

ARCH 48-200

Architecture Design Studio: Composition

Carnegie Mellon University
School of Architecture
Fall 2008

PROJECT 1

A Machine for Research

Introduction

Academic libraries are undergoing profound transformations in their use patterns, contents, and research services, based upon the emergence of digital media over the last two decades. The building type is shifting from being a repository for books to a center for information and community activities. The Hunt Library is no exception. The original building was composed in reference to the book stack. Its structure, windows, and architectural expression are determined by the simple function of storing books. Today, however, the building's uses have broadened beyond this simple paradigm, to include its expanded role as a social and study center and a place for digital media. Yet its architecture fails to acknowledge these new forces and inner workings in any way—functionally, philosophically, or aesthetically.

Hunt Library is in need of reimagining. The introduction of digital media profoundly changes the scope and reach of research. These technological modifications alter how students use the building. As a consequence, we might ask: what are the new spatial implications of connecting this building to a virtual network of nearly infinite dimensions?

At present, computers are simply placed atop standard furnishings. But major issues have yet to be addressed: how do the architectural qualities of digital media types affect the spatial continuity of the building? What role could spaces for technology play in helping to define new spatial sequences of use? How could such interventions represent a language related to technology—a language formed from a completely different means of accessing information, different from the traditional book-based system of libraries? How could they address issues that are common to the traditional library—such as light, materials, structure, the relationship of information to the human body—but in ways that reflect the presence of technology itself?

Approach

As the first step in a longer project, you will develop a solution for a hybrid prototype over the next two weeks. This prototype should combine the elements of a computer terminal and study carrel. It must be located along Hunt Library's exterior surface. You will be designing a prototype for furniture and/or chambers and/or machines to be an interface between information (as accessed through books and digital media) and the user of that information (students). You should explore ideas about the static nature of a site-specific project and the dynamic nature of the technology. Keep in mind the theme of the studio, and imagine ways in which you can compose experiences. You are not limited in how you may intervene in the library; existing shelving, windows, walls, structure, and floors may be altered if so desired. You may also project outward from the building (within reason) or recess inside if so desired.

Expectations

Your prototype interface is required to contain the following elements:

- One site of digital access, seated or standing;
- One site for reading and studying books while seated.

Your interface must be located at the exterior surface of the building. It should be visible from the façade and you must consider the impact your intervention will have as part of the building's image. In doing so, you should consider its capacity to change the building—the experience of users who occupy the space and those who witness it from the other areas of the building or campus. Think of yourself as a composer, an “inventor” of architectural space and experience. To follow are several themes, some of which you may wish to consider in your work:

- Spatial experiences and tactical modifications to the composition of the existing library
- The human form and scale in relation to the computer and books
- Digital media and the virtual dimension of architecture
- Information, the book and the digital realm as repositories for collective knowledge
- Discovery—how your intervention is revealed
- Thresholds into your space, between users and other patrons, between inside and outside
- Social exchange and patterns, private and public space, voyeurism
- Individual compared to collective uses
- Movement patterns, circulation, adaptability, animation
- Views that are open, are veiled, are closed to the exterior and/or interior
- Control of light, shadow, projection
- Material expression, tactile qualities, engaging the senses, joinery of parts
- Occupying the exterior of the building, reimagining an existing building for contemporary needs
- Structure, both physical and conceptual

Tasks

To begin, you may wish to develop your knowledge about the library as a building type and its emerging trends (by doing research in a library!) followed by intensive exploration of your site and the composition of Hunt Library. Approach the building actively by measuring, viewing, photographing, researching, exploring. Then get to work on your ideas. Begin with topics that interest you most and consider ways in which you might compose experiences for the occupants of your spaces. By Wednesday's studio, you should be prepared with a series of ideas and sketch approaches, which must include drawings and/or models documenting your initial thoughts. On Friday you should have refined and narrowed the search for an approach and have a significant amount of work to show your instructor and classmates. Throughout the two weeks, you should explore many media types, including models and drawings. Build a thoughtful process leading towards the final product, which will provide the framework for a second phase project.

In coordination with your instructor, you may choose how to represent your work. The following drawings will be required for the review on **Wednesday, September 10**:

- A plan and/or section of your prototype showing the surrounding context at 1/4- or 1/2-inch scale.
- A rendered partial elevation of the building at 1/4- or 1/2-inch scale showing your prototype in context.
- Diagrams (building on skills from last year) to demonstrate the concepts and composition of your prototype.

In addition to the drawings listed above, you should prepare a combination of three-dimensional images or models that best represent your proposal. You may choose these documents in coordination with your studio instructor. You are encouraged to be creative and think about the most intelligent way to communicate your ideas. Below is a list of suggested representation types. All drawings or models should include context information.

- Constructed or modeled perspectives of your project from important vantage points within the building.
- Cinematic sequence of stills showing an experience and demonstrating qualities of light, material, etc.
- Photographic montages and drawings.
- Sectional perspective.
- Material model with context.
- Detail model at large or full scale

Documentation

Site drawings are available on the course website: www.andrew.cmu.edu/course/48-200