Ethnographic Research and Participatory Design at the University of Maryland Libraries: Pioneering Partnerships Beyond Library Walls

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UNIVERSITY

LIBRARIES

Thank You!
Contributing Authors

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- Trevor Muñoz
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Presentation

- Project Overview

- Library-Led Activities

- Anthropology and Architecture Classes

- Use of Data Collected, Next Steps

- Skills and Partnerships Developed

Project Overview

University of Maryland (UMD)

- 38,000 Students and Faculty
- 4,000 Faculty
- Flagship Campus of University System of MD
- Inside Beltway (College Park)

- Eight UMD Libraries
  - McKeldin is the largest
  - Hornbake houses Special Collections
  - Largest University Library System in DC-Baltimore

McKeldin Library

University of Rochester

Ayers Saint Gross Architectural Firm

University of Maryland

Libraries

School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Anthropology Department

iSchool

The Players

Nancy Foster

Sandra Vicchio

Pat Steele

David Cronrath

Jane Williams

Michael Paolisso

John Bertot

Ethnography

Ethnography's unique contribution to qualitative research is that it deeply examines the context in which activities occur, usually involving a researcher working with participants as they go about their daily lives.

-College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know, ALA 2012

Participatory Design:
Trusting Community Expertise

Every stakeholder is an expert, each in her or his own way:

In unstable times a physical re-programming can no longer depend on traditional, professional experts (architects and librarians), for whom precedent is now unreliable. We looked to our user community's expertise.

-David Cronrath, Dean, UMD School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation

Methodology

Fall 2011
(Inputs)

Spring 2012
(Results)

Library Participatory Design Team

Anthropology Methods Course
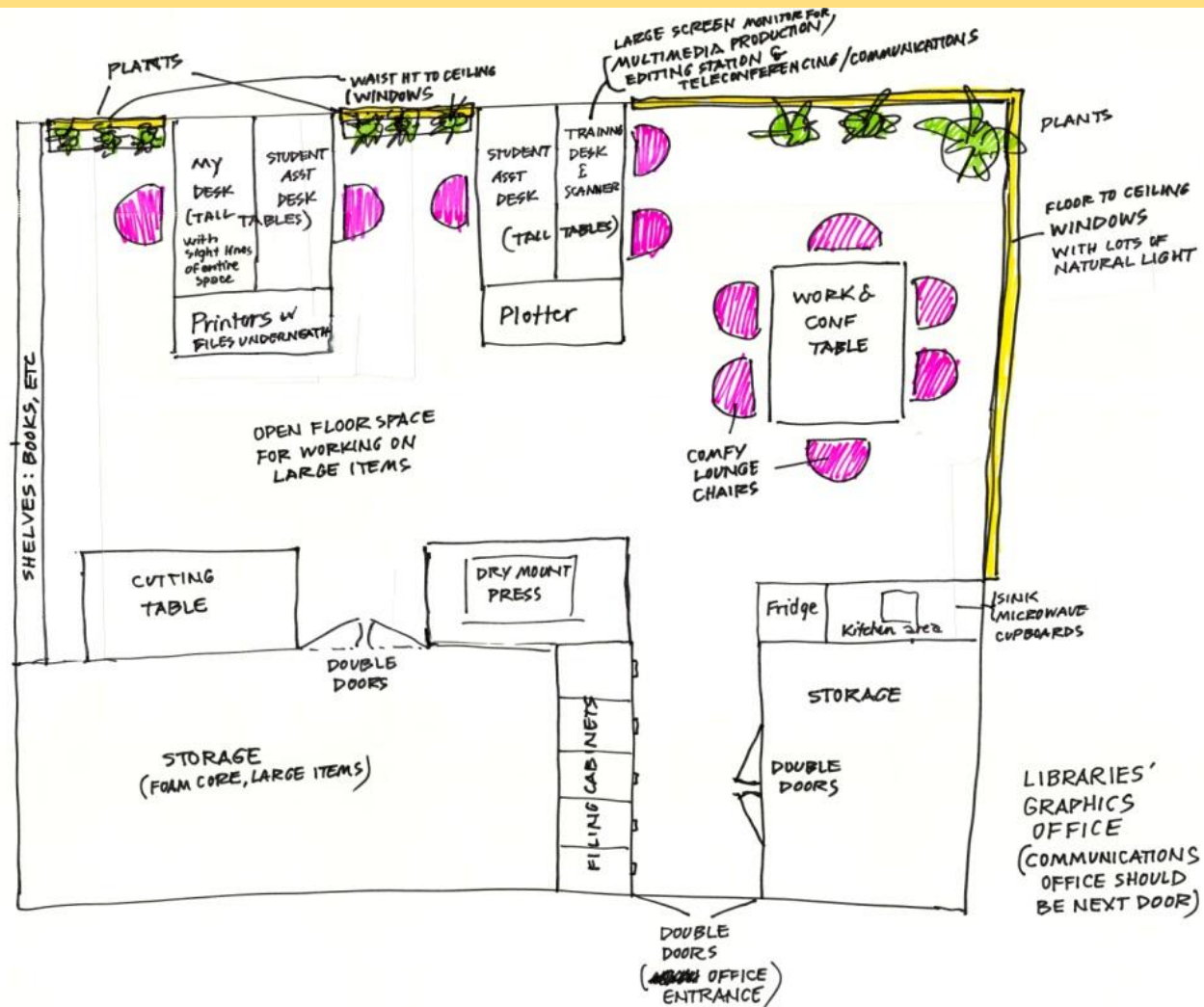
Architecture Students

Architecture Studio Class

Library and Campus Stakeholders

Three Library-Led Participatory Design Activities

1. Design Workshops

Imagine that we could create a new space inside the library that would be exactly as you want it. Imagine that we ask you to design it and then we get a team of people to come in and build it. You walk into the space and it's perfect. It meets your needs and enables you to take full advantage of your academic opportunities.

PLANTS

WAIST HT TO CEILING (WINDOWS

LARGE SCREEN MONITOR FOR MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION/ EDITING STATION & TELECONFERENCING/COMMUNICATIONS

PLANTS

MY DESK (TALL TABLES) with sight lines of entire space

STUDENT ASST DESK

STUDENT ASST DESK

TRAINING DESK & SCANNER

(TALL TABLES)

FLOOR TO CEILING WINDOWS WITH LOTS OF NATURAL LIGHT

Printers w FILES UNDERNEATH

Plotter

WORK & CONF TABLE

SHELVES: BOOKS, ETC.

OPEN FLOOR SPACE FOR WORKING ON LARGE ITEMS

COMFY LOUNGE CHAIRS

CUTTING TABLE

DRY MOUNT PRESS

Fridge

Kitchen area

SINK MICROWAVE CUPBOARDS

DOUBLE DOORS

STORAGE

STORAGE (FOAM CORE, LARGE ITEMS)

FILING CABINETS

DOUBLE DOORS

LIBRARIES' GRAPHICS OFFICE (COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE SHOULD BE NEXT DOOR)

DOUBLE DOORS (MAIN OFFICE ENTRANCE)

Design Workshop Analysis Themes

- Atmosphere

- Openness/visibility

- Privacy

- Dedicated space by function

- Shared areas

- Workflow and support

Design Workshop Analysis
Faculty Work Needs

- Library collections
- Deep, sustained thinking, reading, writing
- Inspiration from "heart" of Library
- Connection to nature, culture
- Solitary AND collaboration/seminars
  - Being in one's own space
  - Conversation, community building
- Equipment
- Occasional break, sustained energy from food/coffee

Design Workshop
Librarian & Library Staff Work Needs

- Light

- Ability to see across space

- Being in one's own space

- Meeting with others

- Technology

- Storage

- Instructing/Training and receiving instruction/training

- Specialized equipment

- Maintaining a sense of self

Design Workshop Undergraduate Work Needs

- Solitude and concentration AND group interaction
- Noisy AND quiet
- Equipment
- Library computers
- Areas to spread out
- People to assist them
- Furniture with some comfort
- Be with others, whether socializing or just being together
- Frequent shifts among courses, disciplines
- Sustained energy from rest, food, coffee, etc.
- Physical comfort, emotional security
- Sense of self, opportunities to experiment/build identity

Design Workshop
Graduate Work Needs

- Ample light

- Solitude, intense concentration

- Containment of noise

- Equipment

- Development of connection to one's discipline

- Focus: attain degree

- Inspiration from "heart of the library"

- Sustained energy from occasional rest

2. On-the-Spot Interviews

1. When did you last study for an exam?
2. When did you last work on a class project or lab?
3. When did you last work on a full-blown research paper?

- For each question, state date, time, for how long and where you were

On-the-Spot Interviews Analysis

- Studying for exams
  - $\leq$ 4 hours
  - > 75% UDGs study afternoons/night
  - 29% in McKeldin; 23% in Bedroom

- Project Work
  - 63% $\leq$ 2 hours
  - 50% in library, mostly McKeldin, mostly TLC; 25% home; 25% in classroom

- Research papers
  - 1-4 hours
  - 60% at home; 37% in library, 80% in McKeldin; half of those in TLC

On-the-Spot Interviews Analysis

- UDGs want quiet, convenient place, computer access
  - Bus stop, parking lot, classroom building
  - Dorm or bedroom

- Seek inspirational/motivational spaces

- Over course of project/studying students may need variety: quiet and noisy space, or private and shared space

- Comfort supports academic work

3. Public Space Direct Observations

- A Reading and/or working on an academic assignment

- L Using own productivity device as part of academic work [also used in combo with A]

- C Using library computer as part of academic work [also used in combo with A]

- B Taking a break alone

- S Socializing with others

- X Not engaged (sleeping, talking through, etc.)

Picture of the area 1/F. There are 6 PCs on each side of the isle before the aisle narrows (up to the clock) - total of 12 to observe.

1st floor
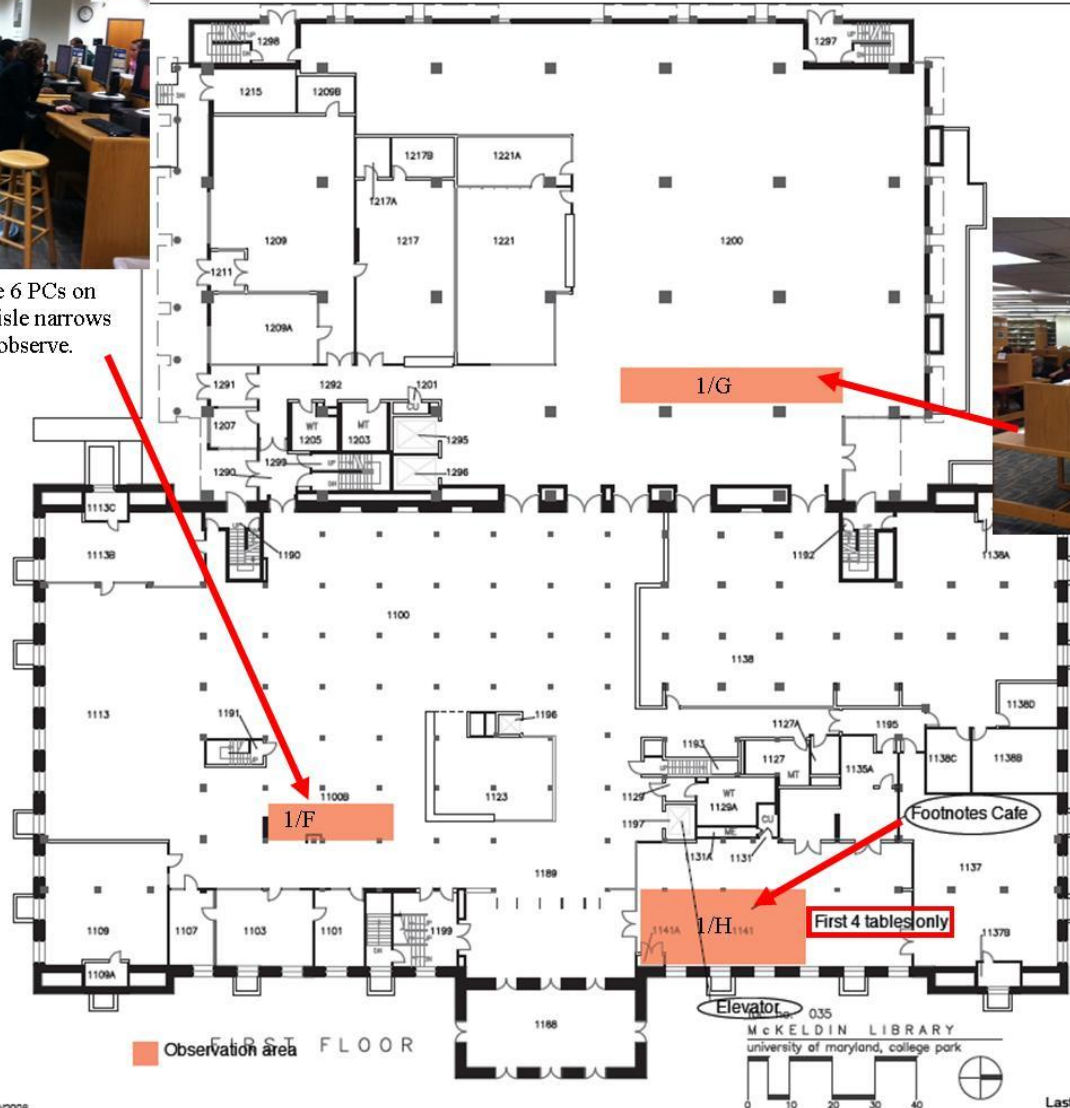
1st row of study carrels in periodicals reading room. Observe both sides.

1/G

1/F

Footnotes Cafe

1/H

First 4 tables only

Elevator 035

Observation area

FIRST FLOOR

McKELDIN LIBRARY
university of maryland, college park

0 10 20 30 40

DRAWING: 035_1.vfm SCALE: 1.0" = 24.0' PLOTTED: 10/29/2008

Public Space Direct Observations

- Few if any GRADS/Faculty appear to use public space

- Students observed taking advantage of both group and individual spaces
  - \> 2/3 working alone
  - Group work increases throughout afternoon, evening

- Students generally not very engaged with library print materials – mostly engaged with personal materials, tech devices

Public Space Direct Observations

- 85% observed apparently engaged in academic work
  - 19% assignment w/o tech device
  - 47% reading/working on assignment w/laptop
  - 18% reading/working on assignment w/library computer

- 15% otherwise engaged
  - 8% taking break
  - 3% socializing/checking Facebook
  - 4% sleeping, walking, otherwise engaged

- % using both library computer and personal tech device not accurately captured

Anthropology and Architecture Classes

Anthropology Findings

Students' needs and expectations while doing schoolwork...

- Students seek **convenience**

- Students need **various types of spaces and amenities**

- Students seek an ability **to personalize** their experience

- Students want **control over their space**

- Students seek **"comfortable" environments**

- Internet access is important, but can be distracting

- There is a difference in the needs of undergraduate vs. graduate students

Architecture:
Existing Building Program
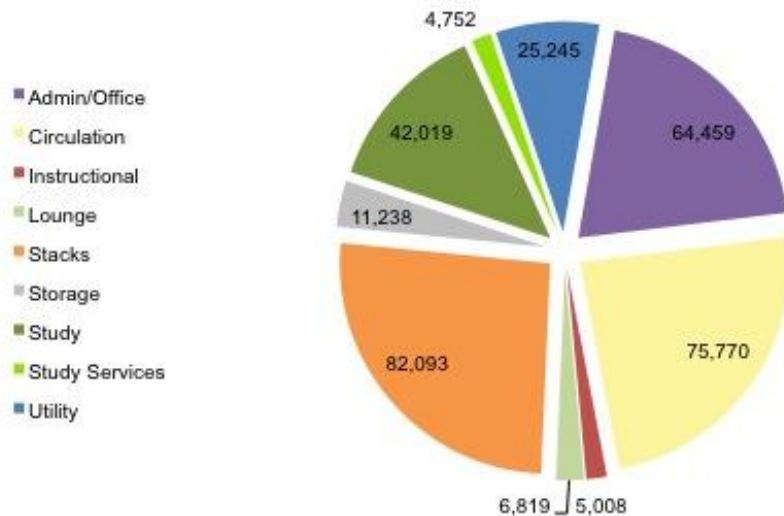
Use of Data Collected & Next Steps

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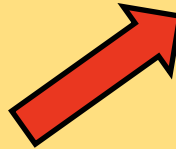
Library and Campus Stakeholders

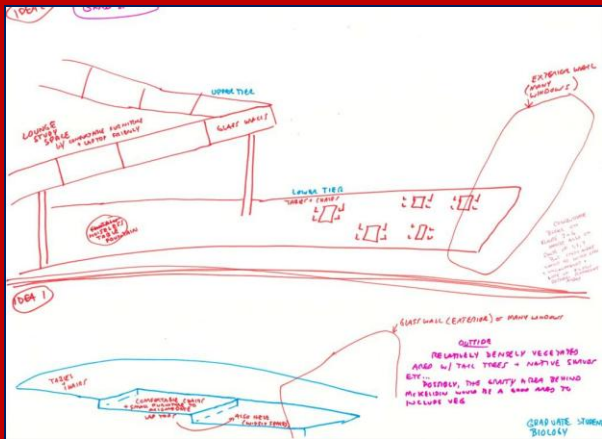# Articulation of the Work with the Architecture Studio
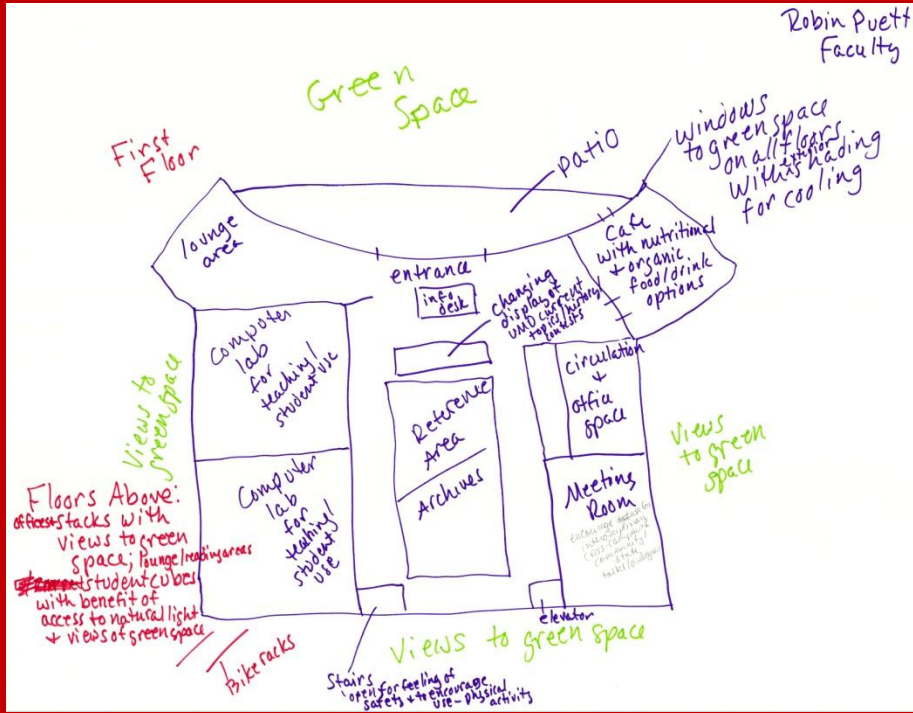
Natural elements
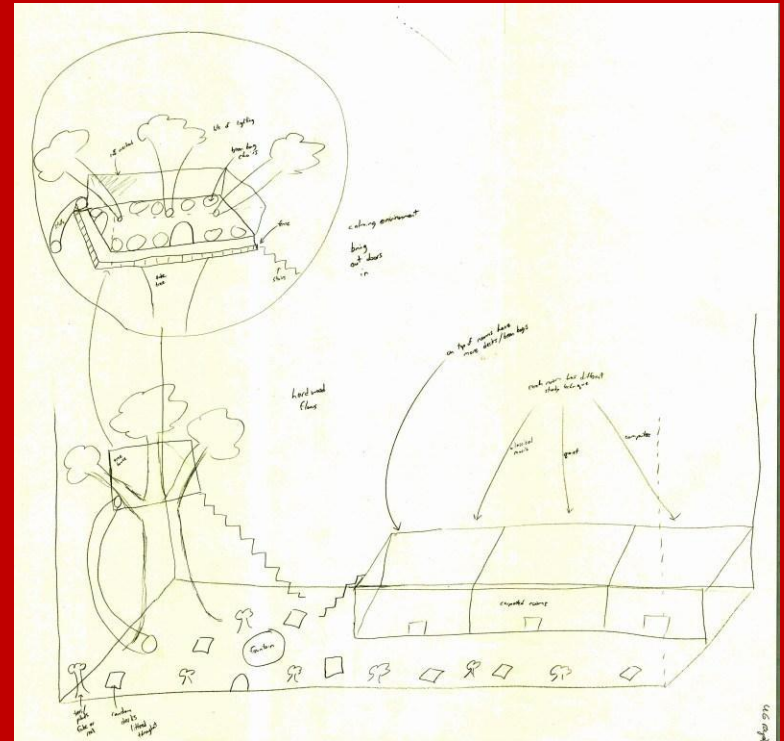
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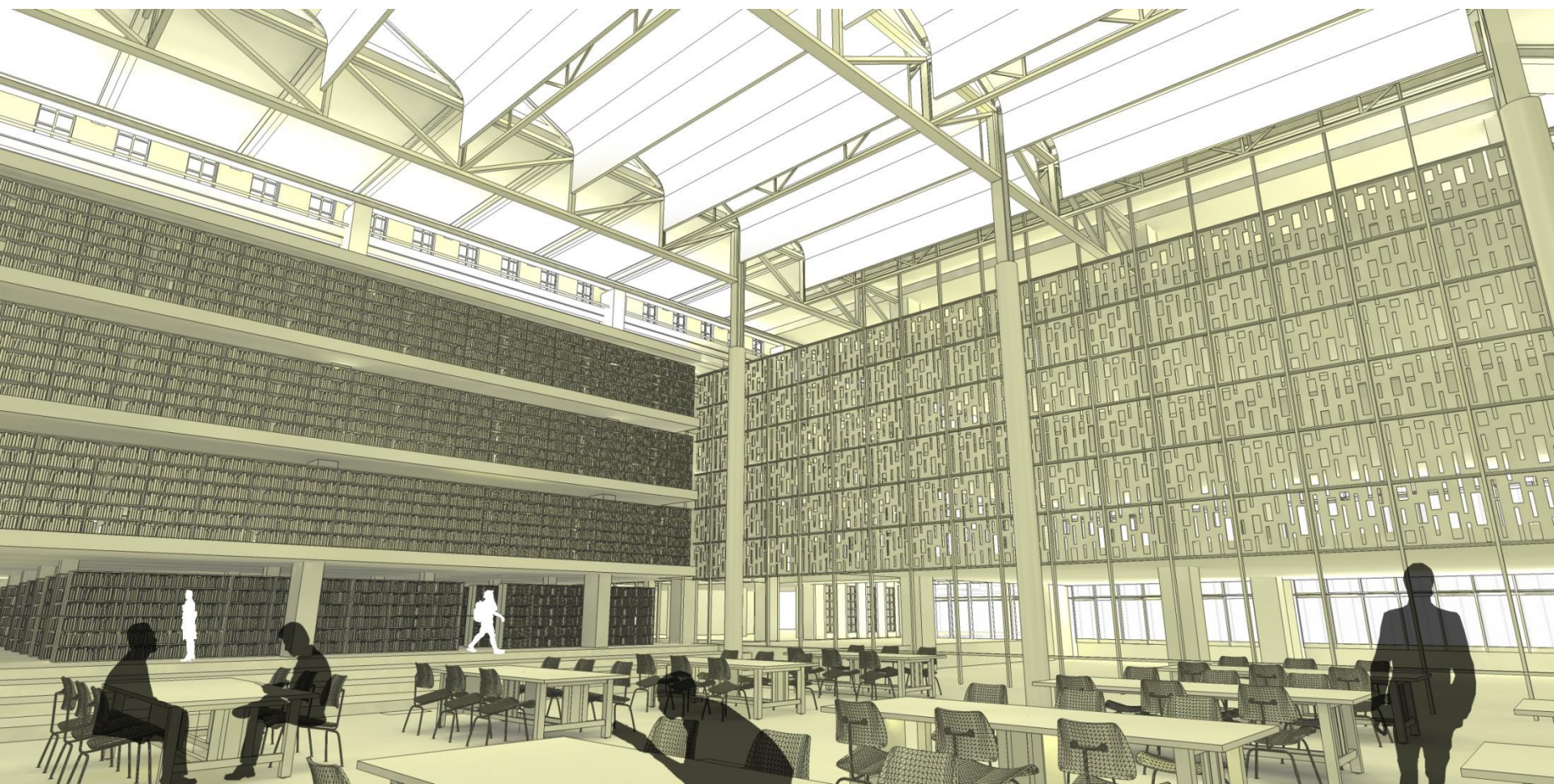

Multistory "slots" or walkways
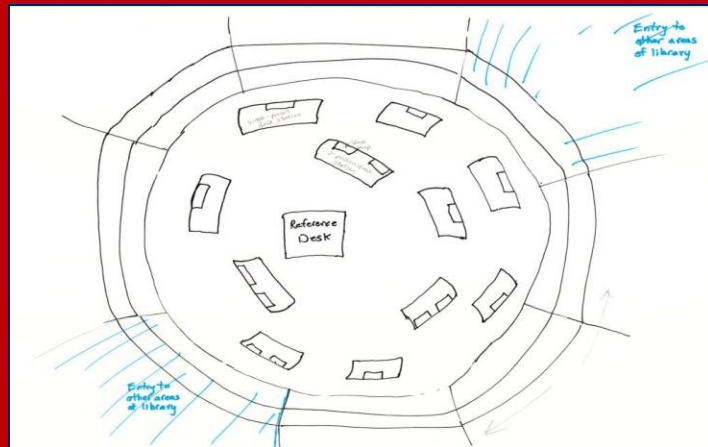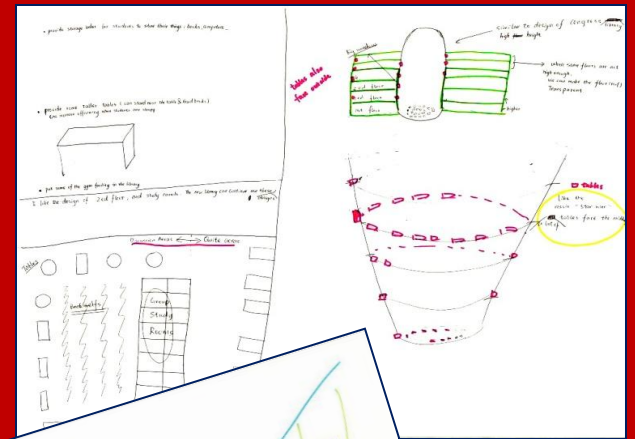
Student Work by Nicholas Tomaszewski, UMCP

Student Work by Nicholas Tomaszewski, UMCP

Skills and Partnerships

Partnerships

Skills

- IRB
- Complex Project Management
- Communication
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Collaboration

Unexpected Outcomes

- Studies for Other Campus Libraries
- Listening for Opportunity
- Creating Opportunity
- Redefine Library Role in Academic Enterprise

STAFF EXIT ONLY
WITH
PROPER AUTHORIZATION

PUBLIC SHOULD EXIT
THROUGH
THE FRONT ENTRANCE
IN McKELDIN EAST

THIS IS NOT

AN EXIT

Questions?

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  TLC and Student Support Services Head

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  Senior Administrative Librarian