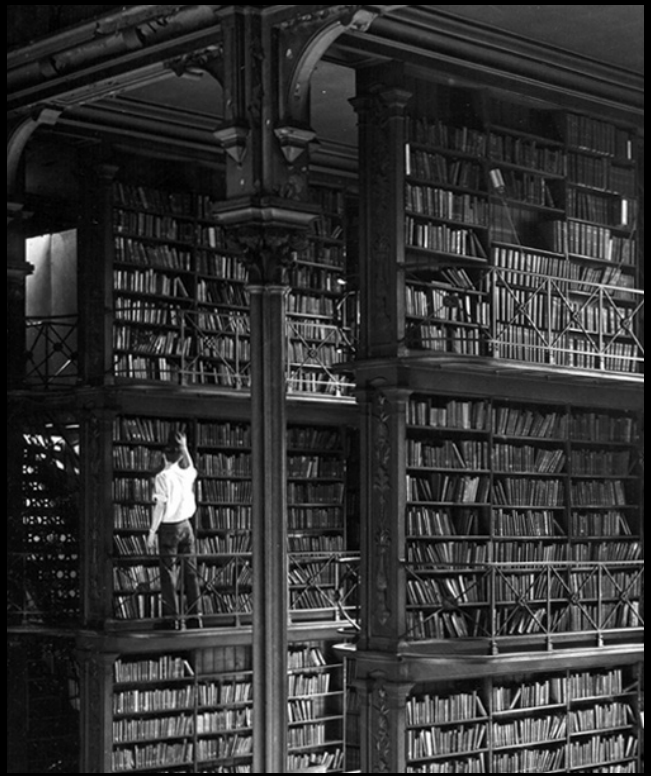
Reframing Library Architecture

Greg Whistance-Smith



A Spatial Philosophy for Public Libraries

Library as a Medium.....01
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libraries gather a community ... .

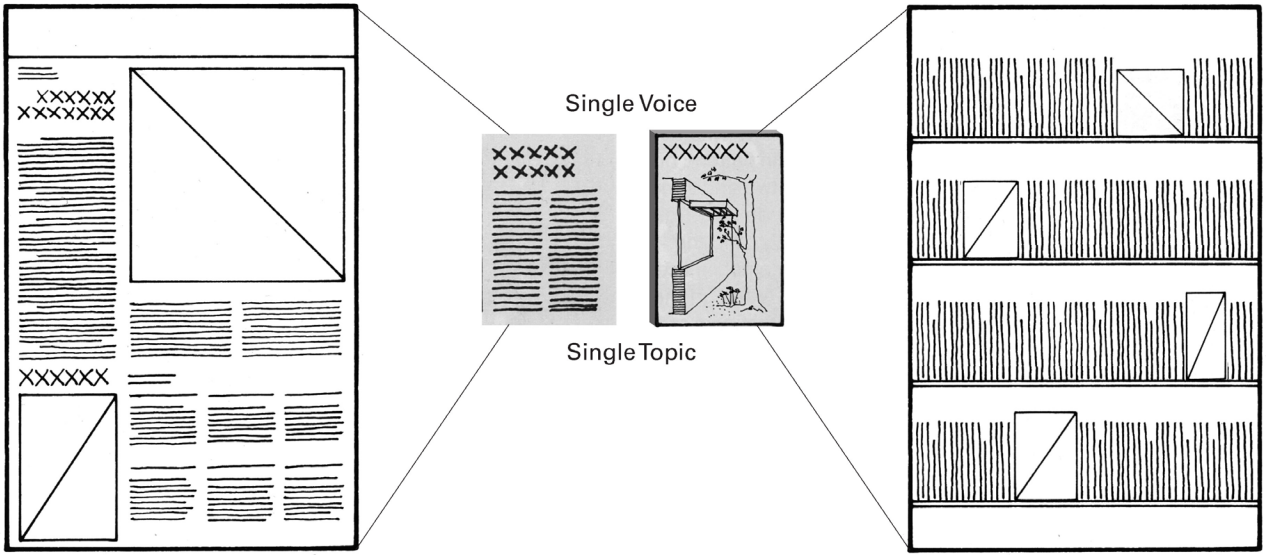
. . .. around a collection

National libraries gather a community around a shared identity.
Academic libraries gather a community around a search for knowledge.

The Public Library gathers a community

to empower it!

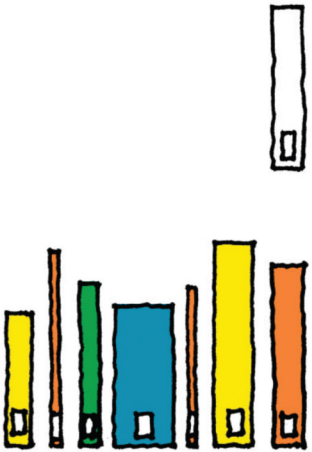
A library acts as a microcosm for the larger media landscape.



"The electric telegraph, when crossed with typography, created the strange new form of the modern newspaper. Any page of the telegraphic press is a surrealistic mosaic of bits of 'human interest' in vivid interaction."

"When two seemingly disparate elements are imaginatively poised, put in apposition in new and unique ways, startling discoveries often result."

– McLuhan



Mosaic surfaces allow diverse browsing experiences.

Each viewer will be attracted to different parts of the whole.

Visual heirarchies break this, orienting a viewer's attention for various ends.

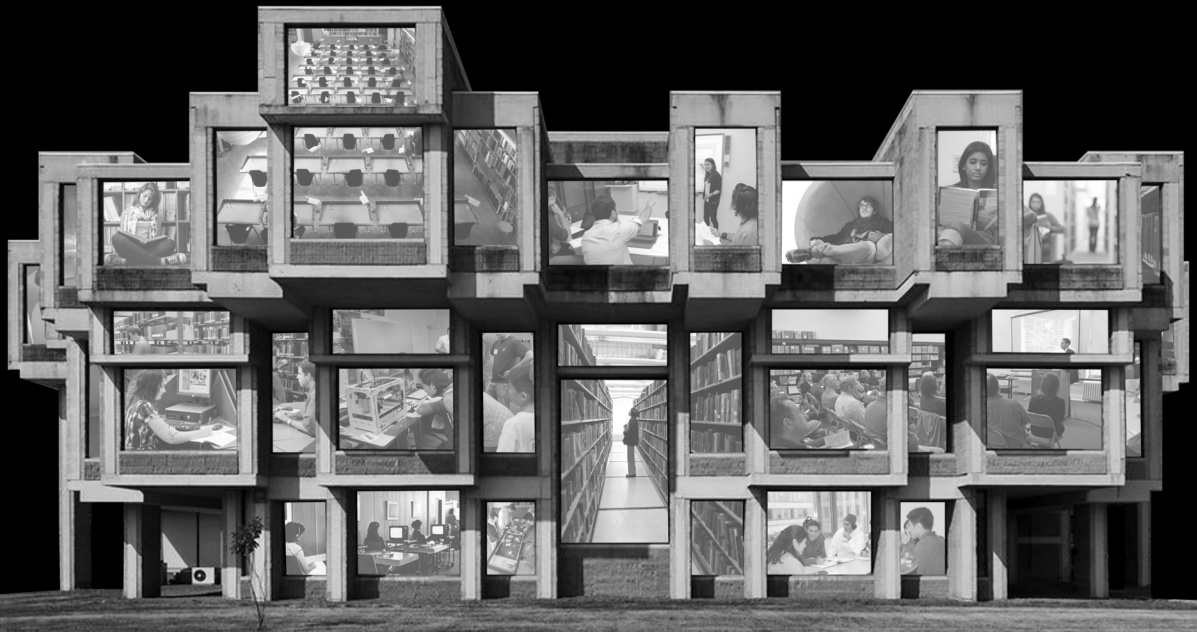
"THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE"

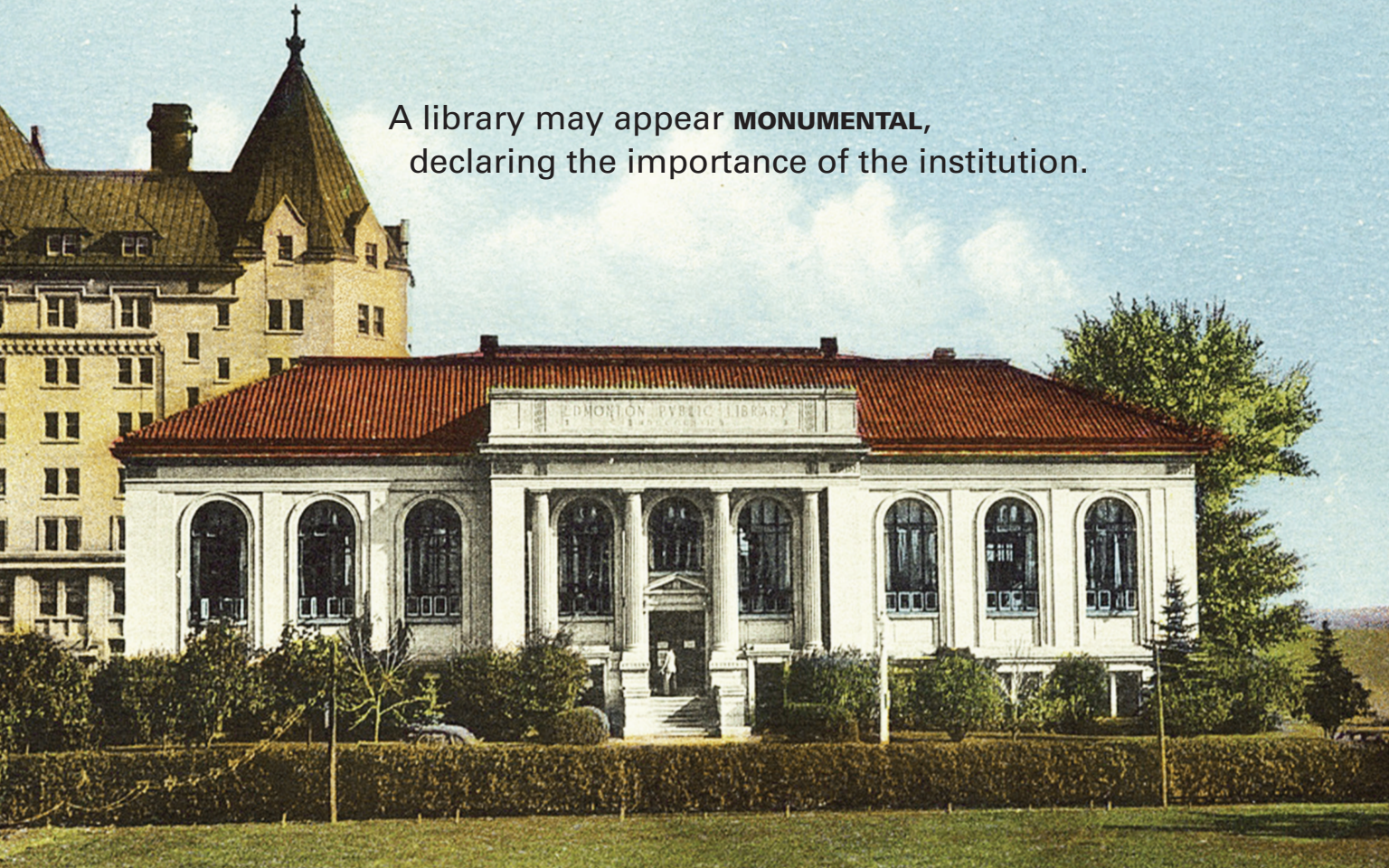
– Marshall McLuhan

"If you say the medium is the message you're talking about a medium meaning a milieu... Every innovation, every new gadget like a pocket calculator or coffee cup or TV camera, brings with it a whole environment or milieu of not just assumptions but ways of thinking, ways of feeling, ways of organizing your life – a whole range of services and disservices without which the item would not function." [5]

And the message of the library is:

equality of access
freedom to explore
and room for every voice!



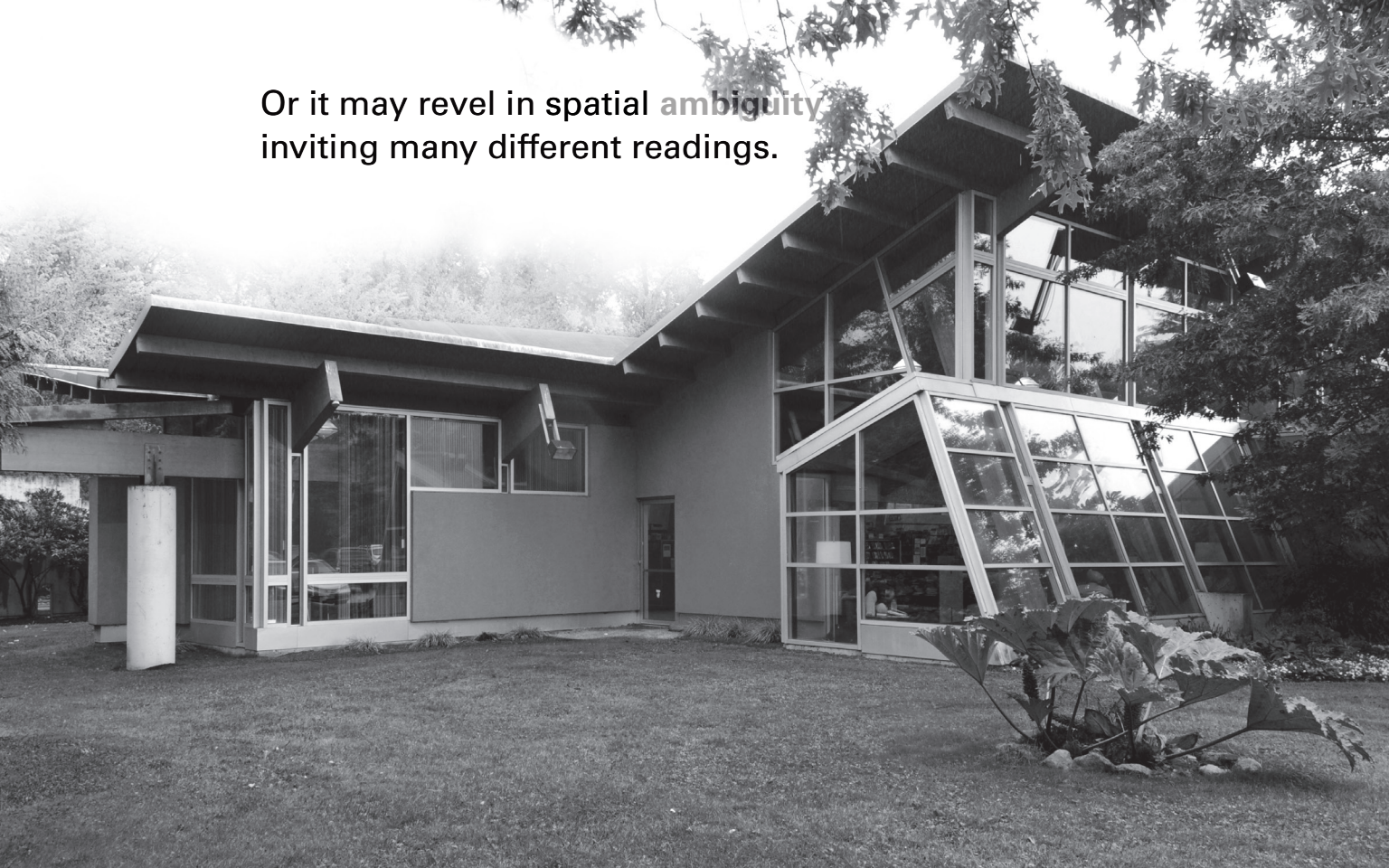


A library may appear **MONUMENTAL**,
declaring the importance of the institution.

It may seem **alien** compared to neighbouring buildings, signifying a *cutting-edge* space.

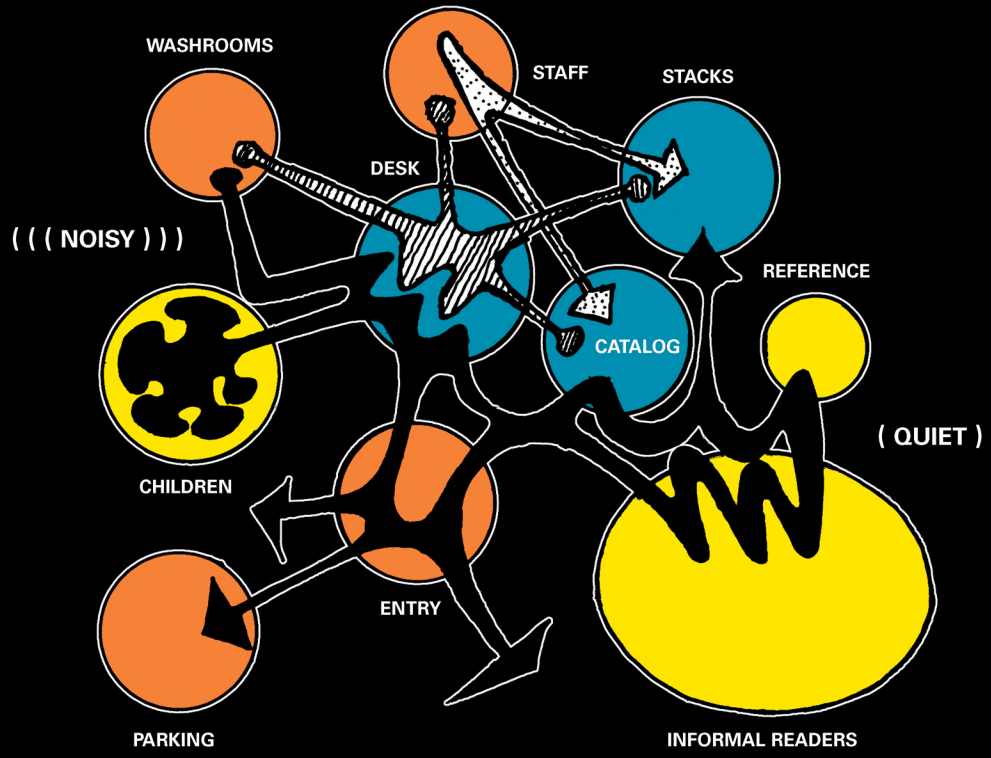
It may blend seamlessly into the neighborhood fabric,
conveying deep integration into community life.

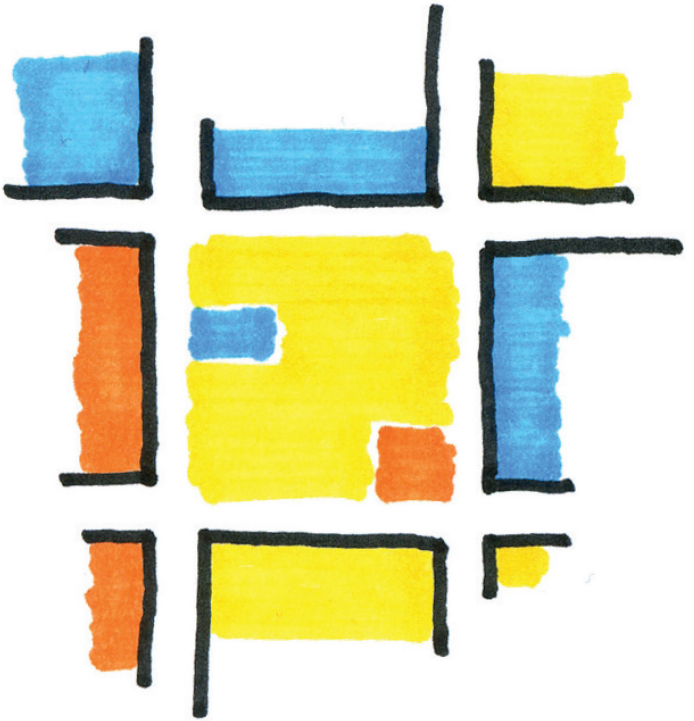
Or it may revel in spatial **ambiguity**
inviting many different readings.

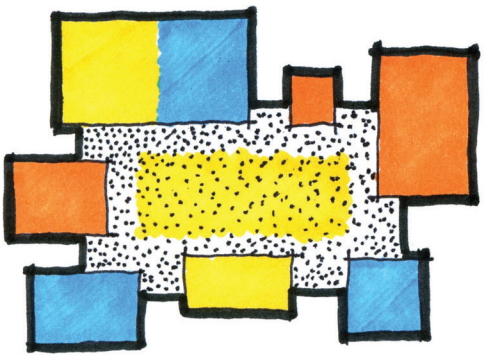


Collection as commodity?
Collection as treasure?

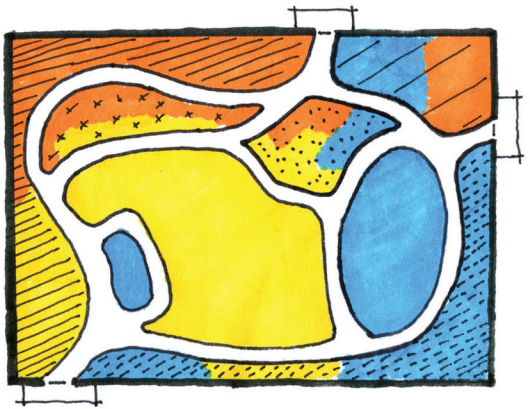
THE BOOKS YOU NEED


WASHROOMS
STAFF
STACKS
DESK
(((NOISY)))
REFERENCE
CATALOG
(QUIET)
CHILDREN
ENTRY
PARKING
INFORMAL READERS



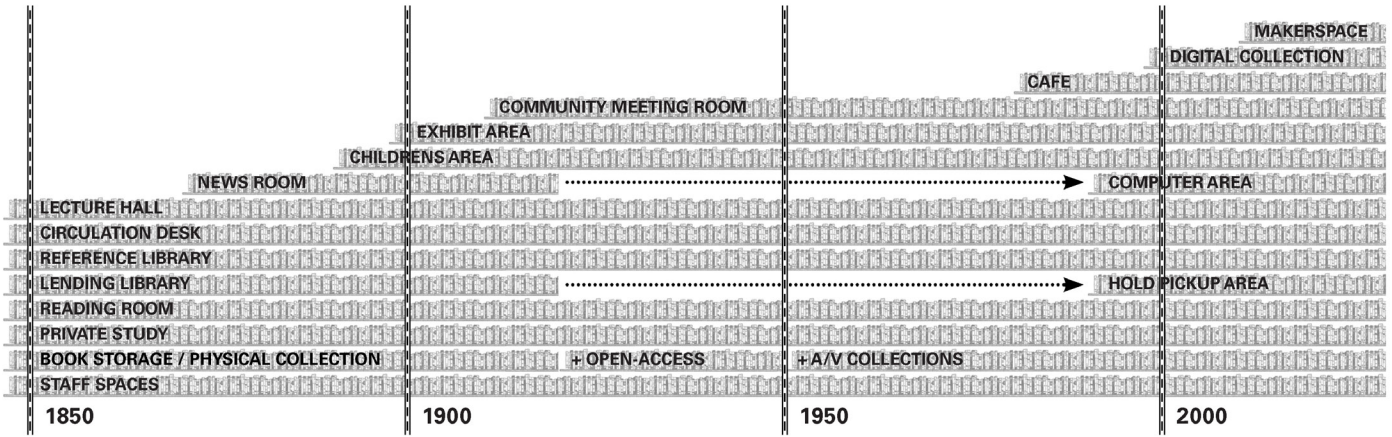


‘Village Square’ Plan



‘Strolling Garden’ Plan

adidas



The gradual increase of public library areas from 1850 to the present.

Reading Room

Event Hall

Children's Area

Network Access

Meeting Rooms

Private Niche

Media Stacks

Service Desk

Lending Library

Makerspace

AR Browsing

Staff Areas

Cafe & Gallery

Mech. / Servers

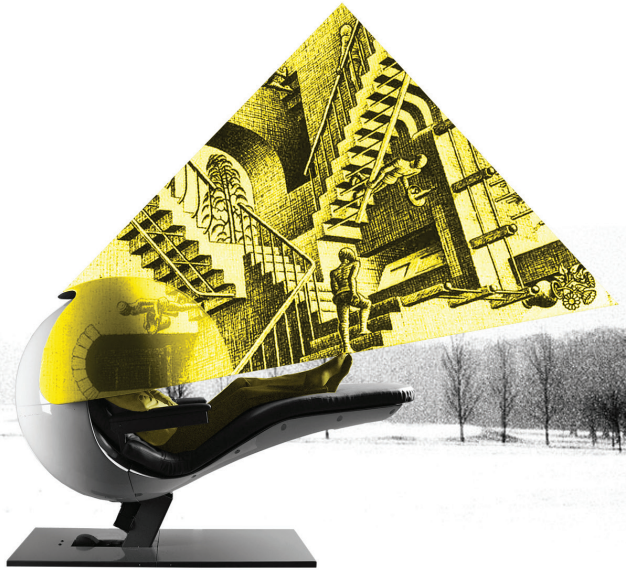
Washrooms

COMMUNICATION

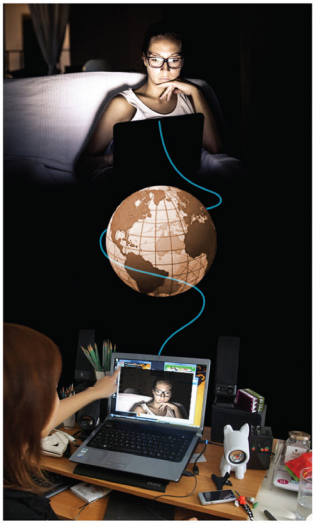
COLLECTION

SUPPORT

Reading Room



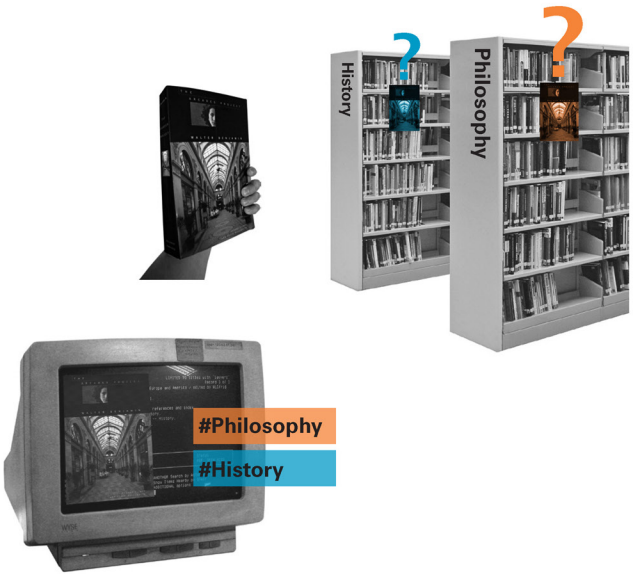
Private Niche



"If our new media constitute so complete a range of expressiveness as both to enhance and almost supplant speech itself, then we have moved into the period of post-literacy. … Not that we are to be deprived of books any more than of ancient manuscripts. But it is plain that our new culture is not going to lean very heavily on any one means of encoding experience or of representing reality."

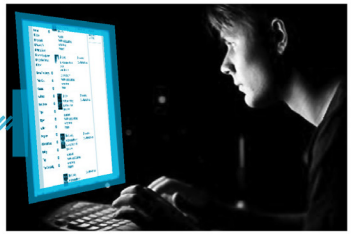
– McLuhan

Extreme Capacity

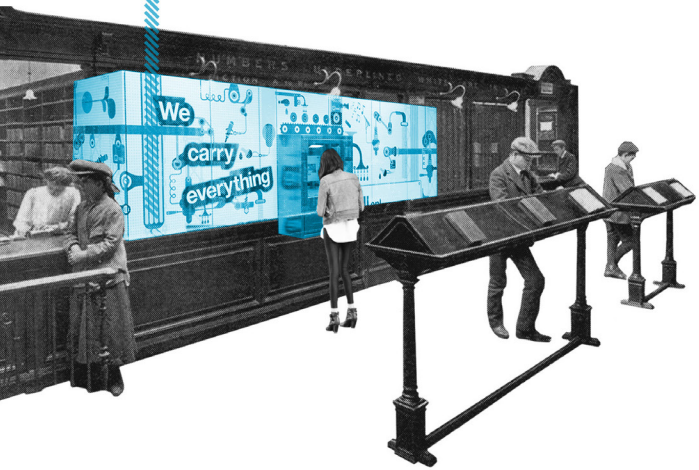


Flexible Categorization

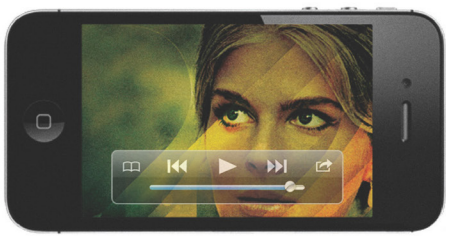
Visual Browsing
versus
Full-body Browsing



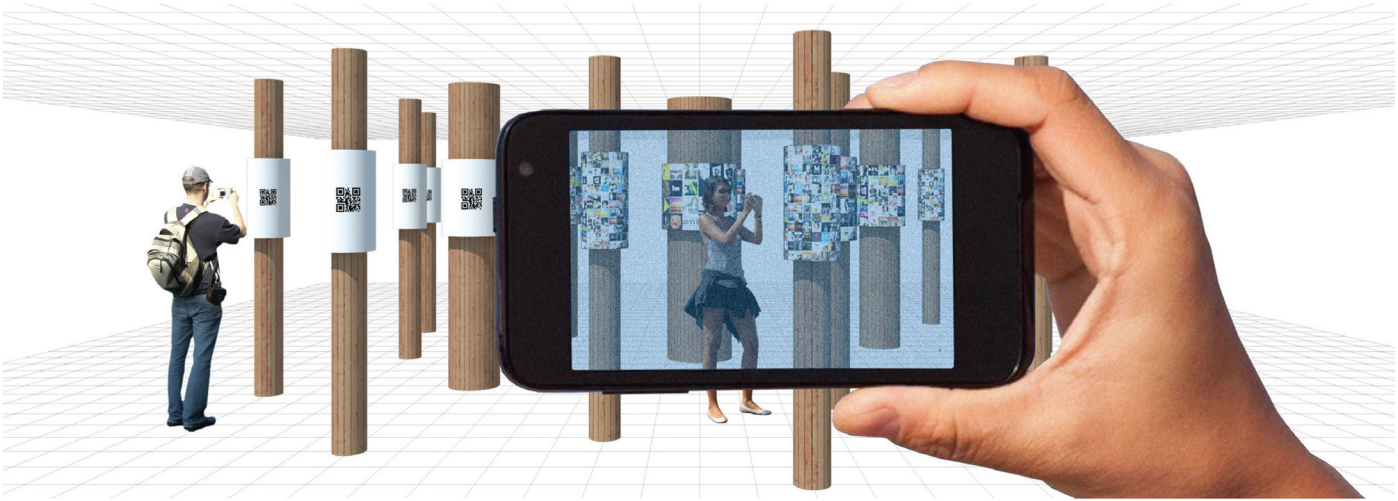
Lending Library

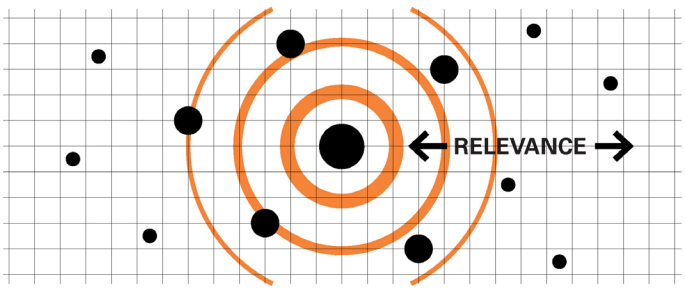


Network Access

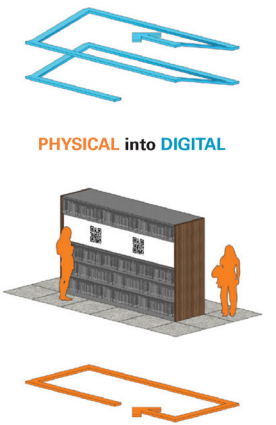


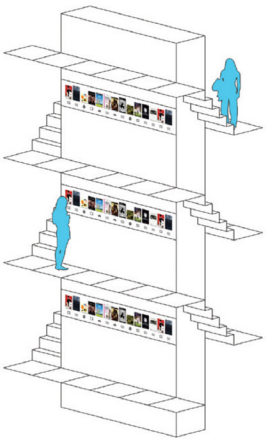
Augmented Reality Browsing





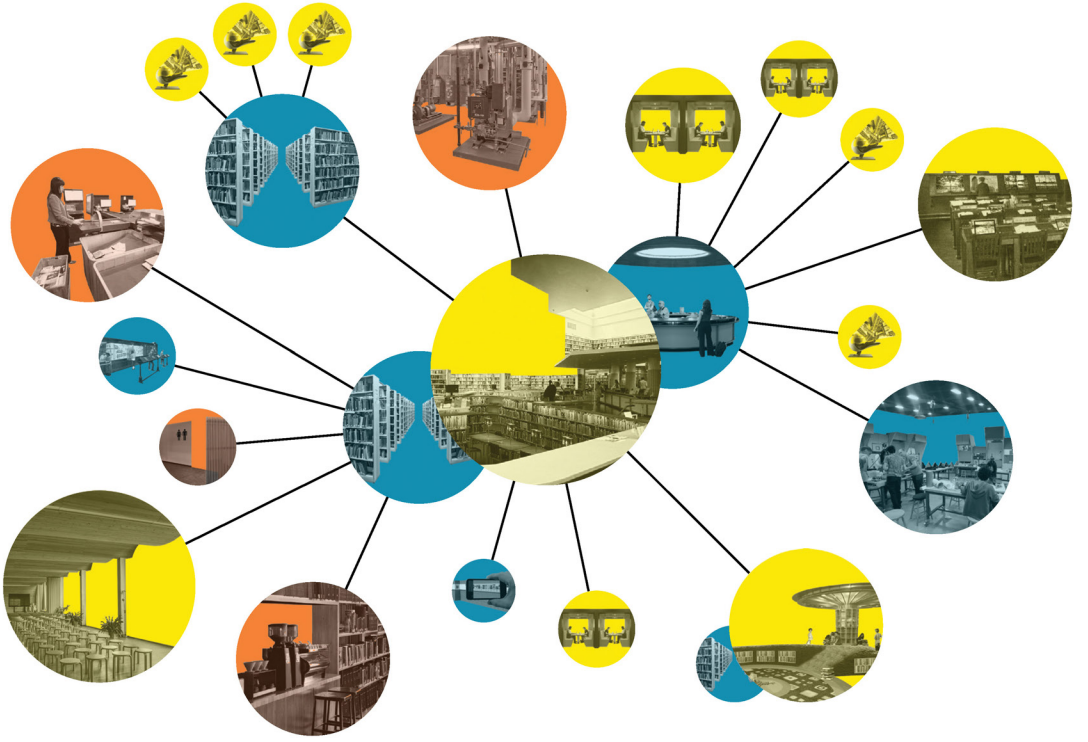
“Glade” Interface





“Infinite Tower” Interface

An Illustrative Design



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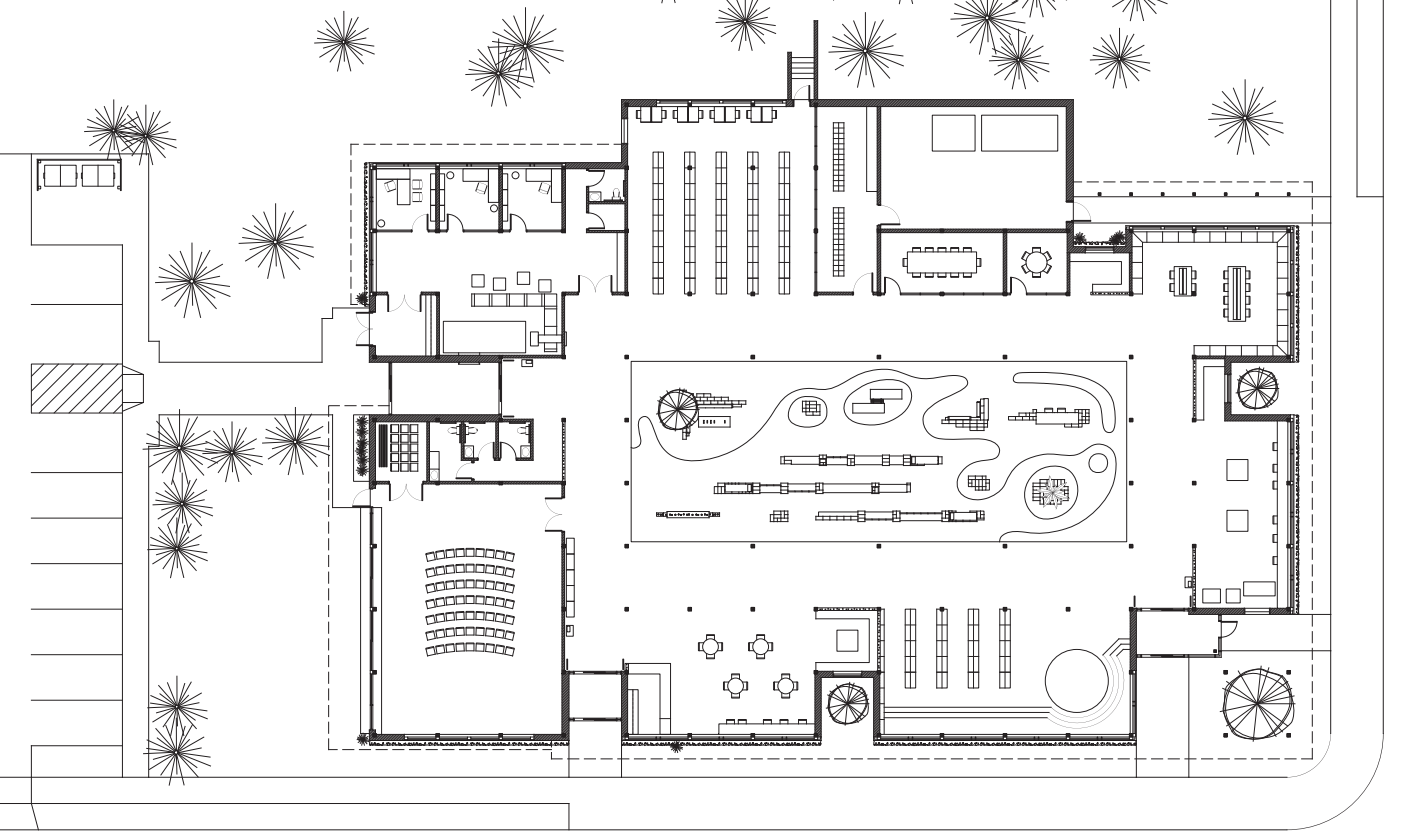

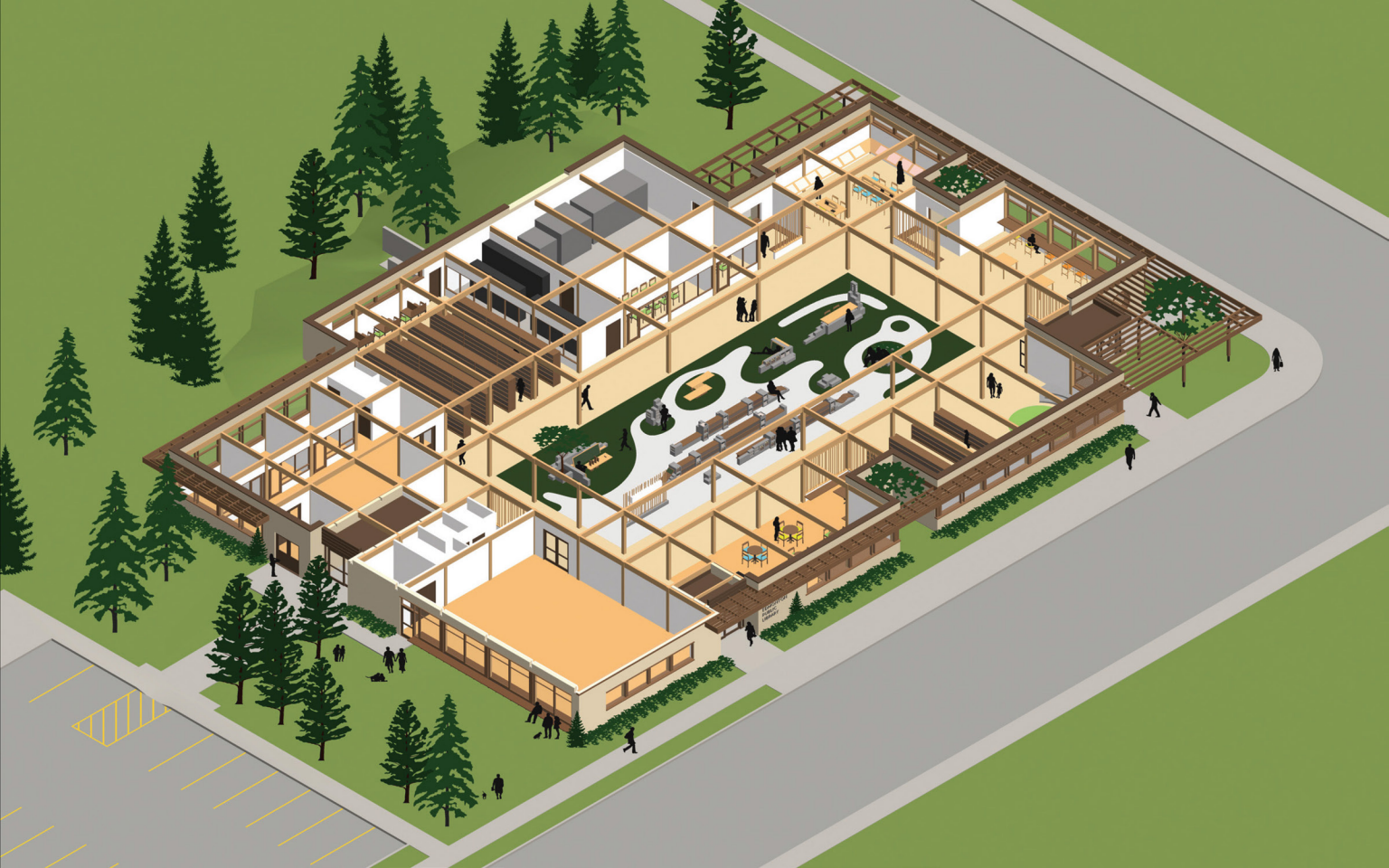

transverse section

longitudinal section

Q & A

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