Michelangelo’s *Libreria Secreta*

by

Nicola M. Camerlenghi

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial
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Signature of Author

Department of Architecture
May 18, 2000

Certified by

David Friedman
Associate Professor of the
History of Architecture,
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by

Roy Strickland
Chairman, Department Committee
on Graduate Students (for SMArchS)
David Friedman  Associate Professor of the History of Architecture

Henry A. Millon  Visiting Professor of History and Architecture

William J. Mitchell  Professor of Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences, Dean School of Architecture and Planning
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**Abstract**

In 1525, Michelangelo was commissioned by Pope Clement VII to design a “libreria secreta” to be placed at the Southern end of the Laurentian library in Florence. The room was intended as a repository of the more precious manuscripts of the Medici family collection. For political and economic reasons, the small room was never built.

The first half of the thesis focuses on the extant evidence. This initial historical research is a prolegomenon to the second half of the paper, in which I reconstruct the *libreria secreta* with several computer renderings. The reconstructions synthesize the historical evidence that I have collected into several possible visual representations of the room.

The goal of this thesis is twofold: 1) To provide a more complete understanding of the Laurentian library by discussing the role of the *libreria secreta* within the complex. 2) To produce a series of computer reconstructions in order to visualize, and in turn, to analyze the resolved and unresolved aspects of Michelangelo’s project.

Thesis Supervisor: David Friedman

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Frank Salmon, “The Site of Michelangelo’s Laurentian Library,” JSBH, XLIX, (December, 1990), 413.

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14. Why sheet CB 80 was cut (point “A” is center of incised circle).
    Charles de Tolnay, Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo, (1980), IV, 560; with over drawings by
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15. Copy of CB 80. G.I. Rossi. 1739.
    G.I. Rossi, La Libreria Mediceo Laurenziana, 1739, tav. XIX.


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    From Bandini, Angelo Maria.

    By author.

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In the process of constructing the Laurentian library, Michelangelo designed a number of proposals that were either rejected, revised, or left unbuilt. Among the unbuilt schemes, the *libreria secreta* remains at once the best documented, least examined, and most innovative project. The proposal lacked precedent in shape, vaulting, and in aspects of its lighting; additionally, it reflected Michelangelo’s affinity for complex architecture even on a small scale and would have concluded the lengthy progression of spaces in the multi-chambered library.

The goal of this thesis is twofold: 1) To provide a more complete understanding of the Laurentian library by discussing the role of the *libreria secreta* within the complex. 2) To produce a series of computer reconstructions in order to visualize, and in turn, to analyze the resolved and unresolved aspects of Michelangelo’s project.

The first half of the thesis focuses on the historical evidence: the two autograph drawings, correspondence, subsequent reproductions of the drawings and contemporaneous maps of the site. This initial historical research is a prolegomenon to the second half of the paper, in which I create several computer renderings in order to reconstruct the *libreria secreta*. The reconstructions synthesize the historical evidence that I have collected into several visual representations of the room.
From the beginning of Michelangelo’s involvement in the Laurentian until the sudden termination of work in 1526, the library was to be a multi-chambered series of spaces. Both programmatically and physically, these spaces underwent several alterations. At first, the subsidiary rooms were intended to divide the manuscripts by language; later, this idea was abandoned in favor of a small chapel meant to crown the library’s southern end; in the end, the chapel proposal was discarded in order to build a small library for the conservation of more precious texts—a *libreria secreta*. The focus of the first half of the thesis is to examine the correspondence and autograph drawings in order to indicate how the design of the *libreria secreta* represented the final proposal for the multi-chambered library.

Fortunately for scholars, the changes in the Laurentian library were discussed within a great deal of correspondence between patron and architect. The letters, particularly those between the papal secretary Giovanni Francesco Fattucci and Michelangelo, have become fundamental to the task of ordering the drawings and the

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proposals into a reasonable chronology.\(^2\) Approximately 38 letters and 35 drawings address the evolution of the Laurentian library’s planning and construction.\(^3\) From this large history, I have selected the critical moments, in order to focus on the development of the multi-chambered scheme which culminated in the *libreria secreta* proposal.\(^4\)

The earliest mention of a library to be associated with San Lorenzo is a memoir written by the prior of the canonica Giovanni Battista Figiovanni in June of 1519. The document indicates the intent to construct both a library and a sacristy as part of the complex of San Lorenzo.\(^5\) The library was intended to hold the collection of manuscripts known as the “Biblioteca Medicea Privata”, which had been in the family since Lorenzo


\(^3\) Ackerman (1961) identifies 31 sheets; Portoghesi and Zevi (1964) indicate 35 sheets; while Tolnay (1980) identifies 41 sheets. Tolnay manages to account for more drawings by including a large number of profiles for moulding details that other scholars do not describe. The similar number of drawings and correspondences does not indicate a direct one-to-one relation. For a collection of all the letters in the Carteggio, which are pertinent to the development of the *libreria secreta*, see Appendix A.

\(^4\) The critical turning points of this complicated evolution are summarized in Appendix B: “The Chronology of Development.”

\(^5\) The memoir was written retrospectively in the 1530s. The text describes an early interest in constructing both a Sacristy on the north side of the main choir of San Lorenzo, and a library adjacent to the church: “Noi siamo d’animo fare una spesa di circa ducati 50 mila appresso a San Lorenzo, [per] la libreria, e la sacristia in compagnia di quella già [fatta] et nome harà di capella, dove molti sepolcri da seppellirvi li antenati mancati.[...]


Incidentally, the word “canonica” refers to the complex of San Lorenzo where the prior and canons have their living quarters. A suitable translation may be rectory, parsonage, or claustral buildings. Scholars writing in English have referred to the space differently. Wittkower (1934) refers to the space as a “cloister”. Ackerman (1961) uses “monastery”, “religious establishment”, or “cloister”. Frank Salmon (1990), who writes about the placement of the library within the complex of buildings, calls it a “canonica”. I prefer this word because it manages to encompass the meanings of all the English translations. [Frank Salmon is a scholar based at the School of Architecture at the University of Manchester, England. The article is derived from a dissertation submitted to the Courtauld Institute of Art in 1986, under the tutelage of Caroline Elam and Michael Hirst.]
il Magnifico. In his will, Pope Leo X (Giovanni de’ Medici), had requested that the vast collection of books, which had been kept at the Villa Medici in Rome, be returned to Florence. These manuscripts complemented the extensive collection that Cosimo de’ Medici had previously established and had opened to the public (i.e. scholars and literati) in the convent of San Marco around 1444.

When the executor of the will – his nephew Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici – had seen his own hopes for the papacy deflated by the election of Pope Hadrian, the library project was put on hold. Fortunately for the Medici, Hadrian’s short reign was followed by the election of Cardinal Giulio on November 19, 1523, thus opening the coffers of the Vatican to the family’s ambitions. Michelangelo had a longstanding connection with the Medici family, which began during his youth as an apprentice in Lorenzo’s sculpture garden. At the time of Giulio’s election, his work on the New Sacristy as well as his previous designs for the façade of San Lorenzo had made him the obvious choice to carry out the design for the library. Shortly after Giulio de’ Medici was elected to the papacy as Clement VII, the forty-eight-year-old artist traveled to Rome to discuss the

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7 The library was the first public library in the western world and measured 45.1m x 10.5m. According to Vasari it was designed by Michelozzo. This is to date the most reasonable conclusion.

8 At this time of Giulio election, Condivi suggests that Michelangelo had already been charged by then Cardinal de’ Medici to design the New Sacristy. Ascanio Condivi, The Life of Michelangelo, trans. A. Wohl (Oxford, 1976), p. 11-12.

In addition, the New Sacristy should be remembered as Michelangelo’s first major architectural commission. According to Ackerman, prior projects included the exterior of the Chapel of Leo X at Castel Sant’Angelo, 1514; the façade of San Lorenzo (drawings and model), 1515-1520; the Ballatoio for S. Maria del Fiore (studies), 1516-1520; the windows of the Medici Palace, ca.1517; and the Altopascio House, ca. 1518-1520(?).
commission with the newly elected Pontiff. The first direct mention of Michelangelo’s involvement in the library project appeared in a letter from the papal secretary, Giovanni Francesco Fattucci, dated December 30, 1523:

Again, I showed sir Iacopo the design of the library at San Lorenzo; he said he would speak about it to the Pope. I will await a response.

This letter indicates that Michelangelo had already produced a design for the library, either prior to his encounter with the Pope or immediately thereafter. Of the extant drawings only one can be associated with this phase of design. Originally part of the same sheet, CB 9Av and CB 10Av represent two proposals for the placement of the library within the canonica. One library was oriented north-south and placed in the center of the southern courtyard. A second “libreria” was oriented east-west and located perpendicular to the proposed façade of San Lorenzo.

Less than one month after Michelangelo had traveled to Rome to discuss the commission with Pope Clement VII, Fattucci wrote to Michelangelo asking him to

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9 The artist’s trip to Rome is likely to have occurred sometime between the twelfth and twenty-second of December 1523. In note 46, p. 419, Frank Salmon argues that: “The terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem dates for Michelangelo’s visit to Rome are provided by a letter from papal secretary Giovanni Fattucci dated December 22, 1523. See P. Barocchi, G. Poggi, R. Ristori, Il Carteggio di Michelangelo, (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1973), 3, 4-5. Hereafter this text will be referenced as “Carteggio”

10 “Ancora ho mostro a messer Iacopo il disegnio della libreria di San Lorenzo, il quale mi disse ne parlerrebbe a Nostro Signore. Aspetterò la risposta.” (Carteggio, III, 12). Later, in early January 1524, Michelangelo wrote to the papal secretary: “[... intendo per l’ultima volta chome la Sanctità del Nostro Signore e vuole che ’l disegno della libreria sia di mia mano. [...]farò ciò che io saprò, benché non sia mia professione.” (Carteggio, III, 20). In English: “[...] I understand that his Holiness the Pope desires the design of the library to be in my hand. [...] I will do that which I can, although it is not my profession.” This last observation has become famously associated with Michelangelo and his preference for sculpture; it was written when he had only just begun to affirm himself in architecture. Michelangelo would phrase his inclination toward sculpture also to Pope Paul III. See Vasari,La Vita di Michelangelo, VII, 218.
present another drawing with two libraries, one for Greek manuscripts and another for Latin manuscripts.\(^{12}\) While CB 9Av / CB 10Av do not specify the content of either of the library spaces, these drawings should not be ruled out as a possible representations of a two-library scheme. It is not surprising that this letter calls for another drawing, since we have evidence of previous drawings already commissioned in December 1523. This is the first letter that specifies a program for the library. It is important to note that while no further mention of this particular arrangement was made, the idea of a multi-chambered library would be present in all later proposals.

It was common for rooms in a library to be separated by content, purpose, or even accessibility. In fact, the Pope’s requests reflected the traditional arrangement of early Renaissance libraries. The catalogue of S. Marco library “mentions a Greek Library which had seven banchi on each side – this was very probably a separate room.”\(^{13}\) The room is located at the northern end of the library and was constructed in 1457, as the entire library was being rebuilt after the 1453 earthquake. The connections between the library of San Marco and that of San Lorenzo are explained by the Medici’s role as patrons of both. A second instance of a multi-chambered scheme is the library of Monte Oliveto, outside Siena, which was built in 1516. Its reading room contains a flight of

\(^{11}\) Ackerman ((1961), II, 37) dates the drawings to between January 30 and March 10, 1524. While Hirst dates them to between January 2 - January 13, 1524.  
\(^{12}\) Carteggio,III, 17; January 2, 1524: "...Per tanto, farete fare uno altro disegnio, et fate sia le misure a tutte a dua le librerie, cioè alla latina et alla grecha, perché questo disegnio che io ho non v'è la lungheza della grecha."

\(^{13}\) The catalogue is currently at the State Archives in Modena, but was described by John Willis Clark in the seminal text The Care of Books, (Cambridge,UK: 1902), p. 199.
stairs that lead to a room 6.4m long and 9.7m wide, which Clark believes was used as an “inner library.”

The similarities with the plan of the Laurentian library become evident as one examines the continuing correspondence between patron and architect. In fact, the multi-chambered organization and the terminology used to describe it reflect the monastic and early Renaissance precedents that inspired both the patron’s demands and the architect’s solutions. A letter from March 10, 1524 describes a set of drawings of two small rooms at the end of the main reading room. In these studietti the Pope wished to place certi libri più secreti. A month later, Fattucci requested that the previous scheme of two studietti be doubled, and directed Michelangelo to design four studioli which extended off the main body of the library:

And make it so that at the head of the library there can be a window between two studioli of approximately six braccia each [3.45m], as was designed in the other drawing, and two other [studioli] between which is the door.

While no drawings can be associated with either of these schemes, a drawing of an ideal monastic library by Giorgio Vasari il Giovane represents a similar space with two “studietti” on each side. (Figure 3) It has been suggested that most of the drawings of this series for an “Ideal City” were loosely derived from either designed or built buildings.

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14 Clark, p. 199.
15 Carteggio, III, 41: “[...] Rimandovi la pianta della libreria che s’affare, et in capo della libreria v’è segnato dua studietti che mettono in mezo la finestra che si riscontra coll’entrata della libreria. Et in quegli studietti vole metere certi libri più secreti; et ancora vole adoperare quelli che mettono in mezo la porta, et più volte sapere la finestra che va in capo la libreria dove la guarda, se-lla guarda sopra orti o tetti o stalla.” According to Ackerman ((1961), II, 37), this plan would have involved “rare book studies at four corners of the reading room.”
16 Carteggio, III, 41: “Et fate che in testa della libreria venga una finestra in mezzo di dua studioli di circa sei braccia l’uno, come è disegnato nell’autra, et dua altri che mettino in mezo la porta.”
around Florence. James O’Gorman has suggested that “it is certainly possible that Vasari’s nephew could have had access to architectural drawings which have subsequently disappeared.”

The current location of the library was formally accepted in April of 1524:

His Holiness says to build the library where you proposed, that is above the rooms toward the Old Sacristy. (Figure 4)

This solution to raise the library above the canonica not only damaged the least number of rooms after completion, but protected the books from flood. Most of the libraries of Florence were built on elevated ground: S.Croce, S.Marco, S. Maria Novella, SS. Annunziata, the Convent of Porta San Gallo, and the Badia. For protection from fire, stone vaulting ideally both above and below the library rooms would have secured the manuscripts within a masonry shell. Caroline Elam is correct in stating that

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17 Vasari il Giovane’s drawings date from 1598 and are located in the Uffizi. O’Gorman cites them twice in connection with Michelangelo’s Laurentian project. O’Gorman, Thesis, p. 51-52. See footnote #20 for references to crociera drawings.

18 “Nostro Signiore dice che voi faciate la libreria dove voi volete, cioè sopra le camere di verso della sacrestia vechia.” April 3, 1524. (Carteggio, III, 57).

19 The library was placed above the canonry, the canonica’s older library, and five of the canonica’s bedrooms. A series of letters indicates the Pope’s concern for the protection of the books. See January 30, 1524 (Carteggio, III, 30-31); March 10, 1524 (Carteggio, III, 41); and most characteristically, April 3, 1524 (Carteggio, III, 57): “Et per rispetto del fuoco vorebbe che le camere sotto la libreria fussino fatte in volta, a ciò che qualche inbriaco, come potrebbe accadere fra’ preti, non mettessi fuoco in camera e della camera nella libreria.” In the final plan the only damage to the rooms involved lowering the ceiling in order to accommodate a vault. Several letters listed some of the Pope’s concerns with the previous plans, and ordered Michelangelo to draw plans of the canonica in order to determine the most economic location. See (Carteggio, III, 30), January 30, 1524; (Carteggio, III, 34), 1-8 February, 1524. Some of the relevant drawings are: CB 9Av; CB 10Av; CB 81Ar; AB, I, 29, fol. 72r; and AB, I, 151, fol. 269. For general construction methods see James F. O’Gorman, The Architecture of the Monastic Library in Italy 1300-1600, (New York: NYU Press, 1972), pp. 15-19. For more information on second storey location see De Angelis d’Ossat, La Biblioteca Mediceo Laurenziana, (Florence: Nardini, 1981), p.37;
Michelangelo was designing with these concerns in mind since the earliest extant drawings (CB 9Av and CB 10Av) depict the library on the second storey of the canonica.

On April 13, 1524, just ten days after the location had been selected, Fattucci requested that Michelangelo design a *crociera* scheme, which organized the *studioli* into a cross-shaped arrangement.\(^2\) Again, there are no extant drawings of the *crociera* scheme but another drawing by Vasari il Giovane may replicate the idea.\(^3\) A vestibule with a stair pattern that greatly resembles a proposal by Michelangelo precedes the *crociera* plan.\(^4\) Probably advised by the papal treasurers, Fattucci wrote Michelangelo to abandon the *crociera* plan because of its destruction of many of the canonica’s rooms. Unwilling to fully discard the idea, Fattucci asked that Michelangelo make it possible to carry out the *crociera* plan at a later date:

For now [the Pope] does not wish you to complete the *crociera* plan, but make it so that when he may wish to build it, it could be done. In addition,

\(^2\) Wittkower (1934) Appendix i and iii; and for C. Elam’s comments see Salmon (1990)p.417 and 420.

\(^3\) April 13, 1524, Carteggio, III, 64. “Per aultro gli piace ogni cosa, et che voi pigliate quelle nove braccia di corte che voi avete disegniato, et cosi la crociera con quello graticolato che v'è segniato.” “He [the Pope] likes everything and suggests that you use the nine braccia of the courtyard that you have designed, and also the *crociera* [...]”

\(^4\) A document from the Ricordi of Michelangelo, mentions expenditures of library construction and in particular a *crociera*: “La spesa della Libreria. le mura che s’anno a fare di nuovo, che s’anno a chominciare sopra le chamere di sopra del chiostro...montano, fornite di tutto, quattrocento trenta ducati, senza la croce. La croce, facendo diciotto braccia per ogni verso, e’l vano d’ogni lato vi va di muro, della medesima altezza e grossezza, cento novanta tre duchati [...]” from Archivio Buonarroti, 135. See Lucilla Bardeschi-Ciulich and Paola Barocch, _I Ricordi di Michelangelo_ (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1970), pp. 144-145.


Michelangelo’s drawing that I am refering to is at the Teylers Museum in Haarlem (A33b-v) or reproduced in Tolnay (1980) as Corpus 219v.
This letter was the first to specifically mention a chamber “at the head of the library”.

Fattucci repeats the words “in testa della libreria” which had been used previously and could refer to a space opposite the entrance. Unfortunately, the other critical term “ag[i]unta” – is vague and does not describe the purpose of the room.

Between August and September of 1524, construction at the library began and Bacio Bigio was appointed capomaestro. The first phase of construction involved reinforcing the sidewalls below the library with thick piers in order to elevate the new structures, as if on stilts, above the functioning rooms of the canonica. This process of raising the “mura grosse” was Bacio Bigio’s idea and was praised by the Pope as both more economical and less cumbersome, because it effectively permitted to build the library as a third floor to the canonica. Construction of the reading room walls

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22 August 2, 1524, (Carteggio, III, 95): “Perr-ora non vole che vi faciate la crociera, ma lassiate in modo che, quando la vora' fare si possa. Et manadatemi la lungheza con quella ag[i]unta che viene in testa della libreria.” One of the biggest concerns of the Pope and of the Canon of the San Lorenzo canonica was to build a library in a location that would have destroyed the least number of rooms. In fact, the rent raised from rooms and shop space was a major profit-making mechanism for the canonica. This is clearly stated in a letter from Fattucci: “[il Papa] Vorebbe che voi [...]vedessi per l’apunto quello che cavano e’ preti o altri di pigione di quelle botteghe et chase che s’arebbe a pigliare per la libreria, et quante botteghe v’andrebbono sotto, per rifare e’ preti del danno loro.” (Carteggio, III, 35), February 9, 1524.

23 On April 3rd, 1524, Fattucci describes the demands for a window which was to be placed “in testa della libreria.”

24 (Carteggio, III, 105): “Mando per Bacio Bigio subito per commetterli l’opera.” This delegation of responsibility made it possible for Michelangelo to continue work on the tombs of the New Sacristy, which remained a priority for the aging Pontiff (1478-1533). Bacio Bigio had worked with Michelangelo on the San Lorenzo façade project and had been involved in many projects of the church for ten years prior to his engagement as capomaestro. See Wallace, (1994). p. 141.


26 The scheme is represented in Drawing AB, I, 160, fol.286, (see Figure 7) which indicates the location of some of the piers and even the spanning arches which formed a thicker wall along the length of the
began in March and by December 1525, the timber roof was completed. With the construction of the walls of the reading room having been begun only one month earlier, a further programmatic change occurred.

[Libreria Secreta Proposal]

Concerning the chapel at the head of the library, the Pope says that he does not desire a chapel, but that he desires a *libreria secreta* in order to store certain books which are more precious than others.  27

With this sentence, Fattucci requested yet another proposal for the multi-chambered library, this time, a *libreria secreta*. This letter is both the first and last mention of a chapel to be placed opposite the Ricetto. The tone of the letter seems to take for granted the existence of a proposal for a chapel; additionally, in the previous correspondence of August 2, 1524, the space was merely referred to as “*quella ag[i]unta*”. These two observations suggest that between August 1524 and April 1525, either the Pope or Michelangelo initiated the proposal for a chapel.

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27 (Carteggio, III, 141): “Circa la capella in capo la libreria, dice non vi vole cappella, ma vole sia una libreria secreta per tenere certi libri più pretiosi che gli altri.”
Such a program would have been a radical departure from what was common in the context of a library. In O'Gorman's comprehensive catalogue of medieval and early Renaissance libraries, there are no examples of a chapel accessible only through a library. Perhaps because of its radical nature, or more likely because its construction would have resulted in less space for manuscripts the project was abandoned. On November 10, 1525, a set of drawings for a *libreria secreta* arrived in Rome. There is no way of knowing if the drawings received in Rome were those requested seven months earlier.

The space was intended as a storage room for precious manuscripts, and was located at the southern end of the Laurentian reading room. The expression *libreria secreta* had several precedents and had been employed as far back as 1381, when it appears in the inventory of the library of the monastery of S. Francesco in Assisi:

> Assisi possessed nearly 700 volumes in two collections. The *libreria publica*, or communal collection, housed 181 books chained to reading desks, and the rest were kept in the *libreria secreta*.

O'Gorman translated the term *libreria secreta* to “storehouse.” Interestingly, in the case of the Assisi library, this room contained the vast majority of the owned texts, along with the more precious ones. In the case of the Laurentian, the Pope intended to

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28 Sufficient storage space had always been a priority for the Pontiff. *(Carteggio, III, 71):* "Et piu' date aviso come volete fare la crociera, perché gli piace assai, per avere Nostro Signiore grande quantita’ di libri, perché in una non v’andrebbono."

29 *(Carteggio, III, 184):* "Michelangelo charrissimo, io ebbi una di Giovanni Spina con certi disegni della piccola libreria, la quale mostrai a Nostro Signiore." In English: "Dearest Michelangelo, I received a letter from Giovanni Spina with certain designs for a piccola libreria, which I showed to his Holiness."

30 Given that construction of the reading room and Ricetto was proceeding at a break-neck pace, it is likely that Michelangelo was occupied at the fabbrica, and it is possible that he needed plenty of time before he could attend to the plans for the *libreria secreta*. Wallace describes that the expenditures from the beginning of 1525 to August 1526 amounted to a "sum that is more than the total cost of the exactly contemporaneous Bartolinni Salimbeni palace that required more than ten years to complete."
only store “certain books, which were more precious than others.”\textsuperscript{32} The word \textit{secreta} might have simply been understood as a synonym of private, in the sense that the space was not intended as a \textit{"libreria publica."} (For a list of pertinent precedents see Appendix F.)

The Vatican Library was also a source for ideas, especially those that were generated by Pope Clement. Sixtus IV built the library in 1475 on the ground floor of the Nicholas V palace between the \textit{Cortile del Papagallo} and the future \textit{Cortile del Belvedere}. Clement was certainly aware of the quadripartite organization of the rooms.(Figure 8) A Latin and Greek library were considered public and referred to as \textit{bibliotheca communis, bibliotheca pubblica}, or merely \textit{bibliotheca}. The second two libraries were considerably more off-limits even to the scholarly public:

\textit{In the bibliotheca secreta} the more precious manuscripts were kept apart from the others. The fourth room, which was fitted in 1480-1481, was called the \textit{bibliotheca pontificia}. In addition to manuscripts, it contained the papal archives and registers (\textit{Regesta}). In the catalogue dated 1512, it is called ‘\textit{Intima et ultima secretior bibliotheca}’, and seems to have contained the most valued treasures.\textsuperscript{33}

The \textit{bibliotheca secreta} measured 11.5m x 6.1m and was illuminated by a single window, and contained several seats, a book closet (\textit{armarium}), a settle (\textit{spalliera}), and chests (\textit{capsae}). These types of furniture were frequent also in monastic libraries. Here, very small spaces-much like closets (\textit{minus armarium or armariolum}) - stored texts pertaining to teaching and instruction. These would be distinguished from missals and the

\textsuperscript{32} O’Gorman, (1972), p. 16.
\textsuperscript{32} (Carteggio, III, 141).
\textsuperscript{33} Clark, p. 202-228. At the end of Sixtus IV’s reign (1484), the inventory of the Vatican library listed the contents of the library in relation to the physical arrangement of the library. See P. Fabre, “\textit{Le Vatican de Sixte IV},” \textit{Mélanges d’Archéologie et d’Histoire}, XV, (1895) 455-75.
manuscripts of the main collection.\textsuperscript{34} The Laurentian library, while located in a canonica, was not intended to cater to canons. As Ackerman indicates, the library had the twofold function of storing the precious manuscripts of the Medici collection and serving a public function of supplementing the university libraries.\textsuperscript{35}

As I mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter, the construction of the reading room walls had just begun when Michelangelo received the request for the \textit{libreria secreta}. By the time the drawings for the \textit{libreria secreta} were received in November, the walls of the reading room were almost complete and a wooden truss roof was about to be put in place. In April of the following year (1526), with the Ricetto walls virtually complete, Fattucci assured Michelangelo that construction of the \textit{libreria secreta} would be undertaken once the Ricetto was completed:

The Pope desires the \textit{pichola libreria} to be constructed once the Ricetto is finished.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{36} (Carteggio, III, 217): "[...] voi volevi la resoluzione della pichola libreria, per potere fare il tramezzo fra i' ricetto et la libreria, [il Papa] dice che voi lo faciate come se la pichola fosse fatta: la quale vole si afacia come sarh finito i' ricetto."

"You wanted the resolution of the pichola libreria, in order to make the partition wall between the Ricetto and the reading room, [the Pope] says that you ought to build it as if the pichola [libreria] were already complete: he desires it to be constructed once the Ricetto is finished" In this last letter, as with the November 10th letter, the change in terminology from "libreria secreta" to "piccola libreria" need not necessarily indicate that a major programmatic change had occurred. Both terms can reasonably be used to describe a small library.

Various scholars have referred to the project differently: to Ackerman it was the "Rare Book Room"; Wittkower called it a "supplementary reading room" as well as "piccola libreria"; Argan referred to it as "libreria segreta"; for Portoghesi and Zevi it was the "libreria segreta"; and finally, Tolnay combined the more common forms and called it "piccola libreria segreta". For the sake of clarity and consistency I have referred to the project as the "libreria secreta", which I find to be a more telling and stimulating name. Furthermore, it is the first nomenclature we know used to describe the space in the correspondence.
A conflicting version of this resolution was already in the air when, two months earlier, the Pope expressed his interest in seeing the New Sacristy complete:

Now that [Michelangelo] has begun working on the figures, I would like it if he did not lose time on other things, and to think now of nothing other than the figures [in the New Sacristy].

The shifting of funding and labor toward the New Sacristy took a toll on the Laurentian library, and the *libreria secreta* in particular. In 1527, papal money was cut to all Florentine projects because of the threat of invasion by Charles V. A series of poor diplomatic maneuvers brought the relationship between the papacy and the major powers of the time – the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of France – on the verge of collapse. On May 6, 1527, Charles’s army attacked Rome, in what became known as the “Sack of Rome”. Immediately, Michelangelo understood that “times are unfavorable to this art of mine.” He must have recognized that he would be unable to complete the projects at San Lorenzo as planned. His attention turned to the design of fortification walls intended to protect Florence in her uncertain future.

When construction at the Laurentian site was postponed late in 1526, the library effectively remained truncated, one room short of completion. This complex history of Laurentian library proposals indicates that, far from being an isolated instance, the *libreria secreta* was the final distillation of many ideas regarding a multi-chambered

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37 (Carteggio, III, 210), February 23, 1526: “Poi che egli a cominciato a lavorare, io non vorrei che e’ perdessi tempo in altre cose, né avessi a pensare per hora ad altro che alle figure.” A famous letter of April 3 1526, urges Michelangelo to complete work because the Pope was complaining that he wasn’t going to live long: “che noi viviamo poco.” It turns out that Clement was worrying too early, since he lived until 1533!

38 (Carteggio, III, 250), February 1527: “visto e’ tempi, chome è desto, chontrari all’arte mia, non so se io m’o da sperare più provigione.”
library. Fortunately, the *libreria secreta* is also the best documented of all these proposals in terms of both correspondence and drawings.

**[The Principal Drawings]**

Having presented the development of the multi-chambered library concept, I now turn to the pair of drawings for the *libreria secreta* in order to describe Michelangelo's methods of design and his proposal for the space and to lay the groundwork for a virtual reconstruction of the room.

The two drawings pertaining to the *libreria secreta* belong to the Casa Buonarroti in Florence and are numbered 79A and 80A. (Figure 9, 10) According to Tolnay, neither sheet contains a watermark. Both sheets were drawn using a pen and brown ink. Because the two images are of different sizes and the angles of the sidewalls differ, I am

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39 CB 79A was drawn on a sheet of *filigrana briquet* 6659, which measures 283x412mm (in inches: 11 1/8 x 16 1/4). The sheet was cut at its edges, at one point folded down the middle vertically, and relined. This last process most likely occurred in 1964 when the drawings (CB 79, CB 80 and many others) were removed from frames and according to a drawing curator at Casa Buonarroti "controfondati." CB 79 is patched in a portion of the upper left, which few scholars have mentioned. There are several blotches but it is otherwise in good condition as described by Tolnay (1980), p. 71-2 and Hartt (1970), p.199. In the past decade, the drawing has not left the Casa Buonarroti for exhibitions.

40 The second sheet measures 212 x 280b, 278t mm, (In inches: 8 3/8 x 11b 10 15/16t). It was drawn on *filigrana* 6076-80. The sheet was cut on various sides and relined; it is stained but is otherwise in good condition. I will describe the "trimming" further along in this description. The drawing left Casa Buonarroti on four occasions during the 1990s. London (April 29-July 24, 1994); Edinburgh (August-September 1994); Tokyo/Kyoto (April 6-September 23, 1996); San Paolo/Valencia (September 10-February 20, 1998). For these past two exhibitions, see Pina Raggionieri’s catalogues.

certain that the drawings were not copies of each other. Furthermore, I side with all scholars in believing that CB 79 was drawn before CB 80. Michael Hirst stated that CB 80 was predated by “a number of earlier exploratory sketches, one of which, CB 79, survives.”

At the center of sheet CB 79 is the large plan of the *libreria secreta*. The distinction of free hand and straightedge lines indicates that the drawing was completed in more than one phase. (For a detailed description of the possible ordering of the lines in the drawing, see Appendix C.) Briefly, the first stage of Michelangelo’s design involved transcribing the results of a land-survey of the existing site; this was accomplished with a straightedge, a square (or some other device which measured angles), pen and ink. If the drawing is inserted onto a plan of the canonica, these straightedge lines echo important lines of pre-existing walls: to the right (west) was the rear of an adjoining property; to the top (south) was another boundary of the canonica; on the bottom (north) one finds the wall of the reading room of the Laurentian library; and

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4 The base of the *libreria secreta* in CB 80 measures 25.4cm vs. the base in CB 79 which measures 36.8cm. A common technique for copying drawings is known as “pin-holling” and involves placing two sheets on top of each other and “marking” the endpoints of lines with pinholes, which are then connected with a line. The pin holes are far less visible markers than an tick mark made of ink would be. The absence of pinholes in these two drawings indicates that we cannot be sure that there were any other drawings relating to the project drawn or copied from the extant ones.


45 For Portoghesi-Zevi, the first sitting comprised: “un rilievo della situazione; sulla sinistra è la parete di fondo della biblioteca, in basso e sulla destra il muro[...]” 1964, p. 205.
finally, to the left (east) was a long block of dormer cells stretching eastward. I will return to this last line when describing CB 80.

In the second phase of design, Michelangelo focused on the interior of the room. Faced with the odd geometry of the site, he resolved to “regularize” the space by constructing a wall symmetrical to the western oblique side of the site. Only after fixing the external shape of the room to fit the site did Michelangelo proceed to organize the interior. Probably frustrated by the two $55^\circ$ angles formed by the side walls adjoining to the body of the library, Michelangelo elaborated the interior by truncating the pair of awkward spaces, thus transforming the trapezoidal interior into an irregular hexagon. After making this change he included the six columns and the circular and rectangular niches along the wall.

I would distinguish a third phase, which included a series of supplementary drawings. At the upper right of CB 79, the lower sketch represented the plan of the ceiling of the room. It repeated the trapezoidal exterior and the irregular hexagonal interior of the main plan and included a central circular structure - thought to be a dome. Immediately to the left of this drawing is an elevation of the corner niches presented in the main plan. It included a niche framed by columns and an entablature that in turn

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46 I discuss the geometry and the innovative resolution which Michelangelo proposed in the section entitled “Geometry”
47 Tresham Lodge, in Rushton, England, should truly be considered the “first triangular building of architectural history”, although the interior does not contain a triangular space. This is a first, which Hartt (1970) ascribes to Michelangelo and the libreria secreta. Its interesting that the architect, Thomas Tresham, chose to handle the interior corners in a manner similar to Michelangelo: “The rooms within [on the upper and lower floors] are hexagonal, the corners of the large triangle being separated off into triangular closets, one containing the staircase.” In the case of Tresham Lodge, the truncated tips of the triangle are transformed into closets and a stairwell, while with Michelangelo they are relegated to the function of light shafts. Tresham lodge was built circa 1595. See W.D. Sweeting, The
supports an oculus and what seems to be the indication of a lunette. In this portion of the sheet, there are also three large "X"s, whose identity is ambiguous: possibly related to the drawing, possibly part of a conteggio. No scholar has yet commented upon the perspectival elevation found in the middle of the libreria secreta plan, which presents a long end of the room framed by two of the shorter corner walls. (Figure 12) It is drawn very hastily and does not include any indication of a capital, oculus, vault, entablature or pavement level. 48 Finally, Michelangelo developed a scheme for the furniture.

CB 79 is drawn to scale, which appears at the top left corner of the sheet as a horizontal line broken into short segmental portions. In a poor restoration, a strip of paper was attached to the front of the sheet. (Figure 13) When observed in transparency through strong light, the end of the scale can be viewed underneath this restoration. The full length of the scale marker is 2.1 cm. I find it baffling that the segment does not correspond to any common Florentine units. 49 Nevertheless, its identity as the scale can not be mistaken, because comparing its 2.1 cm length to the width of the reading room (37.5 cm), the room measures 17.85 braccia. The width of the reading room as built is anywhere from 17.89 to 18.05 braccia, depending on what was considered for the measurement. 50 Given the scale, I have computed the essential measurements of the


48 Such "perspectival" sketches are extremely rare for Michelangelo. It would seem reasonable to conclude that the perspectival drawing was placed before the lines of the benches, otherwise it would likely have been placed outside the main drawing. Close observation of the drawing at the Casa Buonarroti confirms this hypothesis, as it is clear that the lines of the furniture overlap those of the perspectival sketch.

49 For similar equivalences see Ronald Edward Zupko, Italian weights and measures from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981).

50 Various scholars have measured it differently, rarely do they indicate what they considered as boundaries.
proposed room in Appendix D. These measurements will be useful when discussing the wall treatment and furniture of the room.

Sheet CB 80A is the later depiction of the *libreria secreta* and includes a refined plan of the room and some of the adjacent structures.\(^5\) At the upper left of the sheet is the scale that indicates the length of a *braccia*. It corresponds precisely to 1/2 soldo or 1/20th of a braccia, which in modern terms equals 1.45 cm. As with CB 79, I have produced a table of the measurements of the room and its furniture (see Appendix E). CB 80 was drawn by tracing over an incised underdrawing which presents a refined version of CB 79. (For the order in which the lines were drawn see Appendix C.) From the degree of completion and resolution of many features which were not even present in the earlier drawing, I believe that it is likely that a series of intermediary drawings were made between the production of the two extant sheets.

In CB 80, Michelangelo also includes the pre-existing structures. The one exception is the leftmost line that represented a block of dormer cells of the canonica. While CB 80 lacks this long vertical line to the left of the *libreria secreta*, there is enough evidence to conclude that the sheet was trimmed in a manner that eliminated this important line.\(^5\) First off, ink lines extend to the limit of the paper on all sides, which generally is a good indication that a drawing has been cut. Particularly, at the bottom, the


\(^5\) Professor John Sherman believes that much of this trimming was done by Michelangelo himself. From a Core lecture at Harvard University, Spring 2000.
word “liberria”[sic] is written on what is now the edge of the sheet, but it does not appear to have been fit onto the sheet when written, indicating that it is more likely that the sheet was cut. The bottom corners where the *libreria secreta* meet the reading room are not completely indicated. Secondly, there is a clear marking of an incised circular section in the bottom left corner. (Figure 14) The point from which this circle was drawn is located off the current sheet. Because it was a compass mark, the center would have been on the sheet being drawn. Finally, in a 1739 engraving of CB 80 by G.I. Rossi, a vertical line to the left exists in the same position as the one on CB 79. (Figure 15) There are also clearly drawn wall structures to the left of the library including the corner where the reading room and *libreria secreta* cross. Because Rossi lamented that CB 80 was the only drawing of this room available to him, he must have been unaware of CB 79 where the vertical line still exists today. This last indication leads me to conclude that at the time of Rossi’s engraving, the drawing still included the vertical line of the eastern wall. Close observation of the plan’s interior reveals that Michelangelo was not consistent in his articulation of elements, particularly with regard to the treatment of the corners. In fact, the walls enclosing the rounded niches of the side walls are not all indicated in the same manner. Because the variations occur irregularly, I would suggest they are the result of carelessness or a disinterest in that type of detail at the time.

53 In Tolnay’s Corpus, the word “liberria” appear to be trimmed.
54 G.I., Rossi, *La Libreria Mediceo Laurenziana*, 1739: “Questo originale, di cui favelliano, nel libro de disegni tuttora si conserva del Signor Senatore Filipp Buonarroti, Antiquario celebratissimo. Nulladimeno, in tutta la preziosa raccolta tanti e tanto rari disegni, non è mai stato possibile di trovare un piccolo schizzo dell’alsato convenevole a questa leggiadra pianta.” (description of Tav. IX.) CB 79 presents two elevations, so I would conclude that it is likely that Rossi never saw this drawing, if he was complaining about a lack of elevations. It is clear from the engraving that CB 80 was used to formulate the articulation of both the interior and exterior.
According to Dottoressa Pina Raggionieri, these “piccole mancanze” are merely human errors, which do not dissuade her from believing that CB 80 was a “modello” and that its finalized form was an indication that the drawing was meant for the patron to see.\footnote{I spoke with Pina Raggionieri, the Director of the Casa Buonarroti in late January, 2000.}

Similarly, Michael Hirst, writing in 1988, believes the drawing to have been:

The modello Michelangelo made to send to the Pope in Rome, among the drawings which arrived November 10, 1525. […] It shows us very clearly how anxious Michelangelo was to make everything clear to his exigent patron. He has written in the identification of a neighboring property, has indicated his idea to have three overhead skylights, and has put in a one braccio scale.\footnote{Hirst, (1988), p. 85}

Charles de Tolnay also believed that CB 80 was a drawing which “probably Michelangelo wanted to show to the Pope.”\footnote{Charles de Tolnay, I disegni di Michelangelo nelle collezioni italiane, Exhibit of Casa Buonarroti / Galleria degli Uffizi. (23.11.1975 - 6.1.1976), p. 104. Tolnay neglects to repeat this statement in the \textit{Corpus}(1980).}

Pope Clement VII was a very demanding patron; while ultimately encouraging Michelangelo to work a “vostro modo”, there are several instances in the correspondence where the Pontiff had few reservations about presenting his concerns for materials, lighting, and even vaulting and wall thickness, which were considered practical concerns of the architect.\footnote{Wallace, (1994), p. 137.} Therefore, it is to be assumed that these drawings were viewed with great scrutiny. According to William Wallace:

These drawings [any drawing] were discussed by the Pope and his advisors, principal among whom was Jacopo cardinal Salviati; and they were sometimes returned to Michelangelo.\footnote{Wallace, (1994), p. 136. Wallace makes no specific mention of returned drawings. Could he be thinking of CB 80 for there are few other drawings which refer to the Laurentian which are quite as complete?}
The regular pattern of the folded creases that remains on the sheet is generally an indication that a drawing was part of a correspondence. The creases are so clear that it is possible today to trace them onto a second sheet and retrace the fold pattern of the original. Among all the drawings represented in the Corpus, relatively few are correspondences but these are all creased regularly.\(^{60}\)

A pair of letters describe a set of returned drawings of the Laurentian library that were returned to Michelangelo:

I enclose the plan of the library that has been chosen, and at the head of the library there are two windows that frame the window opposite the entrance.\(^{61}\)

The second letter reads:

With this letter, I am returning your drawings for the windows and for the library; I also enclose the drawing for the Pope’s funerary monument.\(^{62}\)

Of the extant letters pertaining to the Laurentian, these are the only ones that mention a returned drawing. Because we lack the drawings described above, CB 80 may well be the only drawing that was sent to Rome and returned to Michelangelo after viewing. This may have been a common practice especially for highly detailed drawings, and for drawings to which alterations were made in order to request a reworking of the project.

\(^{60}\) Of the architectural drawings in Corpus IV, it is clear that T593, T599, and T631 were sent as letters since they include the name of a recipient on the opposite side. Of these sent drawings, none currently belongs to the Casa Buonarroti. The first sheet remains at the Casa Vasari in Arezzo; the second is at the Bertoliana in Vicenza, and was donated by the Count Antonio Porto around 1883; and the third was sent to Michelangelo’s nephew Lionardo and is part of the Archivio Buonarroti (which only recently has become property of Casa Buonarroti). This raises the question of how frequent was it for a drawing to be returned to Florence from Rome.

\(^{61}\) (Carteggio, III, 41), March 10, 1524. “Rimandovi la pianta della libreria che s’affare, et in capo della libreria v’è segnato due studietti che mettono in mezo la finestra che si riscontra coll’entrata della libreria.”
The two principal drawings break three of the rules which Ackerman describes as characteristic of Michelangelo's architectural drawings: 1) He rarely employs a compass and ruler, even at an early stage; 2) He rarely uses perspective without shading, 3) The drawings are not to scale. In addition to being unique in the realm of Michelangelo drawings for the above mentioned reasons, in the case of CB 80, Michelangelo has gone to the extent of labeling the major elements of the drawing in his own hand. The degree of completion is unprecedented for any other Michelangelo drawing!

There is widespread consensus about some matters concerning CB 79 and CB 80, in particular: the fact that they pertain to the *libreria secreta*, that they are autograph drawings, and that the former was drawn before the latter.

[Chronology of the Drawings]

62 (Carteggio, III, 141), April 12, 1525. “Per questa vi si rimanda e' disegni delle finestre et della libreria; et ancora vi mando il disegno della sepultura del Papa.”

63 Ackerman, (1986), p.47.

64 (Carteggio, III, 34), February 1-8, 1524: “Et mandatemele più chiaro che voi potette, a ciò le sappia meglio ragionare con messer Iacopo et col Papa.” (Carteggio, III, 62), April 7, 1524: “Ma sopra tutto disegnate bene le scale, a ciò che il Papa la intenda.” From left to right, we find: “di qua si può fare quello / che ci piace perché è de' preti” (“From here on one can do what one pleases because it belongs to the priests”). Above this is the word “braccio” of the scale marking; at the bottom of the page one finds “lume per di sopra” (“light from above”). At the bottom edge of the sheet one find “el vano della libreria” (“the space of the reading room”). In the center of the room “bancho tondo” (“round desk or table”); above this, again one finds “lume per di sopra”. Adjacent to this, “el muro di Lario[n] Martelli” (“the wall of Larion Martelli”) is written between the pair of slanting lines. An oblique label runs parallel to the wall and reads “la chasa di Lario[n] Martelli”; below this “riducesi in tondo di sopra e tucti e' lumi si piglion dalla volta / perché non si possono aver d'altrove” (“it reduces to a circle above and all the light is received from the vault because one can not get it from elsewhere”). Finally, at the bottom right, there is a third “lume per di sopra.” Translations are from Hartt (1970), p.199.
On the other hand, there is disagreement among scholars about the dates in which the drawings were made. A first group of scholars date the pair of drawings to between April 12, 1525 and November 10, 1525. Ultimately, these scholars are bound to the belief that the two drawings present a scheme that would have worked in conjunction with the Pope’s desire to purchase an adjacent property, belonging to Larione Martelli.

In the November 10 letter, in fact, Fattucci wrote to Michelangelo:

The Pope says to do as you have designed. Because he will not tolerate that Larione infringe upon the canonica, he wants you to have Spina, or who ever is competent, talk to Larione and have him declare how much it cost him and a little bit more.

65 These scholars are Frey (1909-11), Thode (1908-13), Wittkower (1934), Ackerman (1961), Tolnay (1980), Hirst (1988), and Argan (1990), all of whom These are the dates of the only two letters which mention drawings for the libreria secreta. As we have seen above, Tolnay and Hirst concluded that CB 80 was one of the actual drawings referred to in the letter. Argan specified: “With all likelihood, this date can be restricted even further, if one considers August 1525, as a date ante quem the drawings were made, due to the earliest payment annotation made on the verso of A79.” Argan/Contardi, (1996), p. 187. My translation.

66 In footnote #36 of his article, Frank Salmon argued that the dynamic between the libreria secreta and the Martelli property might have been a misunderstanding. He suggested that all the references in the Carteggio may have been to another house owned by the Martelli family in the Borgo San Lorenzo. This is preposterous and based on a severe mis-reading of a letter from Fattucci to Michelangelo. The April 3, 1526 letter does not suspend plans for the libreria secreta, as Salmon concludes, rather postpones them until the rest of the library is complete. For the sake of being comprehensive I include Salmon’s note: “Attempts were indeed made to purchase property belonging to Larione Martelli. It is unlikely, however, that this property lay to the west of the library site, since discussion of the purchase continued in July 1526, after the suspension of plans for the triangular room in April 1526. The property may possibly be identified instead with a house in Borgo San Lorenzo owned by Larione and Nicholò Martelli (Archivio di Stato, Firenze, Decima Granducale, vol. 3631, fols. 44 and 466).” From Salmon, (1990), p. 417, note 36. It should be mentioned that Georg von Gronau includes an annotation for 42 Lira which Michelangelo paid to Larione Martelli “per una parte d’uno muro”. There is little way of knowing what this was for, unless we consult the catasti perhaps. It dated to December 30, 1525. See Gronau, Jahrbuch der Preussische Kunstsammlungen., 1911, p. 73.

67 (Carteggio, III, 184): “Michelangelo charrissimo, io ebbi una di Giovanni Spina con certi disegni della piccola libreria, la quale mostrai a Nostro Signore. Et dice che vole che la si facia come avete disegnato; et perche’ non gli piace ne’ vole che Larione entri nel convento, ma vole che voi faciate parlare a ilarione, allo Spina o a
A second group of scholars does not believe that the realization of the schemes presented in CB 79 and CB 80 were dependent on the purchase of the adjacent Martelli property; rather, they propose that the two drawings represented a later scheme developed after difficulties arose with the purchase of the Martelli property. The position of the group originated with Portoghesi and Zevi (1964) was repeated by De Angelis d’Ossat (1965) and was further enforced by Frederick Hartt a few years later (1970). None of these scholars provided a specific date for the drawings, because there is no evidence for an offer either being rejected or accepted. Portoghesi and Zevi’s book presented the following argument:

The triangular solution was likely devised after November 10, 1526 [should read 1525\(^68\)] following the difficulties that arose around the intended purchase of Martelli’s palazzo. It is evident that the unusual shape is a result of a predetermined situation, rather than the result of an \textit{a priori} decision by Michelangelo; this is more evident considering that the shape is not an equilateral triangle.\(^69\)

Hartt echoed these sentiments and related the drawing to the payment annotation on the side opposite the drawing:

\begin{quote}
\textit{chi fussi piu’ al proposito e per quello che la gli costo’ et qualche cosa piu’, tanto che e’ si contenti.}"
\end{quote}

\(^68\) The date should read 1525, in reference to the November 10, 1525 letter (\textit{Carteggio}, III, 184). In fact, there is no mention of the Martelli house in any correspondence from the month of November 1526. This appears to be just one of many careless mistakes made by the authors (editors?) throughout the book. I believe that were the text footnoted, more attention would have been paid to the details. In the previous sentence of the text, another error occurs: a letter from August 2, 1524 (\textit{Carteggio}, III, 95) is referred to as “a letter dated April 28”. No letters exist from either 1524 or 1525 on this date. Further along, drawing CB80 is sloppily referred to as CB 88.

It is possible that the recto [of CB 79] was used for a plan only after the negotiations with Larione fell through.\textsuperscript{70}

In place of the pair of trapezoidal room drawings, Portoghesi and Zevi suggested that the upper left side of CB 89r represented one of the drawings requested on April 12, 1525 (Figure 16)

Their argument is weak and motivated merely by the “lack of convincing evidence in favor of the room being the chapel intended for the end room” as was suggested by Wittkower. “Lack of evidence” in favor of one hypothesis does not a new theory make.\textsuperscript{71} The only evidence they presented blindly assumed that the need to purchase Martelli’s property could have only come from an imposing libreria secreta.

Indeed, if the rectangular space of CB 89 had been appended to the reading room, its size and shape would certainly have necessitated the demolition (and thus purchase) of a large part of Martelli’s palazzo. Hartt correctly acknowledged that the scheme presented in CB 79/CB 80 would also have required the purchase

Of a piece of Larione’s house, or just the back wall, to be replaced by Michelangelo’s adjoining wall of the rare book room, nor is it even clear whether the Pope’s offer was ever accepted.\textsuperscript{72}

Ultimately, the issue of the Martelli property purchase addresses a central question to the discussion of the libreria secreta, over which scholars disagree: when were CB 79 and CB 80 drawn?

\textsuperscript{70} Hartt, (1970), p. 199.
\textsuperscript{71} There is some evidence that may strengthen their position. Along the sides of the wall are regularly placed elements, likely to be columns or pilasters which rise above the cassoni below in order to provide structural support for the walls and necessary vaulting. Were we to understand this drawing not as a chapel but as a secret library, I would cite the Sant-Gallen plan. Maria Misti reads the squares as the benches (personal desks by lights). See Misti, Maria Christina. “‘Ubi Libri Custodiuntur’, note sull’architettura della biblioteca nell’età Carolingia”. in Accademie e Biblioteche d’Italia. Anno LXI (44n.s.) n.3. 5-15. 1995?
From a close observation of the drawings, it is evident that in CB 80 the *libreria secreta* and the Martelli family palazzo share a wall. (Figure 17, 18) This proposition implies the need to purchase the adjoining property (or perhaps only a portion of it) before any sort of construction along that wall of the *libreria secreta* could be undertaken. Toward the upper edge of the sheet are the words “el muro di larione martelli,” which run obliquely. The words are written between two parallel lines that extend from the pochéed wall of the *libreria secreta*. Given the manner in which the drawing is labeled, there would be no doubt that the wall thickness in which the label appears is the wall of the Martelli palazzo. This wall extends into what becomes the pochéed wall of the *libreria secreta*, which is drawn as a shared wall. There is another written label beyond the wall that reads: “la chasa di larione martelli.” It is significant that the label indicates the house as the space directly to the west of the pochéed wall, which again leads me to believe that the pochéed wall marks the wall of the Martelli palazzo. If as Portoghesi, Zevi, De Angelis d’Ossat, and - to some extent - Hartt suggested CB 79 and CB 80 were drafted “after the negotiations with Ilarione fell through”, why would Michelangelo stubbornly have insisted on encroaching on Martelli’s property a second time?

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73 To cover all bases, I have examined the available maps of the area. I have concluded that it is unlikely that the wall would have shifted suddenly, making it possible for there to be a wall running parallel to the pochéed wall and actually representing the Martelli property wall. In a map of the canonica drawn by Michelangelo in the early months of 1524, the border of the canonica is represented with a single oblique line that does not make sudden turns at this point. A later map from before 1768, represents the property line as an unbroken oblique line that cuts the property at 52 degrees which is remarkably close to the measurements in CB 79 and CB 80 of 55 degrees. Again, I argue that the wall of CB 80 is a “shared wall”.
If this evidence does not reject the second group’s hypothesis, then a look at the last letter that mentions the Martelli’s palazzo, may shed light on the issue. This letter was written July 7, 1526. Fattucci asked Michelangelo:

Giovanni Spina was given charge to purchase the house of Larione, I would like to know what he has managed to accomplish?74

This letter indicates that from November 1525 to July 1526, Spina had been charged to purchase the property, without achieving any success. It is probable that the Martelli family was unwilling to yield its grip on a very important piece of real estate facing the canonica of San Lorenzo. Only ten days after this last mention of the property, Fattucci informed Michelangelo that funding for the library would be cut and shifted toward the New Sacristy.75 Shortly thereafter, construction was entirely halted. If the property remained unpurchased ten days before funding was cut, why would Michelangelo design a project as Portoghesi et al. suggest, “after the negotiations with Martelli fell through”? Why would he have designed a plan, which, as I mentioned above, did not avoid infringing on the Martelli property?

On the other hand, to hypothesize that CB 79 and CB 80 were planned with a request for the Martelli purchase in mind, raises the following question: why would Michelangelo design a project for land his patron did not own? Fortunately, there is evidence from correspondence that the Pope was unhappy that the property lines at this point of the canonica were dictated by Martelli’s palazzo. It was imposing on what would otherwise have been a rectangular property, which if employed to construct more

74 (Carteggio, III, 231): “Giovanni Spina ebbe comissione della casa di Larione: vorrei sapere quello che egli è fatto.”
75 (Carteggio, III, 232): “Sua Beatitudine vrebbe che per ora voi ispendessi in tre mesi quello che si spende hora in uno, nella libreria... Ma nella libreria per hora non vole si spenda tanto, et vole si sciemi dua tertii della spesa il mese.”
rooms for canons would have increased profits for the canonica. In fact, the odd space left over in the southwestern corner of the canonica was at that time only used for gardening. As indicated above, in the letter of November 10, 1525, Fattucci first mentioned the intent to purchase the Martelli palazzo because the Pope “does not like that, and will not tolerate that Larione infringe upon the canonica.” In light of the aforementioned letter, the issue of the canonica boundary can also be played out as a power struggle between the Martellis and the Medicis, families that had been associated with San Lorenzo for centuries. This may also account for Martelli’s reluctance to sell to the Pontiff who was willing to spend what was likely an elevated sum: “That which Martelli spent and a little more, as long as he is satisfied.”

Aside from power struggles, Michelangelo’s need for space, while minimal in the context of the canonica boundaries, was important to the realization of the project. The possibility of reducing the threat of fire by isolating the library rooms from the adjacent palazzo may also have inspired the Pope to buy Martelli’s property. The masonry would not allow a fire to spread, but if timber roofs were within reach of each other, accidents of this sort might have been more likely. Almost a month after the drawings were received in Rome, the Pope became “resolved on buying the house, whenever Martelli is willing to

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76 (Carteggio, III, 184): “[...] et perché non gli piace ne’ vole che Larione entri nel convento”

77 The Martelli family had been associated with the church of S. Lorenzo even around Brunelleschian times; their family chapel in the church had been completed in 1447-1450. Vasari described opposition to Giovanni de Bicci de Medici’s reconstruction of the church as originating from many families including the Martellis. See Gabriele Morolli, “La Croce di San Giovanni, i ‘più modi’ di Filippo (1422-1428)”, San Lorenzo 393-1993, l’architettura e le vicende della fabbrica, (Firenze: Alinea, 1993), p. 47. (Morolli is quoting Vasari- Milanesi, 1878-1885, II). For information on the family chapel, see Gabriele Morolli, “I due tempi del cantiere di Cosimo”, San Lorenzo 393-1993, l’architettura e le vicende della fabbrica, (Firenze: Alinea, 1993), p.55.

78 (Carteggio, III, 184).
sell.” Given the small size of the room, had Spina not acquired the rights to at least the Martelli wall, he would certainly have needed to reconfigure (or altogether abandon) his proposal. At the southern end, the room would have been one and a half braccia narrower.

According to my reading of CB79 and CB80, Michelangelo required only the exterior wall of the Martelli palazzo. This was clarified in another letter, which has not been previously included in scholarship dealing with the Martelli purchase. Fattucci wrote to Michelangelo on December 8, 1525:

The Pope read the letter from Spina in its entirety and concerning the house [of Martelli?] he says that he will hold to your first suggestion, that is to buy the house and to use that which is necessary and to rent the rest. 80

I argue that this letter was in reference to the Martelli property on three counts: 1) the letter was written only ten days after the previous mention of Martelli’s palazzo (November 29, 1525); 2) the letter makes reference to a letter from Spina, whom we know had been charged with the purchase of the adjacent property; and finally, 3) the notion of using “that which is necessary and to rent the rest” is a condition which matches what may have been intended to occur in the construction of the libreria secreta. This

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79 (Carteggio, III, 186): “Charissimo Michelagniolo, questa per fare risposta a una di Giovanni Spina de’ 22 di questo, la quale subito la mostrai a Nostro Signiore. Et circa a Ilarione Martelli non volle dire altro, perché aspetta la lettera di Larione, et a quella farà risposta. Parmi sia risoluto a conperarla quando la volessi vendere, come per l’autra mia vi scrissi, alla quale non m’avete risposto.”
letter proves to be valuable in understanding the intended use of the Martelli palazzo: only the necessary portion, i.e. the back wall would have been used. The rest of the property, and here I assume the front facing Via della Forca (now Via Zanetti), could have been rented for income. While the evidence is not conclusive on all counts, I have made the argument that the opinion of the first group of scholars provides a more tenable understanding of the chronology of the drawing and its relation to the intended Martelli purchase than the opinion of the second group.

[RECONSTRUCTING THE LIBRERIA SECRETA]

In this second part of the thesis, with the help of computerized reconstructions, I will address the difficulties inherent in visualizing an unbuilt space. Given the lack of a fully resolved proposal, the appearance of the libreria secreta is for the most part an indeterminate question. Instead of presenting a single reconstruction of the space, I have proposed a series of reconstructions which represent the gamut of possibilities discernable from the historical evidence. The reconstructions do not represent Michelangelo’s intentions for the room at any single point in time; rather, they are a visual synthesis of the historical information I have collected on the room.

Analyzing the drawings and the historical evidence through visual reconstructions will provide new insights into the libreria secreta. At first, I will address the aspects of

quando lesse che e' bisogniava abassare la volta del capitolo. Credo che ve ne dirà qualche cosa."
the design that Michelangelo had specifically resolved; in a second phase, I will include aspects that he had left unresolved in the extant drawings.

**[Resolved Aspects]**

By presenting the resolved elements of Michelangelo’s design, I will be addressing the geometry of the space, the monumentality of its elements, and the placement of the room with respect to the rest of the library.

**[Geometry]**

Ackerman and Wittkower referred to the *libreria secreta* as a “triangle,” Argan described its “*pianta triangolare,*” Portoghesi and Zevi examined its “*forma triangolare,*” and Hartt proclaimed it “the first triangular room in architectural history.”82 In reality, the room is of two shapes, neither of them triangular: the exterior is a trapezoid and the interior a hexagon. I imagine that the frequent labeling of the room as “triangular” is a reflection of the spatial organization (which reads as a triangle). On either side of the entrance, a short corner wall composed of a niche surrounded by a pair of columns

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81 This idea would have required the construction of a new exterior wall for the Martelli palazzo, which would have likely abutted the wall of the *libreria secreta.*

echoes its counterpart at the head of the room. The presence of identical schemes at the three “corners” of the room augments the apparent triangular organization.83

Because the actual geometry of the plan is hexagonal, and because I believe that Michelangelo conceived of it in these terms, I will not refer to the space as triangular. In his quick sketch at the top right of CB 79, Michelangelo was very precise about the actual geometry of the space. (See Figure 11) While it would have been much easier – especially in the case of a quick sketch – for him to draw a triangle, he unquestionably represented the room with a trapezoidal exterior and a hexagonal interior.84 Especially in terms of the resolution of the dome, as I will describe in the chapter on “The Vault and Lighting”, the importance of identifying the interior as a hexagon illustrates the tension between triangle, trapezoid, and hexagon that becomes apparent when setting a dome on pendentives.

Previous accounts for the plan’s geometry differ mainly in the emphasis each scholar has given to the importance of site restrictions or the importance of the room’s position at the end of the built library. Wittkower and Ackerman describe the geometry of the room only in comparison with the rest of the built library. The former writes:

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83 While identical in motif, the dimensions seem to have been different between the two base corners and the corner at the head of the room. In CB 80, the former measured 2.4 braccia (1.4m) in width, while the latter was larger and measured 3.2 braccia (1.87 m). In CB79, the niche at the head of the room was drawn to be 2.95-3.33 braccia (1.72-1.94) wide, while the pair of corner niches each measured 3 braccia (1.8m). In my reconstructions I have merely traced the plan of the drawings onto the computer and have thus transferred any discrepancies of Michelangelo’s into the reconstruction. The differences are minimal and seem unnoticeable in elevation.

84 The extant correspondence contains no written description of the shape of the space. I would argue that the term “triangular” has just been a careless label passed down from scholar to scholar.
[...][the libreria secreta] was conceived simply as a natural prolongation of the big room; the long line of the hall finds its natural termination in the apex of the triangle.\textsuperscript{85}

A second group of scholars – including Tolnay, De Angelis d'Ossat, and Hirst – describe the geometry of the room as resulting from site restrictions.\textsuperscript{86}

Neither statement alone captures the complexity of Michelangelo's design process. In the end, combining both ideas produces the view of the geometry as a response originating from an external difficulty, which conditioned Michelangelo to resolve the limitations in an ingenious manner that conform with the necessities of the Laurentian complex. The critical moment in the design process occurred when Michelangelo was faced with the oddly shaped site and decided to regularize it by reproposing the oblique line of Martelli's palazzo boundary, as the opposite wall of the libreria secreta. Like at the Campidoglio, Michelangelo was working on a site with odd boundaries. The angle between the Palazzo dei Senatori and the Palazzo dei Conservatori is analogous to that between the southern boundary wall and the western wall. In both cases, Michelangelo opted to resolve the asymmetry and the obtuse angle relationship by

\textsuperscript{85} Wittkower, (1934), p. 183. Ackerman adds: "The rare book room, if it had been built, would have added another experience mediating between the contrasting moods by its combination of static form and vigorous modeling. Its plan reveals Michelangelo's consciousness of the geometrical sequence of his scheme: square, long rectangle, triangle, and suggests the psychological as well as the utilitarian aptness of his decision to articulate the upright, vertical vestibule actively, and the recumbent, horizontal readings room passively." Ackerman, (1986), p. 44.

imposing an axial symmetry to the plan. In both cases, he proposed a non-conventional solution that was at once “regularizing” and revolutionary. In fact, in terms of geometry, the hexagonal interior and the trapezoidal exterior of the _libreria secreta_ were unprecedented in the Renaissance. The room’s shape challenged the hegemony of circle and square, which dominated architectural form at the time. As the architect, he freely created a space that had never been proposed before. It is important to note that breaking with the rules and the conventions of history was _his_ decision, not merely a result of the site.

In order to visualize in three dimensions the geometry of the room as well as the other characteristics of the space, I have related the elevation of CB 79 with the plan of the same sheet. (Figure 19) The elevation drawing depicts a corner of the room. I have come to this conclusion by examining the pair of lines that represent the lunette that cuts into the pendentive above the oculus. This sort of detail only occurs at the corner of a room. At this point, I proceeded to enlarge the elevation to the size of the plan, using the centerline of the columns as my points of reference, and I consequently measured the elevation using the scale marker of the plan. Figure 20, presents the elevation as measured by this technique. While Michelangelo’s elevation was not drawn to scale, its dimensions were certainly based on the proportions of the plan.

My assumption that the plan and the elevation can be matched together disregards an important tenet of this sort of architectural drawing. Unlike blueprints where the plan and elevation are meant to combine in order to produce a single structure, Michelangelo’s sketches do not represent a single building, rather an evolving idea of his design. The reconstructions I will produce with AutoCAD™, much like a blueprint, condense the
plan and elevation of Michelangelo’s design into a single proposal. For this reason, the foundation from which I derive my reconstructions only allows me to create a composite of his design proposals.

[Niches]

Among the advantages of producing reconstructions is the realization that none of the geometric labels (“triangular”, “trapezoidal”, or “hexagonal”) for the room’s plan do justice to its complexity. Both drawings present an interior in which the walls are not flat surfaces but are rhythmically composed of pilasters that frame niches. The built niches would have receded into the wall about .3 m (.11m in the hastily drawn CB79) and would have been 1m wide (.86 - 1m in CB 79), while the engaged pilasters would have protruded about .06m (.14m) and would have measured circa .2-.3 m in width (.3-.4m). The elevation sketches of CB 79 indicate two alternatives for the treatment of the corner niches: the perspectival drawing in the center of the large plan includes an arcuated niche surrounded by two columns, while the orthogonal elevation shows a rectangular niche also framed by two columns. The two drawings reveal that Michelangelo was considering different niche solutions.

By the early Renaissance, the medieval practice of housing manuscripts in niches was replaced by the practice of employing benches and ledgers. According to G.B.

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87 In the Middle Ages niches in libraries were generally used to house books. In this respect they were similar to built-in closets, and they were called armarium, a term borrowed from the freestanding armaria (whence the French term “armoires”) which were also common in
Nelli, the niches of the *libreria secreta* were to contain statues. On the verso of his replica of CB80, (Figure 21) Nelli describes the space:

This drawing – copied from an autograph drawing belonging to his heirs – represents a room that was to be ornamented with nine statues and which was covered by a dome. The room would likely have been for the convenience of scholars or for the placement of the more precious and rare manuscripts, and was to have been built at the head of the library in a triangular site adjacent to the canonica of San Lorenzo. 

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libraries. “Nell’alto medioevo il termine armarium poteva designare una semplice nicchia scavata nel muro del chiostro.” Misti, (1995), p. 7. An early example of an armarium (containing the four gospels) is depicted in the mosaics of the Mausoleum of Gala Placidia. For more examples of armaria, see Clark's *the Care of Books*. We can only speculate whether the niches of the libreria secreta were used to store books, but a comparison of measurements would allow only the smallest of the manuscripts in the collection at the time to be placed within. The development on a large scale of the “wall system” with bookcases arranged against the wall and tables in the middle of the room, was made at the Escorial library, begun in 1563 and completed by 1584; it was also used in the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana in 1609. Thompson, (1939), p. 624.

“Until the fourteenth century and fifteenth centuries it was customary to lay books upon their sides upon the shelves, but the method was obviously wasteful of space, so that later, as books increased in number, it became the ordinary practice to stand them upright on shelves.” Thompson, (1939), p. 623.


In reference to the Ricetto, for which there is evidence that there were to be sculptures in the niches, Portoghesi wrote: “Anche se è probabile che le nicchie del ricetto dovessero ospitare delle statue, è chiaro che protagonista incontrastata della Biblioteca è l’architettura.” Portoghesi, “Le architetture fiorentine di Michelangelo,” in *Atti del Congresso*, 1966, p. 215. Cianfogni wrote: “Il magnifico atrio non è stato mai ultimato ne svolta alcuna di quelle statue, che dovrebbero esser collocate nelle nicchie, che lo adornano. Al serenissimo Granduca di Toscana Ferdinando III, era riservato il nobilissimo pensiero, e la gloria di terminarlo, e a tale oggetto eretti furono i ponti, e preparate le pietre: ‘quod opus coeptum pontibus constituitis, et marmoribus conquisitis, conditione temporum perfici non potuit,’ come si esprime il Ch. Ab. Lanzi nella nota
The fact that nine sculptures are indicated can only mean that the statues were to be placed in the rounded niches, and that the rectangular niches were not to contain statues. Was this annotation by Nelli a reference to a drawing that is now unknown, or a reference to CB 80 in which Nelli imagined the location of the statues? The phrasing does not specify whether Nelli was describing a drawing he had seen, or whether it was a hypothetical recreation. Because the issue of statues in the *libreria secreta* cannot be resolved with written evidence alone, I will re-address the issue of statuary when I discuss the furniture of the room. At that point, it will be possible to reconstruct the likely furniture heights and illustrate how they would have blocked the view of the niches for an observer. For now, I merely propose that the niches in the reconstruction were identical in size and placement as the niche in Michelangelo’s elevation.

[Scale and Monumentality]

Figures 21 and 22 present the plan and section of the *libreria secreta* placed on site at the extreme southern end of the library. Measuring 5m in length and 7.6 m at its

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*apposta alla seguente epigrafe, che collocare ivi doveasi; da esso poi pubblicata tra le altre sue iscrizioni imprese in 'Firenze'"*

Cianfogni, (1804), p. 44

89 Nelli’s copy of CB 80 does not include statues. It is interesting to note that, as Frank Salmon argued, Michelangelo “consciously perceived Pope Clement’s ideas for the library as a resumption of an earlier scheme by Lorenzo the Magnificent.” Salmon, (1990), p. 419. Furthermore, Condivi writes that during Michelangelo’s stay at the San Marco sculpture garden, Lorenzo had intended to commission several works for the convent’s library: “Lorenzo the Magnificent was having the marble, or rather the cut stonework, done there [at the San Marco sculpture garden] to ornament that very noble library which he and his forebears had collected from all over the world.” See Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo*, trans. A. Wohl, (Oxford, 1976), p. 11-12.
widest point, the room would have been dwarfed by its adjacent counterpart, which measures 46.2m in length and 10.54 m in width. Comparing the two reveals that the length of the sidewalls of the *libreria secreta* is equivalent to only one and a half bays of the reading room!

In terms of size, the project is comparable to Michelangelo’s edicola for the Chapel of Leo X at Castel Sant’ Angelo. In this earliest of realized Michelangelo’s architectural works, a window is fancifully organized in a tripartite fashion. In the center, the opening is framed by a pair of engaged columns supporting an entablature which breaks backward as it extends to a pair of pilasters on each side of the window; in turn, these pilasters enclose a small niche. The size of the project did not force Michelangelo to compromise on its monumentality. Many of the elements used here recur in later projects of a much grander scale, including some of his proposals for the façade of San Lorenzo. (See Figure 33)

In the *libreria secreta*, the use of several elements present in the Chapel of Leo X, such as the niche/pilaster pairing and the broken entablature, enhances the architectural richness of the room. In addition, more complex elements such as the attic storey, ochi directing light from above, and pendentives supporting a dome express the monumental scale of the room and seem to disguising its actual size. Like with the Chapel for Leo X, the *libreria secreta*’s size does not compromise its monumentality.

As I mentioned in the first half of the paper, after work at the Laurentian library was postponed, Michelangelo became preoccupied with designing the fortifications for

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90 I am thinking of the Chapel of Leo X, also known as the Chapel of Saints Cosma and Damian was built between 1514 -1516, according to Contardi who undertook the monument’s restoration. Potentially, it could have been comparable to the scale of the *Ambone* project for S.
his beloved Florence. This are among the most monumental and
magnificent of Michelangelo’s drawings. Ironically, I find that the most telling scholarly
description of the *libreria secreta* is Portoghesi’s analysis of the fortifications. The
similarities are significant and striking:

The projects for the fortifications are an affirmation of supreme freedom. Classical dogma, the logical and geometrical design process, and perspectival principles are all surpassed in the attempt to devise a new architectural language for new necessities. Rather than be applied to preconceived structures, this new language becomes a means of investigation and discovery of novel problems and possibilities. Michelangelo did not hesitate to release himself from the shackles of tradition, or the constraints of classicism. In so doing, he managed to imbue the walls with a vital and vigorous movement by placing them in dialogue with their interior and exterior spaces.

As with Portoghesi’s analysis of the fortifications, in his design for the *libreria secreta*, Michelangelo exchanges tradition with innovation, preconceived structures with a new language of geometry; he investigates novel solutions and possibilities that overcome the constraints of the site; and finally, in CB 80 he devises a wall articulation that is vigorous and dynamic.

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Maria del Fiore; however, because not much is known about the nature of this last project, this remains speculative.

91 In Casa Buonarroti 25A, the trapezoidal exterior and the pochéed wall thickness resemble those of the *libreria secreta*.

92 This is my translation from the Italian: “Con i progetti delle fortificazioni si compie l’ultima stagione fiorentina di Michelangelo, con una affermazione suprema di libertà. Il dogmatismo classico, il procedimento logico-geometrico, lo stesso principio prospettico, vengono superati dialetticamente in uno sforzo di adeguare il linguaggio architettonico a necessità nuove, non adoperandolo strumentalmente per realizzare schemi tecnici precostituiti, ma come mezzo di conoscenza, di indagine, di scoperta di nuovi problemi e di nuove possibilità. [...] Michelangelo non esita di liberarsi di ogni legame vincolante con la tradizione, di ogni remora classicista, vitalizzando la massa muraria nel movimento, mettendola a colloquio con lo spazio interno ed esterno in un rapporto di reciproca determinazione.” Paolo Portoghesi, *Atti del Convegno*, (1964), p. 225.
In the above passage, Portoghesi summarized the over-arching spirit of Michelangelo’s fortifications. Such a macroscopic conclusion rests on a foundation of microscopic analysis. To define similar conclusions about the *libreria secreta* my approach addresses the details of the architecture when permitted. Given that the extant drawings do not elaborate the sort of details that would have occurred where the attic storey joins the pendentive or where the pendentive meets the dome, I cannot generate a full sense of the room’s monumentality and also remain honest to the evidence. In fact, I sense that in the *libreria secreta*, the monumentality of the architecture would reach its apex in the careful details that express the transitions from element to element, and connect the whole. My reconstructions are pale versions of what Michelangelo’s room might have been. Who knows what sort of heavy-handed application of contorted classical elements Michelangelo would have devised? I realize that such words as “heavy handed” have negative connotations today, but I think that it is a term that we can apply to Michelangelo without disrespect. His architecture is heavy, burdensome, and emphatic. In turn, however, the complexity with which these elements combine reveals the grace and elegance present in his architecture.

[Context in the Laurentian]

The parade of pilasters and niches that rhythmically articulate the wall surface are the trademarks of the reading room. (Figure 25) In tune with the plan and elevation of Michelangelo’s drawings, my reconstructions for the *libreria secreta* continue the rhythm
of the reading room at a smaller scale. However, instead of aligning itself axially, the pilasters and niches of the libreria secreta are organized circularly. The transition from the horizontal focus of the reading room to the vertical emphasis of the libreria secreta occurred in this last space and was to be expressed by borrowing and transforming elements from the neighboring room. For the viewer, the experience would have been excitingly dynamic as the elements previously associated with the horizontality of the reading room became attenuated and subtly swept into the verticality of the vault.

Compositionally, this scheme is to be understood as the concluding element in the progression from Ricetto to reading room to libreria secreta. These ideas were first posited by Wittkower, who wrote:

The simplicity of the articulation [does not] disavow connection with the big room. [...] The ‘piccola libreria’ is conceived simply as a natural prolongation of the big room; the long line of the hall finds its natural termination in the apex of the triangle. 93

Ackerman added:

If it had been built, it would have added another experience mediating between the contrasting moods by its combination of static forma and vigorous modeling. Its plan reveals Michelangelo’s consciousness of the geometric sequence of his scheme: square, long rectangle, triangle[...]94

Both authors describe the geometric rationality of employing a “triangle”, which is a figure that can provide a satisfying termination to the progression of space. The “corner” wall opposite the entrance is at once the terminus of the axiality of the reading room and a pivot point for the circularity of the libreria secreta.

Much like the Chigi Chapel by Raffaello in Rome (c. 1513), Michelangelo created a space that would have invited the viewer to experience the room from its interior.

93 Wittkower, (1934), p. 182.
94 Ackerman, (1961), p. 44.
(regardless of whether he was permitted to do so or not). Lotz describes the motivating impetus for entering the Chigi Chapel to be the small size of the entrance arch in comparison to the diameter of the dome. A similar compression occurs with the *libreria secreta*, but additionally, the curiosity of a visitor would have been captured by the variation in wall treatment that tied the reading room to the *libreria secreta*.

**[Ambiguous Aspects]**

In this second group of reconstructions, I will specifically address the aspects of the evidence that Michelangelo left unresolved in the extant drawings. The reconstructions will present plausible solutions by comparing the evidence from the first half of the paper with architectural solutions from other buildings of Michelangelo. Again, I propose the formula of multiple reconstructions to account for ambiguities. I will discuss the columns and entablature, attic storey, vaulting, entryway, furniture, and construction materials.

**[Columns and Entablature]**

Among the principal elements contributing to the room's monumentality are the six columns at the corners of the room. In CB 79, they stand free of the wall, while in CB 80, they are partially recessed into the wall surface but are still structurally
independent. In the elevation drawing, the columns stand on a base, while in the plan Michelangelo neglects to show a base. The bases that I have employed in the more finished reconstructions are simple rectangular prisms that are visible only at the columns on either side of the entrance. In the other cases, the furniture hides them. Were the bases to have been built, I imagine they would have carried a minimum of moulding or ornamental work, as in the bases below the niches of the Ricetto.95

The order of the columns was also left unresolved. Conventions for reconstructions where such details are not specified suggest leaving the capital as nondescript. In retrospect, I should have followed this idea, since Michelangelo had devised a new variation on the Tuscan order for each level of each room. However, I instead embarked on a lengthy and complex speculative process for which I found no particularly rewarding results. I traced the capitals, bases, and entablatures of the orders used in the reading room, the upper storey of the Ricetto and the lower storey of Ricetto (as drawn by Geymuller in 1904) onto AutoCAD.96(Figure 26, 27) After revolving the outline of the order 360° to produce a three-dimensional object, I scaled all four columns to the dimensions indicated by CB 79. At this point, to save time, I chose a single option which best resembled the height indicated by Michelangelo in the elevation. All the reconstructions which rise above the entablature and those which are light renderings present the order (column bases, capitals, and entablature) of the reading room pilaster.97(See Figure 26) In the end, if viewed without significant magnification, the

95 For all we know, at a later point, Michelangelo may have intended there to be volutes below the columns!
96 I also traced drawing Casa Buonarroti 7Ar, which according to Tolnay was intended for the Ricetto.
97 In my reconstruction I have simplified the entablature of the reading room by eliminating the guttae which were to hang below the architrave. In place of these I inserted a flat moulding.
details of the order of the column and entablature are indiscernible, and serve to appease
the eye in details which otherwise might be seen as void or choppy. (Figure 28)

In both CB 79 and CB 80, the entablature that topped both the columns and the
engaged pilasters would have been broken forward because the columns and pilasters
were not coplanar. (Figure 29) For the sake of comparison Figure 28 shows an
entablature which does not break forward. However, Michelangelo clearly draws the
former condition in his elevation, where the entablature's three elements (architrave,
frieze and cornice) are heavily outlined over the capital. My interpretation of this detail,
in light of the discrepancy between the alignment of the columns and the pilaster, is that
Michelangelo envisioned an entablature that was to spring forward in order to cap the
columns.

Whether consciously or not, in different corners Michelangelo presents different
solutions with important consequences for the elevation of the drawing. Figure 30b
presents the condition where the column is embedded in the wall of the room. In this
case, the wall would have appeared to be thicker and the entire room would have seemed
more robust. In addition, the entablature would have protruded less into the room. In
comparison, figure 30a presents the second condition, in which the column is not
embedded in the wall, and where the entablature would have protruded further. Both
conditions require that the entablature break forward, as occurred in two prior uses of
free-standing columns by Michelangelo. In the unbuilt Ambone proposal for S. Maria del
Fiore of 1518, (Figure 31) the entablature breaks above the columns to accentuate the
vertical line of the columns. The same occurs in the lantern project of 1525 for the New
Sacristy. (Figure 32) In both cases, like in the libreria secreta, the verticality of the object
is enhanced and its horizontality becomes secondary. Because the walls meet at obtuse angles, I have positioned the axis of the broken entablature along the bisector of the angle of the walls. The same resolution is present in the lantern of the New Sacristy.\textsuperscript{98}

As Michelangelo continued to study the column resolution, he may have thought that the columns occupied a large amount of the small floor space. In CB 80, his decision to embed the columns into the wall can be understood as both a space-saving device and an elegant manner in which to propose the column as a structural element of the wall.

One of the most contested issues in Laurentian scholarship is the date in which Michelangelo first employed encased columns. Ultimately appearing only in the Ricetto, it has been suggested that these columns were at some point also intended for the reading room, and according to Contardi, even for the external façade of the library facing the square of San Lorenzo.\textsuperscript{99} All of these suggested “inceptions” pre-date the April-November 1525 \emph{libreria secreta} drawings. For this reason, the columns of CB 80 can only be seen as a repackaging of an idea developed at some earlier point in time.

\textbf{[Attic Storey]}

In the \emph{libreria secreta} – as with the \emph{Ambone} and with the Lantern – an attic storey rises above the entablature. The elevation of CB 79 indicates that the pilasters below the entablature were to be extended into the attic. These short piers reflect those

\textsuperscript{98} Michelangelo had also proposed columns for some of the Medici tombs in the New Sacristy, and may have been entertaining this idea well into the 1530, when work on the tombs ceased. The elevation of the lantern was built nine months before the drawings for the \emph{libreria secreta}.\textsuperscript{99}
planned for the façade of San Lorenzo, which act as intermediaries between the first and second storeys. (Figure 33) They are not of a specific order, and they do not carry a capital. Interestingly, they appear in two other Michelangelo drawings for attic storeys in the Laurentian: Corpus 191r and Corpus 218v. (Figures 34, 35) In both these cases, the piers are indicated along with windows/tabernacles in order to articulate the attic level with a rhythm that replicates the lower level.

On the other hand, Corpus 527r presents a second storey where the rhythm usually articulated by piers is expressed by alternating tabernacles and ochi, a sort of combination of *libreria secreta* and reading room. (Figure 36) This drawing is an early scheme for the Ricetto. According to Wittkower, it is the “final form of the first stage” and would date to only a few weeks after CB 80 arrived in Rome. The drawing is of interest because it presents the Ricetto with a flat vault, which Wittkower associates with Michelangelo’s spectacular skylight proposal. Immediately below the flat vault is the attic storey of the space. It contains a rectangular shape (more likely to be a window than a tabernacle or niche at that height) and to the left of this, a pier is drawn. As in Corpus 191r and Corpus 218v, it extends the vertical line of the elevation to the vault.

In my reconstructions, I have applied the ideas expressed in these three drawings to the attic storey of the *libreria secreta*. (Figure 37) This portion of the reconstruction is informed by contemporaneous precedents rather than evidence relating to the *libreria secreta*, but only because CB 79 specifies the presence of an attic without being explicit about its articulation.

99 At the center of the debate are the drawings C541r, C219v, C527r, C527v, C561v, and the chronologies which have been attributed to them.

100 The drawing is also known as British Museum 1895-9-15-508r
In the only previous reconstruction, De Angelis d'Ossat disregarded Michelangelo’s elevation drawing, and did not include a full attic storey neither around the room nor above the “corner” walls. (Figure 38) If the pendentive rose from above the oculus, then an attic storey (of the height indicated in the elevation) would have encircled the entire room. However, d’Ossat postulated that the pendentive was to spring immediately above the cornice, not the oculus. In this manner, he could elaborate a solution that avoided speculating on the attic storey and its appearance above the longer sidewalls. Caught in the same quandary, I have reconstructed two solutions. In the first, the pendentive is low, and the oculus cuts into the pendentive, to form a lunette; in the second solution, the pendentive is higher and the oculus merely cuts into the wall, leaving the full development of the pendentive to occur above. (Figure 39, 40)

[The Vault and Lighting]

Unlike the reading room, where light entered through 15 rows of windows, the sidewalls of the libreria secreta did not allow light to enter the room. Frank Salmon noted that in the reading room “the windows were placed at the lowest possible level above the roofline and the third-storey floor level (6 braccia above the second) designed so as to bring the desks just beneath them.” Salmon, (1990), p. 421, n. 63.

However, lacking precise cadastral information, I have been unable to draw conclusions regarding the role played by Martelli’s palazzo in determining the room’s window treatment. Modern photographs of the area indicate that a wall rises above the level where windows would be located. The wall stretches to just below the roofline of the reading room and cuts a portion of the wall thickness at the southwestern corner of the reading room.

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101 I will discuss this proposal (also unbuilt) in connection with the lighting of the libreria secreta.
102 Frank Salmon noted that in the reading room “the windows were placed at the lowest possible level above the roofline and the third-storey floor level (6 braccia above the second) designed so as to bring the desks just beneath them.” Salmon, (1990), p. 421, n. 63.
103 However, lacking precise cadastral information, I have been unable to draw conclusions regarding the role played by Martelli’s palazzo in determining the room’s window treatment. Modern photographs of the area indicate that a wall rises above the level where windows would be located. The wall stretches to just below the roofline of the reading room and cuts a portion of the wall thickness at the southwestern corner of the reading room.
clearly indicated on CB 80 that the *libreria secreta* could only be illuminated by overhead sources:

[The room] reduces to a circle above and all the light is received from the vault because one can not get it from elsewhere.\(^\text{104}\)

In each corner of the room, Michelangelo devised a light shaft intended to redirect light into an oculus that faced the interior of the *libreria secreta*. In Milan, the library at San Vittore al Corpo (1507) and in Padova, that of S. Giovanni di Verdana (1495) employ oculi high in the elevation to illuminate the library. In both these cases, the oculi are placed in association with a lunette encased by the arms of a vault, much like d’Ossat presents the *libreria secreta* in his reconstruction. Like in the side aisles of a Gothic cathedral, light introduced from the side, would reflect from the vault onto the floor and into the rest of the room. Michelangelo was not explicit about how the oculi intersected the pendentive, so d’Ossat’s reconstruction is just one option that depends on the pendentive starting at a lower point. I have been unable to reconstruct what the light shafts were to look like from the exterior: what height were they to rise to? How did light bend into the room? Why did Michelangelo not leave the oculi unmediated by a light shaft and open to the exterior?

Figure 42 is the most complete rendering I have produced. I consider it to be the best condensation of the extant evidence and the most viable interpretation of the aspects

\(^{104}\) The inscription on CB 80 reads: "riducesi in tondo di sopra e tucti e’ lumi si piglion dalla volta/perché non si possono aver d’altrove." Furthermore in a seventeenth century account: “Sono XV finestre in ciascuna banda, tutte con ornamenti di pietra riquadro, e con cornice architavata di vista oltre ogni stima graziosa. In testa della libreria è situata un altra porta simile a quella, di cui si è detto, messa in mezzo da due finestre, come si vede ancora nell’atra, la quale a questa è di costa.” F. Bocchi, (1677), p. 544. Perhaps the two “windows” in the southern end wall were at one point open to add more light to the reading room, since there was no *libreria secreta* in place.
which remain ambiguous. The attic storey for instance employs the solutions presented frequently in Michelangelo’s drawings for the Laurentian combined with the structural requirements of the pendentive.

After a full reconstruction of the room was completed in AutoCAD\textsuperscript{TM}, I proceeded to analyze the lighting of the room. With Lightscape I simulated the lighting conditions which would realistically occur in Florence, on determined days of the year, and at different times of that day. Ideally, with more time, I would have created a series of reconstructions that responded to the diverse solutions of the windows and dome that Michelangelo left unresolved.

In this thesis, I have only proposed one condition.\textsuperscript{(Figures 43, 44, 45, 46)} The simulation replicates lighting conditions at the latitude of Florence, on June 21 at 11am, when theoretically the most light should be present in the room, because it would enter the light shafts as well as the dome at a slight angle. Due to time constraints, the door from the reading room was treated as a window facing an exterior rather than another interior room; for this reason, it spills more light than it would if it had been treated as a door to another room. Most of the light in the room enters through this opening, but given that it is an exaggerated rendering – and the room is still dark – it is clear that the lighting conditions as indicated in the extant evidence would have required a reworking by Michelangelo. The plan of the ceiling in CB 79 contains two pairs of tick marks that may be interpreted as windows that were to open in the dome. Tolnay suggested that other windows might have been planned in the drum and in the lantern of the dome.\textsuperscript{105}

This would have been a worthwhile reconstruction to undertake.

\textsuperscript{105} There are only four marks, which I would pair into two sets of windows each located above the midpoint of the long wall below. Above
Another set of lighting solutions should have been produced to represent the ambiguity of the southernmost light shaft. In fact, close observation of CB 80 reveals an inconsistency in Michelangelo’s proposal: the walls of the southernmost of the light shafts have not been hatched with ink-wash. Did he intend there to be a light shaft here as well? A multitude of interpretations can be derived to explain this inconsistency.  

the western wall there are no tick marks, but there is a short curved line which either A) closes the circle of the dome or B) represents a different manner of drawing the windows in the dome. The fact that the potential opening is absent on this side of the room may be related to the presence of the multistoried Martelli property. At this point, I am not able to determine how high the structure was in Michelangelo’s time. For Tolnay's opinion see Tolnay, (1981), p. 71-2.  

Along with the western wall, this southern light shaft incurred onto Martelli’s property. The Pope may have been further inspired to buy the adjoining property to assure a symmetry in the lighting scheme. On the other hand, perhaps the absence of a darkened wall is an indication that no light catching chamber was intended for this corner. Since the light would not have been diffused and redirected, it would have appeared stronger than at the other two oculi. Such lighting would have intensified the axiality already implicit in the placement and arrangement of the room. As a third possibility, the absence of a southern light-funnel in the drawing may simply be the result of Michelangelo having previously written within the Martelli wall space, which would have prevented him from applying wash to represent the wall thickness. While many of these possibilities contradict each other, without more evidence, no possibility appears to be most convincing. In a later copy of CB 80, the engraver G.B. Nelli took the liberty to darken the walls representing the southern light shaft. The approximate date for this engraving—known as Uffizi 3739A—is 1698. Nelli changed many features of the drawing. He unified the differing corner solutions as well as the wall treatment by encasing each column consistently. The darkened walls and other attempts to make uniform the solutions presented in the drawing can be accounted for with a simple explanation: Nelli did not intend to replicate CB 80 with a high degree of accuracy. On the other hand, the nineteenth century engraving by G.I. Rossi presented a very precise replica of Michelangelo’s CB 80 drawing. Rossi, (1739). G.I. Rossi published a book on the Laurentian library with many plates derived from Michelangelo’s drawings. In the description for his replica of CB 80, he described that: “Since the time of Michelangelo there was the idea to employ an empty space that advanced and which advances to this day beyond that [second reading room] door[...].” This passage from the eighteenth century indicated that critics and scholars of Michelangelo understood that the nature of the libreria secreta project was controlled by a series of preexisting complications. Rossi was attentive to every detail: the column niches retained their inconsistency as drawn by Michelangelo and even the text was located as it was in CB 80. These two engravings do little to illuminate the problems of this southern corner, except indicate how a multitude of interpretations have already been derived from Michelangelo’s drawings.
The power of a program like Lightscape™ lies in the ability to present a series of alternatives for such ambiguous details as the light shafts.

Early on, Michelangelo must have realized that the geometry and lighting of the *libreria secreta* would be more like the New Sacristy than the reading room. Only a year before, in the early spring of 1524, Michelangelo was supervising the construction of the lantern and the application of stucco to the dome of the New Sacristy. I have hinted at the similarity of the elevation of the lantern to the elevation of the *libreria secreta*; but the analogy stretches even further to include the vaulting scheme and lighting condition.

A plan drawing (in CB 79) and a written description (in CB 80) document the presence of a dome covering a large part of the room. In the extant evidence, Michelangelo did not elaborate such structural details as the pendentive system that supported the dome.

Faced with the necessity to input data into the computer regarding these structural aspects, I have had to make decisions, of the sort which Michelangelo would have made on site with structural consultants like Baccio Bigio. (Figure 47) The trouble is that this sort of pendentive structure was unprecedented, and the only example I could find was built 150 years after Michelangelo’s proposal. I am referring to the Chapel of the Holy Shroud in Turin, by Guarino Guarini. (Figure 48a/b) It includes a three lobed pendentive with three arches that support the dome above. In plan, this pendentive replicates the geometry of the *libreria secreta*. This similarity inspired me to conclude that if Michelangelo was to vault the space with a dome on a pendentive, he could have done so only as Guarini did in Turin. I interpreted the three arches as equivalent to the long sidewalls, while the lower sections of the pendentive correspond to the short corner walls.
This similarity makes it easy to imagine how a pendentive system would have worked in the *libreria secreta*. At the three corners of the room, the pendentive would rise as a spherical section cut by three arches that span above the sidewalls of the room. While not indicated by the evidence, I have included a “rim” or moulding detail that visually strengthens the joint of pendentive to dome. This was characteristic of many Renaissance domes, including all those by Michelangelo; furthermore, it respects the Renaissance convention of placing mouldings at the joints and turns of surfaces.

Tolnay and d’Ossat discussed the dome in terms of the lighting scheme of the interior and the effect it would have produced. According to d’Ossat: “Illuminated only from above, like the Ricetto, the room would have been a strangely sacred space [...]” Tolnay agreed citing that the room would have appeared “much like a *sacrarium* or the apse of a church [...] Michelangelo has not yet abandoned the idea of having a chapel at the end of the library.”

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107 Guglielmo De Angelis d’Ossat, “Architecture”, The Complete Work of Michelangelo, Various Authors, (New York: Reynal and Co., 1965), p. 302. De Angelis wrote: “Illuminated only from above, like the Ricetto, the room would have been a strangely sacred space [...]. Michelangelo repeats and concludes thus his impulse for the vertical, which after convincing him to build on the roof of the canonica, persuaded him to raise further the ceiling of the Ricetto, and to imagine this last room with a sweeping dome.” Tolnay, (1980), IV, p.72: “Sulla destra è una piccola pianta della Libreria, da cui risulta che Michelangelo aveva previsto una copertura a forma di cupola circolare impostata su pennacchi angolari; la luce piovendo dall’alto, avrebbe conferito al piccolo ambiente ‘la dignità di un sacrario o di un abside di chiesa.’ Michelangelo non si era ancora staccato del tutto dalla sua idea originaria di mettere qui una cappella.”

For the most part, Tolnay and d’Ossat agree and they both saw the dome as a receptacle for light that “raining down from above, would have conferred to the small room the dignity of a *sacrarium* or the apse of a church [...] Michelangelo has not yet abandoned the idea of having a chapel at the end of the library. [The room was a] synthesis between the sacred and the profane.” De Angelis and Tolnay are the only scholars to have devoted more than two sentences to the possible appearance of the dome.
As with the geometry, the *libreria secreta*’s lighting was controlled by the restrictions of the site. Nonetheless, Michelangelo devises a solution that capitalizes on the restriction and creates a space lit only from above. It is not possible to conclude that Michelangelo was intent on recreating the sacred space of the chapel proposal, because the light renderings clearly indicate that Michelangelo would have had to revise his lighting scheme. We can only speculate what he would have planned at that point, but certainly, he would have introduced more light into the room.

While the room is dark by any standard, O’Gorman has pointed out that even in terms of lighting: “our preferences do not apply to the Renaissance.”\(^{108}\) He further described a counterintuitive observation from the early seventeenth century concerning lighting:

> Justius Lipsius says specifically that ‘a brilliant light is disturbing to the attention and makes writing difficult.’\(^{109}\)

The lighting inside the Vatican’s *libreria secreta* may have been minimal as well, for there was only one window in the room. The room measured 6.1m by 11.7 m and was illuminated by a single window 1.9m in width (height unknown?) and placed high in the wall. Clark describes the light in the room as “sufficient”.\(^{110}\) Not having visited the room, I cannot judge this statement. However, many libraries of the Renaissance, like that of Monte Oliveto, are dimly lit.

Shortly after sending the drawing for the *libreria secreta* to Rome, Michelangelo informed the Pope that he was eager to commence designing the Ricetto. From the correspondence, we can surmise that his proposal for the Ricetto was spectacular and

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\(^{109}\) ibid.

unprecedented: a series of round windows placed in the ceiling were to illuminate the room from above. The Pope reacted with great pleasure but also expressed his hesitation about the technical and economic feasibility. The correspondence indicates that the Ricetto proposal was developed two weeks after the libreria secreta drawings were sent to Rome: the two letters, which described this proposal, were written on November 29, 1525 and December 23, 1525. The first began with a reference to the Pope, who was awaiting a response from Larione Martelli regarding his offer. This indicated the degree to which Michelangelo and his patron were involved in securing the necessary space to build the libreria secreta.

The scheme of overhead lighting developed for the libreria secreta was expanded to the Ricetto. The chronology from the correspondence indicates that there can be no doubt that in terms of lighting the libreria secreta was the model for the early Ricetto proposal. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence for the "skylight" solution, and it would be nice to develop a clearer idea of this proposal, which the Pontiff enthusiastically called "bella et nuova." 111 According to Wittkower, Corpus 527 represented the Ricetto at this point in time. (See Figure 36) The horizontal line of the Ricetto roof, extending from the flat vault seems to continue over the reading room.

111 (Carteggio, III, 186); November 29, 1525: "Regarding the windows in the roof with the glass openings in the ceiling, he thinks them to be a novel and beautiful thing... but we would need to hire two clergy just to clean the dust." The second letter reads (Carteggio, III, 194); December 23, 1525: "The pontiff says that the roundels therein shown as lights can be looked upon as very beautiful; but he does not know whether the dust which will fall on them will not be stronger than the light they will be able to transmit? And whether the walls will bear the weight or whether the structure will be damaged." Wittkower’s translation, (1934), p. 133. With regard to the vaulting of the Ricetto, I would like to draw attention to a pair of drawings that thus far have not yet been considered in the proper light. Corpus 219 and Corpus 218 show two plan drawings of the Ricetto and a large circular
Wittkower has concluded that this proposal involved a continuous roofline between Ricetto and reading room, and that the difference in height of the current roofline is a result of Michelangelo’s later reworking of the Ricetto. (Figure 49) The hypothesis of a continuous roof begs the question: how would the vaulting of the *libreria secreta* connect (if at all) with the roofline?

Thanks to the chronology of events, it is possible to describe Michelangelo’s intentions for the entire library around the end of 1525. This is not an arbitrary date; rather it is the first time that specific proposals had been made for all three chambers of the library. At this point in time, Michelangelo was producing drawings for the Ricetto, reading room and *libreria secreta* to function together. I find this to be the most exciting moment of the design history of the Laurentian library, and it is with great regret that again, I must state that I did not have enough time or enough data, to reconstruct the entire library at this moment.

**Entryway**

In the extant evidence, Michelangelo left the entrance of the room an unresolved issue. At the time that the drawings for the *libreria secreta* were first requested, the walls of the reading room had been under construction for a month. Because there had been intent to have a room at the southern end of the library before the *libreria secreta* form inscribed in the square room. How do the domes in Ricetto and *libreria secreta* relate? To what height was each to rise?
proposal, it is likely that a door had been planned from the start of the reading room’s construction. (Figure 50)

The drawings are of little assistance. For instance, CB 79 has no indication of a door opening in the wall; however, it does present a wall surface that is unarticulated and framed by two pilasters. In CB 80, on the other hand, the doorframe is expressed by a moulding that is slanted toward the entrance. The opening that is indicated does not correspond on either side of the threshold to what is currently there. Today, a doorframe that is identical to the one at the opposite end of the reading room allows one to access a small room built over the intended location of the libreria secreta. The threshold of the actual doorway measures 229 cm in width, and 119 cm in depth. The last 10 cm of this depth are composed not of stucco but of macigno that is curved perhaps to accommodate a door hinge, as occurs at the door between Ricetto and reading room. (Figure 51) The macigno hinge is all that remains of Michelangelo’s proposal for the interior of the entryway. There is no indication of how the libreria secreta doorway appeared in the years between the end of construction and the current addition, but I imagine that behind the wooden door panels was a masonry wall. It is clear that in the case of the libreria secreta, the door must have been downscaled on the interior. There simply was not enough space to accommodate a doorframe of the depth of that between the Ricetto and the reading room, and in elevation we should assume that the monumental front of the opposing door must also have been simplified.

[The Furniture]
In both CB 79 and CB 80, Michelangelo was concerned with arranging the *banchi* (or ledgers) compactly into the space. In the earlier drawing, a series of ledgers were placed parallel to the longer walls leaving several awkward empty spaces; at the top of the room, Michelangelo imagined filling the remaining void with curved ledgers, which linked to the ones in front of both sides of the sidewalls. In effect, he created an arrangement similar to the furniture in CB 80, where three long ledgers wrapped themselves around each other echoing the geometry of the room.

I have previously described how closely G.I. Rossi’s engraving replicates Michelangelo’s CB 80 drawing. The only difference between the two drawings is the manner in which the plan is highlighted to indicate the wall thickness and the furniture. Particularly in the *banco tondo*, the levels or angles of the table are represented differently. Unfortunately, Michelangelo’s drawings did not present conclusive evidence regarding the *banco tondo* or the other ledgers. I have attempted to compare his drawn furniture with depictions of period furniture and library furniture. In a fifteenth century manuscript belonging to the Laurentian library, Petrarch is depicted at work in his study, with a round table in the distance. (Figure 52) Francesco Gurrieri, who published these illustrations in 1980, described the table as a rotating bookstand where a reader could place a manuscript that had just been examined. 

Given the information in Michelangelo’s drawings, Petrarch’s table seems to resemble Michelangelo’s *bancho tondo*, particularly with regard to the round shape and the central bookstand present in

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112 I discuss this room in the section known as “Later Additions.”

113 The manuscript was published in 1466 and is titled *Opere di Petrarca*. Gurrieri describes the *bancho* as a “leggio rotante su cui appoggiano”
both depictions. There are several other examples of a bancho tondo in late medieval
depictions of libraries. (Figure 53) Its easily accessible position suggests its use as a
reference book stand.114

While Michelangelo labeled the central round table, the remaining furniture is not
named. Because Michelangelo does not specify the purpose of this furniture, comparison
with contemporaneous library furniture becomes valuable. In both drawings, the
furniture measures 35cm in width, and only 20cm are provided between the benches, and
between the benches and the wall. These are hardly feasible amounts of space to allow
for human occupancy or circulation. For comparison, the ledgers in the reading room
measure circa 85cm in width. However, this width is divided into sections, for each
ledger includes an angled plane for resting the manuscripts (33cm wide) and a bench for
sitting (also 33cm wide). The two parts are separated by a vertical wooden partition
(19cm wide). Comparison to the ledgers of the reading room indicates that the 35 cm
width of the ledgers may be sufficient if they were to provide for seating alone; the
manuscript would have to rest on an opposing lectern. This assumes that manuscripts
would have been consulted in this room. There is no way of knowing for sure. Evidence
from other libraries indicates that the libreria secrete were off-limits to scholars. Were
they merely storage spaces? The purpose of the room would have informed the nature of
its furniture.

Michelangelo designed the ledgers of the reading room. The extant drawing
expresses the relatively resolved nature of the design, which was inspired by the a papal

manoscritti appena consultati.” From Francesco Gurrieri, Disegni nei
request to replicate the arrangement of the *banchi* in S. Marco.\textsuperscript{115} In the correspondence, the Pope demanded to know the distance between the *banchi*, and the number of manuscripts each would store. This letter referred to the main reading room, but it is likely that at some point a more precise organization would have been required for the *libreria secreta* as well. In an earlier letter of April 29, 1524, Fattucci wrote:

> Be sure to inform us of what you intend for the *crociere*, because the Pope likes it a lot, since he has a large amount of books, which would not fit in a single space.\textsuperscript{116}

This letter was in reference to the early *crociere* scheme, and indicated the Pope’s intention to create an adequate space to house his large collection of manuscripts.

The scholarly literature rarely addresses the furniture of the *libreria secreta*. For instance, De Angelis d’Ossat’s reconstruction neglects to include furniture. On the other hand, Wittkower recognizes the role that the furniture would have played, particularly with regard to the wall niches. In CB 79, he noted that the *banchi* permit one to access — both physically and visually — the corners of the room:

> The arrangement of the furniture on a ship’s-keel principle shows the axis of the library to be dominant here.\textsuperscript{117}

This analogy to a ship was overturned in Wittkower’s description of CB 80:

> The furniture is made to correspond with the line of the ground plan [...] the idea of axial line has been supplanted by that of an independent shut off, centralized room.\textsuperscript{118}


\textsuperscript{115} Fattucci’s letter of August 2, 1524, (Carteggio, III, 95): “Send me how many ledgers will fit and indicate the distance between one and the other, just like at San Marco. Also, be sure to indicate how many books will fit in each ledger.” In Italian: “mandatemi [...] quanti banchi vi va colla distantia l’uno dallo altro come quelli di Santo Marco a punto. Et ancora n’aviseate quanti libri andrà per banco.” \textsuperscript{116} (Carteggio, III, 71).

\textsuperscript{117} Wittkower, (1934), p. 182.

\textsuperscript{118} ibid.
Wittkower ascribed to the *banco tondo* a great deal of importance as the focus of the room and of the other furniture. After producing the reconstructions, I sense that the *banco* could only have been a secondary focus point. The dome would have been the unchallenged focus of the room. Given that I had no indication of the height of the furniture, in my reconstructions, it rises 1.4m from the ground, as in the reading room.

Earlier in the thesis, I have mentioned that a more comprehensive analysis of the furniture might reveal some insight into the possibility of the niches holding statuary. The existence of the furniture would have created a visual obstacle between the viewer and the sculpture, especially if the sculpture were not raised in the niche. I can safely conclude that if the room were to contain statues, the niches would have been elevated.

**[Construction Materials]**

The extant evidence for the project does not indicate what material Michelangelo intended to use for the interior. In the chapter about “Placement and Context”, I have indicated how several of the architectural features of the *libreria secreta* resemble those of the reading room and Ricetto. Given the similarity in elements, I believe that the materials would have been similar as well: white stucco walls contrasting with a fine grade of stone, known as *pietra del fossato*. Reconstruction 37 shows the room with these material and color considerations.

Conjectures about the materials intended for construction should be made by comparison with the reading room, Ricetto and other regional libraries. A telling passage
addressed this last comparison and concluded that *pietra serena* interiors were common to most libraries in the region. O’Gorman’s lengthy description of the S. Marco library presented several similarities to the actual reading room of the Laurentian:

The present color scheme of gray-green *pietra serena* details and white stucco walls is more characteristic of traditional Florentine architecture than of the monastic libraries built in Renaissance Italy [...]. It must have been the common color if the interior was not frescoed, and probably was used because of a recommendation by Isidore of Seville. This seventh century bishop, in a passage on the decoration of libraries, recommended the use of green rather than gold, which is ‘hurtful to the eyes’. The use of green in the interiors of these libraries and limited illumination from many small windows resulted in rooms that seem surprisingly dark to us.\(^{119}\)

The walls of both the Ricetto and the reading room were completed in a combination of *pietra del fossato* and stucco covered brickwork. The stone is very fine grained and originates in the *valle della Mensola*. It is slightly blue (“azzurigna”), but of a similar tone to the “greenish” stone used at S. Marco.\(^{120}\) A contract for the stairs and two doors of the library specified that the stone was to be *pietra del fossato*. According to Wallace it was: “the first of all [macigni], a type of *sereno gentile* differentiated from other *macigno* by the fineness of its grain and a subtlety of color.”\(^{121}\) In the reading room, the *macigno* was used for “36 pilasters [including capitals and bases], 33 windows and tabernacles, and 2 door frames. In the Ricetto: 24 columns, 24 pilasters, 20 consoles, 10 tabernacles, and 2 doorframes. All together 500 feet of entablature and an equal amount of cornice and dado moulding.”\(^{122}\) Wallace indicated several reasons for Michelangelo’s choice of *macigno* for the built portions of the library. While the façade

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\(^{120}\) See Valerio Tesi, “La sala di lettura nella biblioteca laurenziana”, in San Lorenzo, 393-1993, p.137. See also G. Vasari (1550), *La Vita di Michelangelo*, reprinted 1986, p. 29. This bluish *pietra serena* was also used in the New Sacristy.


of San Lorenzo was to be entirely in marble, and the New Sacristy included many details in marble, an inordinate amount of marble would have been necessary for the entire library complex, which would have greatly escalated costs.

[LATER ADDITIONS]

The nature of the space below the proposed liberia secreta is puzzling, because a variety of maps indicated different uses of the space.\textsuperscript{123} The earliest depiction of the site is Michelangelo's second storey plans of the canonica of February 1524. The western border of the property is indicated with a thin line cutting into the property at 25°, as opposed to the 55° presented in Michelangelo’s drawings. Because the shape of the corner of the canonica and the border with the neighboring homes were not a concern of Michelangelo at the time, these drawings are of little assistance; this would account for the relative inaccuracy of measurements and angles along this western side of the canonica. The next (published) plans of the canonica are a pair of plans for the ground floor and the second floor, which date to 1768.\textsuperscript{124} (Figure 54, 55) On the ground floor plan, a vicolo or tight alleyway skirts around the canonica in order to connect the Martelli property to the Fensi family property (to the east, opposite the southern cellblock). (Figure

\textsuperscript{123} Below the reading room and the Ricetto was the western side of the canonica that comprised the old library, the chapter house, the refectory, and several of the canon's rooms (including that of the head Canon). From published materials, I can only account for the structures below the library up to the southern end of the reading room.

\textsuperscript{124} The two plans were published by Salmon. He described them as they "relate to the interest shown in San Lorenzo by the Gran Duke Pietro Leopoldo, since they were preserved among the Hapsburg family documents in the Prague State Archives." Salmon, (1990), p. 416. The drawings are known as 1) Prague State Archives of the Hapsburg Family in Tuscany, VII, drawing 9 (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz) and 2) Prague State Archives of the Hapsburg Family in Tuscany, VII, drawing 11 (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz).
The vicolo would have been directly under Michelangelo’s intended libreria secreta.\footnote{Was the vicolo considered Martelli property? Researching the cadasters may reveal more about property lines.} Creating sufficient space for the collection seems to have become a pressing issue by the beginning of the 19th century.\footnote{This expansion project is illustrated in Tesi’s article see footnote 120 above. But Tesi did not mention it in his text. The caption reads: “Progetto per 'l’Aumento di locale della Libreria Laurenziana occupando le soffitte dei beneficiati di San Lorenzo' ('Planta di diversi Quartieri della Canonica di San Lorenzo”, inizi del XIX secolo), AMFE, 90.”} At this time, a proposal was made to expand the library into the attic space above the southern wing of the canonica. While this library extension was not completed, a similar adaptation was ultimately undertaken and comprises the part of the library that today is used for exhibitions.\footnote{The room was described by Wittkower: “[...] the block above the south side of the cloister, to be entered through the door lying opposite that to the Ricetto - the door which should have led into Michelangelo’s "piccola libreria". Though these new rooms - whose junction with the library ruthlessly cuts off its old south east corner - have no effect on the interior, they form but a shabby and unorganic} Both the built and unbuilt project made use of a small room that mediated between the reading room and the extension to the east.\footnote{The room was described by Wittkower: “[...] the block above the south side of the cloister, to be entered through the door lying opposite that to the Ricetto - the door which should have led into Michelangelo’s "piccola libreria". Though these new rooms - whose junction with the library ruthlessly cuts off its old south east corner - have no effect on the interior, they form but a shabby and unorganic} This room was beyond the central door of the reading room on the intended location for the libreria secreta. Ironically, the custodians of the library refer to the room as saletta triangolare or triangular room. A remarkable amount of light is present in the room, but it must be noted that it enters from two large windows in the sidewall. These windows are possible because the room is not as deep as the libreria secreta was proposed to be, and therefore its southern wall is not obstructed from other properties.\footnote{The room was described by Wittkower: “[...] the block above the south side of the cloister, to be entered through the door lying opposite that to the Ricetto - the door which should have led into Michelangelo’s "piccola libreria". Though these new rooms - whose junction with the library ruthlessly cuts off its old south east corner - have no effect on the interior, they form but a shabby and unorganic}

Today, one of the most noticeable additions to the library is the Rotonda d’Elci or Rotonda Elciana. It was built by Pasquale Poccianti and inaugurated in 1841. This room
was only a small part of a plan by Poccianti to expand the library to most of the canonica.\textsuperscript{128} (Figure 60) This space is used for exhibitions today, while the majority of the collection is currently stored on shelves, in the extensive space below the reading room.

\textsuperscript{128} The room was built to house the vast collection of Count Angelo d’Elci and the manuscripts of the Magliabechiana library. For a brief description of the project and an ample bibliography, see Gabriele Morolli, “L’Ottocento” in San Lorenzo, 393-1993, p.160. For other additions to the library see Wittkower, (1934), p. 203-205.
[CONCLUDING THOUGHTS]

We shall never know for certain what Michelangelo’s unexecuted projects – whether abandoned or partly completed – were to have been; in fact, the attempt to do so implies at the outset a misunderstanding of his conception of architecture. To visualize any of Michelangelo’s designs, we must seek to capture not a determinate solution, but the spirit and the goals of a process.129

I have stated repeatedly that attempting to know for certain what Michelangelo’s libreria secreta was to have been is not a determinate question. Yet, as I began to understand the room through computer reconstructions, I found that my analysis of the drawings clarified matters which previous scholarship barely addressed. The more resolved aspects of Michelangelo’s design – such as the geometry, monumentality, and the room’s context within the Laurentian – became even more convincing when reconstructed. The less resolved aspects – such as lighting, vaulting, and furniture – were presented as the part of Michelangelo’s proposal that would have necessitated further attention. In fact, to construct the space in three dimensions (physical or virtual) a stone mason, or in my case, a computer, requires more information than the extant evidence provides.

Most of my learning took place in the interstice between that about which Michelangelo was specific and that which he left unresolved. To deal with these design ambiguities I was forced to analyze the proposals from a tectonic and pragmatic point of view. My work became most valuable after I abandoned the pretension of reconstructing Michelangelo’s architecture and focused on reconstructing his design process.

129 Ackerman, (1986), pp. 50-52.
[Appendix A]

Correspondence in the Carteggio that relates to the Laurentian library

1519

June

Memoires of Giovan Battista Figiovanni, Prior of Canonica. see article by Corti-Parronchi (1964)

1523

19 November

Pope Clement VII elected.

12 –22? December

Michelangelo goes to Rome. (See F. Salmon, 419, note 46)

30 December

“Ancora ho mostro a messer Iacopo il disegnio della libreria di San Lorenzo, il quale mi disse ne parrelrebbe a Nostro Signore. Aspetterò la risposta.” (Carteggio, III, 12)

1524

2 January

“Per fare risposta a una vostra a me gratrissima. Stamani messer Iacopo, en essendo illetto, mi domandò se voi avevi veduto o-ffatto il disegno della libreria di San Lorenzo, al quale risposi che nonlo sapevo. Dissemi che voi lo facesi mostrare a Stefano, et che voleva che e’ ffussi di vostra mano; et io dissi che Stefano era vostro amicissimo et che e’ non farebbe niente senza voi. Per tanto, farete fare uno altro disegnio, et fate sia le misure a tutte a dua le librerie, cioè alla latina et alla grecha, perché questo disegnio che io ho non v’è la lungheza della grecha. Et abbiate cura che all’entrata della libreria pare che v’abbia a essere poco lume. Mandatelo quanto più presto potete.” (Carteggio, III, 17) Plan with separate rooms for Latin and Greek books and separate vestibule. Letter would seem to imply that the two libraries were not of identical length of symmetric location, for one would otherwise be able to recover the measurement by association.

First Ds. of Jan.

M. writes: “…intendo per l’ultima volta chome la Sanctità del Nostro Signore e vuole che ‘l disegnio della libreria sia di mia mano. Io non ho notitia nessuna, ne sso dove se la voglia fare; e se
bene Stefano me n’à parlato, non ci è posto mente. Chome torna (Stefano) da Charrara, io m’ informerò dallui, e farò ciò che io saprò, benche non sia mia professione. (Carteggio, III, 20)

13 January

“E Sappiate che ne’ libreria che s’abbia a-ffare, o faciate o altro, per conto di Nostro Signore, vole che tutto passi per vostra mano.” (Carteggio, III, 22)

21 January

Michelangelo sends a plan indicating location of library in cloister to Rome. (no letter, no drawing)

30 January

“This would lead one to conclude that the design mentioned in previous letters was not vaulted, since here Fattucci clarifies that the Pope wants a vaulted library. (See O’Gorman, p54)

1-8 February

“Michelangelo Charissimo, io è ricevuta una vostra et per quella intendo tutto quello s’appartiene circa alla libreria. Nonll’ò mostro al Papa, perché non v’è quante camere s’à a guastare fra di sopra e di sotto. Prievo le mandate, et, se e’ vi pare, con un poco di disegno, et quante braccia sono quelle che volete acressire la piazza; et mandatemeli più chiaro che voi potete, a ciò le sappia meglio ragionare con messer Iacopo et col Papa.” (Carteggio, III, 34)

9 February

“Hora, per tornare alla libreria, pare a Nostro Signiore che e’ si guasti di sopra setti camere, et di sotto se n’acieca altre sette, et per questo no gli piace. Vorebbe che voi facessi intendere a Stefano o a chi vi paressi di quella libreria che va in su la piazza di verso il
borgo Santo Lorenzo, et vedessi per l’apunto quello che cavano e’ preti o altri di pigione di quelle botteghe et chase che s’arebbe a pigliare per la libreria, et quante botteghe v’andrebbono sotto, per rifare e’ preti del dannno loro. Ancora vorrebbe sapere la spesa del tutto, il più che fusi possibile. Et mandateci l’apunto di quante chamere s’andrebbe a guastare, perché in fatti, in quella altra, si rovina mezzo il convento. Per tanto dite a Stefano che ci usi diligentia in sapere da que’ pigionali quello che e’ pagano et a chi, se sono preti o altri, et quello che costerebbono, et tutto quello che vi achade.” (Carteggio, III, 35)

Michelangelo’s assistant, Stefano, draws a plan of the early intentions for the library’s location. The Pope is unhappy because of the large number of rooms that needs to be destroyed, and suggests a second proposal for the location overlooking the piazza.

March

The present site on the upper storey of the west range of the cloister of San Lorenzo was selected, after two others had been rejected.

10 March

“Michelangiolo, io o ricevuto la vostra con quella di Stefano et insieme con due piante della libreria, et tutto s’e mostro a Nostro Signore. Essi diritto a-ffare quella di verso la piazza, cioè la più lunga, che e 96 braccia. Restagli uno poco di dubbio, et questo si è la scala per salire le 6 braccia. Ancora non gli piace che voi facciate palco sopra le camere, per non essere sottoposto al pericolo d’un briaco che mettessi fuoco in detta libreria. Vorebbe che vo’ vedessi se si può fare in volta, et crede di sì a ogni modo, perché e vani sono tanti picoli che le mura gli regerà di sopra. Ha caro il palco, et vorebbelo bello et non riquadrat, ma con qualche fantasia nuova; et che e’ non vi fusi di sfondato più che dua o tre dita, come voi saprete fare. Rimandovi la pianta della libreria che s’affare, et in capo della libreria v’è segnato dua studietti che mettono in mezo la finestra che si riscontra coll’entrata della libreria. Et in quegli studietti vole metere certi libri più secreti; et ancora vole adoperare quelli che mettono in mezo la porta, et più volte sapere la finestra che va in capo la libreria dove la guarda, sella guarda sopra orti o tetti o stalla.” (Carteggio, III, 41)

3 April

“Nostro Signore dice che voi faciate la libreria dove voi volete, cioè sopra le camere di verso della sacrestia vechia; et piacegli assai la vostra considerazione rispetto alla facia di Santo Lorenzo. Per tanto mandateci il disegno, et mettetevi la scala per l’appunto, et che s’intenda bene. Et fate che in testa della libreria venga una finestra in mezzo di dua studioli di circa sei bracia l’uno, come è disegnato nell’altra, et dua altri che mettino in mezo la porta. Et per rispetto del fuoco vorebbe che le camere sotto la libreria fussino fatte in volta, a ciò che qualche inbriaco, come potrebbe
accadere fra’ preti, non mettessi fuoco in camera e della camera nella libreria. Et disopra vorebbe fare uno bello palco, ma vorebbe ussire di questi riquadramenti come sono questi qua, che non gli piaciano. Desidera che voi pensiate a qualche bello andamento, con qualche sfondato di tre o quattro dita; ma per ohra disegniate in modo la scala che la s’intenda, per salire quelle sei bracia che voi scriveste l’altra volta.” (Carteggio, III, 57)

7 April

“Manderete ilo disegnio della libreria colla scala; et avisatemi dove guarda la finestra di testa, se guarda sopra tetti, o corte, o orto. Ma sopra tutto disegnate bene le scale, a ciò che il Papa la intenda. Et più mi mandate e’ cassoni disegniati et bene.” (Carteggio, III, 62)

13 April

“Michelangniolo charissimo, io sono stato con Nostro Signiore et ogli mostro e’ disegni, et songli piaciuti assai; et vole che la si faci, quando voi non abbiate a rifondare, perché non vole fare una libreria per avere a rifondare quasi tutto un convento. Per aultro gli piace ogni cosa, et che voi pigliate quelle nove braccia di corte che voi avete disegniato, et così la crociera con quello graticolato che v’è segniato. Et pensate che e’ vole che il piano della libreria si facci in volta, per paura del fuoco de’ preti di sotto. Et datene aviso. Ancora vide il disegno del palcho, il quale gli piaque. Pargli che quelli andrari si riscontrano con que’ di sotto, che l’à carissimo; solo gli pare che quello andare dallato venga a essere più largo che quello di sotto, che è tre quarti, secondo che v’è scritto. Et se per aventura non fussi in questo modo come Nostro Signiore la ‘ntende, fate a ogni modo sia così come la ‘ntende lui. Et se voi vi potessi acomodare qualche sua fantasia, o vero livrea, come à fatto in quella camera che fe’ maestro Giovanni da Udine, credo l’arebbe caro. Et questo vi dico damme; pure fate a vostro modo, perché io non me ne intendo, pure che e’ sia come la ‘ntende: che gli pare che quello quadro con quelle…” (Carteggio, III, 64)

Michelangelo’s plan for a reading room with a cross-scheme.

29 April

“Charissimo Michelangelo, io ‘o ricevuto tre vostre, co’ disegni della libreria, la quale mostrai al Papa. Et quando gli dissi che avevi menato Bacio Bigio se ne rise, et disse che gli aveva fatto certe cose al Pogio le quale rovinano. Pure, gli piace il fare le volte in botte; ma non gli piace già che voi ringrossiate le mura più d’un bracio, perché non anno a regiere altro che il tetto: et circa alle scale, gli piace assai la salita di dua scale. Niente di manco non s’è resoluto a nulla, né si vole risolvere se prima voi non vi resolvet e’ fondamenti. Si che pensate se cotesti fondamenti sono per regiere le mura grosse uno bracio et non più, col tetto, et datene risposta. Et piu’ date aviso come volete fare la crociera, perché’ gli piace assai, per avere Nostro Signiore grande quantita’
di libri, perche’ in una non v’andrebbono. Circa al modello, non gli pare voi lo faciate.” (Carteggio, III, 71)

13 May

“... io ‘o ricevuto la vostra ultima, et per quella vego le difficulta’ della libreria circa a-rringrossare le mura, et come vorresti rovinare ogni cosa dal primo solare in su’, e dipoi voresti fare pilastri di prieta drento alle camere et di fuera. Et veramente mi pare, come dite, uno grandissimo vilupo. Detti la lettera a messer Iacopo, il quale la mostrò a Nostro Signiore, et parve ancora allui uno viluppo...Pure come damme, credo che voi potresti ringrossare le mura uno quarto da ogni banda in sulle volte, come dice Bacio Bigio, perche’ le mura nonn’anno a regere altro che il tetto, et le trave sono come catene a detto muro. Vorrei vi consigliassi con gente I quali non metessino tanta ruina inanzi, come e’ a volere disfare tanto muro; et questo dico damme.”(Carteggio, III, 73)

9 July

“Charissimo Michelagniolo, io ebbi la vostra col disegnio de’ pilastri, la quale mostrò a Nostro Signiore et piaquegli assai. Et dite che voi diate la cura a chi vi piace, et cominciate a fondare et dare cenire le priete et metete mano a fare detta libreria. Et N.S. vi prega che faciate fare detta opera a giente che sieno di qualità che voi v’abiate a mettere manco tempo che si possa; et altanto à dato commessione che si comprino le due casette da e’ Nelli et butinsi a terra.” (Carteggio, III, 86)

12-18 July

From Michelangelo to Fattucci. “Messer Giovan Francesco, per l’ultima vostra son ito actrovare lo Spina per intendere se à chommissione di pagare per la libreria, chome fa per le sepolture; e visto che e’ non l’à, non è dato prencipio a decta opera, chome m’avisate, perché non si può fare senza danari.” (Carteggio, III, 89)

21 July

“Et circa la libreria, Nostro Signiore, come per altra vi scrissi, vorebbe sapere, vel circa, quello che si spenderà in detta libreria. Per tanto sarete con chi vi pare; et fate fare il conto d’ogni cosa a uno dispresso il più che sia possibile.” (Carteggio, III, 94)

2 August

“Michelangelo charrissimo, io ’o riceuto il conto della libreria, et Nostro Signiore rimette ogni cosa in voi: solo vi priege che vi perdiate manco tempo che sia possibile, et vorebbe che lla fussi di gia fatta, nonche’ cominciata. Togliete degli uomini assai, a ciò si possa fare più presto. Perr-ora non vole che vi faciate la crociera, ma lassiate in modo che, quando la vora’ fare si possa. Et mandatemi la lunghexa con quella agiunta che viene in testa della libreria, e quanti banchi vi va colla distantia l’uno dallo altro come
quelli di Santo Marco a punto. Et ancora n’avisate quanti libri andrà per banco.” (Carteggio, III, 95)

August/September  Baccio Bigio appointed to direct construction

13 August  “Nostro Signore dice che voi attendiate a tirare inanzi l’opera, et piacegli il tutto, et dice che, quando Sua Santità vi mandassi a dire che voi faciate una cosa più che una altra, et che a voi non piaccessi, non vole che la faciate, a causa che, sella stessi poi male, non vole che voi diciate averla fatta per sua volontà. Per tanto rimette ogni cosa a voi; et quando vi fussi ditto una cosa per una altra, o che e’ volessi di costà far fare niente ad altri che a voi, nollo crediate. Solo vi priega che sollecitiate più che si può si della sepolture come delle sepolture; et se vi pare, avisate quello che fate, et se avete cominciato le figure, come io credo, o nno. Et se volete, mandate il disegno della libreria; et se vi paressi mettervi tropo tempo, lasciatelo stare, perché Nostro Signore desidera che voi non perdiate tempo, per amat delle sepolture. Né altro per questa.” (Carteggio, III, 101)

17 September  “Charissimo Michelagniolo, io sono stato molti giorni che io non v’ò scritto: è stato per la rabbia che io ebbi della lettura del Priore, la quale era piena di bugie; et così è stata tenuta da Nostro Signore. Dal Cardinale la auta la resoluzione di farla come voi avete sempre detto, et parmi che Sua Santità n’abia preso grandissimo piacere. Et disse che la cosa non poteva se none andare bene, perché voi avete dato la cura a Bacio Bigio, il quale è tutto nostro; et voi potresti con più agio attendere alle figure. Et dipoi disse: ‘Di a Michelagniolo che tutto l’onore et la vergognia sarà sua, et che e’ non dica poi: - E’ fu Bacio -. Facia fare ogni cosa a suo modo; et circha le mura non pigli più sicurità che si bisogni, ma abbastanza’. Et sopra tutto vi priega che si facia con presteza.” (Carteggio, III, 106)

and from Giovanni Spina:
“Mando per Bacio Bigio subito per commetterli l’opera.” (Carteggio, III, 105)

1 October  “Arei caro che qualche volta voi m’avisassi come le cose vanno, et quello che voi lavorate, et come la fate col priore bugiardo di Santo Lorenzo, che dice al Papa che voi fate la libreria in colonbaia.” (Carteggio, III, 108)

1-10 October  Battista Figiovanni to M.: “Arò caro mi sia detto le volte che s’à fare sopra le camere e sotto la libreria, che lavoro à essere, se
nóstrale o campigiano, e quello arò a provedere.” (*Carteggio*, III, 109)

6 November

Battista Figiovanni from San Lorenzo: “Carissimo Michelangelo, e’ s’è murato alcuna di quelle pietre forte de’ pilastri, quali li maestri muratori trovano non tutte a una misura, e molte capigrosse sotto squadra: per il che acade, per non perdere piu’ tanto tempo come s’è fatto, che si lavorino molte da capo, et aconpangnarle. Et questo perché li scarpellini dicono avevano 2 misure e le squadre cattive.” (*Carteggio*, III, 115)

Again, no evidence that this is in reference to substructures of library.

16 December

“Sapiate che il priore di San Lorenzo à cerco qui con Nostro Signore che si gli facia una camera, perché voi gli fate uno pilastro in camera sua; et voleva il refettorio di sotto, o vero di sopra. Credo non ne sarì niente; pure facia lui. (*Carteggio*, III, 120)

1525

Entries in Michelangelo’s account books for raising the long walls and carving their exterior window frames.

12 April

“Per questa vi si rimanda e’ disegni delle finestre et della libreria; et ancora vi mando il disegnio della sepultura del Papa. Et circa la libreria, Nostro Signore in tutto et per tutto se ne rimette a voi, et piacegli le finestre di drento et di fuora, et ancora que’ tabernacoli di drento sopra le finestre. Ogni cosa rimette a voi. Circa il ricetto, quelle scale, se a voi paresse vorebe che di dua se ne facessi una che tenessi et pigliassi tutto il ricetto, se paresse a voi che stessi meglio; si che pensatelo et datene aviso. Circa la capella in capo la libreria, dice non vi vole cappella, ma vole sia una libreria secreta per tenere certi libri più pretiosi che gli altri. Et dice che voi sollecitate più che si può. Ancora vole faciate uno bellissimo pa[alco?] alla libreria, come già vi scrissi altra volta con poco isfondato; et rimandatemi il disegnio facesti l’autra volta. Et se n’avete fatto nessuno altro o avessi altra fantasia, mandategli, perché Nostro Signore gli vole vedere.” (*Carteggio*, III, 141)

April

Final sketches for interior tabernacles and windows of reading room are sent to Rome. Among the mural drawings discovered in 1979 in the altar chapel of the New sacristy are two full-scale drawings – ruled, but with freehand corrections made on the cornice profiles – for the interior and exterior elevations of the Laurentian library windows; they evidently were models from which the stone carvers could make templates to guide the carving of the mouldings. Argan writes: “Dal Poggetto 1979 ha potuto aggiungere con i disegni murali 137 e 112 della sagrestia nuova due straordinari esemplari della finestra interna ed esterna della sala di lettura disegnati da Michelangelo a grandezza naturale per il
carpintiere che doveva eseguire in legno il modello da tradurre in pietra.” (p. 186)

26 August  “... per l’ultima mia allo Spina intendesti quanto acade per conto della libreria, né vi dirò altro.” (Carteggio, III, 164)

10 November  “Michelangelo charrissimo, io ebbe una di Giovanni Spina con certi disegni della piccola libreria, la quale mostrai a Nostro Signore. Et dice che vole che la si facia come avete disegnato; et perché’ non gli piace ne’ vole che Larione entri nel convento, ma vole che voi faciate parlare a ilarione, allo Spina o a chi fussi piu’ al proposito e per quello che la gli costo’ et qualche cosa piu’, tanto che e’ si contenti.” (Carteggio, III, 184)

29 November  “Charissimo Michelagniolo, questa per fare risposta a una di Giovanni Spina de’ 22 di questo, la quale subito la mostrai a Nostro Signore. Et circa a ilarione Martelli non volle dire altro, perché’ aspetta la lettera di Larione, et a quella fara’ risposta. Parmi sia risoluto a conperarla quando la volessi vendere...Nostro Signore à preso grande piacere quando lesse che voi vi eri risoluto a fare il ricetto: si che sollecitatelo. Ora, circa alle finestre sopra tetto con quelli ochi di vetro nel palco, dice Nostro Signore che gli pare cosa bella et nuova; niente di manco non si risolve a fare, ma disse che e’ bisognierebbe soldare due frati delli Iesuati che nonnandessino ad altro che a nettare la polvere. Niente di meno, se vi parrà, ne parlerò un’altra volta con sua Santità. Aviste quello che volete che io facia, perché non credo certo, per essergli piaciuto questa fantasia, a parlàgliene una altra volta sarà forse contento.” (Carteggio, III, 186)

8 December  “...et circa la casa [di Martelli?] disse che si voleva atenere al vostro primo consiglio, cioè di conperare detta casa et di adoperare quello che se n’arà di bisogno, et il resto apigionare ; et così mi pare al tutto risoluto, dicendo: ‘Io voglio più presto mi dolga la buorsa che concedere né c[h]iasso né altro’. Et disse che vi scriverà dua versi di sua mano. Diravi, e della casa e delle finestre sopra tetto, quello che e’ vorrà. Parvegli strano quando lesse che e’ bisogniava abassare la volta del capitulo. Credo che ve ne dirà qualche cosa.” (Carteggio,III, 192)

23 December  “la presente è per farvi intendere come Nostro Signore alli giorni passati hebbe la vostra de’ 7, col disegno a piedi della libreria gli mandasti... et che el disegno predeco li piace et satisfà. Et dice che li ochi disegnate per dare li lumi si pensa habbino ad essere una cosa bella, ma che non sa se la polvere riceveranno sarà maggiore ch’el lume rendere poteranno, et che alzando el muro
duo braccia per fare le finestre come advisate, ed essendo parte del tecto posto sù et haverlo hora ad disfarlo et tramutare legnami, s’el reggerì el peso et fark’ danno alla fabrica. Pure, che essendosi Sua Beattudine liberamente rimessa in voi, per confidare nella affectione et virtù vostra, si persuade tucto haviate a fare ad beneficio et utile d’essa fabrica, per haverne più cognizione che non ha Sua Santità et alcuno altro.” (Carteggio, III, 194)

1526

23 February

“Poi che egli ‘a cominciato a llavorare, io non vorrei che e’ perdessi tempo in altre cose, né avessi a pensare per hora ad altro che alle figure.[...] Circha il ricetto, disse [il Papa] ‘Ringratiato sia Dio che la cosa devesse essere in modo aviata che Michelagnolo non a’ara’ piu’ a perdere tempo’.” (Carteggio, III, 210)

10 March

From Leonardo Sellaio in Rome to M. in Fl. “dipoi il Papa dua volte mandò per me et dettemi udienza... et volse che mi chominciassì alla libreria, dipoi alla sagrestia, e chose per chose glile disegnassì; e poi a’ marmi ritti, e chom’è el modo dell’abozare...[dissi] che in questo tempo voi avevi pensato al ricepto, chosa inusitata a ffare gli scarpellini, e bisognava essere loro appresso a ongni hora...” (Carteggio, III, 214)

3 April

“Scrivigli una buona lettera, et digli che tutte le cose che e’ farà che io le approverò sempre’. Del palco, dice Sua Beattitudine che se vi paressi che fussi per riuscire cosa bella, vorebbe che, come in tera sono tre vie che mettono in mezo due ordini di banchi, così vorebbe fussi nel palco. Non vi parendo, dice che voi faciate quello che meglio vi viene. Et dice che troviate o faciate trovare asse d’albero e di noce per e’ banchi dove anno a stare e’ libri; et perché dice che voi volevi la resolutione della pichola libreria, per potere fare il tramezzo fra i’ ricetto et la libreria, dice che voi lo faciate come se la picola fussi fatta: la quale vole si facia come sarà finito i’ ricetto.”(Carteggio, III, 217).

18 April

Letters concern the door of the Ricetto to the reading room and inscription to be placed above. (Carteggio, III, 220-221)

20 April

Letter of Francesco Campano (Prior of San Lorenzo) to Michelangelo: “per l’amore mi havete sempre dimonstrato portare, che voi vi degnate dare commessione a Bernardo muratore che mi facci la cucina, acciò io possi habitate le stanze di sotto almeno della casa del priore, e non stia più in questa stanza obscura. Et se le stanze di sopra non si possono forniere al presente, nè le scale, non mi daranno molestia. Faccinsì quando si può, purché io possi habitate
le stanze di sotto. El tecto in luogo della loggia, e el luogo della cucina ho mostrò a Bernardo, e li piace; quando piace ad voi, e per uscire di questa stanza tenebrosa non si possi altrimenti fare, datemi la materia et io pagherò el magisterio. Scrivo così perché in vero sto mal contento; et ad voi per l’amore di Dio mi raccomando perché in vero non posso più.” (Carteggio, III, 222)

6 June

Letter concerns inscription on door frame and: “Delle arme, Nostro Signore dice che non vi vole arme di Papa ma quelle di casa colle livree, et accomodarvi la sua, cioè andor illesus. Del legname che avete messo a sechare, cioè tigli, abeti, asse d’albero, non avete aviso. De’ noci, se non n’avete conperati, fate di conperargli, perché Nostro Signore vorebbe che e’ banchi fussino d’uno legno che durassi assai. Quando voi credessi che faciendogli tutti di noce fussino più durabili, fategli; quanto che no, faretegli fare a modo vostro.” (Carteggio, III, 225)

17 June

Michelangelo writes to Fattucci: “Del riceto, di questa settimana s’e’ murato quattro cholonne, e una n’era murata prima. Terranno un pocho a dietro e’ tabernacholi; pure, in quattro mesi da oggi credo sara’ fornito. El palcho si chomincierebbe ora, ma ’tigli non sono anchora buoni; sollicetereno che e’ si sechino el pi’ che si potra.” (Carteggio, III, 227)

June

Tolnay(1975, 132) writes that work was stopped.

7 July

“Giovanni Spina ebbe comessione della casa di Larione: vorei sapere quello che egli i fatto. Avisate di maestro Giovanni, se vi dà noia l’aspettare; et io farò quello che voi mi aviserete.” (Carteggio, III, 231)

17 July

“Sua Beatitudine vorebbe che per ora voi ispendessi in tre mesi quello che si spende hora in uno, nella libreria. .. Ma nella libreria per hora non vole si spenda tanto, et vole si sciemi dua tertii della spesa il mese.” (Carteggio, II, 232)

16 October

“Del palco della libreria, per ora nonne vole fare niente.” (Carteggio, III, 238)

4 November

“Sua Sanctità me ha decto ch’io li scriva che circha alle cose de cotesta opera de Santo Lorenzo, che si bene si[a]nno state demninuitone le spese et non così seguitatosene l’ordine datone, che non vorebbe pensasse che ‘l non ce havesse quella medesima affezione et animo de finirla secondo più volte s’è parlato; ma che quanto sia stato pretermesso et se pretermecta, lo causa non la volontà ma le obcupazioni et travagli nelli quali Sua Santità s’è
A letter from Girolamo di Montauto in Roma to Michelangelo in Fl. Asserts commitment on part of Pope to finish project but apologizes for the time being that other constraints are being put on funds.

**1527**

February? Michelangelo to Giovanni Spina: “[... ] visto e’ tempi, chome è detto, contrari all’arte mia, non so se io m’o da sperare più provigione. Quando io fusi certo non l’avere più, non resterei per questo che io non lavorassi e facessi per el papa tucto quello che io potessi: ma non terrei già chasa aperta[... ]” (Carteggio, III, 250)

**1530**

end of year Tolnay (1975, 132) writes that work was re-commenced.

**1533**

7 July (Tolnay, 1955) project for construction of roof begins anew. (?)

August The Pope permits Michelangelo to leave Florence for Rome providing he arranges for completion of decorative work and the stairway; twelve carpenters are at work before. Argan: “Michelangelo alloga agli intagliatori Battista del Icnque e Ciapino i banchi di lettura, pensati sin dall’agosto del 1524.” (p.190); Portoghesi (1964): “non come semplici suppellettili, ma necessario elemento integrante dell’ossatura architettonica”. Clement dies in September, and six masons contracted to build the vestibule stairway and doors, but leave everything unfinished except one of the latter. (Argan, 195)

September Clement VII dies

**1534**

? Tolnay (1975, 132) writes work was stopped again, Michelangelo leaves for Rome.

1549-50 Hibbard (1974): Floor and ceiling were built in their present form. Vasari: Floor and ceiling were built by Carota and Tasso.

1549-54 De Angelis (1981): Floor completed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1555</td>
<td>Michelangelo’s Letter to Vasari describing stairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1558-59</td>
<td>Stairs built by Ammanati</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[Appendix B]

The chronology of development of the multi-chambered scheme

1523
December 12-22  Michelangelo visits Rome, discusses commission with Clement VII

1524

January 2 - ?  “LATINA E GRECHA”
“[…]tutte a dua le librerie, cioè alla latina et alla grecha[…]”

10 March - ?  “DUA STUDIETTI”
“[…]et in capo della libreria v'è segnato dua studietti[…]”

April 3 - ?  “STUDIOLI” (Four in number)
“dua studioli di circa sei bracia l’uno … et dua altri che mettino in mezo la porta.”

April 13 - August 2

April 13 - August 2

1525

? - April 12  “CAPPELLA”
“[…]non vi vole cappella[…]”

“AGIUNTA
“[…]agiunta in testa della libreria.”
“LIBRERIA SECRETA”
April 12 - ?     “[...]libreria secreta per tenere certi libri più pretiosi che gli altri.”

“PICCOLA LIBRERIA”
November 10 - ? “[...]certi disegni della piccola libreria”

1526

“PICHOLA LIBRERIA”
April 3 - ?     “[...]voi volevi la resolutione della pichola libreria[...]”
[Appendix C]

Drawing Order of CB 79 an CB 80
The scope of this appendix is to discuss the sequence in which the lines were drawn on each sheet.

Casa Buonarroti 79A

After accumulating the necessary data from a survey of the area, Michelangelo proceeded to create a drawn plan of the available space into which he would design the libreria secreta. To derive the shape and size of the lot, only 3 measurements are necessary, the fourth could be extrapolated from those. With the surveyed distances in hand, Michelangelo could begin sketching. He chose a sheet of filigrana briquet 6659 and a fine pen tip soaked in brown ink. There are no incised or lightly drawn lines that outline the ink drawing. Michelangelo must have used a straightedge and a tool (perhaps a square) to determine right angles; he may also have used a protractor or another instrument for determining angles. Important points like the end of a long line or where two lines meet were indicated by inked tick-marks, which served as guidelines for the ink lines.

While it would seem obvious to set a scale first, but in CB 79 the scale does not correspond to any florentine length measurements. I argue that there are three possible lines that could have been drawn first: the scale marker, the vertical line, and the higher of the bottom horizontal lines.

If the higher of the bottom horizontal line had been drawn first, it would have been followed by the perpendicular vertical line. The length of the horizontal line would then have been divided by the known width of the reading room (circa 17 braccia) in order to determine the scale. At the end of the vertical line, Michelangelo would then have placed the scale marker. Admittedly this is a backwards way to derive the scale. But given that the scale (which measures 2.1 cm) does not correspond to any florentine measurement, this may be a manner to account for the anomalous scale.

At this point, he proceeded to tick the length of the vertical wall and the width of the pair of upper most horizontal lines. Their length was most likely a surveyed measurement which allowed him to draw the lines to a point which marked their length. Subsequently, or at some earlier point he drew the second of the pair of lower horizontal lines. The tick marks at the bottom right corner of the sheet on the lowest line indicate the end points of the two oblique lines which represent the Martelli family boundary.

The three lines drawn without a straightedge that represented the left (east) wall that enclosed the trapezoidal room, could only have been drawn at this point. The innermost of these oblique lines departs from a tick mark which indicates the interior

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130 The Braccio measures 58.4 cm; the Palmo 29.18 cm; the Crazie 4.86 cm; the Soldo 2.9 cm; the Quattrino .97 cm; the Denaro .24 cm.
width of the reading room. The middle line departs from the corner where the exterior reading room wall would have met the canonica’s block of cells (i.e. the long vertical line). It is angled at a sharper 54° from the horizontal and merges with the first line. The outermost line does not have a distinct starting point and was hastily sketched; it is segmented and parallel to the middle line. I will assume that the oblique walls were meant to be symmetrical, at least from the interior. Given the location of the room at the end of a lengthy axis of view, and given that an identical interior wall treatment is mirrored onto both oblique walls, I argue that the southern corner—the head of the room—would seem awkward if the walls were not symmetrical.\(^{131}\)

The order that I propose these oblique lines were drawn is of course informed by this hypothesis. I believe that the first attempt was the middle line, which attempted to symmetrically reproduce the angle and position of the pre-existing western wall, must have proven unsuccessful because it would not allow Michelangelo to connect the masonry of the libreria secreta to the masonry of the reading room. The outermost line seems to run parallel with the first line drawn, which indicates to me the likelihood that Michelangelo drew these two lines before he corrected the angle and position of the middle line with a new line (currently the innermost of the three). This third line seems to be “symmetrically correct” because, as with the western wall, it passes through a point which marks the inner corner of the reading room. Since Michelangelo places the series of niches and pilasters off this line, I am assuming that it is the one he intended to build from and that it was drawn last.

On the other hand, if the vertical line had been drawn first, Michelangelo could have proceeded in two ways.\(^{132}\) 1) he could have chosen a scale and then drawn the horizontal lines at the bottom of the sheet; or 2) he could have drawn the higher of the two bottom horizontal lines, divided the line up by the length of the reading room, set a scale and then proceeded to draw the lower horizontal line and the rest in the same order mentioned above.

If the Scale had been drawn first, then one of two things would have followed, as indicated in the chart: 1) either Michelangelo drew the vertical line followed by the pair of lower horizontal lines, or 2) Michelangelo immediately drew the lowest horizontal bottom line and after drawing its pair, drew the vertical line.

\(^{131}\) it is important to remember that once within the room the visual terminus may well have been two fold, since the vertical dome would also have added a new dimension to the space. Much like the pantheon where the would have been intended to be a long horizontal axis dictated by the plaza in front of the building culminating in the apse across from the entry, but when one enters the space one becomes aware of an intersecting axis which further gives the building a sense of centrality.

\(^{132}\) The vertical line may have been his datum line from the survey since it is the only line that has two perpendicular sides at its end, if available it would be useful to have it be the first line taken while surveying.
With the outline of the walls complete, Michelangelo must have been conscious of the two acute angles of the trapezoidal room.\textsuperscript{133} Michelangelo proceeded to cut the bottom corners of the space and subsequently devise the column and niche scheme. As a final treatment of the wall surface he would have carved out the rectangular niche and pilaster rhythm.

At this point the overlapping of lines would seem to indicate that he drew the small perspectival representation in the center of the room, perhaps to begin to visualize what the space might have looked like. This was drawn before Michelangelo tried to organize the furniture. The supplementary drawing to the top right of the sheet were drawn after the layout of the space in the large plan was considered. I argue this because of their positioning in a corner of the sheet. It is not possible to be more precise as to when in the order of events this plan and elevation were completed.

Casa Buonarroti 80A

The drawing process must have begun with Michelangelo preparing a sheet, a pen, brown ink, straightedge, compass, and a sharpened point to incise tracing lines. A full underdrawing of incised lines, perhaps traced from a previous working of the proposal outline the brown ink lines of the drawing. Another indication that this drawing derives from at least one earlier drawing is the series of developments which Michelangelo has managed to resolve in CB 80. Hirst states that “the drawing is the fruit of a number of earlier, exploratory sketches, one of which CB 79A also survives.”\textsuperscript{134}

The incised lines of the underdrawing are visible in many parts of the sheet where the bistre washes over them. A clear example of this occurs in the lower left of the sheet where the sidewall meets the shorter corner wall. Additionally, three incised compass arcs appear at the lower two corners of the room. In the left corner the incised arc is clearly visible through the bistre; and two arcs, similar both in radius and in center point, are traced in the right corner. They are only visible in raking light and most likely guided Michelangelo’s placement of the corner niches or even the angle of the oblique walls.

Even though this later drawing is less explicit about the site survey than CB 79, it is still drawn to scale. The scale marker in the upper left of the sheet indicates that a braccio corresponds precisely to 1/2 soldo or 1/20th of a braccia, which in modern terms equals 1.45 cm.

Comparatively the measurements for the room do not differ greatly between the two drawings. The length of the room as drawn to scale on CB 79 is 5.56m and on CB 80 it is 5.02m. Its maximum width represented in CB 79 is 7.37m, and in CB 80 it is 7.65m. The difference can be accounted for by the scale and should not be thought of as an indication that any structural changes have actually ensued between the two drawings. In terms of my reconstruction, both drawings have been rendered and I am focusing my discussion on the architectural differences between the two, not on the differences in size.

\textsuperscript{133} Such acute angle interiors are unprecedented in Renaissance architecture, and as far as I can see do not make an appearance until the twentieth century in the work of I.M. Pei for instance.

\textsuperscript{134} 1988, p. 85.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>Scaled Size (in cm)</th>
<th>Intended Size (in Braccia)</th>
<th>Intended Size (in m)</th>
<th>Actual Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including wall thicknesses</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width of room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At base</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At widest point</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>12.62</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At southern boundary</td>
<td>? 6.2-7</td>
<td>? 2.9-3.3</td>
<td>? 1.7-1.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width of &quot;el vano della libreria&quot;</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>17.86</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>10.54</td>
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APPENDIX F

Precedents for multi-chambered libraries
(From Clark, THE CARE OF BOOKS.)

Cesena: [p.197]
Built in 1452 as a public library. Oriented E-W, in order to have windows facing N-S. 10’ 2.5” long ledgers, 2’3” between ledger and wall, 4’ 2.25” height of ledgers. Seat width 3’1”, desk to desk 4’1”, slope of desk 45 degrees. Paved with unglazed tiles

S. Marco, in Florence: [p.199]
Built by Cosimo de’ Medici in 1441. First public library. 148’ long x 34’6” wide
The catalogue [in state archives in Modena] “mentions a greek library which had seven banchi on each side – this was very probably a separate room.”

Convent of S. Francesco, Assisi: [p. 201]
Catalogue of 1381 describes:
“Here begins the list of all the books which are in the reserved library (libreria secreta) of the Holy Convent of San Francesco at Assisi. Manuscripts lent to prelates, masters, readers and bachelors, and all other brethren in orders, according to the amount of knowledge or line of study of each demands them.”
Clark continues: “this part of the collection is contained in eleven presses (for which the unusual word solarium is used) arranged along the east and west walls of a room, but whether the same as the last we are not informed. The number of manuscripts is 530.”

Convent of Monte Oliveto, (province of Siena): [p. 199]
Built in 1516. 85’ x 32’.
“At the end of the library, approached by a flight of thirteen stairs, is a room of the same width and 21’ long, which may have been used as an inner library.”

Vatican Library, Rome: [p.204]
Early location was on ground floor of Nicholas V palace, between the Cortile del Papagallo and the future Belvedere courtyard. Latin and Greek library were public library (bibliotheca communis, bibliotheca pubblica or merely bibliotheca.) “Bibliotheca Secreta or reserved library, in which the more precious manuscripts were kept apart from the others. The fourth room, which was not fitted up till 1480-1481, was called Bibliotheca Pontificia. In addition to manuscripts it contained the papal archives and registers (Regesta). In the catalogue dating 1512, it is called Intima et ultima secretior bibliotheca, and seems to have contained the most valued treasures.” Bibliotheca Secreta measured 38’ x 20’.
Single window, seats, *armarium*, settle (spalliera), chests (*capsae*).
[BIBLIOGRAPHY]

* Indicates texts with frequent citations and of major relevance to research of Libreria Secreta.

**Primary Sources**

Autograph Drawings, Correspondence (Carteggio), subsequent Copies of the Drawings, Memoirs of Construction.


Ferri, Pasquale Nevino. Indice dei disegni di architettura ... nella galleria degli Uffizi. Roma, 1885.


*Rossi, G.I. La Libreria Mediceo Laurenziana. 1739. Contains copies of Michelangelo’s drawings as they were in 18. century. Invaluable for reconstructing original sketches of CB 80.

*Tolnay, Charles de. Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo. IV vols. Novara: De Agostini, 1975-1980. Very accurate reproductions of Michelangelo’s drawings. Contains an entry regarding CB 79 and CB 80, with a rich bibliography on drawings. All illustrations of Michelangelo’s drawings in my thesis are photocopies of these images. In addition to personally viewing the autograph drawings, I have consulted these reproductions.
See also
and

Secondary Sources

Michelangelo
Design Process, Biographies, Monographs.

First chapter on theory of architecture is critical to my approach. The short mention of the libreria secreta is offset by a lengthy discussion of the reading room and ricetto. Contains an entry regarding CB 79 and CB 80.

Apolloni Ghetti, Bruno Maria. Opere Architettoniche di Michelangelo a Firenze. Includes large original drawings of library

* Argan, Giulio Carlo and Bruno Contardi. Michelangelo Architetto. Milano: Electa, 1996. As the most recent monograph on Michelangelo, it contains an invaluable bibliography.

Exhibition catalogue that contains entries regarding CB 79 and CB 80.


Condivi. Biography of Michelangelo. 1553. After Vasari, it is the major biography written during Michelangelo’s life. No mention of libreria secreta.

* De Angelis D’Ossat, Guglielmo. “Architecture,” in The Complete Michelangelo, with intro. by Mario Salmi. Contains the only visual reconstruction of the libreria secreta. Useful to compare to my reconstruction.


*Portoghesi, Paolo and Bruno Zevi. *Michelangiolo Architetto*. Torino, 1964. A monolithic text. Contains many insights and alternative opinions that were new in Michelangelo scholarship. Because it lacks footnotes or endnotes, I feel it gets away with being sloppy on details and references to Carteggio. It could probably use a second corrected edition. In the end, it remains an unconventional and novel view of Michelangelo worthy of consideration.


**Laurentian Library**

Spatial Sequence (Ricetto, reading room, *libreria secreta*), lighting, later additions, collection within Library.


Thesis?


Gurrieri, Francesco. Disegni nei manoscritti laurenziani. Secoli X-XVII. 1980. It is curious to see the manuscripts that Michelangelo knew were to be housed in the library.


Still the primary text concerning the Laurentian library, especially with regard to style and Mannerist traits. Contains several pages on *libreria secreta.*

see also:

He connects Laurentian to architectural precedents, thus demistifying Michelangelo’s genius. He offers precedents for inset columns, broken pediment, alternating color scheme, among other things.

Discusses use of proportion and perspectival vantage points in the main reading room.
Controversial in my mind, because it does not take into account preexisting structures which, ultimately controlled the length of the room, which was not left to Michelangelo to decide upon.

Helpful for an idea of later additions to the Laurentian Library.

**Canonica of San Lorenzo**
*Site Restrictions, Political, Social, and Spatial Organization of Canonica.*


Contains earliest account of Medici intention to build a library in canonica of San Lorenzo.


Fattorusso, G. *The Basilica of San Lorenzo.* The Media Art Series, 1927.


Wallace, William. *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo*. Cambridge Press, 1994. Includes interactions between New Sacristy and Laurentian Library. Valuable to see what projects Michelangelo was dealing with at the same time. Focuses principally on construction and uses payrole to derive new conclusions about building order and quarrying of stone, etc.

**Libraries / Books**

**Tuscan-monastic-libraries of Renaissance, Lighting Scheme, Furniture.**


Helpful with issues regarding handing of books, furniture, and niches. Also useful for illustrations of Vatican and other libraries.


Misti, Maria Christina. “‘Ubi Libri Custodiuntur’, note sull’architettura della biblioteca nell’età Carolinga”. in Accademie e Biblioteche d’Italia. Anno LXI (44n.s.) n.3. 5-15. 1995?


The classic text on monastic libraries. Contains several pages on Laurentian and other Tuscan precedents.


Includes some illustrations that I copy: the two Vasari “ideal city” prints. These are not present in book.


*Thompson, James Westfall. The Medieval Library.* University of Chicago, 1939.


**Urban Setting**

[Site Restrictions, Contemporaneous maps of the site…]

Archivio di Stato, Firenze, *Decima Granduciale,* vol. 3631, fols. 44 and 466.


Lastri, Marco. L’Osservatore Fiorentino sugli edifizi della sua Patria. Firenze, 1821.

Mazzanti, Riccardo and Enrico, and Del Lungo, Torquato. Raccolta delle migliori fabbriche. Firenze, 1876-1880. tav. CXIV.


Miscellaneous and Reference


4. Photograph of Laurentian library exterior, from courtyard of canonica.
   By author.
6. Photograph of western wall of Laurentian library with lower storey arches for support.
By author.
8. Plan of *libreria secreta* of Vatican library.

Charles de Tolnay, Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo (1980) IV 560
11. Detail of CB 79, supplementary drawings at upper right of sheet.
12. Detail of perspectival view of CB 79, with non-essential lines removed by Author. 
14. Why sheet CB 80 was cut (point "A" is center of incised circle).

Charles de Tolnay, Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo. (1980), IV, 560; with over drawings by author.
15. Copy of CB 80. G.I. Rossi. 1739.

G.I. Rossi, *La Libreria Mediceo Laurenziana*, 1739, tav. XIX.
17. Photograph of Martelli property and the western wall of Laurentian library. 
Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi, Michelangiolo Architettto, (Torino, 1964), ill.248.

18. Photograph of canonica showing southwest corner of Laurentian library, Rotonda Elciana, and Martelli property. 
Frank Salmon, “The Site of Michelangelo’s Laurentian Library,” JSAH, XLIX, (December, 1990), 412.
19. Detail of CB 79, plan at southern corner.
20. Detail of CB 79, elevation with scaled measurements.
Courtesy of Prof. Henry Millon.
Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi, *Michelangiolo Architetto*, (Torino, 1964), ill. 253; with scaled down CB 80 added by author.
23. Chapel of Leo X, also known as Chapel of Cosma and Damian. Rome.
Michelangelo. 1514.
Charles de Tolnay, Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo, (1980), IV, ?.
From Bandini, Angelo Maria.
   By author.
27. Five speculative alternatives for the order of the *libreria secreta*.

By author, autocad from tracing: CB 7A, CB 7A, lower storey of Ricetto, upper storey of Ricetto, reading room pilaster. Last three as copied by Geymuller.
28. AutoCAD Model. Perspectival section of *libreria secreta* reconstruction of CB 79 with broken entablature.

By author.
29. AutoCAD Model. Perspectival section of _libreria secerta_ reconstruction of CB 80, with continuous entablature.
30 a/b. AutoCAD Model. Elevation of two alternative corner wall solutions. Extruded from CB 80.
Drawn by author.
Charles de Tolnay, Corpus dei Disegni di Michelangelo. (1980), IV, 521r.
32. Lantern of New Sacristy. Michelangelo. 1525.
34. Study for New Sacristy. Michelangelo.
37. AutoCAD Model. Perspectival section of *libreria secerta* reconstruction with oculi, and pendentive and rim.

By author
38. Reconstruction of *libreria secreta* by Guglielmo De Angelis d’Ossat.

39. AutoCAD Model. Perspectival section of *libreria secerta* reconstruction with high pendenteive.
By author.
40. AutoCAD Model. Perspectival section of *libreria secerta* reconstruction with low pendentive.
By author.
41. Interior of reading room with slanting light.
42. AutoCAD Model. Rendered image of CB 79 with dome.
By author.
47. Plan of libreria secreta, with dome diameter, pendentive diameter and centerlines of hexagonal interior. Used by author to determine center of space, for dome construction.

AutoCAD image, by author.

48b. Plan and Elevation of Chapel of Holy Shroud, Turin. Guarini
49. Plan, section, elevation of reading room and Ricetto.

50. Photograph of interior of reading room, looking south.
51. Photograph of current room’s door moulding detail.
By Author
52. Illumination representing Petrarch in his study. From a manuscript in Laurentian library, Opere, 1466.
53. Illumination representing scholar in his study with a detail of a banco tondo.
From *Livre des cas des malheureux nobles hommes et femmes*. French, end of the 15th century.
From Clark, J.W. *The Care of Books*, 1902, p. 308
55. First floor plan of the canonica of San Lorenzo. Before 1768. Prague, State Archives, (Hapsburg Archive of Tuscany, VII, c.11)
56. Close-up of first floor plan of the canonica of San Lorenzo. Before 1768. Prague, State Archives, (Hapsburg Archive of Tuscany, VII, c.11)

57. Plan of current room at southern end of reading room, "saletta triangolare". 
Drawn by author from a survey of the site.
58. Photograph of current room with window and entrance from reading room.
   By Author.
60. Addition proposal by Pasquale Poccianti. c. 1817. G.D.S.U., 7601A.

59. Project for an addition to the Laurentian Library. Early 19th century. ("Progetto per l'aumento di locale della Libreria Laurenziana occupando le soffitte dei beneficianti di San Lorenzo.") AMFE, 90.