

# Revision of building guidelines

Dr David J Jones, State Library of New South Wales

The State Library of New South Wales has recently engaged Heather Nesbitt in association with Bligh Voller Nield as consultants to prepare a revision of the guidelines and standards for public library buildings in the state. The project will run until August 1999, with publication of the final document scheduled for late 1999.

The result will be a set of comprehensive, plain-English guidelines for local authorities that are renovating, extending or refurbishing existing library buildings, adapting other existing buildings for library use or designing new library premises. These guidelines will relate to the planning process, siting, services and facilities to be provided, and to general planning and design issues relating to public libraries. There will also be a set of floor space standards.

## Project background

The Library Council of New South Wales issued guidelines relating to library buildings in the 1970s. In 1990 the Council expanded and adapted its guidelines to make them more useful to those planning new buildings (published as *The planning and design of public library buildings*), with a new edition issued in 1995. This publication has been an important reference document for local authorities, providing criteria against which applications for capital grants for library buildings can be assessed.

The new guidelines and standards will help ensure that New South Wales public library buildings are able to perform in an optimum manner into the next century by:

- reflecting changes in public library services;
- taking account of the diversity of modes of library service provision, including links with other Council facilities, sharing buildings or infrastructure with other organisations, various central and branch library structures, providing joint services with other institutions and mobile library services;
- allowing for the appropriate integration of information technology including measurable and verifiable criteria and standards; and
- being unambiguous and simple to use.

## The consultants

Heather Nesbitt is a qualified town planner, a member of the Royal Australian Planning Institute and a specialist in the field of social planning and community consultation. She has worked extensively

with local and state governments on community infrastructure projects, using public meetings, forums, phone-ins, written questionnaires, focus groups and individual interviews.

Bligh Voller Nield is a firm of architects with significant experience in public buildings and community facility planning. Neil Hanson and Mark Floate will be working on this project. Among Neil's credits are Sunshine Coast University College library and major extensions to the library of the University of Technology, Sydney. Mark also worked on the UTS Library, the School of Dance at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean, and many public housing projects in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

## Project management group

A project management group representing a number of key stakeholders will help guide the consultation process. Its membership is:

- Graeme Deutscher, manager, library and cultural services, Wollongong City Council;
- Robert Knight, director, Riverina Regional Library;
- Duncan Bains, director, environmental services, Narrandera Shire Council;
- Chris Williams, Kathleen Bresnahan, Paul Scully, Kerrie Burgess and David J Jones of the State Library of New South Wales.

## Consultation process

The library wishes the new document to be as helpful as possible to users, who will include councillors and council officers, architects and planners, and librarians. The approach taken will include

*research* into relevant standards and guidelines for state of the art public library facilities and other appropriate models for community infrastructure;

*development of an issues paper* outlining different approaches in order to stimulate discussion;

*focus groups* to generate further feedback, held in Sydney and at least two country localities;

*a widely distributed draft version* of the guidelines and standards; and

*a final document* which the library will publish in print and electronic form.

The first discussion paper is expected in early April 1999, and will be mounted on the Public Libraries Branch Web pages (<http://www.slsw.gov.au/plb>). ■

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