

Design Quality²⁷ Indicators

I am writing this sitting in the Science, Industry and Business branch of the New York Public Library. Whilst it is housed in what was once the basement of a department store the conversion in 1996 opened up a large double height entrance space to bring you down from the street. This, with the terrazzo floor and exposed concrete, makes it airy and cool, a welcome relief from sweaty Manhattan in July.

I have just ducked out of an event for officers and architects from several New York City public authorities in how to apply DQI. The Department in charge of procurement wants the tool to be used on all large public projects in the city, including fire stations, police stations, hospitals, court buildings, health centres, civic offices, schools and libraries. In fact, nearly every type of project local authorities and their suppliers have used DQI on in the UK.

It is rewarding for the Construction Industry Council and the large number of people who contributed to the development of DQI that the tool we started work on in



Interior of Science, Industry & Business branch of NY Public Library

the late 1990's is being picked up here. New York likes involving users and communities in the briefing and development of design, the ability to initiate debate and share ideas, to visualise data, and to track how projects are progressing while focusing on and improving the quality of design. They see DQI as both a project and programme management tool.

This latest adventure for DQI comes on top of its use on over 800 projects in the UK, mainly from the public sector with around half being schools, many being part of the Building Schools for the Future programme. It is this schools focus that led CIC working in partnership with the DCSF to launch DQI for Schools in 2005, an adaptation of DQI tuned to the needs of school buildings and grounds.

DQI offers a holistic approach to the measurement of design, and as Nigel Badcock identifies in his Civic Building of the Year Award article this provides a rigorous structure to consider all issues which will be prevalent in the design of the final building.

CIC has trained facilitators in the application of DQI and how to work with a diverse stakeholder group to balancing different opinions and ideas. The facilitator needs to be supported by a 'DQI leader' who knows the project and can encourage the project stakeholders whose opinions the DQI process will collect. I find the most successful DQI leaders are part of the client team, the project manager or design champion. It is important the DQI leader is given time to work with the facilitator and stakeholders to undertake the exercise properly. ▶



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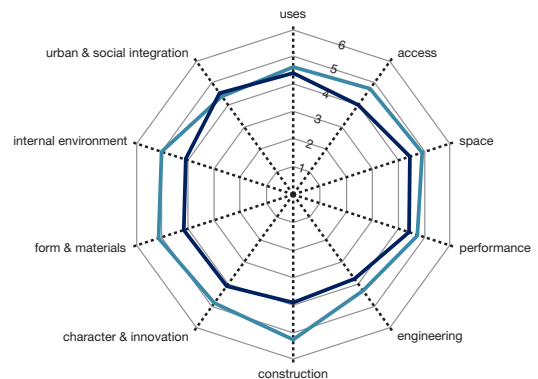
To get DQI to work best for you it is important to consider it at the right points in the building process. Whilst it might be tricky to work out quite when in a complex programme like BSF it would typically be addressed during:

- Briefing, to set priorities for the design and complement brief information, which in PFI procurement would then be sent to bidders.
- Once or twice during design, to assess how well design solutions are meeting the aspirations.
- At occupation, to create a benchmark for the building.
- One to two years after use, to see how the building is performing in use, and against the original aspirations.

In briefing the DQI tool helps manage stakeholder input at the point where the vision for the service is developed into an outline brief for the building¹.

However, the principles in DQI, the indicators and its structure should be discussed less formally earlier in briefing to help inform the emerging decisions and provide a forward view. A client design advisor, DQI facilitator, or school building organisations such as School Works can help with this. If the project is a refurbishment, or a replacement of an existing building it has been found that using DQI to assess the existing fabric is a great way to inform the brief.

At mid design stage the challenge is to present design information to stakeholders in a way that allows them to assess it and the best way to do this is to ask the design team to present design options using the DQI structure of ‘Functionality’, ‘Build Quality’ and ‘Impact’. Evidence shows this really helps lay stakeholders interpret and question design information.



Using DQI cannot guarantee a great design but it will help with project communication checking that all opinions are heard as well as raising and managing expectations. To demonstrate how DQI helps create useful information we asked all the delegates at the event in New York to assess this library, the chart above shows how the professionals in the team had a very different view from building users we asked to complete it, and after sitting here all morning I realise I need some natural light. ■

¹ see Mairi Johnson's article in the Summer 2007 edition of **Scalanews**.

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