

Public Library of the Year Award 2018

by Santi Romero

Overview

The Public Library of the Year award is conferred by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and sponsored by Systematic A/S, the largest privately owned software company in Denmark (<https://www.systematicinc.com/>). The award is presented to the best public library for either a newly created building or an existing one that has been remodelled to house a public library. A library has to have been opened in the last three years to be considered for the award. What makes this award different is that it combines architecture and quality of library service in a single award. Only in its fourth iteration, the award is gaining remarkable momentum and visibility. The future of the award looks promising.

This article tracks the evolution of the award and includes images and commentary on the five nominees for the 2018 award.

Background

The award was initiated in 2014 and organized in cooperation with the Danish Agency for Culture and Palaces (DAC). It was sponsored by Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects (<https://www.shl.dk/>) and the panel of judges included members of the IFLA Public Libraries Section.

The 2014 award, won by the Craigieburn Library in Australia, was presented at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Lyon, France.

(https://www.humelibraries.vic.gov.au/Locations_amp_Hours/Libraries/Craigieburn_Library);
<https://modelprogrammer.slks.dk/en/news-events/public-library-of-the-year-previous-years/public-library-of-the-year-2014/#c123451>.

The 2015 and 2016 awards, sponsored by the IT company Systematic, were also organized with the collaboration of the DAC. The IFLA Public Libraries Section was again represented on the judging panel.

In 2015, the IFLA World Library and Information Congress was hosted in Cape Town, South Africa, where the winner of the award was the Kista Public Library in Sweden

(<https://biblioteket.stockholm.se/bibliotek/kista-bibliotek>; <https://modelprogrammer.slks.dk/en/news-events/public-library-of-the-year-previous-years/public-library-of-the-year-2015/#c123450>).

In 2016, the IFLA World Library and Information Congress was held in Columbus, Ohio, USA, where the prize was awarded to the Dokk 1 Library in Denmark

(<https://dokk1.dk/>; <https://modelprogrammer.slks.dk/en/news-events/public-library-of-the-year-2016/>).

No award was made in 2017.

Further Progress on the Public Library of the Year Award

In 2018, the award came under the umbrella of IFLA, and will be sponsored by Systematic under a five-year sponsorship agreement (<https://systematic.com/library-learning/nyheder/2018/public-library-of-the-year/>).

The judging panel is made up of seven Standing Committee members from three Sections of IFLA: the chair and two members of the Public Libraries Section, two members from the Metropolitan Libraries Section and two members from the Library Buildings and Equipment Section. One of the members from the Library Buildings and Equipment Section is an architect, which helps with assessment of the architectural features of libraries competing for the award.

The four or five finalists chosen from the entries submitted receive a certificate. The winning entry receives a prize of US \$5,000 . All finalists are required to deliver a presentation at the awards ceremony held at the annual IFLA World Library and Information Congress.

Assessment Criteria

The Public Library of the Year Award recognizes the best public library of the year, evaluating the architectural quality of the library building as well as such diverse aspects as local culture, sustainability, digital developments, and the wishes and needs of library users.

Specifically, the libraries are evaluated in relation to six criteria:

Interaction with the surroundings and local culture, including how the architecture reflects or gives consideration to the local culture of the community and how it provides visibility in the urban landscape and interaction with surrounding buildings and open spaces.

Architectural quality, including how each space works in terms of functions and logistics, how the architectural concept is implemented and designed on different scales within the building, and how the spaces affect people's senses, for example, with the use of light, darkness, sound, silence and materials.

Flexibility, including how rooms are designed and organized, how surfaces and the combination of spaces inspire for the users' own activities, and how the spaces can be easily modified and used for various functions and activities.

Sustainability, including how sustainable solutions have been incorporated into the library, for example, by reducing quantities of resources used, using local materials in the construction process, or using natural resources as an energy source.

Learning space, including the way the library offers a diversity of approaches to education, how learning spaces support different learning situations, and how the learning spaces interact with the rest of the library.

Digitization, including how digital communication and accessibility of library content are integrated into the library space, using methods that include mobile technologies, and how digitization has been used in innovative and creative ways to create experiences for library users within the library building.

In addition to these six criteria, and because the prize is awarded by IFLA, each library is assessed on how it lines up with the IFLA's Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The challenge for the judging panel is to award the prize to the library with the best approach across all the criteria.

The Judging Process in 2018

For the award made in 2018, participating libraries had to have been completed between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2017. Entries were accepted from 1 March to 15 May. Applicants were required to complete a form with questions related to the assessment criteria (maximum 250 words per question) and to provide links to the library website and photos or architectural drawings relevant to the application.

Thirty-three libraries from eighteen countries presented entries. The Award required each entry to submit written and graphic information in the form of photos and plans. Photographs and plans showing the building distribution and furniture organization were essential requirements for the judges to be able to evaluate each entry with reference to architectural quality and flexibility criteria.

The international nature of the contest made it impossible for the panel to visit physically all the libraries entered, and therefore the judgement had to be made on the basis of the information received with each entry. It must be said that some entries failed to provide sufficient information for the jury to be able to evaluate the architectural quality and flexibility of the libraries in question. Having detected this problem, the panel decided to make judgements on the basis of the information received. What was evaluated was what could be seen, and no assumptions were made about what could not be seen. Some libraries might have scored more points if the information presented had been more complete.

All the information was transferred to a Basecamp project accessible to all the judges. The two-phase scoring system was based on an evaluation form. In the first phase; each member of the panel made her/his individual evaluation of the 33 entries and chose a shortlist of ten. In the second phase, the judges worked as a team on the shortlists produced, communicating by email. The five finalists and the winner were subsequently decided at a meeting of the panel, attended by some panel members in person in Copenhagen, and by others virtually via Skype.

The names of the five nominees shortlisted were made public on 27 June, 2018.

The Finalists

The five libraries nominated for the 2018 award were as follows:

- Deichman Biblio Tøyen, Norway
- Austin Central Library, Texas, USA
- KopGroep Bibliotheken (School 7), The Netherlands
- Villa-Lobos Park Library, Brazil
- Tampines Regional Library, Singapore

Of the five nominated libraries shortlisted, the judges declared the Netherlands' KopGroep Bibliotheken (School 7) to be the winner.

Some of the nominees' most outstanding features are detailed below.

Biblo Tøyen, one of Oslo Public Library's (Deichmanske bibliotek) newest additions, is a unique and innovative space, created for young people aged 10 to 15. It occupies part of the ground floor of an existing building and was designed by architect Aat Vos. The spaces have been organized with great flexibility, making it easy to redistribute the furniture to create distinct environments for different types of activities. The treatment of the interiors produced an almost magical environment, including a workshop built with two old Piaggio scooters, a kitchen in an old Volvo flatbed truck, and a variety of creative cubicles.

The judges said:

Through extensive user involvement, the Deichman Biblio Tøyen has created a new and exciting interior design, reflecting the surrounding city and its people. The new interior shows how to bring new value to an existing building by inviting users to participate in creating their public library. The library acts as an agent for change for vulnerable young people and, through cooperation with local organizations and professional specialists, has increased accessibility for this special group. Deichman Biblio Tøyen is a wonderful example of how the impact of a library can be maximized by specializing and working together with a specific group.

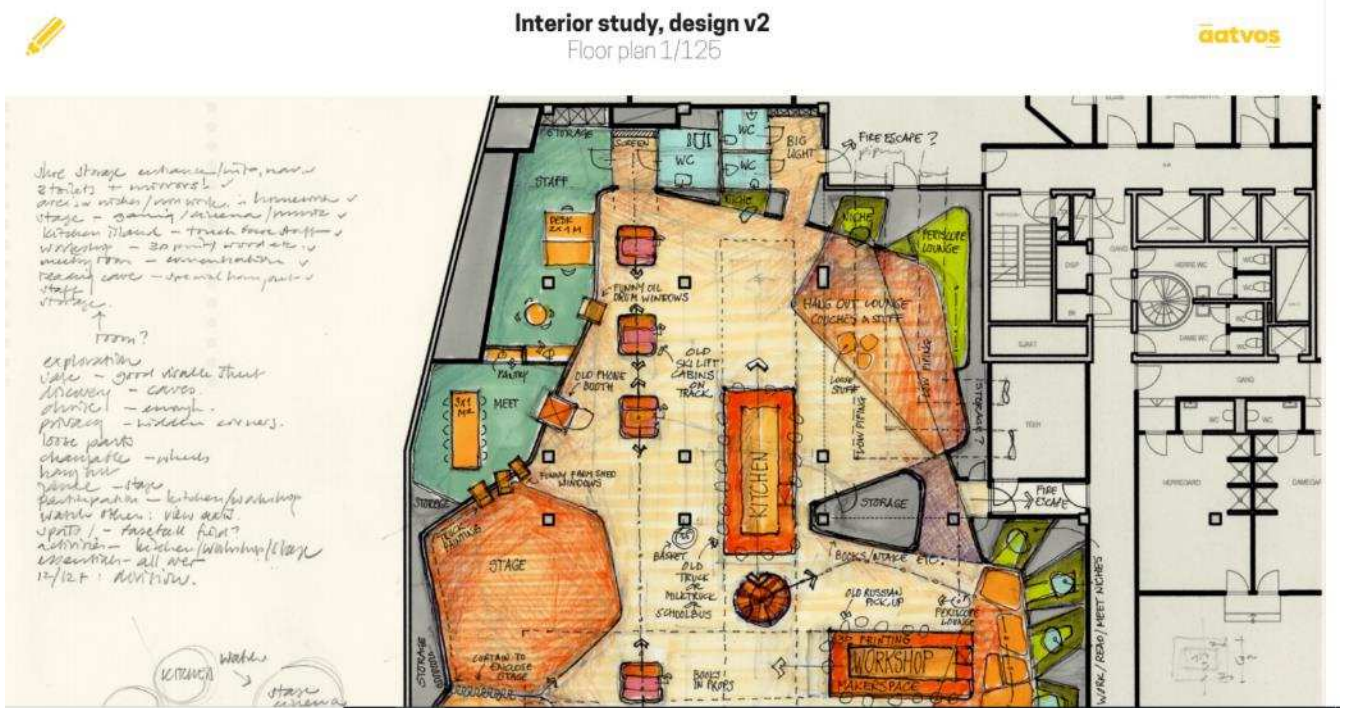


Figure 1. Deichman Biblio Tøyen Interior Plan



Figure 2. Deichman Biblio Toyen Interior Casual Seating



Figure 3. Deichman Biblio Toyen Interior Feature

Austin Central Library, Texas, USA

<http://library.austintexas.gov/central-library>

The Austin Central Library is part of the Austin Public Library system serving the city of Austin in Texas, USA. The 18,500-square-metre library, designed by the architectural firm Lake Flato, is located in the heart of the city next to its lake. It is a flexible and easily adapted building with a variety of modifiable spaces, providing both lively and contemplative spaces for the community.

The judges said:

The impressive Austin Central Library is an iconic building and a landmark in the city. The building features its own energy production and rainwater system, and the airy feeling in the atrium and rooftop garden emphasizes the focus on sustainability, in both building and content of the library. The library has created a framework for lifelong learning by providing easy access to information and learning in all departments. Flexibility is the building's key feature, which serves as a model for sustainable resource use.



Figure 4. Austin Central Library Exterior

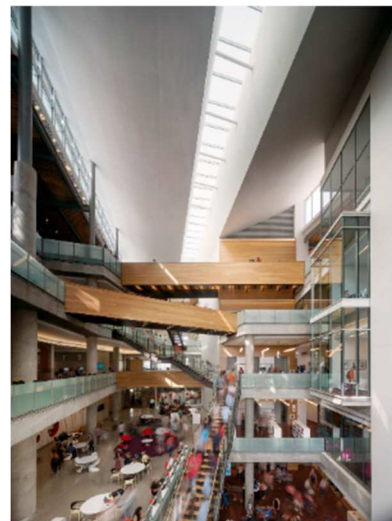


Figure 5. Austin Central Library Interior



Figure 6. Stepped seating in the Austin Central Library

Villa-Lobos Park Library, Brazil

<https://bvl.org.br/>; <https://www.pita.arq.br/en/biblioteca-parque-villalobos>;
<https://educationsnapshts.com/projects/2208/villa-lobos-library/>

The Villa-Lobos library, designed by architect Decio Tozzi, is located in a park in the metropolis of São Paulo in Brazil. It occupies an area of over 4,000 square metres. Thanks to its prime location, the library serves a diverse public, from the urban inhabitants located nearby to sportspeople and visitors to the park.

The spaces inside the library are open and flexible. Most of the library spaces converge to the central atrium, allowing a natural integration between the areas. The furniture was designed along modular lines and equipped with bearings to facilitate greater mobility and versatility in the use of the spaces and adaptation to different layouts.

The judges said:

The architecture of the Villa-Lobos Park Library is visionary and courageous, creating a bright and open environment. It is an attractive place in which to spend time, and its architectural solutions make it possible to participate and feel part of the space. The unity of spaces can be observed throughout the library and contributes to a sense of space and freedom. This library is a particularly active library, whose interior design and architecture allows various kinds of activities to take place.



Figure 7. Villa-Lobos Library Exterior



Figure 8. Villa-Lobos Library Interior



Figure 9. Villa-Lobos Library Interior

Tampines Regional Library, Singapore

<https://www.nlb.gov.sg/VisitUs/BranchDetails/tabid/140/bid/335/Default.aspx?branch=Tampines+Regional+Library>; www.ourtampineshub.sg/our-tampines-hub/about-our-tampines-hub

The Tampines Regional Library is located at the former Tampines Stadium and Tampines Sports Hall in Singapore, which has been converted into a multifunctional complex with a surface area of 10,900 square metres, bringing together multiple agencies to offer a comprehensive and diverse range of services, programmes and facilities. The project was designed by DP Architects.

The library occupies five floors at the south-east wing of the building, with an internal façade overlooking the football pitch. The library has adopted an open layout with fluid connections between levels.

The judges said:

The Tampines Regional Library is an integral part of Singapore's community hub, offering a unique combination of sports, recreation and citizen services. With its modern and inviting surfaces, its surprising and distinct rooms and flexible spaces, this library has become a focal point for the citizens of Singapore. Natural lighting, resource recycling and water efficiency make this library the platinum standard for sustainability in libraries.



Figure 10. Tampines Regional Library Exterior



Figure 11. Tampines Regional Library Interior

The Winner : KopGroep Bibliotheken (School 7), The Netherlands

<https://www.kopgroepbibliotheken.nl/school-7.html>; <https://systematic.com/library-learning/nyheder/2018/public-library-of-the-year-2018-vinderen-er-fundet/>

School 7 is located in the heart of Den Helder in the Netherlands, and is described as the living room of the city. The building, designed by Bureau van Veen and MARS Interior Architects, is a successful example of integrated design, a fine combination of new and existing architecture, maintaining the quality of old and new elements while achieving functional unity, both interior and exterior.

The judges said:

KopGroep Bibliotheken has successfully integrated the library with its surroundings and is cooperating with the local theatre, café and university. Situated in an outstanding location, the old and new buildings create a visual and harmonious whole that emphasizes the best of both. KopGroep Bibliotheken is built according to sustainable concepts with the focus on restoration of the old building. The building has a well-structured layout with clear features for the various parts of the library, including good learning venues to support its vision of lifelong learning. The library is focused on social sustainability and offers services to increase social opportunities for everyone, a vision which is reflected in the architecture and learning space of the library.



Figure 12. School 7 Exterior



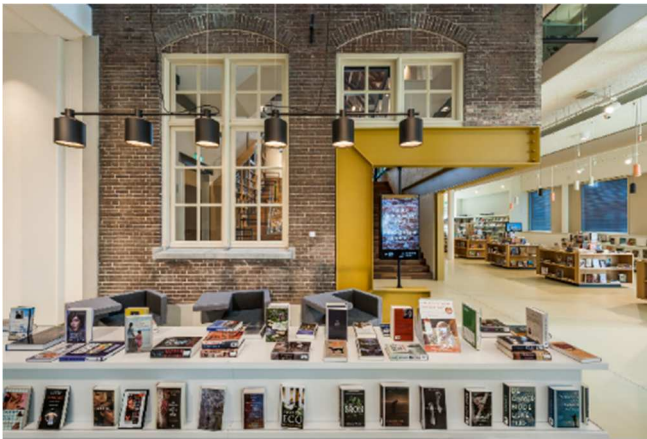


Figure 14. School 7 Library Interior



Figure 15. School 7 Library Interior

Presentation of the Award

The presentation of the award for 2018 was made at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in August 2018. The five finalists presented their libraries in a session held on 28 August. All were delighted to have reached the final stage. At the end of the session, the winning library was announced.

Conclusion

The IFLA Systematic Public Libraries Award is loaded with promise and it is expected that many libraries will take part in future iterations. Experience so far has shown that the contest generates great interest in the winners and shortlisted libraries within their own countries and provides positive exposure for the sponsor and for IFLA.

The judging panel has already identified aspects for improvement in the coming years and will stress the importance of providing detailed graphic and written information to enable the judges to fully and fairly evaluate each library according to the assessment criteria.

The various IFLA sections are very grateful for the generous sponsorship from Systematic that provides a significant platform to recognise the commitment governments and funding authorities make to public libraries and the communities they serve.

Acknowledgements

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Author Details

Santi Romero, one of the judges for the 1918 awards, is an architect who began his work in 1993 at the Library Services Management Office of the Diputació de Barcelona. Since 2005, he has been the Head of the

Library Architecture Unit. His work involves advising on and monitoring public library projects and works in Barcelona province; he has worked on projects for over 150 libraries.

Santi has written articles and spoken at conferences, both in Spain and abroad. He has sat on the judging panels of library architecture competitions, as well as on the commission that drew up the Catalonia Public Library Standards published in 2008. He took part, as a Spanish expert representative, in the drawing up of the Technical Report ISO/TR 11219 Qualitative conditions and basic statistics for library buildings, published in 2012. Santi penned the book *Library Architecture: Recommendations for a comprehensive research project*. He has been a member of the IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Section Standing Committee since 2005.

Contact: romerogs@diba.cat