LIBRARY WORKS

Administration | Facility | Construction | Security | Technology

LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS - UNDERWAY

....

EAST COUNTY LIBRARY, MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OR: The East County Library in Gresham, Oregon, designed by Holst Architecture, will be a 95,000-square-foot community hub featuring mass timber construction and forest-inspired design elements. Anticipated completion in Spring 2026.

Total Area: 95,000 sq

LEED Cert. Target: Gold

Funding: Bond Mea. (2020)

Cost (est.): $126M

CONSTRUCTION TEAM:

Owner: Multnomah County Library, Multnomah County

Library Director: Annie Lewis

Architect: Holst Architecture

Design (Prelim): Adjaye Associates

Mass Timber: Timberlab

General Contractor: Fortis

Engineer: MKA

MEP: PAE

THE LIBRARY ACCUMULATION EFFECT

Library Accumulation Effect (aka "LAE") refers to the tendency of libraries to accumulate materials, furniture, and other items over time without adequate weeding, organization, or space management. This accumulation often becomes excessive and disorganized, with many items being neither immediately necessary, nor useful. Over time, these forgotten objects end up in closets, basements, or offsite rented storage spaces, taking up valuable space, creating hazardous and pest-ridden conditions, and perpetuating an endless cycle of accumulation. Common manifestations of LAE include countless boxes of book donations, bookcarts missing wheels, broken or obsolete furniture, overflowing closets of art supplies, outdated stationary, and stacks of outdated computers and peripherals, stored "in case we ever need it."

Why Does The Library Accumulation Effect Happen?

Despite the best intentions, LAE can take hold for several reasons:

1. Cultural Foundations

At its heart, LAE is rooted in the cultural mission of libraries. Libraries are inherently focused on "collections," and librarians serve as their curators. By nature, librarians strive to procure, develop, and maintain diverse materials that reflect the needs and values of their communities. This instinct to build robust collections often leads to a tendency to accumulate more and more resources.

Over time, these materials can take on meaning beyond their original purpose, creating an emotional attachment that makes discarding them feel counterproductive or even disloyal to the library's mission or the community. Collections are kept and stored for years based on a librarians assessment (who since retired or is no longer at the library) that "once an individual asked for the material" or a donation was made by a VIP of the community. In themselves, these are all good reasons to keep and store material, but only for a set period of time.

2. Economic Pressures

Periods of financial uncertainty further contribute to LAE. When budgets are tight, libraries often adopt a "save for later" mentality. Broken furniture, outdated technology, or surplus supplies that might otherwise be discarded are retained in hopes they may prove useful in the future. While this approach can be practical in the short term, it frequently results in long-term inefficiency and clutter.

3. When Saving Gets Out of Hand

The well-meaning intent to save can sometimes spiral out of control. When a culture of saving gets out of hand—or when a few individuals adopt an extreme approach—it can lead to significant physical clutter. Accumulated objects, unused equipment, and excessive inventory can obstruct workflows, reduce usable space, and detract from the welcoming environment that libraries aim to provide.

LIBRARY MAINTENANCE SPOTLIGHT
Sump Pumps - How do they work and Common Problems

A **sump pump** is a device designed to remove water that has accumulated in a sump basin, typically found in the library's basement or in a basin around the exterior. It is a key component in preventing basement flooding and water damage.

Here's how it works:

1. **Water Collection**
   - Where water comes from: The sump basin collects water from around the building foundation, which might seep in due to rain, melting snow, or groundwater.
   - Drainage system: The water usually arrives through a drainage system installed around the foundation of the building (e.g., drain tiles).

2. **Activation**
   - Float mechanism: The pump has a float switch that rises with the water level in the sump basin.
   - Triggering: When the water level reaches a certain point, the float activates the pump.


3. **Pumping Water Out**
   - Motor activation: The pump's motor powers an impeller (a rotating part) that pushes water up through a discharge pipe.
   - Check valve: A check valve on the discharge pipe prevents the pumped-out water from flowing back into the basin.

4. **Discharge**
   - Water removal: The water is expelled away from the building to a designated drainage area, such as a storm sewer, dry well, or a safe distance from the foundation.

5. **Deactivation**
   - Float resets: Once the water level drops, the float returns to its original position, turning off the pump.
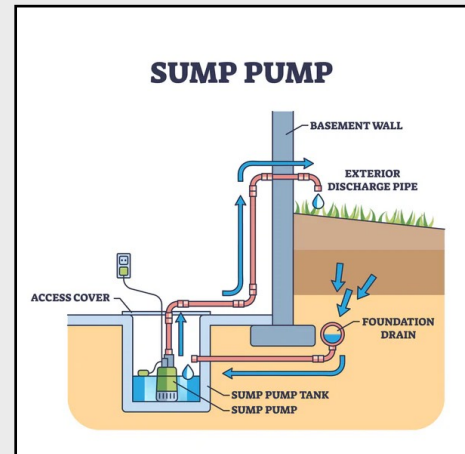
Types of Sump Pumps

1. **Submersible:** Installed underwater in the sump basin, offering quiet operation.
2. **Pedestal:** The motor sits above the sump basin, ideal for easier maintenance but noisier.

Maintenance Tips

- **Clean the sump basin** regularly to remove debris that could clog the pump.
- **Test the pump periodically** by filling the basin with water and ensuring it activates.
- **Inspect the discharge line** for blockages or freezing in colder months.

A well-maintained sump pump protects against costly water damage and ensures a dry, usable basement space.

How Does LAE Affect Library Building Maintenance?

LAE has a profound impact on library building maintenance, creating challenges that compromise functionality, safety, and sustainability.

Overburdening Storage and Safety Code Violations

One of the most immediate effects of the Library Accumulation Effect is the cluttering of work spaces and overburdening of storage spaces, which can lead to safety code violations. An individual's 'messy' work space can be excused and accepted over time as the way they work, or becomes "off-limits" to intervention. Other clutter often spills into areas where storage is prohibited, such as elevator machine rooms, electrical vaults, and HVAC control rooms, where accumulated materials can block access to critical utility and life safety systems, including fire alarms, electrical panels, HVAC units, and plumbing. Such conditions create unsafe working environments for library staff and maintenance personnel who need to perform their duties while navigating cluttered spaces for routine inspections, repairs, or cleaning. This inefficiency slows down essential tasks like replacing light fixtures, maintaining restrooms, and repairing equipment.

Safety Hazards

Safety hazards due to LAE increase as clutter accumulates. Flammable materials like paper and textiles elevate fire risks, while blocked corridors, littered floors, and obstructed sprinkler systems pose significant dangers during emergencies. Cluttered areas can also create trip hazards, hinder safe evacuation, and prohibit safe passage for disabled-bodied individuals, in violation of fire safety, OSHA, American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other building safety codes. Violations can result in violation notices, forced mitigation, or levied fines from local friends inspection agencies. Additionally, overcrowded storage spaces can negatively affect HVAC efficiency by blocking airflow and intake registers, resulting in uneven temperature control and increased strain on systems. Dust from stored items exacerbates these issues, clogging filters, reducing air quality, and requiring more frequent maintenance.

Pest Infestations

Pest infestations are another consequence of LAE. Poorly stored or forgotten items attract and harbor rodents, insects, and mold, which can damage library collections and building infrastructure, such as wiring and insulation. Once test infestations are established, they can easily spread to other areas, causing even more damage. Infestation in kitchen, where food is prepared, will result in costly mitigation and fines from local health inspection officials. Mold growth in damp or poorly ventilated areas further compromises infrastructure and creates additional remediation needs.

Aesthetics

The aesthetic and functional impact of LAE cannot be overstated. Clutter spilling into public areas creates an uninviting atmosphere for patrons, detracting from the library's mission of providing a clean, welcoming space. Staff distractions caused by frequent rearrangements or temporary fixes can divert attention from critical maintenance needs.

Finally, LAE imposes financial strain on maintenance budgets. Funds that could be allocated to planned upgrades, energy efficiency improvements, or accessibility enhancements are often diverted to address issues caused by clutter, such as fire safety violations, structural repairs, pest control, and HVAC maintenance.

How to Stop LAE - Intervention is Required!!

The LAE Audit Plan

To stop Library Accumulation Effect, an authoritative Audit Plan is needed. An Audit Plan brings together representatives from each of library's main operational groups (the Audit Body), and engages them in an audit exercise to identify "clutter" in their areas of responsibility.

Here are steps to follow for can Audit Plan:

1. Define Objectives

- Purpose: Clearly outline the goals of the LAE audit, such as reducing clutter, optimizing storage, or ensuring compliance with safety codes. Goals should be simple and easy to understand.

- Scope: Determine the areas and items to be audited, such as library collections, storage rooms, public spaces, machine rooms, or even digital inventories.

- Outcome: Establish measurable success criteria, e.g., a 30% reduction in stored items or the removal of all outdated equipment. Don't forget to periodically report on progress thru visual queues, photos, etc.

2. Assemble the LAE Audit Body

- Representation: Form a team with members from all of the library's operational groups (e.g., librarians, maintenance staff, IT, and administration). The team should be comprised of key people who understand their operational areas, are wiling to participate, and are proactive.
- Roles and Responsibilities: Assign tasks to each team member, such as inspecting specific areas, documenting findings, or coordinating actions. This task could also be done in teams to get more than one opinion on more sensitive matters and the responsibility doesn't fall on one person's 'shoulders.'

3. Conduct a Preliminary LAE Assessment

- Inventory: Perform a walkthrough of designated areas to take stock of current conditions. Note the obvious clutter first to mark easy wins and establish momentum.
- Identify Problem Areas: Note cluttered spaces, unused materials, or areas that violate safety or building codes.
- Photographic Documentation: Take photos and/or video of problem areas for reference and 'before and after' comparison.

4. Develop an Actionable Timeline

- Set Milestones: Break the audit process into stages with deadlines (e.g., assessment, recommendations, implementation) in order to avoid 'endless evaluation.'
- Flexibility: Allow for timeline adjustments if unforeseen challenges arise, but set firm deadlines to maintain progress. Timeline adjustments should be rare and with documented justification.

5. Evaluate and Categorize Items

- Useful vs. Obsolete: Separate items into categories such as "useful," "donate," "discard," or "repair."
- Urgency: Prioritize immediate hazards, such as flammable materials in storage rooms or blocked emergency exits. Prepare to shorten timelines for mitigation if the potential hazards exist.
- Retention Criteria: Establish clear guidelines for what should be retained (e.g., items of historical value or frequent use). Be open to considering other reasons for retention, as long as, they are within the library's mission.

6. Propose and Implement Solutions

- Storage Optimization: Redesign storage areas to maximize space and accessibility.
- Decluttering: Remove, reuse, or recycle broken, outdated, or unnecessary items.
- Donation or Sale: Partner with organizations to donate surplus materials or sell them through auctions.
- Repairs: Fix broken equipment or furniture that still has utility. Establish clear timelines for getting equipment back into service in order to avoid continued and perpetual storage.

7. Update Policies and Procedures

- Weeding Policies: Incorporate regular decluttering and weeding into the library's operational guidelines. Set terms and conditions within the Collection Development policy

for stored collections (i.e. length of storage time, spaces allocation, etc.) to establish parameters for storage.

- Storage Limits: Set clear limits on how much can be stored and for how long.
- Acquisition Policies: Ensure that new acquisitions align with storage capacity and library priorities. If you are limited in space, the solution for new acquisitions should not be acquiring or building more storage, but to limit the amount of new acquisitions to the existing storage.

8. Monitor and Report Progress

- Status Reports: Provide regular updates to stakeholders or the Audit Body on progress and challenges. Send updates with photos or video on progress achieved and goals met. If challenges arise, reconvene the Audit Body to work through options and solutions for storage. Allow the operational experts to suggest solutions.

- Metrics: Use measurable indicators (e.g., percentage of items removed, reclaimed space) to track success. Keep indicators SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), and don't get too caught up in the numbers rather than the action.

- Stakeholder Communication: Keep all staff informed about changes and the benefits of the audit.

9. Conduct Regular Follow-Ups

- Annual Audits: Schedule routine audits to prevent LAS from recurring.
- Training: Educate staff on the importance of space management and clutter reduction.
- Feedback Loop: Create a process for staff to report accumulation issues or suggest improvements.

10. POST AND CELEBRATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS!!! WOOHOO!!! :)

- It is very important to keep track of the progress and celebrate the accomplishments. When library staff see the progress and are rewarded for the hard work, positivity and a new outlook on accumulation will reign.

By following these steps, the Library Accumulation Effect audit plan ensures a systematic and sustainable approach to addressing clutter, improving efficiency, and maintaining a safe, functional environment.

Carlos Baffigo
Founder, Building Basics for Libraries (BB4Libs)

With over 30 years of executive-level experience in library administration, facility management, technology integration, and security operations, Carlos Baffigo is a seasoned expert in the field.

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.

BB4Libs
Building Basics for Libraries

W: https://bb4libs.com/
E: bb4libs@gmail.com
T: 909-569-2461