LITERACY AS A COMMUNITY ICON

A Critical Evaluation of Literacy as a Community Icon in the Design of a New Public Library for Stellenbosch.

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Everybody at Cala Moller Argitekte
Professor Albrecht Herholdt
My parents
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INTRODUCTION

Libraries, places of study and reference par excellence, have not escaped the architectural revolution of the last few years. From gloomy, poorly lit, cold and neutral places, architects have turned them into welcoming environments conductive to reading and concentration. These new buildings combine general-purpose study rooms with other more specific functions. These buildings incorporate the internet and wireless internet.

The library has become a status symbol for communities, even a symbol of hope. Here the individual can find information.

Figure 1. Shelves of books, the typical library
PROPOSITION

The topic for this thesis is a new main public library for Stellenbosch and the direct urban spaces that support it. The thesis will explore the technical requirements for this type of building as well as the response to a historical urban context.

METHODOLOGY

- Relevant issues were identified and architectural solutions suggested.

- The viability of the project was investigated by means of research and interviews.

- An analysis of the theoretical model of the building functions was undertaken to give an insight into the practical functioning of the building.

- Using this information, criteria for the site selection were established and a suitable site was identified.

- Knowledge gained was used to formulate a brief.

- Using the aforementioned conditions and the forces present on site, seed ideas were conceived to initiate the three-dimensional solution to the problem.
The library should be a place of activity for the whole community, fulfilling the divergent needs of all age groups - from the very young to the elderly.

The library has become a status symbol to towns and communities. Especially in a country like South Africa where a lot of communities were disadvantaged in the past, new libraries give those communities a much needed sense of identity and hope. However because of this, established libraries are neglected. The main public library of Stellenbosch is an example of this.

The current main public library of Stellenbosch is not suitable as a modern day library. It is too small for the community that it serves. It is poorly lit and typical of the time of its construction and design “dark and dusty”. Spatially, the current library cannot accommodate the functions of the modern day
library. There seem to be lack of study and reading spaces and most people go there only to borrow or return books.
Libraries, as repositories for written records, were established in the Middle East between 3000 and 2000 BC where writing itself began.

**Libraries of Antiquity**

The oldest libraries were those of the Sumerians, housing clay tablets inscribed with business and legal records in cuneiform. These libraries were destroyed by earthquakes and fires, but great numbers of the clay tablets survive in museums today. The first Egyptian library was founded by Ramses II in 1250 BC and contained 20,000 papyrus scrolls. The greatest library of the ancient world, however, was that established by the Greeks in Alexandria in the third century BC. This was a centre of learning for the entire Hellenistic world; it consisted of a museum, a library of 700,000 rolls on papyrus or linen, and facilities for copying and translating texts in many languages. By the first century BC, wealthy Romans began to develop private libraries containing Greek and Latin works. With the growing demand for books, copying businesses and bookshops developed, and libraries for the public were established. By the second century AD, such libraries had been established in Rome.
Libraries of the Middle Ages

Many scientific and mathematical texts were copied and preserved by Muslim scholars in the eighth and ninth centuries. Their adoption of Chinese methods of papermaking lowered the cost of books and facilitated their distribution throughout the Muslim Empire. By the tenth century, for example, Córdoba, Spain, had a library containing 400,000 books.

In Western Europe, literature was preserved in monastic libraries such as those of St Gall in Switzerland, Lindisfarne in England, and Fulda in Germany. Each had its scriptorium, a room especially for writing, in which monks produced manuscript copies of classical and religious works. These libraries were enriched with previously unknown classical and scientific works brought back as spoils from the Crusades of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The rise of universities in Salerno and Bologna, Italy, as early as the eleventh century also stimulated the development of library collections for students and scholars. The 14th century, even with such catastrophes as the Hundred Years' War and the Plague, was a notable period for the establishment of European libraries. In France, Charles V began a collection that formed the basis of the French Royal Library; in England Richard of Bury, bishop of Durham, described in Philobiblon his method of book collecting; in Italy the supporters of humanism began to copy and collect neglected classical texts.
From the Renaissance to the 19th century

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century and an expanding economy, books became more readily available and literacy increased. During this period the Vatican Library in Rome was expanded, an important private collection by the French bibliophile Jean Grolier was built, and the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, Italy, was developed to house the Medici collection. Western collections benefited from the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the consequential scattering of Byzantine literary treasures.

Figure 6. The Vatican Library was designed by Italian architect Domenico Fontana between 1587 and 1590. An impressive example of Renaissance architecture, the library has one of the finest collections of books and manuscripts in the world.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, national libraries began to be established throughout Europe. The library at the University of Oxford was firmly established by the English scholar and diplomat Sir Thomas Bodley, who arranged for copies of all books printed in England to be deposited there. Learned societies, such as the Royal Society of London, founded in 1660, set up specialized collections for research.
The first academic library in the United States was founded in 1638 by the English clergyman John Harvard with a bequest of 300 books to the college in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which later became Harvard University. A new form of library was also developed, the lending library of popular literature, operated for profit by booksellers and patronised by a large clientele.
Library collections are varied, as are their purposes and clientele. Most developed nations have libraries of several types. Generally, all libraries of the same type within a country are linked through professional associations and lending agreements. Libraries of different types are connected through a number of interlibrary systems, through loan arrangements, and through other cooperative programmes. All the tertiary institutions in South Africa are linked by an inter-library association.

National libraries

National libraries, such as the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and the British Library in London are primarily supported by public tax funds and exist to serve the needs of the government and of a general scholarly public by providing research materials.

Figure 7. The Library of Congress is the national library of the United States, as well as the world’s largest library

In terms of South African legal deposit legislation, each of the national libraries was a legal deposit library, entitled to receive from the publishers a complimentary copy of every book, serial, newspaper, government publication or other printed item published in South Africa. In South Africa legal deposit, in some form or another, dates back to 1842. As a result, extensive collections of material of great scholarly value have been built up in the former national libraries.

During the 1990’s the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology began a review of all legislation under its jurisdiction, including the National Libraries Act, No 56 of 1985. The most important recommendation of the Working Group was that the two national libraries be amalgamated to form a dual-site (Cape Town and Pretoria) national library, to be known as the National Library of South Africa.
Research libraries

Research or reference libraries are often supported by private donations and contributions and mainly serve the needs of scholars. Because such collections contain many rare and valuable materials, use is almost exclusively confined within the library buildings. Such libraries often publish scholarly studies of materials in their collections, sponsor lectures, and arrange exhibitions of their most important holdings.

Academic libraries

College and university libraries, such as the Bodleian Library in Oxford, differ from research libraries in their need to serve readers with various levels of expertise, and in their responsibility to support the teaching and research programmes of their institutions. They usually obtain most of their financial support from the parent institution.

The University of Stellenbosch has a large and extensive library to serve the students. The JS Gericke Library is the central library of the University of Stellenbosch Library Service. The Library Service comprises the central library, five branch libraries and some departmental collections, all of which are dispersed over three campuses.
The JS Gericke Library is housed in a unique underground building and is situated underneath the Jan Marais Square, off Victoria Street, on the Stellenbosch campus.

**Public libraries**

Public libraries attempt to meet a wide variety of readers’ needs. In addition to traditional literature, their collections contain social services information, reference works, phonograph records and CDs, and recreational books and films. Many public libraries sponsor lectures, group discussions, dramatic, musical, or film presentations, and exhibitions. Services to children may include storytelling and even provision of toys and games. Public libraries also provide reading machines and audiotapes for blind people and large-print books for the visually impaired. Material in the libraries can usually be borrowed without charge, although some charge may be made for films or CDs, for example.

The Johannesburg Public library is the largest in South Africa with 1.5 million volumes.
School libraries

Like academic libraries, school libraries support the curricula of their parent institutions. These also provide extra-curricular books to encourage the development of reading skills. Many provide a variety of audio, visual, and electronic media.

Special libraries

Some countries have special libraries which are designed to serve specific professional needs. Most are an integral part of businesses, corporations, organizations, and institutions, the employees or clients of which require the services of these libraries in the course of their work. Members of staff of a special library are usually trained in appropriate subject areas as well as in library science.
Acquisitions

Acquisitions departments of libraries obtain materials from a variety of sources such as publishers, book wholesalers, and second-hand book dealers. British copyright deposit libraries, such as the Bodleian in Oxford and the National Library of Scotland, are entitled to receive a copy of every book published in the British Isles. Gifts are another source, particularly essential to rare book and historical collections. Private individuals often donate or bequeath valuable collections to universities which ensure its preservation as well as make it available for wider use.

Cataloguing

When material arrives at a library, it is sent to the catalogue department, which determines how the work will be described in the catalogue and where it will be located in the collection. The catalogue descriptions are then prepared, and the material is marked with the library's name and an identification number or code. For leading material, labels or card pockets are affixed. An indication is made in the library catalogue that the material is available, and the newly acquired item is placed in its proper location.

Much of the work of technical services is of a clerical nature. Record keeping, ledger notations, unpacking, typing, marking, and shelving can be done by clerks or, in academic libraries, by students. The cataloguing process, however, is a highly skilled operation and is usually performed by professionally trained librarians.
Online public access catalogues are the automated equivalent of the card catalogue, intended to provide efficient access to a library's holdings while reducing much of the manual work of the traditional card catalogue. Online catalogues provide additional searching possibilities for the users. Such systems can communicate with one another about which materials are held in other libraries and use the computer to borrow various materials from many other libraries through interlibrary loan systems. The Stellenbosch area has six public libraries. All these libraries are connected through an interlibrary loan service. This service can be accessed on the internet.

**Binding and preservation**

In addition to acquiring and cataloguing library material, technical services sections are also responsible for the physical preparation and preservation of materials. Since World War II, libraries have become increasingly aware of the problem of deterioration of paper and books. Libraries must decide which materials require special handling and treatment to preserve them as well as possible. They must then select bindings, wrapping materials, methods of storage, and heating and lighting systems that will contribute to the preservation of these materials. Where important materials are extremely fragile, the library may photograph the contents and thus preserve them on microfilm, microfiche, or in electronic formats.

**Reference services**

Reference work for a librarian is the process of helping users find information; it is one of the professional public services, demanding skill in communication, familiarity with information sources, and a wide
general knowledge. In recent years, reference librarians have tried to anticipate users' questions and to respond to recurring queries by preparing guides, flyers, signs and audio-visual presentations to aid library users. In academic institutions, reference librarians offer courses in bibliographic instruction, library use and research methodology.

As the computer has changed the forms of the library catalogues, reference librarians have found themselves increasingly involved in helping users with these tools. During most of the 20th century, library catalogues consisted of drawers filled with printed or typed cards. Catalogues are now on microfilm, on microfiche, in book form, and available on central network servers.

A whole new field of reference librarianship has developed rapidly in the last decade in the form of database searching, with librarians helping users by searching the commercially and publicly developed databases of bibliographic information about materials in a great variety of fields. Originally devoted largely to the sciences, such automated databases now embrace a comprehensive array of subject fields.

**Circulation**

Computers have also increased the reliability of lending records. The traditional card has given way to encoded labels on the book and on the reader's identification card that are read and recorded by optical scanners. All the libraries in the Stellenbosch area are connected through an interlibrary internet service. Users can reserve and renew books on this service from anywhere. Users are also notified by email of books and events at the library.
Library buildings have changed over the centuries in response to five major influences:

- The form in which information is recorded
- The nature of the library's use and readership
- Technological developments in both architecture and librarianship
- The availability of funds
- The recognition of traditional architecture as part of the cultural heritage.

The Oldest structures

Roman libraries that were open to a wider public than the ones in Alexandria and at Pergamum in Asia Minor, usually contained a single large reading room, ornately decorated and lined with shelves for scrolls and codices (bound volumes of manuscripts, the progenitors of books).

In the Middle Ages, European libraries were usually housed in monasteries, universities, or, in a few instances, royal households. Books were commonly kept in cupboards or on shelves and were read at counters, in study cubicles, or in alcoves near windows.
Since manuscripts were rare and costly to produce, they were often chained to walls or desks. With the spread of printing and literacy from 1400 onwards, libraries expanded their reading areas and developed storage systems. Large halls, richly decorated, housed both readers and books or manuscripts.

In some libraries, bookshelves or cabinets were arranged in tiers around this central room and were reached by ladder or balcony. Readers sat in stalls and at desks in the grand halls.
19th Century developments

Drastic changes in library building took place in the 19th century. With the emergence of a large literate public and an enormously expanding stock of books and newspapers, libraries had to extend their storage capacities.

Free-standing bookcases furnished with metal shelves became common. Until the early 20th century, readers in larger libraries were accommodated in decorated, fairly large, central reading rooms furnished with rows of long tables and simple wooden chairs. In the larger libraries, smaller rooms housed specialized collections.

Contemporary library design

Today, library buildings are constructed so that they can be easily expanded or modified to accommodate changes in collections, formats, and user needs, including users with disabilities.
The rapid expansion of information technology since World War II has forced libraries to consider new methods of storage such as compact movable shelving, the microfilming of bulky or deteriorating materials, and the relegation of less-used materials to storage. The interior of modern libraries is determined largely by practical considerations. Lighting is bright, furnishings are sturdy, and structural elements are designed to conserve energy. The library has become an iconic building type, where architects can push their creativity and the limits of construction technology. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is an example of this. The library and museum complex, funded by the Egyptian government was completed in 2002 to commemorate the ancient library of Alexandria.

Figure 16. The new the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt
**Building in the historical context of Stellenbosch**

Stellenbosch has a very rich and diverse collection of the architectural styles of South Africa. From the oldest restored house in the country to Post Modern contemporary buildings, all of this within walking distance of one another. New buildings in the historical centre of town have to be approved by the Heritage Committee before submission to the Municipality. This issue explores how the building would fit into its context and respond to the historic buildings and streetscape surrounding the site.

**The building as a pavilion in a park**

The nature of the chosen site is such that the building becomes a pavilion in a park and interaction with the park area is important in this sense.
The building as a community icon

The modern day library has become a community icon. These buildings are seen as positive assets to cities and towns. This icon could be as unsubtle as the Guggenheim museum in Bilboa, Spain, which may be criticised as making too much of a statement, although it has become the pride of that city. It could be more subtle like the Library of Mount Angel, Benedictine Collage by Alvar Aalto. This issue explores what the community icon in this context needs to be.

Figure 19. The Guggenheim museum by Frank Gehry
Library

Entrance
Circulation desk
Reference desk
Adult section
  - Books
  - Reading area
  - Study rooms
  - Multi-purpose rooms
Computer centre
Youth section
  - Books
  - Reading area
  - Study rooms
  - Storytelling
Multi-purpose rooms
Hands-on science centre
Computer centre
Reserve (special collections)
Conference room
Lecture rooms
Gallery / Exhibition area / Multimedia pavilion
Coffee shop
Bookshop
Public toilets
Back of house

Offices
- Library director
- Business office
- Adult services
- Youth services
- Technical services
- Computer administrator

Staffroom
Staff kitchen
Staff toilets

Archives
Deliveries

Storage
Workshop (maintenance)

Technical services
Cleaners

Plant room
Pros and cons of the current library site

The current site of the Stellenbosch public library of Stellenbosch may have the potential to expand. But due to the nature of the built-up areas around it, practical and adequate parking will become a bigger problem than it already is. It is located more centrally than the chosen site and faces a street (Plein Street). Open public spaces are limited around the building. There is no service area for deliveries.

The building forms part of the Municipal office complex and, with the current expansion of the town’s surrounding suburbs will be better suited as additional offices.
Site selection criteria

The site for the new library has to meet some criteria. The site has to be within walking distance from educational institutions as well as the shopping hubs in town. Stellenbosch has six high schools and seven primary schools, all of these supported by the university.

The area has to be large enough to accommodate the building programme. To prevent the building from adding to the current urban sprawl, the site has to contribute to densifying the urban fabric. Adequate parking or a link to adequate parking is also important as well as a vehicular.
The chosen site.

1. The chosen site
2. Alexander Street. Link to Adam Tas and the N1
3. Dorp Street. Links to Adam Tas and the airport
4. The Braak
5. Piet Retief Street. Link to two of the primary schools and three of the high schools of town.
6. Bird Street. This street goes through town to the N1 and Cape Town.
7. The site of the current town library.
8. Eikestad Mall. The big shopping hub in the town centre.
The urban context and edges

The site is situated in a municipal park. It is not utilized as an urban park area. The park is on the edge of the historical core of Stellenbosch and borders on Dorp Street. It used to be the back garden of some farm houses.

Dorp Street is one of the oldest roads in South Africa. It was the first main wagon route that linked Cape Town with Stellenbosch. Today it is the shortest route from Stellenbosch to the Cape Town International Airport. It contains the longest row of uninterrupted national monuments in the country. It is also the only street in South Africa to be declared a national monument. The street is lined with oak trees and historical buildings.

To the north of the site is the old Rhenish hostel, now the PJ Olivier Art Centre. This building was originally an H-plan gabled house from 1787.
In 1862 it was converted into a double storey flat roof hostel for the daughters of the Rhenish missionaries. It was later extended on both sides to accommodate more children. Today it serves as an art centre for all the schools in town, as well as supporting the university. It also houses art exhibitions. The edge between the chosen site and the Rhenish hostel is an old wall and water furrow. There are no physical links from this part of the site. Currently the parking area of the art centre’s staff is behind the wall.

On the eastern edge of the park is a parking lot that serves the Checkers shopping centre. The centre contains twenty stores with the anchor store being Checkers. A wall and palisade fence separate the parking area from the park. There is a gate in this wall.
The western edge consists of two two-storeyed residential flats. The south block is accessed from Dorp Street and the northern block from Herte Street.

These flats are separated from the park by a palisade fence, but still live onto the park. The northern block has a private gate into the park.

Numbers 112 to 126 of Dorp Street are between the park and Dorp Street on the southern edge. These buildings have all been declared national monuments. Numbers 108 to 116 Dorp Street once formed part of the farm De Nieuwe Molen. In 1796 it was divided into plots and sold. All of these buildings have been restored and are in use today. Most have been converted to double storeys. All contain elements of their time of construction.
1. 116 Dorp Street, Voorgelegen
2. 120 – 122 Dorp Street
3. 126 Dorp Street, Jubilee House, now a textile museum
4. The Rhenish Missionary Church
5. P.J. Olivier Art Centre
6. The old Rhenish Parsonage
7. Dorp Street
**Links, movement and scale**

Currently the park can be accessed freely from the east side (the parking lot) and the north-west corner via the Old Rhenish Parsonage. The access from Dorp Street is closed with a locked gate. The residential block of flats on the western edge has a private gate opening into the park. This links the residents to the shopping centre. Number 116 and 118 Dorp Street also have private gates linking to the park, since the park used to be a garden for these buildings.

The buildings surrounding the site are no higher than two storeys. Some of the trees are big and tall. The smaller trees and shrubs give the space a human scale. The Dorp street link is the most important and will be redeveloped in the design to strengthen the link visually and physically.
1. The link to Dorp Street
2. The link to the parking area
3. The link to the Old Rhenish Parsonage
4. Vehicular link into the parking area
5. Pedestrian link through the Checkers shopping centre
6. Private gate between Voorgelegen and the park
7. Dorp Street
8. Two storeyed residential flats
9. Two and three storeyed building - residential and business
Stellenbosch has possibly the finest collection of architectural styles used in South Africa. These styles range from Cape Dutch, Victorian, Cape Georgian, Cape Baroque, Neo Classical, Neo Gothic, Dutch Neo Renaissance, Classical Revival, Neo Cape Dutch, Greek Revival, Neo Cape, Modern and Post Modern.

Apart from restoring old and historical buildings, the Architectural Heritage Committee not only strives to preserve the old, but to boost the collection by allowing new buildings to be built according to current design and construction philosophies in architecture. This attitude towards architecture presents designers with relative freedom in the town. The most important restriction on buildings around the centre of town is a three
plus one storey height restriction. These height restrictions were brought about to prevent uncontrollable fires (1710, 1803, 1875).

To prevent a “Paris” skyline, the fourth storey has to be set back. This, together with the oak trees, creates a unique broken skyline. This broken skyline creates a unique human scale to the town as well. Due to the nature of the street planning of the town, walking and cycling is preferred to vehicular transport.

Many of the buildings in the town are set around courtyards and squares. Most of the university hostels have private courtyards. This was predominantly done for safety and the need for outside private space.

There are numerous urban squares and courtyard buildings in town.

These are mostly for public non-vehicular movement or parking and are also the first threshold to the buildings surrounding the square. The squares are generally very

Figure 37. Saxenhof was named after Peter Andreas Sachse. The land was granted to him in 1704. The present house dates from 1890.
green (trees and lawns) with paving and amenities such as benches, lights, public telephones, bicycle racks and trash receptacles. These areas are well utilised by the public.

Figure 38. The US library is underground. Above it is a well-used square. Students use the grass areas as resting places, and the paved areas are the circulation routes. The urban amenities blend effectively into the square. The square on the right is a parking area. In Stellenbosch these parking pockets are preferred to off street parking. Note that most buildings in this area are designed around an internal courtyard.
From the earliest days tree planting in Stellenbosch was important. Governor Simon van der Stel (founder of Stellenbosch) started this by importing the common oak (Quercus robur) to supply the Cape Colony of timber. These trees were chosen because they grow fast. The first oak trees became unsuitable as they grew too fast and attracted diseases and rot. Later the water oak (Q. nigra) and the pin oak (Q. palustris) replaced the common oak. Hence the name Eikestad (“Oak town”), which refers to Stellenbosch.

Through the years different tree species have been imported and planted in the town. Some parts are lined with jacaranda trees, which were probably planted at the same time as those in Pretoria. Many plantations were planted to supply the Cape Colony with timber.
These plantations are Pine and Eucalyptus trees and most of them are now a part of nature reserves and well managed. Today indigenous trees replace dying exotics. These being yellowwood, white stinkwood, wild olive and wild plum. Residents are encouraged to plant trees.

Stellenbosch Municipality has a tree planting policy. In new developments the streets are lined with trees even before building commences. These are mostly indigenous trees, but depending on the town-planning scheme of the area could well be the water and pin oak. Trees are well maintained and replaced as necessary. This rich variety of trees gives Stellenbosch a unique green skyline.
PRECEDENT STUDIES

Library of Mount Angel, Benedictine Collage
Alvar Aalto

"Aalto works with light, with the route, with massing and modelling of the building form. These are classic architectural references. His range is formidable in that he appears able to handle an extraordinarily wide spectrum of architectural problems. He handles the urban and the rural, the large, medium and small building. He is able to absorb virtually every building material, be concrete and stucco, glass, copper, marble, brick, ceramics or timber."
David Dunster, ed. Architectural Monographs 4: Alvar Aalto
The library is located at the hilltop Mount Angel Benedictine Monastery in Oregon, USA. The simple single storey inner facade in pale brick continues the courtyard edge, blending with the traditional buildings on either side of it. Only after entering this facade and passing the circulation area is the visitor confronted with the dramatic naturally lit triple volume space.

The planning arrangement has one control point that serves all other spaces. In this case the user enters a lobby, and from that lobby proceeds past the circulation desk into the main reading rooms, or to the offices and support spaces. This way the support spaces also interact with the main library spaces.
The use of direct and indirect natural light falling through triple volumes creates welcoming interior conditions. Aalto created naturally lit reading spaces on the border of the building.

Figure 44. Floor plan clearly showing the control point in relation to the rest of the scheme

Figure 45. Section and elevation drawings
Figure 46. Eastern view of the main reading room

Figure 47. Northern view of the main reading room
This new library is the second major civic building in Ílhavo by the partnership of José and Nuno Mateus, who founded the ARX Portugal collective in 1990. The library project involves an existing element, that of the remains of the Manor Visconde de Almeida, an aristocratic mansion dating from the seventeenth century. The site lies on the edge of Ílhavo, in surroundings typical of incoherent, dislocated peripheries everywhere. Both the nature of the site and the presence of an original structure gave rise to a more nuanced strategy of restatement and consolidation, as opposed to simply introducing a gestural, object building.

Figure 48. The library’s crisp, white rendered volumes are contemporary abstractions of Iberian vernacular. The entrance is well defined.
When the Mateus brothers won a competition for the project in 2001, not much remained of the mansion house. Yet since it constituted a rare example of enduring heritage in a coastal town more noted for its industry than history, the preservation and integration of what had survived became the starting point for the project.

From the original house, only the main facade running along the south-west edge of the site and the small family chapel remained. Both were in ruins, but are now immaculately restored, forming anchoring points for ARX’s additions and interventions.

Performed with a taste for the reductive that clearly owes a debt to Siza, the new parts lock into the old, their white rendered volumes an abstract, contemporary play on Iberian vernacular. The main entrance on the north-east side is marked by a triangular canopy which shelters a shimmering wall of full-height glazing, a rare interlude of lightness and permeability in a predominantly hermetic composition. The library forms the social and organisational pivot of the plan, docking into the historic parts, now functioning as offices and technical spaces.
The main reading room is suspended over the entrance foyer and capped by a modern version of a saw tooth roof. On the south side, the foyer and reading room enclose a secret courtyard garden, a modern version of the cooling, verdant Iberian patio.

A rigorous palette of white walls and creamy stone floors unifies the interior, with the odd calculated touch such as the designer light fitting that hovers sharply over the entrance hall like a clutch of suspended pick-up-sticks.

Though stripped of its decorative elements over time, the little chapel has been restored to its original function, adding another dimension to the civic nature of the complex; however in a noticeably Catholic country, its presence does not seem out of place. Throughout the project there is a rich reciprocity between old and new with the new parts unmistakably of their time and characterised by a formal boldness.
This is tempered by a subtle sensuality - the handling of materials, the play of light - and an enlightened awareness of place, history and how good architecture can resonate with and reinvigorate the wider community.
The university in Orleans occupies a peripheral campus. It is removed from the city centre and linked by a tram line that runs on a north-south axis across the town. The site for the library is next to the tram line, in front of one of the four stations that serves the campus.

The building has a strong, almost graphic presence in the landscape. The rigid orthogonality of its form, a long, three-storey box terminated by a full-height colonnade, suggests a scientific triumph of the rational over the romantic, but it has a more idealistic side in its requisition of materials, handling of light and approach to energy use and environmental control.
The tall concrete colonnade, like a scaled down version of Norman Foster’s Carré d’Art museum in Nîmes, is a welcoming gesture that celebrates and civilises arrival, while emphasising a route to the lake. A small glass box, which also acts as an informal exhibition space, forms an intermediate zone between the noise of the outside world and the silent inner sanctum of the reading room. Areas of clear glazing are punched at random into the translucent polycarbonate skin frame and define views of the landscape from inside at study table height.

In operational terms, the modern university library is concerned with the efficient storage and retrieval of information, in both paper and digital formats. Yet the process of information withdrawal, consultation and return continues to underpin and structure the library as a building type. Lipksy + Rollet articulate this process through a central ‘book box’, a dense core of books surrounded by more fluid study zones around the periphery. The main reading room is a dramatic triple-height space, overlooked by perimeter study zones on the floor above, so users can enjoy privacy, yet be aware of wider goings on.
The monumental book box is clad in Fincof panels (more commonly employed for concrete formwork), a type of Finnish birch plywood stained with dark phenolic resin. The panels evoke the warm leather of traditional bookbinding and study armchairs.

The budget necessitated an imaginatively frugal approach to materials, as manifested by the double skin of polycarbonate used to clad the building which combines good insulation levels with light diffusing qualities. The reading room seems wrapped in a rice paper screen, with readers silhouetted against its translucent walls. South and east facades have vertical, manually operable white polycarbonate louvers to provide additional glare control. Depending on the sun angle and building users, the vertical louvers create a changing pattern on the facades.

Though France is not as advanced as Germany in legislating for efficient energy use, the need to keep capital and running costs down proved an important incentive, giving rise to an integrated system of low key, passive environmental control techniques that minimise mechanical systems. The building is naturally ventilated, with fresh air
warming and rising up through the main reading room through the stack effect and expelled through vents in the roof. In winter, the main gas-fired heating system of water pipes in the ground floor slab is supplemented by a network of local radiators for smaller cellular spaces. All this is achieved in a subtle yet thoughtful way that blends with the architectural concepts. Without succumbing entirely to the lure of scientific rationalism, Lipsky + Rollet manages to make complex things look elegantly simple and obvious.
**Design concepts**

A planning notion found in most of the libraries studied for this design, is that of a single main space that accommodates and connects the functions of the library.

The user has to cross several thresholds before entering the main library space. The first threshold from Dorp Street is turning onto the site by means of the new vehicular route. The road is already quieter than Dorp Street and has a different surface treatment.

From here the user can park in the parking areas off the link and walk to the extended atrium roof or drop someone off. The floor level is one step higher here and there is a roof element over it. The user is sheltered from the major elements such as rain, wind and sun. This space connects all the major public functions of the scheme. From here users can go to the conference facilities, the coffee shop or into the library. The coffee shop forms part of the atrium space and serves to create a livelier atmosphere.

The entrance to the library component is from the atrium space. This entrance is at a smaller scale than the atrium space. In this space most
of the exterior noises are blocked out and the user is focused on the books and reading.

The different components of the building are simple boxes treated differently according to the function of each. These boxes are connected to one another by elements that best suite their functions. The atrium space between the main library component and the conference facilities is roofed with a light structure. The circulation space that connects the main library box to the northern box is a glazed box.
Urban components

The major link from the site is the one to Dorp Street. This link is cleaned up and reinforced with a vehicular link into the site. This link is reinforced with vertical elements which are the trees. This link serves as a drop off zone near the entrance of the library as well as additional parking and access to the delivery area. The entrance road lines up with the main atrium space. This visual link leads users towards the library entrance. This new vehicular link connects up with the current parking lot between the shopping centre and the park.

On the north east corner of the site is an access gate. The user who enters from this gate will be drawn around the main library component to the entrance in the atrium. The extended roof of the atrium is there to give the user a clue of the entrance to the atrium. The route is not as direct and axial as the one from Dorp Street. The user is taken on a journey through gardens and around the building. Along this route the user will get a glimpse of the main reading area and through it the inside of the library. The route then lines up with the axis of the atrium and connection to Dorp Street.
Figure 62. The link to Dorp Street that lines up with the atrium space. The vehicular link connects to the parking lot. Extra parking is provided in pockets on the site.
Spatial relationships

The main library functions on three levels i.e. adult section, children section and study and research section. The three levels are visually connected by a central triple volume under a skylight. Vertical and horizontal circulation takes place in a triple volume space between the main and servant areas.

The main entrance to the library function is on the ground floor. This floor houses the adult library to which the main reading space is connected on the north side. On the eastern side the relevant technical services are attached to the main library.

The first floor houses all the functions for children and education. These being books and a hands-on science centre. The children’s library contains the books and a storytelling area as well as the hands-on science centre. The latter is above the main reading space on the northern side of the building. The relevant technical services also function on this level.

Lecture rooms and study areas are located on the second floor. This is linked to the computer lab on the north side. The library staff offices are also on this level, but only connected to the technical services on the lower levels.
Figure 63. Ground floor plan
Figure 64. First floor plan
Figure 65. Second floor plan
The modern day library building has to be more than just a library. It has to be a community amenity. It becomes a centre for information, education and relaxation. The current main public library of Stellenbosch does not fulfil these needs. By adding functions such as conference facilities, a hands-on science centre, computer lab, a study centre, a large comfortable reading area, bookshop and coffee shop, all these needs are catered for. Adequate, safe on site parking makes this community amenity easily accessible and therefore would be utilised freely.

The library becomes a community status symbol that can serve to uplift the community.
Literacy as a community icon

West Elevation 1:200
East Elevation 1:200
North Elevation 1:200
South Elevation 1:200
Section AA 1:50

Literacy as a community icon


