

LIBRARY WORKS

Administration | Facility | Construction | Security | Technology

Library Interior Design Awards - 2024 Winners

The 2024 American Library Association (ALA) and International Interior Design Association (IIDA) Library Interior Design Awards celebrated outstanding achievements in public library interior design.

Missoula Public Library, Montana: Designed by MSR Design, this library integrates cultural and educational spaces seamlessly.

Shanghai Library East, China: Created by Schmidt Hammer Lassen, the design emphasizes openness and modern functionality.

Pleasant Hill Library, California: Designed by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, this library stands out for its community-centric design.

Indianapolis Public Library's West Perry Branch, Indiana: HBM Architects crafted this library with a focus on accessibility and warmth.

Congratulations to all!!!

YOUR LIBRARY, YOUR BUILDING

Did you ever imagine that your responsibilities as a library supervisor or manager would include managing the building itself? Or that your career might one day involve addressing janitorial, plumbing, or electrical issues?

Did you know that the largest portion of a library's budget is often not dedicated to the collection or personnel, but to building maintenance and capital improvement projects? It's true: working in a library involves much more than overseeing collections, e-resources, and programming—it also involves a great deal of attention to building maintenance and facility management.



LIBRARY FUN FACT

The oldest continuously operating library in the world is Al-Qarawiyyin Library in Fez, Morocco, founded in 859 AD. It is also the oldest operational educational institution.

YOUR LIBRARY, YOUR BUILDING (CON'T)

What is Library Facility Management?

At its core, **Building Management** refers to the practice of maintaining a functional, secure, and efficient environment within a building. This includes coordinating all building systems to ensure the safety, comfort, and security of both occupants and property. While this definition applies generally, it only scratches the surface when it comes to libraries.

Libraries present unique challenges beyond those typically encountered in commercial or municipal settings. The library building must serve multiple roles, far beyond simply housing books and materials. It is a learning and community space, a shelter from the elements, and a place of refuge from noise, stress, and even crime. It must be accessible and welcoming to individuals with special needs while maintaining a safe, quiet environment.

Given these complex demands, library buildings require careful attention to ensure they accommodate these diverse uses while also meeting safety and security standards for both library staff and the public.



Why Should Librarians Care About Building Management?

You may be wondering: **Why do I need to know Facility Management?**

Unless you are fortunate enough to have a dedicated team of facility technicians available around the clock, you will likely be the first point of contact when building issues arise—whether it's a plumbing leak, electrical malfunction, or HVAC problem. Staff and patrons will turn to you for quick identification of the problem and guidance on how to resolve it. Even if you're not the one fixing the issue, you'll need to know how to effectively communicate the problem to a contractor, plumber, or electrician and answer their questions accurately.

The Importance of Electrical Junction Box Covers

Missing electrical junction box (J-Box) covers are a common issue in both older and newer buildings. However, their absence should never be overlooked. Open J-Boxes can expose live wires, increasing the risk of fires, electrical shocks, or even electrocution, particularly in public areas where safety is paramount.

Properly installed and secured J-Box covers are essential for preventing accidental contact with electrical components, safeguarding the building's occupants, and maintaining compliance with electrical safety standards like those set by the National Electrical Code (NEC).



LIBRARY MAINTENANCE SPOTLIGHT

Critical Implications of Broken/Missing Ceiling Tiles

Missing ceiling tiles can be a violation of the **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes**, specifically under provisions related to fire barriers and safety in commercial buildings, including public libraries.:

Compromise of Fire Barriers (NFPA 101: Life Safety Code)

Ceiling tiles in a drop ceiling system often serve as part of a fire-rated assembly designed to limit fire and smoke spread. Missing tiles can breach this assembly, allowing fire or smoke to travel more easily between spaces, which violates fire compartmentalization requirements.

Impact on HVAC and Smoke Control Systems

NFPA standards, such as NFPA 90A (Standard for Installation of Air-Conditioning and Ventilating Systems), require that HVAC systems and return air plenums function within a sealed environment. Missing tiles disrupt this, potentially rendering smoke control systems ineffective and endangering occupants.

Interference with Sprinkler and Alarm Systems (NFPA 13)

Ceiling tiles ensure that sprinkler systems operate as designed by maintaining proper heat build-up near the ceiling to activate sprinklers effectively. Missing tiles can delay activation or create inconsistent coverage, violating NFPA 13 (Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems).

Other problems that may arise from broken/missing ceiling tiles include:

Exposure to Mold and Mildew

Missing tiles may allow moisture to accumulate in the ceiling cavity, promoting mold growth. This can cause respiratory issues for patrons and staff.

Pest Infestations

Gaps in the ceiling provide easy access for rodents, insects, or birds, creating unsanitary conditions

Loss of Insulation

Ceiling tiles play a role in maintaining indoor temperature. Missing or damaged tiles can disrupt insulation, leading to increased heating or cooling costs.

Noise Amplification

Ceiling tiles often help absorb sound. Missing tiles can result in a noisier environment, reducing the library's functionality as a quiet space.



YOUR LIBRARY, YOUR BUILDING (CON'T)

Better Communication

The most important reason librarians should understand the basics of building management is **communication**. Familiarity with industry terms and building systems will make interactions with contractors, service providers, designers, and engineers much more efficient and productive. For example, knowing the type, location, and maintenance history of your HVAC units will help a technician diagnose and fix issues more quickly.

By learning the basics of your library's building systems, you'll be able to address issues more effectively—whether it's reducing unpleasant odors through regular HVAC maintenance, ensuring safe lighting, or planning for future repairs.

The Largest Budget Line

As you progress in your career, you will learn that the largest portion of a library's annual budget often goes toward building upkeep. Depending on the age of the building, more than 50% of the budget may be spent on utilities, maintenance, repairs, and upgrades. If major remodels or new construction projects are planned, the facility budget could easily dwarf other areas of spending, such as materials or personnel. Understanding your library's building systems is crucial for managing these large expenditures, especially when dealing with **Capital Improvement Projects** (CIPs).

Effective Planning

Building projects—whether routine maintenance or large-scale renovations—can be disruptive and often take longer than expected. Proper planning can save time, money, and prevent public complaints. Knowing the scope of a project in advance allows you to anticipate its impact on library operations and create an actionable plan to mitigate disruptions.

Emergency Response

In the event of a building emergency, you will be the first point of contact. Emergencies may include issues such as plumbing breaks, roof leaks, electrical failures, or HVAC breakdowns. Your responsibility is to assess the situation, take appropriate action, and call for help if necessary.

Being prepared for emergencies means knowing how to respond quickly and confidently, which could involve everything from securing the building to contacting the appropriate professionals.

Being a Good Steward of Public Funds

As a library manager, you're responsible for managing and allocating public resources. Whether it's approving timecards, reviewing collection development policies, or negotiating vendor contracts, you are entrusted with making sound fiscal decisions. The library building, likely the library's largest asset, requires similar stewardship. A thorough understanding of building maintenance and facility management will help you make informed decisions about future projects, respond to emergencies effectively, and protect public funds.

**Carlos Baffigo**

Founder, Building Basics for Libraries (BB4Libs)

With over 30 years of experience in library administration, facility management, technology integration, and security operations, Carlos Baffigo is a seasoned expert in the field. He has held key leadership positions, including Deputy Library Director at both the **Pasadena Public Library** in Pasadena, CA, and the **Glendora Public Library** in Glendora, CA.

In 2022, Carlos founded **Building Basics for Libraries (BB4Libs)**, a specialized consultancy dedicated to providing library-specific education in management, facility maintenance, security, technology, and construction. Through BB4Libs, Carlos works to empower libraries with the knowledge and tools needed to better manage their physical spaces and improve operational efficiency.

Carlos' work began with a successful partnership with the **California State Library**, the **California Library Association**, and **InfoPeople** to offer educational programs through the **California Libraries Learn (CALL)** initiative. Since then, he has expanded his reach, consulting and collaborating with libraries, library associations, municipal agencies, and architectural firms across the nation.

Carlos is passionate about helping libraries optimize their resources, enhance safety, and navigate the complexities of facility management to support their ongoing mission of serving the community.

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