A Designer's Diary

NOTES FROM CALCASIEU PARISH, LOUISIANA

David Michaels

May 1992
Journal Entry 8

Thanks to a hard-working but fun two-day session with Lynda Lee, Calcasieu Parish library director, and Butch Roberts, the facilities manager, we made final decisions on existing furniture that is to be reused and where and on hundreds of other minute issues. Then we pressed forward to the completion of our specifications. Having the decision makers together for this critical detail phase was invaluable. The two-hundred-page-plus specifications package includes detailed descriptions, catalog numbers, quantities, sizes, and finishes on thousands of items. Ultimate coordination of the fourteen plastic laminates, seventy fabrics, and other color decisions with the appropriate projects required hard, long, focused effort, but it is now in the hands of the printer.

Lynda will be making final refinements to the front end of the Bid Document, which includes the Advertisement for Bids, Instructions to Bidders, General Conditions, and other legal documents. She and I have been sending markups back and forth, trying to marry the parish's standard forms with the specific aspects of this unique bid package. We delivered our disk to her knowing that she might want to make last-minute refinements herself. Computers really have become essential tools for us. One good example is the ability to legibly put all of our coded CAD furniture plans on 8 1/2-by-11-inch pages via our laser printer. By so doing the plans can be bound with the specifications, eliminating the inconvenience and expense of what otherwise would be hundreds of 36-by-24-inch sheets.

We will be keenly interested in how the logistics of the project will affect pricing. Bidders will have to factor in the phased installation of thirteen project locations spread out over an eighteen-month period. Early purchase of upholstery fabrics and plastic laminates will be authorized at the outset to guard against their being discontinued.

We have proofread the document, as well as the fifty pages of custom drawings, several times; but to double-check descriptions and catalog numbers further, we will fax each specification to its respective manufacturer's representatives for their scrutiny and to alert them to the upcoming price

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requests. We have found that this step is valuable in catching obscure typos and facilitating good competitive bidding. We are hopeful for good, down and dirty but qualified prices.

Yesterday we presented our documents to a formal gathering of the library board. The board members were extremely complimentary of our efforts, which was very gratifying. We believe strongly in giving praise and credit to all colleagues and to people in general because we know how wonderful it feels to be on the receiving end.

Lynda in turn presented the entire package later to the Parish Police Jury (Louisiana parlance for “County Board of Supervisors”), which formally authorized the advertisement for bids. That was the good news. The bad news was that bids had just been opened for the Hayes, Iowa, Bell City, and Epps branches, and there was but one bid: significantly over budget. This bewildered Lynda and the project architect, who expected much better bids given the economic climate. Thus far the bidding has been quite erratic: very Iowan the large new project and very high on the small remodelings. In my next journal entry, I will describe the bidding process and include the floor plans of some of the projects.

Meanwhile, as I promised, here are illustrations of some of the non-seating items on the project. Each piece solves specific needs, such as critical dimensions, configurations particular to various layout conditions, wire management and technology issues, user-friendly edges and corners, integrating coordination of finishes, flexibility, and interchangeability.

**Project team:**

Lynda Lee, library director, Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana

Lee Brawner and Dean Doerr, HBW Associates, library planner and consultants, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Bill Hidell and Denelle Wrightson, Hidell Architects, library architectural consulting architect, Dallas, Texas

Andrea and David Michaels, Michaels Associates Design Consultants Library Interior Planning, Alexandria, Virginia

J. T. Platt, president, Calcasieu Library Board

Butch Roberts, clerk of works for furnishings and facilities manager

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**Key to illustrations**

1. Modular public service desk, components of which include:
   - A. 48-by-30-inch shell unit with either independent drawer pedestal, knee space, or independent shelf
   - B. Computer enclosure with access to wireway
   - C. 90° quadrant corner
   - D. 45° angled corner
   All units at either stand-up or sit-down heights. Top surface is “granite look” Corian.

2. Public catalog terminal, with note card slot and wire management, 48 by 30 inches at standing, sitting, or children’s heights

3. Adult reading table. Unit indicated is the four-place version, 72 by 42 by 28 1/2 inches high. Substantial solid oak edge with transitional profile shape

4. Children’s reading table, 48 by 26 1/2 or 24 inches high. Edge is a shaped, resilient material by Edgemold Company, available in a variety of colors.

5. Staff workstation, with a 66-by-30-by-28 1/2-inch high desk; a 66-by-15-by-36-inch high shelf unit with tack surface and light; independent drawer pedestals; and a reversible “L” return, 42 or 48 by 28 1/2 inches high

Note: Typical surfaces other than those mentioned are high-pressure laminate.

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