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## *The symbolic motifs in contemporary architecture of libraries – most frequent trends*

### *Introduction*

John E. Buschman noted that the trends in the new philosophy of library management include among others a desire to create a clear language of a library building and first of all to present it in a *high-tech* convention [5, pp. 96–97]. This is a popular convention but it should be stressed that the modern construction technologies do not need to be *idée fixe* of a building. On the contrary, more and more frequently they are a tool of presenting other ideas and philosophy. The contemporary library can assume humanized features in new dimensions. The literature on library science which employs the terminology from architecture

and construction engineering, uses the term “intelligent building”. A building is “intelligent” because it has information systems such as security, ergonomics, flexibility [3, p. 41]. Unlike the old library which ‘lived’ because of its books, the modern library ‘lives’ also – or maybe sometimes primarily – because of its building. Thus the primary functions of the library are less important than the technological façade and symbolically are subjected to it. Although the modern architectural solutions determine the ‘life’ of a library, they are in the background and they only serve as tools to execute that idea.

### *Trends*

The “philosophy of building” has its restrictions too, the main of which is fashion, though it is not subjected to it. Georg Simmel saw fashion as a form of life which should guarantee a compromise between the social trend to equalize and the individual trend to vary [24, p. 22]. The libraries from different times provide a tangible testimony to following fashion and not only utility criteria when designing. The phenomena which could be classified nowadays as fashion include ecologization and westernization of spatial and aesthetic designs of libraries. It is fashionable to search for original spatial developments and ideas. Fashion includes everything regarding social activity of man. An architectural style which dominates in a specific period is fashionable, and consequently specific building materials and technologies are in fashion too. All this affects the transformations in the mental paradigm of the viewer of architecture. Fashion provides an opportunity to

make use of a single raw material simplicity of a building. However, as Marek Czyński noted, the dominance of one kind of material is a stressful factor in the building environment. Nowadays, glass has become such a material and it can be used by engineers not only as a traditional material to let in more light inside the interiors but also as a construction element in, e.g. floors, balustrades or staircases [6, p. 59]. Buildings dominated by one building material are nothing new as for centuries marble or sandstone served a fashion function, as does glass today. However, transparent glass makes an indelible impression which is uncommon when other materials are used – and that is why it can potentially cause stress among some viewers of architecture. On the other hand, it is the very transparency which can reduce stress reactions in other viewers compared to, e.g. heavy concrete structures.

In modern library buildings, light is used as an element of composition on an unprecedented scale. It is possible because of technology and the very special fashion for transparency and ecology. This is evident in such projects by Norman Foster as the British Cranfield University Library,

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Fig. 1. Philologische Bibliothek – Freie Universität Berlin.  
Photo: D. Ausserhofer

Il. 1. Philologische Bibliothek – Freie Universität Berlin.  
Fot. D. Ausserhofer

the roof around the old reading room of the British Museum, the John Spoor Broome Library at California State University Channel Islands or perfect blob architecture – and in a sense the crowning achievement of this architect's style – the Philological Library (Philologische Bibliothek) in Freie Universität Berlin from 2005. It has a shell shape filled with alternate rectangles of silver aluminum and transparent glass which allows for the penetration of as much light as possible (Fig. 1). The library has been dubbed the “Berlin Brain” – which shows the symbolic strength of the institution gained through the sensual perception of light absorbed by the building during the day and emanating it after twilight. The shape of the structure makes that after-glow look like a halo.

Built in 1963 according to the design by Gordon Bunschaft, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library has been dubbed the “Pompous Temple”. It looks especially impressive after dark. Due to the see-through marble slabs in the façades – in the opinion of Charles Jencks – the building looks like “a pile of television sets with no picture” [15, p. 19], which is an unsuccessful attempt at creating a chiaroscuro effect as the pictures of the façades with the use of pre-cast wall elements. It is an interesting example of a compact body of the building which from a simple cuboid seen from outside transforms into a closed space which helps to concentrate (Fig. 2). The ambiance which might not match other types of libraries harmonizes with the historic collections the same as the body of the building designed on an organic, elliptical plan matches the offer of the university library at the University of Cottbus (Informations-, Kommunikations- und Medienzentrum Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus). Opened in 2005, it has become the symbol of the university, the city, and the region so characteristic in a newly promoted city without any long-lasting academic traditions. The Library's façade – its glass skin – was covered with entangled texts in different languages which are the illumination of the function of the building both literally and metaphorically. The architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron realized the idea of printing on glass façades also in another library designed at the same time: Bibliothek der Hochschule für



Fig. 2. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.  
Photo: M. Marsland / Yale University

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Fot. M. Marsland / Yale University

nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde, however, that library has also figural motifs taken from the photographs by the German artist photographer Thomas Ruff. The same as in the Berlin blob, after dark this library's interior is lit by the building surrounding and the lines of letters create a chiaroscuro effect. The 32-meter-tall building, with no front or back, resembles a stronghold and the letters are the symbol of hidden treasures [8]. The image of a symbolic shelter of knowledge is intensified by the building's location on a hill with no tall plants or other structures around it. When mentioning the shelter, the role of light should be emphasized again – this time it is electric light which when turned on in specific points marks emergency exits. The building's lighting is then its integral part at symbolic (emanation of knowledge) as well a pragmatic level (safety and ecology).

The restrictions which are used to realize a specific idea to a certain degree determine the way a body of the building is looked at, its cultural belonging, and utility functions, which does not mean, however, that they occur at the expense of the user. In fact the restrictions affect the form and spatial development which may be especially convenient from an individual point of view. Nowadays, that connection radiates stronger but it was present in the past too. Apart from ethical issues, as already mentioned – ecology is now in fashion. Consequently, when designing



Fig. 3. Tønsberg og Nøtterøy bibliotek. Photo: P. Fiskerstrand

Il. 3. Tønsberg og Nøtterøy bibliotek. Fot. P. Fiskerstrand

libraries, the environmental issues are especially important, which is evident in the Japanese architects' designs. Their buildings, which are the function of nature – landscape and colors which are present in the surrounding environment, cooperate with the elements. As Wolfgang Welsch put it *A building is not a closed crystal but an element in a broader context. Outside is inside and inside is outside* [26, p. 186]. The presence of the cultural and ethnic perception of the natural environment can be seen in the projects by Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (SANAA group) which are realized in Europe. In the Rolex Learning Center in Ecublens near Lausanne, its wavy roof, punctured with large empty holes, reflects and echoes the serpentine form of a nearby mountain range. The “landscape” building on this academic campus by the lake – with a multimedia library, language learning center, offices, eating places, lobby – in fact does not have internal walls. The emptiness, which is so typical of the far-east spirituality, helps to calm down, sending the message that *possessing nothing, one possesses everything* and that *emptiness is where form is born* [1, p. 50]. It is a material space whose character is liberating and generating. Its large space as well as its surrounding make the building center of student life – it is open regardless of perspective, symbolically connects with nature through physical glazed bridges between parts of the complex. The architecture of sustainable development in the far-east concepts shows two elements affecting the form of the building: culture and nature, as well as, assuming a more technogenic paradigm: culture and civilization [27, pp. 8–9]. The first, rather conservative, the other – dynamic. Both of them, however, which is the architectural program of the Rolex Learning Center, are inseparably connected.

Nature, as the instance to which the “philosophy of building” refers, can be a horizontal background but it can also be present near a building or inside it. Biblioteca Joan Miró in Barcelona from the late 1980s, located next to a park – makes use of its serenity “connecting” through panoramic windows in the reading room and at the same time isolating from the tumult of the city located on the other side of the building. It has a water cascade whose sound and movement provides a positive motivation to

read [12, pp. 97–98]. This is a dynamic picture but also soothing as it is far from the artificial urban rush.

The symbolism of water in a broader context is visible in the project by Charles Correa of Jawahar Kala Kendra in Jaipur in India. The complex has a square plan further divided into nine squares alluding to a model of cosmos – mandalas symbolizing the birth of a harmonious form from chaos. The library – which is its integral part – covers it. Similarly to all other elements, the library pavilion has its individual climate with a contemplative atmosphere. It is intensified by the walls made of red sandstone with the symbols from mandalas engraved in them, the nearby enclosed court, and a static small pond in the library. Similarly to the Library in Barcelona, ecological motifs were the tools used to develop the symbol-forming space in the library and around it. The religious motifs in Jaipur are significant and this kind of references are present not only in case of adaptations of ecclesiastical buildings.

Another interesting architectural design based on religious subjects is Tønsberg og Nøtterøy bibliotek in Norway – it is a project of the local group L2 Arkitekter from the late 1980s. The ruins of a medieval monastery of St. Olaf, whose remains are displayed under the Library, were the inspiration for the form of the building. In order for them to be able to radiate their spirituality, the amount of glass is significant in both the floors of the building and its glass façade which reflects not only the “world of the street” in Tønsberg but also – immaterially – its old past. The structure of the roof is supported on so called “trees of knowledge” (Fig. 3) – steel columns branching out to a number of profiles. They allude to the monastic complex in two ways: firstly – indicating that probably trees grew in that area, and secondly – regarding the already described role of vertical structures, namely their function of connecting the temporal and eternal worlds. And finally the roof – supported on the “trees” – is undulating as if it was the surface of the nearby sea. The waves are also a sign connoting the transcendence of the place – this is where the Vikings were buried. The recurring conception of folds in architecture is not, it seems, unusual or accidental; it is rather an attempt at materializing eternity in a building. The affiliation processes which introduce a foreign strain (Nordic pagan culture) to a specific work coexist with the processes of form unification [25, p. 55]. Connoting substance is obviously more inconspicuous than the denoting aspect, however, it makes the building more convenient to the function than to use. It is tangible that an attempt is made at taking the purity of nature as well as transcendence of human spiritual life and introducing them into the symbolic sphere of library architecture.

The example of the design from Tønsberg testifies to the fact that the pluralistic compilation of cultural codes, breaking the bond connecting form and function of a building, contrasting selection of its decorations, has been fashionable in architecture for several decades. These activities are becoming a play with shape, sometimes with the viewer, where what is absurd becomes a symbol as well as a tool. Furthermore, they are also a methodical judgment of the form – serious and balanced. These features are presented by the libraries which have been designed for

almost half a century by Isozaki – including the Japanese Oita Prefectural Library and Kitakyushu Central Library, the Australian Bond University Library, the Japanese Toyonokuni Library for Resources and finally the Shenzhen Cultural Center in China (where a library is one of the main parts) as well as the Qatar National Library which is still, however, only a project [1, pp. 118–119], [20, pp. 38–41]. They all have unique yet moderate shapes and details, indicating that the architect was looking for a simple language of form, infrequently drawing from historical European styles and playing with materials. They feature an elite code [16, p. 386]. If Isozaki's libraries can be classified as “Esperanto architecture”, then the cultural play is the catalyst of that compilation.

The problem which results from abundant information causes an excess of substance, which is not necessarily positive. Jean Baudrillard noted that the character of information can be negative for culture. It conveys senses and meanings, neutralizing and “devouring” them at the same time. Instead of facilitating communication, information is disappearing in the communication simulation [2, p. 102]. This phenomenon occurs in relation to many modern library buildings where information itself replaces the substance. Examples include the cultural façade of the University Library in Warsaw or the Powell Temporary Library at the University of California in Los Angeles (Towell Library). This is a temporary library built for the duration of the repair of the main building. It resembles a hangar or an industrial warehouse. It was designed in the offices of Craig Hodgetts and HsinMing Fung to be used for temporary storage of the library collections in a safe place. The ideas behind that building deny the ideas of a library, regardless of its structure. The message is incoherent – the library is an institution for storage of cultural heritage for next generations, here it is temporary. It is a simulacrum which only simulates the social function because it does not make a permanent impression. There is a physical space called a library but is not a library – it is a storage place at the most.

As a rule storage places are functional, which for libraries over the last several years has been brought up as their fundamental value. Modern designs – despite the fact that that current is in reverse – have dominated thinking about libraries so much that the recommendations made by Henry Faulkner-Brown still in the 1970s [11, pp. 3–8] are quoted by librarianship experts almost like a mantra all over the world. However, the functionality is not a simple consequence of standardization and universality. It is also an expression of local construction needs and fads. Although, postmodern architecture, or more precisely one of its currents – deconstruction, unlike modern architecture, draws from cultural patterns, including ethnic ones [12, p. 21], the modern man – as Chantal Delsol put it – is not certain of the values of those cultural references and – at the most – communicates them timidly [9, p. 76]. It is quite paradoxical in the context of the opinions, which were audaciously promoted already before the war – even in Poland – on taking into account the national cultural distinctions and social structures in architecture and design [28, p. 3–4]. However, retouching our own culture and “filtering”



Fig. 4. Peckham library. Photo: Stephen Cadman

Il. 4. Peckham library. Fot. S. Cadman

it through separate systems has become the basis for developing ideas for new buildings. Consequently, the main feature is the effect – or what is more frequently defined as a “skin-deep effect” – which has replaced the typological, morphological, and tectonic profundity of traditional architecture [18, p. 37]. This is how contemporary libraries are designed. Local and ethnic elements coexist with foreign ones, complementing one another. This rule can be exemplified by the project of Frances Howard Goldwyn of the Regional Branch Library in Hollywood from 1986. The library building was developed by Frank O. Gehry and its form is emphasized both by its features (scale) and the composition principles (symmetry). It is both usual – because of the simple cuboidal shapes and monumental – because of the same shapes and their combination. It is to the same degree pompous in Hollywood style and intimate for the users who need it [13, p. 120].

Coincidentally, the form of the building also conveys a deeply rooted idea of libraries defined as shelters for cultural heritage. Their means of protection at technological level correspond to those in traditional fortresses. They have tall walls whose surface is resistant to graffiti and huge gates. Diane Ghirardo described such buildings a somber and confined but also as providing interesting and spacious interiors for those who use them [12, pp. 101–102]. Ethnic riots that took place in Los Angeles in 1992 – the Rodney King Riot – demonstrated that the ideas of civil fortress engineering does not belong to the past.

Playing is effective too. Ignoring the significance of shape and considering it a play covers up the archetypical patterns of specific types of buildings and evokes Léon Krier's concerns. The buildings of such libraries as the San Antonio Public Library or Peckham Library in London (Fig. 4) do not communicate information about their use and functions. However, they are not “misleading objects” as they do not evoke any archetypical associations and as such they are not compositionally inappropriate.

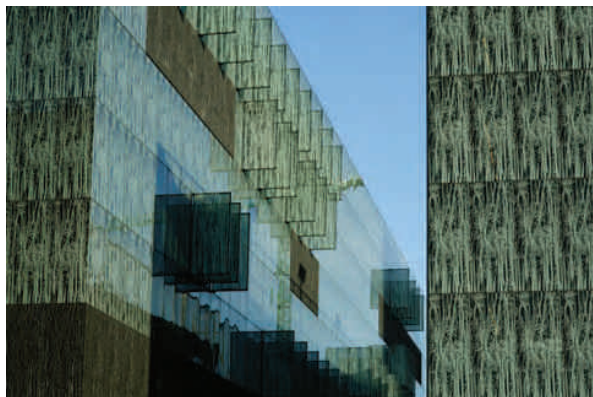


Fig. 5. Universiteitsbibliotheek Uithof. Photo: J. Bosman

Il. 5. Universiteitsbibliotheek Uithof. Fot. J. Bosman

Unlike modern forms based on the right angle geometry, they are intriguing – it is difficult to pass by the central library in San Antonio without noticing surprising geometric combinations of groups of solids composing the building or ignore the balls rolling down the ramp “frozen in time”.

Asymmetry is one of the composition principles often used in the post-modern world. It is seen in deconstructivism where rationalism and functionalism were replaced with chaos which, however, should be a readable text of culture – a technological metaphor. The works of architects who want to reject the modern restrictions of form reflect the famous claim by Jacques Derrida that *there is nothing outside the text* [10, p. 163]. If it is acknowledged that each interpretation of architecture is equally justified, then free play with geometry and the use of curved lines has turned the forms of deconstructivists into texts whose interpretations go far beyond what they were supposed to be used for. The universally known Seattle Public Library is a building perceived independently of the institution which uses it. Although its building was designed as a library, it “hid” with its meanings in the shadow of values conveyed by the building designed by Rem Koolhaas. It testifies to the fact that in spite of the growing unification of library services, the diversity of library architecture can be still visible, depending on their type. This is what is happening in the United States where academic libraries have less impressive buildings than public libraries. Furthermore, their design is not as grandiose and spectacular [3, pp. 156–157]. It is difficult to find academic buildings which are as impressive as the public library in Seattle, although their dynamic evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the years 1910–1945 – the period of huge constructions – might indicate a different trend [17, p. 85].

When building the new University Library in Utrecht (*Universiteitsbibliotheek Uithof – Universiteit Utrecht*), a specific geometric module was used – an idea connected with what Isozaki called “amplification”, which is a designing method consisting in amplifying the form of a square. It results in an empty frame – a form of cages which can be freely filled [16, pp. 391–392]. What seems to be asymmetric is only the outer layer within which black concrete slabs

are loosely associated (actually concrete is used to provide shadow in the places where there are racks with books) and large sections of transparent glass that is imprinted with bamboo forests (Fig. 5). As demonstrated by the projects from Herzog & Meuron, this has been a popular technique of decorating façades over the last couple of years. The dominance of asymmetry demonstrates in those subtle deviations from simple shapes. Although the building does not provoke or raise excessive emotions, it signals its large volume. The rectangles in the façades and the interior spatial layout are different: filled or empty, symbolically surrounding nature (stems) and culture (recesses in walls providing view of the library collection). What emerges is unrestricted space – allowing for asymmetric activity compared to standard users’ expectations of an academic library. The library is a building which stands out in the chaotic development of the university campus [7]. What is grotesque in relation to an orderly shape becomes asymmetric to the nearest surroundings.

Probably nowhere else is the mechanistic metaphor more evident than in the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris from 1977 designed by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. According to Ghirardo, there are several types of architecture of contemporary museums, i.e.: shrines, warehouses, and cultural shopping malls [12, p. 72], and the building which houses the central public library of the capital of France – *Bibliothèque Publique d’Information* – should belong to the second type. A steel “rhythmic” cage without any internal divisions maximizes the flexibility of space. It is a kind of warehouse, a neutral container for cultural diversity. As much as is happening inside it due to the multi-functionality of that space can also happen on the building which is covered by a network of winding walkways as well as pipes and ducts. All utility ducts are exposed with specific colors – red and gray for stairs and elevators, blue for air-conditioning, green for water, yellow and orange for power supply. That aggressive marking – despite successive paint applications – has been deliberately deprived of its urban context. On the contrary – it has become its glaring contrast [22], which is especially evident when looking at the building – a steel box squeezed in the traditional inner city district. The only complement of the Centre is the fountain by the building. Juggling with the contrast proved to be the main semi-otic tool which is supposed to surprise the viewers. This is connected – which in the case of a library, usually associated with a static institution, is important – with the utilities. Their constant circulation and dynamics suggest the activity of the organizations managing the Centre.

As Jencks put it, postmodern buildings are exaggerated versions of modern construction designs which are logical, and communicative, enriched by double coding including the elements of tradition and locality [15, p. 133]. The contemporary architect can choose from among such signs which are understood and known to the users despite the fact that there is a multitude of symbols regarding different times and places. Such an architect cannot create new symbols which in social perception will not be associated with something familiar which is not connected with an already accepted system of signs and specific practical determinism [14, p. 47]. It

is the internalized codes that determine a library as “such and such”. Whenever it is different, like in the case of the public library in Seattle or the blob-architectural project of the national library in Prague – it causes concern, irritation, and protest because it includes unclear codes which do not fit the pattern of a library developed from experience. Usually it is claimed that denotation is information present in an architectural object which determines its functions, whereas connotation is a kind of ideology of those functions – communicating their scope of meaning [23, p. 188–189]. Hyper-modern libraries connote information about institutions operating inside them in a different way than expected by people who live especially in places where traditional looking buildings dominate, as for instance in Prague. Just like in the case of the conception of Jencks’ classification – they represent a variety of values, meaning they are impersonal to a larger extent than in the past. For library buildings it is an advantage favoring its egalitarianism.

When writing about architecture of libraries, Ghirardo saw the dominant influence of urban “warehouses”. She classified as warehouses the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Laurentian Library in Florence, the Wren Library in Cambridge from the next century, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris and the libraries which have been built over the last few years. It is probably the only clear indicator of coherence between old and contemporary libraries. Her analysis does not indicate that the libraries – especially post-modern ones – could be cultural shopping malls or more so shrines, though she noticed the germ of changes in the project by Koolhaas which lost the competition for the new building of the national library in France. However, it should be noted that libraries in the future, especially public libraries which are present most often in some social environment, will not operate primarily in order to provide access to books. Apart from that, they will offer data on electronic carriers. Libraries will look for users by placing offers which will differ from the library and information operations in their traditional meaning. They will be – in a universal scope, as in the individual one they already are – offers meeting the so called everyday needs. The sacred character of library architecture will not fit them and except for museums it will not return. Their forms will have to communicate with the users at a different level. That symbolism will have to be obvious and tangibly express the new functions of the institution. This causes concerns connected with the difficulty in using codes which potentially would be reserved or at least connected with libraries.

Biblioteca Pública del Estado de Jalisco Juan José Arreola in Guadalajara which was opened in 2011 is an example which seems to illustrate that we are running out of symbols expressed in the solutions applied in the library construc-



Fig. 6. Biblioteca Pio IX – Pontificia Università Lateranense.  
Photo: T. Kruszewski

Il. 6. Biblioteca Pio IX – Pontificia Università Lateranense.  
Fot. T. Kruszewski

tion. Its design brings up associations with the styles assumed in the Center for African-American Arts and Culture in Charlotte, USA, the designers of Biblioteca Pio IX – Pontificia Università Lateranense in Rome (Fig. 6), and first of all the new building of the Jewish Museum in Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind. The problem is that although the warped structure of the building façade in the capital of Germany alludes to the Star of David – “fallen” and “destroyed” by the Holocaust, it is not symbolically established in the Mexican metropolis. The form of the façade is only the aesthetic cover of a simple cuboidal building taken out of its cultural context. Keeping in mind that the Library is supposed to be a “gate” leading to the university campus – lines and irregular geometric figures covering its external walls resemble more a fortified gate. The building looks like a skin wounded by gigantic claws but none of these interpretations of the architects’ idea has much to do with the symbols of libraries described in the book. No special sophisticated composition of geometric “penetration” with its semantic code is visible there either. So a modern library does not have to be placed somewhere, sometimes, and for some reason. It does not even have to draw from rich traditions of architecture of this type of buildings. It is supposed to look nice or provoke – in a word generate interest and thus attract. The popular thinking which is driven by marketing reasons makes any idea of the architect good. As long as in the past one could look for some meaning (mainly analogy of the language of architecture to the functions offered in the building), nowadays one can assume that some projects are dominated by symbolic nonsense.

## Summary

The 1980s and 1990s are considered the best times in the history of development of libraries [21, p. 4]. The first decade of the 21st century does not demonstrate regress either. It seems that one of the fundamental reasons is human desire to leave some tangible marks which would

distinguish present times from other periods in the future. This desire is primal and typical of our species, however, nowadays, in the postmodern society looking hard for its identity, its significance is special. Architecture is a form which can be relatively certainly created even if provo-

cation is its only distinctive feature. It can be treated in opposition to utilitarian aspects – as an object of art and even folk art. Libraries belong to those types of buildings in which a greater role is attributed to meaning than to assumed formula [4, p. 8].

According to one more typology where a “container” is a type of object – a kind of packaging for what is inside, whereas a “laboratory” is a building causing archetypical reactions [19, pp. 322–329], it is not difficult to see that architecture of libraries belongs to the latter. At the same time, over the centuries of its evolution, a form specific to libraries has not been developed – and most probably never will develop. Apart from adapted buildings, a trend is visible to focus on the form of the building. The forms which appear most often include cuboids and other polygons, less frequently – ovals (and when they do, they cause a lot of interest, despite their objective simplicity – e.g. the Ruskin Library). Emphasis is placed on shape, with ornaments only sometimes complementing it, and sporadically reverse proportions – for the benefit of decorations. These are, in general, the features of contemporary buildings anyway. Consequently, in a way this provides a negative answer to the question whether the forms of libraries belong to exceptional architectural designs of the past or contemporary? The shapes of the

buildings are sometimes strange, e.g. the Public Library in Tampere (Tampereen kaupunginkirjasto) whose contour resembles that of a turkey. However, the forms of buildings designed for different uses are strange too. The relations look similar as regards the assumptions of urban development and design. Libraries can boast their attractive appearance, solutions demonstrating that a lot of attention is paid to their designs, e.g. the public library in Qingp (part of Shanghai agglomeration) built on a lake. However, other public utility buildings also have unique locations and significant aesthetic values. All this causes some dulling of senses. There are a lot of extraordinary buildings whose uniqueness is lost in abundance. Another factor weakening the strength of signals being emitted with the use of architecture of libraries is fashion. Consequently, both materials and colors as well as the whole form reduce the level of diversity and actually distinctness of concepts of projects.

Uniqueness is determined by a low level of competition and, to a lesser extent, by aesthetics. Additionally, since marketing has been employed in the civilizational development, it has become a norm to make every effort to draw attention or catch the eye of the passer by – a potential consumer. The intentional isolation of the message coming from the library is more difficult than ever before.

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### *Motywy symboliczne współczesnej architektury bibliotek – najczęstsze tendencje*

W artykule poruszono problematykę motywów przewodnich stosowanych w architekturze bibliotek ostatnich trzech dekad. Wśród nich znajdują się tendencje kierowane ekologią, prostotą, etnicznością i elastycznością, ale również – wydawać by się mogło już archaiczną inspiracją – religią. Ich dobór jest podyktowany modą kreowaną przez świat zachod-

ni oraz filozofią ponowoczesną. Obie przyczyniają się do tworzenia wizerunku nowoczesnej biblioteki odizolowanej od jej tradycji, a co za tym idzie, porzucania klasycznych rozwiązań ideowo-symbolicznych konstytuujących jej dawną rolę kulturową.

**Key words:** contemporary libraries, architecture of libraries, symbols, semiotics of architecture

**Słowa kluczowe:** współczesne biblioteki, architektura bibliotek, symbolika, semiotyk architektury