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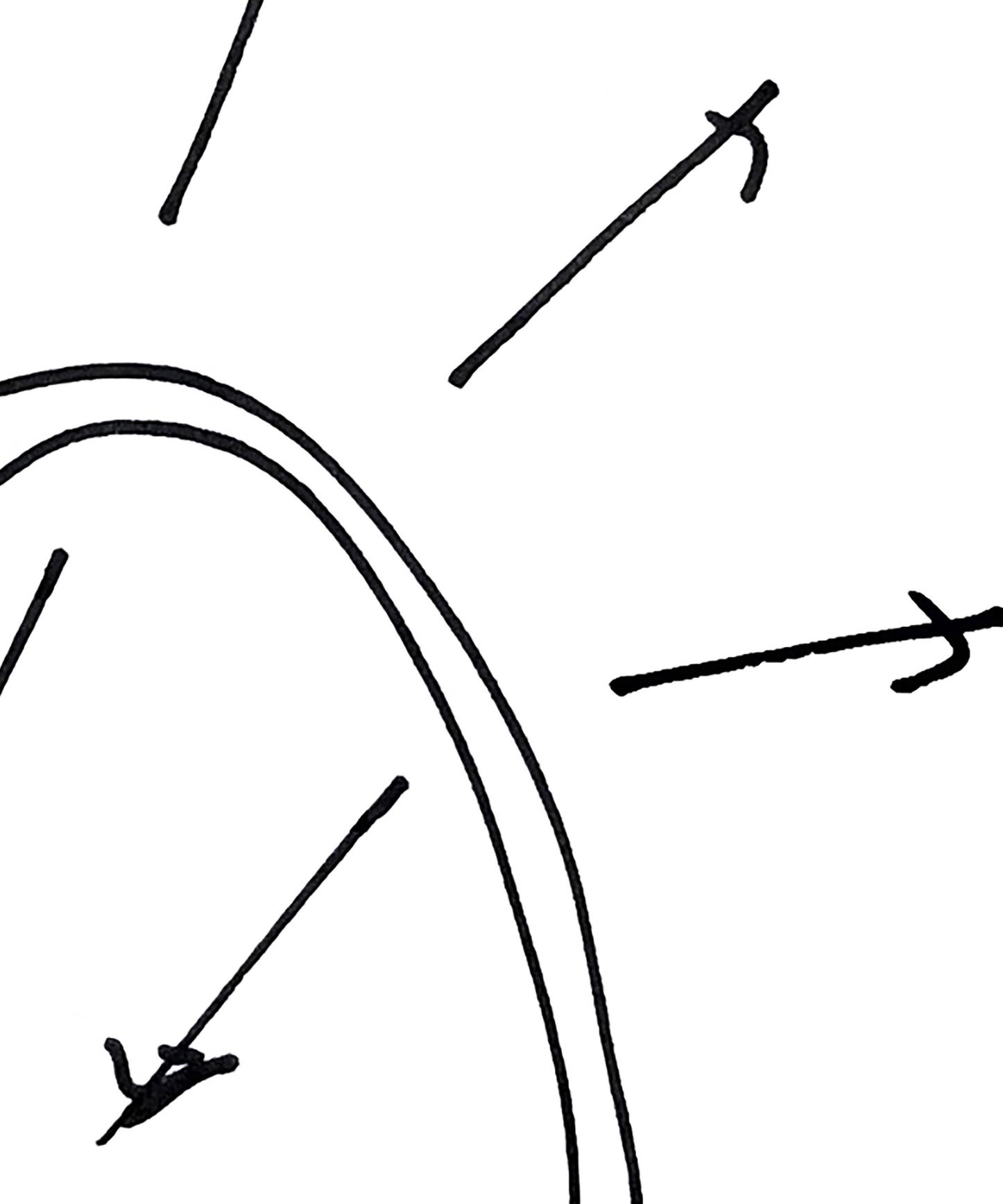
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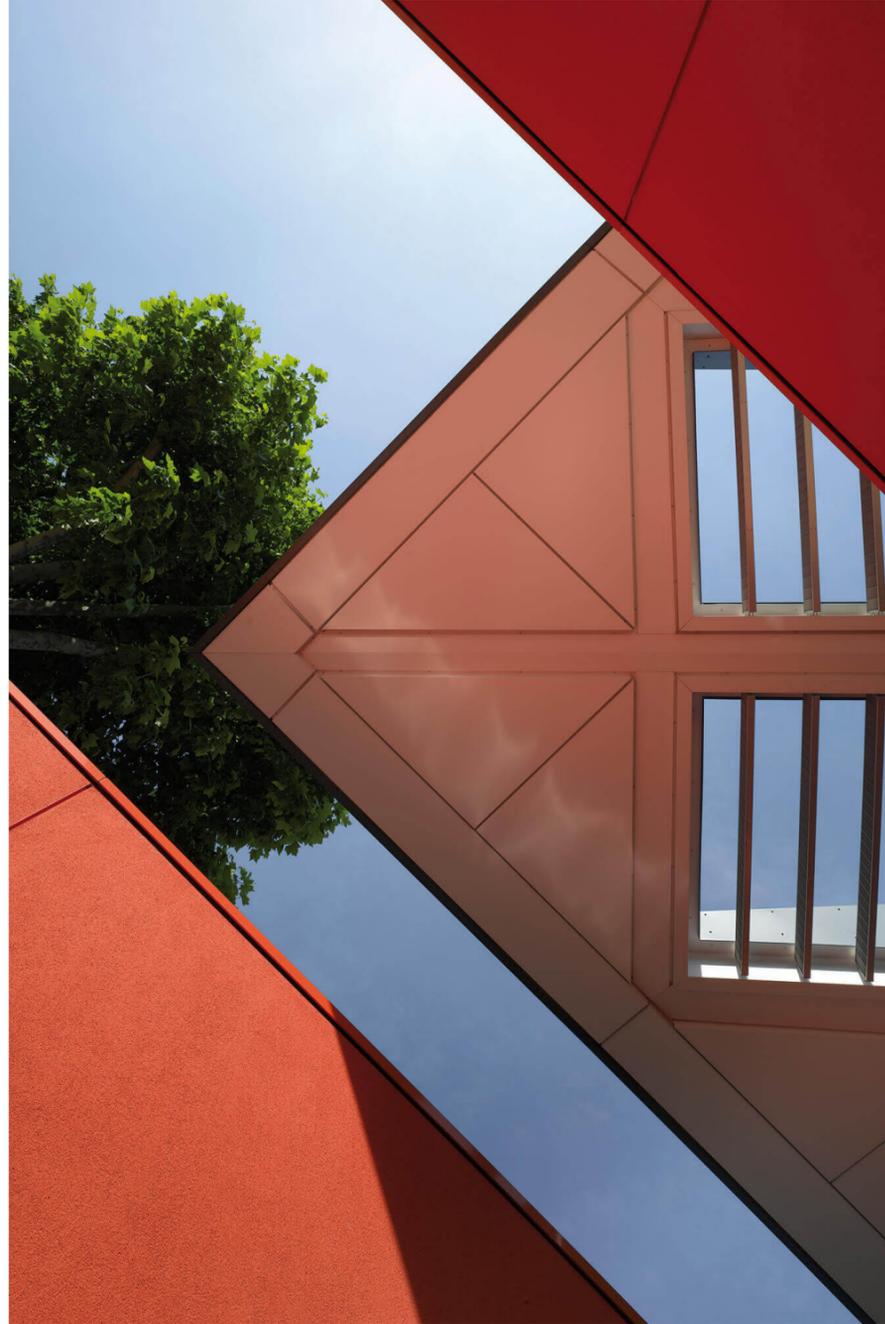
CURRENT

THE RIVER CITY
LIBRARY

Abigail Fundling
MFA | VCUarts Interior Design
Spring 2020

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6.1 Maggie's West
London Centre
(2008) by Rogers Stirk
Harbour + Partners

DECLARATION

Design is not a luxury, but rather a responsibility. As designers, we create spaces and the parts of the built environment that people touch; in doing this we have the opportunity to improve the quality of life of those who use these spaces.

In my design practice, I believe it is important to prioritize:

SUSTAINABILITY

Prioritizing the people who use the spaces I design as well as the environment in which these spaces reside. I believe in prioritizing energy efficiency, low, no-impact, and recycled materials, limiting waste, and optimizing the needs of the relationship between the building and its specific natural setting.

CONTEXT

I believe that we do not design for ourselves, but for others, their environment, and their culture. For this reason, I will always design with awareness and be responsive to the unique conditions of the landscape, social circumstances, and culture that surround a project. My designs will always have a sense of place and be evidence-based.

CREATIVITY

As a designer, I believe one should not take themselves too seriously, become prescribed, or allow the fear of risk to prevent them from imagination. I believe each design we make must be original, experimental, and unexpected. We must strive to inspire not only interiors, but experiences. Our work must transform space, striving to continuously expand our knowledge, collaborate, and cross disciplines. We should design on every plane we touch and be as multidimensional as the work we make.

AESTHETIC

As designers, we are tasked with making places. While the aesthetic quality of a design is subjective, I believe the importance of maintaining a standard of aesthetics is not. In the design of environments, it is important to design with confidence, lean in, and commit to creating space through sensory experience. To design something that is timeless can seem unattainable, but to design something that is interesting, immersive, and enjoyable takes only a commitment to an idea.

HUMANITY

As designers, I believe most of all that we must do no harm. We should believe in the projects we work on and be committed to our ethics. We must strive to make a positive impact, not simply minimize the bad. We must always design with respect and hold ourselves to a higher standard of practice. An example of this commitment comes from the firm Rogers Stirk Harbour, which developed a constitution that describes the firm's culture of collaboration and creativity, lays out the kind of projects that the firm will not take on due to moral objections like military projects and prisons, and an obligation to do charity work.

**“A LIBRARY IS ABOUT
KNOWLEDGE... THE ART OF
UNDERSTANDING THINGS YOU
DON'T ALREADY KNOW. IT IS THE
MOST INCREDIBLE MACHINE TO
CREATE TOLERANCE.”**

RENZO PIANO

8.7 Iceland's
Volcanic Rivers, by
photographer
Andre Ermolaev



MOTIVATION

The motivation for this thesis stems from the desire to design an interior environment that responds to the city in which it resides. When looking at a map of Richmond, its most obvious geographical trait is the James River which cuts through it, but despite this direct relationship, the river is seldom acknowledged in the city's downtown. In the city, the river is inconspicuous in spite of its rich history, obvious proximity, and potential for public space. In a city, there are no built environments more valuable or democratic than its public spaces. Of the Seattle Central Library, architect Joshua Prince Ramus said, "Public libraries are the last vestiges of public free space" (Prince Ramus, 2009). They are uncompromisingly democratic, egalitarian, and an accessible source of information and education, having the opportunity to become the nucleus of a city's culture and a nexus of connection for its people. This thesis explores a public library's ability to connect people as well as to examine the potential of this public space as a tool to connect the city with its river.

PROBLEM

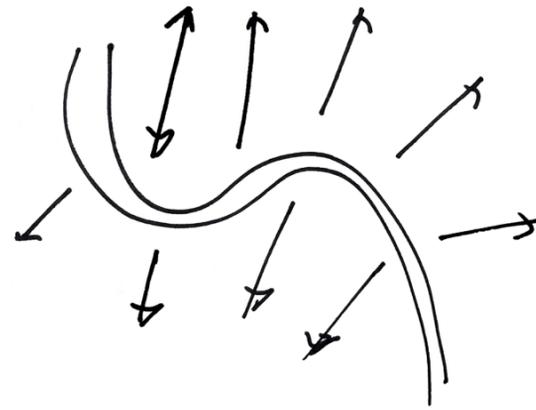
In the mid-Atlantic, the city of Richmond was founded on a river because of all it provided and was the core of city life, but with the rise of the Industrial Era and the changes it brought, the city's industry turned elsewhere. The once bustling, wealthy city is now a sprawling, mid-sized urban center and the river is a relatively undeveloped section of the city. The James River, like many east coast urban rivers, has a long, complex history, ranging from the original Native American inhabitants, their displacement, the trafficking and trade of enslaved peoples, the industrial revolution, to the present day. Now, Richmond residents primarily access the river for an escape to nature and some harvesting of fish and oysters. Standing at the water's edge, one can see a vast panorama of the city skyline, yet when one stands in Richmond's downtown, the river is all but invisible and easily forgotten.

Derelict for years but now accessible by limited towpaths and largely sold off to private entities, what remains of the undeveloped riverfront is important public space and a strong opportunity for community connection. The James River's history, close connection to the city and landscape, and the affection residents have for it make it a desirable environment for personal growth, rich experience, and learning. To place a library - that which is truly public space - at the edge of this central waterway will engage the city with this urban path; its original source of history, culture, and life.

METHODS

Evidence-based design decisions grounded in research drive the development of this project. Theories of human behavior enrich the human-centered design of the interior, such as: Prospect and Refuge, defined by theorist Jay Appleton as the feeling of safety and comfort in interior space influenced by having a view over one's environment as well as a sense of concealment (Appleton, 1984), place attachment, a preference based on perceived "image" of a place (Hull, 1992), and place identity, a theory based in the genius loci of a place, rooted in the idea that there are "essential natural characteristics that identify a place, and that, in effect, these are latent and will structure, but also be released by, a sensitive design solution," (Hague & Jenkins, 2004, p. 5).

Research methods including interviews with librarians, library designers, and surveys of the people that use these public spaces as well as the examination of case studies. The goal of this public library on the river is to create the opportunity for patrons to slow down, be immersed in the river experience, and feel a sense of connection and attachment to Richmond; the library will function as a beacon of information, engagement, and connection in this city so closely tied to its river. The research cultivated through these case studies, interviews, and surveys helped define the programmatic needs of the proposed space, how best to achieve a sense of place, and what defines a twenty-first-century library.



RESULTS

The research conducted for this project revealed that enhancing a relationship between an interior with its site required the creation of a sense of place and belonging linked to its situational context. This required connecting the city, where people already are, to the river using the interior of the library as a tool to accomplish this. Research found that people want to engage and connect through activities like workshops and group study, the consumption of culture like local food or drink, film, and visual media. Successful interior environments are immersive and are based in human-centric design theory.

Libraries were once insular environments for individual research, study, and information consumption, with their plans focused inward. Now, they are community institutions for connection, study, and information production, focusing outward in both view and programming. This thesis proposes a new cultural typology of a library's interior design as the primary tool to activate a sense of place and public connection with the river. As a community hub, it is an environment for connection and culture as well as study.

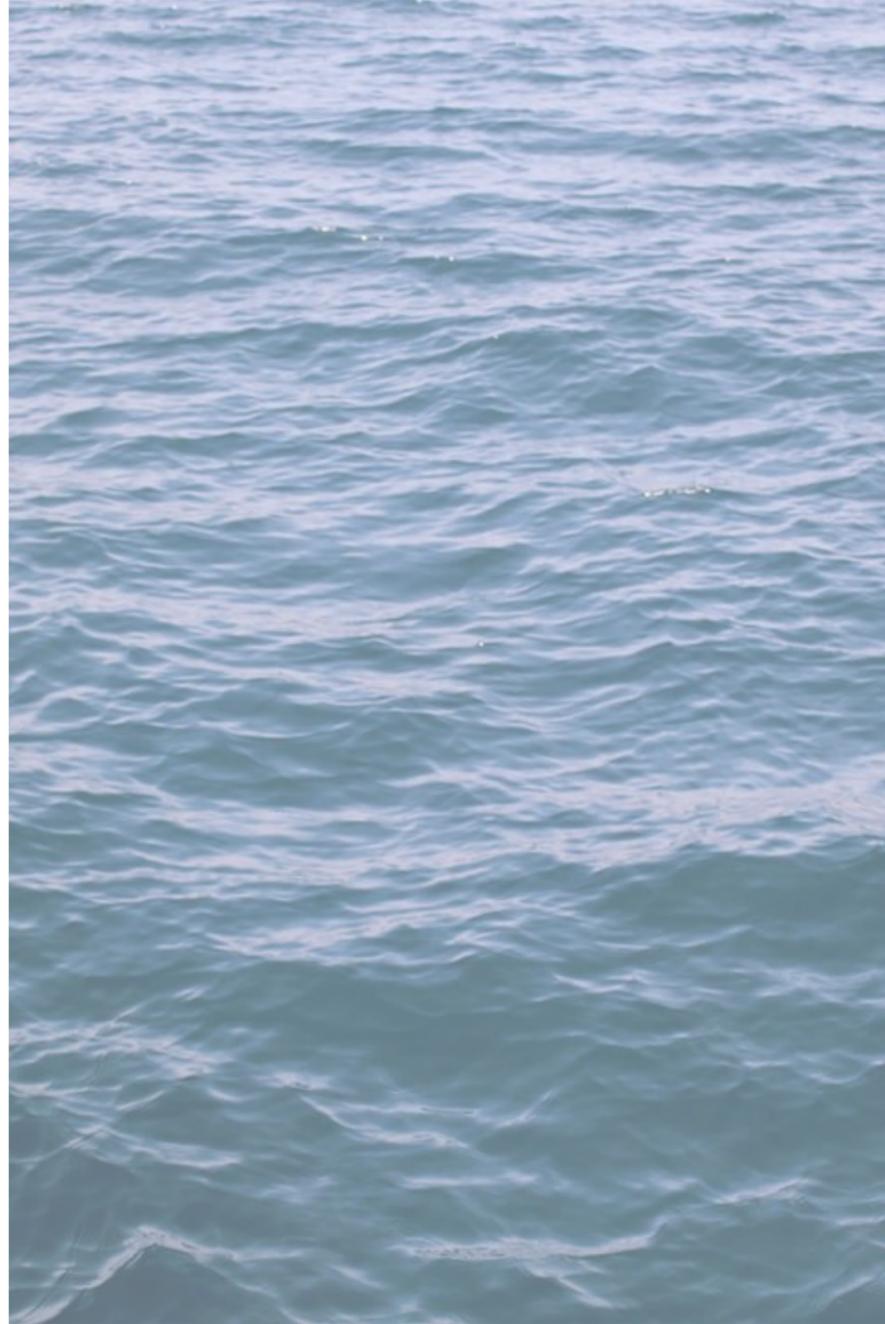
REFLECTIONS

The goal of this thesis was to orient a Richmond public library toward the city's riverfront to strengthen the river's connection to the community. Adapting an existing warehouse with a history of river industry situates this project between the city and the river, drawing a natural connection between these two forces. The resulting design used form, material, and contextual hierarchy to emphasize this river-city relationship and uses existing architectural details in the interior design of this structure. These visual and contextual cues, the library's programming, as well as strong axes in the space drew a strong connection between the river as the city's water source and the library as a community anchor.



The James River from Rocketts Landing, Richmond, VA

ABSTRACT



LITERATURE REVIEW

RESEARCH STATEMENT

A public library's interior design will enhance the connection between a city and its urban river.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis proposes a new cultural typology of a library as the primary tool to activate a sense of place and public connection with the James River as an important node within the city of Richmond. Richmond's riverfront holds a complicated history of injustice, conquest, commerce, and leisure. Today, it is a place to connect with nature and some business as well as agriculture. Before, it was the setting for a bustling economy, but also once the home of Native Americans, the place of their displacement, and the traffic and trade of enslaved people. While the site selected for this project does not rest on the exact location of these injustices, it acknowledges the history associated with the river. What appears as a simple body of water, is actually a site of much history for the city of Richmond, providing an opportunity for engagement and connection.

In 1818, Richmond's upper dock was located near where the Kanawha canal entered the James River, while the lower deep-water port was originally located at Rocketts Landing (Pool, 2018.) Today, an empty warehouse stands between these two ports at Gillie Creek (Pool, 2018.) It was constructed in 1939 as part of FDR's New Deal, the former president visiting the site in 1936 to announce the new project (Pool, 2018, pg. 7.) It was called the Intermediate Terminal Warehouse #3 and facilitated the import of Cuban sugar, peanuts, tobacco, sand, gravel,

newsprint, gas, and oil (Pool, 2018.) A mile and a half south-east of downtown, the vacant warehouse still stands today, rising high on piers to avoid flooding, its reinforced concrete structure empty but foreboding, a vestige of the city's history of river industry. This once bustling warehouse's immediate proximity to the river as well as its access to road, towpaths, and bus lines make it an ideal candidate for public space, contextual reference, and a refuge from the bustle of the city.

There is a significant precedent for once-opulent cities turning away from their rivers during economic changes and then, in time, re-discovering their waterfronts with a great deal of positive impact. These waterways provide opportunities for community connection and identity in their cities as well as moments of calm and enjoyment. Meanwhile, research repeatedly shows the power of libraries as agents for community engagement (American Library Association, 2018.) This research supports the design objective of using public space in the form of a library as an opportunity to enhance a city's relationship with its river through site-specific design, creating an environment for learning and engagement.

THE LIBRARY AS PUBLIC SPACE

In a city, there are no built environments more valuable or democratic than its public spaces, chief among these are its public libraries. These institutions have become one of the last vestiges of truly public space in the twenty-first century (Prince Ramus, 2009.) Unprejudiced, democratic, and egalitarian, libraries freely provide information and accessibility to all and, as public, locally-anchored spaces, they have the potential to be a touchstones for communities.

Since their inception, “[libraries] have always been a place where informational and social infrastructures intersect within a physical infrastructure that (ideally) supports that program” (Mattern, 2014). They are “opportunity institutions” that open doors for the disenfranchised, yet many still question the viability of continuing to push the programming of libraries in the context of ever-tightening budgets. Despite their financial struggles, the twenty-first-century library is host to a variety of programming, both traditional and contemporary, supporting literacy, providing gathering spaces, sites of cultural engagement, safe spaces, meeting rooms, and serving as a technology provider. With this weight of wide programming, libraries have become one of the most resilient public institutions in existence. “At every stage, the contexts — spatial, political, economic, cultural — in which libraries function have shifted; they are continuously reinventing themselves and the means by which they provide those vital information services” (Mattern, 2014). Once, libraries were only home to books, then their inventory stretched into special collections, magazines, newspapers, and multimedia, then, with the rise of technology came audiobooks, CDs, and DVDs. With each advance and changing need of its user, the American library stretched, flexed, and accommodated, providing not just physical

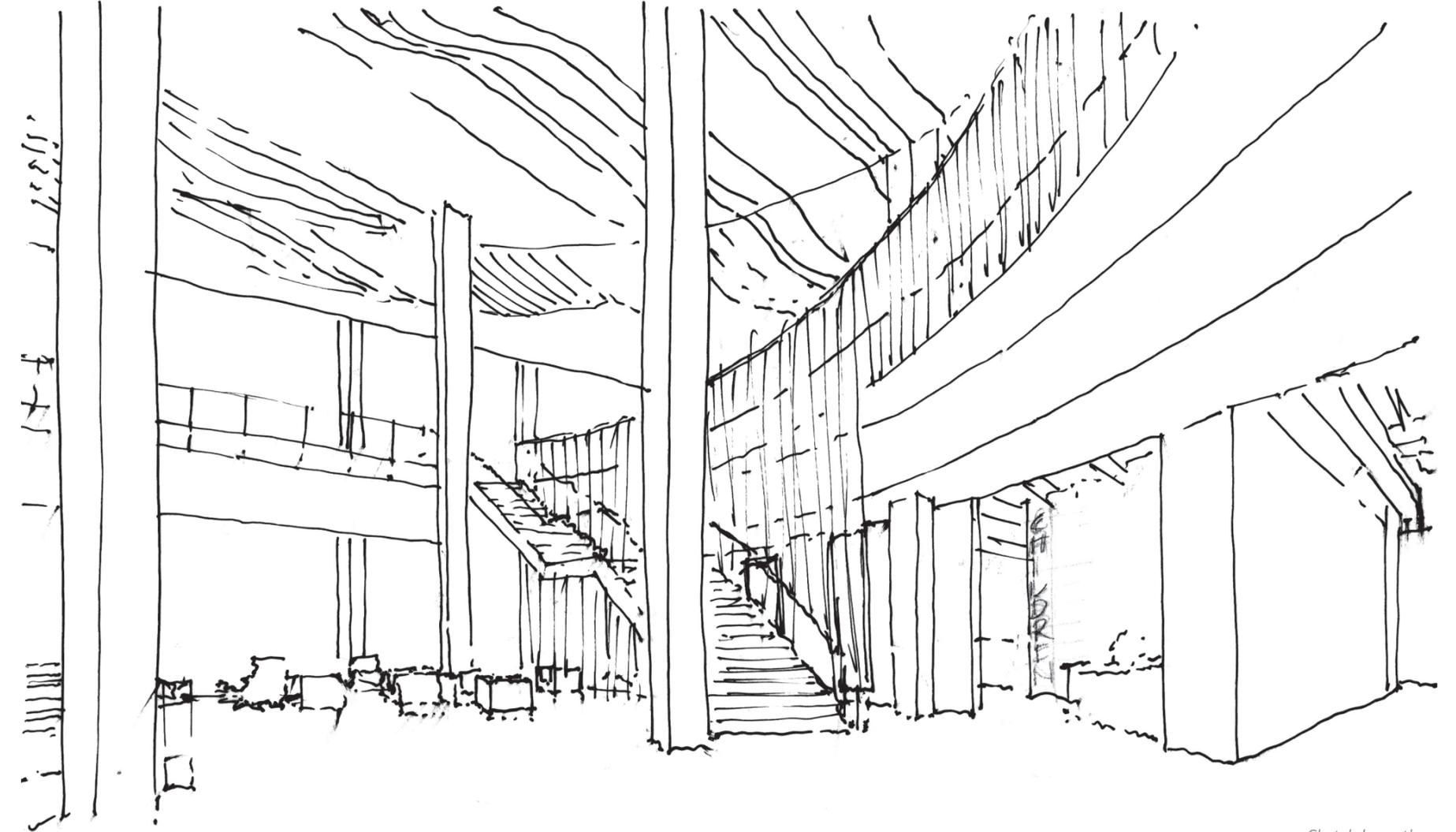
resources, but in a changing political and diverse climate, social resources - spaces for community clubs, meeting spaces, voter registration, and English as a second language classes. According to the American Library Association, “the central library is then a key site of both cultural consumption and production and a facilitator of civil society in a way that other public places are not” (2018). The American Library

[LIBRARIES] HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE LAST VESTIGES OF TRULY PUBLIC SPACE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

Association also conducted a user survey on attitudes toward public libraries and the perceived value of their presence in communities, concluding that, “overall, almost all those who responded felt that they “contribute in a meaningful way to the quality of life in their community, and that funding public libraries was a good use of tax revenue” (American Library Association, 2018). The Seattle Central Library is an important precedent for this thesis due to its contemporary approach to library design. In the design of the Seattle Central Library, Rem Koolhaas and OMA attempted to bridge the chasm of competition between the digital and the actual. The architect, prior to approaching the project, believed that contemporary society’s heavy reliance on the digital created a danger to institutions like libraries, institutions that housed the actual. With the Seattle Central Library, Koolhaas strived to strike a balance between the digital, human, and tradition, creating a library that centralizes all three, stating that “it is not a matter of

either/or... the modern library, especially in a cybercity such as Seattle, must transform itself into an information storehouse aggressively orchestrating the coexistence of all available technologies” (Murphy, 2006). It was designed with this dichotomy of the real and the virtual as its core concept, informing its layered, contemporary, and heavily mobile design language. The designers wanted to rethink the architecture of the twenty-first-century library, especially in the context of public space. Ultimately, they designed the exterior to respond to the city by providing a “civic destination,” while the interior acted as almost a public theater - “a fluid intersection of spaces through which social actors move, rehearsing their role in civic life” (Murphy, 2006).

Richmond’s library on the river must also serve the city’s need for both traditional and new technologies. Housed in a historical building of industry, it must also be industrious. It will provide access to reading and visual materials that most libraries provide, but it will also create a haven, a safe space that serves both as a refuge from Richmond’s busy downtown and an electrifying connection with the river. Using this library does not just provide one with a book to read and a computer to use, but a connection to place, community, and nature; informed by a pace that matches the slow, winding life of the river.



Sketch by author



The James River
looking downriver,
Richmond, VA.

RICHMOND'S URBAN PATH: THE JAMES RIVER

Central to this thesis is the library's placement by the river. This public library's community importance makes it an ideal tool for strengthening Richmond's relationship with the river by providing an access point for engagement with this natural resource; while, simultaneously the river serves as a key tool for grounding this public library in the city of Richmond.

Richmond is not the first city to have a long, complex relationship with its river. Once hubs of transportation and power, many cities were built on rivers. From the beginning, "settlements have been located at the water's edge and it is in these locations that the greatest cultures and empires of history developed" (Şimşek, 2014). The symbiotic relationship between river and city has grown and evolved with time. "Cities and rivers were (and are) intimately linked to each other; they co-evolved and shaped each other in a multitude of ways and aspects" (Knoll, Lübken, 2017, pg. 3). Throughout history, cities like Richmond exerted power over waterfronts, turned their backs on, and re-engaged their rivers as well as the role urbanization and industrialization played in this story.

Now, river reclamation projects are popping up around the world to promote urban renewal and the creation of functional and beautiful community spaces. The results of river reclamation projects have proven to be "unparalleled catalysts for urban renewal, spurring the creation of functional and beautiful community spaces" (Allen, 2013). But why rivers? These natural entities are an essential resource for almost all larger, old cities, providing the fuel to their power and the foundation of their existence, and, as such, the river-city relationship "provides an angle from which to advance comparative urban history with a focus on the relationship of cities to their natural environments" (Knoll, Lübken, 2017, pg. 3). Protecting public space at Richmond's riverfront is essential to the preservation and continued development of the city's culture, "Public space marks the limits of the idea of the city. Where it does not exist, one may speak of urbanization but not really of the city." (Gastil, 2004, pg. 113). Grounding a civic

amenity like a public library on Richmond's riverfront will create a site-specific community environment that speaks directly to the city itself.

The James River runs directly through Richmond, but there is a continued feeling of the river being at the city's back. It is no longer the center of Richmond's industry, so, from an institutional standpoint, the relationship has become one of apathy. Despite the dereliction of its islands, they are loved by locals, towpaths are limited but used, and one glossy restaurant can be found at the river's edge. The rest

**“PUBLIC SPACE MARKS THE
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of Richmond's riverfront property is either overgrown or slowly being sold off to private entities like Dominion Energy that moved in and gated-off the landscape from public use. A public library at Richmond's riverfront would provide a protected access point to this natural resource, a refuge for observation, and a place more in connection with this essential, urban resource. The library would be a site-specific public source, a place truly in reference to and residing in the city of Richmond.

DESIGN THEORY

As opportunity spaces for information and connection, human-centric design theories are the core of successful library design. These theories also provide the foundational logic for helping this library connect people to the place in which they live. Key design theories explored as part of this thesis include Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Prospect and Refuge. Each of these theories delves into what connects people to their environments, helps them feel secure in them, and connects these interior environments to the places outside their walls.

As people move through interior space, they seek a sense of security, especially when exploring a new environment. The theory of Prospect and Refuge was originally applied to landscapes and anthropological studies. Jay Appleton's *In The Experience of Landscape* theorizes that preferences for where one places themselves in an environment depend on mainly two factors: one's prospect, defined as how far one can see, and refuge, or how protected they are against possible threats (1975). While its history lay in landscapes, researchers have since applied the theory of Prospect and Refuge to interiors (Stamps, 2006). Hildebrand was one of the first researchers to do this, asserting that as a designer lays out an interior environment, the user must feel that from refuge they are able to survey their prospect and from their prospect able to retreat to refuge" (Hildebrand, 1999, p. 22). Applying this theory to interior space uses a variety of methods that allow users to see what's coming while limiting their feeling of exposure. Stamps, a researcher examining Hildebrand's work, writes that refuge in the interior is created by dimmer spaces, solid walls and surfaces, and enclosure on two and three sides as well as "small horizontal dimensions, narrow horizontal aspect ratio, and, especially, low ceilings" (Stamps, 2006, p. 644). Meanwhile, prospect is created by opposite effects, including brightness, transparency, and enlarged, tall and vertical proportions (Stamps, 2006). How one moves between spaces is also subject to the theory of Prospect and Refuge, lighting playing a significant role in this experience. Hildebrand found that if one moves from dark to light, they feel as though they can see without being seen, giving them the impression that they can explore these new spaces freely (Stamps, 2006).

The theory of Place Identity takes on a broader examination of how one relates to their environment on a sociological level. Researches Brown and Perkins define this theory as "clusters of positively and negatively valenced cognitions of physical settings . . . [that] helps to define who and of what value the person is both to himself and in terms of how he thinks of others" (1992, p. 281). This theory looks at how one links themselves to what they see in the place around them. Furthermore, it suggests that visual cues in a place may trigger how one feels about their connection to their community.

AS PEOPLE MOVE THROUGH INTERIOR SPACE, THEY SEEK A SENSE OF SECURITY, ESPECIALLY WHEN EXPLORING A NEW ENVIRONMENT.

Place Attachment theory delves even deeper into the link between a person and their environment. Researchers Low and Altman define Place Attachment as a trait that "emphasizes the unique emotional experiences and bonds of people with places" (1992, p. 2). Furthermore, they suggest that these attachments are essential to how one defines oneself in both their individual and community identity (Brown & Perkins, 1992). Places play a significant role in this sense of self. The places in which people dwell become "repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place..to which people are attached" (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 7). Place Attachment then provides a sense of daily normalcy and an ongoing sense of stimulation and with places and landmarks that become stable, allowing individuals to relax into their environment, increasing a sense of safety, freedom, control, and creativity (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 10). Hummon refers to this resulting

sense of belonging as "insidedness," which they define as that sense of community, local attachment, and personal identity (1992, p. 258). "Insidedness" is the result of a multitude of factors - physical, social, and personal, "living within a known terrain; within an order of community life; within a landscape of remembered events" (Hummon, 1992, p. 258). Then, to help an individual to connect to their environment, they must be able to relate to it socially, geographically, as well as through its communal culture.

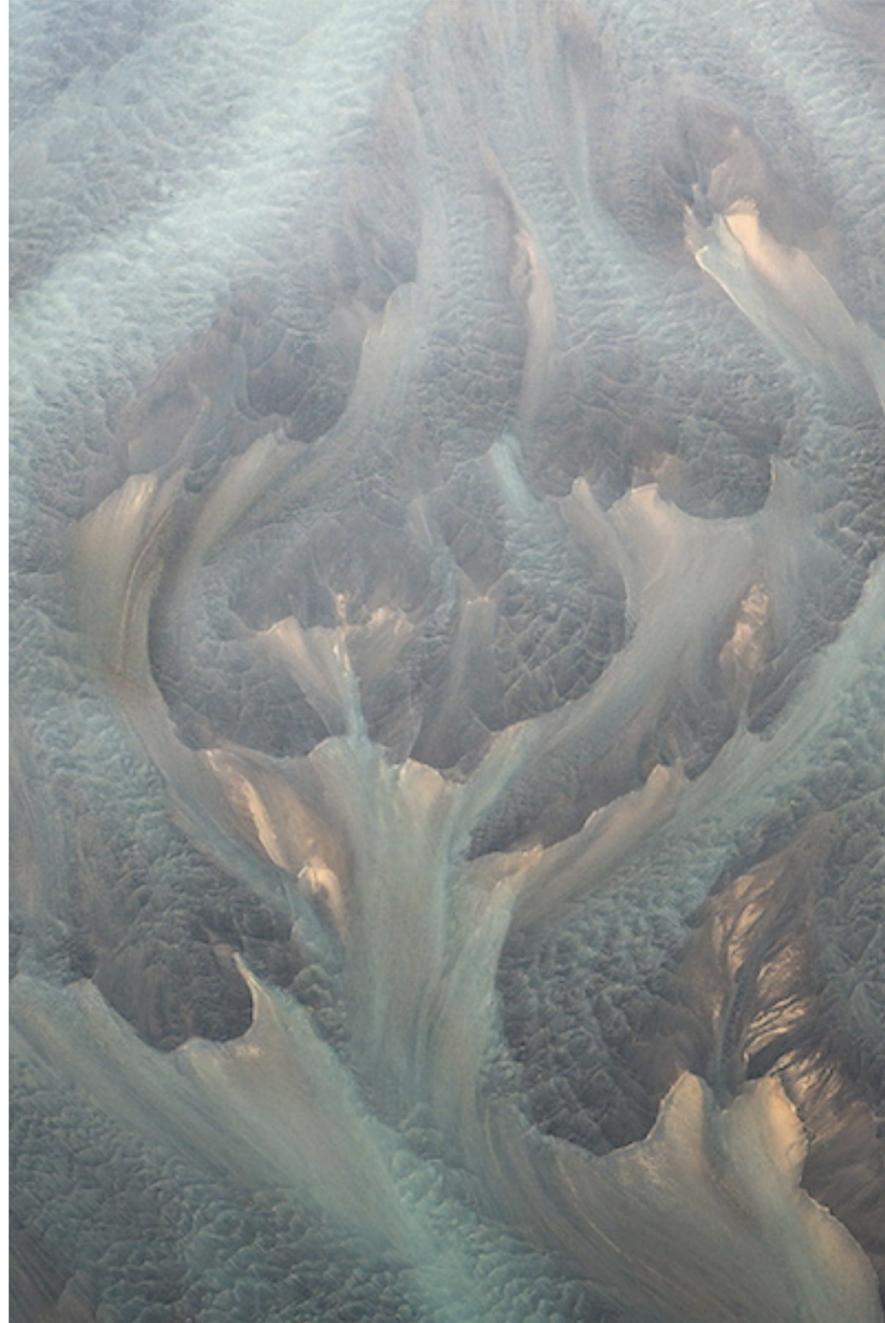
According to this research, attachment occurs at both the individual and communal levels (Brown & Perkins, 1992). The physical environment and landmarks of a place both reflect and shape people's understanding of who they are as individuals as well as their place as part of a group (Brown & Perkins, 1992). In the built environment, renovation and adaptive reuse play a role in this. Brown and Perkins state that, "renovation is an example of an activity that changes the environment, yet can still maintain and enhance one's attachment to place" (Brown & Perkins, 1992, p. 283).

The act of taking something recognizable and known and turning it into something current and useful to the individual becomes exceedingly important to one's Place Attachment. The tools to helping them relate to that environment come to examining the identity of that place and helping the users of this environment feel comfortable and safe exploring it is reinforced by the principles of Prospect and Refuge. The built environment evolves alongside generations and design allows these changing environments to continue to relate to the people that use them. These theories are especially important in the design of public spaces like libraries, known for being used by an ever-changing and varied group of people. To increase people's sense of safety and belonging, Place Attachment and Identity as well as Prospect and Refuge guide their design into a human-centric approach that creates a more specific environment, not just for the place, but for the people that use it.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this research to explore the use of a public library's interior design to draw a connection between a city and its urban river is possible through the use of human-centric design theory like Place Identity and Attachment and Prospect and Refuge. To accomplish a sense of place attachment and identity requires drawing from the exterior within the interior, in the case the city Richmond and its river history. In doing so, a connection will be drawn between these two urban entities as well as a connection between the people who use the library and the place surrounding it. Further research exploring effective traits of the city, river, and culture as well as the needs of twenty-first-century library patrons will inform the designs that will define this site-specific community library.





RESEARCH

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore the physical, aesthetic, social, and contextual attributes of public libraries through a series of case studies that would reveal what defines the contemporary needs of libraries in the twenty-first century and how those public spaces can be both grounded in and enhanced by their environments.

Some key research questions used in these case study analyses include:

1. What are the roles public libraries serve in twenty-first-century cities?
2. How do people use libraries today?
3. How do libraries respond to the context in which they are sited?

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The methodology for collecting data in these case study analyses included observation, visual documentation, and interviews. It was important to study the interior architecture of libraries, their designers, and their user experience to understand the importance of these spaces as well as their most dynamic and successful characteristics. To create a well-rounded approach, this study includes interviews with librarians, designers, and patrons.

Site visits which included observation and visual documentation were necessary to observe the primary use of the space, its functionality, and its response to context and patron needs. This study took place in six public libraries. While all libraries studied were public, the characteristics of these libraries varied in context: one was agricultural, two were neighborhood libraries, two were urban, and one was waterfront. Each library responded differently to its site, adapting to fill the needs of the library and its patrons and grounding it in context.

VISUAL INTERPRETATION

The study of libraries began with the collection and documentation of situational characteristics, including their location, physical attributes of their sites, and the design responses to that context. Then came the collection of physical characteristics of the interior, gathered through observing and documenting these spaces' organization, program, and architectural attributes. These interior architectural analyses included documenting the use of color, material, the square footage of each programmatic space, furniture types, lighting, and views. Key in this observation was understanding each library's references and responses to their context and site. Finally, the researcher observed and made note of how the library is used - where people gathered, what services were used most, and whether these spaces were used by singular individuals or groups.

OBSERVATION SESSIONS

Observation sessions aided in the understanding of how the libraries were used and how they responded to context. Prior to the observation, floor plans were copied and prepared and research conducted on the location of the library, when it was designed, and the designer's intent for the project.

Upon visiting the site an exterior site walk was conducted, followed by an interior walk-through to orient the researcher. Following this, more time was spent in the space observing patrons, librarians, and staff. Here, the researcher sketched, diagrammed, and took notes on distinct architectural features, contextual references, and design. Further notes were made on how the spaces were used and what, in each library, was used most.

INTERVIEW SESSIONS

To further understand the impact and design of public libraries, a series of interviews and surveys were conducted. To have a multifaceted understanding of public libraries, librarians and designers were interviewed, while a larger pool of patrons was surveyed. A similar series of questions were asked in each interview with designers and librarians, with some adaptations made to accommodate each interviewee's relationship with the institution. Librarians were asked about how they perceived the value of public libraries and the roles they serve in society at large, the impact of the library's designed spaces, popular library programming and materials, and patronage. Designers were interviewed regarding their experiences in designing libraries. They were asked questions about the roles they believe libraries serve in our society, which ideas guide their design strategies when approaching library design, and how context is involved in the process.

A survey was used to collect data in regard to patron experiences and perceptions and to get a better idea of the needs of a contemporary library user. 58 surveys were distributed, each with identical questions to ascertain how and why they used libraries, their experiences of their design, and what they want and need from these spaces. They were asked about their positive and negative perceptions of libraries and how these influenced a sense of community and place attachment.

ANALYSIS

Data collected from observation, visual documentation, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively, while surveys were analyzed quantitatively.

Similarities across the observed libraries and in the interviews were highlighted and examined as consistencies in the library design and hypotheses drawn why these features have been repeated. Differences and anomalies were also examined and evaluated to understand the reasons behind them - what specific needs they filled or did not fill, whether or not they were successful, and how they were used. Meanwhile, information gathered in the surveys were gathered and compiled to create quantifiable statistics on patron experiences and perceptions.



*The rocks at Belle Isle,
Richmond, VA*

DESIGNER INTERVIEWS

When interviewing architects and interior designers on how they approached the design of libraries, several questions became important to understand this process: what design strategies guide contemporary library design, how are those designs human-centric, and where do conceptual and contextual inspiration meet.

To each designer, when it came to library design, no two libraries were the same. Andrea Quilici, an architect working with Quinn Evans and who was on the team that designed Varina Library, spoke of how libraries "Were once spaces for gathering information, now they are a place for creating and sharing information." They were once places for books, but are now places for "books *and* people." With what a library holds being as important as those who use it, libraries have become opportunity spaces, meaning designing libraries has become about designing for opportunity.

When approaching these designs, each designer said that concept was the basis for all of their library designs, it was how they sell projects to clients and lay the foundation for every nuance of the design that follows. These concepts can be rooted in the history of the place, the client, the site and landscape, important figures in the community, and the patrons and community itself. These conceptual drivers become the foundation of storytelling that defines the design of the whole project. Key to these designs is the way people interact within them Quilici liked to think of this on three levels, a logic similar to the other designers interviewed: alone, alone with others, with others. These three levels of personal interaction were approached similarly by all designers interviewed. Twenty-first-century libraries, unlike those of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, require a communal component, causing a need for multiple types of gathering and individual spaces.

**"[LIBRARIES] WERE ONCE
PLACES FOR BOOKS, BUT ARE
NOW PLACES FOR "BOOKS AND
PEOPLE."**

LIBRARIAN INTERVIEWS

Librarians found similar changes in the needs of patrons. While people use the library space to gather, they also want privacy. Patrons use the library to study privately, in small groups, or host business meetings, this variety of gathering types require variations in privacy. People want to gather at libraries and they want new technologies in programming, like digital programming and "exploration classes" for Adobe, coding, podcasting, photo/film as well as 3D design and access to computers. Civic needs are also essential to current library programs like ESL classes, research help through reference interviews, and club meetings. Computers and printing services are popular as well as children's story time, private meeting rooms.

While technology advances and the need for access and education for it becomes more necessary in libraries, in these interviews, librarians also said that much of what is needed from these community hubs are the same. Adrienne Minnock, Director of Richmond's Libbie Mill Library said that while media may evolve, what people want from libraries is the same. The digital and the actual mesh well in contemporary library programs. People still want both and no matter the medium, "humans want story." People are curious and they use libraries to satisfy and engage with that curiosity.

When it came to the design of libraries, almost all librarians emphasized the importance of maintaining lines of sight in every room and controlling acoustics. Librarians conduct a great deal of research alongside their patrons, delving deeply into topics from external curiosities to academic endeavors to deeply personal inquiries. These types of meetings require privacy. Meanwhile, a lot of patrons seek fun in their study and reading spaces, playful furniture and beautiful views create hospitable environments for these interactions.

PATRON SURVEYS

To get a better understanding of how people use their libraries, what they need from them, and how they feel about them, fifty-eight library patrons were surveyed on their experiences. These surveys were circulated online by the author, then further passed along by those who took the surveys. These surveys were anonymous and drawn from library patrons of all ages, genders, and socio-economic circumstances.

Those surveyed were asked what was memorable about their experiences in their community libraries, what they like about these spaces, what they use and engage with when there, as well as what they need from them and how they feel these spaces can connect to their sense of local culture. The goal was to glean what could enhance a sense of place attachment, or a preference based on the perceived image of a place (Hull, 1992) as well as place identity, a theory rooted in the idea that there are “essential natural characteristics that identify a place,” that can be enhanced in the designed environment to create a positive experience for those that use that space (Hague & Jenkins, 2004, p. 5). A further goal was to use these surveys to aid in cultivating a sense of the environment surrounding the library within the interior. With the rise of mixed-use buildings in the 21st century, there were also questions included to find out if there should be a mixed-use aspect of this building to better meet the needs of the surrounding community.

When asked about their impression of the impact public libraries have on their communities, 92% of patrons responded positively. Additionally, most respondents answered positively to questions asking if they felt their libraries reflected their local culture or attachment to their hometown.

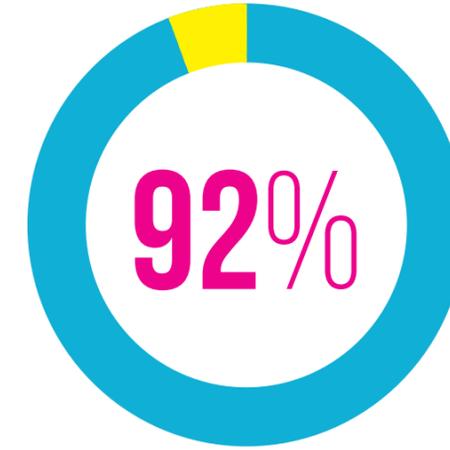
Surveying how libraries were used found that they were commonly used for both traditionally individual activity as well as more group-oriented uses, the majority of both levels of gathering being used for educational purposes (74.4%). While 69% more frequently use libraries of individual activity, 52% still use the space for group gathering or engagement. This suggests that despite new media and rising popularity of mixed-use buildings, libraries are still primarily used for

education and places of study, but patrons are seeking options for communal gathering. When it came to more specific programs and offerings, patrons most favored book and e-book rentals, DVD rentals, a place to work and study space, children’s spaces and programs, workshops, and educational clubs, as well as views.

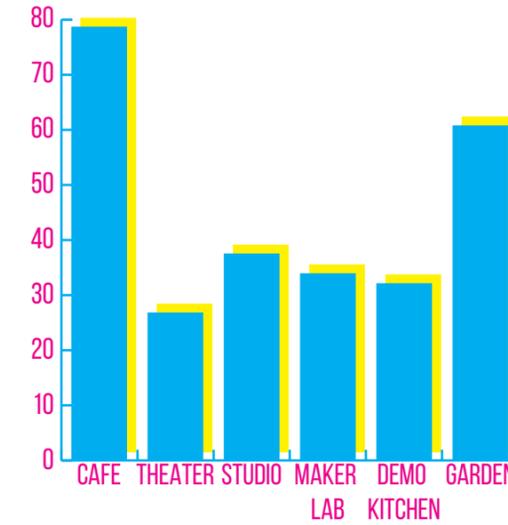
Asking about what people wished their libraries offered, almost all responses were communally or socially based. 95% wanted demonstration and workshop spaces for new skills and activities as well as language and job help, 79% were interested in a cafe, with added comments of programming for discussing literature like book club happy hours and coffee discussion groups, 61% wanted a learning garden. Other popular suggestions for desired experiences were maker spaces, tax advising, screenings, music, and book readings.

The data collected suggests a desire for libraries to serve both individual and communal needs. One respondent wrote, “Libraries I’ve been to grow up and recently have all been so dull and simple. Just a concrete block with four walls. I would definitely enjoy a library that has a more aesthetic design.” A similar sentiment can be found across the board in this survey, people do not simply want a repository for books, they want to be in the library environment. They like a quiet environment to study, an institution they can rely on for support and connection, and a place to consume the culture of their city through clubs, workshops, or local views. The traditional function of a library for study, reading, and education are no less true today, but the media for these has evolved and expanded to include discussion, demonstration, and the digital.

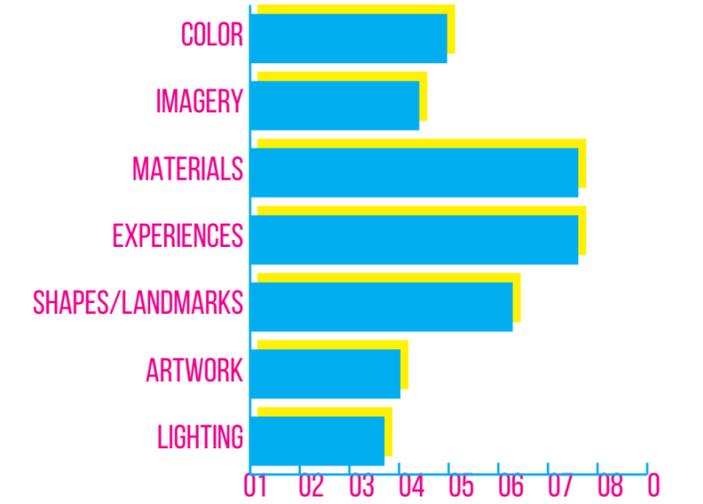
Based on the interviews, surveys, and case studies examined for this research, a strong case is made for a public library as a community hub in a city. Users want to relate to these public institutions as environments for quiet, culture, and community. Librarians and designers alike suggest that these places are for storytelling, and thus have the power to tell the story of a community, past, present, and future. By orienting a library as a connection point between a river and a city or two people, it becomes a hub for this exchange.



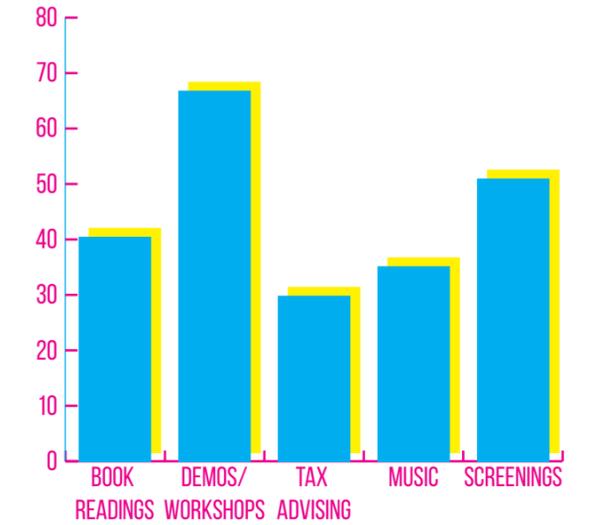
Percent of library patrons who feel **public libraries contribute positively to their communities.**



What **spaces** do patrons wish their libraries offered?



Factors that library patrons feel contribute to **A sense of place/place identity** in their libraries.



What **programs** do patrons wish their libraries offered?

CASE STUDIES + VISUAL OBSERVATION

Six libraries were analyzed through site visits and visual observation to create an understanding of the American public library over time and how they respond to context. These libraries included contemporary libraries like the Varina Library serving the agricultural community of Richmond, the Bellevue and Francis Gregory Neighborhood Libraries in Washington DC that were built in conjunction with one another to serve the unique needs of two DC neighborhoods, the historic and urban New York Public Library and Morgan Libraries, and the riverfront Hunters Point Library in New York.

As these libraries were examined, it became clear that understanding their response to place intersected with understanding their response to the needs and perceptions of the people using them at the time they were built. All of these libraries were contemporary, save for the New York Public Library and the private-turned-public Morgan Library. At the time these two libraries were built, like today, libraries were meant to be the "living rooms" of the cities in which they resided, but what was different was their response to context. At the time the New York Public Library was built, the view of the environment surrounding it was that the city was common, while the library was a place for aspirations - one went the library to elevate yourself from city life. It was an environment for self-improvement and learning, for ideals and philosophy. The result of this perspective was a very introspective plan, stacks lined the walls in mezzanined layers while the center of the rooms was reserved for individual study. These spaces were quiet and for inward thought. The same plan is reflected in the Morgan Library. These interiors have no views, their windows placed above one's eye line, instead, the views are made inside the space - sculpture, bas relief, mural, and focused on learning. All imagery expresses idealism, philosophy, and history, encouraging its patrons to focus inward, away from the city, and on self-betterment.

Today, as reflected in the Varina, Bellevue, Francis Gregory, and Hunter Point Libraries, libraries are for connection.

They provide a variety of study and reading spaces from individual and quiet to collaborative and social. Their plans are focused outward-oriented toward views of the surrounding landscape and city to encourage connection with place and community. The details of the imagery outside and interior architectural details illustrate this by echoing the motifs out the surrounding place. Varina Library focuses on the agricultural community with barn-like details like barn doors, wood paneling, tilted columns to reflect the trees outside, and specific references to place. Bellevue library echoes the surrounding hilly DC neighborhood with raised pavilions and sloping staircases while Francis Gregory highlights the woody park outside with its reflective glass building skin and an interior screen that frames views of the parks. The Hunters Point Library focuses on the Hudson River in the building section, zigzagging staircases and amorphous windows reflecting the river outside while curving walls furniture echo its winding qualities.

These details paint a picture of the evolving role of libraries over time as places for community connection and place attachment. They also highlight the priorities of the people who built and use them. The result that is revealed is historic libraries that prioritize and facilitate place detachment and introspection while contemporary libraries prioritize and facilitate connection and attachment to place.



VARINA LIBRARY

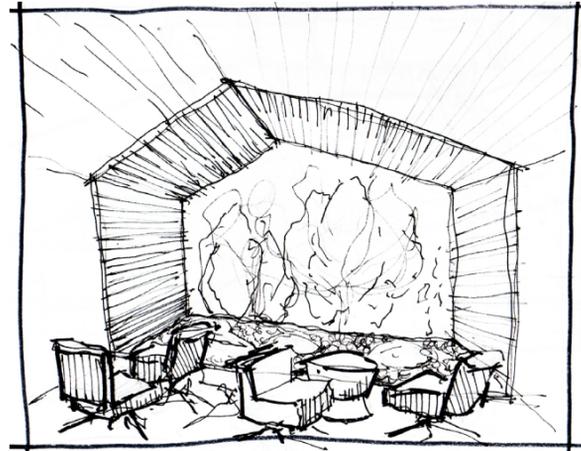
Quinn Evans

Richmond, VA
Built 2016
44,000 SF

Built to respond to the agricultural culture of Varina, this library is composed of a series of barn-inspired pavilions and wedged sheds that open up the wetlands that back the library. Its interiors borrow from agricultural themes to relate the community surrounding it. Its program was adjusted from a typical library to accommodate community needs - building around the sacred tree at its entrance used for Native American ceremonies, incorporating a kitchen for farm-to-table workshops and classes, and an amphitheater for movie nights and live music.

Sensitive design decisions in the interior evoke a strong sense of nature to create an impression of the community and landscape that surrounds it - thin columns tilted to echo the trees outside, wood paneling, overlooks built into the spaces, and patterns that mimic tree limbs and gravel.

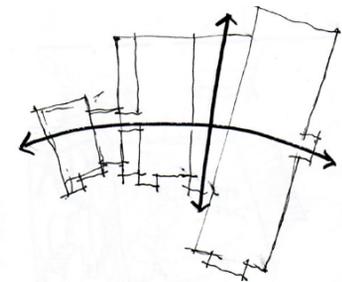
Photos by author.



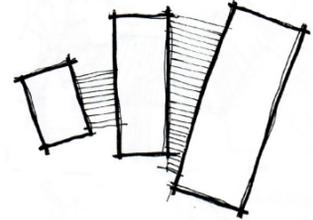
28.3 Sketch of the teen section overlook by author.



28.4 Conference room set into the landscape



28.1 Building Axes Diagram



28.2 Diagram of the three barns with sheds that make up the library



28.5 Overlook into wetlands



28.6 "Barn" ceiling over stacks

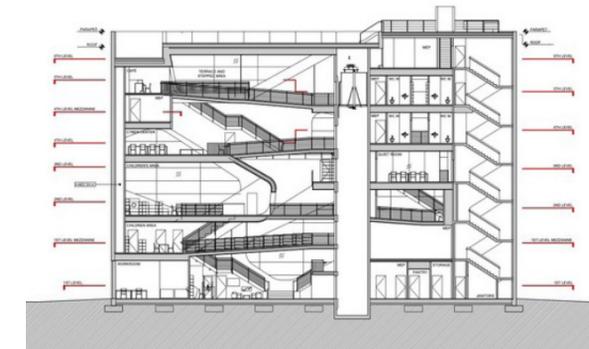
HUNTERS POINT LIBRARY

Steven Holl Architects

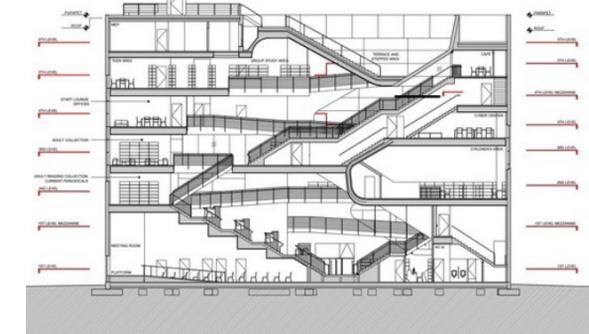
Queens, New York, NY
Built 2019
22,000 SF

Along the edge of the East River stands Hunters Point Library. Essentially a box, it has the organic shapes of its windows carved into the exterior to allow bright sunlight and sweeping views to the river. Designed to mimic this body of water, this concept can truly be seen in section - circulation wrapping and winding through the building and the interior experience of those amorphous windows translating into one that echoes the levels and shapes of the river outside.

Photos by Paul Warchol, sections by Steven Holl Architects



29.1 Building Section



29.2 Building Section



29.3 View over stacks



29.4 Curving interior walls



29.5 Circulation along terraced stacks and study spaces

WILLIAM LOCKRIDGE/ BELLEVUE LIBRARY

Adjaye Associates

Washington DC
Built 2012
23,000 SF

David Adjaye was selected to design two neighborhood libraries, William Lockridge/Bellevue Library and Francis A. Gregory Library, that would respond to their neighborhoods. William A. Lockridge Library resides within the hilly Bellevue neighborhood of Washington DC and these slopes provided the inspiration for the design. The structure rises from the hills in a series of pavilions that barely touch the earth. To emphasize these changes in elevation, it rises in three levels, wrapping circulation both around the perimeter and coiling it tight at the building's center. Bold colors highlight these changes in elevation, their angular slopes echoing the neighborhood outside.

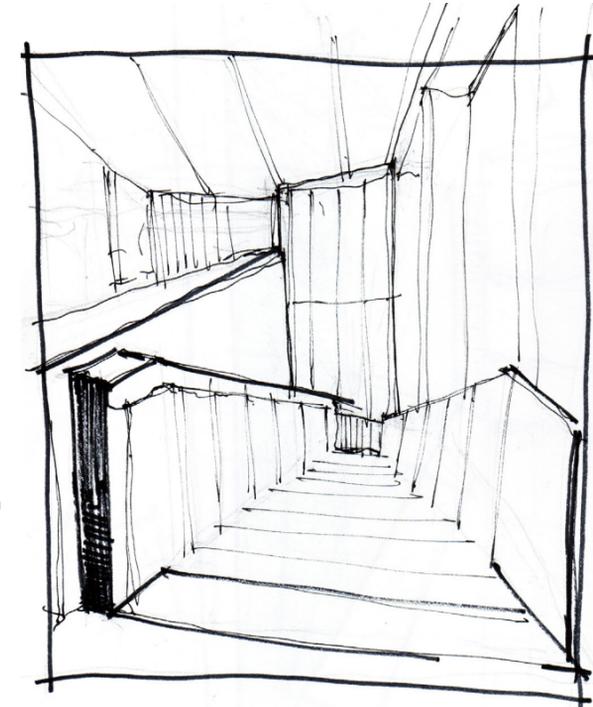
Photos by the author.



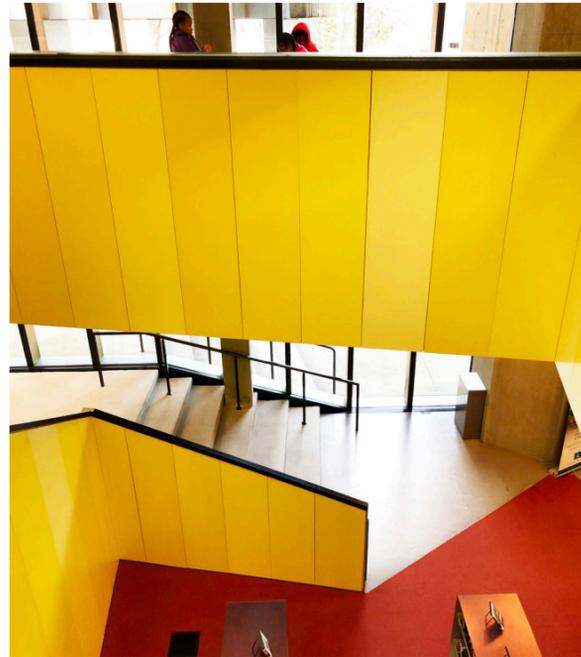
30.2 Perimeter stair



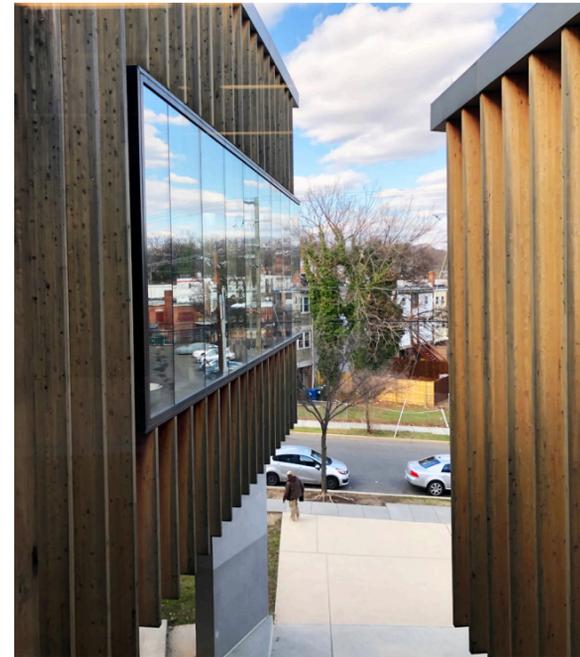
30.3 Interior material details



30.1 Sketch of the interior by author.



30.4 Use of color on interior stair



30.5 Floating Pavilions

FRANCIS A. GREGORY LIBRARY

Adjaye Associates

Washington DC
Built 2012
23,000 SF

This library sits on Fort Davis Park in DC's Hillcrest neighborhood. Adjaye's design draws from the site, reflecting and emphasizing its shaded, forest environment. Clad entirely in reflective glass, the exterior has an almost mirror-like experience, appearing and disappearing into the trees. On the interior, a three-dimensional wood screen lines the perimeter, framing views to the park as well as evoking a warm and wooded sense of enclosure.

Like the Bellevue library, this library uses bold colors for wayfinding and in strong contrast to its natural setting.

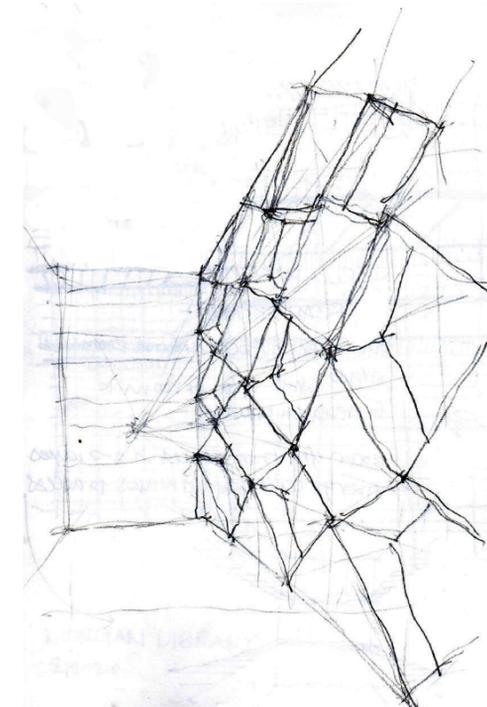
Photos by the author.



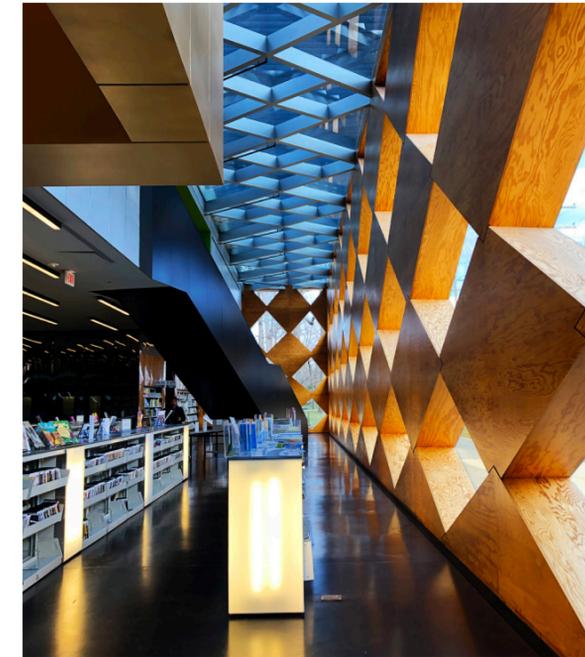
31.2 Exterior reflective glass



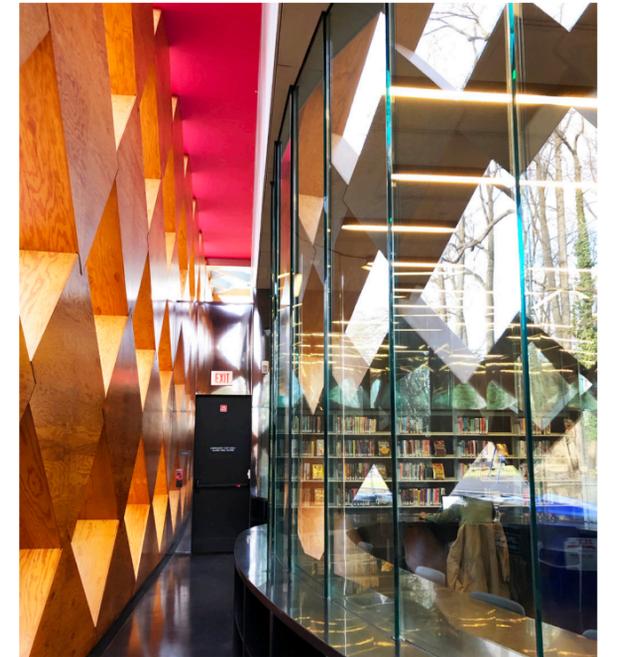
31.3 Use of interior color



31.1 Sketch of the interior screen by author.



31.4 Interior three-dimensional screen



31.5 Interior three-dimensional screen playing off glass and color in the interior

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY (SCHWARZMAN BUILDING)

Thomas Hastings, John Mervin Carrère

Manhattan, New York, NY
Built 1897
76,200 SF

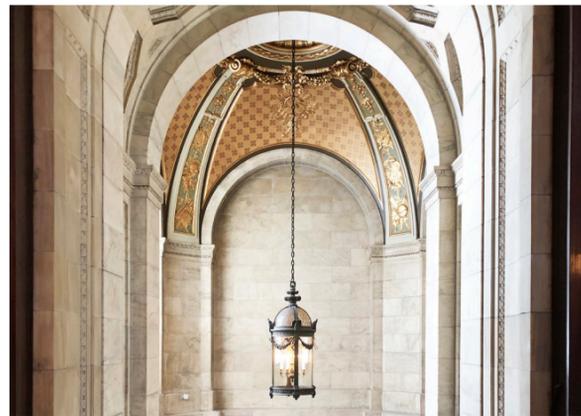
The Schwarzman Building was designed to be the "living room" for New York, a library concept that has continued into the 21st century. From its construction, this Beaux-Arts library would lay the groundwork for what would become an ideal American library for decades to come, its organization forming what is considered today to be a traditional library layout.

At the time, libraries were purely for the consumption of knowledge and, as such, about self-betterment and idealism. Located in the thick of New York City, it was about elevating oneself from what was considered the incivility and grime of daily life. Elevated on wide steps above the city streets, the library offered quiet, introspection, and knowledge. With this in mind, its every room becomes about looking inward and away from the city. Stacks rise high on the perimeters with catwalks to reach the upper shelves, windows are purely for light, not views, located high on the walls. Dense ornamentation tells stories of virtue and allegory. At the center of each room is where patrons work and study - lines of tables and chairs with small lamps, looking inward. In these libraries, unlike those of today, the views are solely of interior - the books that line the walls, the bas-relief and murals ornamenting the ceilings, and from the catwalks, other library-goers. This library responds to its environment by removing its patrons from it, fully turning inward and away from the city outside.

Photographs by the author.



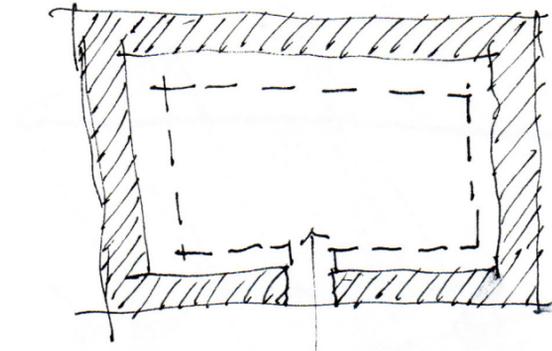
32.2 NYPL Rose Main Reading Room



32.3 Interior ornamentation



32.4 NYPL Astor Hall



32.1 Diagram of NYPL room layouts

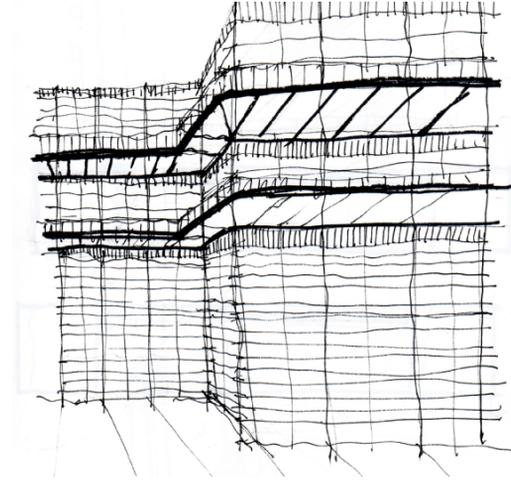
MORGAN LIBRARY

McKim, Mead & White (expansion by Renzo Piano)

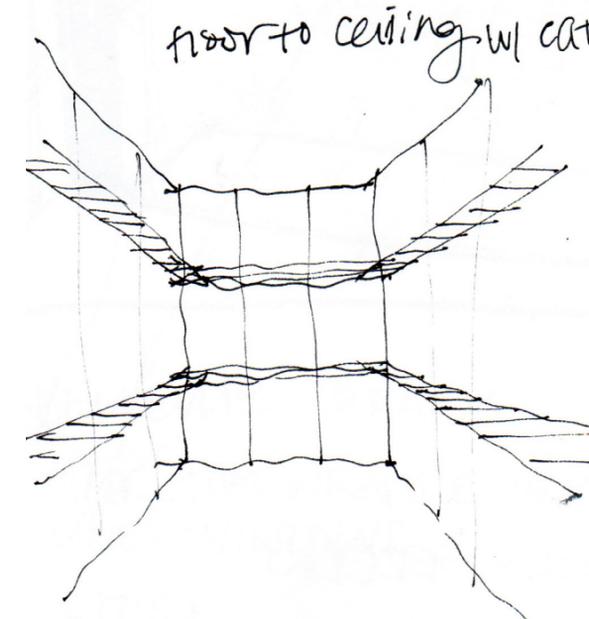
Manhattan, New York, NY
Built 1906 (expansion in 2012)
14,700 SF

Constructed only a few years following the New York Public Library Schwarzman building, the Morgan library follows the tradition of the time with interiors designed for introspection. In each room, Piermont Morgan's library and collection line the perimeter while a few artifacts reside in cases at the center. Work and observation happens at the mostly-empty central space of each room. Along the walls, stacks of books reach the ceilings with a series of catwalks to each of the three levels of shelves. No views can be found to the city - windows placed high for light and, in many cases, housing stained glass. Like the New York Public Library, this library looks inward for the purpose of separating and elevating the user from the world outside.

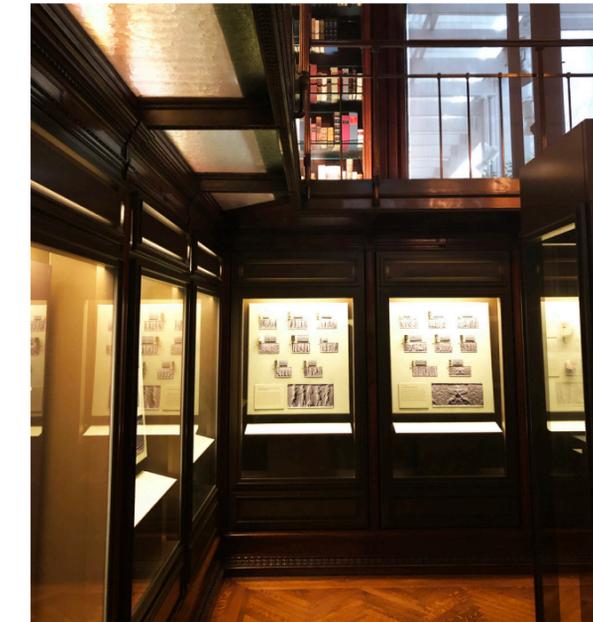
Photos by the author.



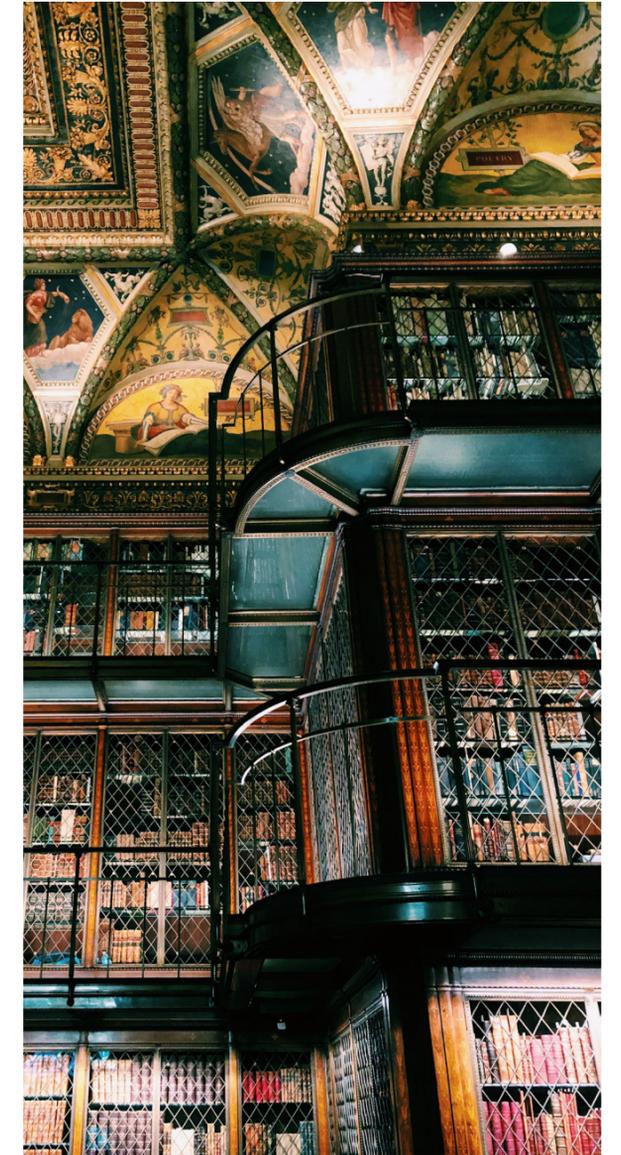
33.2 Sketch of Morgan Library mezzanines



33.1 Diagram of Morgan Library mezzanines



33.3 Morgan Library exhibition and library space



33.4 Morgan Library interior



35.1 *The Royal Library, Copenhagen, Denmark*

While gathering research for the program and design for Richmond's riverfront community library, I looked at precedents for site-specific libraries that referenced their waterfronts. These projects included:

THE ROYAL LIBRARY

Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects
Copenhagen, Denmark

KIKUCHI CITY CENTRAL LIBRARY

Nomura Co., LTD
Kunamoto, Japan

OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK AMSTERDAM

Jo Coenen & Co Architecten
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

PRECEDENTS

THE ROYAL LIBRARY

Schmidt Hammer Lassen Architects

Copenhagen, Denmark
 Built 1999
 2100 sm

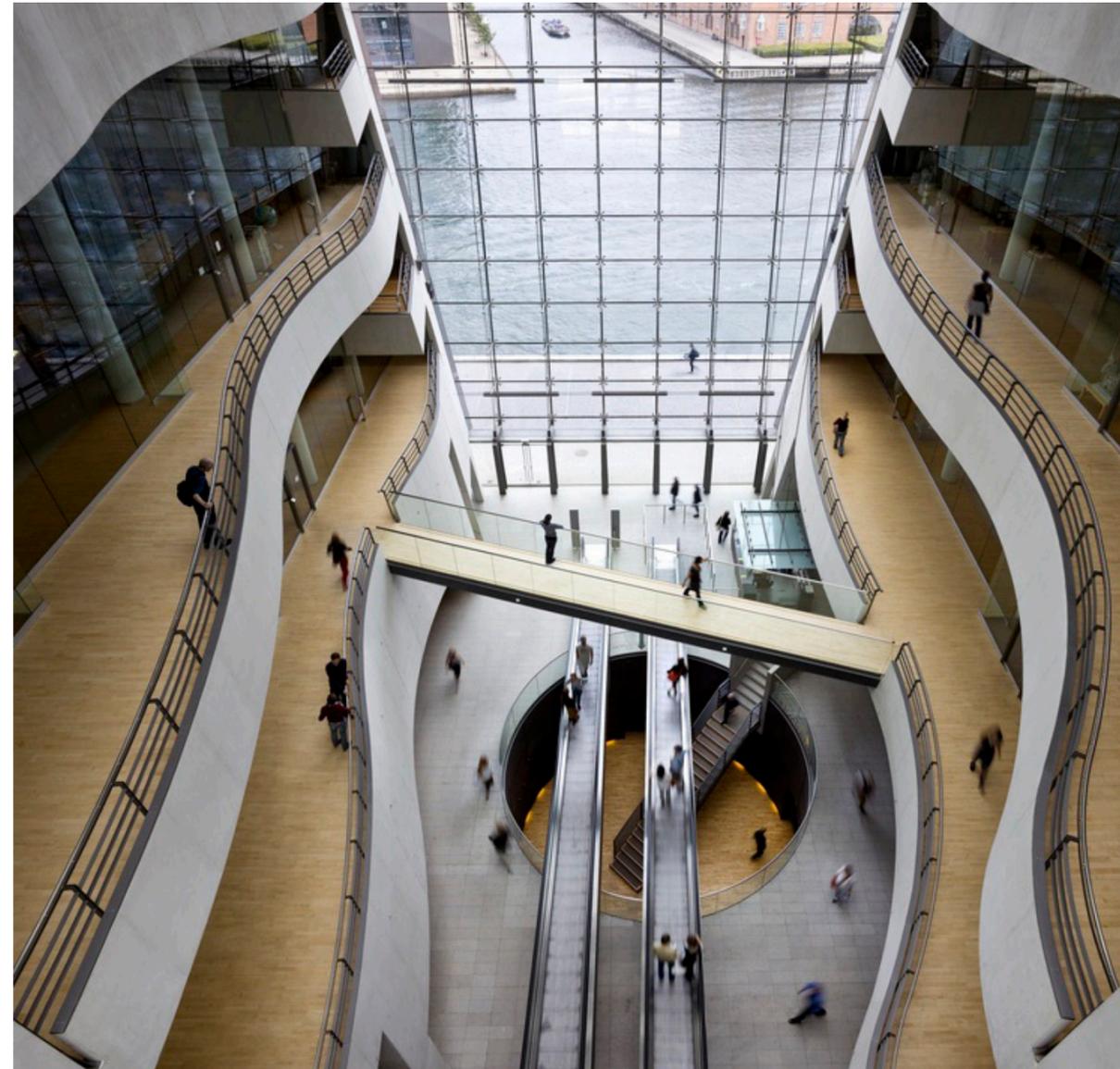
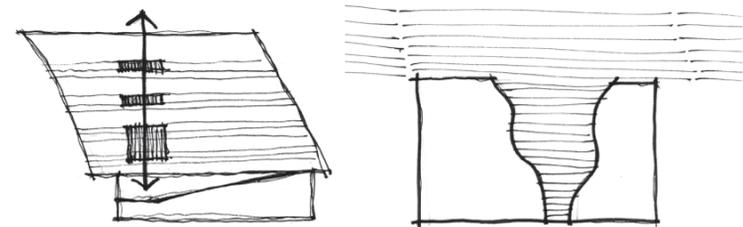
Seated at the heart of Copenhagen, the Royal Library rises at the river's edge. It is also called "The Black Diamond" on account of its black granite and glass exterior. It is one of the largest libraries in the world and is home to the Royal Library, the National Museum of Photography, a bookshop, cafe, and the Dronningesalen concert hall. It is the point where history, culture, and community meet.

The library opens to the river with a massive incision in its facade, glowing at night and providing panoramic views during the day. The interior of the building is oriented toward these views, opening around the split in the facade. Soft undulating curves and raised walkways echo the river and bridges outside, bringing the river in while orienting the user's focus outward. The building splits to open itself to the outside, the depths of its layers exposed using undulating curves that echo the organic mobility of the river with bridges that span the interior the way bridges span the river. This is the moment in the building where it is most obvious that the river informed its design. The organization brings the river in while orienting the user's focus outward.

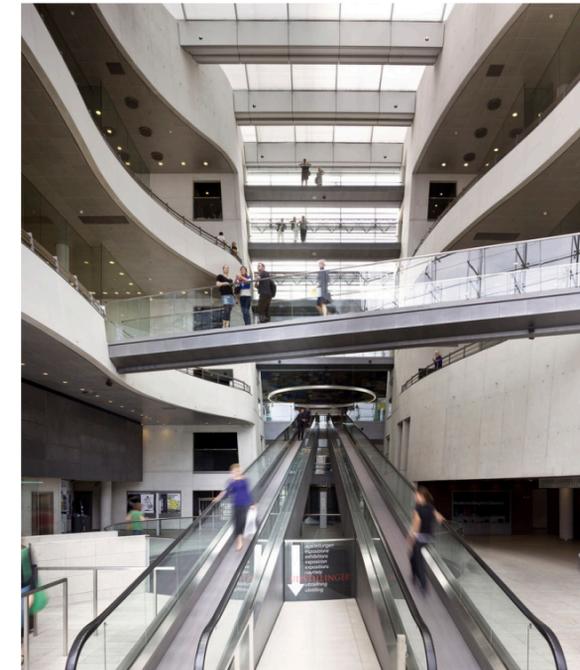
RELEVANCE

- Library built directly on the river
- Merging of two of Copenhagen's main amenities: the river and the Royal Library
- Cultural building - the Royal Library, the Dronningesalen concert and theater hall, the National Museum of Photography, bookshop, and a cafe
- Design centered on the river

36



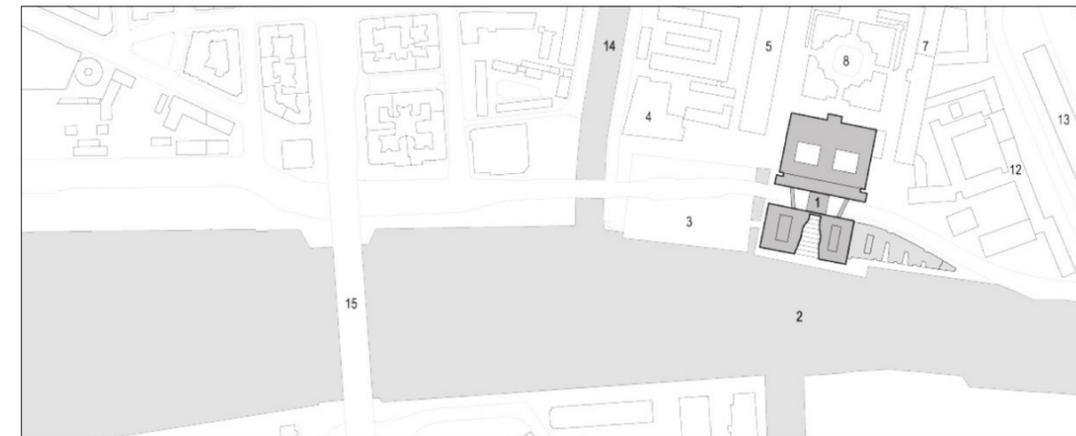
36.1



37.1



37.2



37.3

Images (from left to right):

36.1 THE BUILDING CENTER

The split in the building opens the interior to the outside, the depths of its layers exposed using undulating curves that echo the organic mobility of the river with bridges that span the interior the way bridges span the river. This is the moment in the building where it is most obvious that the river informed its design.

37.1 CIRCULATION

Users circulate through the building's escalators and bridges. Its design encourages movement in the space, how the layers of transparency, stacked bridges, and materiality bring in exterior light, give a feel of openness, as well as compression and release - guiding the viewer through the space and to the river view.

37.2 RIVER VIEW

Here, the building's relationship with the landscape as well as the surrounding structures. From this angle one can see how that opening connects the split interior, its curving edges and divided space, to the reflective river which splits and divides the city.

37.3 SITE

This diagram clearly shows the relationship between the building site to the river. While obvious, it is necessary to show. From this view, the immediacy of this adjacency can be seen and how its volumes and voids echo the river's shape and its relationship to the city.

37

KIKUCHI CITY CENTRAL LIBRARY

Nomura Co., LTD

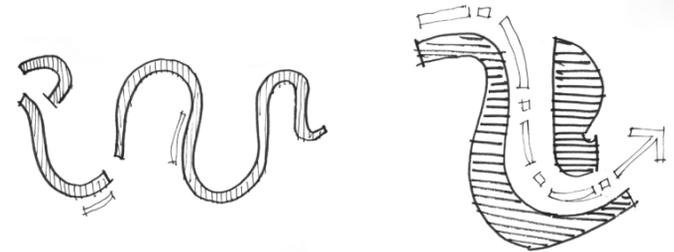
Kunamoto, Japan
 Built 2018
 18,300 sf

On the island of Kyushu, the Kikuchi river runs through the heart of the city, cutting canyons into the landscape and informing the urban planning of the city. The Kikuchi River is an important part of the city's identity, holding a personal importance to its citizens. For this reason, When Nomura was commissioned to design the City Central Library, they looked to the river to conceptual guide the library's design. Using spooling curves, Nomura designed a system of flowing shelves that snake throughout the library. The heights of the shelves vary depending on use - lower shelves for children and higher for adults. They rise up to create walls, closing in distinct nooks for patrons to gather. Openings in the shelves provide access to these enclosures, their shapes and sizes irregular to mimic interruptions in the waterways. Meanwhile a variety of seating is offered in the space through a system of "islands." Custom seating and shelving interact through custom shelving and furniture hybrids - winding and opening to make space. This way, the library does not just evoke the winding river, but also encourages the users to move through it like they are on a river's edge - sitting on the rocks and walking along the water.

The custom bookshelves are comprised of steel columns with shelves of Japanese ash. They are intentionally open - their transparency allowing librarians to maintain a line of sight, while still giving patrons an impression of enclosure. The 330 linear feet of winding shelves also provide "neighborhoods" by which the books may be organized, reinforcing the library's system.

RELEVANCE

- Library directly inspired by its local river
- Custom-designed bookshelves and seating to evoke a sense of the river
- Successful design - it has become a popular local library, which keeping a practical usability - providing site lines and spacial organization for the librarians



38.1



39.1



39.2

Images (from left to right):

38.1 HEIGHT VARIATION

The winding, organic curves of the library's shelving system define circulation in the space. Heights vary and layer to create terrain while shelves swoop and curve through the space. The volumes respond to use - tall shelves for adults and shorter shelves for children to reach. The visual they create evoke both the river as well as the canyons of the surrounding landscape. The library is designed as much for gathering as it is for enclosure and privacy.

39.1 INTERIOR ISLANDS

The space uses a system of interior islands. Custom seating and shelving interact - winding and opening to make space. This way, the library does not just evoke the winding river, but also encourages the users to move through it like they are on a river's edge - sitting on the rocks and walking along the water. A warm, natural effect is created by the space's materiality - Japanese ash with a clear sealant and white edges for a clean, warm, feel.

39.2 NOOKS

These openings in the bookshelves allow access to the enclosures created by the tall, winding shelving, while also creating smaller nooks in the room. They provide privacy for seclusion and intimacy for the gathering. Each opening is different, intentionally irregular to imitate interruptions in waterways.

OPENBARE BIBLIOTHEEK AMSTERDAM

Jo Coenen & Co Architecten

Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Built 2007
28,500 sm

Twenty-six public libraries reside in the city of Amsterdam, the newest and most thoroughly designed of these is the Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA). A multi-use amenity project, this building is host to the Netherlands' largest public library, retail spaces, a theater, and restaurants. It sits immediately adjacent to the water and its interior is strongly oriented toward these views.

The building is divided into three main spaces - the "base plinth" defined by its sense of fast-paced, urban, public place, the "middle" is the place where books are preserved, and the "top" is where the other non-library amenities can be found - retail, restaurant, and theater. This three-part layering of the building sandwiches the privacy of the book-centered section of the library with the top and base, which are the most public-feeling parts of the building.

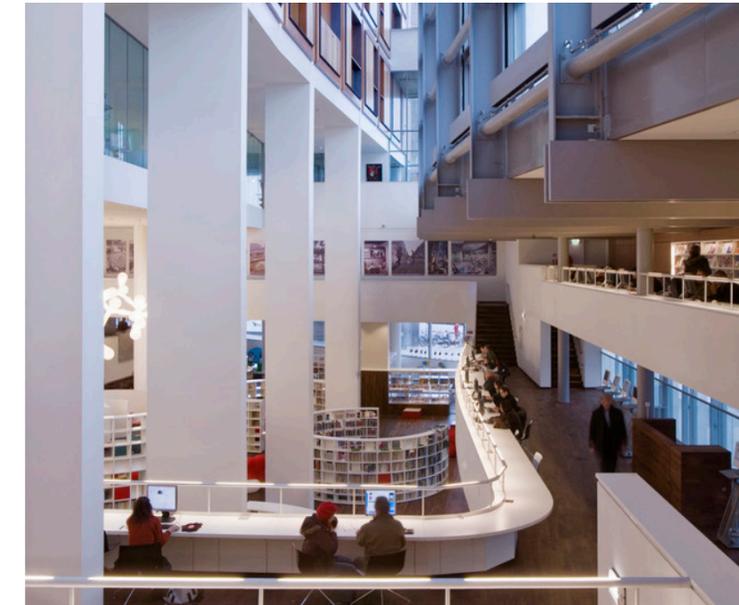
When tasked to design this building, Jo Coenen & Co chose to "focused on designing the inner world," making interiors their priority. They set out to design a variety of volumes within the space, varying the sizes and shapes of each to create intimacy, overlooks, and an emphasis toward orientation. They wanted to create "spots," defined by form, light, and color. They played with dichotomies of light and dark, opened and closed, fast and slow to create a variety of place types throughout these "spots," fostering a varying of rhythm throughout the library

RELEVANCE

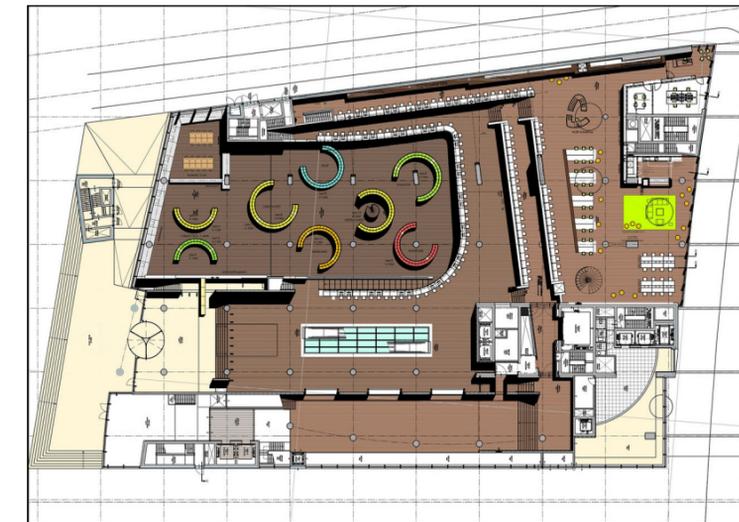
- Water-front library and major public space in Amsterdam
- Multi-use building with an emphasis on public amenities including the library, the theater, retail
- An emphasis on interior to create place - using design theories to evolve a variety of space types with the goal of creating a strong sense of building and cultural identity



40.1



41.1



41.2

Images (from left to right):

40.1 ORGANIC & ORTHOGONAL

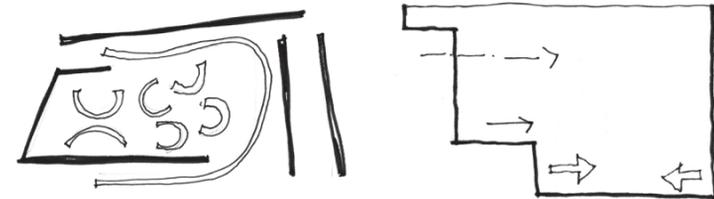
Here we see an example of two "spots" developed in the Library. The open window-front group work space has an open, spacious feel with even lighting while the inner, book-lined space uses flat, low-lying furniture, circular walls, and blue light to create a quieter, private room. These two adjacent spaces also exhibit Jo Coenen & Co's use of curvilinear shapes to contrast and create visual tension with the orthogonal books housed in the building.

41.1 LAYERED SPACE

This building houses sub-volumes within its overall space. Height variation, shape, and density create transitions between these space types. Here, we can see how the designers create different views - overlooks of both the library as well as the river, inner-facing research spaces, and smaller, more intimate environments.

41.2 RELATIONSHIP TO RIVER

This plan further exhibits the designers' divisions of space through variations of size and shape. Toward the building's exterior the spaces are wider and less dense, more linear. As one passes closed to the building's center, the spaces become more dense and begin to curve more and more until they become small collections of circles. These changes signify a movement from a feeling of public to private.





42.7 Iceland's
Volcanic Rivers, by
photographer
Andre Ermolaev

**“ARCHITECTURE IS BOUND TO
SITUATION... THE SITE IS A
METAPHYSICAL LINK, A POETIC
LINK, TO WHAT A BUILDING
CAN BE.”**

STEPHEN HOLL



RICHMOND INTERMEDIATE TERMINAL WAREHOUSE #3

3101 Wharf Street,
Richmond, VA 23223

Built 1938
29,554 - 44,331 SF

Built as part of the new deal, the warehouse was built between Richmond's two main ports - the upper dock located near where the Kanawha canal entered the James River and the lower deep-water port located at Rockett's Landing. Built on piers to protect it from flooding, the warehouse once received daily shipments of sugar, peanuts, tobacco, sand, gravel, newsprint, gas, and oil.

Today, the Richmond Intermediate Terminal Warehouse 3 stands vacant, windows boarded. A temporarily-closed road runs beneath its piers and a grassy plaza crosses the distance between the warehouse and the river's edge.

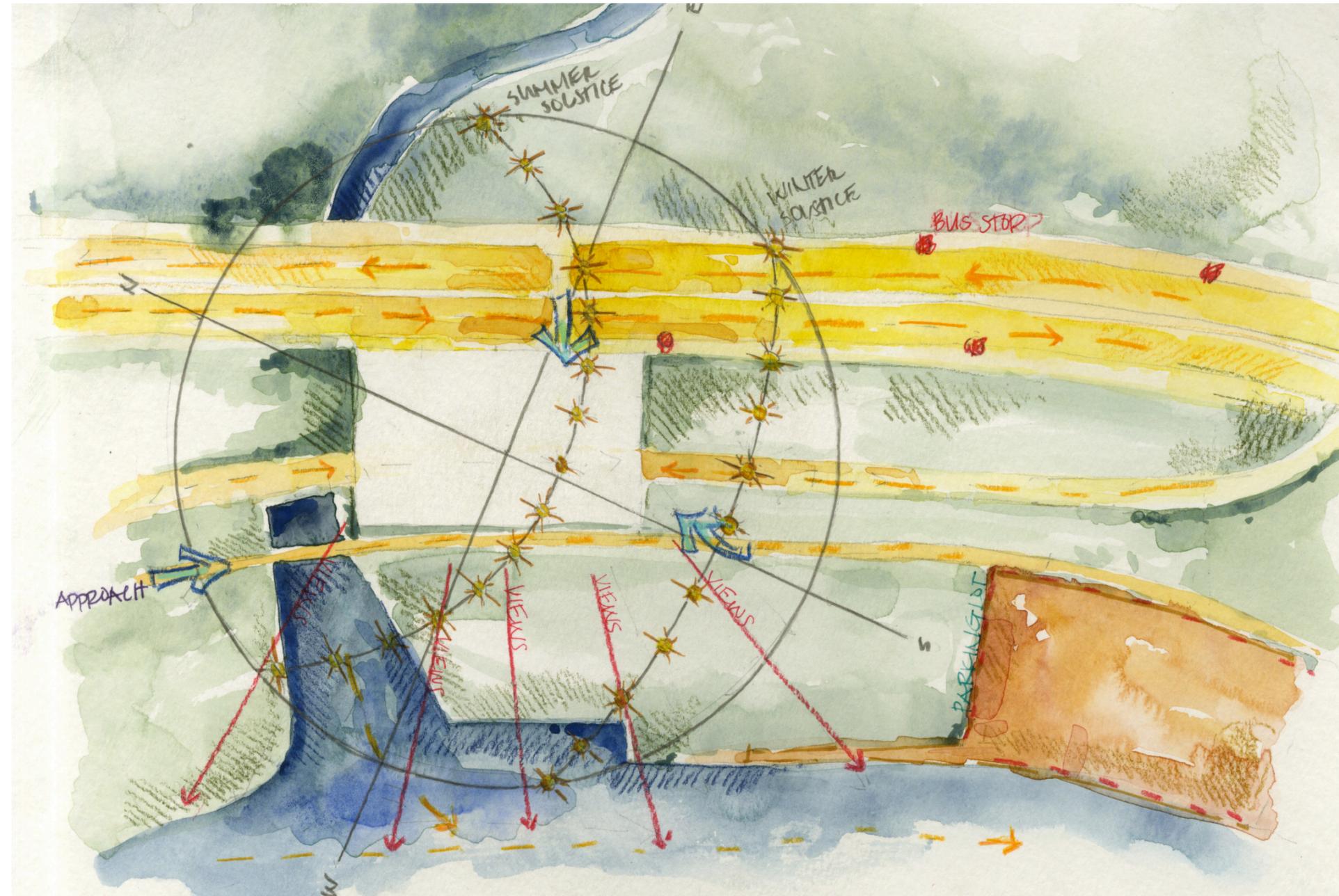
Though the building stands vacant, its property borders highly trafficked pedestrian paths and is immediate adjacency to the wharf.

Selected due to:

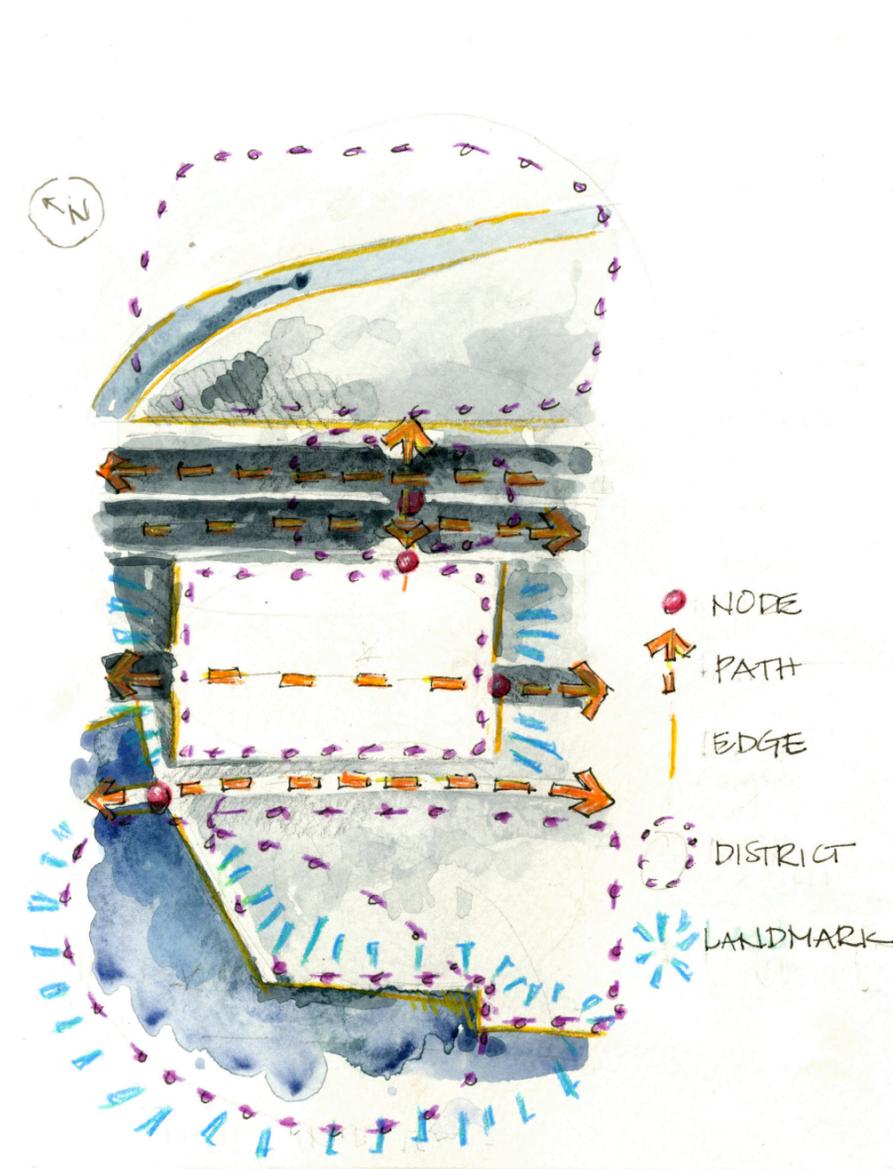
- Immediate adjacency to the river
- History as a major port warehouse
- Current unoccupied and derelict state symbolic of Richmond's relationship with the James

SITE

Site Analysis examining sun paths, views, approaches from Main St., Wharf St, and the Capital Trail, bus stops, parking area, and where the water from the James River and Gillie Creek meet the site.



Kevin Lynch's Image of the City guided much of the site analysis, treating this site as a city and finding its nodes, paths, edges, districts, and landmarks as a way of focusing the design.



Another important subject of analysis was sound. In this diagram "sound" is pleasant like that of the rushing river, something that is natural and soothing, while "noise" is less pleasant, like what comes from the road.





Exterior - South-East from Wharf Street



Exterior - South-West elevation from river



Exterior - View from the Rockett's Landing

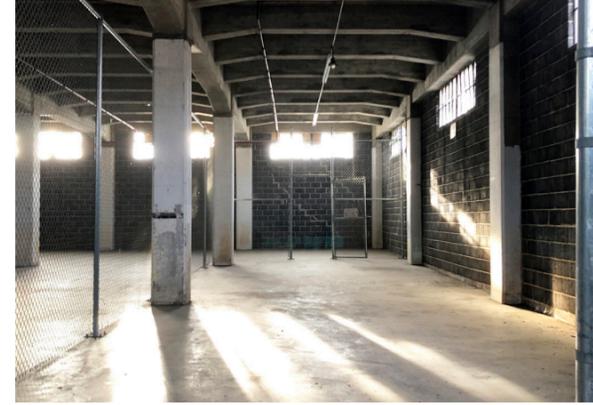
EXISTING BUILDING



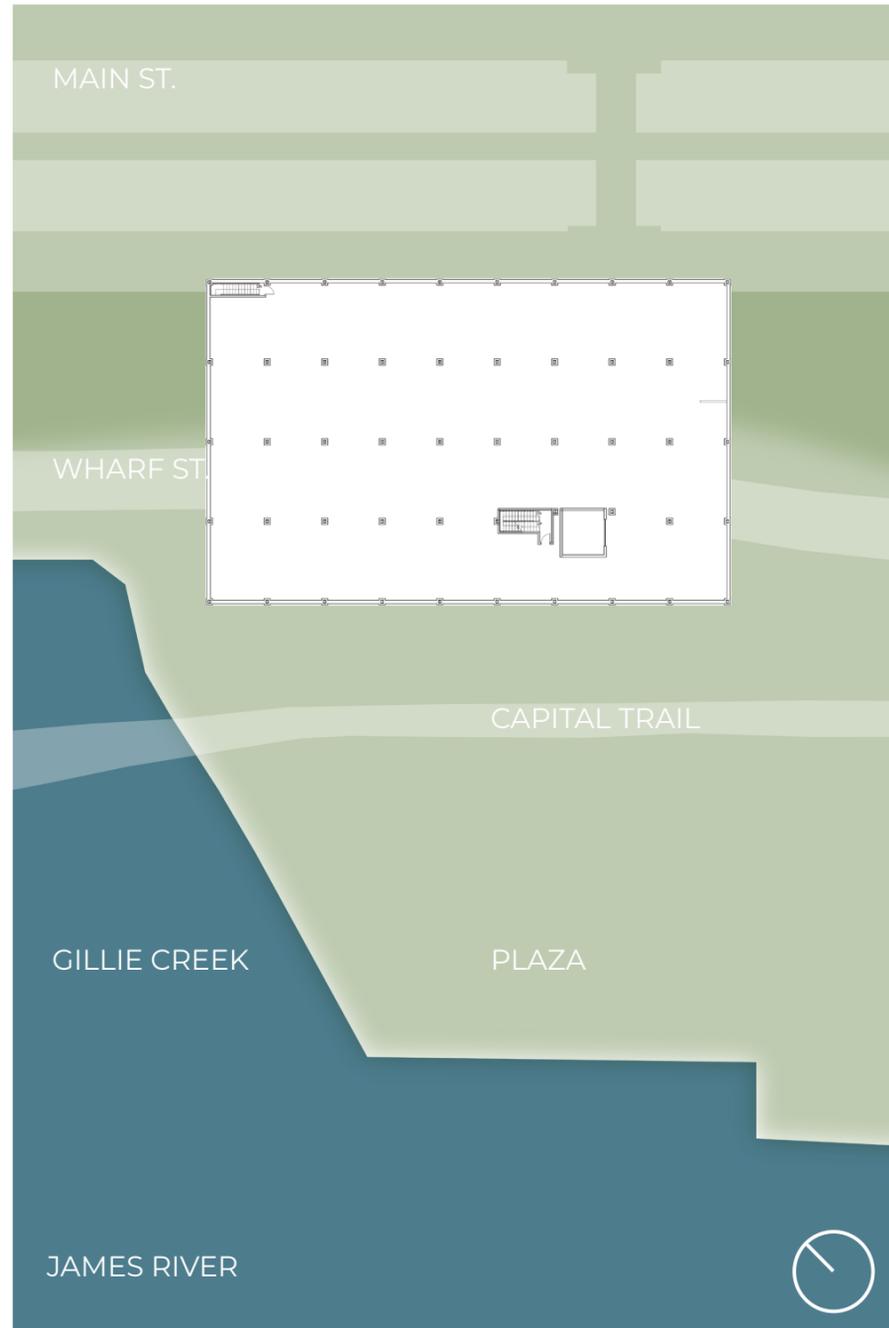
Interior - Level 01 beams and clerestory windows



Interior - Level 02 beams and colonnade experience



Interior - Light quality and colonnade experience

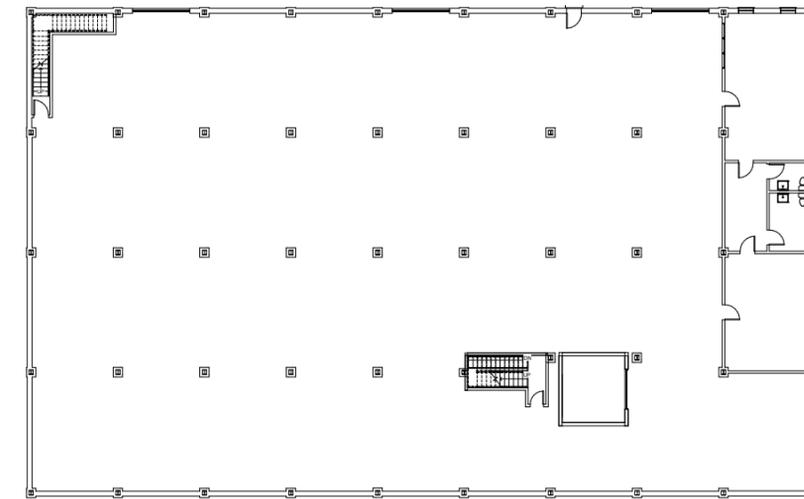


SITE PLAN

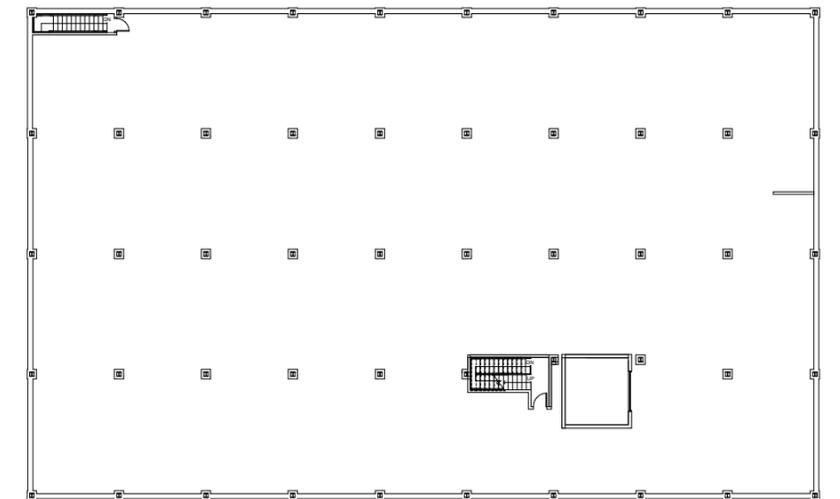
The site on which the Richmond Intermediate Terminal Warehouse #3 sits is a relatively undeveloped swath of land. It has no built neighbors in its immediate adjacency and receives direct sunlight. It has a direct relationship with both the James River and Gillie Creek, while additionally lying at the intersection of Main Street, Wharf Street, and the Capital Trail.

Its piers navigate the slope that drops from the road to the plaza that separated the building from the river. The land surrounding it is green with tall grasses, brush, and small to medium trees.

Note: throughout this book, whenever one is looking at a plan, the road will always be situated above, and the river below.



LEVEL 01 0' 5' 10' 20'



LEVEL 02 0' 5' 10' 20'

The Richmond Intermediate Terminal Warehouse #3 resides at the edge of the James River. Just north of Rocketts Landing and less than a mile south of Richmond's downtown, it occupies a relatively undeveloped swath of the city between these two neighborhoods and resides just at the foot of Fulton Hill.

The city of Richmond was founded where it is today because of the river and the potential settlers saw in it as a port city (Pool, 2018). The river brought goods, transit, irrigation, and drinking water to Richmond as well as a connection to the outside world. Because of all of these offerings, Richmond thrived at its founding, proving to be a highly viable port city, allowing for consistent economic growth (Pool, 2018). Before the rise of the industrial era, the port of Richmond was home to the "greatest water trade on the East Coast" (Pool, 2018, p. 5). Before the railroads and interstates that came with the rise of the industrial era, water transport was the main method of commodity transport and the main economic resource for the city (Pool, 2018).

The hub of Richmond's once-bustling industrial riverfront, or its "wharf," resided where the Richmond Intermediate Terminal Warehouse stands today. The city had two main ports on either side of this site, including the upper dock and the lower deep-water port. In 1818, the upper dock was located where the Kanawha canal enters the James River, while the lower deep-water port was originally located at Rocketts Landing (Pool, 2018). The majority of Richmond's transportation and commercial shipping would take place at these two ports. When the industrial era reached Richmond, the city's dependence on shipping lessened and its reliance on these ports diminished until falling dormant. After the Great Depression, part of the New Deal money granted to Richmond was slated for shipping investment. In 1936, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited the site between the upper dock and deep-water port at Gillie Creek - where the warehouse stands today - and, "that same month... the City of Richmond took steps to apply for "New Deal" funding through FDR's Public Works Administration to build the Intermediate Terminal #3" (Pool, 2018, p. 7).

Completed in 1938, the Intermediate Terminal #3 was financed as part of the New Deal and constructed of steel-reinforced concrete. The building is large, standing on piers and 29,554 square feet. The devastating 1936 flood of the James River influenced the design of the Intermediate Terminal #3, causing the structure to be built on concrete reinforced piers

above the floodwaters (Pool, 2018). A 1938 press report stated, "the Intermediate Terminal was handling an average of 35,000 tons annually and producing a 'gratifying' income to the city" (Pool, 2018, p. 8). One of the most important imports coming through the warehouse was Cuban sugar, but on any given day the warehouse would hold sand, gravel, newsprint, gas, oil, peanuts and tobacco - which had the greatest export volume (Pool, 2018).

Today, much of the riverfront is dormant or sold off to private entities like apartment complexes and large corporations like Dominion Power, which has blocked off a swath of the riverfront to the public with security gates. The main public connection with the river is through a series of footpaths - one of which runs directly by the warehouse and connects

BEFORE THE RISE OF THE INDUSTRIAL ERA, THE PORT OF RICHMOND WAS HOME TO THE "GREATEST WATER TRADE ON THE EAST COAST."

the ports. Where it was once a bustling port, the riverfront now stands quiet with limited daily activity. The warehouse is unoccupied and boarded off and the road that ran beneath its piers is now closed. The public grassy plaza and footpaths that run between it and the river are popular for those on foot and bike and occasionally residents will fish on the concrete dock. This sturdy vestige of river industry in Richmond is uniquely poised as a connection point, much like the way the site once connected Richmond's upper and lower docks. Now, it could be a connection point between the city and river, an opportunity for engagement with the James that would be accessible for everyone.

Where the deep-water port stood at Rocketts Landing is now a middle to upper-class residential area with a few restaurants. Fulton Hill, at the foot of which the Terminal sits, was once a thriving and predominantly African American neighborhood that fell victim to racially-driven displacement from The Fulton

Urban Renewal Plan in the 1970s and now is a quiet, residential neighborhood in the process of trying to preserve their history (Komp, 2016). Richmond's riverfront, especially its ports, has a layered and complex history. Much like the racial injustice committed in Fulton Hill, the riverfront has a history of similar displacement and injustice. The James River was once home to Monacan Native American tribes before they were displaced by settlers, who later trafficked and traded enslaved Africans using its waters. Later, its industry was reserved for goods like Cuban sugar and tobacco, before rail and road transport took over. While this site does not sit directly at the locations of the more complex social history of Richmond's riverfront, this thesis acknowledges its importance.

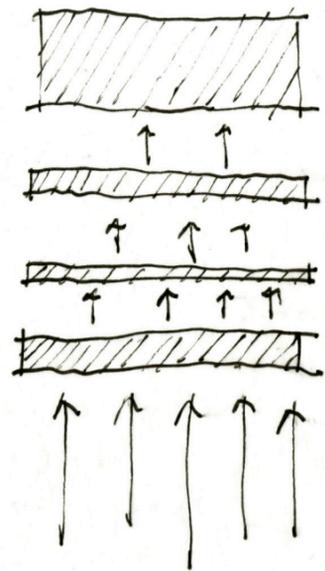
The history of this stretch of Richmond's riverfront is important to the development of this adaptive reuse project. Allowing this site's history as a connection point and as a site for the river-focused industry was crucial in approaching the design of this library. Exploring the history of connection the site provided in the form of transit, bridging the ports, and connecting the city with the rest of the region led the design to emphasize connection in the space. For this reason, the space between the river and the main road that carries people to and from downtown that this building occupies was key, letting it inform the main axes of the space. Connections were also used to inform the programming of the library, like workshop spaces for industrious activity and education as well as the pop-up cafe for businesses that typically only occupy Richmond's downtown to be shared on the riverfront. To acknowledge and connect patrons with the dense history of the river, a breezeway was created in the library's central space for an ongoing exhibition to tell "the Story of the River."

The building's site at the edge of the river and its history of river-focused industry informed the library's emphasis on the river as a focal point in the space. River motifs inform the material choices and forms, as well as strong viewing points throughout the space. These views are at various elevations in the library to provide different senses of observation. Lower viewpoints give a feeling of standing on the river's shore while higher moments create a sense of sitting on a pier - like the ones that support the building, while terraced seating in the amphitheater enhances the sense of sitting on the sloping landscape that lines the Jame River. These views and elevations create an immersive experience that encourages patrons to adopt the slower, calmer pace of the river while remaining connected to the city.

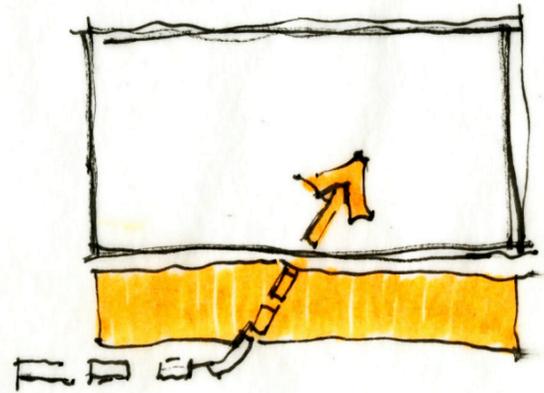


NEIGHBORHOOD + BUILDING HISTORY

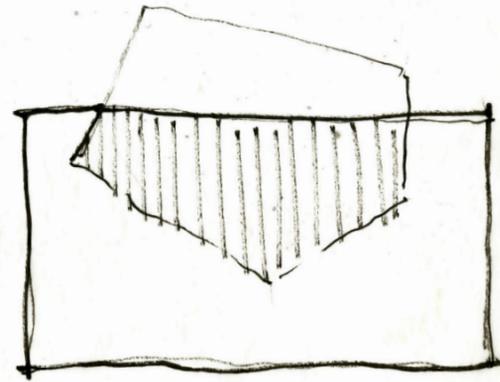
View of the James River from the Capital Trail that lies between the water and the Richmond Intermediate Terminal.



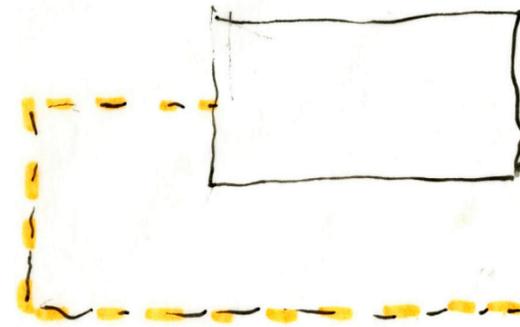
LAYERED TRANSITION
LIKE WATER LEVELS



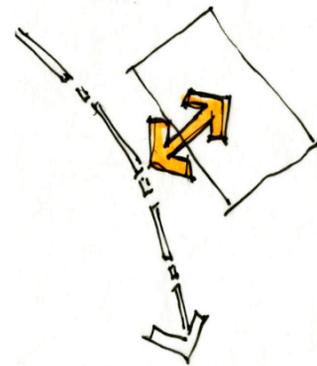
TRANSFORMATIVE
ASCENSION



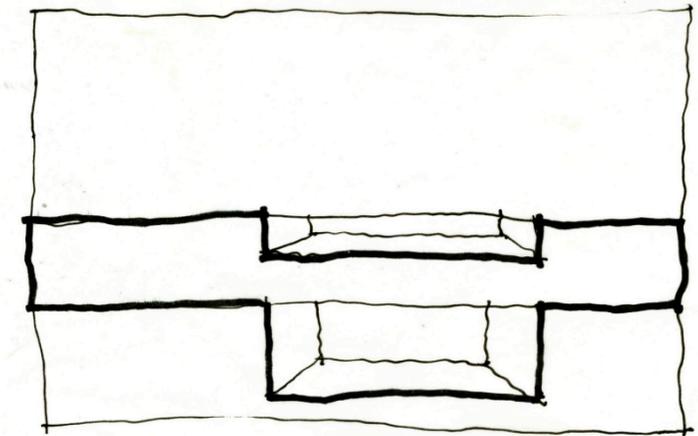
IMMERSIVE



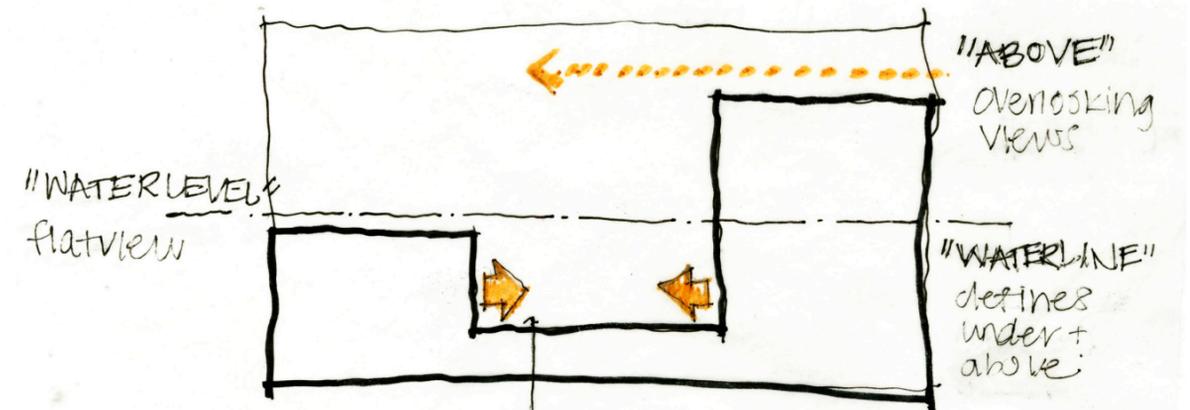
RISING & FALLING
LEVELS - FLOOD



RIVER / BUILDING
CONNECTION
(TRANSIENT)



LEVELS



"WATER LEVEL"
flat view

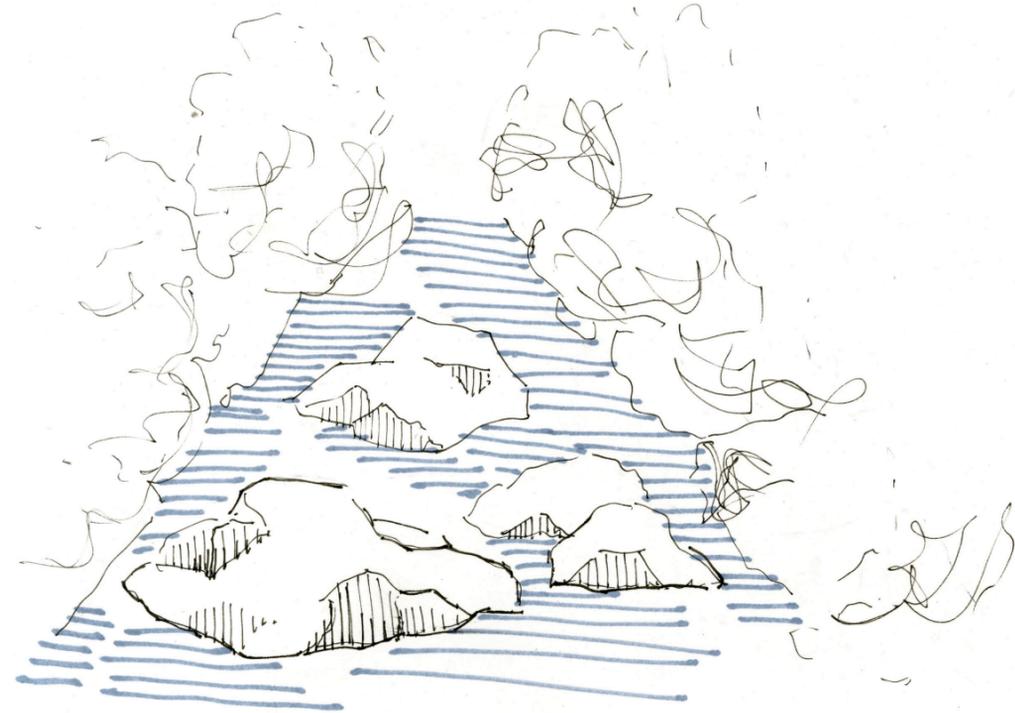
"ABOVE"
overmasking
views

"WATERLINE"
defines
under +
above

"UNDER"
condensed, short
sightlines, pressure

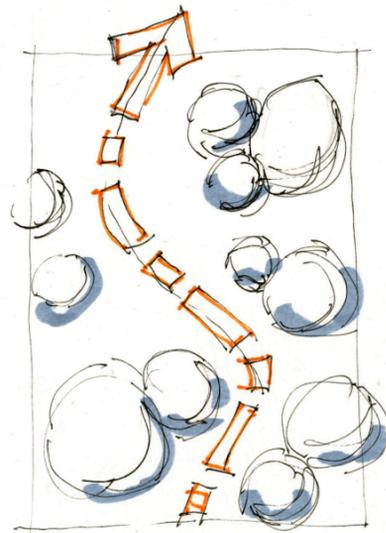
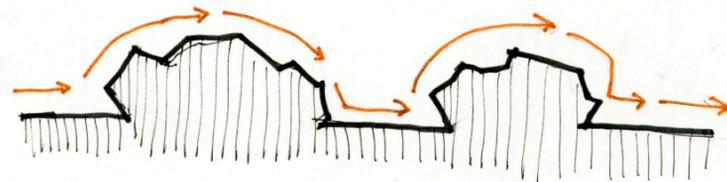
CONCEPT

This public library will be a bridge between the city of Richmond and the James River. The interior acts as an eddy in a river - providing a quiet, calm environment that celebrates the James and the city with views to the water and the Richmond skyline.



JAMES RIVER
BOULDERS

- HONED + RIVER CARVED
- DEFINE SHAPE OF PATH



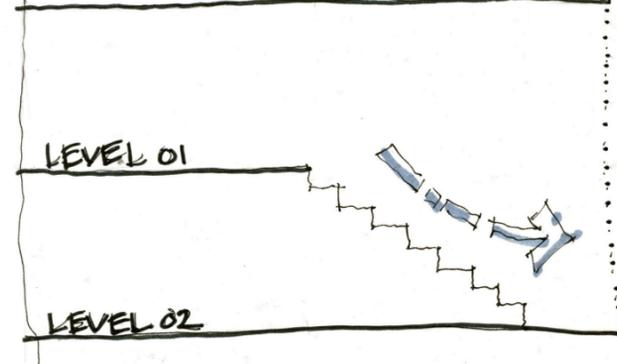
SOFT DISRUPTIONS IN
CIRCULATION

MAKING EDDIES

When focusing on traits specific to the James River, a few forms became apparent, including those of its large, white boulders. Rising from the rapids and

sun-bleached, they provide inspiration for forms within the library as well as seating opportunities and meandering circulation patterns that reflect that of the river.

OPEN TO THE RIVER

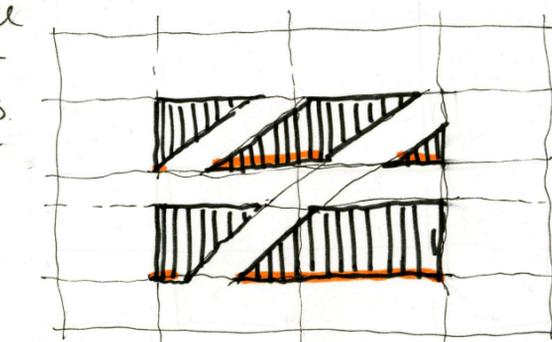
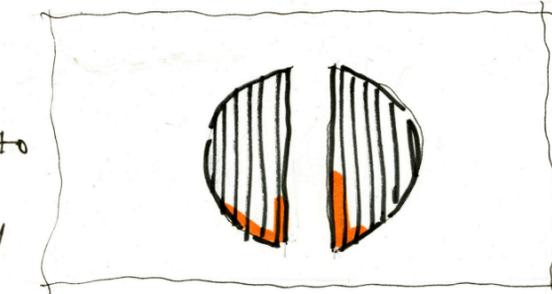
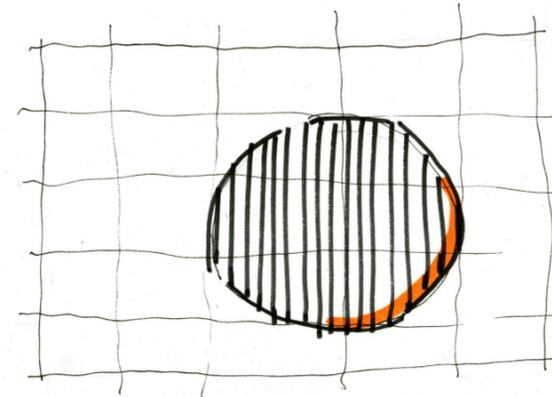


STRONG
CONNECTION
B/T LEVELS

SUBTRACTIVE DESIGN

Searching for methods to open this opaque building to the river, subtractive design became exceedingly important. Carving into its floors and ceilings to create

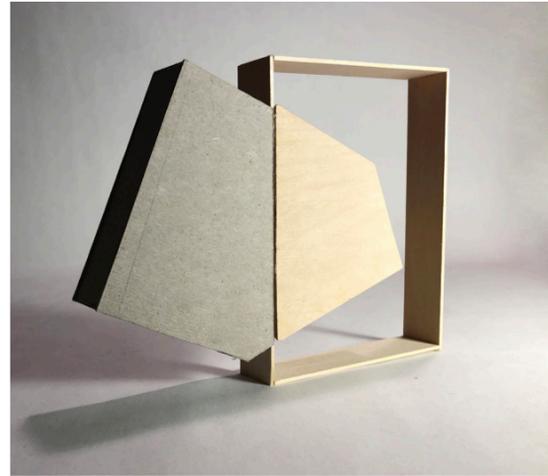
viaduct-inspired catwalks and terraced seating was important in connecting the two levels as well as the interior to the exterior.



BRIDGES +
VOIDS IN
LEVEL 02 to
create
continuity
b/t levels
+ reference
bridges +
viaducts.
@ RIVER



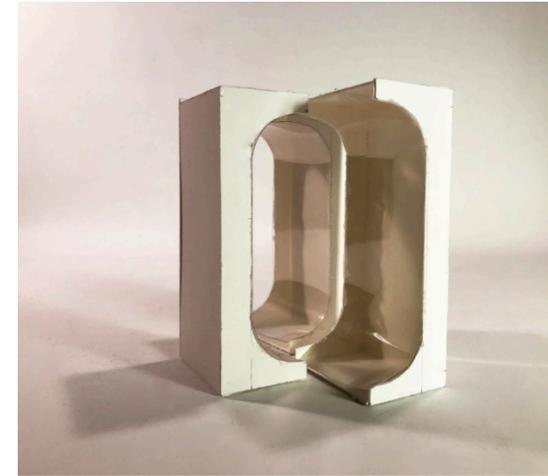
MASS OF BUILDING vs. LIGHTNESS OF PIERS



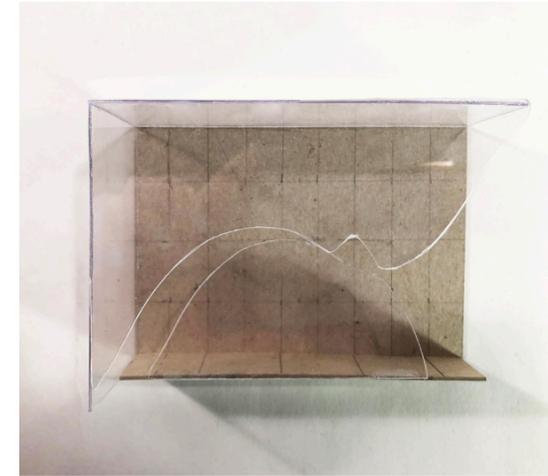
SUBMERSIVE TRANSFORMATION



LEVELS OF BUILDING vs. TIDAL LEVELS



MOVING UNDER WATER



SPLIT BETWEEN FLOORS vs. RIVER SPLITTING LAND



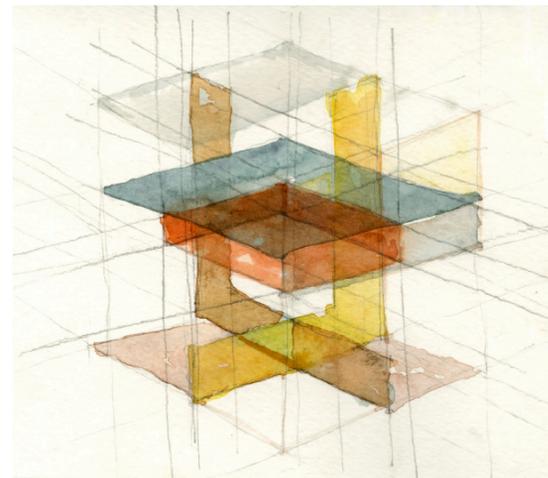
SUBMERSION



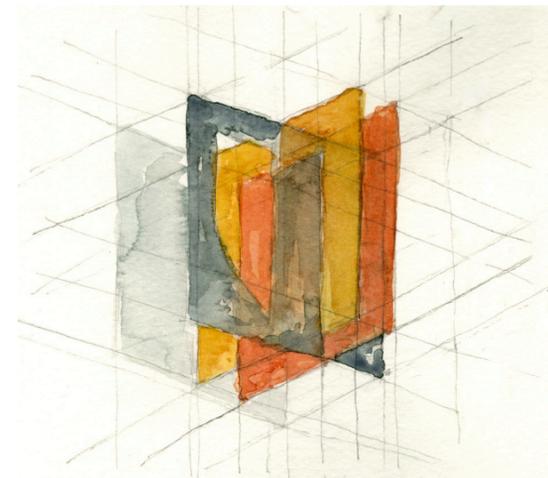
SHIFTING VIEWS



RIVER / COMPRESSION + RELEASE



LEVELS OF BUILDING vs. TIDAL LEVELS



SPACE PLAN - CONNECTIONS B/T FLOORS



RIVER AS NUCLEUS OF THE CITY



RIVER AS NUCLEUS OF THE CITY / INTERSECTION OF PATHS

DEEP EDDY

2000 SF
Occupant Load: 20
A-3 Occupancy Class

Open gathering space at the center of the library. It has a variety of seating opportunities for those enjoying the adjacent cafe and panoramic views to the river.

Used by adult and teen patrons, all races, genders, states of ability, etc.; Minimal staffing required.

AMPHITHEATER

2000 SF
Occupant Load: 20
A-3 Occupancy Class

Open forum for reflection and discussion. Provides the key access point for the community and the river.

Used by adult and teen patrons, all races, genders, states of ability, etc.; Minimal staffing required.

CIRCULATION DESK

200 SF
Occupant Load: 2-4
Group B Occupancy

Librarian help desk and material check out. Functions as an access point for community and library staff and the point in the library with which all users connect.

Staffed by librarians of all levels. Used by all library patrons.

STACKS

5000 SF
Occupant Load: 50
Group A-3 Occupancy

Shelving & display for books, DVDs, CDs, periodicals. Serves as part of the library's main function.

Staffed by librarians (returning books, circulating), Used by all teen and adult patrons (separate section for children.)

OPEN STUDY

2500 SF
Occupant Load: 40
Group A-3 Occupancy

Open work and study space that can accommodate individuals and small groups, providing both desk/table space as well as lounge space

Used by patrons of all ages, races, genders, states of ability, etc.

LEARNING COMMONS

1200 SF
Occupant Load: 60
Group A-3 Occupancy

Education spaces for classes, meetings, workshops, and club gathering spaces.

Used by instructors (in-house and external), community clubs, attendees of classes for all ages, genders, states of ability, etc.

STORY OF THE RIVER / GALLERY

500 SF
Occupant Load: 10
Group A-3 Occupancy

Breezeway-like space with the opportunity of the James River's history to be told from the Native Americans through slavery to present day.

Used by patrons and librarians of all ages, all races, genders, states of ability, etc.

CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

3000 SF
Occupant Load: 30
Group A-3 Occupancy

Dedicated, smaller section for children's books and reading - mix of stacks and reading nooks for families. Uses "neighborhoods for organization."

Used by children and parents/guardians. Staffed by librarians (returning books and circulating.)

DIGITAL COMMONS

1000 SF
Occupant Load: 50
Group A-3 Occupancy

Computer/internet access for library users with printing, copying, and scanning access.

Used by patrons of all ages, all races, genders, states of ability, etc.; staffing required.

POP-UP CAFE

115 SF
Occupant Load: 2
Group A-2 Occupancy

Cafe within the library that engages local businesses with quarterly/twice-annual pop-up rotations for library users to enjoy.

Staffed/run by local businesses. Used by library patrons and staff.

ADMIN

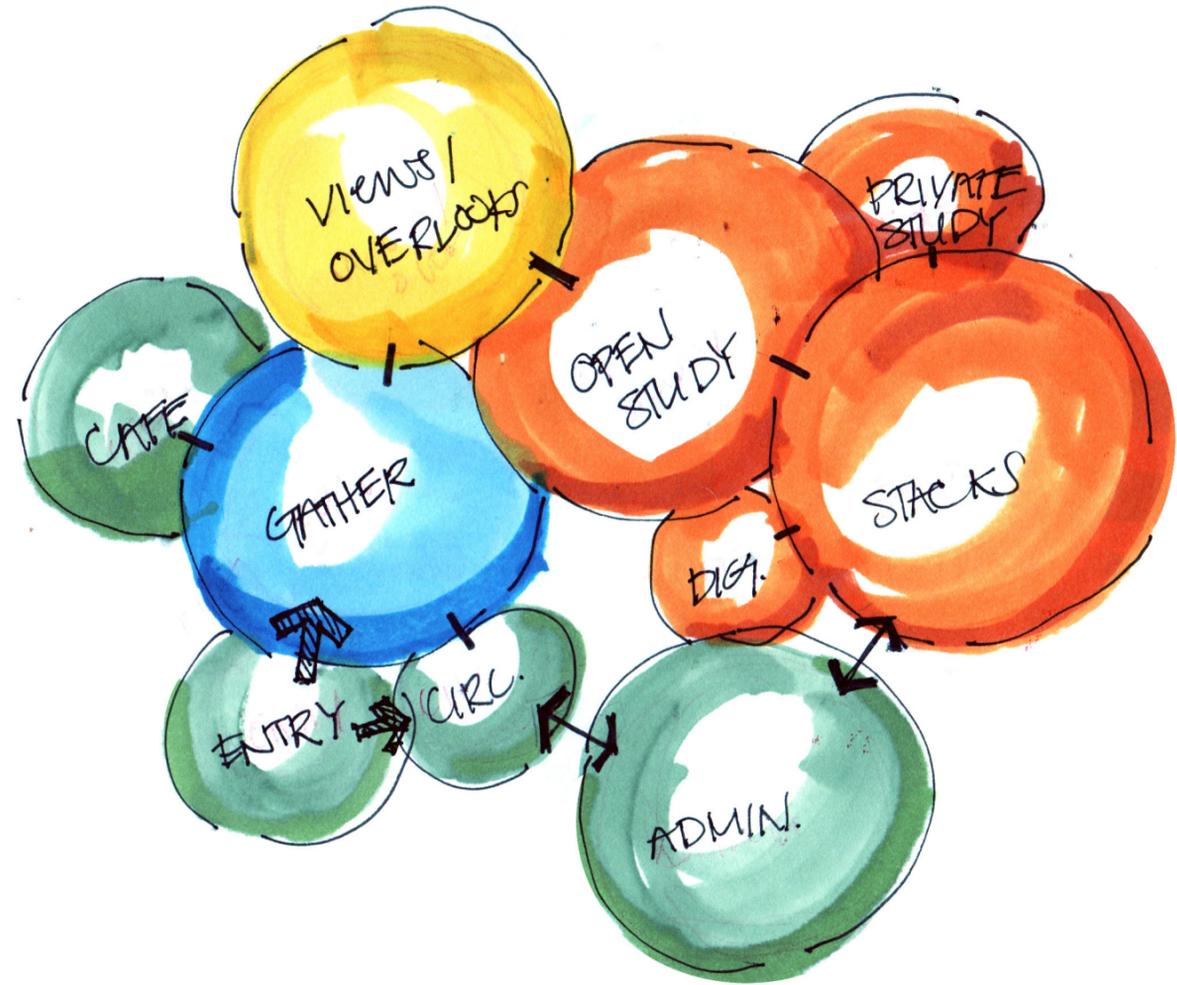
1000 SF
Occupant Load: 100
Group B Occupancy

Administrative offices for library director and staff. Desks, private meeting spaces, storage, printing/copy/scanning, and administrative tools housed here as well.

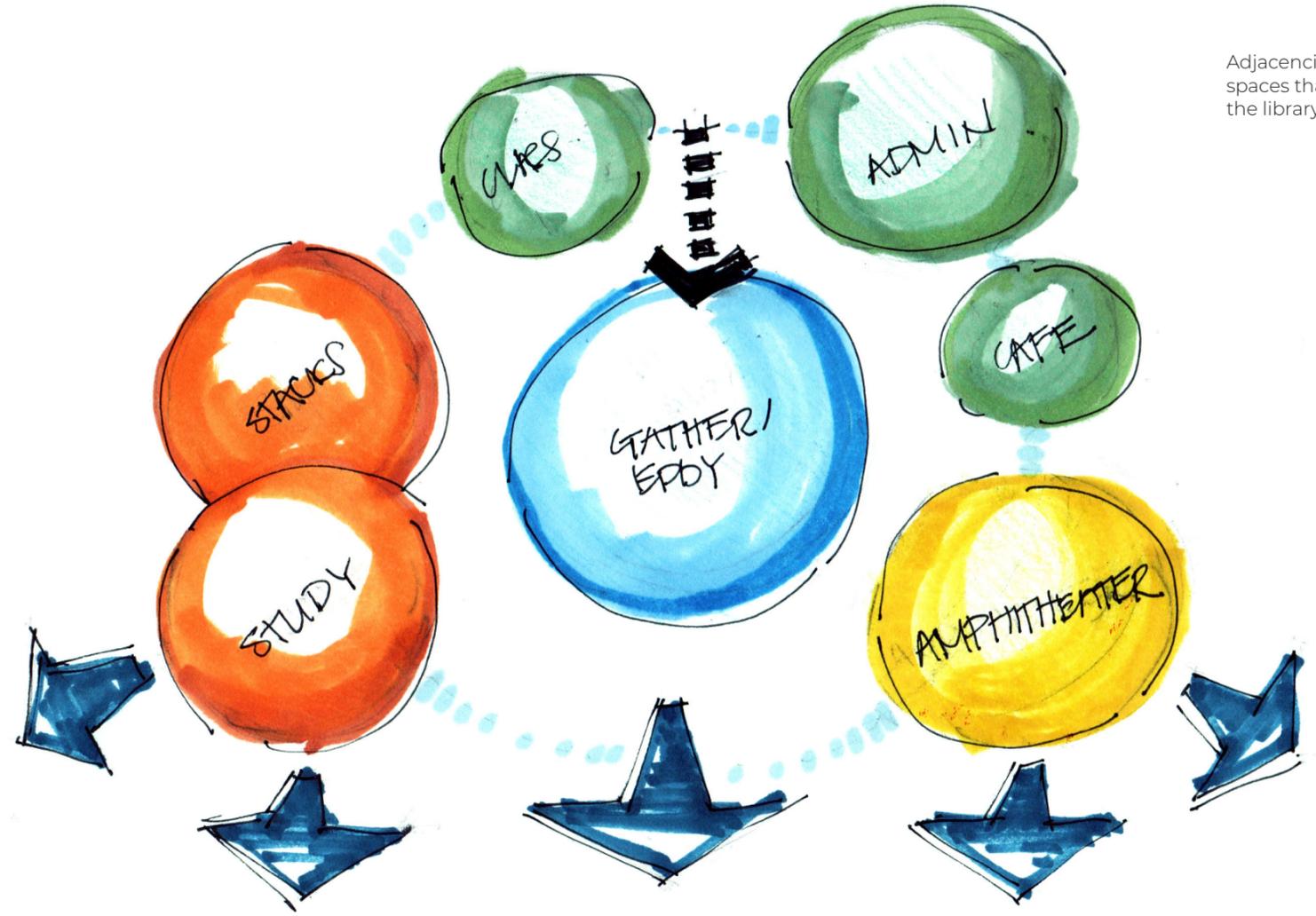
Used by librarians and staff of all levels.

PROGRAMMING + CODE

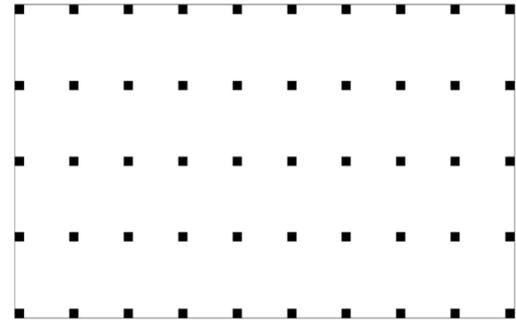
ADJACENCIES



Refinement of relationships between key spaces in the library.

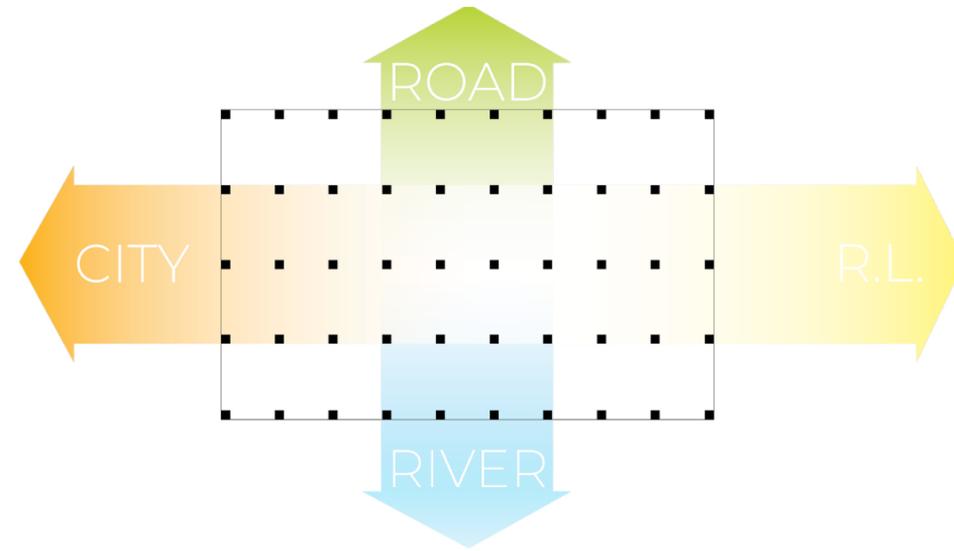


Adjacencies between the spaces that flow around the library's central eddy.



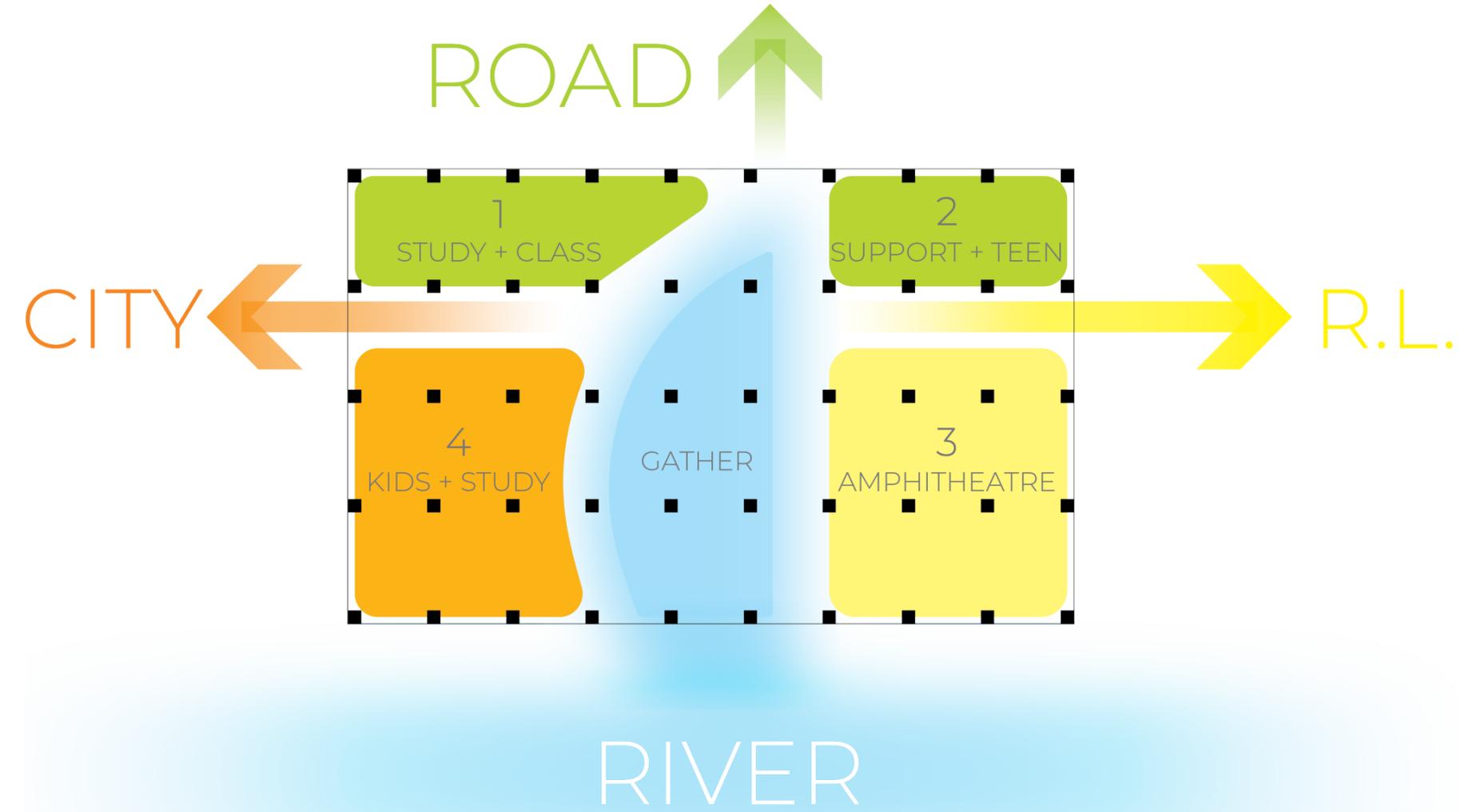
COLUMN GRID

The existing building has a rigid, orthogonal structure. Comprised of reinforced concrete, it has a grid of fifty columns.



ORIENTATION TO SITE

This unyielding orthogonal structure creates two natural axes that directly relate to the site with the road to the North, the city to the West, Rockets Landing and downriver to the East, and the river to the South.



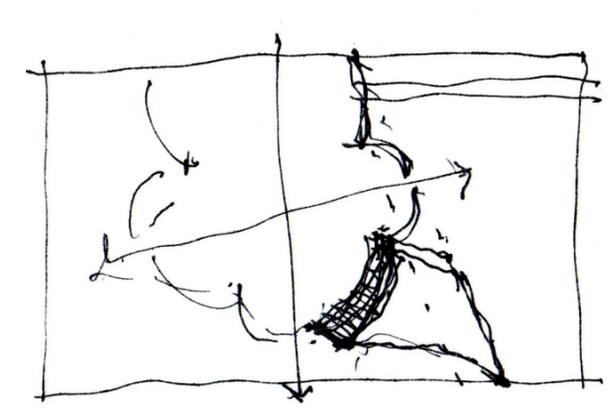
VIEW CORRIDORS

Those axes create view corridors that define the plan. Administrative and support programming creates a buffer between the road and the library, the children's section and

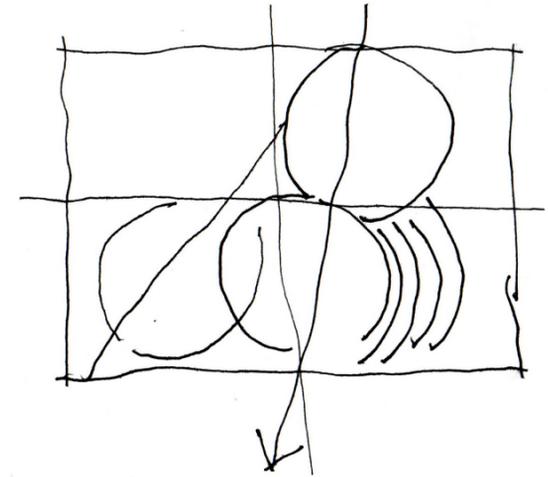
and the amphitheater and overlook have views to the river and downriver. At the center of the building is the main eddy. Here, the river enters the building and all other programming flows around this gathering space.

PLAN MORPHOLOGY

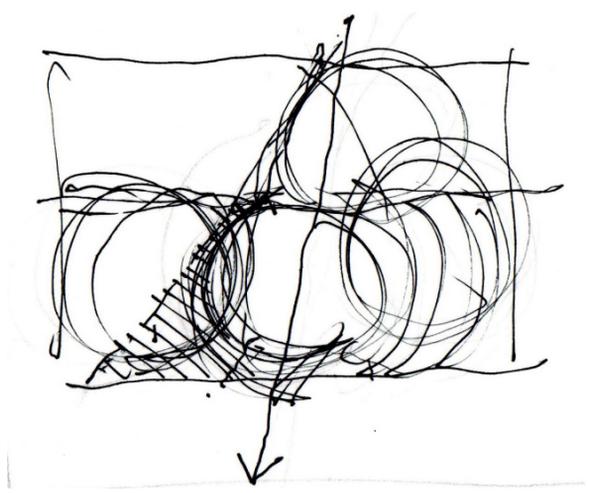
SPACE PLANNING



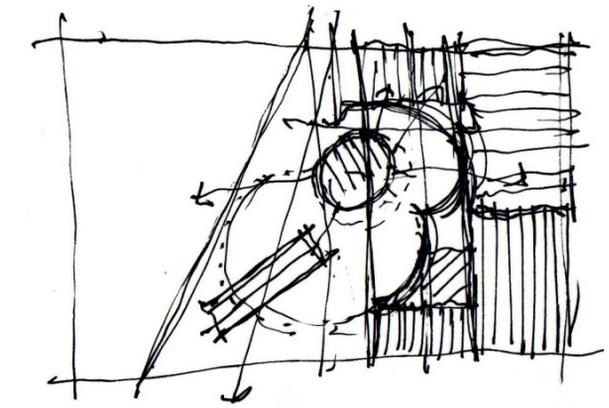
AXES: ROAD/RIVER + UPRIVER/DOWNRIVER



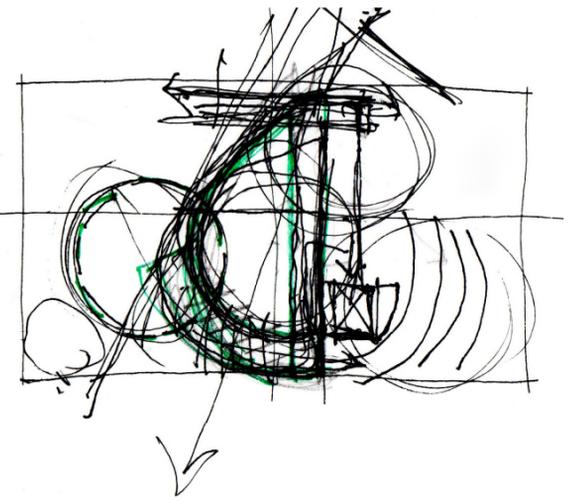
RIPPLE OFF ROAD/RIVER AXIS



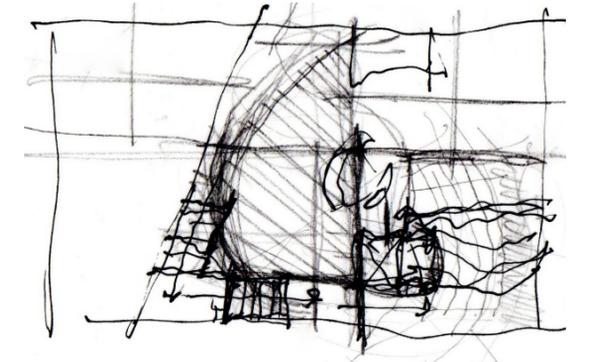
RIPPLE OFF ROAD/RIVER AXIS (MASSING)



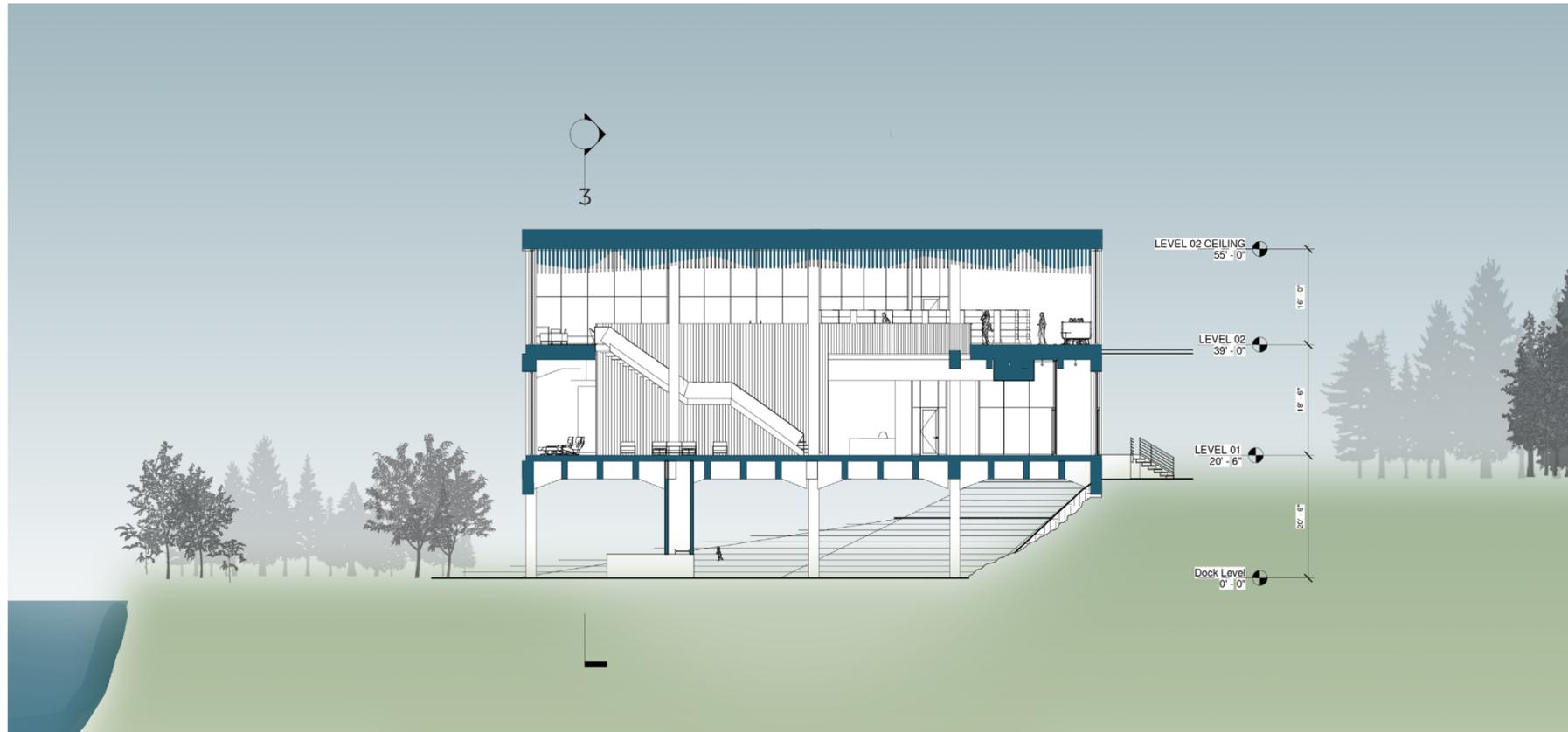
SPACE PLAN - CONNECTIONS B/T FLOORS



SPACE PLAN



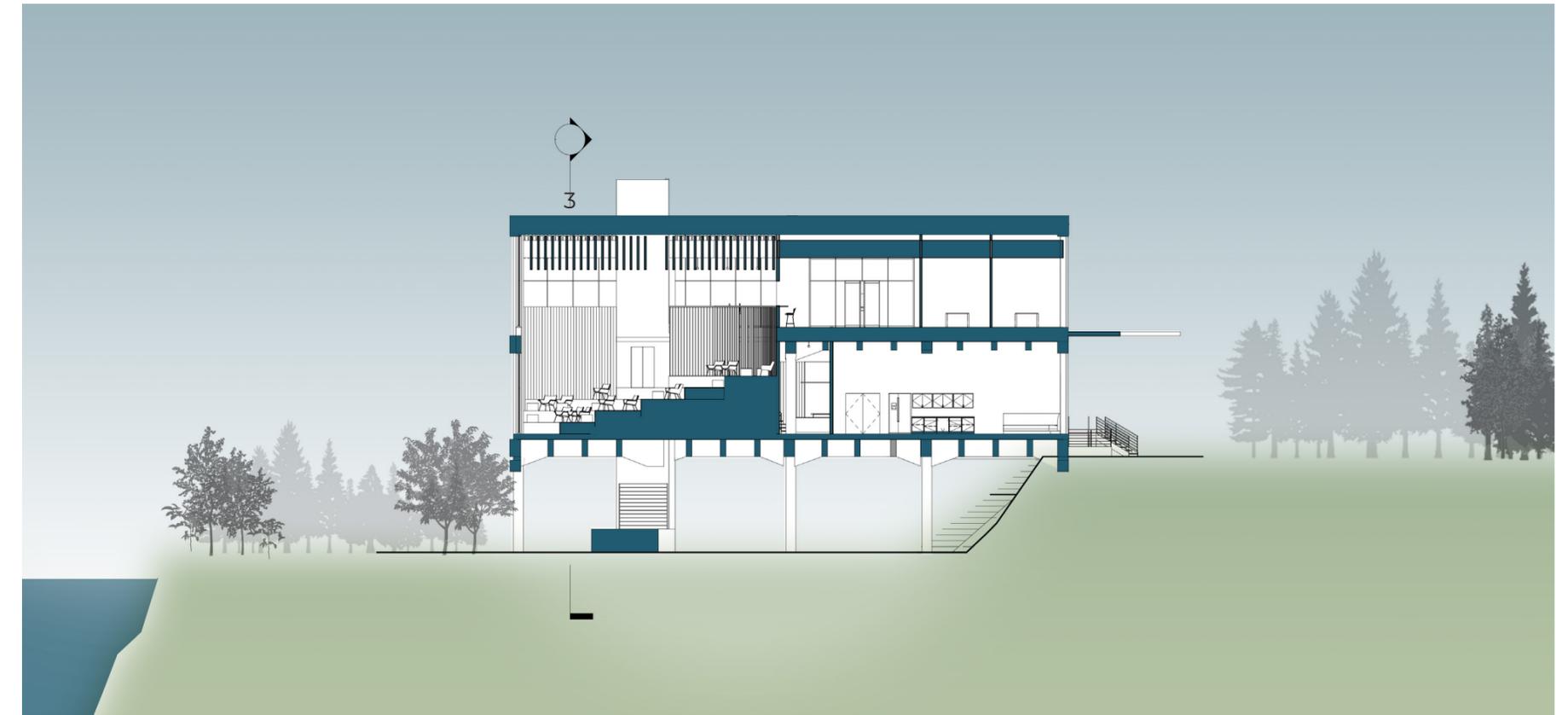
SPACE PLAN - CONNECTION B/T FLOORS



TRANSVERSE SECTION (1)

Level 01 - Deep Eddy, Children's Section, and Conference Room
 Level 02 - Deep Eddy, Stacks, Open Study

0' 5' 10' 20'



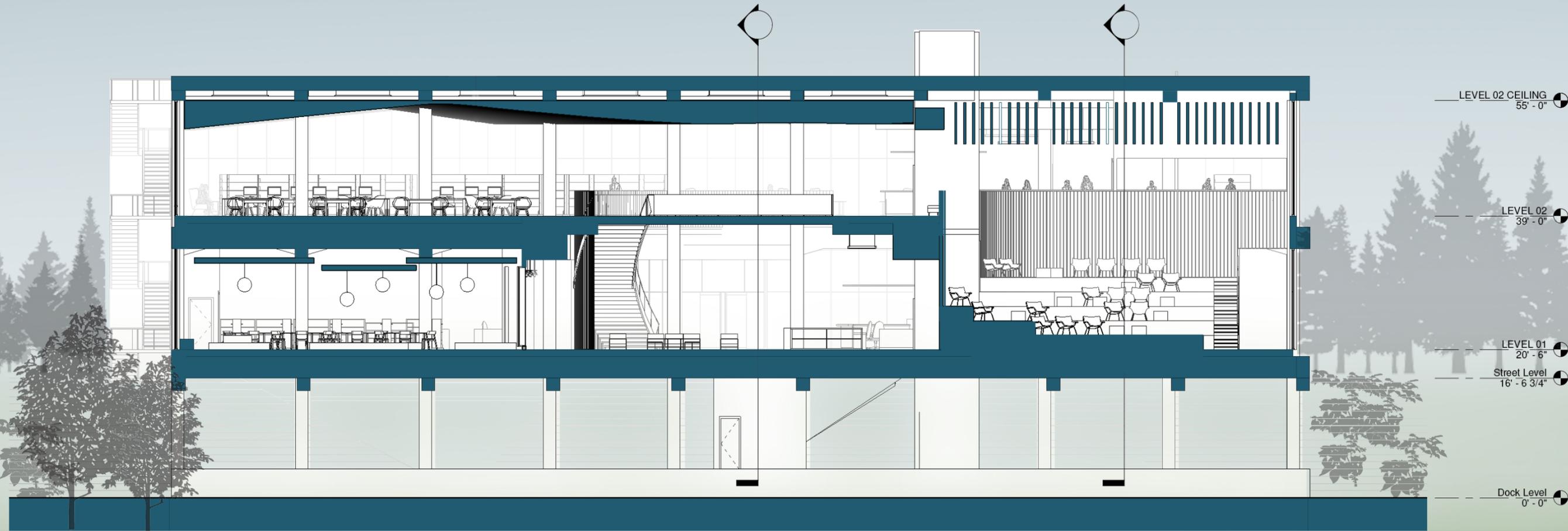
TRANSVERSE SECTION (2)

Level 01 - Amphitheater, Admin
 Level 02 - Teen section

0' 5' 10' 20'



SECTIONS

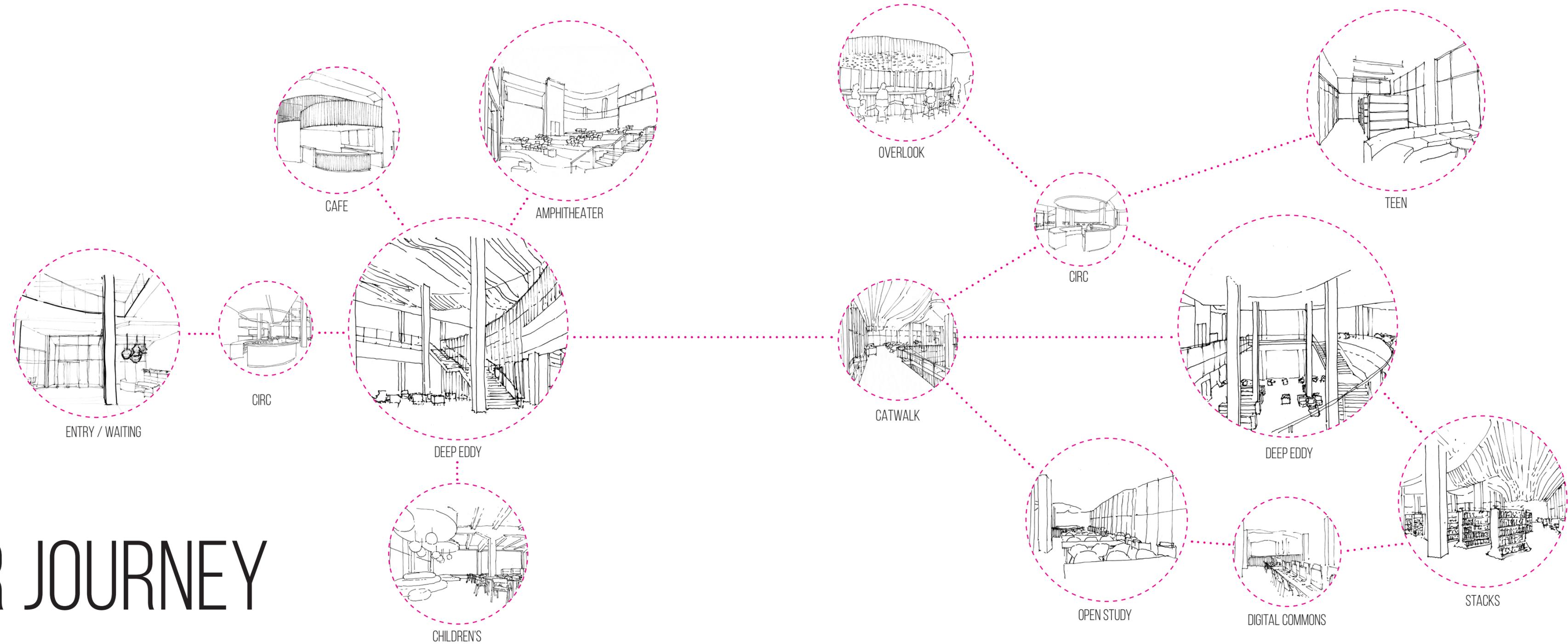


LONGITUDINAL SECTION (3)

Level 01 - Children's Section, Deep Eddy, Overlook, Teen
 Level 02 - Open Study/Stacks, Deep Eddy, Amphitheater

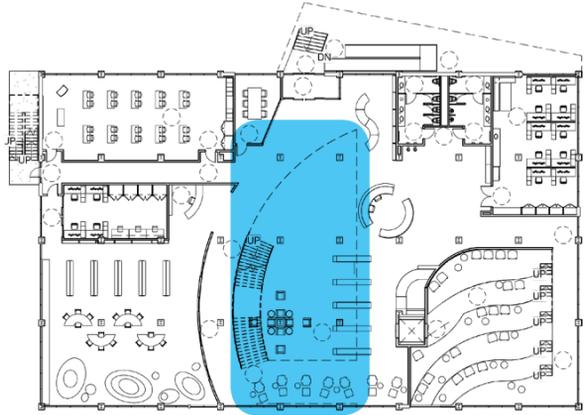


USER JOURNEY



PRIMARY SPACES





DEEP EDDY

LEVEL 01 / LEVEL 02

When entering the River City Library, one immediately encounters the Deep Eddy. This monumental, double-height space acts as an eddy in a river. All spaces are organized and flow around this central area. With its sweeping views of the landscape, depth, and its role as a hub for gathering, it is the place where the river truly enters the library.

On level 01, it has an immediate adjacency to the circulation desk for librarians to greet and orient patrons as they enter the building as well as the Pop-Up Cafe and the Children's Library. Following the soft line of the Deep Eddy's curve is a semi-transparent wood screen that divides this space

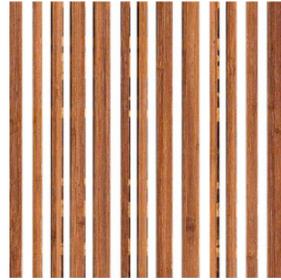
from a breezeway. Here, "the Story of the River" is told - an opportunity to convey the history of the James River from the lens of the original Native Americans that lived here, the trade of enslaved peoples, the industrial revolution, to present - as one follows the curve, their journey through history ends with a view of the James River today.

To reach level 02, one may either ascend through the elevator or the stair that follows the curve of the screen. At the top, one encounters the catwalk. From here, one may follow the lines of the deep eddy to enjoy this space from above, the view into this gathering space, the panoramic river, or the undulating ceiling grid.





CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



WOOD SCREEN
(CUSTOM)
Armstrong
Stair / breezeway



GLASS
McGrory Glass
Railing panels



ATMOSPHERA (light
wood)
Arktura
Ceiling



CHROME PANELS
Armstrong
Ceiling/underside of
catwalk



LIGHTBOX STACKS
Custom



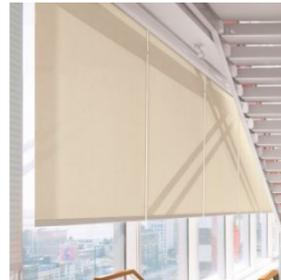
NORK CHAIR + OTTOMAN
Fjords Spinnaker
Lounge seating along
window



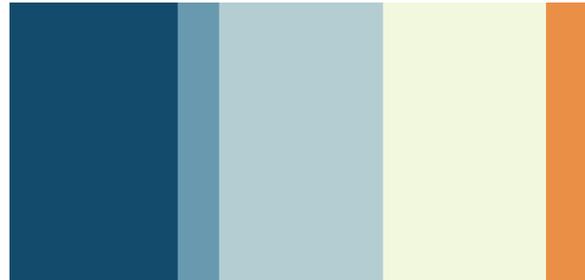
BANK LOUNGE CHAIR
Blu Dot
Central/cafe seating



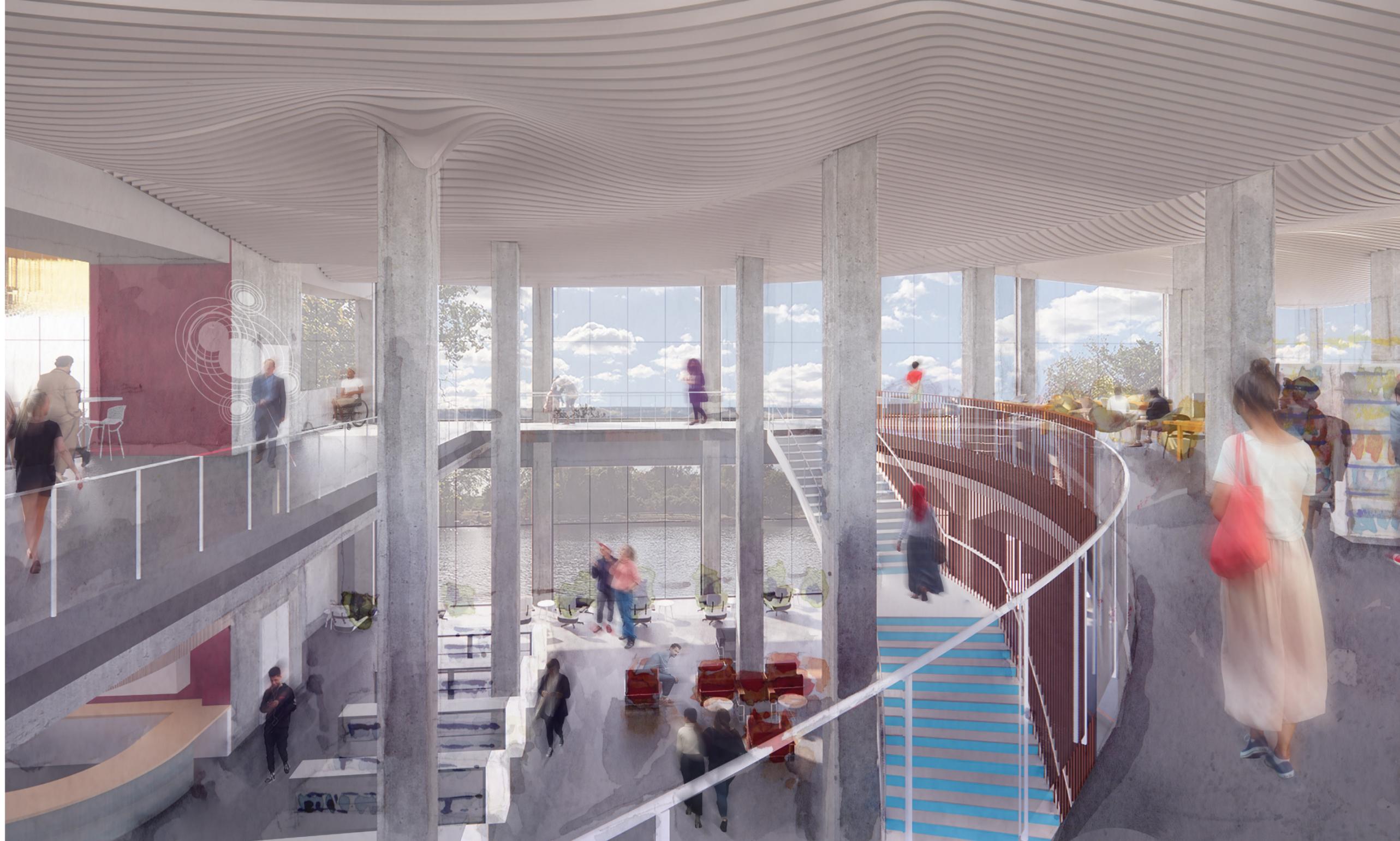
FREE FORM TABLE
Karl Springer Ltd.
Central/cafe seating

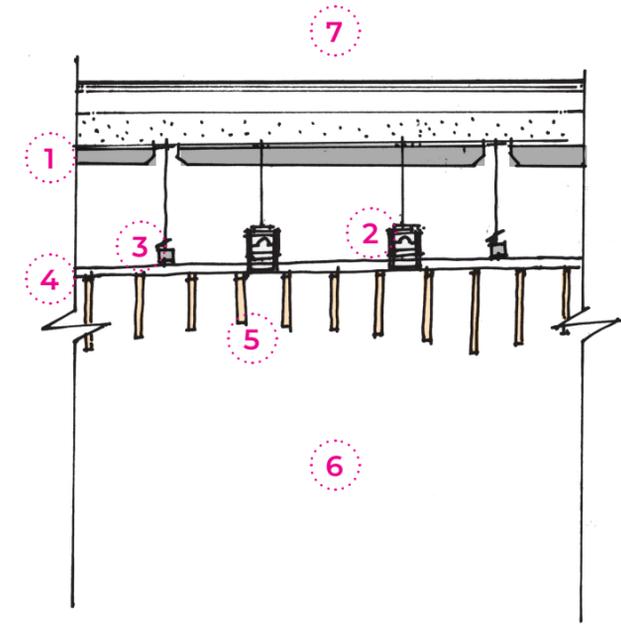
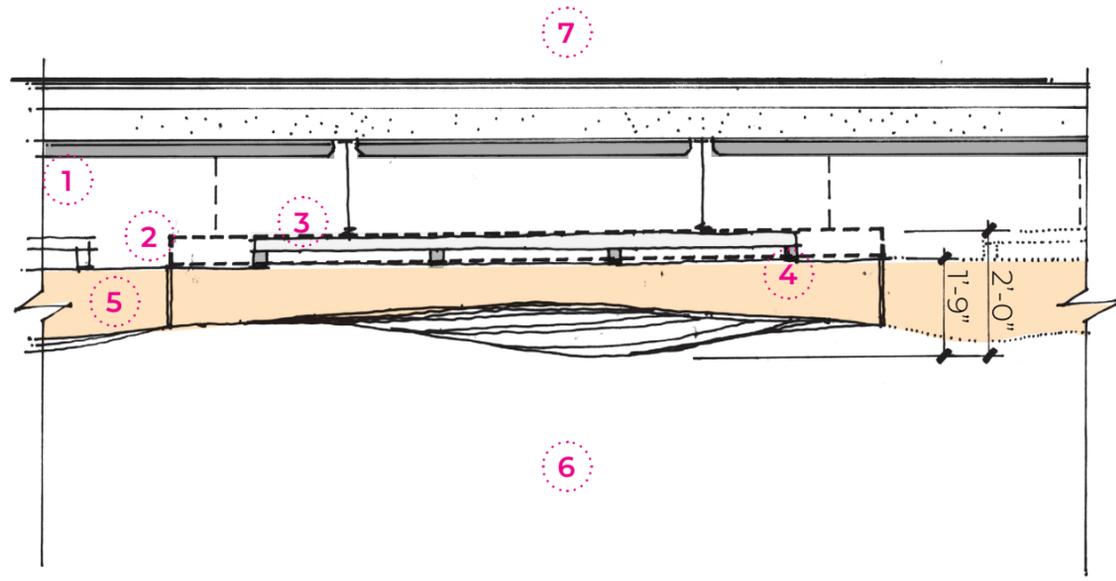


SOLAR TRAC SOHO
SHADES
Mecho Shade
Along all windows

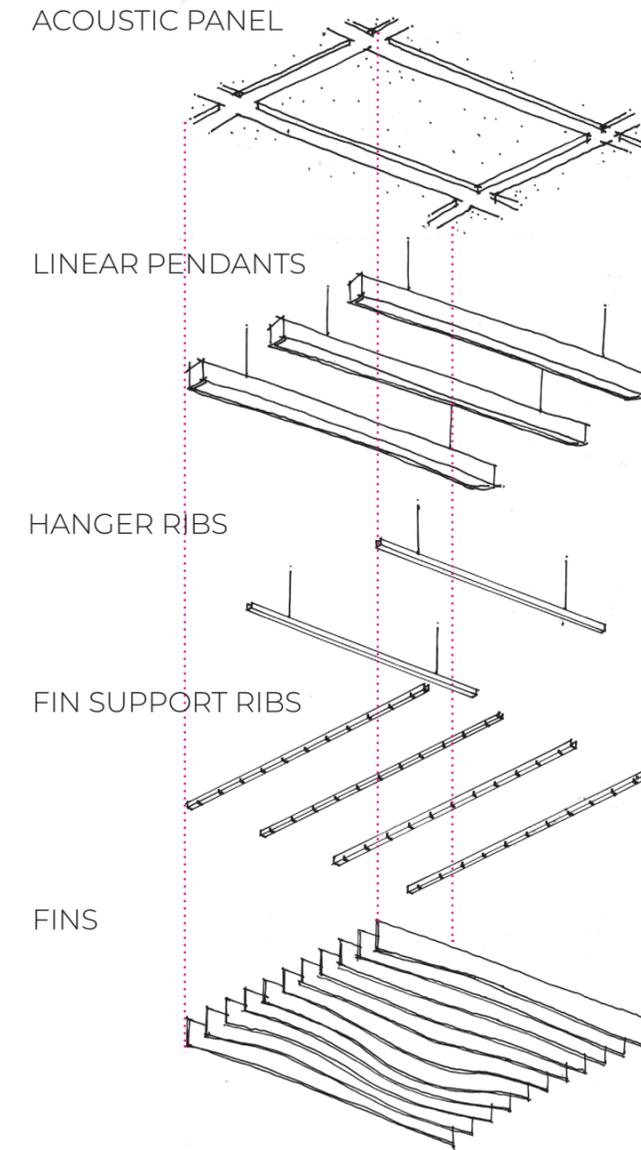


COLOR PALETTE





- 1 ACOUSTIC PANEL
- 2 LINEAR PENDANTS
- 3 HANGER RIBS
- 4 FIN SUPPORT RIBS
- 5 FINS
- 6 INTERIOR
- 7 EXTERIOR

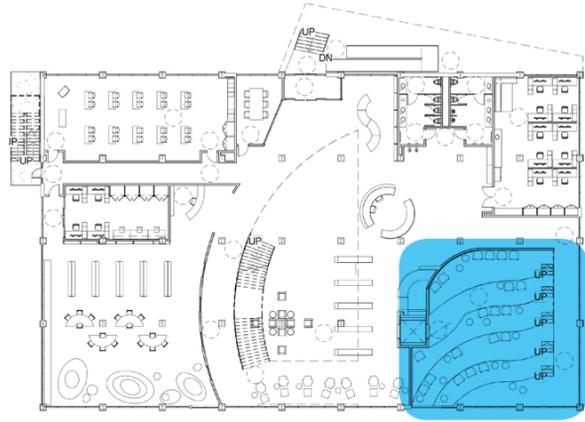


DETAIL: UNDULATING CEILING

ARKTURA - ATMOSPHERA

This product has a custom installation to meet the lighting and acoustic needs of the library. Its undulating fins flow over the existing hard, orthogonal building structure as water would over rocks.

These pale wood fins are installed at an average depth of 2'-0", and every 6" on center. Linear pendants are pocketed into the system to provide lighting and emphasize its rolling form while acoustic panels are installed on the roof membrane to control sound.



AMPHITHEATER

LEVEL 01 / LEVEL 02

The Amphitheater evokes a feeling of sitting on the river's shore. The organic curves of its terraced levels reflect the rolling slope of the landscape while its warmer palette and linear textures provide a sense of the vegetation outside. The custom ceiling is comprised of 3Form resin tubes lit from above to give a sense of the ephemeral quality of tall grasses blowing in the breeze, something found when sitting on the James River's shoreline.

To increase accessibility for those with limited mobility, the elevator has a rear-entry onto the fourth tier of the amphitheater. This allows one to be part of this experience and equally immersed regardless of physical ability.

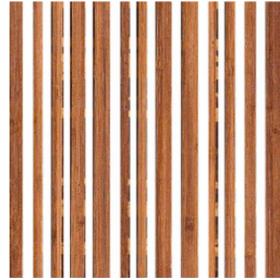




CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



COLLECTIONS ALTERED
CPT
Shaw Contract
Terraced seating



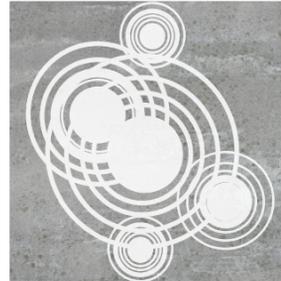
WOOD SCREEN
(CUSTOM)
Armstrong
Along walls



GLASS
McGrory Glass
Panels b/t Amphitheater
+ Overlook



AMBER RESIN CEILING
INSTALLATION
3Form (custom)
Ceiling



WALL GRAPHIC
Custom design / SW paint
Elevator exterior walls



SAARINEN WOMB CHAIR
Knoll
All levels



PUCK POUF
Enea
All levels

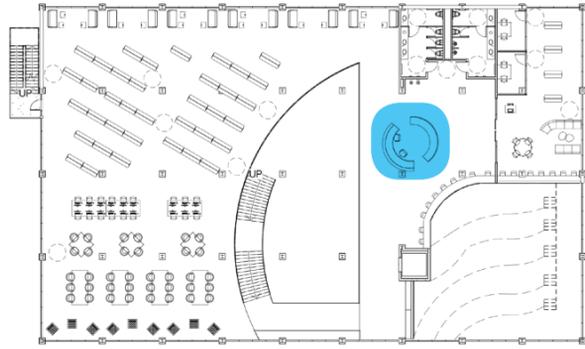


SOLAR TRAC SOHO
SHADES
Mecho Shade
Along all windows



COLOR PALETTE





CIRCULATION DESK

LEVEL 01 / LEVEL 02

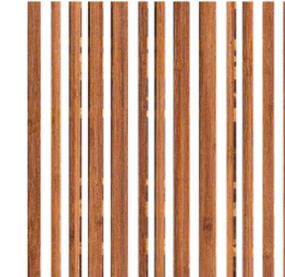
Positioned to optimize line of sight and accessibility to patrons, the library's two main circulation desks are positioned on both level 01 and level 02 with immediate adjacency to main circulation paths. On level 01, the desk is just off the Deep Eddy, near the main stair and elevator, and immediately adjacent to the front door to receive people as they enter. On level 02, it holds a similar position; just off the Deep Eddy and immediately adjacent to the catwalk and overlook. In both cases, the circulation desk has 360-degree views of the space to optimize the librarians' line of sight. On the second level, the stacks are installed on an angle to give librarians at the circulation desk a full view of the walkways between them.

This desk is round to encourage circulation around it but has a back component for storage and to promote a feeling of enclosure for the librarians using it. Comprised of wood and concrete with limited plastic and metal accents, its heavy materials reflect that of the building. They promote a solid, permanent feel to reinforce its importance in the institution it resides within.





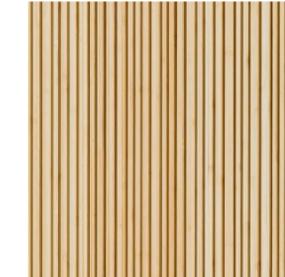
CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



WOOD SCREEN
(CUSTOM)
Armstrong
Along stair / breezeway



GLASS
McGrory Glass
Railing panels



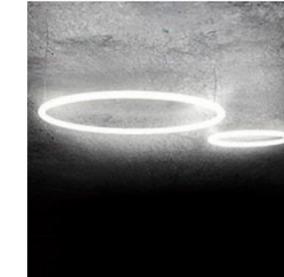
LINEAR LINE PANELS
Plyboo
PLACEMENT



CONCRETE + WOOD
Cemcrete / Hardwood
Reflections
Desktop



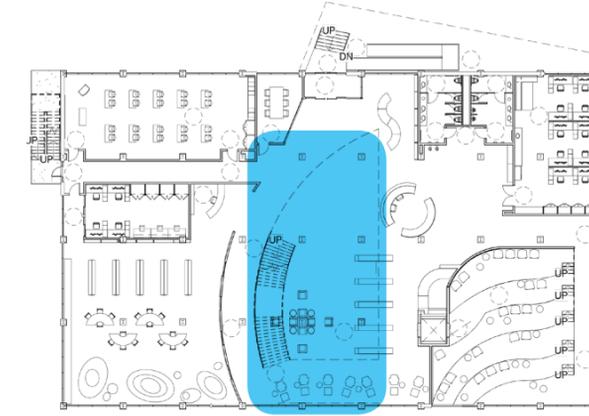
SILQ CHAIR
Steelcase
Circ desk task chairs



ALPHABET OF LIGHT
CIRCULAR
Artemide (custom)
Above circ desk



COLOR PALETTE



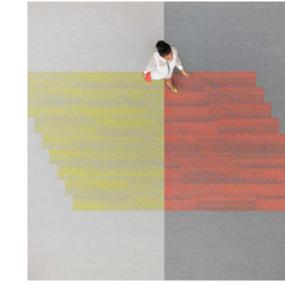
CHILDREN'S SECTION LEVEL 01

Residing on level 01, just off the Deep Eddy and with sweeping views of the river and city skyline is the Children's Library. Here a variety of interaction points were necessary to meet the needs of how children use libraries. Along the windows is boulder-inspired soft seating. The large, organic cushions are stacked and movable to allow children to climb, play, lounge, and read on them at the water's edge the way one would on the shore of the James River. Separating this area from the children's stacks are curved work tables for reading, activities, and play. All furniture in this space is rounder to accommodate the higher activity levels of this children's space. Meanwhile, softer and sound absorbent materials like the soft seating, the window bench, and acoustic panels are installed throughout the space to meet the acoustic needs of this higher-volume children's space.

The floor to ceiling height of level 01 is 16'-0". To bring this down to a more comfortable scale for children, the ceiling is color-blocked to a height of 8'-0". To further lower the height, acoustic clouds and pendant lights are floated over the boulder-seating.



CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



ACTIVE CPT
Shaw Contract
Flooring along window



SCALE ACOUSTIC
PANELS
Selina Rose
Stacks wall



LIVINGSTONES
Smarin
Along window



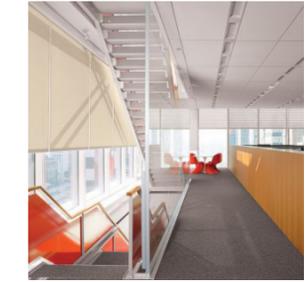
ALTZO COALESCE CHAIR
Enea
Reading tables



KIDNEY ACTIVITY TABLE
Wood Designs
B/t stacks and windows



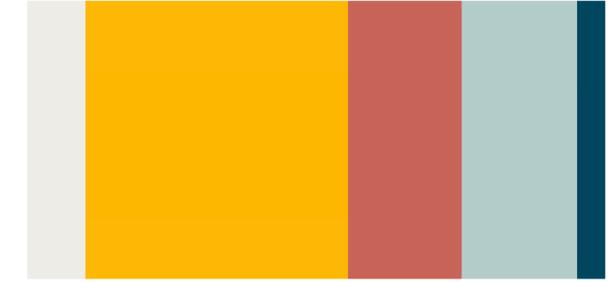
STACKS (small)
Estey Shelving



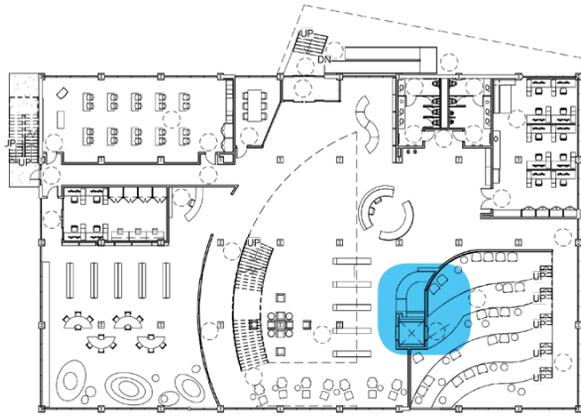
SOLAR TRAC SOHO
SHADES
Mecho Shade
Along all windows



SHINY SHADOWS LIGHTS
Smarin
Above Livingstones play
furniture



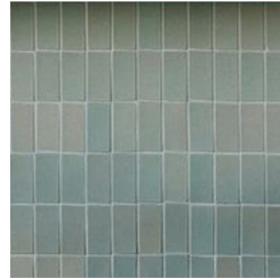
COLOR PALETTE



LUXURY VINYL TILE
Shaw
Cafe floor



LINEAR WOOD PANEL
Armstrong
Fascia



CEMENT TILE
Cement Tile Shop
Backsplash + wall



PAMBETON SHUI
Concrete LCDA
Front of counter



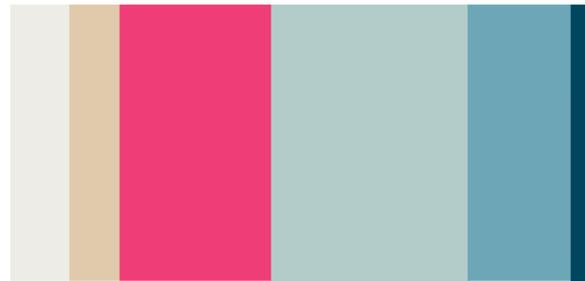
WOOD COUNTERTOP
Hardwood Reflections
Countertop



CASEWORK
Martin Star (custom)



STRETCH CEILING
Barrisol Ryan
Soffit



COLOR PALETTE

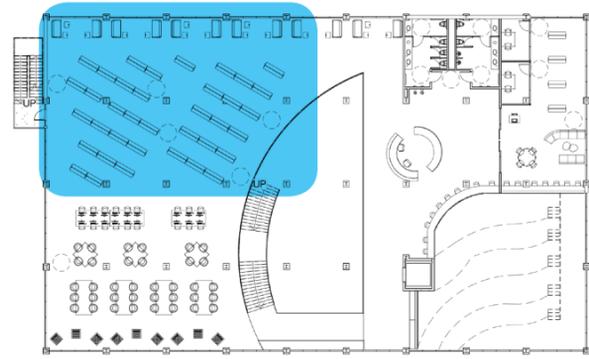
POP-UP CAFE

LEVEL 01

In the twenty-first century, the acts of reading, studying, or gathering are seldom done without a warm drink in hand. With the area surrounding the library without many amenities to meet this commonplace desire, the library's Pop-Up cafe provides the opportunity to bring city's many small businesses and cafes to the river on a rotating basis.

The palette for this space is comprised of warm wood, textured concrete, and a variety of blues. LVT is installed on the floor to provide more comfort to those working as opposed to the existing polished concrete. A glowing stretch ceiling above provides an even light to the cafe as well as some acoustic control.





CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



GLASS
McGrory Glass
Railing panels



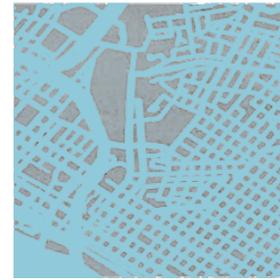
ATMOSPHERA (light
wood)
Arktura
Ceiling

STACKS + STUDY

LEVEL 02

Breaking the unrelenting orthogonal column-grid of the library, the stacks are installed on a diagonal to both promote line of sight for the librarians at the circulation desk and encourage meandering through the shelves. This library uses shelves with built-in lighting to showcase their offerings. A custom wall graphic depicting the map of Richmond is installed on the backwall to promote a sense of placemaking.

The contemporary library is more social than libraries of the past, requiring them to accommodate a variety of seating options from communal to semi-private to private. On either side of the library's main stacks are open study spaces. On the road-side of the stacks is high-backed privacy seating while the river side has communal work tables and the Digital Commons, where computers, scanners, and printers can be used.



WALL GRAPHIC
Custom Graphic / SW
Back wall



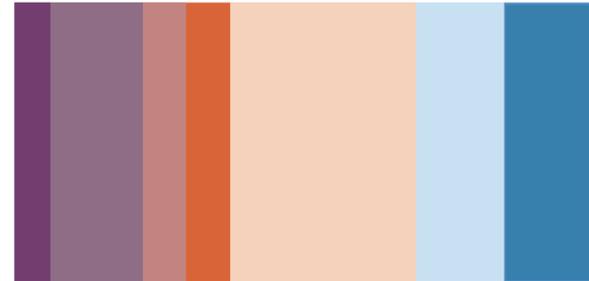
STACKS (small)
Estey Shelving



HIGHBACK WORK SEAT
Muuto (Maharam - Ellipsis
upholstery)
Along back window

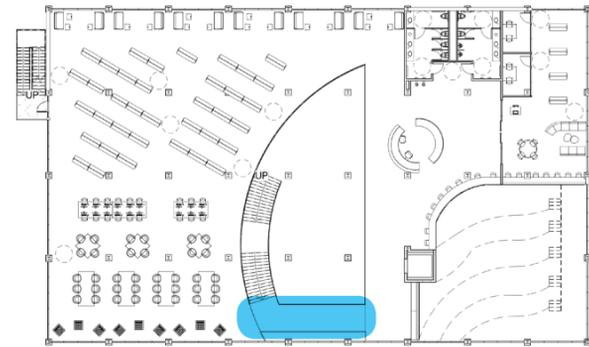


SOLAR TRAC SOHO
SHADES
Mecho Shade
Along all windows

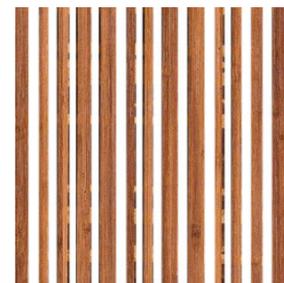


COLOR PALETTE





CONCRETE
Floor (polished)
Wall (sealed)



WOOD SCREEN
(CUSTOM)
Armstrong
Along stair / breezeway

CATWALK LEVEL 02

The catwalk marks the moment where the Deep Eddy, level 01 and level 02 meet. This walkway is pulled off the facade to give it the impression of crossing a viaduct like the ones found crossing the James River.

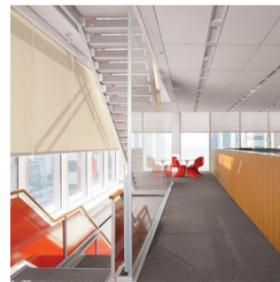
From here, one may access either the open study area on one side or the overlook and circulation desk on the other.



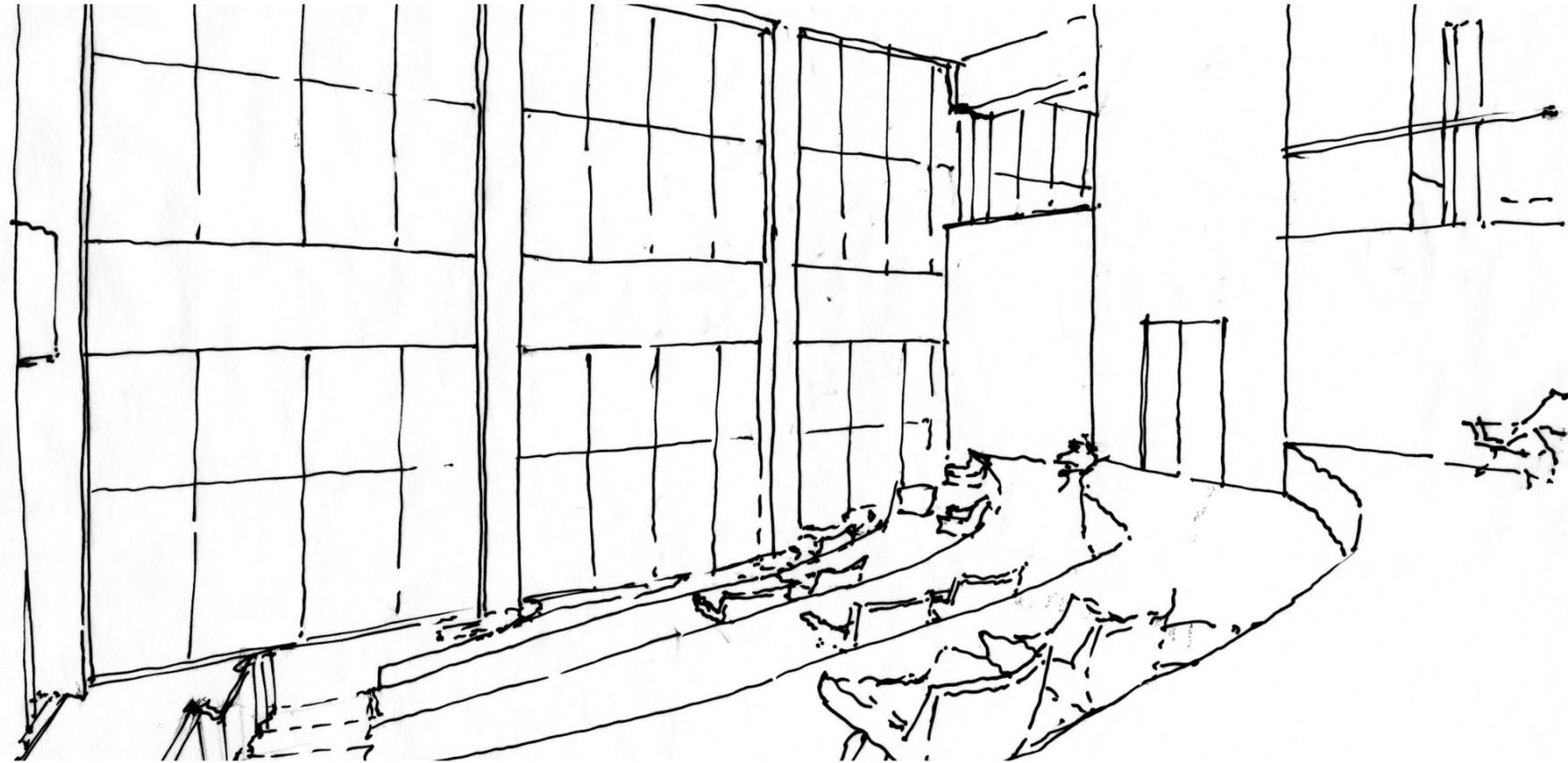
GLASS
McGrory Glass
Railing panels



ATMOSPHERA (light wood)
Arktura
Ceiling



SOLAR TRAC SOHO
SHADES
Mecho Shade
Along all windows



FINAL THOUGHTS

The core goal of this library was to design a site-specific community experience for the city of Richmond. It was to be a beacon at the edge of the James River that would enhance the city's connection to this body of water that winds through it. I wanted it to hold a place in time and memory in Richmond, acknowledging the past while making room for the future. It was important that these spaces be universally accessible for a community of diversity, the roots of Richmond.

As I began this project, I found that while designing the interior, I could not keep my eyes off the exterior. This duality led to a long conversation between the outside and the inside that would continue throughout the thesis, one that ebbed and flowed as the two entities pushed and pulled against one another. For this River City Library, it became clear that the inside must come out and the outside come in. As this journey began, I found that context was not something to resist or fight against, but rather the other player in a constant conversation to be had when venturing into the interior. The site was the canvas for this story.

Through mixed-method research in the forms of interviews, surveys, site visits and observation, evidence was uncovered to inform the design of this library and reinforce its role as a community-engagement hub. This research fueled the emphasis on gathering spaces versus private spaces, site-specific design and motifs, and the incorporation of the amphitheater and pop-up cafe. The case study analyses played an especially heavy role in the design development, revealing for

me the most about what had to be in my design and its potential for innovation. The learning curve was wide, but advancement came from seeing and doing. I learned that as a designer, using research to guide my process opened doors to unlimited potential for new ways of making space, living, and experiencing the places in which we move. It was the key to designing holistically.

This thesis adds to the body of knowledge of interior design through sensitive space planning and the development of universally accessible spaces that incorporate a sense of history, place, and context. Above all, it contributes to the body of knowledge of interiors in how it addresses the exterior environment. The key to this design was its site; its contextual response and site-sensitive design. Allowing the exterior to play a significant role in the interior's development was central to this library, a method that should be incorporated into all interior projects.

This project repurposes an existing two-story vacant warehouse at the edge of the James River to create a community library space. The interior spaces draw from the organic forms and materiality of the river - its rolling water, smooth boulders, and golden grass, as well as the hard, concrete edges of the existing orthogonal structure. Using an undulating grid, reflective and transparent, and both cool and warm palettes drawn from the landscape, this library provides a site-specific community experience.

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Bryce Wilk Superintendent, James River Park System

Charlie McIlraith Designer

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The entire **VCUarts Interior Design faculty** with a special thanks to **Christiana Lafazani** and **Sara Reed**

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**Note: All photographs and drawings are by the author unless otherwise noted here.*

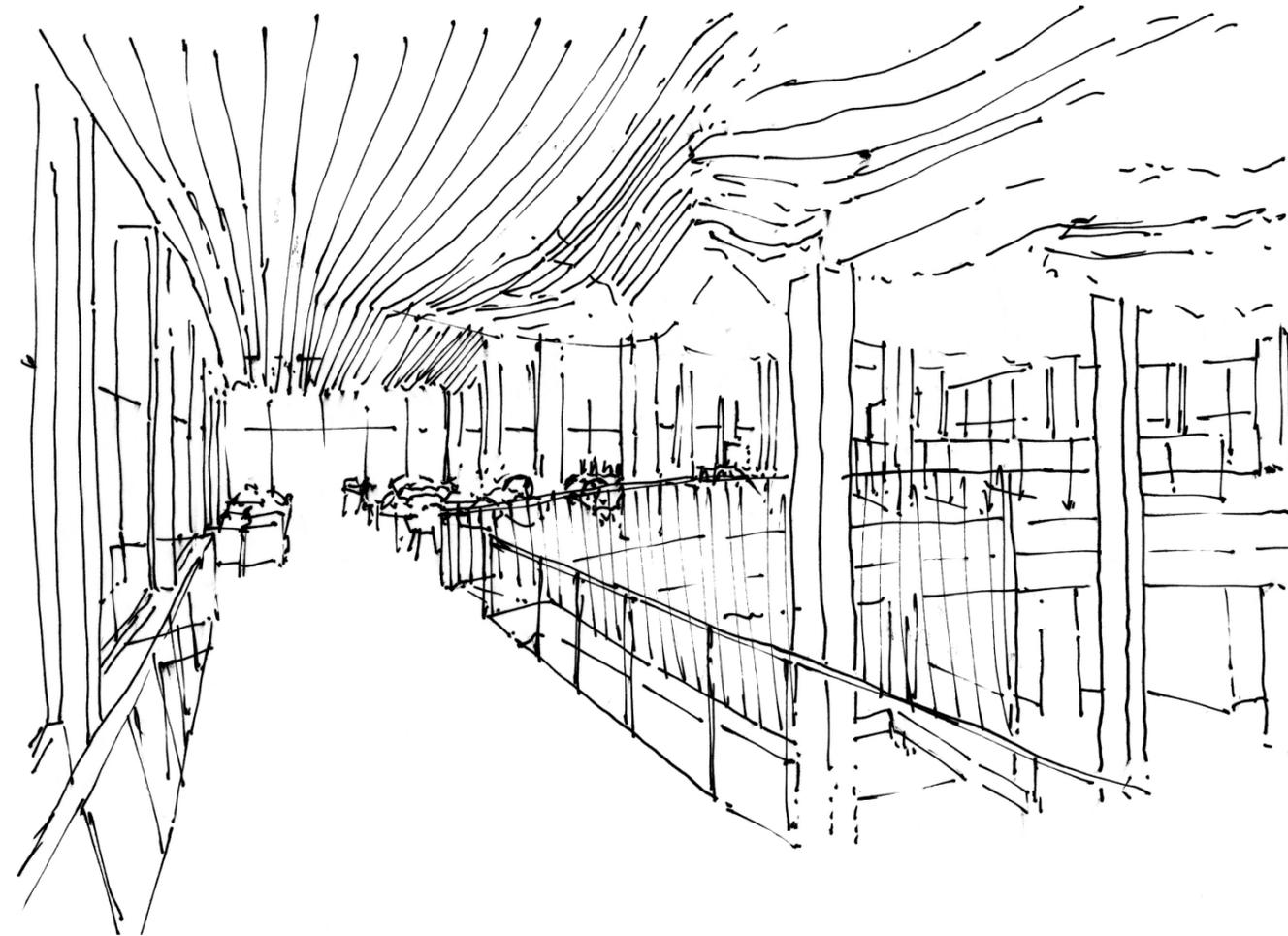


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