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The New Development Program for the French Academic Library Buildings 1991- 1995*

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I chose to speak today about the new development programme for french academic library buildings, because it is still quite recent and therefore probably unknown in our neighbour countries.

Actually, I believe that you are roughly aware of the current situation of public libraries in France, public City libraries or lending local libraries, because of the tremendous effort made for them during these last twenty years, also quite largely from the State. We are clearly rather proud of some of these achievements.

We are also quite proud of 2 major public libraries, managed by the State, the Bibliothèque Publique d'Information of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, opened in 1977, and the Médiathèque de la Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, also in Paris (La Villette), which opened in 1986 with holdings chiefly in the scientific, technical and industrial fields.

These two large public libraries have been and are still critical to the development of other public libraries, but also now of academic libraries.

It is true that they do not have the same patrons as the academic libraries, even if 55 to 57% of their users are indeed students, but the advanced technologies which they have been promoting with success towards the large public should now be also available in the academic libraries facing a kind of rebirth.

- A complete automation of their management (acquisitions, cataloguing, accounting, serials checking, lending, on-place or

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remote reservation of documents thanks to the Minitel, on-place or remote catalogue searching and retrieving)

- The whole bulk of the holdings offered in open access reading rooms
- The dramatic development of the audiovisual documents of good quality available on site
- The development of computer science collections: software, or teaching material, for games or training
- In the open access collections, a major role is given to serials (2400 in the BPI, 5500 in the MSCI, the latter making the largest part of this collection available for home loans).
- Backed up its large holdings, the MSCI has developed an important documentation service for the small and medium-sized firms (processing profiles, searching american and european data bases, etc.)
- The implementation of efficient services to the blind and visually-handicapped
- The importance and diversification of all the cultural activities.

These 2 large libraries, open to the public also on saturdays sundays and holidays, play a real incentive role for all french libraries, while waiting for the renovation and modifications of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and for the real status of the Bibliothèque de France, starting in 1995 or 1996.

1995 should also be almost the first year enabling us to have a glimpse of the important changes concerning the library buildings, and hence the services offered by the french academic libraries.

But before I come to this point, I must first make a description of the situation in which most of them are still currently, specially the buildings, and there is nothing there for us to be proud of!

A small historic precision is necessary to be able to understand how things stand.

The first expansion of the university libraries took place in France between 1955 and 1975, in order to face the growing number of students, due between other things to the development of the school attendance rate, and the post-war baby boom: from 155.000 students registered in the universities in 1955, we reached 831.000 in 1975-76, and these figures have been naturally growing ever since.

During that period 1955-1975, about 110 university library buildings have been erected or have benefited from extensions, as an accompanying measure to

the development of their host university: 516.000m² have thus been opened, wholly financed by the State.

Those who have contributed during these 20 years to build academic libraries had the following preoccupations in mind:

- to offer reading rooms big enough to seat 1 student out of 10,
- to build stacks allowing the holdings to develop for 20 to 25 years,
- to offer the staff decent offices to work in,
- to allow, when the time would come, if the grounds would allow for it, an extension on site,
- to ensure the proper way of working, with staff as reduced as possible, thanks to a good thinking of the circulations,
- lastly, to find cost-efficient architectural solutions, by using compact buildings.

These ideas have often led to the erection of three-tiered buildings: one for the stacks (blocks or towers), one for the reading rooms, and one for the offices; this is very typical of the french academic libraries of that time.

1975 has been an essential year: it is in fact the time when university building ceased totally, including consequently university libraries, since between 1975 and 1990 only a dozen of university buildings have been erected or expanded, amounting to less than 20.000m² over 15 years (very far from the 500.000m² built over the preceding 20 years!).

From 1975, and over almost 15 years, the french academic libraries saw their situation getting worse and worse gradually, in terms of buildings as well as in terms of document acquisitions and staff positions.

However, during that period, at many times, the red flag procedure was activated; the government, as well as the members of parliament, were questioned about the scandalous state of the libraries.

Three reports were published on that matter during the eighties:

- in 1981, a first report, the Vandevoorde Report, described the dual nature of the documentary function within the universities: on one hand the university libraries impoverished and without any integration within the university, on the other hand, a proliferation of department, laboratories, and institutes libraries, considered as more convivial and nearer to the students and teachers, with additional credits for documents acquisitions.

In order to remedy this situation, the Vandevoorde report suggested to merge the university library and the institutes and departments libraries of each university into a common documentation unit (Service commun de la documentation), with a unique director, a decentralized management, and a

global budget for the whole documentary activity.

A second report, in 1985, (the Gattégno-Varloot Report) stated the continuous (more than 10 years) lack of any major programme in favour of the academic libraries. This report proposed among other things to initiate a global policy of university library buildings extension.

However, we had to wait until 1988 to see the Minister of National Education entrusting Professor André Miguel (formerly the administrateur général of the Bibliothèque nationale) with the task of devising a pluriannual planning of university libraries renovation.

His report, called the "Rapport Miguel", stigmatised very firmly in 1989 the scandalous situation of the french academic libraries, depicted as the "disaster area of the university world". He described their degradation, concerning as well the premises (at that time $0,65m^2$ in average per student, based on the statistical data collected in 1987), the staff positions (3,25 members for 1.000 users) or their ridiculously low documents buying power.

He suggested to erect $370.000m^2$ of buildings in 10 years, to create 1.500 job positions, and to quadruple the budget in 4 or 5 years.

The "Rapport Miguel" insisted on many points:

- a wider and better access for the students
- training students to the utilisation of documentation from the start of the university studies (the first 2 years),
- to increase the documents acquisitions
- to offer open access to documents as widely as possible
- to open the university libraries at least 60 hours per week during 45 to 46 weeks per year (the average being 40 to 45 hours and 40 to 42 weeks per year in 1987, the Rapport reference year).

The "Rapport Miguel" was the starting point of a new policy in favour of the university libraries. It is still currently the reference for the Ministre de l'Education National in his programmes for short and medium term activities in favour of the university libraries.

In 1992, the situation of the french university libraries shows the following figures:

- 79 university libraries within 79 universities (and not 47 as in 1975), representing 195 locations, without mentioning the "University branches",
- $635.000m^2$ of buildings
- the ratio of square meters per student has still decreased since the Rapport Miguel, from $0,65m^2$ in 1987 to $0,52m^2$ in 1992, the total of

students itself having grown from almost 969.000 in 1987 to 1.245.000 for the university year 1991-1992, i.e. an increase of + 28,6% in 5 years. Currently the increase rate of students per year is about 6%.

- university libraries offer today about 70.000 seats for reading, i.e. about 1 seat for 18 students, instead of the average of 1 per 5 users. Moreover, a very bad geographical repartition makes the situation all the more catastrophic in some universities.
- the university libraries buildings erected during the period 1955-1975 have almost no capacity of conversion, their internal organisation making them unfit for open access as well as new technology implementation.

Please note also that the needs for renovation of the existing real estate are as high as those concerning the extensions and the new buildings: the conformance conditions must respect the current security rules, which are more drastic than those accepted between 1955 and 1975, also the conformance rules with the 1979 regulation concerning accessibility for the handicapped to buildings opened to the public, the renovation of the grounds, the paintings and the lights, a new furniture equipment, since the current furniture dates back to the fifties-sixties!

What could be done in such conditions of degradation and high insufficiency of the real estate?

The State has initiated, with the contribution to the local and regional collectivities - this for the first time for universities - an important development programme of development for higher studies, called "Schéma Université 2000", which from 1991 to 1995 as the first phase will allow to raise the universities back to reference level, at least for their seating capacity for an ever growing student population. The "Schéma Université 2000" is supported by a funding of 32 billion francs, 16 out of which come from the State, and 16 from the municipal, local and regional collectivities, stretching on the years 1991-1995. Potentially, these credits represent the possibility to build and to equip about 2.500.000m² of new university buildings, but these figures have to be detailed and adapted.

How can the academic libraries find their place within the "Schéma Université 2000"? It may be sometimes difficult for various reasons:

- First reason: the high credits involved within the framework of this programme are not broken down at the start, on ratios calculated on the major roles of a university: i.e. general teaching, tutorial teaching, laboratory work, administration, canteens, student lodgings, sport, documentation, etc. Each library has to fight to have its specific needs acknowledged within the university; it may be often quite difficult.

- Second reason: The original Schéma Université 2000 dealt only with the building and renovation actions. All the university buildings heavy maintenance actions, and all the furniture equipment have been added later, the whole programme being budgetted on the same global envelope. The first potential figure of 2.500.000m² of university buildings will hence obligatorily be lowered down!
- Third remark: The university president, in agreement with the academy rector (who is the representative of the ministère de l'éducation nationale) does determine the priorities for the works to be done for his own university, then he makes a hierarchy of choices, in order to be able to respect the budget allotted, which is fixed by the State together with the various local collectivities; this budget envelope does not unfortunately allow the realisation of every project presented by each university. This makes the fight twice harder!
- Fourth remark: nothing having been undertaken for almost 20 years, it has been necessary to set people's minds back to work on previsions, evaluations, evolutions, planning, and pedagogy, for every university and also for every university library; this is not one of the least difficulties.
- Last remark: the role of the university library is not yet fully acknowledged everywhere, and one has to admit that the major handicaps consisting of the impossibility to access directly the core of the living collections within many french academic libraries, the big lack of reading seats, the extreme discomfort and the overall poverty of the small equipment and fittings, are not yet sufficiently felt by the university authorities as unbearable for the students daily life and works, contrarily to to the overload of an amphitheater, a working room, or a university restaurant.

These remarks must not, however, lead us to think that the university libraries have no fitting place within the Schéma Université 2000. The goal of creating 35.000 additional seats in the reading rooms (i.e. an increase of 50% of the existing), as is quoted by the Rapport Miguel, will certainly be carried out only by half, but this should already modify notably the situation, and it should offer reference equipment, largely oriented towards open access holdings, and towards a diversification of the reading seats and document types offered to the users.

Many important building actions are already being programmed in Paris - where the situation is more desperate than in the whole of the nation - : Paris VIII-Saint-Denis (12.500m²), the oriental languages and civilizations library (12.000m²), 2 major libraries of the Jussieu campus, downtown in the heart of

Paris, (Literature and Human Sciences and a research library for a global surface of about 20.000m²), the Law library of Montpellier again at home downtown with the Law Faculty (15.000m²). Buildings extensions will also be erected in Besançon, Dijon, Grenoble, to mention only actions over 5.000m².

Moreover, 7 new universities will be created, 4 in the Ile de France region, to relieve the congestion of Paris, 2 in the North region, and 1 in La Rochelle (somewhat below the city of Nantes). These new universities should welcome from 10 to 20.000 students each before the year 2000; they are currently designing their building programme for their library. The current programmes range from 8 to 12.000m² each. Many other extension actions are of lower importance (and unfortunately often of too low importance compared to be needs); They will nevertheless give some more ease to the involved libraries, without a dramatic transformation.

I must also say a few words about the "Centre technique du livre" "Technical book centre", which will hold, at a distance of about 30 kms from Paris, a part of the less requested holdings of the university libraries of the Ile de France region, in order to relieve them from their overload. It is in fact a "book storage silo", the general conception of which is near to that of the books depot of the Harvard library in Cambridge (USA), or the SpeicherBibliothek in Munich (Germany) with some holdings stored in a high-walled stack. A first block of 6.400m² will allow the storage of 100 linear km of documents, with an extension capacity of 250 km. The first block should be operational as soon as mid-1994.

Globally, about 60 actions are today quite ready to be launched, meaning about 200.000m² of surfaces.

The chief goals of today for the university libraries buildings are the following:

- Installing the library in the heart of the university, and the university in the heart of the population. Wherever possible, one must drop the notion of a campus, as the french have it, i.e. the university being apart from everything, without any public transport really operational, without any real life, without any cafés or restaurants other than the university restaurants, without any theater, movies, bookseller, etc. The creation of 7 new universities and the transplantation of university branches within medium-sized towns (15 to 50.000 inhabitants), inasmuch as the reintegration of some university fields of studies downtown should enable us to do so in the medium term.
- Programming the reading rooms with open access to a maximum of contemporary collections must be a rule
- Allowing the home loans of a maximum of documents
- Creating highly diversified reading spaces where everyone can be at

ease: traditional reading rooms, of a reasonable size, working rooms for groups, individual reading places in reading rooms, closed carrels for long-term work, in fact everything that already exists in the majority of economically developed countries! During a first period, the given advice is to plan 1 seat for 8 to 10 users; later, as quickly as possible, 1 seat for 5 users.

- Giving access to all media of collections, printed documents, audiovisuals, computer documents, following the exemple of many french public libraries.
- Implementing all kinds of computer-based access to information on-place and remote: catalogues, CD-ROM, data bases.
- Programming the development of the holdings, and hence the building sized, for the 25 years to come.
- Building flexible and modular architectures, with a possible evolution.
- Making high quality buildings, not only from the architectural, but also from the used materials viewpoints, so that they might be well protected from the noise, inside or outside, comfortably equipped, convivial and aesthetic, with the maximum of comfort for the user as well as for the staff.
- Increasing staff, in order to open at least 60 hours per week for mid-1993 (today we have reached about 55 hours), 70 to 80 hours as soon as possible.

It seems to me that if we manage to fulfill these objectives on the about 60 actions I mentioned earlier, we will have lost no time!

But we must be aware of the many difficulties to achieve that: therefore some actions will be spilt into two phases, the implementation of which will be spread for some years for financial reasons. The actions over 10/12.000m² and even more those of 15.000m², where the phasing stage could appear as necessary, are still very few in France, whereas they are many in the United States, in Canada, in the United Kingdom, in the Netherlands and in Germany, for an often lesser number of students, without making it necessary for those countries to stage these actions in successive phases.

However, should it be impossible to fulfill a programme in one single action, the first stage should represent at least 70 to 75% of the total surface. Building a smaller part of it would raise serious questions of the coherence of the first phase compared to the whole programme. But we are not sure to be able to make it!

When, unfortunately, the staging of a project into successive actions cannot be

prevented, we would then advise that the detailed technical planning used for the building programming should be drafted for the whole of the project, and that the first architectural plans should be drafted not only for the first phase but for the whole project. It may then not be too bad, and it must be hoped that the other phase(s) will follow quickly!

Another matter deserves also some attention in long and delicate actions: the building, renovating or extending of a library requires from the project leader (usually the university library director) some knowledge out of the usual scope of librarianship. It is however necessary, that he should master it quickly as soon as a project is envisaged, for it is essential for him to be able to hold his place in front of the deciding and financing authorities, in front of the prime contractor (the architect), or in front of the firms who will carry out the building. This place will have to be kept for 3 to 4 years at the minimum, sometimes 5 or 6, hence the importance to have mastered some real knowledge in the field of architecture and building.

Without going too much into detail, here are the 6 chief phases of any building project:

1. Drafting a detailed technical programme, qualitative as well as quantitative for the future equipment. It is one of the key issues for the success of any action.

While designing this programme, one must devise new services (new in France or that should be implemented on another scale than the usual one), more efficient and judicious services for the reader, a way of working often quite different from the current one, an organisation of the collections more understandable for the user. Automation must also be included for all (or part of) the library management activities, and also for the user-oriented ones. Many library visits are also necessary, in order to make comparisons, to force oneself to ask some questions, to get new ideas, and to open one's mind to other organisational ways. This must lastly be translated into quantified data, and into precise functional organisation specifications.

The Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (Sous-direction des bibliothèques, and Sous-direction des constructions), bearing in mind what is at stake in the Schéma Université 2000, wants to stress the importance of planning. A task force of university professors, architects, engineers, university library directors, and representatives of both sous-directions, has met since late 1990. They have drafted in a few months a "planning guide for university libraries", which has been widely distributed since may 1991. This document was very popular, because it gives real indicators for an building planning

methodology. It also gives examples of standards and regulations usually accepted in foreign countries, for their university libraries.

2. Getting acquainted with the various partners the project leader will have to meet, and with whom he will have to work all along the building process.

Full acquaintance with them, and a good understanding of the professional jargon of each of them, sometimes difficult to apprehend, will be decisive for the actions undertaken.

3. Understanding fully the rules of the architectural competitions, which are the usual procedure in France for the designation of an architect for a project. It is actually essential for the project leader to find his place within the committees who compare the competitive projects on a technical and financial level, and within the selection committees which choose the laureate, to ensure the listening to and the understanding of the final user's voice.
4. Learning how to decipher the various plans drafted by the architect, from the most simple sketches to the most elaborate (the contractors tendering files) including the brief draft project and the full draft project. This will enable him to make his own the future building in his mind, to study the functional details, and to request the necessary modifications on the functional level, if applicable.
5. Following the evolution of the works on site, in all the phases: some, which affect the secondary works, are in fact essential for the quality of the offered services and the users comfort (the ground covering materials, the choice of colours, the solar protection, the noise insulation, etc.).
6. Drafting the furniture and equipment records. This is probably the less baffling part for a librarian. The choices are nevertheless not always easy to make when one must deal with large amounts of furniture for big surfaces and volumes (selecting shapes, harmonizing colours, etc.).

Those six basic points give a foretaste of the diversity of knowledge to obtain quickly, of the personal and professional involvement rate of the project leader, and also of his capacity to sweep along his staff into the adventure of building. Indeed, a project is never a single man's business, however brilliant he might be, but the result of a whole team work, and hard work.

In order to enable the team leaders to play this role, for which, in the big majority of the cases, they have not been prepared, the Sous-direction des

bibliothèques has been organising for them since 18 months intensive training courses of 1 week, where architects, engineers and librarians deal with the earlier mentioned matters.

Moreover, to fill the gaps of the missing informations in the book: "Guide de programmation pour la construction des bibliothèques universitaires", a technical reference book, very exhaustive, has just been published on the university libraries building, extension and renovation. It is the first book published in France on the subject. It is intended for the librarians, of course, but also for the architects, the prime contractors, and the firms which will help us building our libraries. The title is "Construire une bibliothèque universitaire: de la conception à la réalisation"; The editor is "le Cercle de la Libraries". I have one exemplar on my bag.

It is equally important, for us in France, to understand today the role of the State has changed, concerning the universities and the university libraries. It is not any more the single distributor of funding. It is only a partner, certainly a major one, since it must approve the technical building programmes and the summary draft projects. But it is not any more the main partner insofar as many of the actions to process will be chiefly financed by the local collectivities, who will then be the programme deciders.

The new wave of the university libraries building starts therefore at the same time slowly, but surely. Many actions are still today at the first study stage which should lead to the drafting of a detailed technical programme. Little by little, the number of architectural competitions will grow and a number of projects, the most humble ones, will begin to emerge around mid-1993, much more in 1994 and 1995. The first results of the "Schéma Université 2000" for the academic libraries will be really visible only by the end of 1994 and in the following years, insofar as the building process, itself takes 18 months to 2 years, and some more months for the furniture and the transfer of the collections. This means that the result of our present efforts will be hardly visible at the completion of the first part of the "Schéma Université 2000", in 1995.

The task is immense as far as the whole of the universities is concerned, and within themselves, the university libraries. It is indeed impossible to catch up in 5 years with what has not been done in 20 years, insofar as the number of students never stops growing and should reach by the year 2000 the total number of about 1.800.000, with a growth rate of 60 to 70.000 new students per year.

It we wanted to build only 1 and a half square meter of library per student (though this figure does mean much in itself), we would need 2.500.00m² of university libraries in the year 2000, i.e. about 3,5 times what we have today. Even considering that we are going to carry out 200.000m² until 1995, we will still have a big task ahead of us! 130 buildings won't still have been touched - without the delocalized university branches -, and they will have to be dealt with someday.

It is therefore a long range work, and which will be followed efficiently only if

the State and the territorial collectivities commit themselves over quite a number of years, and not only for 5 years. It is indeed essential that we may at last work for the medium and long term, which are the only warrants of a real efficiency and of real changes.