

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 24/09/2007</p> <p>The new State of Jalisco Public Library "Juan Josè Arreola": evaluating competition entries and the role of the brief in the process</p> <p>Anders C. Dahlgren President, Library Planning Associates, Inc., Normal, Illinois U.S.A.</p> <p>and</p> <p>Helen Ladron de Guevara Cox Chief Advisor, Jalisco State New Library Project – University Cultural Center, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Mexico has a population of 103.3 million people. Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico and is the capital city of the state of Jalisco located in central-western Mexico.

The city and the state is worldwide known by three traditional emblems: tequila, mariachi music and the "charro" cowboy style costume with a wide hat embroidered with silver thread. In a few months a new

emblem will be identified with Guadalajara: its New State Public Library now being built in the municipality of Zapopan, adjacent to Guadalajara.

This paper will outline the development of the building program statement, or brief, for the construction project and describe how the program was used to evaluate submissions to the international design competition that selected the design for the library.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than 4,000,000 people reside in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara. The largest of the six municipalities in the metro area is Zapopan, just a few minutes drive from downtown Guadalajara. This is the location of a new cultural center which will include the New State Public Library.

There are two public library systems operating in Guadalajara. One is sponsored by the National Council for Arts and Culture of Mexico and the other one by the University of Guadalajara which runs three libraries. The combined collections of these 270 libraries reach a conservative figure of 3,156,680 volumes.

The oldest and largest of these libraries, established in 1861 and housing a collection of more than 400,000 items, is the State of Jalisco Public Library, operated by the University of Guadalajara. It bears the name of the well-known Mexican writer, Juan José Arreola.

The library stores a wealth of special collections and in its essence keeps its spirit of service. Most of the historical holdings and special collections of the library (approximately 300,000 volumes) were assembled from the collections of old academic institutions and monasteries. Today they are valued as one of the richest in the Guadalajara and western Mexico. The library safeguards over 300 years of history not only of the state of Jalisco (important part of the former New Galicia); also of the Royal Audience of Guadalajara, which reached several other present states. The archival collections include documents from parts of northern Mexico and the southeast of the United States. The holdings also include incunabula, Mexican and European imprints from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, a large periodical collection,

pamphlets from the Mexican Revolution period, legislative branch diaries, map collection, private libraries donated and other valuable materials.

The decision to plan an expanded facility for the New State Library of Jalisco was motivated by several factors. The current building was build in 1959 over a dry lake land in the central southern part of the city, Its fortress-like design was unwelcoming and had become obsolete. The permanent humidity in several parts of the building, the space layout, poor ventilation, the lack of flexibility to adapt to new technology and users need of later years, were some of the reasons which led to the need of planning a new building.

The most important factor, however, was the 2003 earthquake. The library experienced severe damage in various areas, which created to cracks and crevices in some walls plus other serious structural problems. As a result, a decision was to make a new library, therefore it would need a Master Plan to create a project and to produce later on a Building Program, which happened in the following years.

IFLA played a key role through its Library Buildings and Equipment Section. Following practices recommended by the IFLA Library Buildings and Equipment Section, the library completed a survey of need, identifying these principal roles for an expanded facility:

- Contemporary general collections library
- Support Center for formal education
- Reference Center
- Access to the information highway
- Gateway of learning for children and young adults
- Center for permanent learning
- Business Development Center
- Historical Research Library
- Center for Community Activities
- Space for artistic and cultural expressions
- Public space for reading and personal work

In 2003, the Board of the Cultural Center Fund engaged Anders Dahlgren of Library Planning Associates, Inc. to develop a building program statement, or brief. Anders Dahlgren was an American librarian with a long list of experience in assisting libraries with pre-architectural

planning, with all the credentials to develop the Building Program for the New State Public Library in Jalisco.

At the same time, a decision was also made to undertake an international design competition to select a design for the new library. The brief would become a central part of that competition.

3. PREPARING THE BUILDING PROGRAM STATEMENT (OR BRIEF)

The brief is known by several terms in different parts of the world. In some places the corresponding terminology is “building program statement.” In others, it is called the “terms of reference.” Regardless of what it is called, the brief is in the simplest terms a written statement of the parameters to be achieved through the design of the building. It is a set of instructions given to the architect to guide the design. It is a critical means of communication between the library and the project architect.

What do you seek to accomplish through the building project? What collections and services do you seek to support? How should the building be organized into departments and areas and rooms? How large do each of these areas need to be? How do they need to relate one to the other? These are just some of the key topics that should be addressed in the brief.

With the addition of Anders Dahlgren to the planning team for the library in Guadalajara, the local planning group now anticipated moving into a new, more detailed, phase of their planning. The process extended over at least three separate visits. At each visit, several meetings were scheduled with project staff from the library and the Centro Cultural Office (which provided oversight for the entire cultural center project). The ultimate goal of these visits was (1) to define as specifically as possible the departments, rooms and areas that needed to be contained within the building; (2) to allocate collections, and resources, and other inventories into those areas so that the floor space needed in each could in turn be calculated; and (3) to describe the required adjacencies among functional areas.

The latter was a particular challenge for this project because the brief to avoid being too prescriptive. Planners wanted to leave some discretion, flexibility, and creativity for architects who submitted an entry in

the competition. For example, the final brief did not specify how many floors the building should have, although it did clearly indicate that for a building of this size, having few floors would produce overly large building floor plates. The brief also indicated that too many floors would likely result in an internal fragmentation that would hamper efficient operations. And the program did specify certain carefully selected elements. The children's library, for example, was to be off the entry level of the building (because planners felt an entry level location would be too insecure), but *not* on one of the uppermost levels of the building (which planners felt would be too inaccessible). Other proximities *within* a given department were also specified – the convenient visibility of the public service desk from the entry to the department, a close adjacency between the public service desk and the department's public computer center, and so on.

4: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRIEF IN AN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION

The attention paid to developing the building program statement – or brief – was crucial because the brief became the principal avenue for communicating with the architects during the subsequent competition. Architects registered for the competition and received an extensive package of documentation. This outlined the rules for the competition and the requirements for the submittal. There was information about the site and the larger Centro Cultural project. And there was the brief.

Within the structure of the competition, there was no real opportunity to engage in a dialog with the architects to explore the requirements of the brief and insure that the architects fully understood those requirements. In the case of the Guadalajara competition, given the large number of architectural firms that registered to participate, it would have been impractical to engage in that many separate dialogs with individual participants. Therefore, the information package for competition participants – of which the brief was a substantial part – needed to stand on its own to the greatest possible extent.

The architects did have two or three opportunities to submit questions seeking clarifications of the project's goals, most of which were enumerated in the brief. Questions ranged from the very general to the very specific. Some revealed a naivete and general lack of understanding

of the library as a building type; others revealed an inherent, deep understanding of how a typical library will operate. The questions were received by the Centro Cultural office, and those that could not be answered by the office were forwarded to Dahlgren for a response. All architects who registered for the competition received a copy of all the questions and all the responses.

5: USING THE BRIEF AS AN EVALUATION TOOL

The brief was developed to guide the efforts of architects as they prepared submissions for the library project's international design competition. The brief was also used by a technical review panel comprised of librarians and by the official jury for the competition comprised of architects and librarians as they evaluated the competition entries.

As competition entries were received, the brief again came to occupy center stage. Entries were received by the Centro Cultural office. They were opened and accessioned. Staff confirmed that they contained all of the required parts and were eligible for consideration. The display panels for each of the entries were photographed. And staff then set about mounting the entries on a maze of temporary wall panels that had been erected under a large tent near the library's proposed site, across the street from the municipal auditorium, which had had its own design competition a year or so previous and was just beginning construction.

There were more than 260 submissions. Most, but not all of them consisted of two large display panels measuring roughly one meter wide by two meters tall. (A minority of entries chose to illustrate their concept with only a single panel.) The panels were complemented by a short narrative providing a description of the design concept. All together, when they were mounted, the panels of the competition entries occupied more than half a kilometer of those temporary walls.

The intent was to subject these 260+ entries to a two-part evaluation process. A technical review panel consisting of four librarians – including the authors of this paper, Anders Dahlgren and Helen Ladron de Guevara Cox – were to examine the entries for consistency with the brief, identifying a subset or shortlist of the 260 entries that would then be examined more closely by the official jury of the competition. The

technical review panel was given no specific target number for the shortlist. The goal simply was to spare the official competition jury from having to review *all* of the submissions, so the jury could devote more of their time and attention to those entries that were “certified” as being in compliance with the brief.

The technical review panel’s task was huge – to examine and evaluate more than 260 entries. The procedure that guided that evaluation allowed for ample discussion, and it insured that each member of the technical review panel would have a full and complete opportunity to have his or her say. The process is commended for similar reviews.

The Guadalajara competition evaluation process was modeled on the evaluation process used in the Library Building Award program, jointly sponsored by the American Institute of Architects and the American Library Association. Every second year, these two organizations each nominate three jurors – three architects, three librarians – who are charged with reviewing submissions describing recently completed building projects that have been nominated for consideration for this award.

For the Library Building Award competition, each member of the six-member jury works independently to examine each of the submissions. Each juror then votes “yes,” “no,” or “maybe.” As the jurors complete their individual reviews, the votes are combined, and the projects receiving the greatest level of support move on to the next level of evaluation.

The technical review panel in Guadalajara adapted this strategy. The review panel informally broke up the 260+ submissions into smaller groups of roughly forty submissions. Working alone, each review panel member reviewed each of the submissions. Each reviewer then applied a numeric vote. If a submission received a “0,” it indicated that panel member’s assessment that the submission did *not* meet the requirements of the brief under any circumstance. A “1” indicated that the submission could be recommended, but with reservations. A “2” indicated that the submission fulfilled the basic requirements of the brief. And a “3” indicated that the panel member felt the submission fulfilled the requirements of the brief in exemplary fashion.

As all four of the review panel members completed the review of a block of submissions the panel took a break to review and summarize

their work on that particular block. The chair of the technical review panel would tabulate the votes from the four of panel members, and that would become a priority listing of the entries in that block. The review panel hadn't agreed to a specific cut-off point in advance, during the discussion that ensued following the tabulation of the first block of forty submittals, the panel quickly came to an understanding that a combined score of "8" or more would represent the elimination point. Any project that scored less than "8" from the four panel members would be eliminated from further consideration, except that the panel agreed to respect any member's request to keep a specific submission in consideration, even if its combined score did not meet the minimum of "8." This last factor was an important consideration in the success of this overall evaluation process.

When the votes were tallied, the panel discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the entries receiving at least a score of "8" (or that a single panel member had granted dispensation to). Often, during the course of those discussions, attitudes regarding an entry would change, sometimes to the entry's benefit, sometimes to its detriment. At the end of the each discussion, the panel would make a preliminary group decision to keep that entry in consideration or remove it consideration.

One key to the success of this process was the review panel's understanding that they were not going to rush to a judgment. The panel understood that there would be multiple cycles of review to eventually derive a short list of entries to recommend to the official jury. Accordingly, the goal of the initial review was not to identify the final short list, but instead to eliminate projects that the panel held to be non-contenders. The entries that remained in contention would be subjected to a second review, and a third, continuing until the panel arrived by consensus at a final short list.

Another key to success of this process was the agreement that any panel member could "overrule" the tally of the full panel in the initial review cycle and keep in consideration an entry that may have scored less than "8" from the full panel. This meant that each panel member was guaranteed the opportunity to subject a project favored by that individual reviewer to a full and complete discussion by the entire panel, and it reserved for that panel member the opportunity to try and persuade the rest of the panel of the merits of the specific project in question.

During the course of the panel's first full day's work, three groups of entries were reviewed – about 110 in all. During the course of the second full day's work, another three groups were reviewed – about 110 entries again. During the third morning, the panel finally completed the first review of *all* 260+ entries. At the end of the initial review cycle more than three-quarters of the entries had been removed from further consideration.

For the balance of that third day, the panel's work involved a group review of the 60 or so entries that remained under consideration. Together, the panel took a walking tour of the remaining entries, just to fix them in their minds as a group. Then the panel proceeded to go from entry to entry, once again discussion the merits of each. This time, however, the second review cycle occurred in the context of the smaller group of contenders.

In this second review cycle, there was a special emphasis placed on each entry's success in meeting the requirements of the brief. As librarians, the members of the review panel had been asked to assess the entries from the perspective of their operations and utility. Although the panel was concerned with the design qualities and the flair of these entries, the primary focus was to be functionality of each scheme.

Seeing the remaining entries now in the context of this smaller group changed the panel's thinking about some of the entries. During this phase, the review panel was also able to discuss at greater length any entries that a single panel member had carried into this second round of the evaluation. And at the end of each discussion, the panel again sought to define a consensus around whether to keep a project in consideration or remove it from consideration.

In this second round, very quickly on, the panel realized that some of the entries that had been kept in consideration that the panel felt very strongly about and others they felt less strongly about. The panel hurried back to the first of the entries that had been discussed in the second phase, and set about categorizing the entries that they wanted to keep in consideration as "first tier" and "second tier."

When the panel finished the second round of the evaluation, they made one more trip through the remaining, smaller group of entries, asking themselves one more time if they were comfortable with the assessment to recommend each of the entries that remained on the list as

either a “first tier” or “second tier” library. In that discussion, some projects shifted from second tier to first. Others shifted from first to second. And some projects the panel agreed to eliminate.

In the end, the panel identified nineteen entries as “first tier” submissions and another twelve as “second tier” submissions. Thirty-one entries remained out of more than 260. Certainly that would allow the jury to concentrate on a relative handful of entries that met the requirements of the brief.

6: THE JURY’S EVALUATION PROCESS

The day after the technical review panel completed its work, the members of the jury arrived in Guadalajara. The jury was to be chaired by Bill Lacy, executive director of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. The remaining jurors included architects (Jose Luis Cortés, Carlos Jiménez, Ricardo Legorreta; and Robert Campbell) and librarians (including Kenneth E. Dowling, Rosa María Fernández, Andrew McDonald and Hellen Niegaard, all well-known members of IFLA). That evening, there was a dinner gathering so that everyone could become acquainted. And the following morning the jury started their work.

It must be noted that none of the technical review panel members – including the authors of this paper – was party to the subsequent deliberations of the jury. According to the original plan for the competition, the chair of the technical review panel was supposed to sit in on the jury’s discussions and serve as a resource, but one of the jury’s first decisions was to dismiss the panel chair from that duty, albeit with a cell phone in hand so that the jury could reach the chair for consultation if needed. Even had any of the review panel members been party to the deliberations, the matter of jury confidentiality would likely prevent the revelation of any particulars.

Another of the jury’s first decisions was that they wanted to view and evaluate all of the entries themselves. Effectively, they chose to disregard the work of the review panel, which, within the structure of the competition, was within their prerogative. The jury was empowered to organize its review of the entries as it wished. So the jury spent one day reviewing the entries, and they sorted their preferences into their own short list of roughly twenty to twenty-four submittals. There was some overlap between the short list of the technical review panel and the jury,

but clearly the jury had approached its work from a different perspective than the technical review panel.

On the second morning of the jury's work, the chair of the jury invited the technical review panel to make a presentation regarding its deliberations. Three of the four members were still in Guadalajara. The panel did not review the specific entries that it had favored, but instead described the key themes that had emerged in the designs on the review panel's short list. And these recurring themes directly reflected the key elements from the brief:

- the need for the design to present a clear point of entry from the major paths of approach
- there needed to be a clear separation between the historical collection and the public library; the historical collection had to operate as a separate library within the library
- the technical review panel tended to favor plans that put the historical collection on one end of the building or another, rather than plans that sandwiched the historical collection between floors of the public library; they felt the strategy of locating the historical collection on an intervening floor or floors could make it more difficult to secure that collection
- there needed to be a proper balance among the number of levels: the brief anticipated a multi-level building but did not specify exactly how many levels would be needed, in order to allow an architect flexibility in developing an entry; the brief contained a clearly expressed expectation, however, that too few floors would result in a floor plate that was too large and unmanageable, while too many floors would fragment the internal configuration and impede effective work flow
- the brief proscribed that individual departments be maintained intact; the review panel insisted that they not be subdivided, but some of the submissions hoped to achieve a creative result by doing just that
- the technical review panel tended to favor designs that had a consistent path through the building vertically, observing that having library users enter each successive floor at roughly the same point (whether by way of stairs or elevator) would enhance their introduction and orientation to each floor of the building

- there needed to be a clear and consistent organization on each floor; if service desks were located in roughly the same location in relation to the stairs and elevator, for example, the review panel felt it would enhance the library user's understanding of the building
- the review panel tended to favor designs that kept the collections away from windows; while this was especially critical in the historical collection (for the basic safety and longevity of the collection), the simple fact is that the books cannot enjoy a view – better to save exterior views for *people* using the library.
- as specified in the brief, certain public service areas needed to be located on the same floor, next to one another; the collection for very young children needed to be next to the collection for middle-age children, the panel didn't want to have the children's department, for example, divided over two levels (and some of the entries did just that)
- the children's library needed to be conveniently located but off of the entry level (a specific requirement of the brief)

After that presentation, the chair of the jury invited each of the three technical review panel members to select one of the entries they had favored and describe it to the jury. Each did that, and the jury then retired to continue its deliberations. Although the content of those deliberations is unknown, after the jury completed its work and had selected the winner of the competition, two or three of the jurors confided to the authors that the panel's presentation to the jury had been extremely useful. The jury referred to the panel's key themes repeatedly and used that information to focus on their eventual selection.

In the final analysis, the winner of the competition was a design submitted by Museotec and Grinberg, López Guerra, Toca y Topelson architects associates from Mexico City. While the submissions were "blind" – unidentified and anonymous – there was a pleasant symmetry to the fact that in an international design competition involving more than 260 entries that were certified for the competition (out of a total of more than 400 submissions in all), representing the work of architects from almost 50 countries, the final selection came from a Mexican firm.

7: CONCLUSION

The members of the technical review panel and the design competition jury in Guadalajara undertook an enormous task – the evaluation of more than 260 entries submitted to the library’s international design competition. The combined efforts produced a winner for the competition that was striking and elegant in its simplicity, yet functional, the embodiment of the essential goals outlined in the brief for this project. Given the limited interaction between the library and architect that is allowed in the context of the competition, the brief assumed an even greater importance than would otherwise have been the case. Those who served on the review panel and the jury now join the people of Guadalajara who eagerly await the completion of this ambitious new building. The world library community will be invited to the opening of the new State of Jalisco Public Library "Juan José Arreola" by the end of 2008 or beginning of 2009.