William W. Sannwald was assistant to the city manager and manager of library design and development from 1997 to 2004, and was city librarian of the San Diego Public Library from 1979 to 1997. He is now a full-time faculty member in the business school at San Diego State University and works as a library building and administrative consultant. He is the author of numerous books and articles on library architecture and management and has presented papers at national and international conferences. Past president of the Library Administration and Management Association (LAMA), Sannwald was a jury member of the joint ALA/AIA awards. He is the recipient of the San Diego AIA chapter’s highest honor, the Irving Gill Award, for his contributions to library architecture.

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This fifth edition of *Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations* is published to accomplish a number of goals:

- to assist librarians, architects, administrators, and other members of a building design team in programming library spaces
- to serve as a guide during the various stages of the design process in order to make sure that all needed spaces and functions are included in the library design
- to enable the evaluation of existing library spaces as part of a library’s needs assessment process
- to provide data and support to the library in its presentations to governing authorities and stakeholder groups

The checklist includes questions concerning almost every aspect of space and function in a library building. The purpose of these questions is to make sure that the building design team in the evaluation and programming of spaces overlooks no element of the building. Although the list is probably not exhaustive, answering the questions in this document should ensure that no major design elements have been overlooked.

The checklist is a valuable tool for programming and planning existing and potential library buildings. Most of the basic areas listed apply to college and university, public, school, and special libraries. It should be relatively easy to adapt the checklist to meet the requirements of almost any type of library.

The first edition was adapted from a checklist produced by doctoral students in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman’s University in Denton and was a product of the Library Building and Equipment Section’s Architecture for Public Libraries Committee.

All sections in the fifth edition have been reviewed, revised, and updated. In addition some new chapters and sections are included:

- chapter 3, “Sustainable Design,” a new chapter dealing with sustainable design, including site selection, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials, and indoor environmental air quality
- in chapter 4, “General Exterior Considerations,” new sections dealing with exterior conditions including loading docks and delivery, trash enclosures, and outdoor book and media returns
- in chapter 5, “Interior Organization of Library Buildings,” new sections on information commons, media production and presentation labs, special collections, faculty/graduate carrels and study rooms, and public art
- chapter 6, “Compliance with ADA Accessibility Guidelines,” reorganized to follow the same organizational scheme found in the federal law
- in chapter 7, “Telecommunications, Electrical, and Miscellaneous Equipment,” a new section on wireless technology
- in chapter 8, “Interior Design and Finishes,” a new section dealing with the behavioral aspects of space
- in chapter 9, “Materials Handling and Storage,” a new section dealing with materials handling systems
- in chapter 11, “Safety and Security,” a new section on disaster planning
- in chapter 12, “Maintenance of Library Buildings and Property,” new sections on routine maintenance and betterments and improvements
- in chapter 13, “Building Occupancy and Post-occupancy Evaluation,” a new section dealing with building acceptance

In 2004, I took early retirement from the City of San Diego, where I had served for twenty-four years as library director and assistant to the city manager. I was asked to teach full-time in the management department of the business school at San Diego State University, where I had taught part-time for over twenty years. I now teach upper-division undergraduate and MBA students in a variety of courses including organizational behavior, strategic management, internships, and ethics. It is a great experience, but I continue to stay involved in libraries through consulting, speaking, and writing.

I dedicate this fifth edition to my children: Sara A. Sannwald, William H. Sannwald, and Suzanne A. Sannwald. I am pleased and proud that my son, Bill, works in a library and is in library school; his wife, Suzanne, works with technology in a library-related job.

This publication should be viewed as a living document, and all comments and suggestions for future editions are welcome. Please send them to

William W. Sannwald
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La Mesa, CA 91941
Sannwald@mail.sdsu.edu
## Library Site Selection

### A. General Conditions

1. Is the site conveniently located to the population served by the library?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**

2. Does the site provide high visibility and identification to the population served?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**

3. Is the site affordable?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**

4. Will the site provide visibility of the building and its function from the street?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**

5. Is a library an appropriate use of the land parcel in question?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**

6. Will the site retain or enhance the natural contours of the land?  
   ![YES NO N/A]
   
   **Comments:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the site zoned for a library?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. If not, is future library zoning possible?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Are there existing structures on the site that must be demolished?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. If an existing structure must be demolished, does it present asbestos, lead paint, or unusual environmental problems?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. If the library is to be a branch of a public library system, are there overlapping service areas from other branches in the system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. If the library is to be a branch of a college or university system, does the site provide ease of access for communication, transportation, and supply to the branch from other library service points?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<td>13. Will the use of the site for a library add aesthetic value or other amenities to the neighborhood?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Are there liabilities or nuisance factors from adjacent properties and their activities?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Will the use of the site for a library have any negative impact on the surrounding areas?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<td>16. Will the library fit in with the architectural style of neighboring buildings?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Will the building work with the traffic flow of adjacent areas?</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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</table>
### B. Location

1. Does the population being served consider the location of the site satisfactory and acceptable?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

2. Is the site accessible to all segments of the community being served?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

3. Is the site relatively close to the part of the community that is understood to be the most active and that will generate the most use?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

4. Is the site appropriate for the library given its function and clientele?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

5. Would library usage  
   a) Increase if another site were selected?  
   b) Decrease if another site were selected?  
   c) Stay the same if another site were selected?  

   *Comments:*  

6. Will this location best meet the library objective of providing materials and services to the greatest number of people at the lowest cost?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

7. Is the location in an area that is frequently visited by members of the community for daily activities such as going to class, shopping, working, and seeking out other services?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

8. Is the site located near commercial, retail, cultural, and other activities within the community?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

9. Does the proposed site present a safety issue for patrons and library staff?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A  

   *Comments:*  

   _______________________________________________________________________________  
   _______________________________________________________________________________
10. For public libraries, is the choice of location driven by the same factors that influence retail site selection? (A good rule of thumb is to get the site on the opposite corner from a McDonald’s.)

Comments: __________________________________________________________

C. Accessibility

1. Is the site easily accessible to those living in the area served?

Comments: __________________________________________________________

2. For academic libraries, is the library located to best serve the interests and unique needs of the college or university?

A number of factors should be considered:

- For many institutions, the library is located in the center of the campus in order to link parts of the campus together. Most academic libraries are considered the heart of the campus, and the preferred location might be in the center of the campus.
- Libraries that serve primarily a commuter population might want to locate the library building near the transportation hub.
- Because the library needs to serve the entire population of the campus, it might be located at a site convenient to most classrooms.
- If departmental or special subject libraries exist, the library site’s relationship to the other libraries might need to be considered.

Comments: __________________________________________________________

3. For school libraries, the following accessibility factors should be considered. Is the library close to
   a) The study hall, to permit easy entry and return of students?
   b) The theater or auditorium, to provide good access to projection and taping equipment and to other graphic and audiovisual support services?
   c) A computer laboratory, to permit access to additional computers and peripheral equipment?
   d) The teacher workroom, to encourage teachers to use the center and to put equipment and resources within reach?
   e) The outside, to permit easy delivery of materials and after-hours access?

Comments: __________________________________________________________

4. Can the greatest number of potential customers easily reach the site?

Comments: __________________________________________________________
5. Are travel times from target population areas to the library acceptable?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

6. Have automobile traffic patterns near the library been considered?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

7. Is the site located on a busy highway that will require a separate street-type entrance or driveway?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

8. Is the site accessible to public transportation?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

9. Is bicycle access encouraged and facilitated?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

10. Are there sidewalks for pedestrian access?
    \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

11. Is the site conveniently accessible to private vehicle transportation?
    \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

12. Does the entrance to the library provide adequate space and ease of accessibility to accommodate all arriving individuals and groups at all times?
    \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

D. Size

1. Does the site provide adequate space for current needs?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

2. Will the site provide room for future expansion and/or remodeling?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]

3. Does the site include enough space for appropriate amenities such as green space and landscaping?
   \[\text{Comments:} \quad \]
4. Is the site large enough to accommodate on-site parking?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

5. Does the property contain possible easements that may influence the type of construction that may take place on the site?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

6. Does the property accommodate adequate setbacks to meet zoning and aesthetic considerations?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

7. Is the property configuration adequate for successful completion of the building project?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

8. Is there enough space on the property and/or adjacent to it for staging during construction?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

**E. Environmental Issues**

1. Has an environmental impact report been made for the proposed site?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

2. Is the site oriented so that it is possible to take advantage of solar energy and/or photovoltaic (PV) systems?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

3. Are complications likely to arise from the nature of the ground beneath the building?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________

4. Does the site have adequate drainage?  
   \( \square \quad \square \quad \square \)  
   Comments: ____________________________________________
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<tr>
<td>5. Is the site above the level of a 100-year flood plain?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Has a subsurface probe been done to examine soil conditions, utilities, and other factors?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Has the site been improved—that is, are curbs, gutters, water, sewers, and electricity available?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Are there any natural or artificial barriers that limit either access to or usability of the site?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Are there any hidden problems of geology, topography, archaeology, buried objects, or toxic waste?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Does the site present issues with indigenous peoples or endangered species?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>11. Do neighboring facilities pose possible environmental/nuisance problems?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Has the condition of the soil been tested to determine the stability of the site or any underground site problems?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. If the site is sloped, are there possible advantages or disadvantages to the slope?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
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Planning construction of a new library facility or renovation of an existing one can be a daunting task. With the new fifth edition of his *Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations*, veteran library administrator and construction consultant William Sannwald guides librarians and other members of a building design team through the stages of the design process. Updated materials include:

- A new chapter on sustainable design, including issues of site selection, air quality, and energy and water efficiency
- New sections on wireless networking, information commons, and media production and presentation labs
- Updated treatment of special collections and materials handling systems
- A new section on disaster planning
- A reorganized chapter on ADA accessibility guidelines that matches the structure of the federal statute

Because construction projects are complex and sometimes unwieldy, Sannwald’s checklist format provides a clear, concise way of itemizing the issues, helping your construction project run as smoothly as possible!