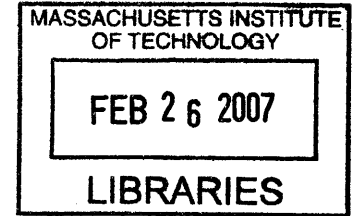


**BROWSE:
Re-Forming the Urban Library**



by:
Sandra Ann Baron
Bachelor of Science in Architecture
The University of Virginia, 2002

ARCHIVES

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
February 2007

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BROWSE: Re-Forming the Urban Library

Abstract

By Sandra Ann Baron

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The urban library has persisted as a cultural entity, largely because its interiorized form functions as a vault, creating a clear, although often intimidating, boundary between library program and the public realm. While preserved in its laudable functions, the library has met significant challenges with the emergence of new forms of media and technology. The introduction of the television, and more importantly the internet, as popular means of gathering information translates into a complete transformation of the acquisition process into mere fleeting engagements with mass media. The viewpoints and opinions of those few who shape the media are imparted upon the masses. In comparison, the library presents information not only with the benefit of multiple perspectives, but also with the necessary context provided through related subject matters. The challenge therefore becomes one of making available to the general public the great wealth of intellectual resources that the library provides.

While some recent library designs have experimented with using the library's very competition to save it from extinction and have essentially contaminated the library with programs from outside the "vault," these attempts have for the most part been unsuccessful. The key to reinventing the urban library, I argue, is structuring a new relationship between the highly sensory and immediate experience of the media and the comprehensive material the library has to offer. The crucial bridge between these seemingly disparate methods of acquiring information is the act of browsing. The curiosity that an individual has in one subject matter branches out to create an entirely new area of understanding and ends in a new ability to generate particular opinions. The new urban library therefore becomes structured as an urban interface to facilitate the act of browsing. The community becomes involved in all aspects of the organization of the library so that the interface reflects the very interests of the various constituencies who pass through the library on a daily basis. The library may no longer bear a precise resemblance to libraries of old, stoic reading rooms and monumental facades, but the objectives of this institution will persist for the benefit of future generations.

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To our thesis class for your humor, support, friendship and encouragement. And last, but not least, to all of those who helped me with production, particularly Al, Kyuree, Gordana, Dennis, Reilly, Marissa, Justin, and Colleen. Thank you Neeraj for your feedback and for your shared interest in libraries.

Preface

Established in 1848, the Boston Public Library was the first publicly supported municipal library in the United States.¹ “FREE TO ALL” inscribed directly above the main entrance, it is unambiguous that all residents of the state are entitled to borrowing and research privileges. One of the most interesting aspects of the library as a public place is its dependence on the community itself. Although the act of reading is typically a solitary event, the library draws patrons into a reading community.

In order to understand the role that books and libraries play in our lives today, we must look into their origins. All considered, libraries are not becoming redundant as many fear. Rather, the number of published volumes each year has continued to grow substantially since digital technology emerged. Libraries are however, doing a poor job of selling their materials to the average public, translating into a loss for society. The library’s importance is explained: “Civilization, from which all human progress has stemmed, depends on consciousness which is largely gained from understanding not just information, but the opinions of others about facts. Science is based on formulating and testing hypotheses. In rather less dramatic fashion, all other branches of human endeavor are based on critical analysis of past opinions. Human development has in a sense been enabled by extremely complex forms of textual criticism.”²

Understanding the evolution of the library in terms of its organization, public versus private divisions, and symbolic qualities helps us understand the precise forces that could potentially shape the library into a more relevant and therefore resilient program in the modern day. The community’s relationship with the library is changing more rapidly than ever before and the library must keep up.

1 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_Public_Library>

2 Peter Davey, “Book Cases,” *Architectural Review*, Vol. 203, No. 1216 (June 1998) 4.

The Library Past and Present

THE LIBRARY IN EUROPE



Sorbonne 1254

http://www.irht.cnrs.fr/publications/pret_sorbonne.htm



Bodleian 1610-81

<http://www.philaprintshop.com/images/oxfordbodleian.jpg>

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the libraries of the ancient times such as the Library of Alexandria, Pergamum, and great Roman Public Libraries were but a distant memory. Library collections during the Middle Ages were initially quite small, storing only a few hundred books, to the effect that monasteries simply stored books in cupboards or small rooms (see Sorbonne 1254). Before the advent of the printing press in ca.1447, books were transcribed by hand, contributing to their limited number and consequential high value. Monasteries kept a careful watch over their collections and the acts of reading and writing were carried out in specific carrels occasionally located in the vicinity.³

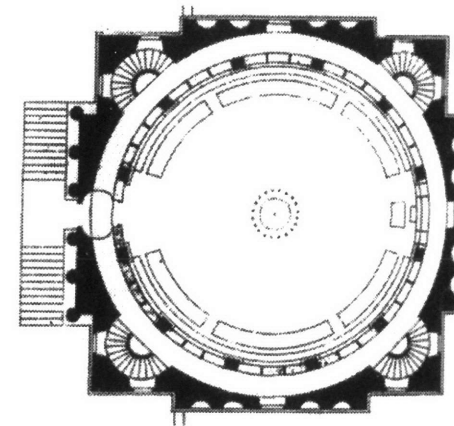
Academia, both in the form of universities as well as religious orders, drove the formation of the library room as a unique program. As the number of readers grew, the library room stretched into a longer and narrower arrangement, and as the number of books began to grow in association with the use of the printing press, libraries began utilizing the full height of the room as a storage solution. The shelves were therefore pushed out to the exterior walls of the room and ladders or galleries were used for access to books which were situated higher up (see Bodleian 1610). The increasing number of readers again raised concerns for the security of the reading materials and books were consequentially chained or stored behind a grille. Projecting cabinets were sometimes combined with the wall shelving system in order to provide privacy for the academics as they studied their material.⁴

3 Clare Graham, "Libraries in history," *Architectural Review*, Vol. 203, No. 1216 (June 1998) 72.

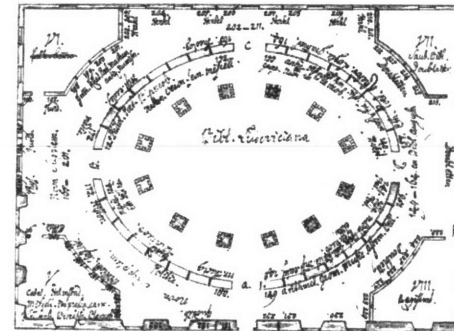
4 Graham, "Libraries in history," 73.

It wasn't until the end of the 17th century that the rectangular form of the library changed to a centralized form, typically in the shape of an oval (see Wolfenbuttel). This idea for the circular plan was pioneered by Sir Christopher Wren in an alternative (unbuilt) proposal for Trinity College.⁵ With the centrally planned model, the room became, for the first time, an organizational force, with books arranged according to topic and these topics then organized hierarchically. The aim of the library during the Enlightenment was to become all inclusive as a means in which to obtain objective truth about the universe. This circular form would grow to become important symbolically in many future libraries.

As libraries grew in size, countries such as Britain and France aimed to assemble the most extensive collections by combining royal and religious collections and raced to house them in the grandest of buildings. New organizational strategies were developed specifically for this National Library model. For example, by this time, library catalogues were widely used to access books that could no longer be stored with the general collection and instead were placed in closed stacks. In the British Museum's circular reading room, "staff sat in the enclosed space at the center, surrounded by concentric rings of the catalogue; beyond this radiated reader desks, while books lining the outer perimeter represented a mere fraction of the collection."⁶ The Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève was designed in the more traditional form of one long rectangular room, but utilized ornate iron vaults to create a sense of grandeur.



Trinity College (proposal) 1675
 "Libraries in history." *Architectural Review*,
 Vol. 203, No. 1216 (June 1998) 74.



Wolfenbuttel 1706-10
 "Libraries in history." *Architectural Review*,
 Vol. 203, No. 1216 (June 1998) 74.

5 Graham, "Libraries in history," 73.

6 Graham, "Libraries in history," 74.

In a change that reflected the social climate of the early 19th century, the library became divided into separate public and private spaces in an effort to create greater public order. The general public was restricted to the reading room, while the greater part of the library collections were positioned in closed stacks. This model would later become an important part of the organization of the public library in America.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN AMERICA

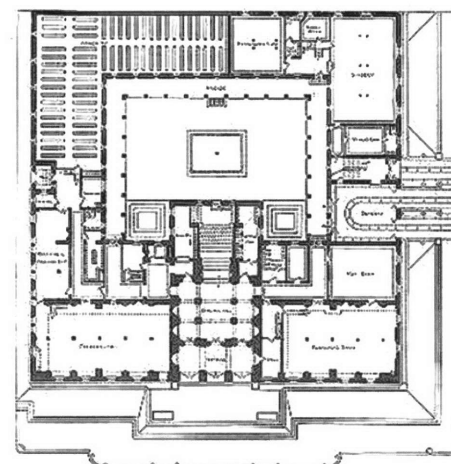
The library in the United States had far less influence from religious or royal collections than libraries in Europe. Instead, the predecessor of the public library as we know it was a sort of “joint stock library,” also referred to as a “social library.” Benjamin Franklin and a group of his middle class friends, anxious to be subjected to more material, decided to pool their resources of books for each man’s mutual benefit.⁷ The effect was toward a more even distribution of intellectual wealth and served to bind together a reading public. A text from 1894 reflects, “It is perhaps significant that this movement for the free use of books owes its origin to the so-called middle class, to the manual laborer rather than the professional man, for Franklin and his friends who subscribed to the stock of the company were mechanics and tradesmen. The library was created, not for the use of the scholar, or the rich, or any one class, but for those people who could not win their way to books through the medium of position or money. It’s effect was toward a more even distribution of intellectual wealth, the establishment,

⁷ Paul Dickson, *The Library in America*, (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986) xiv.

so to speak, of an intellectual democracy.”⁸ These social libraries eventually became more organized in the form of institutions such as Boston’s and New York’s Athenaeums.

Established in 1854, the Boston Public Library was the first of its kind, receiving its funding from the taxed public and therefore open to the entire population. In fact, the phrase “FREE TO ALL” is displayed above the main entry of the McKim Mead and White building, showing its intentions as a public entity. The library played a large role in kick-starting the Public Library Movement and over time influenced the establishment of countless local branches across the country.

The typical urban library circa 1885 most likely included a “desk shutting off the sacred book collection which extends back into the dark crypt called the ‘stacks’.”⁹ A librarian would be sitting behind a desk to receive catalogue requests and then a “runner” would retrieve the desired book. A few libraries began to experiment with breaking down this barrier between public and private within the library. When the brand new McKim Mead and White design for the Boston Public Library opened to the public in 1895, it included a large room with books stored on open shelves. The success of this new organization in Boston was enough to convince conservative thinkers that this “open-shelf policy” was the way of the future.



Boston Public Library 1895
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Boston_Public_Library_Plan.jpg

⁸ Joseph Leroy Harrison, “The Public Library in the United States,” as reprinted in *The Library in America*, by Paul Dickson (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986) 2.

⁹ Ernestine Rose, “The Public Library in American Life,” as reprinted in *The Library in America*, by Paul Dickson (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1986) 26.

The key improvement in the library system at the turn of the century was in accessibility. For example, a "Library Wagon" was conceived in 1905 in order to service the more remote public and was followed by the first automotive bookmobile in 1912. It has been observed that, "Increasingly, libraries were working to serve special groups, ranging from immigrants to the handicapped, while smaller and smaller towns were declaring their need for a free, public library. In short, the library was beginning to move out into the community."¹⁰ An observation from 1901 further reinforces this idea when it states, "The day of one colossal building, serving the people inadequately, and standing more for a place of exhibition and the resort of scholars of leisure than a people's university is certainly passing."¹¹

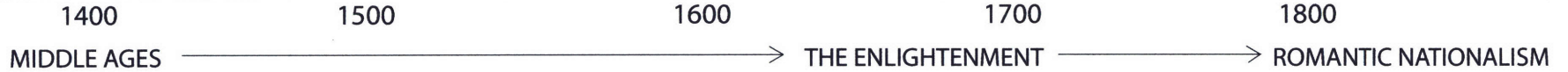
Another important contribution to the accessibility of books was made through Andrew Carnegie and his Carnegie Libraries. Notably, the great iron-maker limited his gifts to the donation of the building itself and left the responsibility of financing annual appropriations to the local municipality. This not only required participation in the library at the present, but encouraged the continuance of public interest into the future. The library was therefore local, flexible, and bound specifically to the community. "A library of the people had to be supported by the people... Popular initiative, participation and control were the desired aims; for they were basic to America's fluid, evolutionary social organization."¹²

10 Dickson, *The Library in America*, 41.

11 Dickson, *The Library in America*, 41.

12 Dickson, *The Library in America*, 48.

TIMELINE




ESTABLISHMENT OF LIBRARY AS A SEMI-PUBLIC PROGRAM


EXPERIMENTATION WITH ORGANIZATIONAL METHODS

LIBRARY AS SEMI-PRIVATE RETREAT

2. WALL MODEL
 GOALS: PRODUCE BOOKS, PRESERVE BOOKS
 SPACE: LONG NARROW RECTANGULAR ROOM, USE WHOLE HEIGHT
 BOOK STORAGE: BOOKS CHAINED TO SHELVES OR BEHIND GRILLES, OR CHAINED TO LECTURNS
 READING: CARRELS OR ALCOVES FOR READING
 RESULTS: MONUMENTALITY, GRANDEUR OF FULL HEIGHT BOOKS, GREATER BOOK STORAGE ABILITY, LARGER COMMUNITY OF BORROWERS

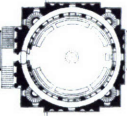


Escorial Library, 1567




Bodleian Library, 1636

4. CENTRALLY PLANNED MODEL
 GOALS: STORE BOOKS FOR EASY ACCESS
 SPACE: OVAL OR CIRCULAR WITH SERVICE CORRIDOR AROUND OUTSIDE AND READING AT CENTER
 BOOK STORAGE: BOOKS ALONG WALLS, "CATALOGUED" (ORGANIZED) BY THE SPACE
 READING: READER AT CENTER OF ROOM
 RESULTS: ENLIGHTENMENT PRINCIPLE OF GATHERING ALL KNOWLEDGE, ORGANIZATION PROVIDED BY SPACE




Proposal for Trinity College, 1675




Wolfenbuttel Library, 1710

3. WALL AND SHELVES MODEL
 GOALS: MORE BOOK STORAGE
 READING: NEW BENCH AND ALCOVE POSSIBILITIES, OCCASIONAL LECTURNS AT END OF ROWS
 RESULTS: MORE GRANDEUR, GREATER BOOK STORAGE ABILITY




Leyden University Library, 1610



Bodleian Library, 1636

LIBRARY AS PRIVATE RETREAT

1. PRIVATE MODEL
 GOALS: STORE BOOKS WITHIN HOME
 SPACE: SMALL ROOM
 BOOK STORAGE: BOOKS ALONG WALLS
 READING: CUPBOARD, TABLE, ETC.
 RESULTS: COMFORT, EASY ACCESS



Gentleman's Cabinet, 1675

LIBRARY AS PUBLIC RETREAT

1a. SOCIAL LIBRARY
 GOALS: SHARE BOOKS AMONG FRIENDS
 SPACE: SMALL ROOM
 BOOK STORAGE: BOOKS ALONG WALLS
 READING: CUPBOARD, TABLE, ETC.
 RESULTS: EASY ACCESS, LARGER BOOK COLLECTION

1900

2000

→ 20TH CENTURY MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY →

PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT

LARGE INCREASE IN NUMBER OF BOOKS

5. NATIONAL LIBRARIES

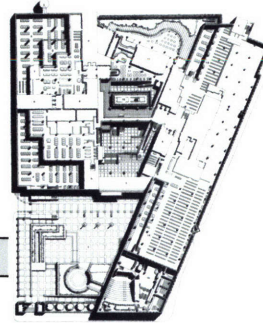
GOALS: RACE FOR MOST BOOKS, INCLUDE ALL BOOKS ESTABLISH PUBLIC ORDER
SPACE: LARGE CIRCULAR OR RECTANGULAR READING ROOM, DIVISION PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
BOOK STORAGE: MOST BOOKS STORED IN PRIVATE STACKS, BEGINNING USE OF CATALOGUE
READING: TABLES AND CURBIES
RESULTS: WIDE USE, GRAND SPACES, NATIONAL PRIDE



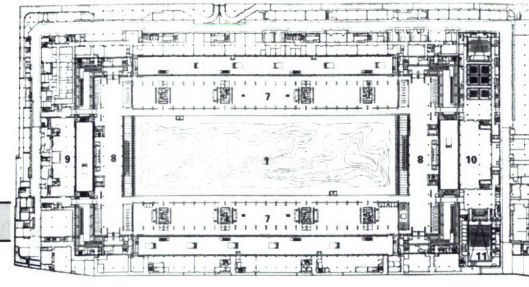
British Museum Library, 1857



Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris 1868



New British Library, 1970 - 1998

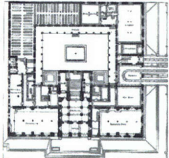


Bibliotheque Nationale de France, 1996

ALL INCLUSIVE PRESERVATION/DOCUMENTATION

6. PUBLIC LIBRARIES

GOALS: DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC, WIDESPREAD INTELLECTUAL GROWTH
SPACE: MULTIPLE ROOM LAYOUTS, DIVISION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
BOOK STORAGE: MOST BOOKS STORED IN PRIVATE STACKS, USE OF CATALOGUE
READING: MONUMENTAL READING ROOMS, BORROWING PRIVILEGES
RESULTS: WIDESPREAD USE, BEGINNING OF RACE FOR LIBRARIES



Boston Public Library, 1895

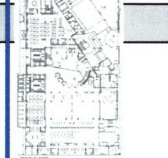


New York Public Library, 1911

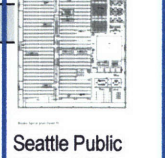
NEW TECHNOLOGY
NEW USES/DEMANDS



Phoenix Central Library, 1995



San Francisco Public Library, 1996



Seattle Public Library, 2004

8. LIBRARIES TODAY

GOALS: INCREASE IN READERSHIP, WIDESPREAD ACCESS TO BOOKS, IMPROVEMENT OF COMMUNITY LIFE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

SPACE: MANY DIFFERENT STRATEGIES, TECHNOLOGY HELPS TO FREE UP ORGANIZATION OF PROGRAM

BOOK STORAGE: MANY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, MANY BOOKS STORED IN PRIVATE STACKS

READING: MANY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS, EMPHASIS ON CREATING A COMMUNITY

RESULTS: SOME SUCCESS SOME FAILURE, LONGTERM PROSPECT UNCERTAIN

EQUAL ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE FOR ALL
CENTER OF COMMUNITY LEARNING AND IDENTITY

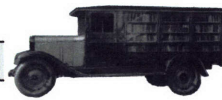
INCREASE IN READERSHIP

7. LOCAL LIBRARIES

GOALS: WIDESPREAD ACCESS TO BOOKS, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LIBRARY
SPACE: DIVISION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN BRANCHES, REDEFINING SPACE THROUGH BOOKMOBILE
BOOK STORAGE: MOST BOOKS STORED IN PRIVATE STACKS, USE OF CATALOGUE
READING: BORROWING PRIVILEGES



Carnegie Libraries, 1890 (first in U.S.)



Bookmobile, 1905



Public Library System, Local Branches

THE LIBRARY TODAY?

The library has undergone multiple transformations during its long history. During the enlightenment, as we have seen, it endeavored to be all-inclusive and represented this through a spherical organization. Next came an equivalent to the “space race,” where extreme nationalism led nations to compete to assemble the greatest collection of books and to store them in the grandest of buildings. The emphasis on democracy in the new world, however, meant that the Library Movement in America was characterized more by fragmentation and accessibility than singularity and monumentality. We thus see the library as having taken on a number of roles symbolically and as having responded to changing social cues throughout history. Today we find ourselves still embracing democracy, but perhaps contemplating a crisis of the collective, or as described by Richard Sennett, a movement away from a unique public life”.¹³ The internet and other forms of media mean that it is no longer required that we become a part of a community of readers, as Benjamin Franklin and others have in the past. As Habermas has argued, one of the functions of this public life of the mid 18th century was to provide a critical space where people discussed and criticized the affairs of the state.¹⁴ The new technological world that we live in could therefore be viewed as providing multiple opportunities, but simultaneously limiting our social interactions.

13 Richard Sennett, *The fall of public man*, (New York: Knopf, 1977).

14 Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) 15.

While we view the internet and other technological advances as strong influences on practically all aspects of life, it is important to understand that this is not the first time in history that such influences have transformed the functioning of the library program. The introduction of the printing press, for example, caused the number of books in library collections to grow exponentially, while this increase required that a card catalogue be used as an organizational and research tool. The catalogues, in conjunction with the Dewey Decimal System, took the guesswork out of locating books and, once the social climate was right, opened the doors for a disintegration of the public versus private boundary. The visitor to the public library could actually engage with the full collection of books for the first time. Technology for tracking items today has advanced to such a degree that we might question whether there is potential for new security solutions. The experience the reader has with the library materials could change dramatically.

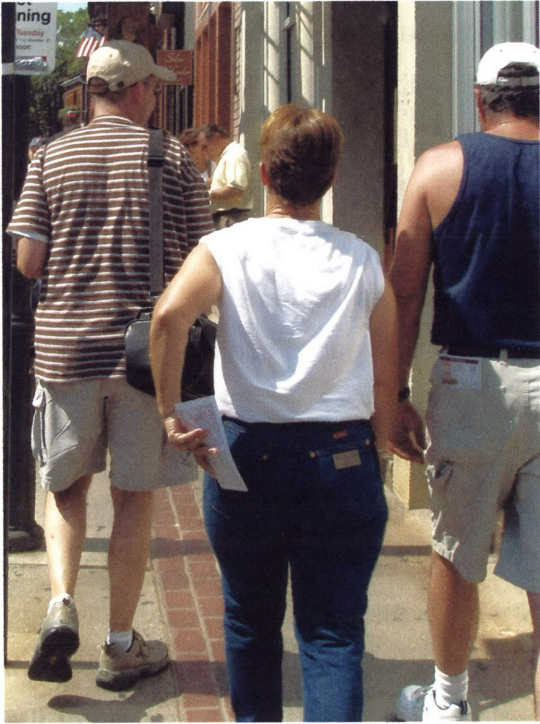
This thesis therefore looks to the future of the library and speculates what it might become. If positioned correctly, the urban library becomes an important component within the community and serves to facilitate a greater collective experience for the public man. Rather than existing, as most public spaces do, as a slave to commercial forces and the media, can the library harness these forces for its own purposes and salvation? Lastly, new technology should not be viewed as the library's cause of death, but instead as a changing force in line with other influences that have come before. Technology can serve to further liberate the experience of the reader with the book materials.

The Library in its Urban Context (Boston)

Boston has a long history as a place which champions the development of democratic ideals and public unity, beginning with the events leading up to the American Revolution. Places such as Faneuil Hall have been home to oratory efforts by individuals such as Samuel Adams leading up to the Revolutionary War, and multiple other revolutionaries, abolitionists, temperance advocates, and suffragists thereafter. Acts of rebellion such as the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party occurred in what is now understood to be the historic heart of Boston. The Old State House served as the seat of the colonial government before the revolution and then as the state capitol until 1797. From its balcony, the Declaration of Independence was first read to Bostonians on July 18, 1776.¹⁵ All of these events happened in what was the public realm and countless people flock to Boston each year to commemorate these occasions.

It raises the question, however, as to the current state of the public realm. Avoiding nostalgia towards the birth years of our country, we might ask whether our public spaces today foster the coming together of all constituencies as part of one dynamic community. We also might ask whether these spaces are successfully representing the city, with all its diversity and unique resources. The answer for both of these questions in regards to Boston is “no.” Instead of investing in the city of the present, Boston merely reflects on the city of the past, allowing the commercial forces of tourism and the requisite preservation and recreation efforts to suffocate the public realm.

¹⁵ Thomas H. O'Connor, *The HUB: Boston Past and Present*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001) 68.

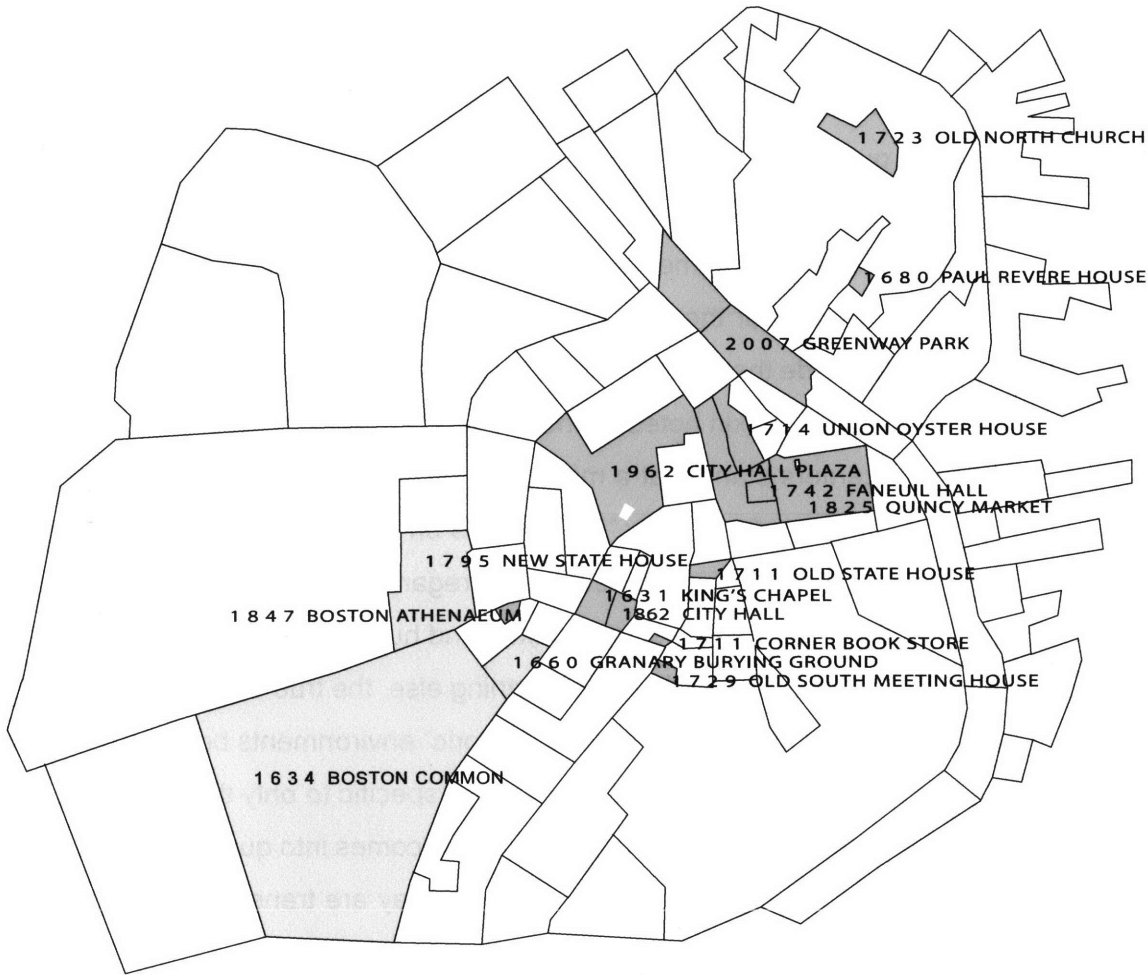


TOURIST ACTIVITY

A large part of this suffocation is related to tourism, which is sadly hardly ever about discovering the essence of the place or the possibilities it holds for a more enlightened existence. Instead, it is a predetermined path and a set collection of markers in the urban field. Simply climb aboard the Boston Duck Tour or follow the Freedom trail to understand this phenomenon. There are only a few free tourist maps and on-line travel guides that find their way into the hands of, and therefore shape the experience of, nearly every self-guided tourist. This has become our culture's understanding of history and place; fragmented and incomplete.

While cities of the past have been largely organized around specific central places, what made them distinct were the relationships that existed around such urban centers. Michael Sorkin notes, "Whether agora, castle, piazza, or downtown, the idea of a city of centers stands, at a minimum, for the idea of a spatial city, a city in which order is a function of proximity."¹⁶ He goes on to explain that these relationships are not just physical, but social as well. Yet, in regards to Boston's urban core, such fruitful associations and hierarchies are masked and human connectivity is lost. Value is assigned to all that is "historic", and everything else, the true organs of the contemporary city, goes unrecognized. Once these "historic" environments become "a city of simulations" and "the city as theme park," they are specific to only the visitor and neglect all other constituencies. Their very public nature comes into question. While valuing the public spaces of the past, public spaces of today are transformed in such a way that they drive the native Boston population away from their own city core. Opportunities for social interaction and community activity are therefore lost.

16 Michael Sorkin. *Variations on a Theme Park—The New American City and the End of Public Space*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) xii.



FRAGMENTED CITY

The definition of the term “public space” has been an intensely debated topic over the past twenty years since, as described by Rosalyn Deutsche, “How we define public space is intimately connected with ideas about what it means to be human, the nature of society, and the kinds of political community we want.” The point of consensus she describes is that, “supporting things that are public promotes the survival and extension of democratic culture.”¹⁷

It becomes important to understand then that public space is in fact a special existence within the condition of open space, one which occurs on limited occasions in our highly proscribed urban experiences. In order for a space to in fact be public, it needs to engender community life from each individual rather than facilitating the continuation of private existence. These discussions of human interaction in the public sphere can be considered through the designations of public and private as defined by Habermas. To him, the “public sphere” is a sphere of private people who join together to form a public. However, the key feature of this sphere, “rational critical debate,” is, at the moment, drowned out by leisure and tourism activities, as well as mass media, which Habermas argues is being “cheap and powerful and serves to generate consensus among the masses”.¹⁸ The temptation may be to use careful planning and, like many other modern Western cities, “to control and direct social interaction, police it, rather than to provide a stage on which various publics can come together in all their often contentious differences and spark a conflagration of public, political, and social

17 Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996) 82.

18 Craig Calhoun, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992).

interaction.”¹⁹ We must fight against the urge to privatize the major open spaces that make up our city.

The most recognized example of control over seemingly public space is Tompkins Square Park in New York’s Lower East Side where riots broke out in the late 1980s and early 1990s in response to city sponsored curfews. The saga ended with the closing and refurbishing of the park, which now stands as an emblem of the escalating neighborhood-wide gentrification. Also notable is the fact that since the 1990s, significant subsidies from the government have gone to the development of such privately owned, yet publicly accessible, spaces as malls as “the last best hope for the city.”²⁰ Recreating the historic as an act of renewal is currently a narrow-minded goal of the city of Boston. These processes are not at all examples of the democratic means of cultivating public culture.

While it is impossible to conceive of a public space that is completely free of media influences or controlling forces, it becomes a valuable study to consider new programs that could begin to neutralize these concerns. The goal is for the library to work as one with the context and become an urban public space of its own. Previously overpowering elements such as commercial programs get placed into a more balanced relationship with the library program. Together, the two programs flourish and constituencies come together as part of one dynamic community.

19 Don Mitchell and Van Deusen. “Downsview Park: Open Space or Public Space?,” in *Downsview Park Toronto*, by Julia Czerniak. (New York: Harvard Design School Prestel, 2001) 103.

20 Mitchell and Ven Deusen, “Downsview Park,” 104.

THE CONSTITUENCIES

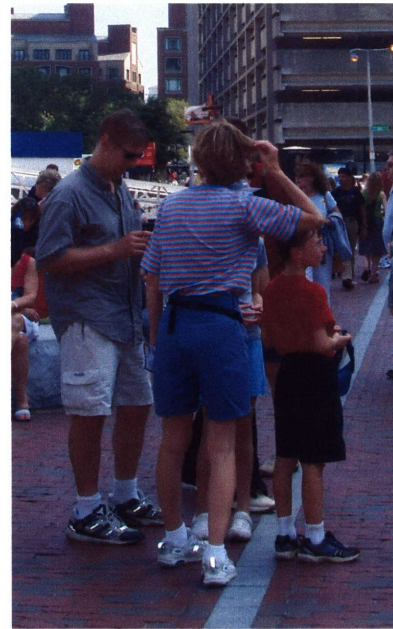
When we speak of human interaction within the urban public sphere, we must understand that the city is composed of a whole variety of personalities with a diverse set of interests. These individuals, which I've broken down into Residents, Suburbanites, Workers, and Tourists for the sake of analysis, carry out routines according to these interests. It therefore becomes important to understand the cues they take from the city and their consequential movement.



THE BOSTON RESIDENT



THE SUBURBANITE



THE TOURIST



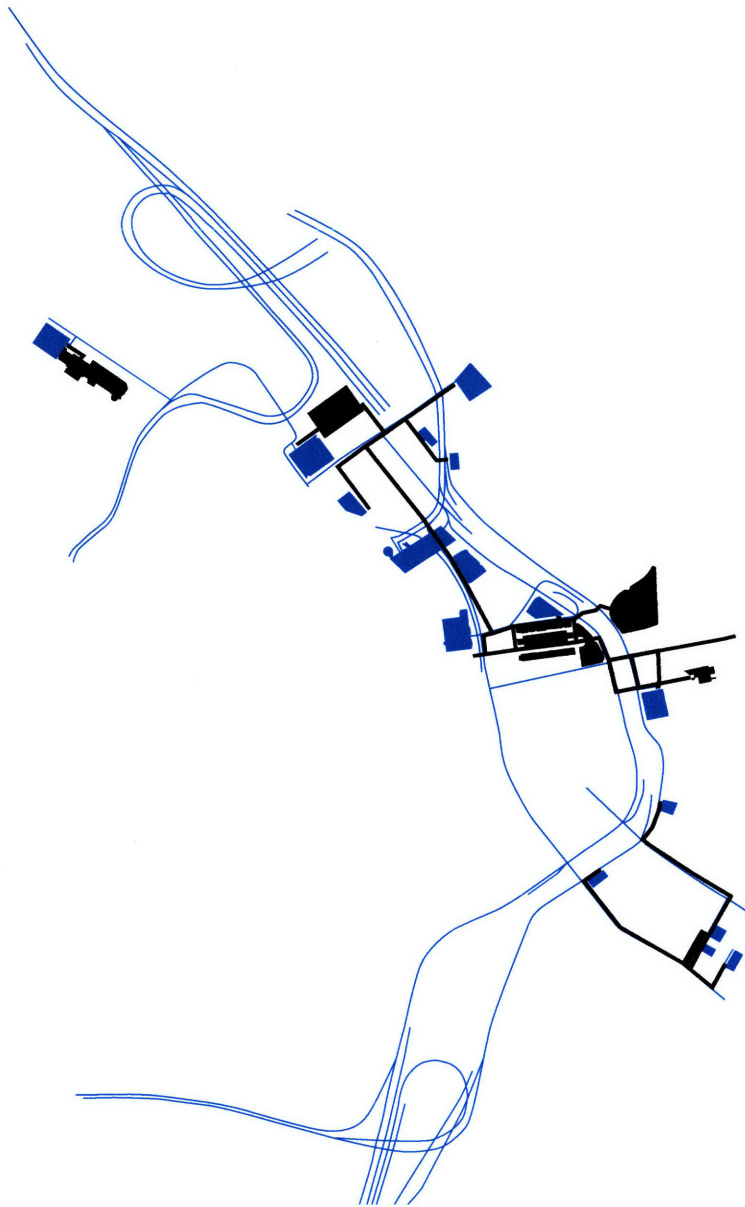
THE WORKER



BOSTON RESIDENTS

The urban dweller, in the case of Boston, typically calls one of the historic neighborhoods such as the North End or the Back Bay home. These individuals rely heavily on public transportation and typically use walking as a means to get from point A to point B. Residents of the North End, in particular, cross the Big Dig on a daily basis to get to the core of Boston. For residents, their home and neighborhood are the base of their urban experience (shown in blue).

MOVEMENT OF CONSTITUENCIES



SUBURBANITES

Those individuals who live in the suburbs tend to traverse the urban core only for special occasions, often a weekend trip to the aquarium or science center. Their arrival in the city is often via central artery tunnels, which leads to a detached and disorienting entrance experience. In addition, their visit is typically highly scripted and specific to those programs that are unique to the city (in black). The many area parking garages become the base of their urban experience (shown in blue).

MOVEMENT OF CONSTITUENCIES



TOURISTS

The city and its many historic sights are dominated by tourists during particular times of year and especially on weekends. The experience of these tourists in the city is highly scripted and geared toward amusement (attractions marked in black). Although arriving by car or airport transportation, the most common foot path through the city is along the Freedom Train (dashed in black). The points of departure in the city for tourists are the many hotels (shown in blue).

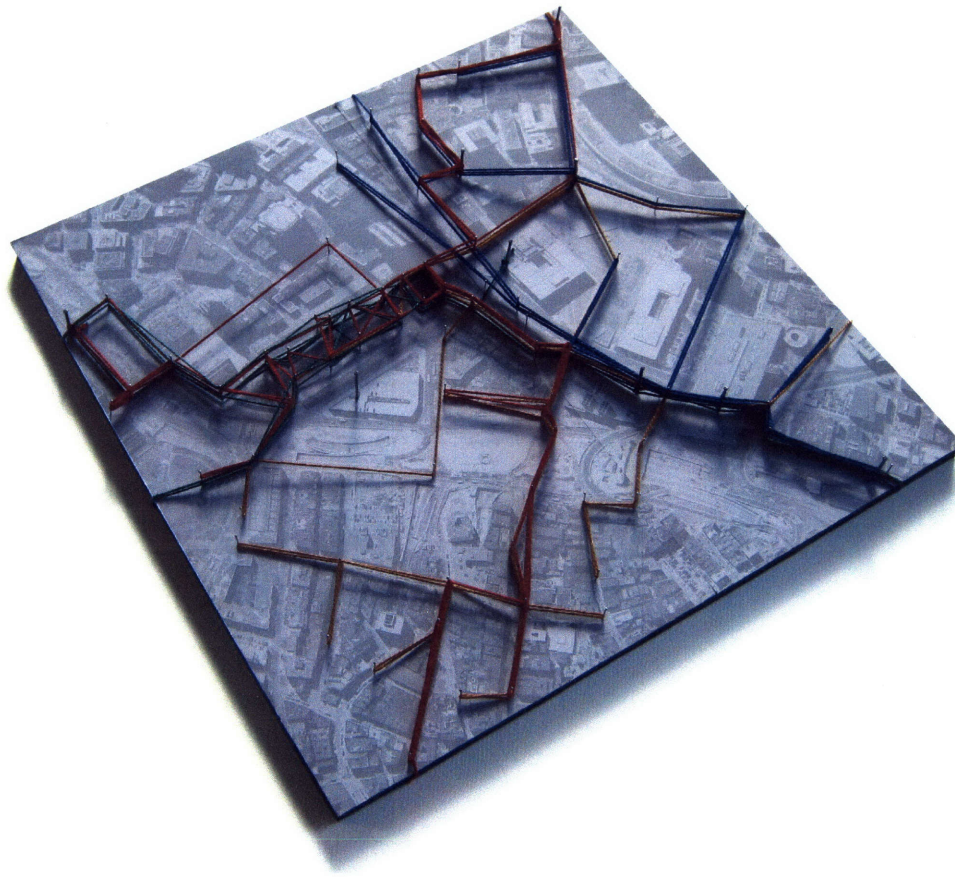
MOVEMENT OF CONSTITUENCIES



WORKERS

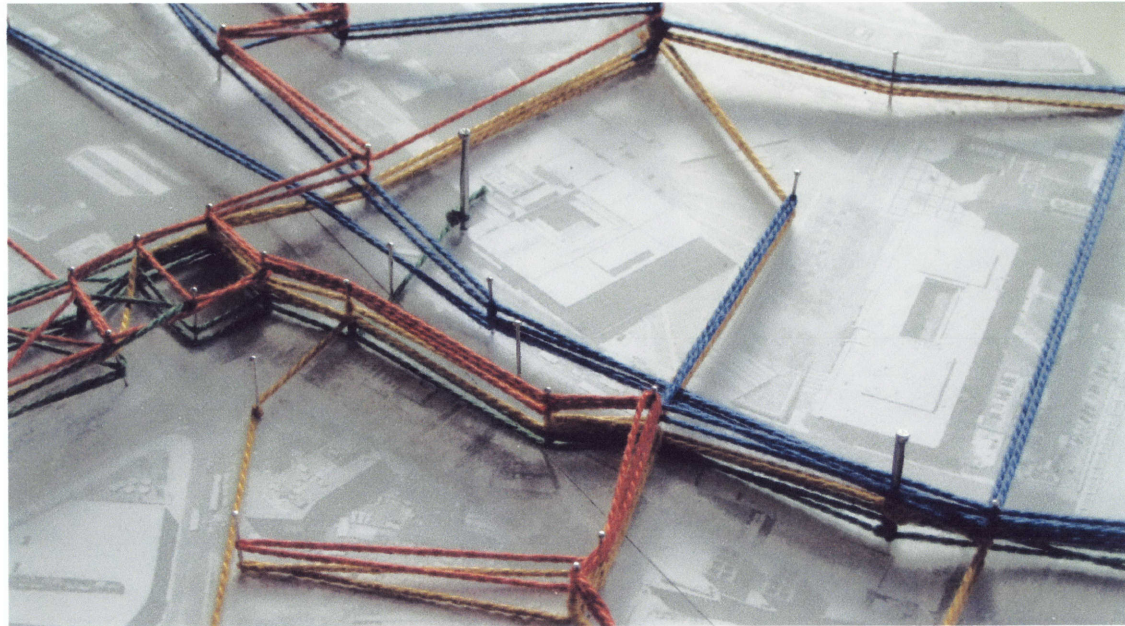
There are numerous white collar workers who descend upon the city of Boston each day, often to work in the financial district. The two main modes of transportation into the city center are train, both subway and commuter rail, and, predominantly, car. The many parking garages in the downtown area (in blue) become the points of departure for these individuals as they make their way to their workplaces. For the most part, the worker's movement is limited to this routine.

MOVEMENT OF CONSTITUENCIES



CONVERGE

When the many paths of the constituencies are collapsed into one diagram, we can begin to understand the complexity and dynamism of the situation. The unique paths of the individuals converge and diverge in a web of activity. A particularly notable convergence occurs along Congress Street, beginning at Faneuil Hall and ending at New Sudbury Street, between the Government Center Complex and the Rose Kennedy Greenway. This becomes an area of great opportunity for community interaction.



A MOMENT OF CONVERGENCE IN THE PATHS OF THE CONSTITUENCIES

BOSTON RESIDENTS = yellow SUBURBANITES = green TOURISTS = red WORKERS = blue



VIEW OF GOVERNMENT CENTER FROM LIBRARY SITE



VIEW OF CITY HALL FROM LIBRARY SITE



VIEW OF POINT OF LIBRARY CROSSING



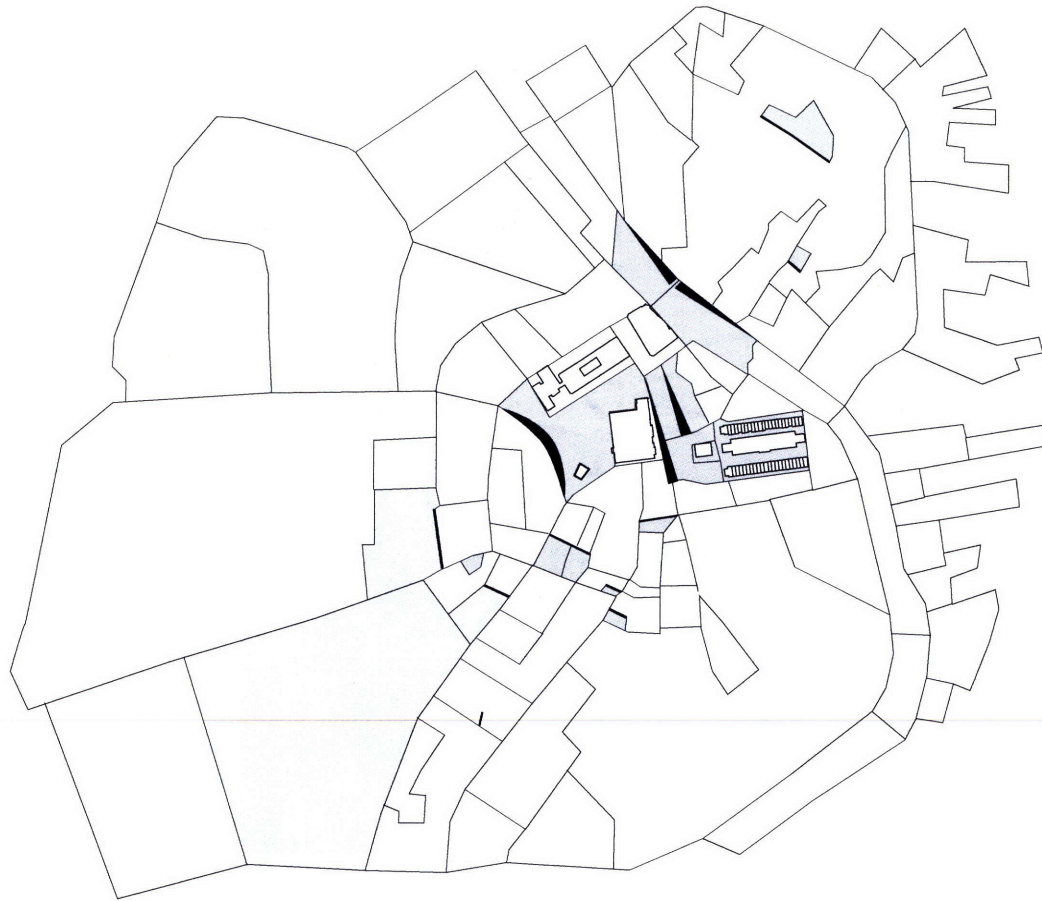
VIEW OF POINT OF LIBRARY CROSSING FROM FANEUIL HALL



VIEW OF HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL FROM LIBRARY



VIEW OF GREENWAY FROM LIBRARY

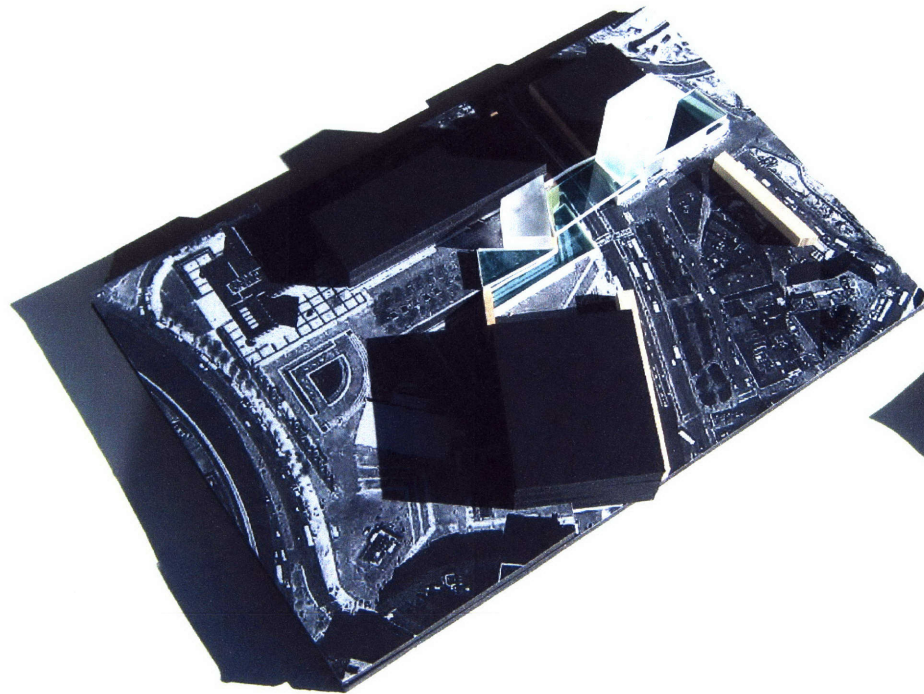


RESTRUCTURING THE FRAGMENTED CITY

CONTEXTUALIZING THE FRAGMENTS

The area illustrating a convergence of constituencies becomes ripe with social potential in that it supports a significant collective experience. It is at this moment that Boston can become understood for who and what it is today. The previously fragmented city becomes contextualized through both public interaction and, through the addition of the library, varied texts and other materials. The city center becomes less about hollow and superficial pursuits and instead about genuine understanding and progress.

The site for the library is therefore designated as engaging the City Hall Plaza and Rose Kennedy Greenway, as well as referencing Faneuil Hall. Whether the library makes a vertical gesture, bridges the site, or tucks between civic buildings are all strategies which have been considered. The final design, however, becomes a balance between monumental and informal gestures and relies heavily on the programmatic requirements of the library.



TOWER FORM



BRIDGING FORM

MASSING STUDIES



STREET EDGE FORM

Contemporary Library Analysis

As discussed previously, new threats to the public library have arrived in the form of commercialized and privatized space. Specifically, the last decade has revealed “an accelerated erosion of the Public Domain - replaced by increasingly sophisticated and entertaining forms of the Private.”²¹ The library was first confronted by this threat in the mid 1960s when the steadily growing system saw its first drop in circulation. Today, the obvious competition for the library is technology itself and the easy access to information it provides. There is something to be said, though, by the fact that the public library has survived largely unchanged even when faced with all the said challenges. The typical form throughout its history has included a commanding opaque enclosure with interiorized collections and “librarians behind desks and rows of closed books.”²² It is specifically this interiorized form that has acted as a preserving force and, whether desirable or not, captured the library model in time. As the library slowly loses popularity, designers such as Will Bruder of the Phoenix Central Library, Pei Cobb Freed and Partners of the San Francisco Public Library, and Rem Koolhaas of the Seattle Public Library consider ways of inducing a revival. New organization and insertion of new programs have been experimented with to varying levels of success.

The advent of the digital age has created new opportunities for the storage and organization of the books. In regards to technology’s influence on spatiality, we see a complete redefinition of the concept of proximity and organization due to new databases and search methods. Importance now lies in the privilege of access and control. William Mitchell observes, “As connectivity matters more, in many contexts, adjacency matters less, and architectural form is less tightly determined by the need to satisfy

21 Joshua Ramus, “Seattle Public” in *Content / AMOMA*, (Koln: Taschen, 2004) 139.

22 Ramus, “Seattle Public,” 143.

adjacency requirements.”²³ The electronic archive is also often associated with the Enlightenment and its goals of creating a universal library. The San Francisco Public Library is an example of the application of new organizational strategies. Librarian Kenneth Dowling used technology as an application of “electronic democracy” with the intention of freeing up the spatial organization of the new library design.²⁴ But, in the case of the San Francisco Public Library, the result was a complex program which has been criticized by many. The challenge, therefore, is to implement technology that not only frees up the organization, but does so in a way that is intuitive for the user. This means that the user should have a large role in the organization of the materials for which he or she searches.

There also has been a minor trend toward specialization in library programs. This is partly in response to the diversity of the community, but also is a reflection of commercial forces on the library. In the San Francisco Main Library, there exist a number of “affinity enclaves” that act as unofficial meeting rooms and study centers for specific local groups. These groups raised funds for the Library in order to gain such spaces in the new building.²⁵ The library thus becomes a conglomeration of discrete community centers. For these outside programs to be successful, however, they must be focused on integration and awareness rather than exclusion and separation.

23 William Mitchell, *ME++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003) 164.

24 Naomi Miller, “Lettera Da San Francisco” in *Spazio e Societa*, Vol. 19, No. 77 (January 1997) 10.

25 Miller, “Lettera Da San Francisco,” 10.



PHOENIX CENTRAL LIBRARY



SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY



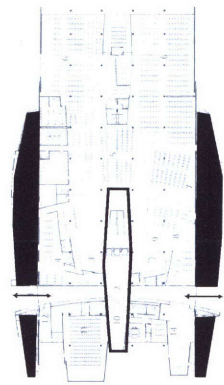
SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

New organizational opportunities and potential hybrid programs are being experimented with in all these examples, but not to the extent that they can function to the library's benefit. If the library is to move away from the Dewey Decimal System and break free from its rigid organization, it must do so in a way that allows full freedom and becomes intuitive to a point that the organization no longer becomes noticeable. Weil Arets explains, "For a library's customers, the organization is of little interest: it is a mechanism that ensures that services are provided. But for customers, the function is essential."²⁶ Joshua Ramus of OMA speaks on the same lines when he states that, "selection, classification, quality assessment, storage, assistance in searching and alerting. The ideal is to organize these services so that they dovetail seamlessly with customers' activities (education and research). They should seem perfectly natural; present yet invisible."²⁷

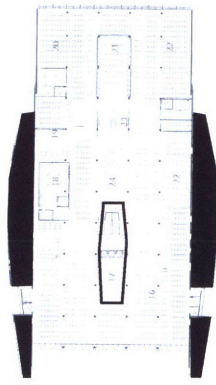
The fear that people have of using technology to facilitate new organizational strategies is directly related to contemporary half-hearted attempts. My proposal for a new urban library is therefore to take advantage of the new freedoms and release the library from its restrictive past, organizationally and programmatically. Most importantly, instead of merely being an institution which shapes individuals, it becomes an institution which is shaped by its users.

26 Marijke Beek, *Living Library: Wiel Arets: Utrecht University Library*, (New York: Prestel, 2005) 20.

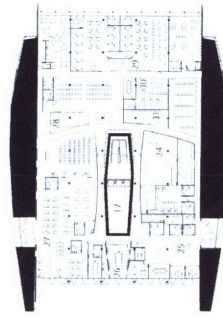
27 Beek, *Living Library*, 20.



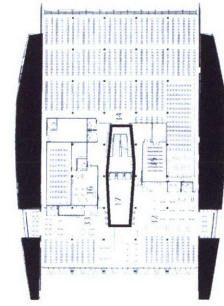
First floor plan



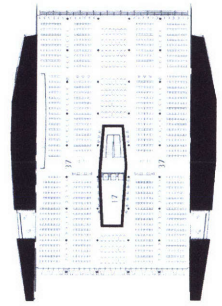
Second floor plan



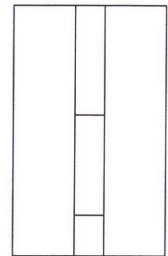
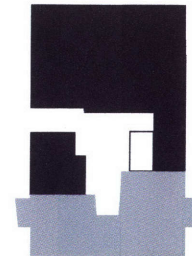
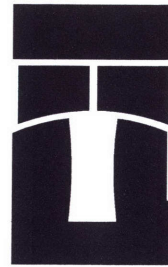
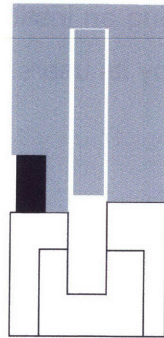
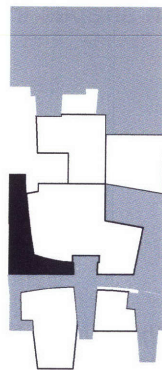
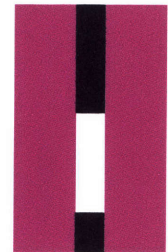
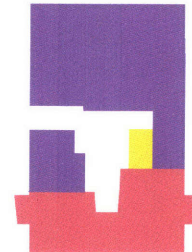
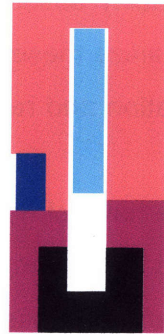
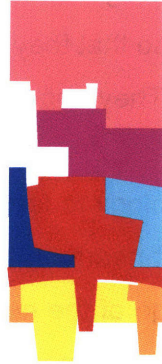
Third floor plan



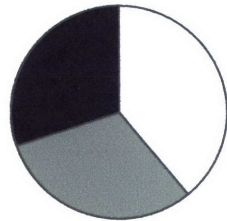
Fourth floor plan



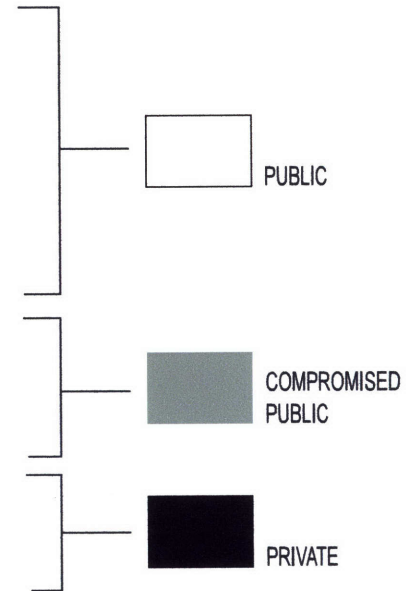
Fifth floor plan

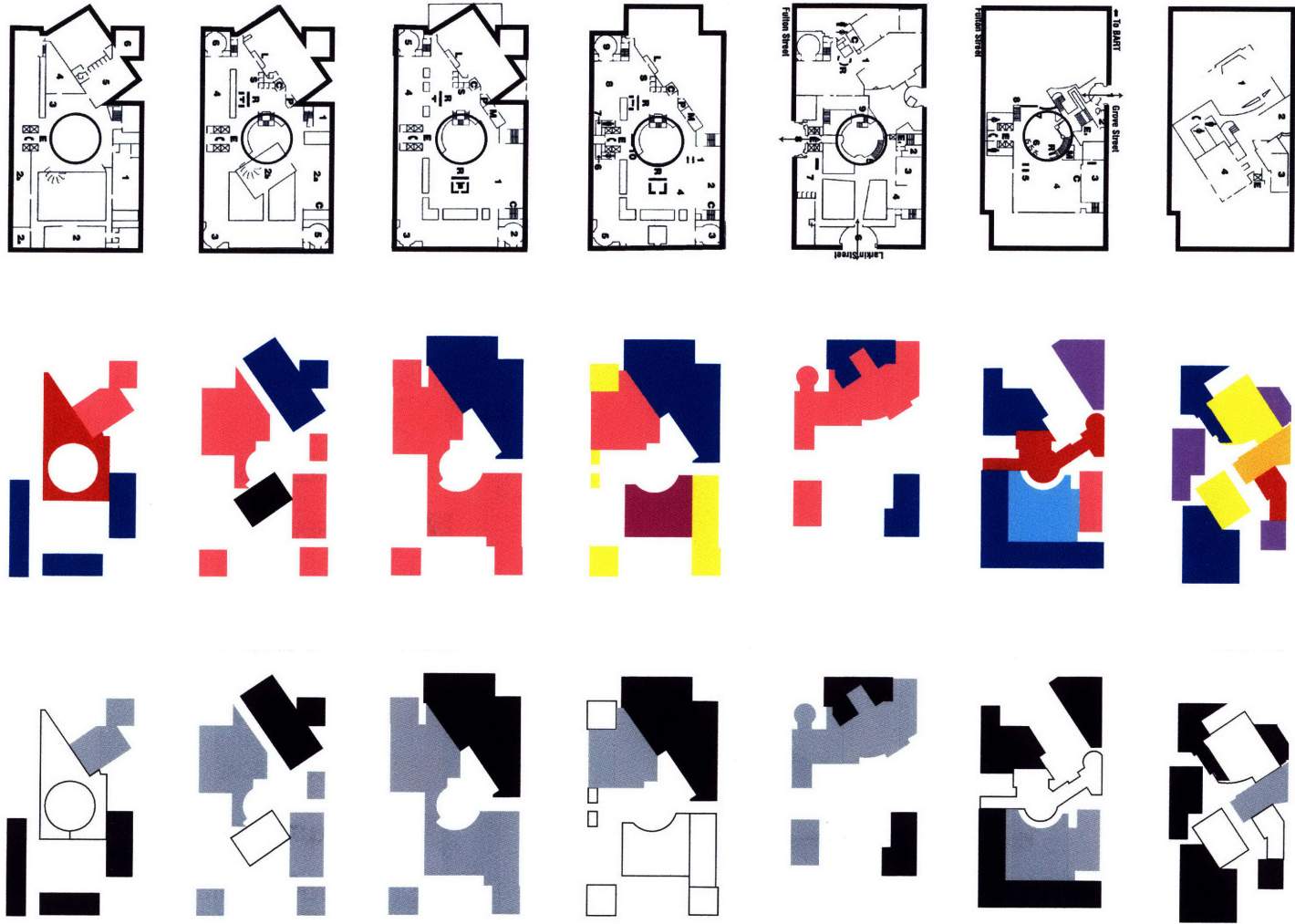


PHOENIX CENTRAL
Will Bruder 333300sf

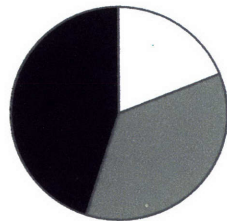
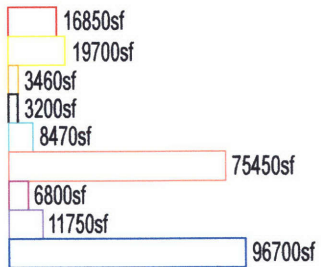


- LOBBY
- MEETING/GATHERING
- READING
- OPEN STACKS
- MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY
- SPECIAL TOPICS
- COMMERCIAL
- CLOSED STACKS
- ADMINISTRATIVE

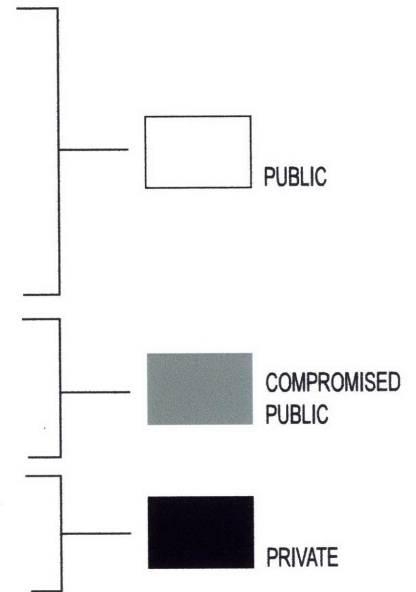


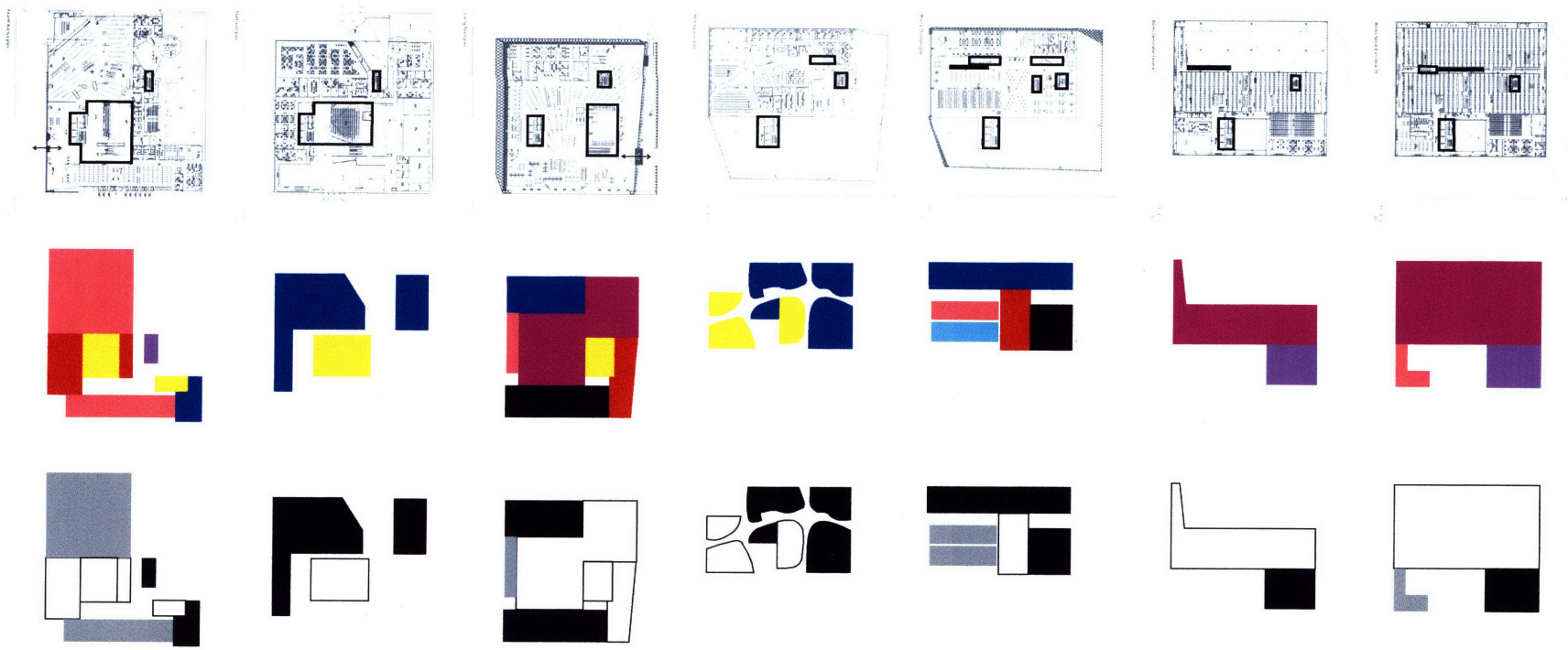


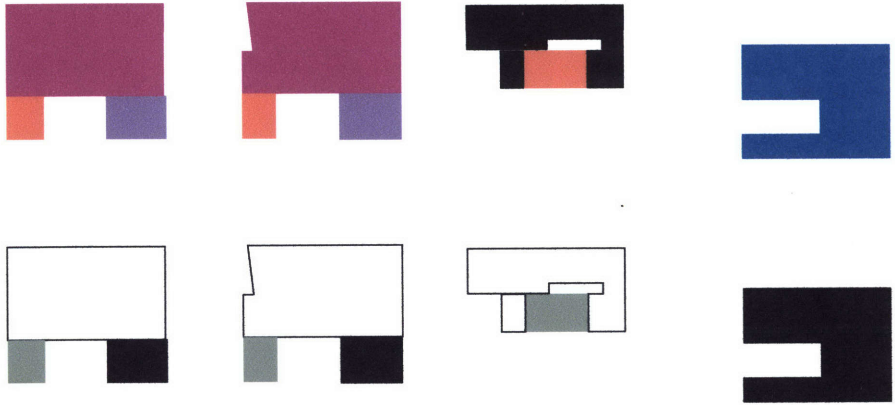
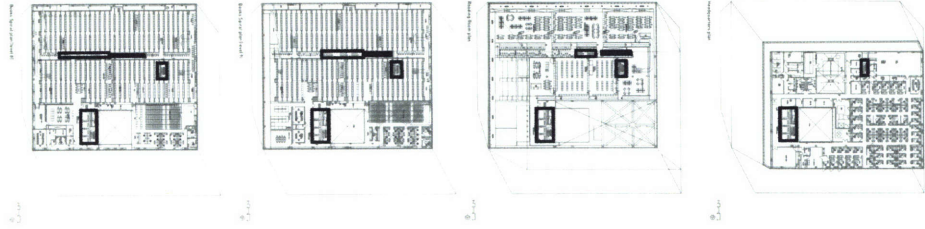
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC 242400sf
 Pei Cobb Freed and Partners



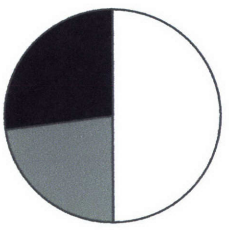
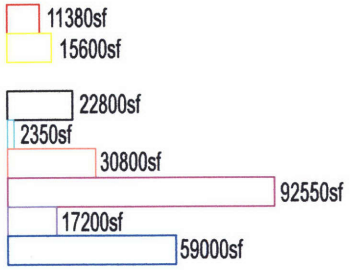
- LOBBY
- MEETING/GATHERING
- READING
- OPEN STACKS
- MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY
- SPECIAL TOPICS
- COMMERCIAL
- CLOSED STACKS
- ADMINISTRATIVE



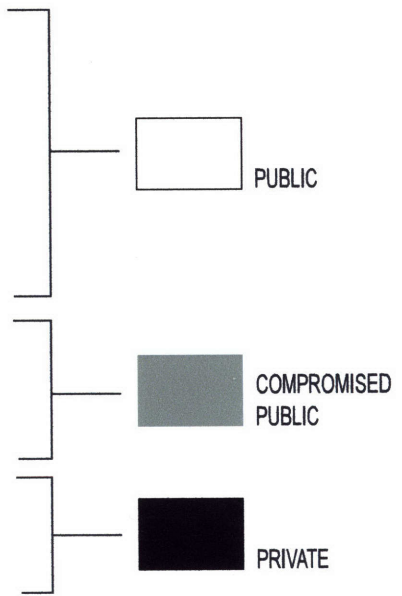




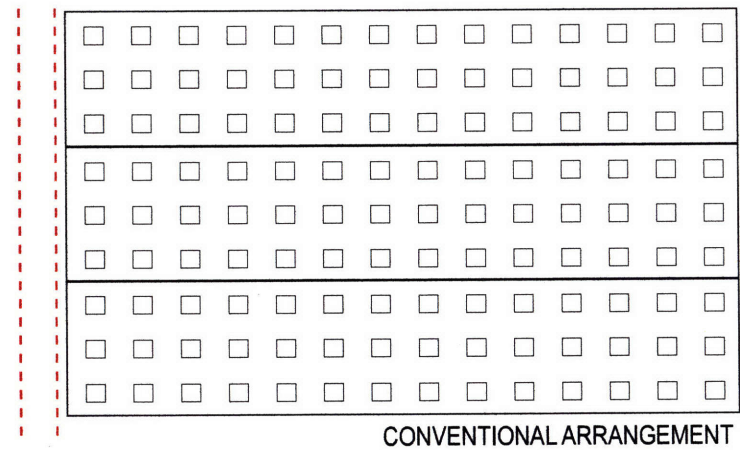
SEATTLE PUBLIC
OMA Rem Koolhaas 284800sf



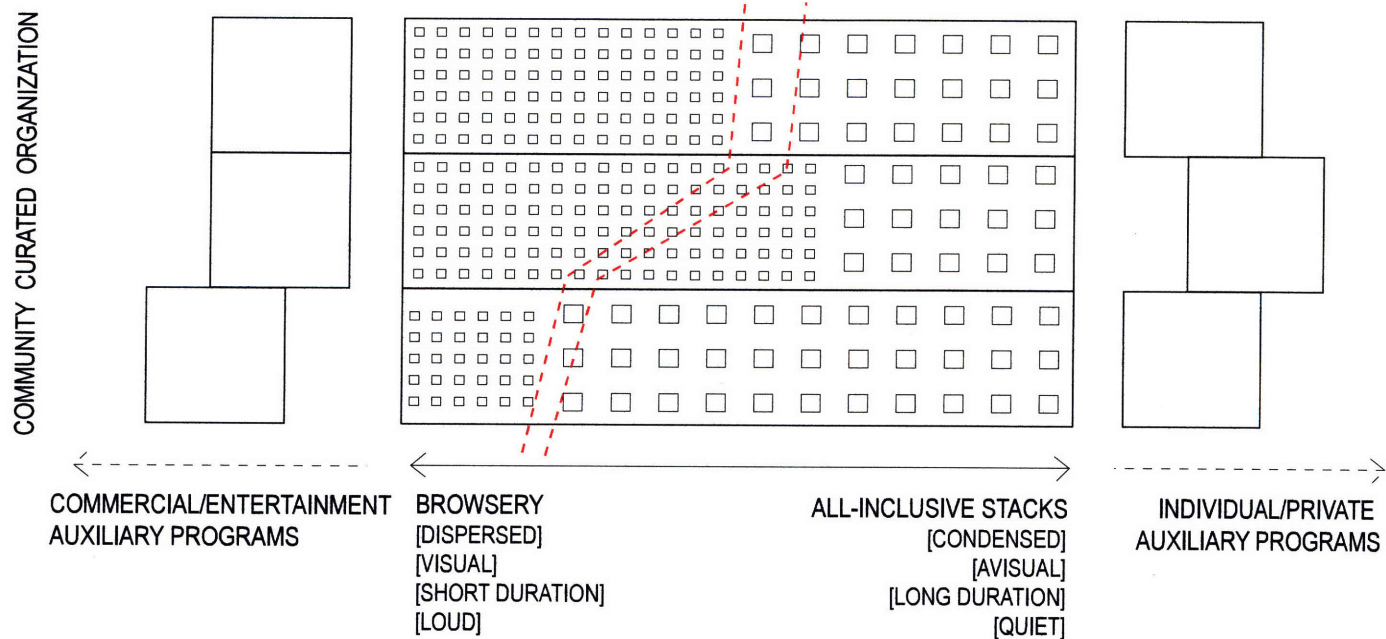
- LOBBY
- MEETING/GATHERING
- READING
- OPEN STACKS
- MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY
- SPECIAL TOPICS
- COMMERCIAL
- CLOSED STACKS
- ADMINISTRATIVE



Utopian Design Strategy

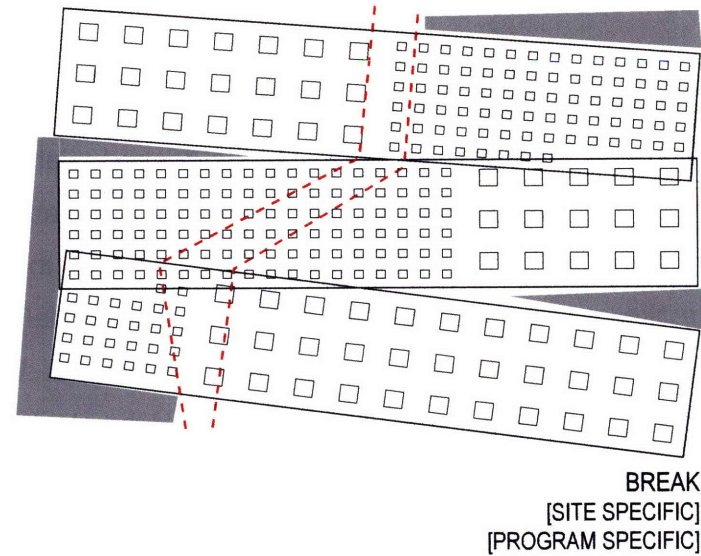
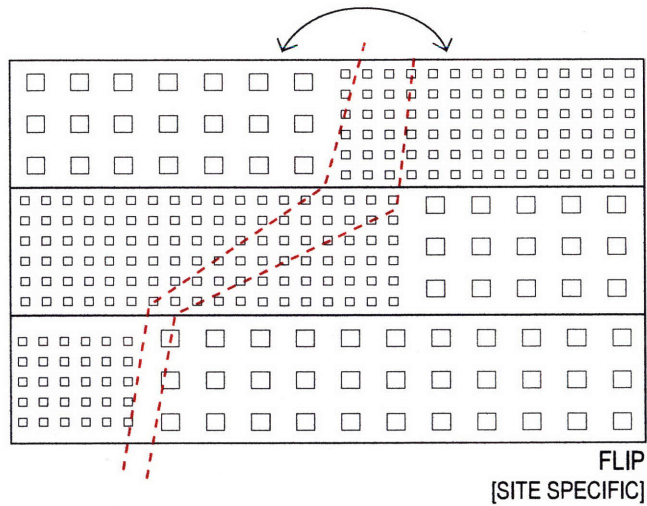


The conventional library is arranged such that there is a clear definition between the public circulation areas and the dense book stacks. This translates into the individual having very limited opportunity to come in actual contact with the books. There is much less of an invitation to take part in browsing activities as well.



A NEW ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

In contrast to the conventional library model, the new design works to create a stronger relationship between the book materials and the visitor to the library. A street-like path (shown in red) becomes the main circulation and zone of activity. The connection between the individual and the book materials is the area entitled “browser”. Rather than an abrupt transition, the browser works to transition slowly from the louder and more visual “street” to the quieter library stacks. Auxiliary programs, ranging from commercial on one end of the spectrum to private meeting rooms on the other, are arranged on the edges of this system.

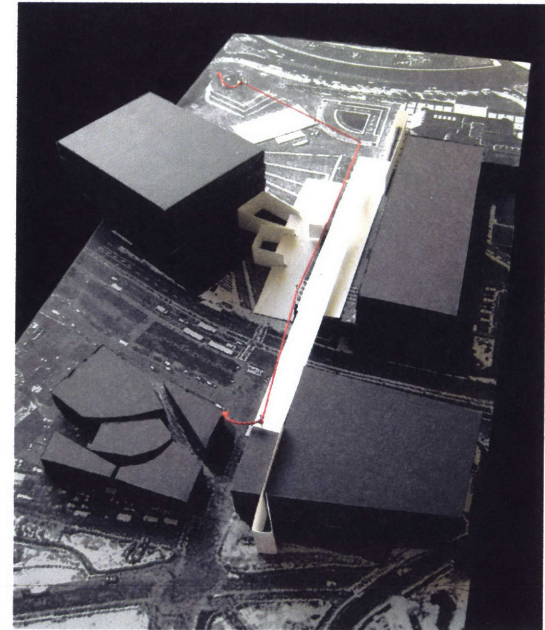


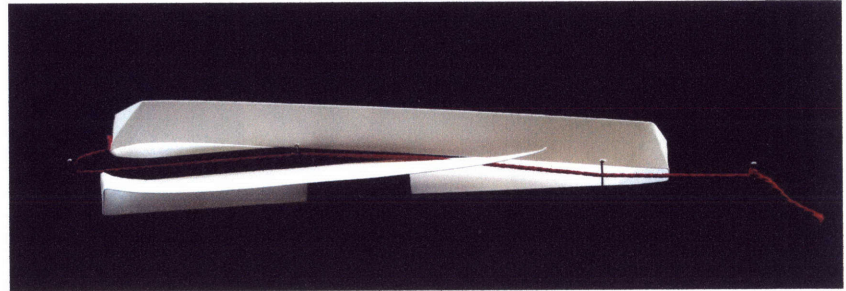
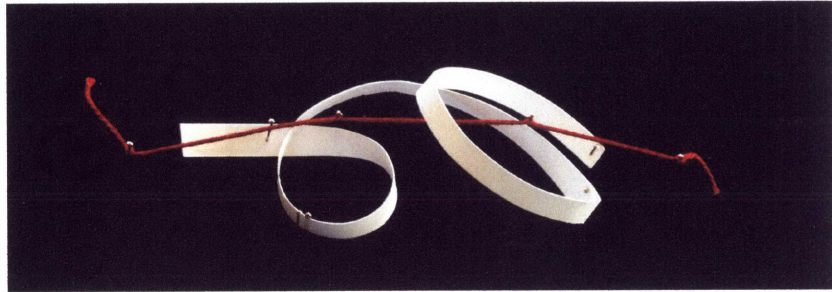
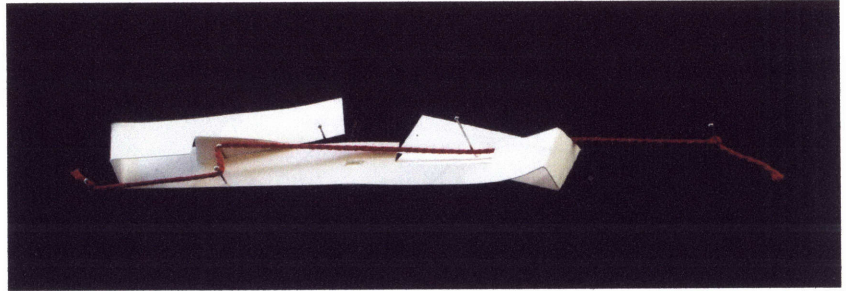
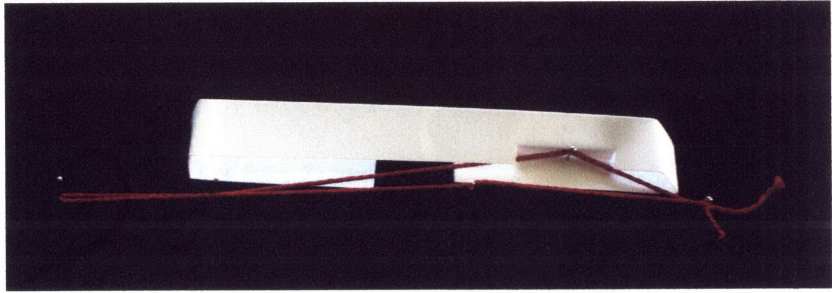
A number of transformations can occur in regards to this ideal library organization. One example is for the browsery program and the stacks to reverse positions in plan. This provides for more unique adjacencies and allows the system to adapt to the project context. The organization can also utilize a number of fissures to strategically allow in sunlight and to create boundaries between areas. These breaks can be placed either in response to site issues, or in response to programmatic needs. As a result of this new library organization, people who would never otherwise have slowed down and stopped, become drawn into the stacks as a result of the entertaining cues provided by the browsery as well as the ease of transition.

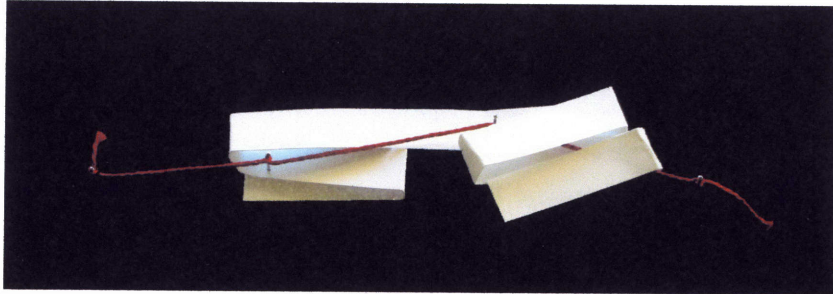
ACCOMMODATING THE BOOKS

While these utopian library strategies create the desired relationship between the reading materials in the stacks and the more visually stimulating and fast paced environment along the “street”, they become challenged by the great quantity of books that make up the average library collection. The model to the right shows the amount of book storage required in relation to the linear site. We must, therefore, consider a way of exposing as much surface area of the stacks to the library visitors as possible. By doing so, we can draw them from the basic browsing program into the denser and more contextual materials.

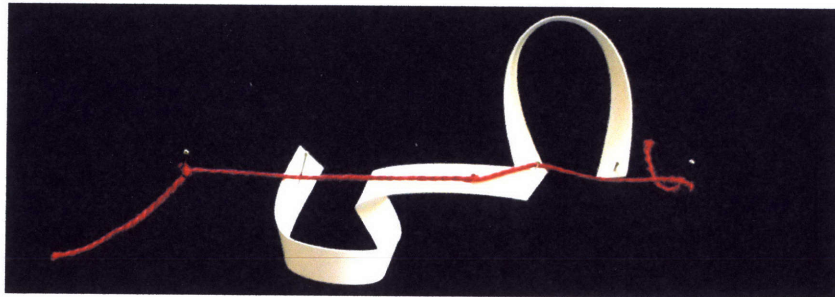
In the studies to the right, the red string represents the “street” program and the ribbon reflects ways in which the reading materials could maximize adjacency to the “street”. Fold, bend, break, twist, wrap; to name a few experimental operations.



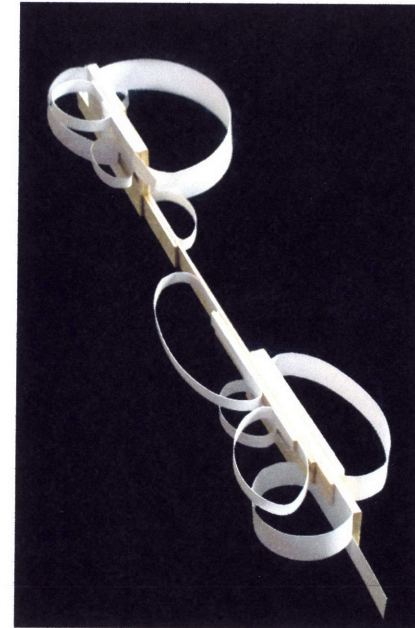




A FOLDING STRATEGY (above)

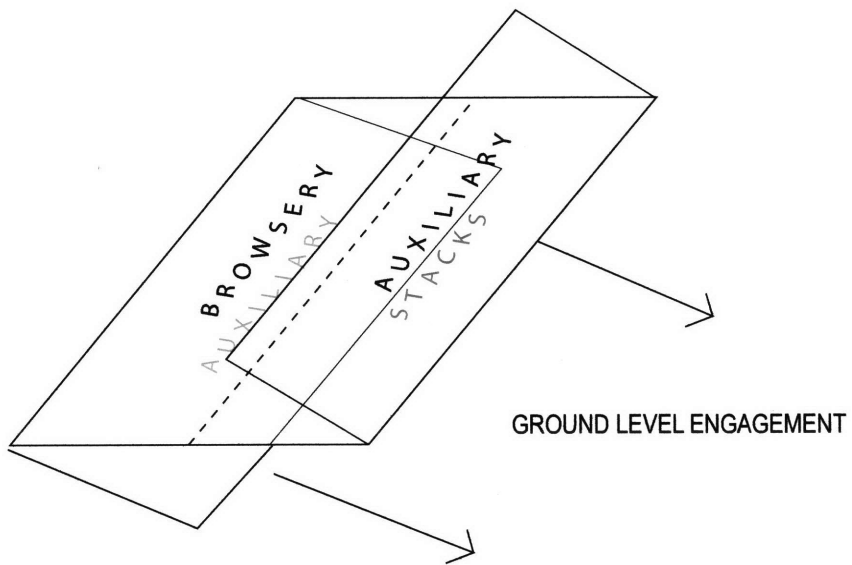
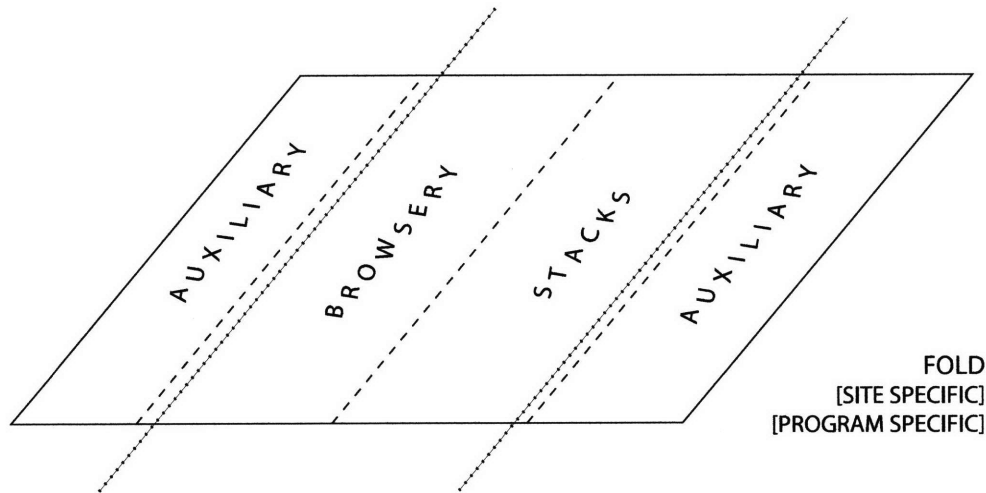


THE "LOOP" STRATEGY (below)

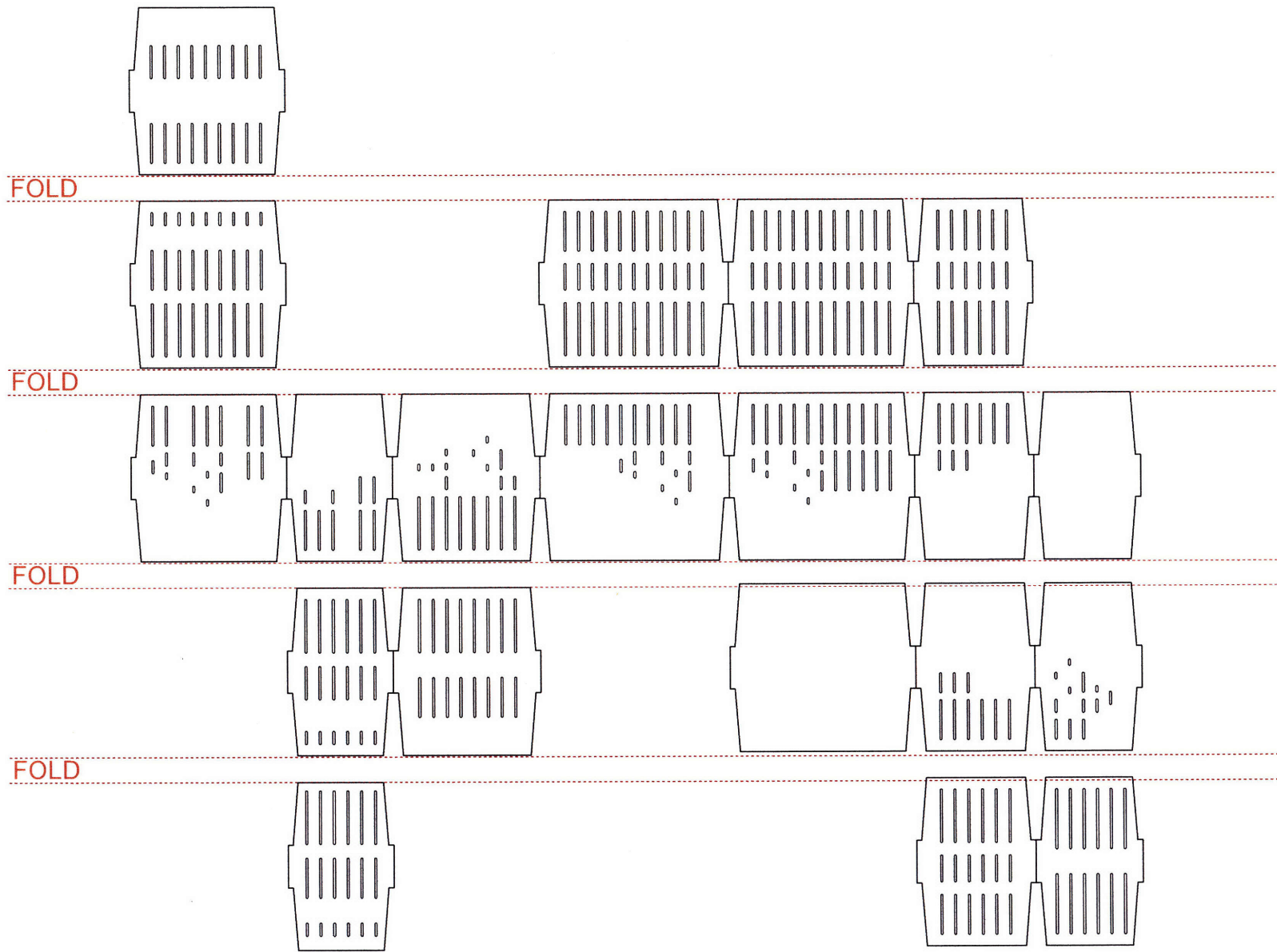


"LOOPS" DEVIATING FROM PATH

The solution to the problem of uniting the utopian organizational strategy with the reality of the book storage was actually a combination of two ideas. First, the library stacks extend away from the street and either fold up or down to accommodate the books as required. One dominant circulation path runs through the building, but a series of other minor paths branch off to create “loops”. These loops represent deviations that are available to individuals.



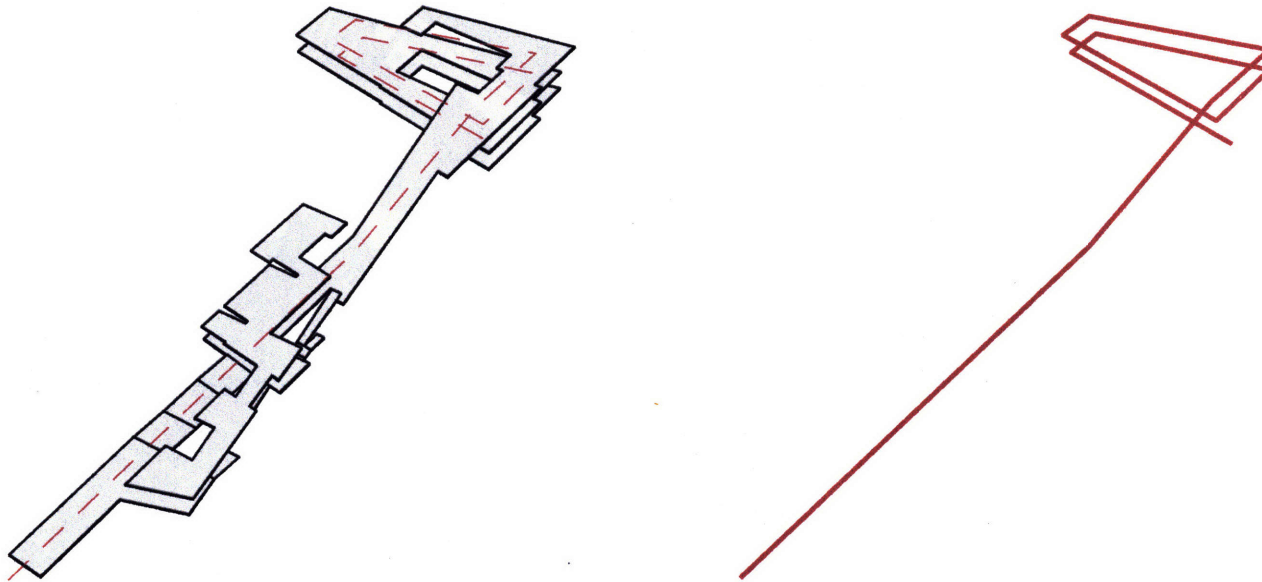
The strategy of the fold can occur just once or twice as shown to the left, or multiple times as shown to the right. Multiple floor plates fold to all for a seamless transition from a continuous strip in to an accordion or sorts.



"UNFOLDED" UTOPIAN PLAN DIAGRAM

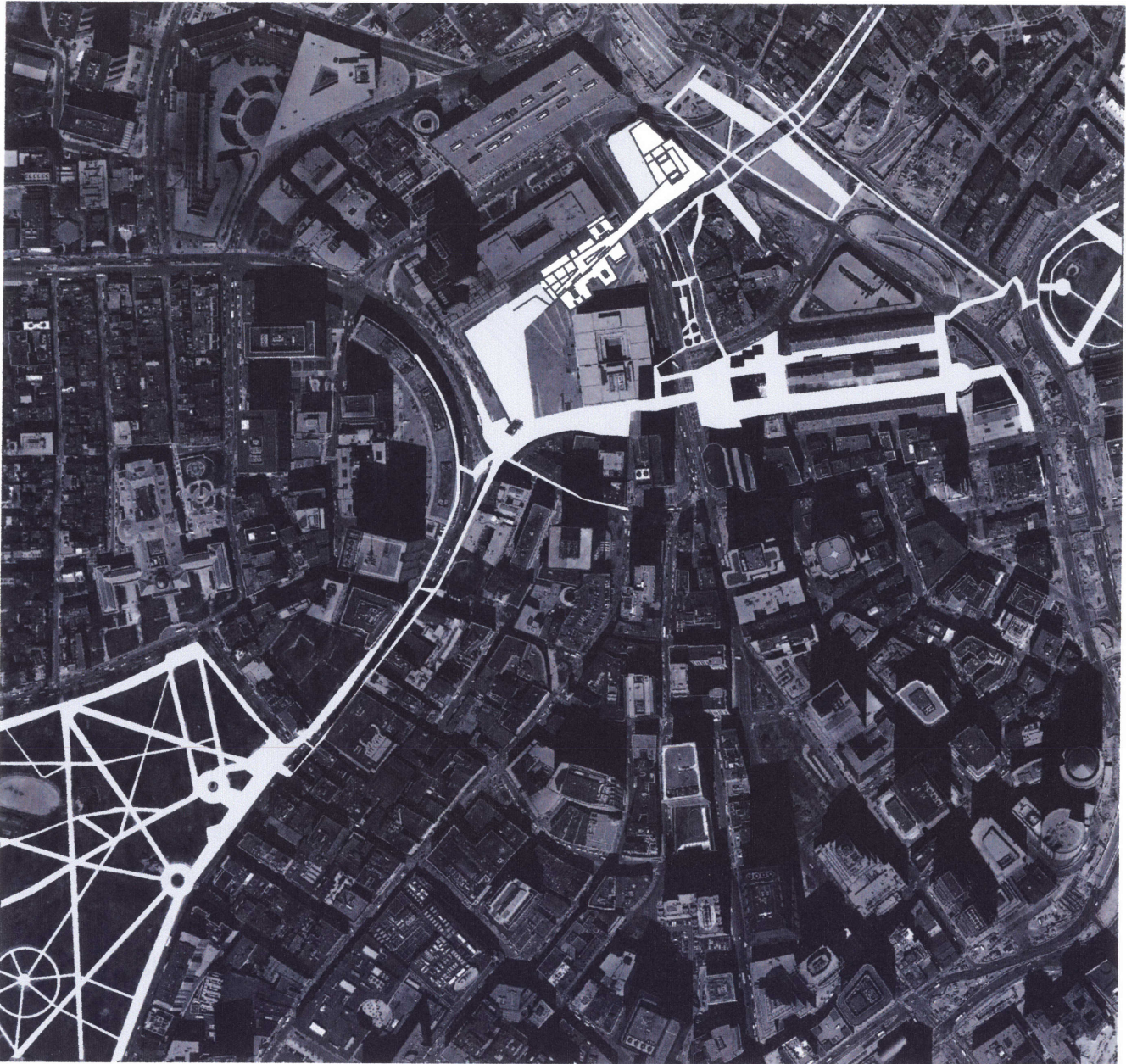
Project Design

3 COMPONENTS: THE "STREET," THE "STACKS," AND THE "BROWSERY"

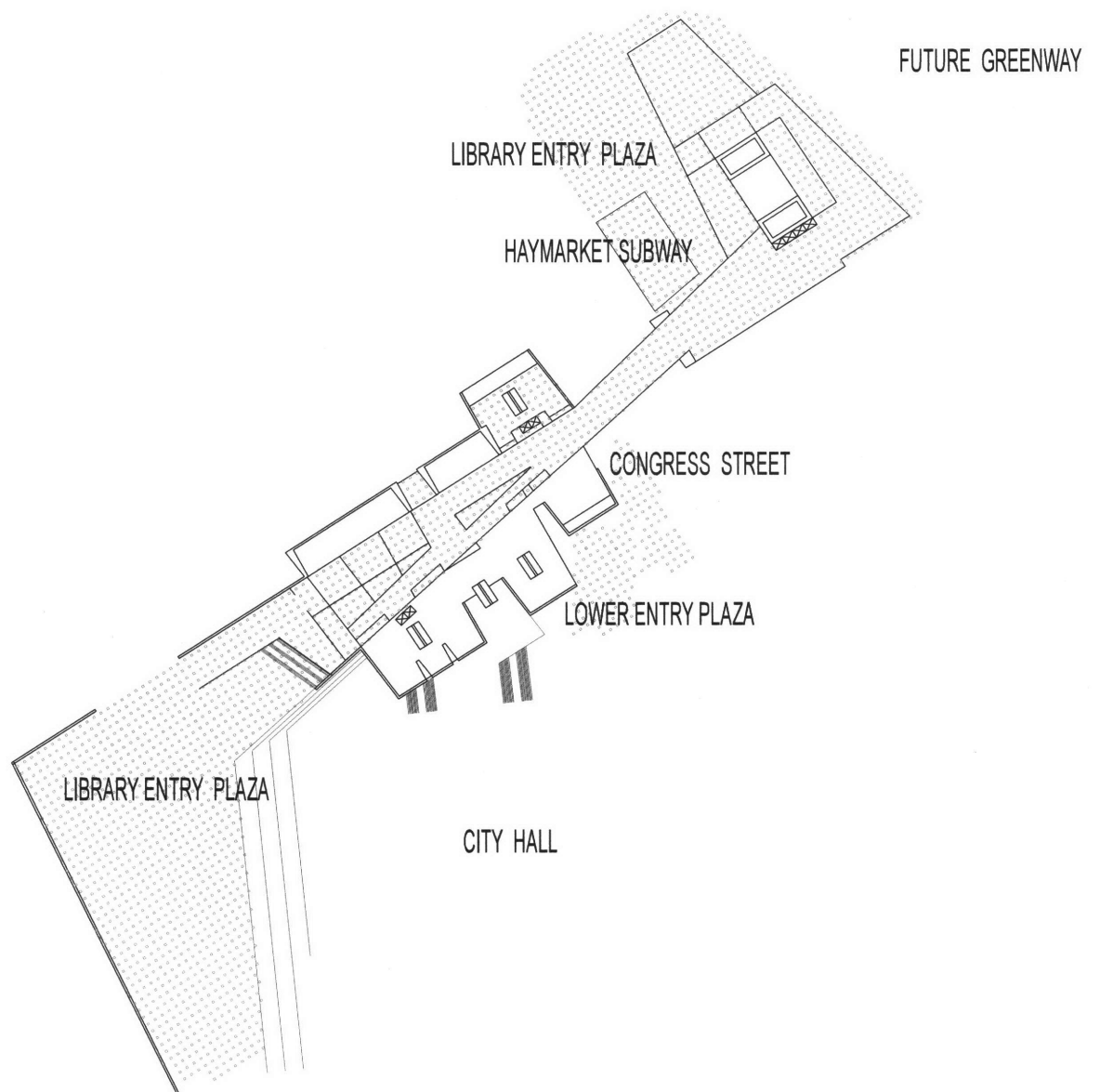


THE "STREET"

The "street" is at the heart of the project and provides opportunities for individuals to meet. It is from this zone of heightened activity that individuals are drawn into the act of browsing, eventually finding themselves in the depths of the library. The "street" begins at City Hall Plaza, bridges over Congress Street and then comes down to meet the Rose Kennedy Greenway. The library therefore serves to negotiate the change in elevations and to link the public spaces of the City Hall Plaza and the Greenway.



CITY CENTER SITE PLAN



LOCAL SITE PLAN

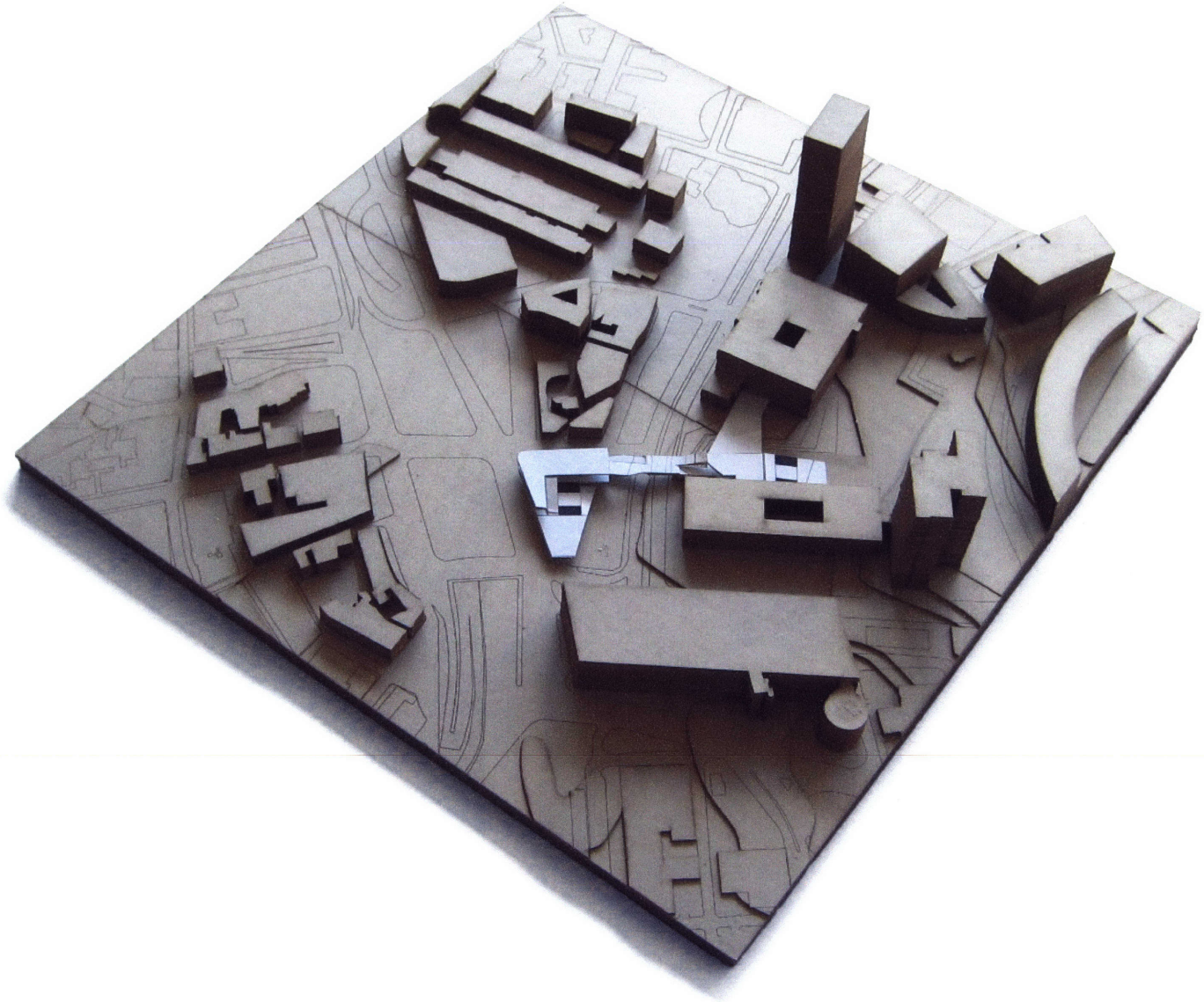


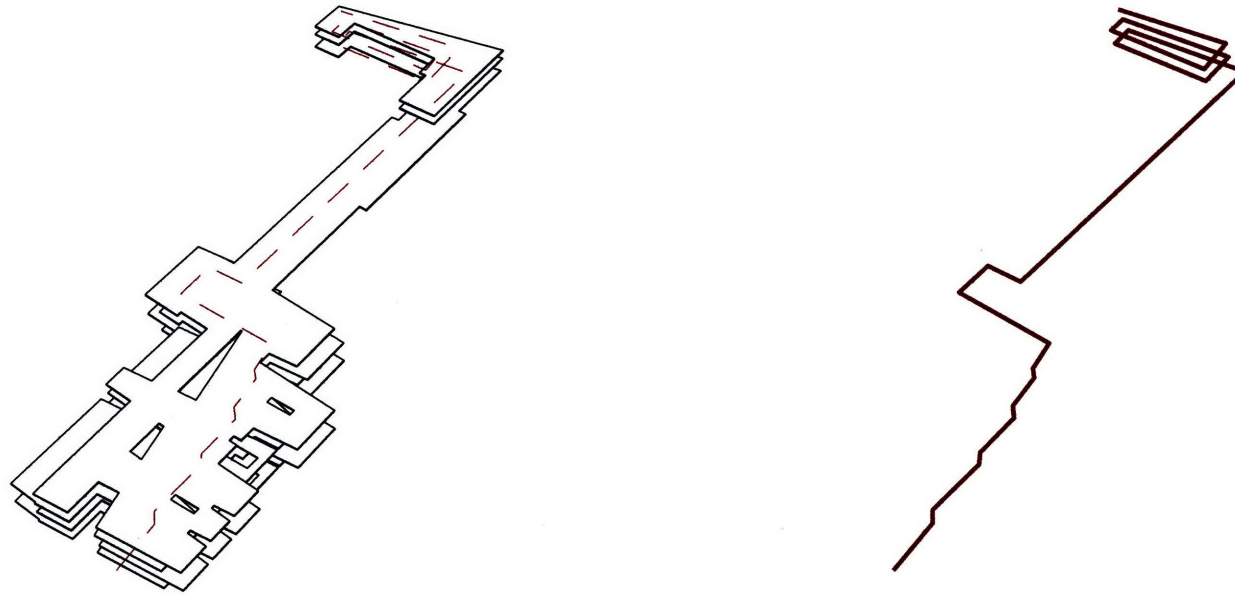
DIAGRAM MODEL WITHIN SITE

Important to the concept of the “street” are the many active functions that are housed within the library’s walls. These programs could be anywhere from cultural, to commercial and would be able to respond to the changing needs of the people. The commercial programs then act as a introduction to the browsing programs and eventually into the reading materials of the library. The following chart shows a few of the many opportunities for such program.

	PEOPLE Group Aspect	Constituency	Age Group	PROPERTIES Size	Indoor/Outdoor	Noise Level	Time of Day	REQUIREMENTS		
								Cost	Transportation	
	large group small group single	tourists workers city dwellers suburbanites	adults teens children	large medium small	I O	low medium high	morning daytime nighttime	no cost occasional cost regular cost		
Library					I					N
TRANSPORTATION										
Bus Stop					I O			\$		Y
Subway Stop					I O			\$		Y
Parking Garage					I O			\$		Y
Bicycle Storage					I O			\$		Y
ENTERTAINMENT										
Concert Hall					I O			\$		N
Playground					O					N
Movie Theater					I			\$		N
Drive-In Theater					O			\$		Y
Video Games/Arcade					I			\$		N
Skate Park					O			\$		N
CONSUMPTION										
Coffee Shop					I			\$		N
Bookstore					I			\$		N
Vendors					I O			\$		N
Haymarket					O			\$		N
Restaurant					I O			\$		N
Bar					I			\$		N
SERVICES										

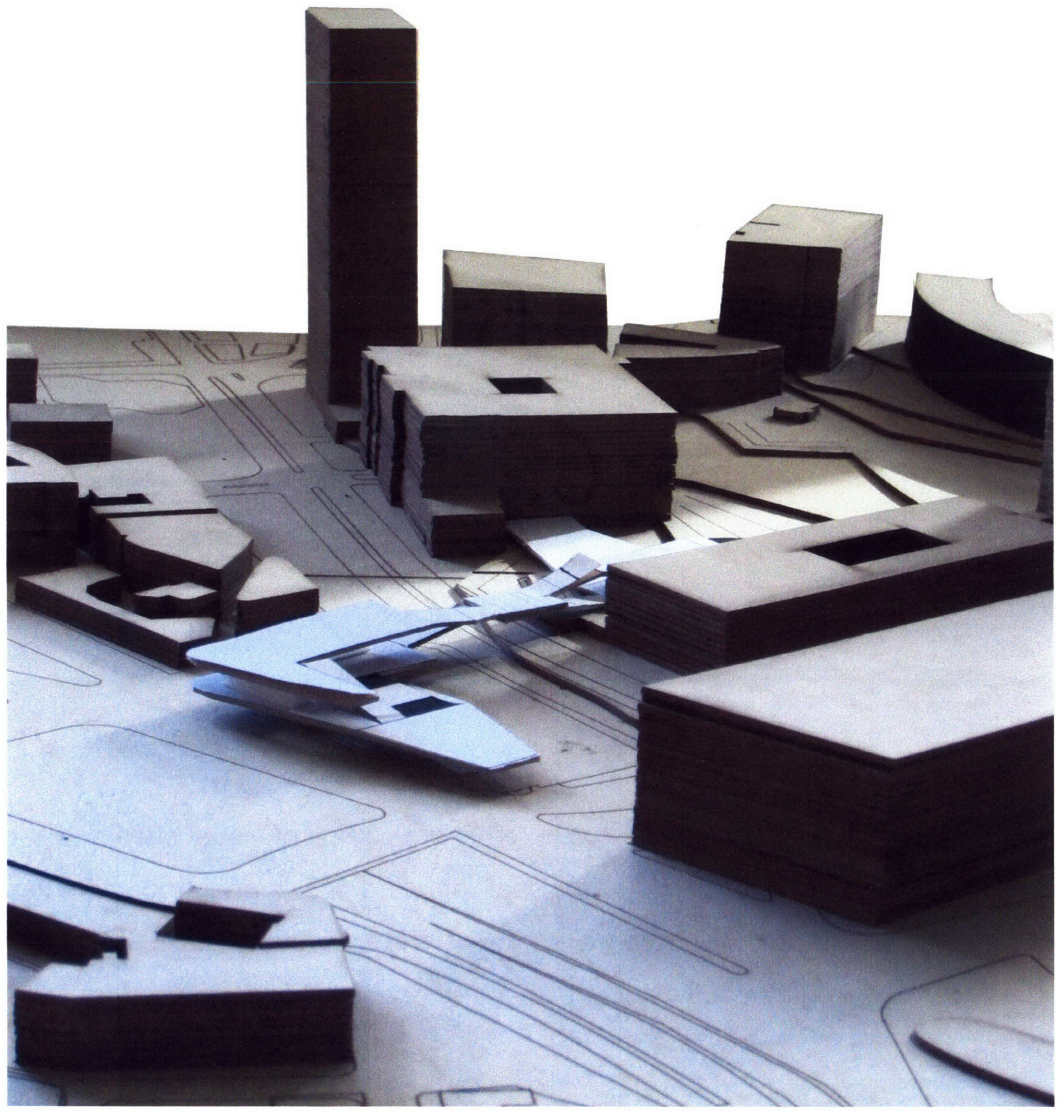
PEOPLE	Group Aspect	Constituency tourists workers city dwellers suburbanites	Age Group adults teens children	PROPERTIES Size large medium small	Indoor/Outdoor Indoor Outdoor	Noise Level high medium low	Time of Day morning daytime nighttime	REQUIREMENTS	
								Cost no cost occasional cost regular cost	Transportation
	Auditorium				I				N
	Reading Room				I				N
	Homeless Shelter				I				N
	Shower Facility				I				N
	Dog Park								N
	Internet Café				I			\$	N
	Daycare				I			\$	N
	CULTURAL								
	School				I				Y
	Viewing Platform				I				N
	Community Gardens								N
	Local History Archive							\$	N
	Community Center				I				N
	Benches/Lunch Tables				I				N
	Piazza								N
	Art Gallery				I			\$	N

3 COMPONENTS: THE "STREET," THE "STACKS," AND THE "BROWSERY"

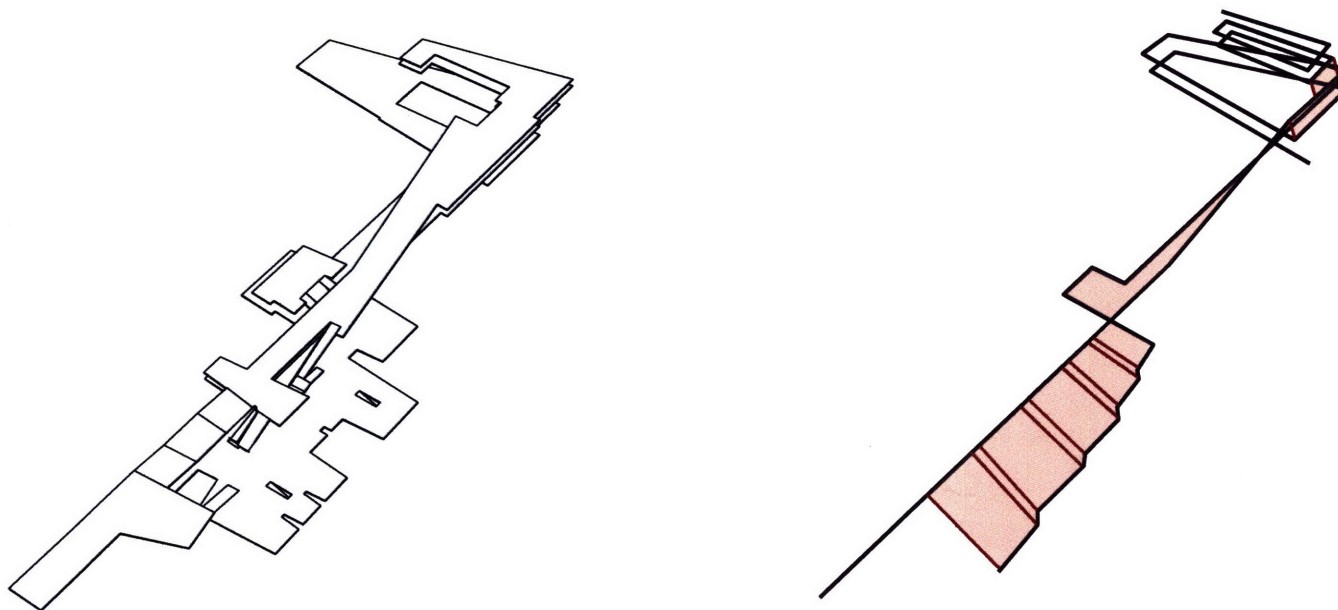


THE "STACKS"

The "stacks" are the part of the program that store the rich variety of contextual information. They begin low to the ground, essentially embedded into City Hall Plaza, and then step up to cross the street. The "stacks" program then holds a significant position perched up above the Rose Kennedy Greenway. The path of movement for the individual perusing the "stacks" climbs steadily into the air as one moves away from City Hall.

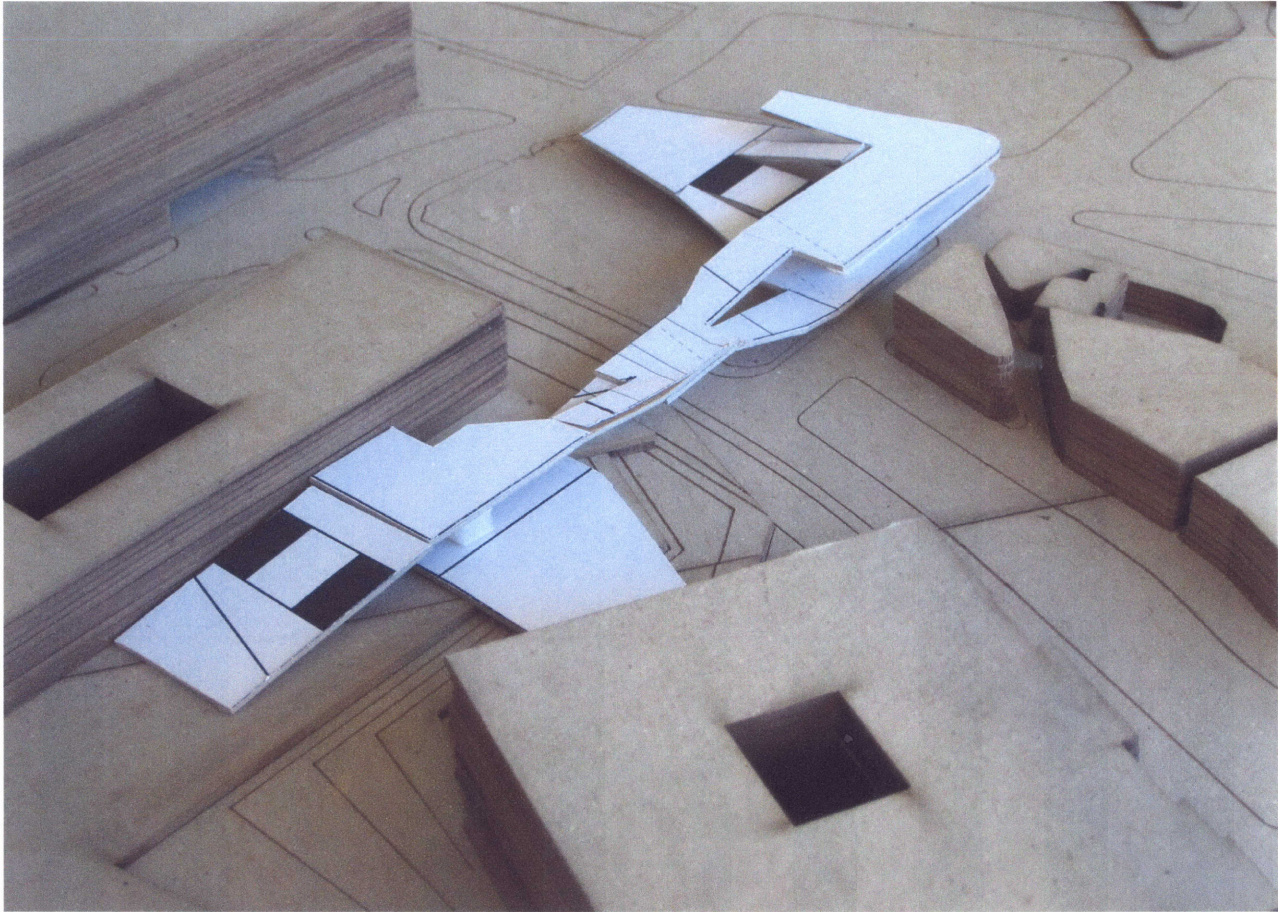


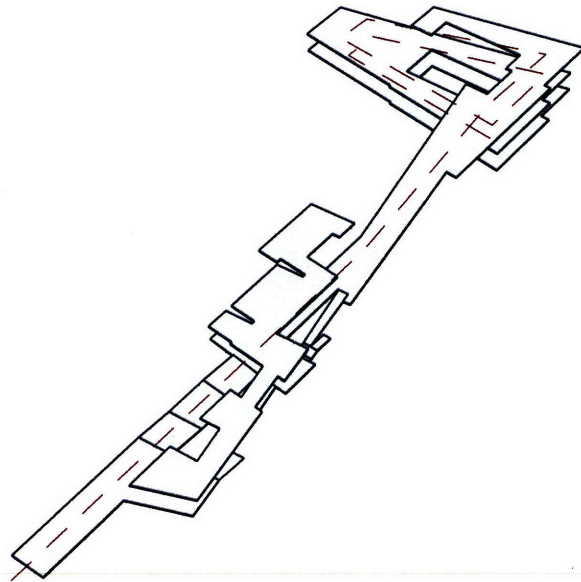
3 COMPONENTS: THE "STREET," THE "STACKS," AND THE "BROWSERY"



THE "BROWSERY"

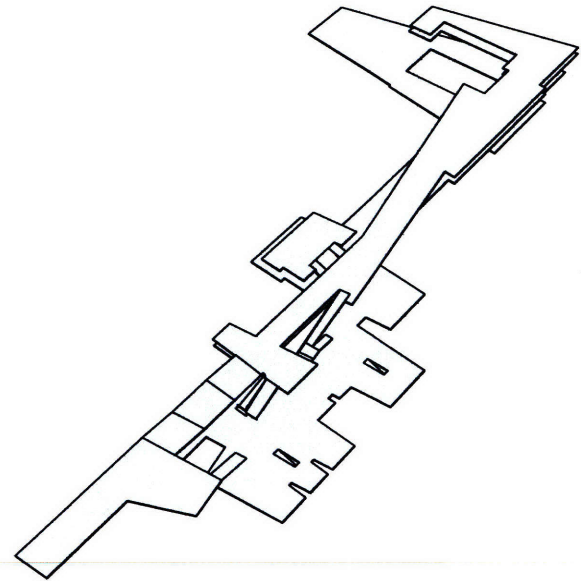
The "browser" program is what makes the urban library unique. This area is full of visual cues and is curated by the community itself. The always-changing exhibits draw individuals in for a closer look and act as an introduction to the full texts of the library. Importantly this program acts as a connector between the trajectories of the individual utilizing the "street" and the individual moving through the "stacks". The browser simultaneously acts as an attractor as well as a security barrier, thus eliminating the library shell we are all too familiar with.





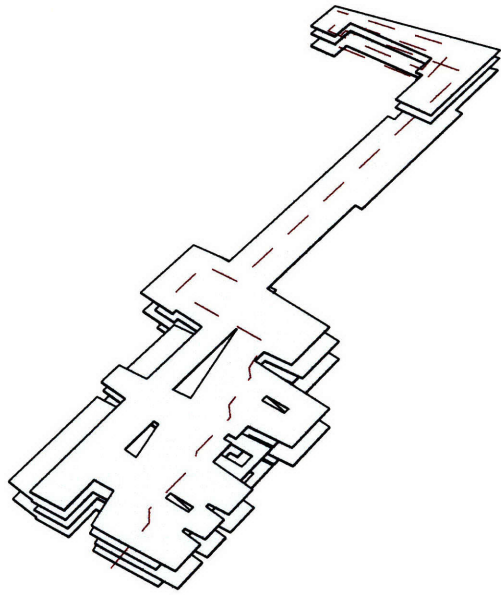
"STREET"

+



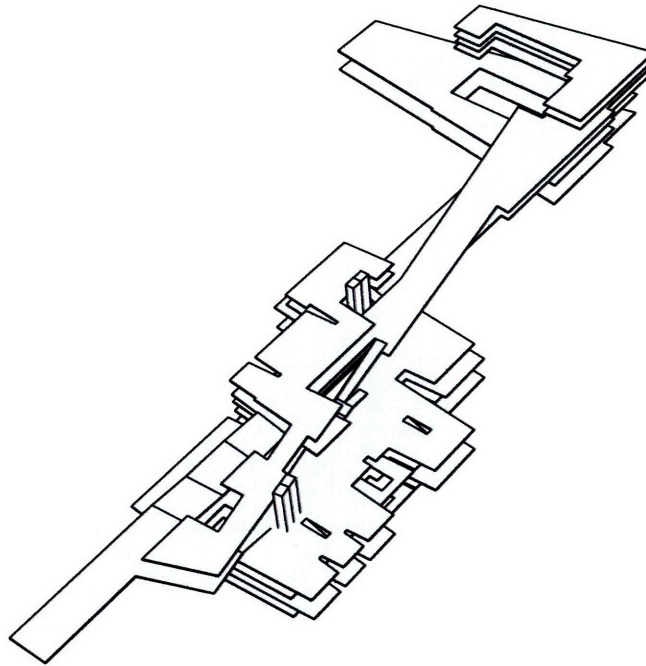
"BROWSERY"

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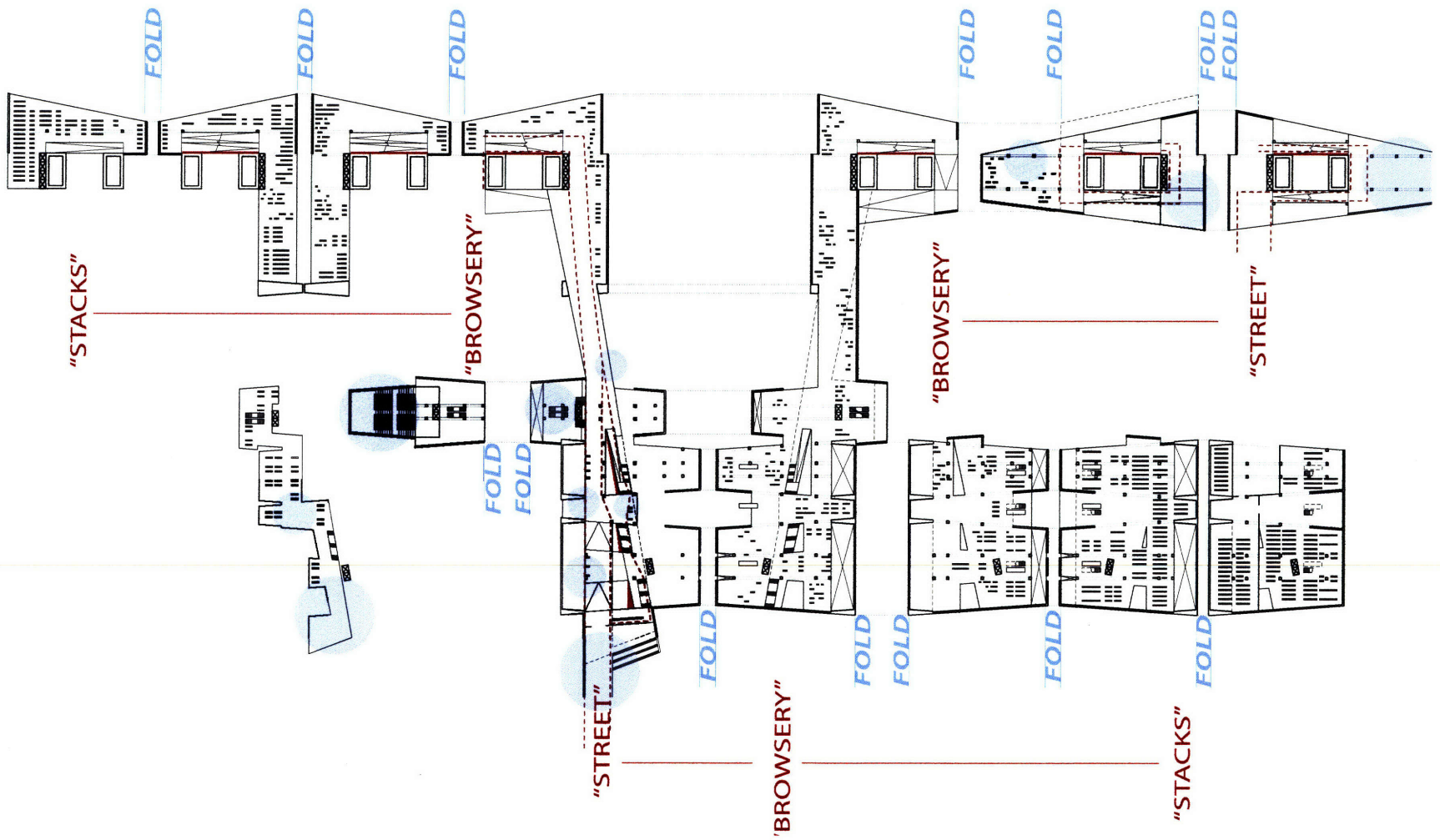


"STACKS"

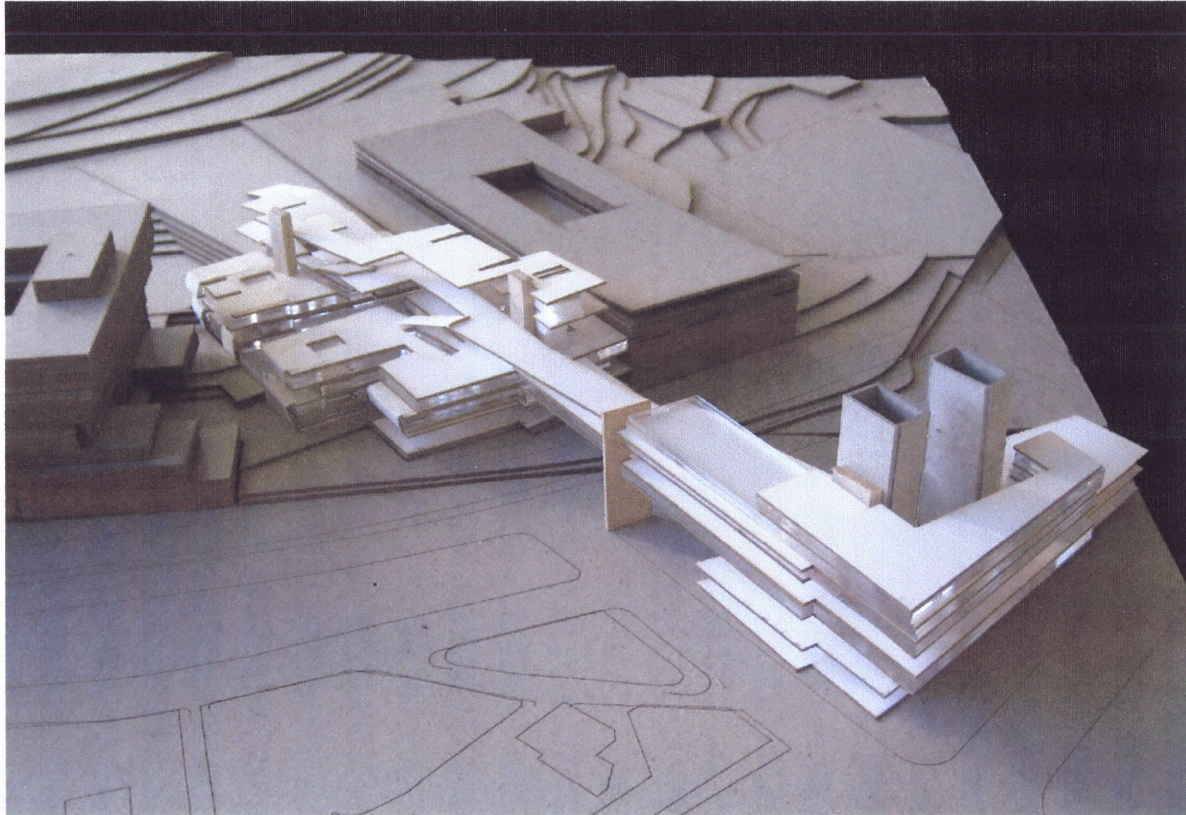
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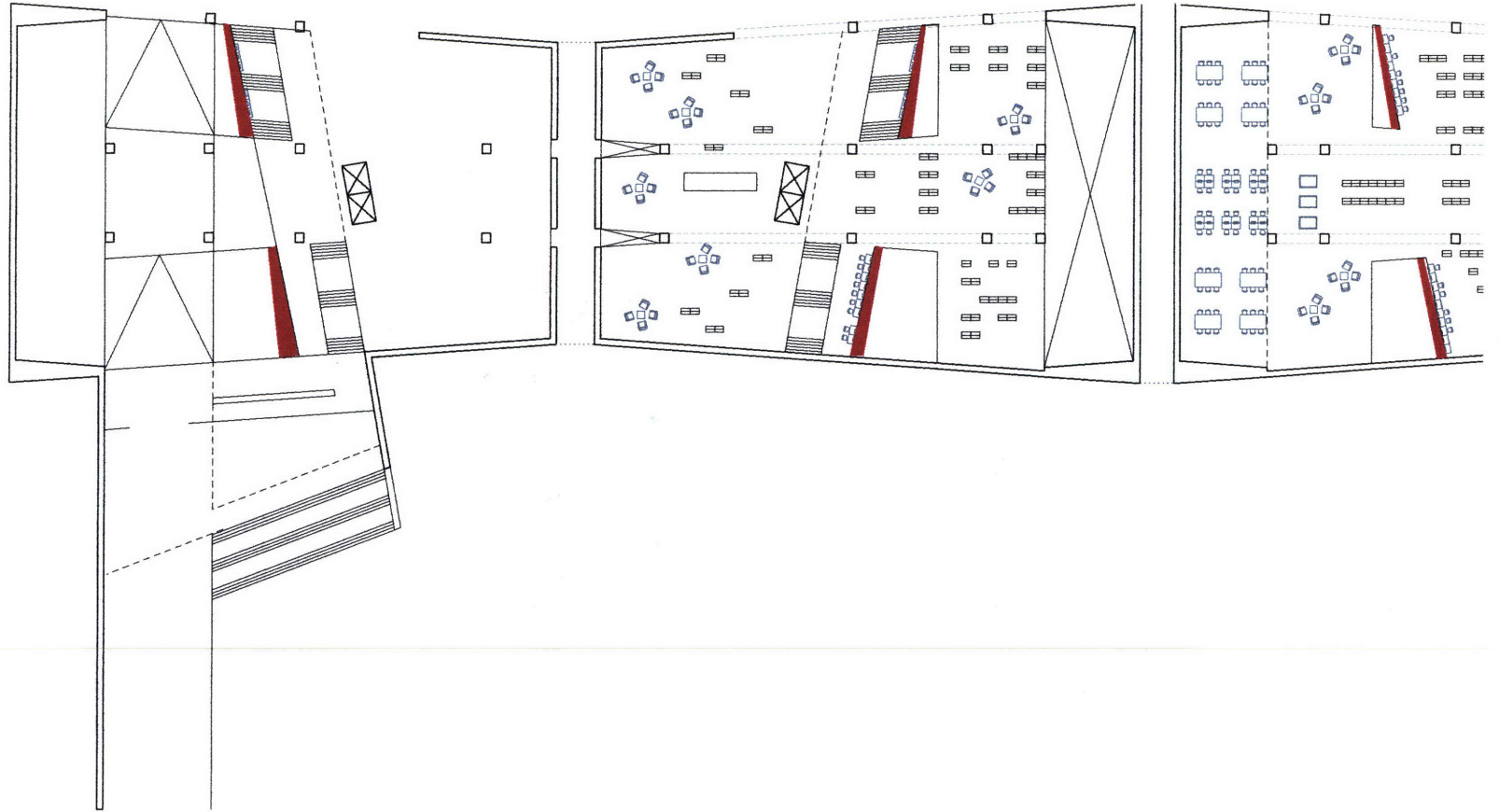


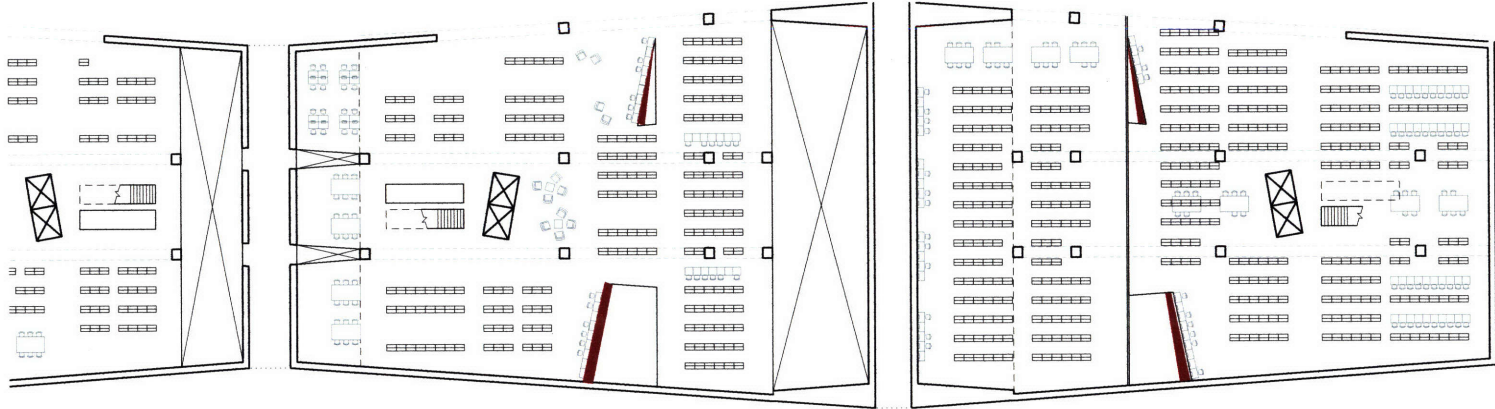
URBAN LIBRARY



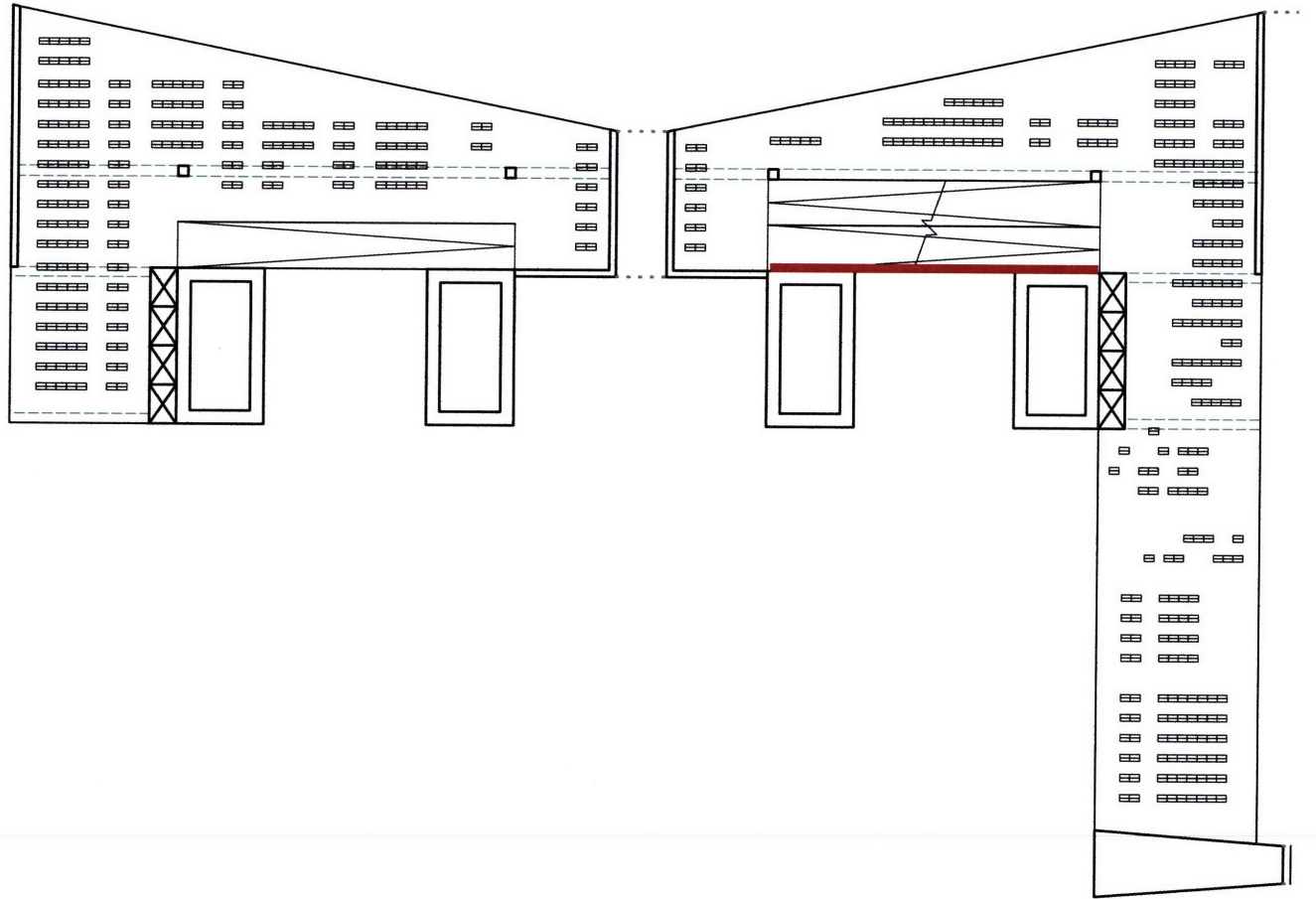
"UNFOLDED" FLOOR PLAN

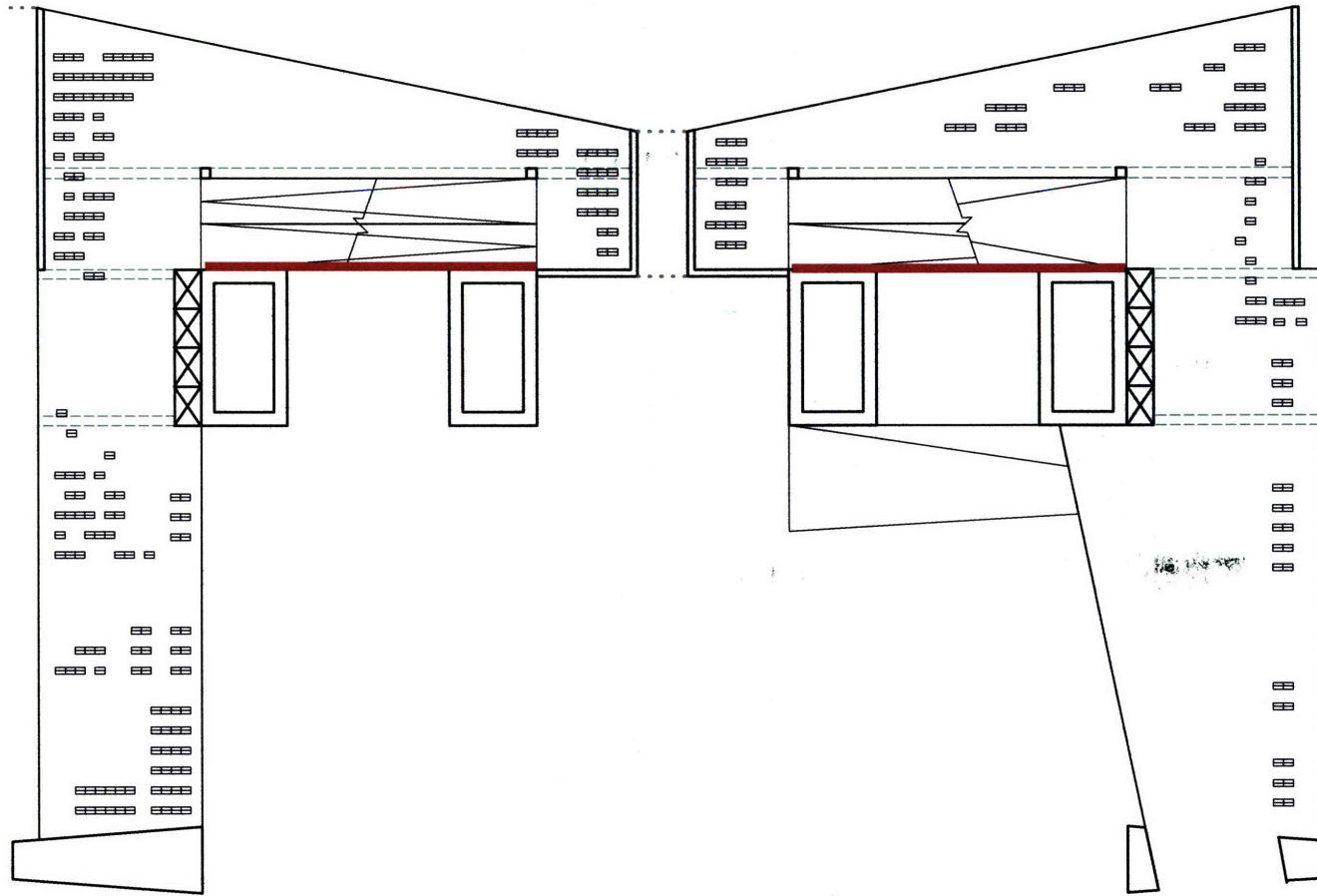




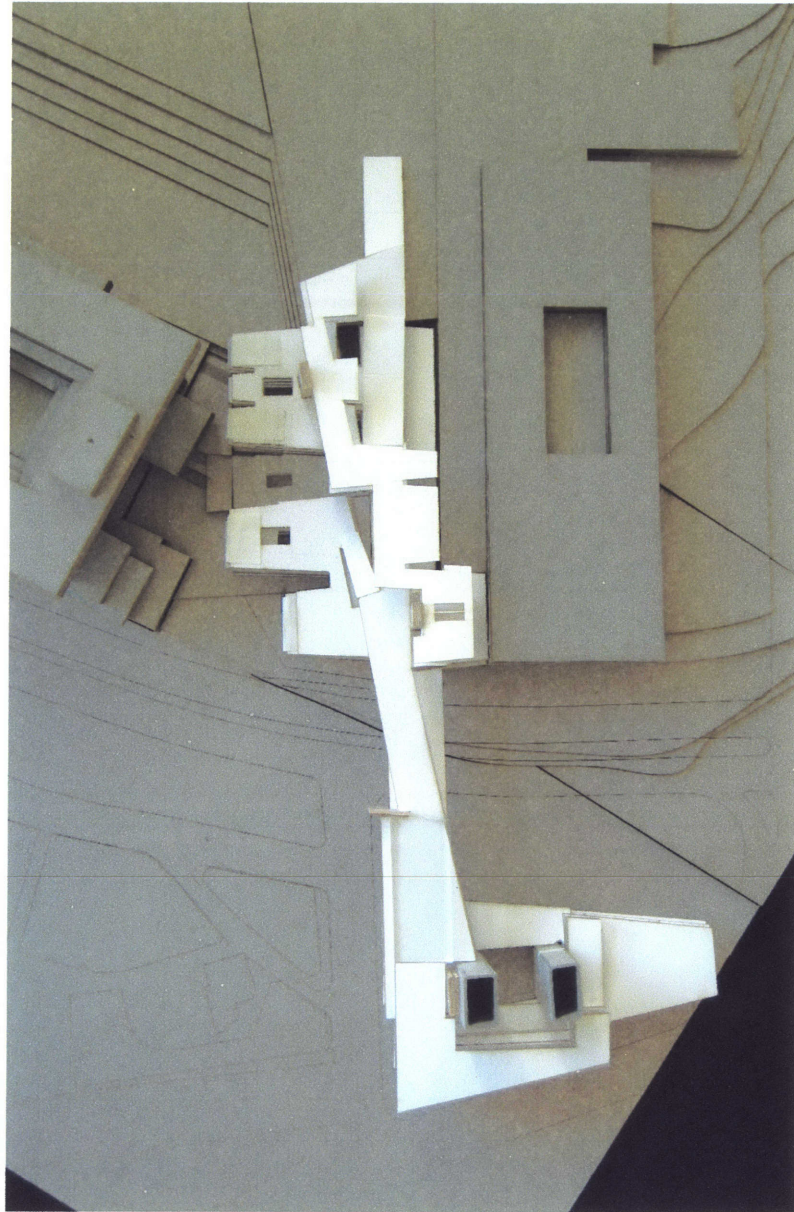


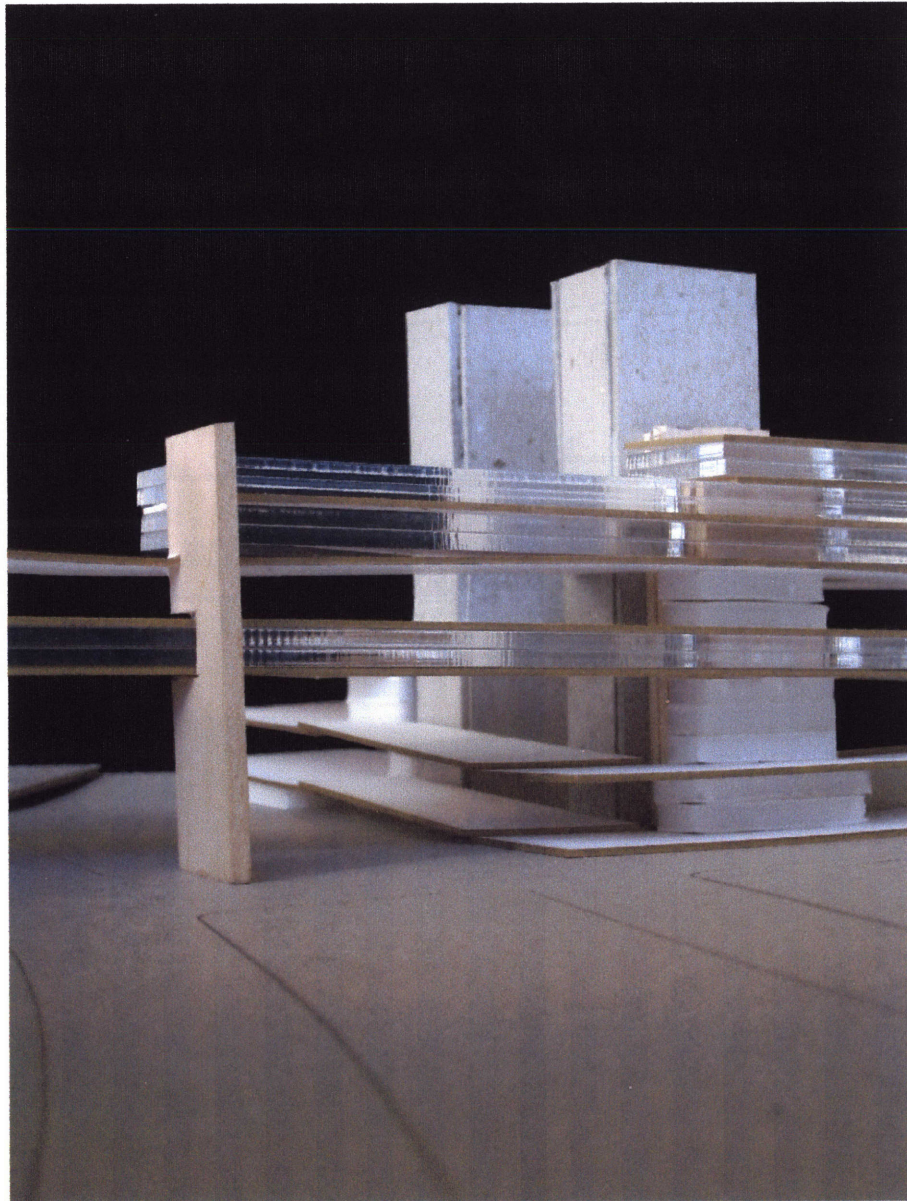
PLAN DETAIL OF PROGRESSION FROM "STREET" TO "STACKS"

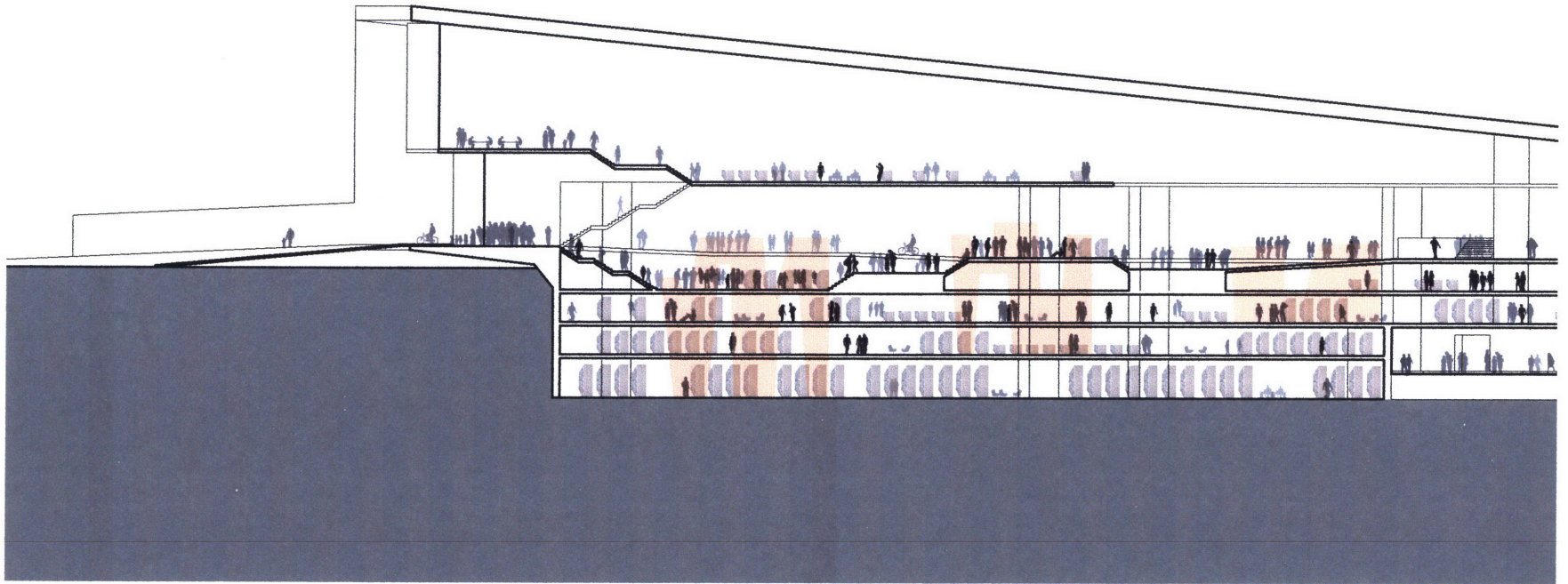




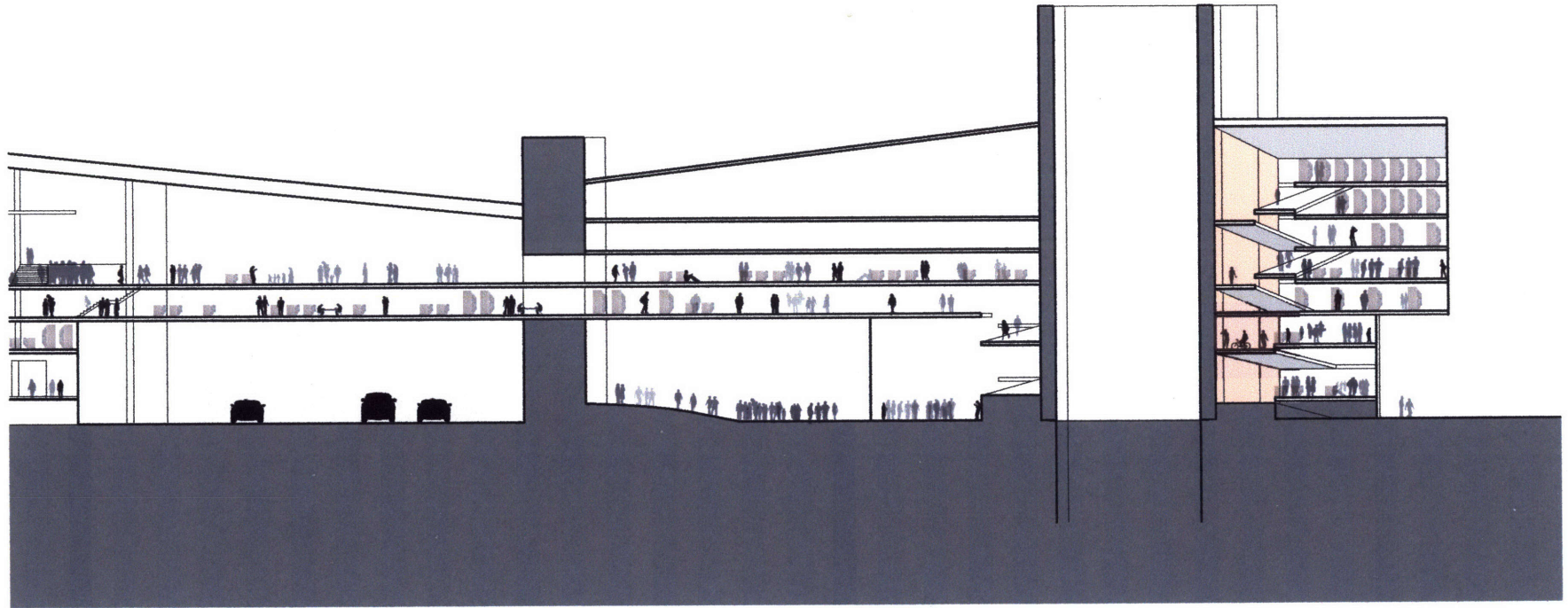
"STACKS" PROGRAM ELEVATED ABOVE THE GREENWAY

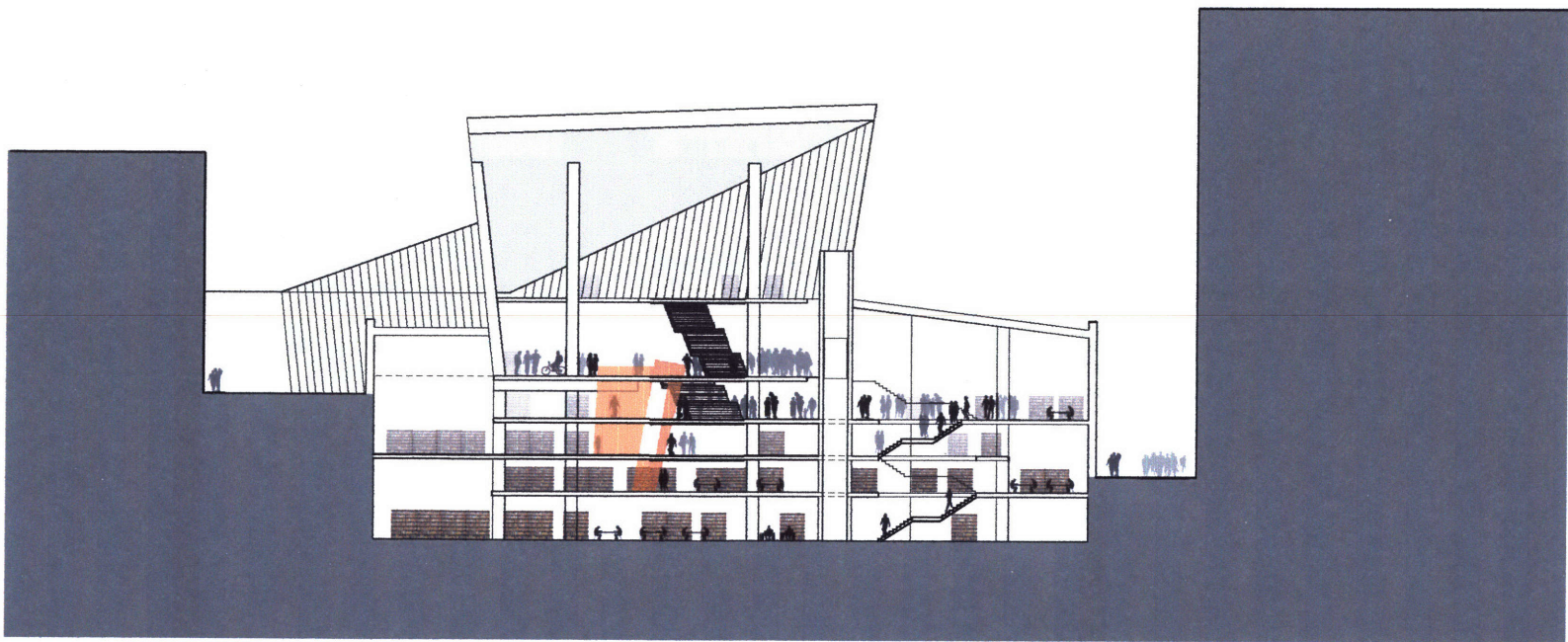




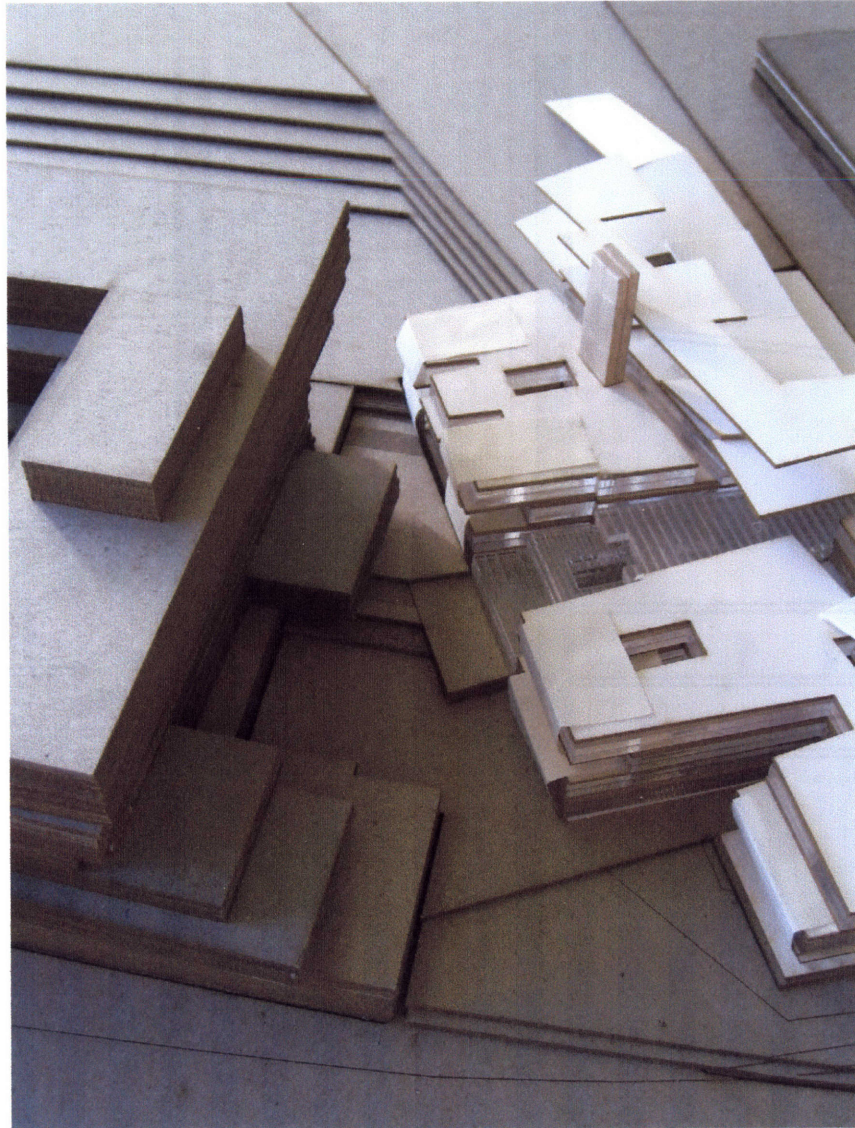


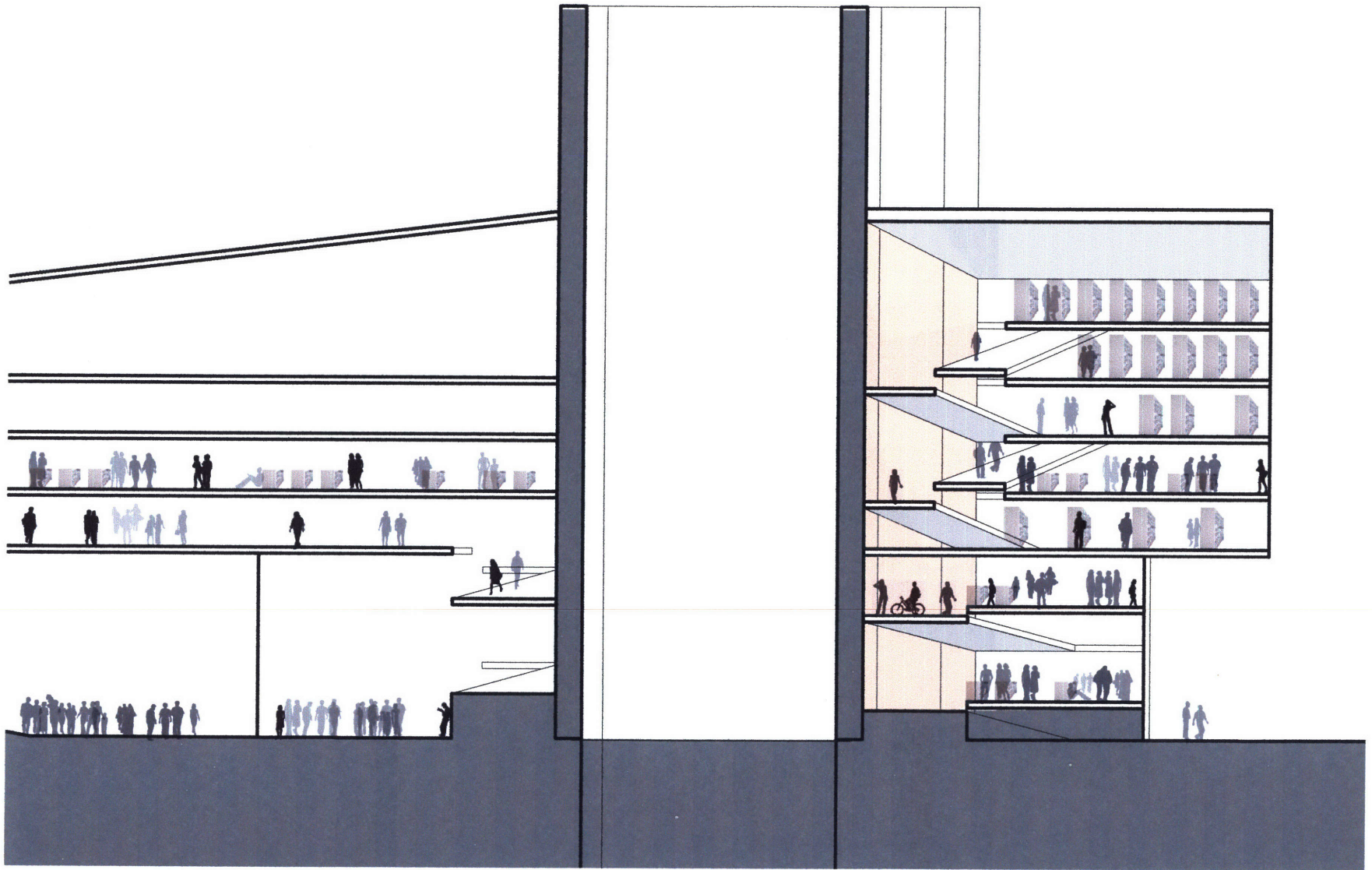
LONGITUDINAL SECTION



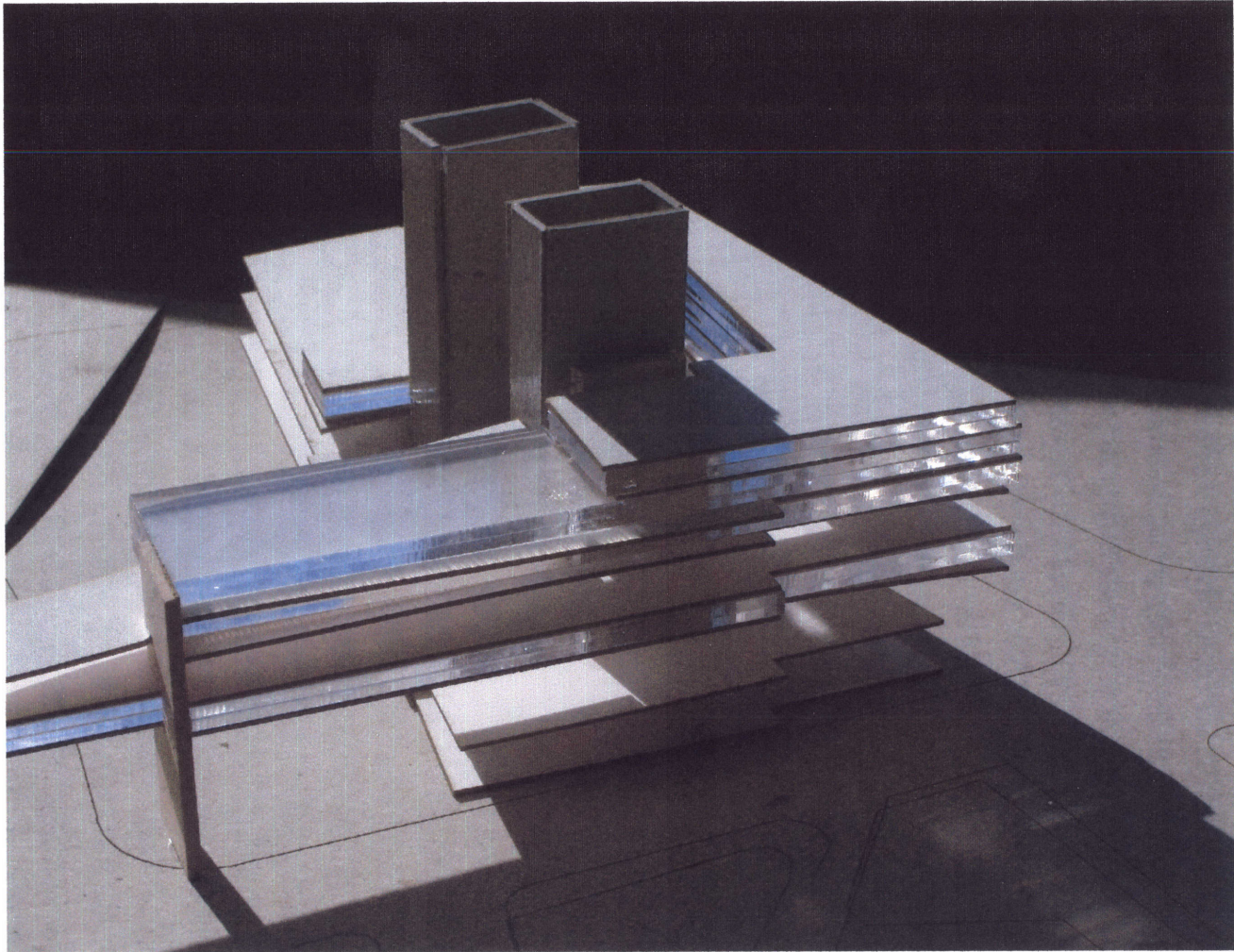


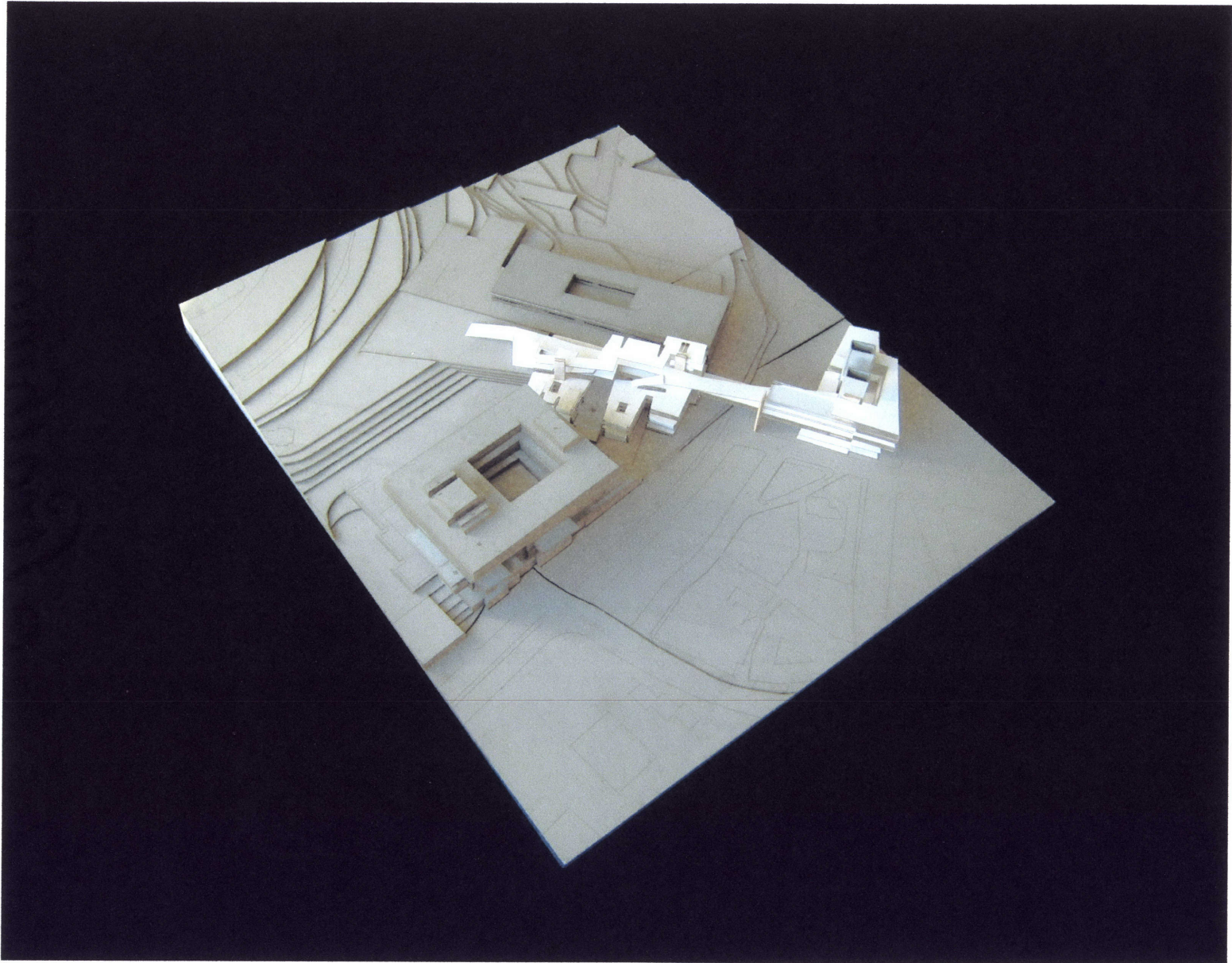
CROSS SECTION





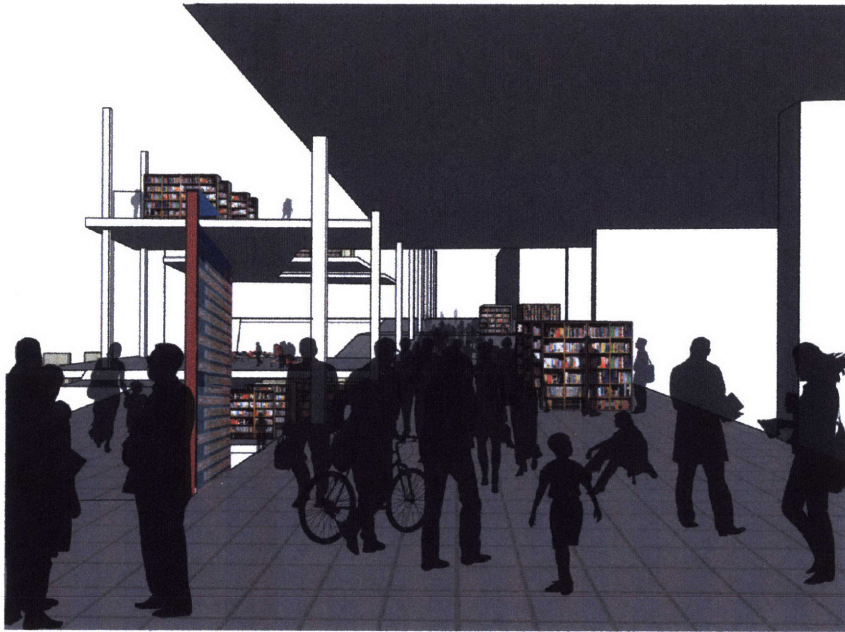
ENLARGED SECTION AT GREENWAY





CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to keep in mind that we are not in a position where one must choose between the technology and media that has become such an integral part of our lives and the more traditional library program. Rather, we must envision a way in which the two can work towards a symbiotic relationship. Media and technology will take on a new role in the library as a transitioning mechanism, bringing visitors closer to the materials previously hidden within the stacks, as well as serving as the voice for the library participants. Technology therefore becomes a key part of the “browser” program which I have proposed to be the new ingredient for the urban library. While our actions and lifestyles may change over time, Humans will always carry a thirst for knowledge and information. Individual knowledge, however, is nowhere near as powerful as that of the collective, especially when it is a collective built on varied opinions and fiery spirits.



“STREET” SPACE ACTIVITY



“BROWSEY” ACTIVITY

“STACKS” ACTIVITY



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IMAGE CREDITS

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<http://www.cityofboston.gov/BRA/maps/maps.asp>

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