

## A Forum on Library Construction

### *Introduction: The Reshaping of Libraries*

*“A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armory,” was the bold pronouncement of a French cleric of the twelfth century.*

That is certainly one memorable example (see Alberto Manguel’s *The Library at Night*, 2007, for others) of how the relationship between an institution of learning and its library can be visualized. All the same, as vivid or picturesque as such an image remains for us, we all know that cultural context is all-important: the services, the holdings, the physical shape of the library vary, and *should* vary, according to place, time, culture, etc.

The spaces we work in, and how they are changing, is a subject that *TL* has wanted to engage for some time, and when an invitation was extended on ATLANTIS a few months ago, it was a pleasant surprise to hear from so many interested parties. We ended up with six respondents, and kept the format as simple as possible: a short overview of the institution and the library project, followed by concise responses to a common list of questions.

It’s probably true that there is never an “easy” or ideal time to launch a library project on any scale. The money and the planning present a challenge no matter when they take place, and (as some of the responses that follow will bear out) the oversight of a library project generally translates into significant extra responsibility, especially for the director, through to its completion.

The projects described here vary dramatically: some produced entirely new libraries, some were significant renovations, some addressed very specific parts of library spaces. But all required imagination, tenacity, and good planning.

Our deepest thanks to our six respondents for sharing their insights and experience. We hope that you find what follows helpful and instructive.

The Editors