

BUSINESS LIBRARIES BY DESIGN

An Interview with Larissa Fedoroff

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Column Introduction In this issue, I interview Larissa Fedoroff, a Senior Interior Designer at DBI, a provider of comprehensive workplace solutions in Lansing, MI, to gain insights into the design of business library spaces. Her tips on sprucing up a space on a budget are simple but impactful and a good reminder that not all space improvements cost a lot of money. Her emphasis on the need for planning and defining goals before reaching out to an outside design firm and her suggestions for solutions to common challenges (will there ever be enough electrical outlets!?) will also resonate with business librarians looking to upgrade their space. - *Laura Walesby, Column Editor*

Larissa Fedoroff is a Senior Interior Designer at DBI in Lansing, MI and works on several commercial design projects in the region. She is also an Assistant Instructor in the Interior Design program at Michigan State University, educating students on a variety of design software and contemporary design issues. During her career, Larissa has earned her National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) professional certification, as well as LEED AP ID+C professional accreditation, and is currently pursuing her WELL AP accreditation. When she's not spending her time involved in industry-related endeavors, you can find her training for her next marathon or hiking along various trails in Michigan.

Q. How should business librarians prepare in advance of meeting with an interior designer or space planner to ensure the meeting is the most productive? In other words, what homework should we do beforehand?

Larissa Fedoroff: I would recommend coming prepared with goals for the space they are looking to renovate. How does the space need to function? What are the "musts" of the space? What are "pain points" of the space that they are looking to fix? Having a sense of direction from the client gives designers a "jumping off point," where we can be our most successful and create a design that meets those critical needs.

Q. Many academic business libraries shut down completely during the pandemic and are only now considering what reopening in the fall might look like. Do you see any new trends emerging from this past year that will inform interior design in library spaces moving forward?

A. More individual work/study spaces will be popular post-pandemic but so will group study spaces. There is this drive to maintain an aspect of health and safety while still encouraging socialization. The



Figure 1. Larissa Fedoroff.
Photo credit: Samantha Kobe.

most effective designs will be flexible in their function and furniture used to accommodate the variety of requested spaces for end users.

Q. Aside from the pandemic, are there larger trends in the interior design world that could enhance the user experience of business library users?

A. Larger trends are driven greatly by incorporating technology and power access as much as possible. Another important trend is access to nature/natural environments. Utilization of natural light from windows, incorporating greenery into spaces, and using products with natural materials or designs are highly sought after. Health and well-being of users in a space will be much more important in the next few years to come, and certifications like WELL and LEED will be pushed into the spotlight even more.

Q. With respect to natural light, are there any solutions for spaces that don't have a lot of windows?

A. Full spectrum lightbulbs that mimic the feel of natural lighting are available. It may also be helpful to include a variety of lighting types beyond your standard general down lighting. Other tips include using lighter wall colors to help reflect light in the space and selecting lighter finishes in general. If there are any windows available in a space, creating clear sight lines to them will also make a space feel airier and more open.

Q. Do you have any low-tech or inexpensive solutions to help business libraries on a budget enhance their space?

A. Inexpensive solutions that I have had great success with would be:

- Connectrac Floor Based Cable Management for bringing power and data to spaces where adding power could be costly.
- Haworth Collaborative Power Station is a great mobile power station that can be docked at night for charging and utilized by end users through a floor plate.

Other non-specific product solutions include:

- Greenery: Adding some live plants to space doesn't have to cost a lot but can improve the health and well-being of users in the space positively.
- Art: Another great way to bring a fresh energy to a space is adding art. Whether it's framed or sculptural, a couple of unique pieces will add interest and variety.

Q. Are there any common mistakes that you see libraries making on a regular basis when designing their spaces (choices that lead to underutilization or overcrowding, for example)? Any advice on how to avoid them?

A. A common pitfall is jumping onto trends that will fade out in 5-7 years. Whether it's aesthetics or not future-planning technology, trying to follow what is current instead of what the space itself needs/how it is being utilized will create costly problems down the road. Focus on the goals/needs of the space to help drive the overall design. A successful space will cater to all users for several years to come.

Another consideration is acknowledging the ever-changing role of libraries in today's community/culture. Libraries have grown beyond solely being a space for studying and reserving books.

Among their goals, librarians should consider where their space is going, use-wise. What can they see occurring in the space 3 years from now....5 years from now?

These hiccups can be avoided by having clear goals and needs for the space. And an openness to change. 😊

Q. What tools or methods do you recommend libraries use to assess user satisfaction with a new or enhanced space once it has been completed?

A. Successful tools for assessing user satisfaction can be anything from an online survey that users can fill out after using a space to one-on-one conversations with users of the space. I often find that catching a user as they are heading out of a space and asking them how their experience was can be the best method of gathering accurate and honest feedback. It creates an opportunity for conversation and in-depth feedback gathering that technology often doesn't capture.

Q. FUN QUESTION: What's your favorite piece of furniture? How about your favorite fabric or finish?

A. I love so many different pieces but If I had to pick a favorite right now, it would be Haworth's Lyda Modular Sofa. They integrated a power drawer into the arm which is a fantastic use of space and creativity! (<https://www.haworth.com/na/en/products/lounge-sofas-ottomans/lydalounge.html>)

A favorite finish fabric for me right now is HBF's Woven Memory. The texture is to die for, and their colorways are fun and fresh! (<https://www.hbftextiles.com/products/wovenmemory>)

Column editor's note: With respect to the planning and assessment of reconfigured or new business library spaces, resources that may be of assistance to those librarians looking to spruce up their facilities include:

EDUCAUSE's Learning Space Rating System (LSRS)

(<https://www.educause.edu/eli/initiatives/learning-space-rating-system>)

A rubric to "assess how well the design of classrooms supports and enables multiple modalities of learning and teaching, especially that of active learning." While it is designed to evaluate formal learning spaces specifically, many of the criteria can be applied to library spaces as well. EDUCAUSE account required to access.

Suma

(<https://suma-project.github.io/Suma/>)

An open-source tablet-based toolkit for collecting and analyzing data about the use of library spaces. Developed by North Carolina State University Libraries.