Graham Matthews and Graham Walton (eds.) (2013),
*University Libraries and Space in the Digital World*

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Written from the perspective of scholars in information management as well as librarians, this edited book offers insights into the use of physical space in university libraries. This is timely since new information technologies shift space from being a purely physical resource towards the digital domain and as a result the role of libraries and emerging usage patterns are transformed. The book is unusual in presenting the perspective of those using or managing space in university libraries.

The book comprises 14 chapters which address a broad range of issues including history, technology, sustainability, staff accommodation, types of library users, place attachment, new ways of teaching and learning, future developments, as well as case studies of successful architectural interventions in university libraries.

Readers with a background in space syntax may find the following three chapters particularly interesting: ‘Space in the university library: An historical perspective’ by John Feather. This provides a fascinating account of the history of the library dating back to the book collections in ancient Assyria, the Athenian ‘Akademe’ and the Museum of Alexandria. The author explores the ‘historical evolution of the storage and study space model against the background of how universities have developed and changed’ (p.19). The chapter ‘The multifaceted place: Current approaches to university library space’ by Olaf Eigenbrodt discusses sociological concepts of space and place in libraries based on a consideration of what types of public spaces our current ‘knowledge societies’ require. Last but not least, the chapter ‘Evaluation of space and use: A case study from Finland’ jointly written by Graham Matthews and Anne Lehto, Eija Poteri and Mirja Livonen presents ethnographic and empirical data on space usage gathered in the Tampere University Main Library over the course of three weeks in 2009 and 2011. Using observations and structured interviews, the authors argue for an evidence-based approach to librarianship. Among the most interesting results is the rise of laptop usage from 12% in 2009 to 20% in 2011 (as expected) and the surprisingly small percentage of users engaged in collaborative group work (only 6-7% of users) with the majority of groups being pairs. The authors conclude that new problem-based teaching methods asking for group work seem less used by the academics than anticipated and that the library is still valued as a place for individual study.

In summary, this edited book highlights how a building typology changes in the light of broader societal shifts towards an increasingly digital access to information. Implications for users and those concerned with the creation and management of physical spaces alike are outlined.