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Modeling Your College Library after a Commercial Bookstore? The Hong Kong Design Institute Library Experience

Patrick Lo, Dickson K. W. Chiu & Wilson Chu

Abstract

The Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) is a leading design education institute in Hong Kong under the Vocational Training Council (VTC) group. Opened in September 2010, the HKDI Learning Resources Centre is a specialist library for the study of art and design. The mission of the HKDI Library is to support and promote the academic goals of the Institute, i.e., to prepare the students for professional careers; emphasize learning through a creative and interactive environment; meanwhile uphold a positively relaxing, and yet inviting environment that is very much similar to a commercial bookstore. In order to accomplish this, the HKDI Library aims to serve as a user-centered library for creative learning—by providing an important place for both students and faculty to actively engage in study, research, as well as socializing. Through a series of small focus group interviews with both students and faculty staff at the HKDI, the study investigates how influential the library environment could be in fostering students' learning and other social activities under a creative environment.

KEYWORDS: college library, modern design, learning commons, interactive environment, user interview

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that libraries are regarded as educational and informational, while bookstores are seen as recreational and commercial. Generally speaking, libraries are more heavily used to find information or as a place for formal learning; meanwhile bookstores are strongly associated with socializing and “casual use.” According to Pennington (1997), bookstores are defined by the presence of in-store reading space, cafes, events, classes and exhibitions, etc. Sanderson (2001) also highlights that a bookstore is a place in which individuals are “encouraged to linger—to drink coffee, meet their friends, read magazines, listen to music or to an author reading.” As described by Torsi (2001), the bookstore is a comfortable, pressure-free environment, in which to explore, read, listen and discover, etc.

Large and successful bookstores do not simply rely on sales figures and feedbacks from the customers. They also conduct a wide variety of studies to determine their customers' needs and reading interests. Such studies aim at determining who their existing as well as potential customers are. They are also designed to identify what these customers want and need. Bookstores are no doubt driven by financial gains; however, libraries are sometimes viewed as boring, and many users simply find them uncomfortable and uninspiring to visit

voluntarily. For such reasons, there are many services and features that we libraries and librarians could learn and adopt from bookstores. In particular, Woodward (2005) wrote:

Bookstores have become enormously popular places where customers can do many of the same things that librarians once viewed as their exclusive province. Unlike bookstores of the past, modern “superstores” encourage people to read and spend time just as they would in a library. They have been highly successful in attracting customers, and there is even some evidence that bookstores are taking costumers away from libraries ... It is probably true that some people are choosing to visit their local bookstores rather than their public libraries. However, that surely doesn't mean that libraries have less to offer. Isn't it possible that we can cherish all the things that make libraries wonderful and vital to our society, while at the same time learning from the bookstore's success? In other words, can't we be better than a bookstore?
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With the advancement of the Internet and mobile technologies, Worpole (2013) has recently confirmed such a need further:

The new libraries are no longer places of regulated patronage in formally distinct rooms, but are increasingly open-plan—places where independent users come to solve their intellectual problems on their own. They may even bring their own laptops, but want the space, the comfort and the associational life offered by the company of fellow citizens, to support them in their personal endeavours. The modern library is now much more than a book depository, formerly accessed by a catalogue, but is a meeting place for books, media, people and ideas (including talks, events, readings and children's activities). In this new world, the external appearance of the library has a weakened symbolic importance; it is now the open-plan interior with its circulation patterns and dis-aggregated service points that embodies the symbolic value of the contemporary library ethos.

This motivates our interview-based exploratory study on the recent setup of a college library, the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) Learning Resources Centre (Library), which is modeled after a commercial bookstore. The reasons for choosing this college library for our study are as follows:

- The library theme and users of HKDI are focused on art and design instead of multi-disciplinary so that the motivation and requirements can be easier to analyze;
- The community college setting is closer to the requirements of the younger generation, as well as junior libraries in schools and for the public, which we plan to extend our study in the next phase;
- Project, collaboration, and inquiry-based learning in this community college is also the trend of recent worldwide curriculum reform and enhancement at various levels of college and school learning and teaching.

THE HKDI LIBRARY IMAGE & BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As Freeman (2005) notes, the library “must serve as the principal building on campus where one can truly experience and benefit from the centrality of the institution's intellectual

community.” The Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) Learning Resources Centre (Library) is located at the heart of the HKDI campus—with the aim of serving as a powerful symbol of learning and cultural life of the Institute. Being the largest facilities on campus, the HKDI Library is also identified the busiest of all Vocational Training Council (VTC) branch libraries, with the largest portion of its circulation being carried out through the regular loan services of printed books, audiovisual materials, as well as other reserve items, etc.

Art and design libraries have always been associated with style, creativity and innovation, which could be everything opposite to conventional academic, junior, or public libraries, i.e., authority, traditions, formal, and to an extent dull and restricted, etc. The changing role and the purpose of a library could be reflected in the building's planning, design, as well as the use of the HKDI Library itself. In addition to supporting the information and learning needs of the whole HKDI, the Library is also intended to be a ‘meeting’ and ‘social place’ for the whole Institute.

With reference to its architectural design, without feeling overwhelming by bookshelves or other textual information, the HKDI Library is regarded as modern, up-to-date, warm, as well as airy. When one walks through the front entrance, one could see plenty of open space. Without creating any unnecessary clutter, the Library's seamless open-floor plan makes its book collections easy to navigate, as well as inviting to browse through. There are no designated boundaries between the quiet and the active areas. As described by Jeannette Woodward (2005), “the key to bookstore's ambience is a sense of comfort and spaciousness. Books, in themselves aesthetically pleasing objects, are the focus of displays; oversize graphics direct customers to merchandise without creating clutter.”

The HKDI Library has chosen the bright colors, clean textures, and other stylish furnishings specifically to create an inviting visual impact. Together with the open-floor space, updated natural lighting—everything is designed with the aim of luring users to come into the Library. Most importantly, the Library is also incorporating many other “bookstore” or “café” qualities by adding movable furniture, and thereby allowing their users to create their own space for either studying or socializing. Such a setup indeed encourages users, especially the younger generation, to form their own social or discussion groups, or simply stretch out across a sofa, or just hang out with a few friends to chat. One may see students at any time lounging on the designer chairs and couches—relaxing, socializing, strolling around or simply doing nothing. Many young students are also engaged in intensive reading or other learning activities. In short, the whole HKDI Library is designed to create a warm, welcoming environment where the users are encouraged to stay, browse, learn, socialize or simply “enjoy” the place.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This article investigates the impact of the “bookstore environment” on the HKDI Library. The attitudes and behaviors of the HKDI Library users were examined through focus group interviews. Semi-structured focus group interviews, facilitating reflections and discussions were held at the HKDI Library in September 2013. Two groups of users were interviewed, with each interview lasting from 30 to 45 minutes. To examine the impact of the bookstore environment on the use of the HKDI Library, the interview participants were asked to describe their experiences of using and simply “being in” and to reflect upon their likes and dislikes. They were also asked to discuss their perceptions of the similarities and differences between a bookstore, a local public library and the HKDI Library.

What is happening inside this library building could tell us much about the users' evolving needs, especially at community college level. This study aimed at exploring the library space usage, in terms of how far the HKDI Library has come to meeting the informational, social and recreational needs of the college community as a whole. We chose qualitative interview methods, because it could offer opportunities for detailed analysis and details (Patton 2002). The interviews asked the users regarding the characteristics of the new HKDI space and usage—in order to obtain a clearer picture as to why this new Library building is so successful. It was hoped that more insights could be derived from what the respondents themselves considered and described to be the most popular aspects of the new Library building. The interview results indicated that there are apparent overlaps between the library and the bookstore, in terms of their nature, role and functions as a community space. The main research questions were:

- to examine how HKDI Library users (all at the community college level) feel about and utilize the HKDI Library's facilities and services;
- to examine how HKDI Library users feel about and utilize library space, in order to identify any trends in attitudes towards using the Library;
- to define sense of place and to understand how that sense of place influences behavior of this young generation; and
- to understand the impact of the bookstore environment on the use and perception of the HKDI Library as a place and experience necessitates through exploring how users utilize and feel about the spaces.

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW RESULTS

Collaborative Learning

Over the past decades, technologies and end-users' needs have both played important roles in reshaping services, collections, as well as the physical space amongst libraries. One of the most unique characteristics of the HKDI Library design is its emphasis on dedicated space for study, particularly collaborative learning. The following questions aimed at determining how successful the new HKDI Library environment was in terms of meeting the evolving learning needs amongst the arts and design students. The respondents were also asked to identify, in their own words, what they considered important measures of facility usage, with the aim to identify the relationships between specific library building characteristics and the learning needs or mode amongst the students. The respondents' comments are as follows:

Female Student A: *“We really enjoy the atmosphere and the environment here in this Library. It has such vast open spaces—hence, we do not feel so psychologically restricted. If I feel restricted, I will not be able to come up with creative ideas ... Also if the place is too quiet or when I am alone, I would not be able to think creatively either.”*

Male Student F: *“[The Library's] large wall windows provide the best natural light—so nice and bright; there is also movable furniture, with which we could create our own space for studying and socializing.”*

Kaman Hui, Lecturer: *“I personally do not think the libraries, particular this ‘Art and Design Library’ needs to be ‘quiet.’ If I had wanted quietness or solitude, I would*

have stayed at home to read instead. In my own opinion, the Library is a place for discussions—for interactive learning, for discussions about group projects. As a teacher, I would also encourage or even bring my students to come to this Library to do discussions for their group projects.” (Kaman Hui is currently serving as Lecturer at the Department of Communication Design and Digital Media at the Hong Kong Design Institute.)

Iris Cheung, Assistant Curator: *“Compared to other traditional public or academic libraries in Hong Kong, this [HKDI] Library does certainly seem more ‘engaging,’ i.e., it provides an environment that allows students to take part in more interactive learning ... In theory, when we are engaged in some kind of creative endeavor, we always need to be around with other people, i.e., to interact directly with other creative people constant exchange of ideas and discussions—this is something what they would call ‘brainstorming’ ... especially for people at their age, this kind of more interactive and dynamic learning activities would no doubt give these young students a fresher perspective and more innovative approach for their projects ... What I mean is that providing them with a space that allows them the freedom for discussion and exchange creativity with others is no doubt the best place or environment, and is the most beneficial and important. Luckily, the HKDI Library is able to fulfill their needs in this regard.”* (Iris Cheung is currently serving as Assistant Curator, External Affairs Office, Hong Kong Design Institute.)

Kaman Hui, Lecturer: *“I also agree that the whole [Library] setup and environment definitely provide a very positive and healthy environment for promoting active learning, critical thinking, collaborative learning for these young learners.”*

Female Student B: *“We go to the [HKDI] Library for assignments and projects and group discussions. It is fun. The [HKDI] Library is really fun and you could look at the books at the same time.”*

As pointed out by Freeman (2005) and Bennett (2003, 2005), libraries need to be primarily planned around the learning needs amongst their students. For this reason, library buildings are indeed gradually evolving from a collections-centered space to a multi-purposed, and multi-functional space—thereby enabling an inviting environment where knowledge, ideas and creativity could be generated and shared. The interview results further support the idea that modern library spaces need to allow students to govern the social and solitary dimensions of their own study environments, in order for them to learn effectively, as well as to work creatively. At the same time, this environment should encourage freedom and self-discovery, and thereby stimulating the mind and awaken the imaginations amongst these young learners. The respondents’ comments are indeed convincing evidence of the HKDI Library's successful augmentation of traditional library space with collaborative space. As highlighted by Scott Bennett, Yale University's Librarian, it is important to create spaces that encourage productive study in a collaborative environment, and for librarians, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning space in an ongoing basis (Bennett 2005).

The Overall Atmosphere & Comfort of HKDI Library

Libraries depart from design constraints of the past decades, and increase their awareness of the building's relationship with the environment. An emphasis on natural lighting is particularly common. Once entering the HKDI Library, one can see the excellent natural

lighting via the Library's large window walls, and the overall setup of the bookshelves and the moveable furniture. It is also not uncommon to see many young students lying down on sofas as they would be at home. At the interviews, respondents were asked to comment on the overall atmosphere and the comfort of the HKDI Library, most respondents described these spaces in simple terms such as “comfortable” and “relaxing”—conveying the notion that the HKDI Library functions as a haven for these users to escape from the noisy and busy world, e.g.:

Male Student F: *“We feel very comfortable inside this [HKDI] Library, and this place looks so stylish, smart and cool”*

Female Student B: *“In many ways, [the HKDI Library] is very similar to a café, we could just come here to read or to relax there is also a lot of space for us to wander around aimlessly without feeling pressured. The environment inside the Library is also very clean, and given the vast amount of open space inside this Library, we certainly don't feel so oppressed in comparison to other public spaces in Hong Kong.”*

Male Student C: *“I have a few friends [classmates] who posted several comments on Facebook, describing how nice the [HKDI] Library looks. After reading such comments on Facebook, my other friends were also tempted to pay a special visit to the Library to check out the place for themselves—to see if it really measured up to what has been described by others.”*

Male Student D: *“We prefer to come to the [HKDI] Library, because cafés cost money, and we are only students. Also there is no air conditioning at the public parks.”*

Female Student A: *“It costs nothing to walk through the [HKDI] Library door. No one forces you to buy a coffee or anything and there is free air conditioning.”*

In addition to giving the users a cutting-edge feeling when one walks into the HKDI Library, the whole library environment was regarded amongst the interview respondents as both physically and psychologically comforting. The HKDI Library was further perceived and functioning as a place in which to linger, or just rest. Respondents' comments conveyed the notion of the HKDI Library being as a “haven,” in which one could “escape.”

Female Student A: *“In fact, this place [HKDI Library] does not feel and look like a library at all.”*

Male Student F: *“Whenever I have got nothing to do at lunchtimes, I will come to the [HKDI] Library and just wander around or generally look on the bookshelves. No one is bothering me. I can linger inside the [HKDI] Library for a long time.”*

Male Student C: *“You can come in and we always feel very comfortable and very relaxed here. It is somewhere you can come in and really look forward to coming to and enjoy coming ... and a big part of the community as well.”*

Female Student B: *“I think it is the way they have the sofas laid out and also the moveable furniture. You are actually encouraged to flick through and read—and that feels like part of the whole experience.”*

Male Student F: *“Hong Kong is very crowded and busy, but inside the [HKDI] Library, I don't feel like I am in Hong Kong—a sense of time standing still.”*

Male Student D: *“I think it is good to have this kind of space [inside the HKDI Library], where people can just sit down and relax—it is a way of making the students stay longer.”*

Female Student A: *“It's a great place to come. There are comfortable sofas, and they are wonderful. You do feel you genuinely can sit and browse ... It is almost like a bookstore.”*

Male Student C: *“It is so comfortable that it is conducive to lingering.”*

The interview results indicated that the HKDI also provides a refuge for the students from the noise and hurry of urban living in Hong Kong. For the HKDI Library, in addition to serving as a space for the physical collections, as well as a place in which to find information to learn and to socialize, it is equally important to provide the students with a comfortable, accessible, and user-centered environment. Student respondents also agreed that the HKDI Library was a place in which they could “escape.” For example, one respondent reported that the new library is “known as the place to be,” while others described spaces as “stylish,” “cool” and “comfortable,” etc. In summary, the results suggested that library buildings are no longer just a conventional space for academic and solitary study or a warehouse for book collections; but also function as a popular social place for providing a sense of uplift and personal well-being. As such, the environmental factors, e.g., light, air, color, furnishings, physical comfort, acoustics, sight-lines and visual interest, etc., all play important roles in the overall design of the library space. As pointed by Frischer (2005, 50), for most users, they come to the library building to “experience something in the library that cannot be available in an office or home, and that something is the drama of community.”

The Place to Socialize

In addition to serving as a learning space and a technological space, the HKDI Library could also serve as a new kind of social gathering space and meeting space. The Library is a neutral venue that people could treat as their own community space; a venue that can fill a gap, as well as a recreational social space. When students were asked how to spend an afternoon in between lessons, the HKDI Library was one of their more attractive and costless options.

Male Student X: *“You can simply come and relax and enjoy the atmosphere [of the Library]. It works well for me as a social space and for my friend too.”*

Female Student C: *“In fact, amongst my friends and classmates at the College [HKDI], I don't know any of them who does not come to the Library ...”*

Female Student A: *“To meet friends or to socialize—I just come to meet people at the [HKDI] Library.”*

Male Student C: “[*The HKDI Library*]*—I am not thinking of it as a library at all, I am thinking of it as a club for friends—somewhere to meet—where would we go if the library weren't here?*”

Female Student E: “*Providing a place for people to meet or just be together.*”

Female Student A: “*There's a sense of vast, open space at the HKDI Library. Most importantly, the [HKDI] Library has become the ultimate hang-out place for me and my friends and my classmates in between classes and after lectures.*”

As Dempsey (2004) argued libraries must create a “brand,” that a “library's brand is the space they have captured in the minds of customers—it's all the things that come to mind, all the expectations they have when they hear the word library.” One of the more common observations was the popularity and demand for the HKDI building as a “marquee” space for social, and other creative activities. Interview results indicated that the HKDI Library has been widely recognized amongst the students, and perhaps functioning as more a social space than a library.

HKDI Library versus Local Cafes & Public Libraries

The local public libraries were felt by the respondents to be generally less appealing than the HKDI Library. The public libraries were viewed amongst the students as a more quiet study space when compared with the HKDI Library. As for the proliferation of social and collaborative space, along with a large amount of soft seating, combined with the traditional study spaces—when the students were asked, “What would you say was the major difference between the HKDI Library and the public library?” some student respondents replied:

Female Student A: “*We prefer to come to here [the HKDI Library] instead of the public libraries, because they [local public libraries] would not allow us to talk inside the library. And they also would not allow us to loan out those art and design books. Moreover, there's a sense of vast, open space at the HKDI Library.*”

Male Student X: “*Coming to the HKDI Library is quite different from going to the public libraries, the local public libraries are not as appealing and comfortable.*”

Male Student D: “*The HKDI Library has a cozier feeling.*”

Male Student C: “*The public libraries are usually constraining, usually quite crowded. But here [HKDI Library], you can just walk all over the place.*”

Male Student A: “*You can spread yourself out on the sofas.*”

Female Student F: “*The fact that it is so loose, and public libraries aren't*”

Male Student X: “*We really want to talk and make noises.*”

Female Student A: “*Does not have to be complete silence—and other people browsing and chatting and passing comments when you pick up a book is actually quite a nice part of the whole experience.*”

Results indicated that respondents in general used the HKDI Library more frequently than local public libraries. In fact, the local public libraries were perceived as more of an information and education center than as a site for leisure and recreation. Much less restricted than a regular public library, respondents generally viewed the HKDI Library as much warmer, smarter, more comfortable, more inviting and more stimulating than the regular public libraries. The respondents also viewed the HKDI Library as significantly smarter, more recreational, more casual, and more stylish than the local public libraries. The HKDI Library was described as a much more “casual” place in which to linger, to socialize and to “escape.” In fact, spaces for collaborative studies and socializing were repeatedly reported by respondents as best representing the library's evolving role in the academic life of the HKDI. The HKDI Library's role is indeed extending beyond the traditional academic functions.

Library Without Coffee?

Kenney (2003 Kenney, B. 2003. The library reloaded; Tomorrow's libraries will have the same components but on a new scale. *Library Journal* 8:8., 8) wrote: “we know the superstore drill: overstuffed chairs, a café, low bookshelves, ambient lighting, eye-catching merchandising. Its success is affecting library design ...” In addition, MacLeod (1998 MacLeod, L. 1998. Lattes ‘n’ libraries. *The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances* 11(3): 97) observes, “it's a great service. People enjoy it. It gives them another reason to spend time in the library ... coffee bars in libraries are helping to create a different sense of place.”

Part of why the library users seemed to linger in the bookstore, aside from the comfortable ambiance and the soft seating, is no doubt the inclusion of food and drink into the bookstore. However, many libraries, i.e., including the HKDI Library simply lack this facility. According to the 2010 MLA report (2010), the top 5 changes that the public said would encourage them to use libraries more put “coffee shop onsite” as the first priority both for current users as well as for the lapsed users too. In an important sense a coffee shop converts any facility also into a meeting place, and a destination in its own right. Many libraries would try to provide a self-contained and sealed-off corner from the library areas to serve as a mini café inside the library building, and most of the time this would work well as an intimate and attractive meeting place for the users. When the respondents were asked what other facilities they wished to see, but were not yet available, the area that was mentioned most frequently inside the new Library building was the café.

Students A & B: *“I wish that there is a small café, a small food stall or some vending machines inside the Library where we would buy drinks or snacks Maybe even just a small corner that is sealed off from the rest of the Library, where we could eat, drink or just stretch out to listen to music or CDs—you know something similar to what they have at HMV”*

Male Student D: *“I also like vending machines or just provide a small corner where we could eat—this would make things much more convenient for us—so that we do not need to leave the Library and go all the way to the nearby stores for small snacks and drinks ...”*

Female Student F: *“I think a café or a snack bar or even a vending machine would make a big difference. You can come here and just relax.”*

The image of the bookstore could be contributing to a growing desire for more soft seating and café facilities inside the HKDI Library. In fact, there has been growing presence of library cafés and the expansion of the library's role as a social center of campus life. And the desire for a café inside the Library further supports the notion that the HKDI Library is a place for the college community. In the end, a library's mission is to give the users what they need and what they want. Michael Sullivan (2001 p.264) noted in "One Happy Library User," "many bookstores have adopted much of what librarians hold dear without losing the best of what the traditional bookstore had to offer." The trend towards multi-use is continuing and is indicative of the library's expanding role in campus life.

DISCUSSIONS

College libraries are responsible for carrying the institutional functions, as well as expressing the values or their parent institutes. According to many designers and architects, an institution's intellectual life should be reflected in the library's architecture. In addition to its core academic functions, new library designs should also reflect the importance of providing an expanded, comfortable environment for users, as well as the library's evolving role as a collaborative learning space. In particular, socialization is an integrated activity of knowledge exchange, which has been proven as an effective means for learning.

This study provided information on many levels, and answered the general question of what roles the college library could play in creating an inspiring and engaging environment for the art and design students. According to King (2000), multi-purpose facilities will become more common as libraries more closely align with the educational goals and overall institutional culture of their organizations. Freeman (2005 p. 6) also highlights that "the library today must function foremost as an integral and interdependent part of the institution's total educational experience." And an increasing number of libraries are also being designed to express the expanding role of the library in the social and cultural life of the institution (McDonald 2002; Rizzo 2002). For such reasons, library functions and facilities are constantly evolving to meet the changing learning behaviors amongst the students, as well as their social and recreational needs. In fact, the basic functions of libraries are gradually moving away from being a warehouse for books to a place for human interactions and collaborative learning. Many libraries are simply trying to further reduce the acquisition of print-based materials, and continue to create bookless spaces to facilitate interactive learning.

As a result, it has become increasingly common for libraries to share space with other non-library functions. Several unique characteristics of the Library building have reflected the library's changing role in campus life. The most visible sign of the HKDI Library is its inclusion of such a large amount of inactive/collaborative-learning and socializing spaces and other associate facilities inside the Library building. Many students provided testimony that HKDI Library building serves as a "marquee place" on campus—which was once outside the normal academic function of an education institute. What we can see now is the HKDI Library's success in creating new spaces around students' evolving needs and learning, rather than planning and evolving around its printed collections.

Library environments are also becoming increasingly flexible for encouraging interactions between faculty members, students and librarians. Libraries are designed to stimulate the whole campus in its role as a center of life and learning. Multi-use enables the library to serve as a center for a variety of aspects of campus life, at the same time, reinforcing its role in the academic life of the HKDI. The HKDI plays an important role in the social life of the college,

as illustrated by the popularity amongst the student users. The focus group interviews provided further insights into the nature of the library usage amongst its users. The HKDI Library is widely seen and used as a place for recreation, socializing, and browsing. The comments of the focus group participants and responses given to the open questions confirmed that the HKDI Library is “emotionally restorative” and even a “spiritually charged” space—a space that is “Welcoming,” “Warm,” and “Relaxing,” etc.

In addition to serving as just a place to study or work, the HKDI Library is also closely associated with socializing and “casual use” than a regular college or public library. In other words, the HKDI Library is not just a place for formal learning, it is also a place for informal learning, recreational, socializing, etc. The interview results indicated that the respondents generally viewed the HKDI Library environment positively. The HKDI Library is described as a comfortable, pressure-free environment in which to explore and discover, a place for learning, fun and interaction, help pass time, and provide a place to meet friends, a social club. Some even describe in as a haven, in which they could linger, to sit, to read, to rest, to sleep, to study, to work and to find inspiration, to socialize and to escape. Supportive to Rossiter (2011), the key elements of success of the HKDI Library could be summarized as follows:

- Maximizing natural light.
- Providing a welcoming and warm ambience with the gravitas of the library.
- Creating vistas and visual interest—and intimacy (with nooks and crannies).
- Replicating the aesthetics and proportions of the existing building to create a seamless space.
- Designing a place that is a pleasure to be in for long periods of time.
- Providing clarity and coherence of layout leading to ease and friendliness of use.
- Delivering the most sustainable building possible within the budget.
- Using zoning to accommodate a range of behaviors—from silent to social spaces.
- Designing settings which encouraged positive behaviors.

Further, the Library serves as access point versus the library as a center for collaborative learning. According to Frischer (2005), users often sanctify the library by developing a culture of silence. However, in recent years libraries are gradually being “liberalized,” as the library spaces are being defined by the end-users themselves and have become increasingly flexible as well as intuitive. The library's traditional image—long dominated by printed books, has begun to incorporate numerous new elements, and is likely to assume more in the future. As Demas and Sherer (2002, 25) note, “libraries are about people—how they learn and how they participate in the life of a learning community.” In addition to its other functions, the library has begun to assume a role in the cultural and social life of the institution (Finnerty 2002; Sannwald 2001). For this reason, libraries are becoming increasingly collaborative and active, as well as engaging, which have become essential factors to attract the younger generation. The success of the HKDI Library lies in its flexibility and versatility in providing a new form learning space that is beyond traditional classrooms in community colleges. Its success has been reflected in its popularity as the center of campus life amongst the students.

CONCLUSION

This study adds to the emerging body of knowledge on planning and construction of art and design libraries in the new era. It has also highlighted areas of potential impacts for further

research in the area of architectural designs for art and design libraries. On the other hand, its success facing the younger generation at college age is also another point to be noted. Data from this study should provide decision-makers with useful information on library building projects in the current era in general. This study provides library planners and practitioners with information on how new library buildings are being designed and more importantly, how they are being used. It suggested that serious consideration should be given to the desired balanced of education and recreation on the future image and nature of libraries, especially for the younger generation. Our results further confirm with the suggestion of Woodward (2005) who wrote:

Since bookstores are so good at getting the word out to the customers who will buy their merchandise, they have much to teach us. Our goals may be different, but those same proven techniques will work for us just as they work for the bookstore. We [librarians] too can adapt our image to changing society and then spread the news that libraries are alive and well and raring to take on the 21st century (55).

The convenience of the Internet as vehicle for delivering information has indeed altered the way people use the library; in addition it has also made major impacts on the library's traditional roles, as well as its academic functions. Many scholars and librarians have been debating about the diminishing importance of a library as a physical space. Meanwhile, the interview results indicated that libraries have the ability to provide space that is conducive to collaboration and learning and satisfy the faculty and student demands. The availability of the Internet and its convenience has fueled much of the current debate about the role of the physical library building in modern academic life. One of the questions that often confounds librarians is why their users do not make better use of libraries. Despite the fact that digital services are the most important parts of recent developments amongst libraries, results of this study could no doubt serve as evidence for convincing the misguided administrators that library buildings are still very much needed, and virtual libraries can never completely replace them.

Clear overlaps in the functions and “expectations” of bookstores and the HKDI Library have been found. It is apparent that modern library designs are gradually moving away from the previously or narrowly defined standards such as seats, study carrels, and bookshelves, etc. Libraries could serve as a contemplative space for discovery, i.e., including discovery of books and knowledge as well as discovery of new innovative ideas via creative interactions with others. For this reason, library spaces are becoming increasingly flexible; while library functions and facilities are becoming increasingly versatile and accommodating. Thus, we have recently witnessed an increasing popularity of the library as a collaborative, social space as a result of new design influence. In fact, our college users are leading the pace of change. A key significance of this finding is that project, collaboration, and inquiry-based learning in this community college is also the trend of recent worldwide curriculum reform and enhancement at various levels of college and school learning and teaching.

The HKDI Library provides the whole college community with a transcendent place and an iconic center for student life. The HKDI Library further conveys the notion of the strengthened role of the library building as center of campus life, learning—a symbol of the college's mission. Users' positive comments, combined with increased visitor figures of the modern libraries suggest that users of any age groups can be won over if the library looks good, feels good, and works well. The new library concept now prioritizes human “self-development” and “social community” as much as it provides the traditional book and

information services to the users. Opening new spaces where these young adults can organize their own learning or socializing—this is the new direction of learning, especially for such young adults who are specializing in art and design. The creation of a comfortable environment in which the patron lingers directly supports the idea behind the library's mission, i.e., to be a cultural and a community center—a place of cultural life. In expanding the idea of having a “brand,” Dempsey (2004) explained that, “to be the third place in a person's life after the home and office. They create places where you can relax and explore, where you can stay in the comfortable atmosphere.” From a librarian's standpoint, balancing recreational or “fun” use with functionality could often be challenging; however it should always be an integral part of the library planning process. A bookstore needs to be, and look, accessible, in order to attract people; and there is no exception for libraries. The interview results indicated that HKDI Library's relaxing and inviting bookstore environment was held in esteem amongst its young users. Consideration should be given to the desired balance of education and recreation in the image and nature of future library design.

Our upcoming research agenda is to perform a more extensive and in-depth quantitative study at the HKDI based on questionnaires to confirm the success factors discovered. Our main research direction is the further study of the requirements of the younger generation as well as junior libraries in schools and for the public. We also plan to extend our study to other countries and explore regional and cultural differences.

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