories, it was taken as read that every library wanted to improve its services, make the best use of available space and create a modern library environment, and so other aspects of library renewal have been highlighted in creating the following categories:

- heritage library buildings – enhancing the past for the present
- new styles of provision – widening the library role
- remaking university libraries – creating modern learning and research environments
- extending the library – modernizing and adding space
- library refurbishment programmes – forging templates for building renewal.

Using these headings, however, means that case study libraries sometimes fall into more than one category and so what seemed important to the editor (and gave more evenly balanced groupings) has guided the arrangement of which chapters were placed in which parts. While not wanting to take a library sector approach with these categories, the nature and aims of academic library refurbishment suggested that those case studies were best kept together as a single group.

Following the case studies, Chapter 18 provides brief details of a number of other UK and non-UK library refurbishments that have come to the attention of the chapter's joint authors.

As well as chapter notes, where appropriate, a short bibliography listing further references is provided for those who wish for additional information on the various aspects of library planning and design.

Preceding the case studies, a preliminary chapter (Chapter 1) looks at the need for library building renewal and provides a brief survey of the current library scene. It identifies drivers and influences for the refurbishing and re-planning of libraries, with particular attention given to government policies, influential reports, library campaigns and the funds made available to renew the library 'estate'. A final chapter (Chapter 19) reviews the contributed case studies, bringing out the common features, concerns, achievements and outcomes stemming from this upsurge in library building renewal projects.

A concluding remark needs to be made about the terms used in this book to describe what happens when library buildings are renewed. The terms include 'makeover', 'upgrading', 'refurbishment', 'transformation', 'improvement', 'remodelling', 'rebuilding', 'renovation', 'modernizing', 'remaking', 'revamping' and the word 'renewal' itself. Of all these 'refurbishment' is commonly used as shorthand to signify a variety of material changes to the library, for example, its layout, décor, furniture and equipment, accessibility, interior organization and physical structure. What exactly a library has experienced by way of 'refurbishment' will be made clear in the full description of the case study concerned.