THE effectiveness of a library depends largely on its appropriate outward appearance. Choice of site almost decides the issue: a university library situated in the immediate proximity of lecture buildings and university institutes will be frequented more than one further away. Most of all, however, it is important that the building in its layout is suitable and adequate for both user and administration.

The user of the library wants to reach the service points, which are of interest to him, quickly: the catalogues, the collection of reference material of various kinds, the lending department and the reading rooms. A well-chosen bookstock and reliable and quick methods of issuing are expected as a matter of course. Rarely does the reader ponder over the preparatory work involved in fulfilling his expectations.

The librarian also regards as the real purpose of his library its use in a liberal manner. However, the library must also, in the interests of its users, be up to date. That means book selection must be carried out comprehensively and wisely from the vast amount of publications pertaining to the fields of knowledge represented in all our universities and colleges within the framework of the funds, deficiencies to be made up from second-hand sources. Six to 7,000 volumes per annum are processed in our library either by purchase, exchange or as donations. Such an extensive increase makes it necessary to employ some safeguarding measures, such as order- and processing-files and individual processing-slips for each accession. Examination and verification of entries for the catalogues with regard to correctness, completeness and necessary subsidiary entries and duplicates for inclusion in central (regional) catalogues are imperative.

Altogether, from the order to the bookseller to the shelving of the processed book, approximately 30 different stages have to be covered. This extensive activity of the accession, cataloguing and classification departments occupies about two-thirds of the library staff and nearly as much room as the user department. The user, however, does not notice this, and only benefits from the results.

The librarian is interested in having a streamlined efficiency in arranging the passing of the book through the various stages of processing, as on a conveyor belt on one level, and to make sure that processing staff and public do not cross each other’s way. The librarian will, therefore, try to close hermetically the accession and cataloguing departments from the users’ department. Only at the reference collection administrative personnel and user meet occasionally, because both need the same material.

A building designed solely for the purpose of a library must fulfil the needs of the users of the library and its administration, and be arranged in such a way that:

(1) the service points primarily intended for the user should be as near as possible to the entrance, allowing for reading rooms to be located on a different floor;

(2) cataloguing department and administrative catalogues (accession and processing proper), bibliographical reference collection and interlending service are on one level; and

(3) lending department (including home-lending) and reading rooms to have direct access to the stack.

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To plan an ideal, or at least almost ideal, library building, it is imperative to have close co-operation between architect and librarian. That was, and is, not always and everywhere so. Numerous examples can prove that the librarian either was not asked at all or he was not in a position to set forth his ideas convincingly enough, so that the architect deemed them important. Fortunately, the co-operation between architect and librarian is outstanding at our Brunswick Technical University. Professor Dr. Ing. Friedrich Wilhelm Kraemer, who holds the chair for Gebäudelehre (building construction) and design of Hochbauten (high buildings) has, in his tutorials over the last years, repeatedly set as an exercise and term task the design of a library building. The students who were interested were asked to seek the librarian’s guidance for their planning. The same theme was also given as a thesis for the diploma. Moreover, he gave the librarian the opportunity to state his point of view regarding the questions relating to library buildings and reserved for that purpose the last hour of a lecture. All this compelled the librarian to tackle the problem over and over again under new aspects. In doing so he gained gradually a clearly formed conception of how a library has to be arranged architecturally. When the theoretical considerations were superseded by the necessity of thinking over the possibilities of how, on a given site within the framework of a larger project, the library of our university could become reality, it was evident in many discussions that this close co-operation between architect and librarian over the years had created a mutually fruitful basis.

For the apportioning of requisite space, the “opinion concerning the normal budget of a technical university library (staff, book and binding fund)”, formulated by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research League) of 9th April, 1957, represented an excellent and incontestable starting-point. In this the staff requirements are established as follows: four librarians with academic degree (administrative grade), 17 librarians graduated from library schools without other academic degree (executive grade), 19 clerical and technical assistants (unqualified salaried officers), and seven janitorial and technical staff (wage-earners). To these are added three positions for trainees: one postgraduate and two from library schools.

According to the opinion of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, an average technical university library should be in a position to subscribe to 1,400 periodicals, 1,100 serials as well as 200 duplicates and 1,400 monographs, altogether 4,100 titles. To this must be added the number of books, which are exchanged or presented. No hard-and-fast rules can be made here. As a valid estimate, it could be calculated that our library, since 1946, on a yearly average, received 2,600 volumes in exchange and as presentation. It is difficult to estimate the increase in dissertations, since their compulsory printing has been reintroduced. Two thousand copies per annum is a fair estimate. At present our library is holding 173,218 volumes and 16,337 dissertations (operational date 31st March, 1960), which would occupy nearly 900 metres (3,000 ft.) of shelves, whilst for the annual increase 33.5 metres of shelving would be needed. This calculation is based on the assumption that 200 volumes of books or 1,000 dissertations can be accommodated on a shelf 1 metre long.

In the U.S.A., as a rule, places provided in reading rooms amount to 20 per cent of the student population of the university. The German student, more than his American counterpart, is used to work in his own quiet study (lodgings). Therefore we have assessed 5 per cent as the lowest limit and 10 per cent as more than sufficient: for our university, therefore, 225 to 250 working places.

According to these standards we had to devise the plans for our library. The librarian thought the following to be the best solution.

Main floor (ground floor): issue department with users’ catalogues, bibliographical reference collection and the office of the director of the user department. Separated from this the library administration, to be reached by a separate entrance.

First floor: general reading room, periodical reading room and open-access collection.

Second floor: special reading rooms for patent and standard specifications, lecturers’ study, carrels for graduates preparing for their dissertations, special stacks for old prints.

Basement: technical apparatus of the library (bookbinding, duplication, photocopics, etc.).

The stack should have been added on to the main building of the library and possibly been drawn into the main building, to have direct access from the issue department and general reading room.

This solution would have demanded more space than there was available. Therefore new possibilities had to be thought over and discussed, until finally the design was settled, which the
librarian could agree to and the architect thought practicable, in view of the fact that the general plan, position and size of site had been irrevocably determined.

Rector and senate had agreed that opposite the main building of our university a place of assembly should be erected. On the southern boundary was to be provided a block of 2,850 square metres, containing a great hall (auditorium maximum) and a physics lecture theatre. The northern boundary should be the library with an area of 2,050 square metres. Both buildings should be connected by an oblong building somewhat set back, which will house the rectorate, university administration and institutes and seminaries of the faculties of natural science and philosophy. Therefore there will be an open space opposite the entrance of the main building, from which all parts of the place of assembly will be accessible.

It is planned to house the stack in the lower basement. Light is provided by windows from two sides and from an inner yard. The stack will accommodate approximately 1,600 shelf metres (5,333 ft. shelving), and with that capacity will suffice for twenty years, according to the above-mentioned figures, for present stock and the anticipated annual increase. (The library of a technical university, in contrast to a library of or for the humanities, is in a position to segregate superseded literature from the main stack, and store it in a more distant stack, so that an extension will probably not be necessary.)

The site scheduled for the library is sloping down towards north, approximately 3·70 metres (just over 11 ft.). Therefore the basement, which is below the level of the place of assembly, has all the light necessary from north and east. The basement houses the administrative office, the offices of director and of two Bibliotheksdienst (administrative grade), a conference room, the acquisitions department, a staff rest room with kitchen, the technical implements of the library (bookbinding, etc.), as well as special stacks for valuable old prints and duplicates.

The main floor is accessible from the place of assembly. Here are the users' catalogues, the bibliographical reference material, the issue department, an open-access collection, and the two reading rooms, with altogether 300 places. (The general reading room has an open-access collection of important quick reference material and reading room for periodicals.) Issue department and general reading room are connected with the stack by lifts. Adjacent to the catalogue section is the office of the third Bibliotheksrat (administrative grade), who is in charge of the users' department and responsible for readers' assistance. Separated from the users' region are accommodated on the same floor the cataloguing department, the inter-library-loans department and the administrative catalogue.

Two gallery-storeys house special reading rooms: the collection of patent, and standard, specifications, a study for lecturers, carrels for graduates working on their dissertations and external users, who are engaged in long-term scientific work, and who may want to use their typewriters and who need adequate room for extensive study material.

Once the plans, the joint endeavour of architect and librarian, have been sanctioned by the authorities and the building has been completed, our library will at last be redeemed from its temporary status, which has already lasted for one and a half decades, and will be in a position to shelve and process the 4,500 to 5,000 volumes which so far have been piled up, uncatalogued, and therefore not utilized.

To reach a full standard of efficiency the library is still lacking another important provision: enough staff and adequate funds. Only when the recommendations of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, in their opinion "about a normal budget for a technical university library", with regard to staffing, are fulfilled, will the library be in a position to meet the rightful demands of their users. Recommended staffing: four (so far: one) librarians with academic degree, 17 (seventeen) librarians graduated from library schools, 19 (six) clerical and technical assistants as well as seven (none) janitorial and technical staff (wage-earners). Only when the ordinary book fund (without exceptional extras) is raised to DM 193,000 (£16,083) (which means that our book fund would have to be increased more than six times), according to the above-mentioned opinion based on the average book prices of 1957, will the library be able to attain its full efficiency. Especially are the students entitled to demand that the library holds at their disposal books and periodicals in adequate selection and in sufficient numbers to enable them to absorb the material presented to them in their lectures and for examination preparation. So far that is not possible, because we are by far the lowest endowed technical university library in the Federal Republic. The librarian cannot do other than voice his demands and point at the discrepancies between what is with every right expected of the library and what it is able to do.