

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHITECTURE

This is an outline of a program presented by Fred Schlipf and John Moorman at the Public Library Association national conference in Kansas City on March 12, 1998.

After the conference, several librarians asked us for information on our talk. Unfortunately, our handouts included only a list of the seven deadly sins and our names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Because our handouts were too short to be of much help, we've expanded our list of sins to include a more detailed outline of our talk, including both the seven deadly sins and a list of some of the examples we provided of each sin.

We hope you will find the outline helpful.

It's important to emphasize, however, that the handout contains only a list of topics. We've mentioned some of the things we think are the most common mistakes made in library architecture, but we haven't explained why we think they are mistakes, how they can be avoided, and what can be done once the mistakes have been made. Unfortunately, many of the problems listed here are complex and deserve detailed explanation, so in some cases the outline may be of very limited value.

We also want to emphasize that our list of sins is a very incomplete list of the things that tend to go wrong in library building projects, reflecting the fact that we needed to fit our presentation into about 60 minutes.

If you want more information, audio tapes of the PLA presentations are available through Teach 'Em, 160 East Illinois St., Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60611 (1-800-225-3775).. However, we are not able to lend our slides or

provide copies of them, and some parts of the tape may be hard to understand without the accompanying illustrations.

We very much appreciate your interest in our talk. If you have questions, feel free to call us. We are also available to make similar presentations on other occasions.

1. BAD LIGHTING

- Glare
 - Direct glare
 - Indirect glare (veiling reflectance)
 - Glare from natural light
 - Glare from artificial light
- Uneven lighting
 - Badly-lighted perimeters and corners
- Dark surfaces, particularly walls and ceilings
- Inefficient lighting
- Inflexible lighting
- Lighting systems with slow restrike times in areas (like meeting rooms) where lights need to be switched off and on frequently
- Noisy lighting
- Esoteric technology
- Skylights
- Downlighting (the truly great evil)

2. INFLEXIBILITY

- Inadequate floor loading

- Bearing walls
- Incorrect column spacing in modern modular architecture
- Permanent objects in the way
- Insufficient data conduit and electrical outlets
- Access points to data conduit and electricity that place limits on space usage
- Non-expandible buildings, due to lack of adjacent land or to designs that defy additions
- Architectural solutions to furniture problems

3. BAD LOCATION

- Entrances far from parking
- Locations with entrances in areas people hesitate to frequent, especially after dark
- Location too close to schools
- Locations adjacent to other government buildings rather than retail shopping areas.
- Badly lighted exteriors
- Need for two entrances in order to serve both drivers and pedestrians
- Locations that would be bad for retail

4. COMPLEX MAINTENANCE

Examples include:

- Bad floor coverings

- Bad HVAC
- Too many different lamps or unusual lamps
- Unnecessarily inaccessible light fixtures
- Trouble-prone rest rooms

5. INSUFFICIENT WORK AND STORAGE SPACE

- No provision for staff growth
- Unrealistic predictions of storage needs
 - Use of offices for storage

6. BAD SECURITY

- Bad sight lines
- Multiple entrances
- Aisles that run the wrong direction for supervision
- Adult pathways through children's services areas
- Private rest rooms
- Places to spit
- Frightening dropoffs
- Failure to take advantage of oversight possibilities through service desk and office placement
- No provision for theft control systems
- Book returns that lead inside the library
- Dead-end book aisles

7. SIGNATURE ARCHITECTURE

- Excess ceremonial space
- Ornamental, free-standing staircases
- Awkward or unusable interior spaces, resulting from creative but impractical footprints
- Badly matched expansions
- Unexpected problems with untested architectural systems

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