

## A Guide to photographing your library

Since the advent of cheap digital cameras we have all turned into amateur photographers, happily snapping our libraries at every stage of the construction or refurbishment for our own interest and also as a historical record of what we have achieved.



It is only when we come to need photos for publicity material or presentations that we realise that the photos we have taken are not quite up to scratch.

Taking the odd photo for posterity is one thing but producing something of suitable quality for professional purposes requires a bit more thought and attention to detail. And for pictures taken during the renovation process you literally only get one shot at it!

Over the years, I must have taken hundreds of library interior shots of completed projects as my clients often like to see other library interior design schemes when planning their own.

However, since setting up Remploy Library Solutions I have worked closely with professional photographer Mike Roberts, owner of the very successful Electra Studios, and together we now ensure that all our key library projects are photographed digitally in a high resolution format.

This not only means we have razor sharp, high quality images for our own portfolio and promotional material, it allows us to provide all Library Solutions clients with a disc featuring those same photos for their **own** publicity purposes.

With some professional help from Mike, I have put together a few key points to consider when photographing libraries. **This simple but practical advice will help you to produce professional pictures you can be proud of...**

**Meryl Blanchard**, Remploy Library Solutions

## Outside of Library Buildings

- Photography is all about light and the best light is to be found early in the morning or in the late afternoon - at these times the camera can pick up the colours better. The midday sun tends to wash out the tones and colours of an image so avoid taking pictures at this time where possible.



- Don't try to capture the whole building in one photo as this can look rather "flat". It is far more effective to centre on a detail and capture its pattern.
- If you do have to get an overall view, use a wide-angle lens to avoid any outlines or features being cut off in the final photo. Leave a generous margin either side – give the building "room to breath".
- Professional photographers will often move a long way away and use a short telephoto lens with a tripod. The telephoto is less likely to distort the appearance of vertical lines.

**Keep it all as simple as possible** – most well designed new build libraries are strong enough on their own to be graphically interesting. Older libraries tend to be more complex to photograph.

## Interior Shots

### Composition

- Think about who is going to be looking at the photo and what they want to see.
- Make sure the picture will be pleasing to look at.
- Ensure a point of interest that the eye will be drawn to.
- Use accessories and compose the shot around them. For instance, if you are showing an easy seating area with chairs and coffee table, use books on the coffee table to add interest.
- Exclude unwanted detail and clutter – clear tops of shelves, counters, straighten books and remove tatty posters.
- Adding people to the photo adds a certain human warmth that takes away the sense of sterility often found in an empty picture. It also adds a sense of scale.
- Make good use of balconies, stairwells and mezzanines – anything that will bring your lens height closer to the mid-point of the subject will help you get a more interesting shot.
- The shape of buildings and objects is easier to see if the camera is aimed at a corner rather than flat on. A corner view gives twice the information in one photo.



**Remember, you are looking to create an iconic image that people will remember.**

## Practical Considerations

- Use a professional architectural photographer if possible – the result will be a well composed, high resolution image.
- High resolution photos are the most suitable to use when printing literature – the higher the resolution, the sharper the image.
- If you do hire someone, make sure you have seen examples of their work and give a clear brief about what you require. If possible accompany them on the shoot and warn the library staff beforehand that you are coming!
- Think about the shots you want in advance – are they general “coffee table style” glossy pictures or specific products or displays? Should the library be open or closed? It all depends on what you are hoping to portray with the photos and how you intend using them.
- If you cannot stretch to paying a photographer then use the best digital camera you can afford. It is also advisable to invest in a heavy duty tripod.
- Try not to use the flash unless it is absolutely necessary as this distorts the natural colours – it is better to try to make use of the ambient light available.
- However the relatively low light levels in libraries mean that a low shutter speed is required to get a sharp picture. The tripod will help to reduce the speed by eliminating camera shake.
- The exception to this would be if you have to shoot in direct sunlight as this can cause details to be obscured. In this case, use a full flash or try to reflect some light into shaded areas with a large piece of white board.
- A simple “point and shoot” camera is less than ideal as you will need manual focusing. It is important to focus on what you want, rather than what the camera is automatically focusing on.



- One of the reasons that Digital is best for these type of shots is that the format allows you to correct the colour balance and adjust the detail after the shot is taken. It also means you can use the photos in any publicity material or presentations much easier than traditional film photos.

***Remember to always ask permission when taking photos,  
especially if you include members of the public and children.***

**Photography guidelines kindly provided by Meryl Blanchard  
of [Remploy Library Solutions](#) and Mike Roberts  
of [Electra Studios](#).**