

(Un)desiderata

27 Snappy Rules for Good and Evil in Library Architecture

Presented by Fred Schlipf and John Moorman
at the 2000 PLA Conference

1. **Few libraries have ever built enough storage space on purpose.**
2. **The right number of entrances to a library is anything up to one.**
3. **Echoes are not our friends.**
4. **Even if it's stupid, as long as it's legal, you can have whatever you want.**
5. **Never buy a chair until you've spent at least 15 minutes sitting in it.**
6. **Never sign a completely open-ended contract with a professional.**
7. **When citizens enter a library, they want to see librarians and books.**
8. **The layout of a good building is intuitively obvious.**
9. **You can't match your carpet.**
10. **Reject traditional architectural forms at your peril.**
11. **Always show your plans to your custodians.**
12. **A service desk is a service desk, not a monument.**
13. **No matter what you call it, EIFS is still an eighth of an inch of stucco over plastic foam.**
14. **Carpet squares tend to look like squares of carpet.**
15. **Any sign worth making is worth making well, and lots of signs aren't worth making at all.**
16. **Never hire a consultant who works for your architect.**
17. **Today's trendy color scheme is tomorrow's avocado and orange.**
18. **Skylights cause impossible glare, but they make up for it by leaking.**
19. **Creating excitement with light in a library is like creating excitement with steps in a nursing home.**

20. **Never create a cozy corner you don't want occupied by a bag lady.**
21. **Even if your books are about pears and your staff are pear shaped, you still don't want a pear-shaped library.**
22. **You can turn HID lighting off, but you can't turn it back on again.**
23. **Watch your sightlines. The romantic dreams of Grace Livingston Hill fans do not include unexpected glimpses of the men's room in action.**
24. **No matter what turns a designer on, a library is not an airline terminal, a torpedo factory, or a Chuck-E-Cheese.**
25. **Task lighting and down lighting aren't completely evil, but they come close enough for all practical purposes.**
26. **Buy strong. There is no theoretical upper limit to the number of teenagers who can occupy a chair.**
27. **Ars longa, technologia brevis.**

How to reach us:

In addition to working as building consultants, both authors are directors of public libraries.

The outline of the authors' program on **The Seven Deadly Sins of Public Library Architecture** at the 1998 PLA conference is available on the Library's website at <http://urbanafreelibrary.org/fredarch.htm>. Their presentation on **The Public Library Construction Process: From Problem Recognition to Ribbon Snipping** at the 1999 PLA symposium on **Planning, Designing and Building the Perfect Library** is available on the Library's website at <http://urbanafreelibrary.org/fredcons.htm>.

The presenters are happy to answer brief questions on library design and construction at no charge.

Both are also able to travel to make presentations on planning library buildings and on library design problems, including narrative walk-throughs of existing library buildings.

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