

THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY: RE-INTERPRETATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAM

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE  
IN  
ARCHITECTURE

FEBRUARY 2013



Approval of the thesis:

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## ABSTRACT

### RE-INTERPRETATION OF LIBRARY PROGRAM: THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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February 2013, 77 pages

The alteration of both information type and information access has led a change in the role and function of library, which is the dedicated space for information storage. Therefore, the library should be re-considered in this respect. Throughout this study, it is aimed to examine and discuss this alteration and the re-invention of library in terms of architectural program and spatial organization. Correspondingly, to understand the change in library, the thesis dwells on the case of the Seattle Public Library (SPL), designed by OMA/LMN Partnership (2004) particularly by focusing on the themes of publicity and technology.

With these objectives, an analysis is conducted both on the presentation proposal of the Seattle Public Library, namely, *Concept Book*, and on the built edifice. Inferring from the analyses, it can be argued that the main functions of the library as the places of preservation and places of accessing has altered dramatically due to the changes occurred in technology. Respectively, the public duty of the library is emphasized to compensate the results of these technological alterations.

This thesis claims that library of today is not only a storage and an accessing space for information but also a social public space carrying multiple identities. Simultaneous existence of these identities creates a tension in the space of library. This tension presents itself in the form of “third space,” which embraces dualities and conflicting conditions, yet goes beyond as to accommodate indeterminate programmatic changes. The library as a third space is shaped with the issues of both *domestication* and *commodification* in a way to provide a more comfortable and homely environment to its users to be appropriated and to survive in the consumer culture.

**Keywords:** Seattle Public Library, Library Program, Rem Koolhaas, Publicity, Public Space, OMA/LMN, Contemporary Libraries

## ÖZ

### KÜTÜPHANE PROGRAMININ YENİDEN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ: SEATTLE HALK KÜTÜPHANESİ

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Şubat 2013, 77 sayfa

Bilginin depolanma formatı ve bilgiye erişim araçlarında oluşan değişimler; kütüphanelerin rolü ve fonksiyonunda değişime yol açmıştır. Bu nedenle, kütüphane programı ve mekânı yeniden değerlendirilmelidir. Bu çalışmada hedeflenen kütüphane programının bu yeni yorumunun mimari program ve mekânsal organizasyon açısından incelenmesidir. Kütüphanede oluşan değişimleri anlamak amacıyla, OMA-LMN ortaklığı tarafından tasarlanmış olan Seattle Halk Kütüphanesi (Seattle Public Library, 2004) tezin çalışma konusu olarak belirlenmiştir.

Çalışma bu değişimi anlamak adına, hem Seattle Halk Kütüphanesi Projesinin “*Concept Book*” isimli sunum önerisi üzerinde, hem de binanın kendisi üzerinde bir analiz yapmaktadır. Bu analizlerden yola çıkarak, kütüphane programının ana amaçları olan bilginin depolanması ve bilgiye erişim konularında, teknolojik gelişmelere paralel olarak büyük çapta bir değişim olduğu; bunun yanı sıra bu teknolojik yeniliklerle gelen değişime ayak uydurmak adına kütüphanelerin kamusalılıklarının daha fazla vurgulandığı iddia edilebilir.

Bu çalışma, günümüzde kütüphanenin sadece bilginin depolandığı ve erişildiği bir mekân olmaktan öte, birçok kimliği de içinde barındıran sosyal kamusal mekânlar olduğu savını tartışmaktadır. Bu çoklu kimlik birlikteliği kütüphane mekânında bir gerilime yol açmaktadır. Bu gerilimin “üçüncül mekân” olarak ortaya çıktığı; ikilikleri ve çelişen durumları barındırmanın ötesinde, belirsiz program değişikliklerine de olanak tanıdığı öne sürülebilir. Kütüphane üçüncül mekânının kullanıcıya daha rahat bir ortam sağlayarak kullanımı artırmak ve tüketim kültüründe var olabilmek amaçları doğrultusunda evselleştirme ve metalaştırma ile şekillendiği öne sürülebilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Seattle Halk Kütüphanesi, Kütüphane Programı, Rem Koolhaas, Kamusalılık, Kamusal Mekân, OMA/LMN, Güncel Kütüphaneler

To My Family

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Berin F. GÜR for her guidance, encouragement, and criticism throughout the research. Any thank you would be an understatement.

I would like to thank to the members of the examining committee, , Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lale Özgenel, Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın, Prof. Dr. Mualla Erkılıç, and Assist. Prof. Dr. Başak Uçar for their valuable critics and inspiring comments.

My parents and sisters, who always supported me with their continuous care and sympathy throughout my whole life deserve more than gratefulness. Especially, it would not have been possible to complete this thesis without my father's encouragement. I offer very special thanks to my husband Ramazan Özkan for his love, support, understanding, and generosity. I am indebted to all members of my family forever.

Lastly, I have been supported with a friendly group of colleagues and fellow students. I owe special thanks to Onur Yüncü for his patience and support. I want to thank to Fadime Yılmaz for her contributions. I am grateful to Hacer Kırmızı, Aslı Koca, Esatcan Coşkun, Ali Yücel Özdemir, and Onur Özkoç who have lended their supportive criticism and comments with sympathy and joy.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |                                      |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| SPL..... | Seattle Public Library               |
| OMA..... | Office for Metropolitan Architecture |
| ALA..... | American Library Association         |
| LFA..... | Libraries for All                    |
| EU.....  | European Union                       |



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The medium, or process, of our time -electric technology- is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and re-evaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted.<sup>1</sup>

Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Message*

#### 1.1. Aims and Objectives

There has been a shift in the repository of information from the solid books to digital data because of technological developments. Meanwhile, information transmission has altered dramatically. It can be argued that the alteration of both information type and information access has led a change in the role and function of library. Thus, the main aim of this thesis is to examine and discuss the reinvention of library in terms of program and space by particularly focusing to the case of The Seattle Public Library (SPL), designed by OMA/LMN Partnership, and completed in 2004.<sup>2</sup> This reinvention or transformation is discussed with regard to the themes of “technology” and “publicity”, which are evaluated as the main triggering forces, in other words as the main catalysts transforming the library program and its space.

Therefore, the study on SPL is considered as valid since its approach to library program is innovative in respect to the technology and publicity issues: SPL fulfills today’s technological requirements of storage and conveying information, while it is appropriated as a social public space by users.

#### 1.2. Subject of the Thesis

There are several attempts of OMA to design a library building, which are proposed for different contexts, yet Seattle Public Library is the only realized one. In these proposals, OMA mainly highlights two issues, which are namely, “technology” and “publicity.” They declare that the digital age brought by the technology is a main driving force on library as such:

In an age where information can be accessed anywhere, it is the simultaneity of all media and the professionalism of their presentation and interaction, that will make the Library new. Technology is not a threat, but it enables the realization of ancient ambitions - totality, completeness, dissemination, accessibility.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, according to this statement, technology for OMA is the issue from which “totality, completeness, dissemination, accessibility” can be apprehended. Besides, OMA argues that libraries

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore. *The medium is the message*, New York: Bantam Books, 1967, p.i

<sup>2</sup> SPL was designed by OMA/ Rem Koolhaas in collaboration with the Seattle firm LMN Architects. Joshua Prince Ramus (OMA) was the partner in charge through this project. The collaboration was a compulsion of the Seattle Library Authority. Thus, throughout the thesis particularly in sections related with SPL, when referred as “OMA” this collaboration should also be minded.

<sup>3</sup> *Concept Book*. OMA/LMN Architects “Concept Book”. 15 December 1999, p.8. Accessed on 24.01.2013.  
<[http://www.spl.org/prebuilt/cen\\_conceptbook/page2.htm](http://www.spl.org/prebuilt/cen_conceptbook/page2.htm)>

encircle a complex discourse in public architecture. For them, the library should be respected at most for its public duty.

At the same time, the last decade has shown an accelerated erosion of the Public Domain, replaced by increasingly sophisticated and entertaining forms of the Private. The essence of the Public is that it is free. Now, it is substituted by accumulations of quasi-public substance that, while suggesting welcome, actually make you pay. The Library stands exposed at its most outdated and moralistic at the moment that it has become the last repository of the free and the Public.<sup>4</sup>

In response to the “erosion” of the public domain and the transformation of public into private in almost every public space, the library is the place, which is still “free and the Public”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the creation of library as a public space is the one of the main issues that OMA considers in the design of libraries.

In the selection of the Seattle Public library (SPL) as the main subject of this thesis, there are two considerations. First, approach to the library program in SPL is considered as innovative in respect to the issues of technology and publicity. The second consideration is that, this library is experienced and used as a member for about a year between the dates of September 2010 and September 2011 by the author. Here, a brief and descriptive information about SPL is provided.



Figure 0.1 Seattle Public Library. Source: Photographed by the author, 1/6/2011

SPL is located in the downtown of the city of Seattle (Figure 1.1). Mount Rainer, Interstate 5, which is the main highway connecting the city to other cities in South-North direction over the country, and sea view of Eliot Bay appear as the most significant site features. It is an irregular-shaped glass-covered building located on a corner plot, composed of eleven-storey. There are five main functional sections as below-ground parking, staff work area, meeting rooms, administrative offices, and book stacks, and public areas are placed in between them as children center, living room, the mixing chamber, and the reading room (Figure 1.2).

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.6

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.6



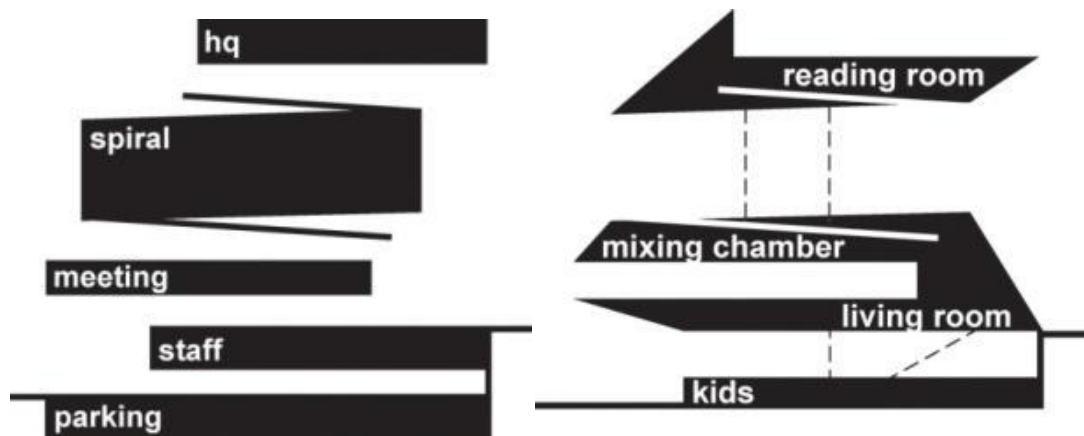


Figure 0.2 Seattle Public Library Conceptual Sections. Source: Michael Kubo, Ramón Prat , Seattle Public Library OMA/LMN, Actar May 2005, p.22, p.26

Thus, including the functional sections and public areas, the building is divided into nine horizontal layers (five main section plus four in-between public spaces), each varying in size to fit its function. These horizontal layers are seen in the “tour map” of SPL, each highlighted with a different color (Figure 1.3). Finally, diamond-patterned glass skin envelopes the whole building, and more defines the public spaces in-between. While the circulation core that is composed of stairs and elevators serves to all layers, escalators are utilized only to connect public areas.

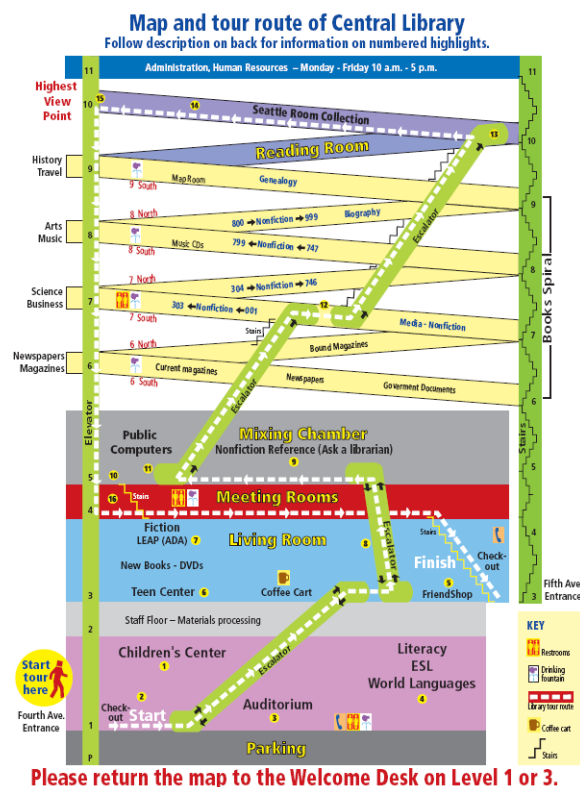


Figure 0.3 Tour Map of Seattle Public Library. Source: <http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-plan-a-visit/central-library-tours>

The library holdings are separated for different targeted users in each functional section. Holdings related with kids are placed in the “children’s center”; fiction, new books, DVDs, teen’s center, coffee cart and library shop are placed in the “living room”; public computers and non-fiction references are placed in “mixing chamber”; and non-fiction materials are placed in “Book Stacks”.

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that SPL replaced the existing library building designed by Leonard Bindon and John L. Wright built in 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the replacement of library was not the first time for this particular site. Bindon and Wright’s library (Figure 1.4) had also replaced an older public library (Figure 1.5) that once located in the same site. The first public library in that site was designed by P.J. Weber. It was opened in 1906 with total of 55,000-square-foot, and designed in Beaux-Arts Style. After almost 50 years of service, the reason for the replacement was the inadequate space for reading activity and inadequate storage for library holdings. The following (or second) Central Library opens in 1960 with 206,000-square-foot area. It was a five-story library including lately introduced services such as a drive-in service window, escalators, or air conditioning.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, it could be argued here that the immense alterations of library program render it impossible to involve these new programs within an existing library. In other words, the stress of this alteration led to the demolition of the edifice and replacement of it with a totally new interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> Judy Anderson, Gail Lee Dubrow, and John Koval. *The Library Book: A Good Book for a Rainy Day*. Seattle: Seattle Arts Commission, 1991, pp.63-65.

<sup>7</sup> SPL Official Website, “History of the Central Library”  
Accessed on : 05.01.2012, <<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-about-the-central-library/cen-history>



Figure 0.4 Seattle Public Library, 1960s, designed by Leonard Bindon and John L. Wright. Source : SPL Official Website. Accessed on : 05.01.2012, <<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-about-the-central-library/cen-history>>



Figure 0.5 Seattle Public Library, 1905, designed by P.J. Weber. Source : SPL Official Website. Accessed on: 05.01.2012, <<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-about-the-central-library/cen-history>>

### 1.3. Evolution of Library as an Architectural Entity

This section will focus on the history of libraries in order to draw an overall framework for the evolution of library as a separate building program. Before moving on, it is important to mention that, this study will not conduct an intense research into the history of the libraries; rather it will attempt to understand the evolution of library as a separate architectural entity.

The initial libraries were not separate entities, rather took place within other architectural programs such as mansions, churches or universities. In 12<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, the institutions of storing information were the churches<sup>8</sup>. Following, the collectors founded their own private libraries which were closed to public.<sup>9</sup> Then, these collections under the hegemony of churches or private collectors had shifted to the authority of states as public libraries. The shift from these private collections to public library regarding the authority was gradual and uneven, occurring more rapidly and completely in some countries and at some institutions than at others.<sup>10</sup>

Generally speaking, public library and public access actually originated with Renaissance due to two main reasons.<sup>11</sup> The first reason is the availability of publishing technologies. The book was reserved for a privileged few before. However, after the invention of rapid replication means, information widely opened to public.<sup>12</sup> It is obvious that, the advent of printing technologies and rising numbers of publications led the libraries to evolve into separate building programs. However, the rising number of collections, thus the need for extensive storage area was not the only reason in this regard. The second reason for the appearance of a separate building was the emerging interest in humanities and the emphasis of publicity with Renaissance. Accordingly, Brian Edwards states that “The emergence of the library, as distinct from the museum or picture gallery, did not occur directly as a result of the invention of the printing press but as a consequence of the growth in rational thought.”<sup>13</sup> Under such influences, the enlightenment of the public, thus, its access to information became important, and public libraries were utilized as agents for public transformation.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the development in the printing technologies and the increased interest in rational thought mentioned above; especially in England and North America, public libraries began to take place simultaneously.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the existence of technology in printing and gaining of a more public dimension yielded to an alteration in the spatial organization of the library. They became independent in both institutional and architectural entities and provided access to public free of charge. The contemporary library originates from this context.

On the other hand, regarding the character of library space, the first definition for a space to be utilized as a library was introduced by Renaissance physician and librarian Gabriel Naudé in his book

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<sup>8</sup> H.A. Innis. Empire and Communications, Oxford, 1950.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Miksa. “The Cultural Legacy of The ‘Modern Library’ For The Future”, Texas: University of Texas, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> A similar analysis is done for the evolution of Public Museum in the book "The Art Museum From Boullée to Bilbao", Andrew McClellan, University of California Press, 2008

<sup>11</sup> Nan Dahlkild. “The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy”, Project Muse, Vol. 60, No. 1 (summer, 2011), p.12. Accessed on 24.01.2013.  
<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library\\_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf)>

<sup>12</sup> Brian Edwards. Libraries And Learning Resource Centres, Boston: Architectural, 2009, p.5-22

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.3

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.3-4

*Advice on Establishing a Library*.<sup>15</sup> In this book, Naudé drew guidelines for arranging the collection, furnishing, and equipping of library spaces. “Open access, collections displaying a diversity and friction of opinion, and professional order” can be regarded as the principles that are introduced by him and contributed to modern library besides his recommendations for library space arrangement.

Besides these principles, there are also significant library proposals that affected the understanding of library as a public space. One of the earliest and outstanding examples in terms of public access is the French architect Étienne-Louis Boullée’s utopian design for a universal library; named as *Bibliothèque du Roi* (Figure 1.6). Boullée’s design proposed a universal library that would gather all information; as French Encyclopedia aimed to provide a universal collection of knowledge available to the public. The project was designed around a central and publicly accessible reading room surrounded by open book stacks.<sup>16</sup> Although the project has never been realized, this idea of central reading room and reaching a universal collection of knowledge constituted the inspiration for latterly realized grand public libraries.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, the main forces that trigger evolution of libraries can be stated as the technological advances and cultural alterations in response, particularly in library: the advance in printing technology and the rise of concept of publicity. Having introduced a brief historical framework of libraries and their evolution as separate entities, it is valid to continue with the evolution of library program and modern public libraries in particular.

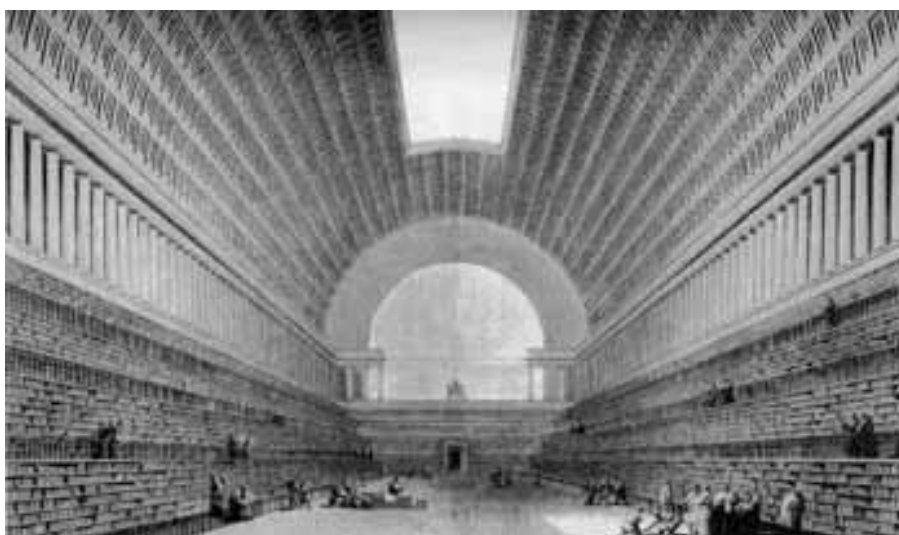


Figure 0.6 Étienne-Louis Boullée's utopian library project for *Bibliothèque Roi* in 1785. Source: Andrew McClellan. *The Art Museum From Boullée To Bilbao*. University of California Press, 2008, p.62

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<sup>15</sup> Nan Dahlkild. “The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy”, *Project Muse*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (summer, 2011), p.8. Accessed on 24.01.2013. <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library\\_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf)>

<sup>16</sup> Because of the expenses, Boullée proposed to cover the existent courtyard of the Louvre for the library.

<sup>17</sup> Nan Dahlkild. “The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy”, *Project Muse*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (summer, 2011), pp.14-15. Accessed on 24.01.2013. <[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library\\_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/library_trends/v060/60.1.dahlkild.pdf)>

### 1.3.1. Evolution of Library Program and Modern Public Libraries

Concisely, a library<sup>18</sup> can be defined as “a building which loosely and casually contains the diverse tentacles of knowledge.”<sup>19</sup> It is the place for collecting, accessing, documenting, and preserving the information whether in form of printed or digital media. In principal, libraries are designed to enhance the accessibility of knowledge by providing their users with free access to their collection. Especially, public libraries are designed to serve every member of the society regardless of age, gender, educational or social status.

In order to observe the changes in the libraries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one may analyze a table prepared by Brian Edwards. This table displays the main functional and architectonic characteristics of libraries with regard to the years, particularly, between the dates of 1850 and 2000 (Figure 1.7). It is observed from the table that technology affected the library space and typology, and as a consequence the libraries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be sorted out in three groups relatively.

| Changing characteristics of library design<br>1850-2000 |   |
|---|---|
| 1850-1950   | Large, often circular reading room                          |
|   | Separate subject rooms                                      |
|   | Seating normally in centre                                  |
|   | Non-electronic security                                     |
|   | High ceiling  |
|   | Large, tall windows   |
|   | Steel & timber construction with load bearing walls         |
|   | Card index or ledger type catalogue                         |
| 1950-1990   | Deep Plan   |
|   | Uniform, low suspended ceiling                              |
|   | Horizontal bands of windows                                 |
|   | Concrete construction with columns                          |
|   | Square reading room   |
|   | Open plan   |
|   | Electronic security   |
|   | Seating at perimeter  |
|   | Air-conditioning  |
|   | Microfiche catalogue  |
| 1990s-onwards   | Shallow plan  |
|   | Relatively high ceilings                                    |
|   | Perimeter windows and central atriums                       |
|   | Open fluid plan   |
|   | Natural light and ventilation in most areas                 |
|   | Mechanical ventilation in “hot spots”                       |
|   | Perimeter cabling for IT                                    |
|   | Task Lighting   |
|   | Book stacks used as a thermal store                         |
|   | Streets or areas of computers as anti-rooms to main library |
|   | Computer catalogue  |

Figure 0.7 Changing characteristics of library design, reproduced by the author. Source: Brian Edwards. Libraries And Learning Resource Centres. Boston: Architectural, 2009, p.259

<sup>18</sup> “A library is an organized collection of information resources made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. It provides physical or digital access to material, and may be a physical building or room, or a virtual space, or both; Library (from French “*librairie*”; Latin “*liber*” = book) is a collection of books, public or private; room or building where these are kept; similar collection of films, records, computer routines, etc. or place where they are kept; series of books issued in similar bindings as set.” --Allen, R. E., ed. The Oxford Dictionary of Current English. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 421

<sup>19</sup> Brian Edwards. Libraries And Learning Resource Centres. Boston: Architectural, 2009, p.xi

Similar to Edwards, regarding the evolution of libraries, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Shannon Mattern defines three categories. According to Mattern, the first wave was the “Carnegie era libraries”<sup>20</sup>, second wave was mid-twentieth century libraries, and libraries of our day belong to the third wave of their kind.<sup>21</sup> This classification is based on mainly formalistic possessions of the libraries (which can also be observed in the demolished Central Libraries of Seattle chronologically). To be more specific; the first wave was a borrowing from Parisian style inspired from the early grand public libraries akin to Boullée’s utopian design . This wave continued until 1920s. The second wave emerged in 1950s and 1960s by the effects of industrialization and standardization. Tectonically, the use of glass and metal without ornamentation contributed to these libraries in America and Europe as well.<sup>22</sup>

If we are to analyze these three categories programmatically, the first wave of libraries included service spaces (including the offices of the librarians), catalogue spaces, and reading spaces as main sections besides the essential functional sections like vestibule or entrance. The lending section was rarely seen in this era. In the second wave, lending space has emerged almost in all public libraries by redefining the spatial and administrative organization. This time, lending department constituted the heart of the libraries, whereas the main issue in terms of administration was controlling the traffic of borrowed books.<sup>23</sup> The third wave, which can be stated as the library of today, is independent of designated styles and supported with additional program parts above and beyond the reading and research activities. Although the libraries of today still operate in Carnegie tradition, they have added up programmatic and spatial developments to keep pace with changing necessities.

Focusing on the third wave, it is conceivable that the new type of storage of information or the digital medium is the conflict of last decades. This medium is not bounded to a physical existence in classical sense and consequently, its physical extension has also been changed. The archive or the collection of digital medium does not require a physical space unlike the case of the book, which requires a physical space for storage. Parallel to that, all terms related with the issues of collecting, accessing, reading, conveying and retrieving of information are re-defined. To illustrate, the current condition is the context where "google" is introduced as a new verb to replace "search" to access information. One can *google* anything and find relevant information about the topic/keyword in seconds. On the other hand, values, uses, and meanings alter rapidly. It is not discussable that these technologies contribute to user in many terms. However, the evolution of library is the concern.

Considering the change, Dillon states that library has experienced more alterations in last two decades than in past two centuries.<sup>24</sup> It has become common for libraries to allocate space with non-library functions (except from the functions of conventional library) such as meeting and gathering spaces, spaces allocated for different type of users (children, teenagers) and so on. Besides this, mixed-use of library space becomes common. That is, more than one event may take place in a single space. The library space is not dedicated only to reading activity, similar to condition of the book, which is not only the medium that library is dedicated. Mattern summarizes the architectonical qualities of contemporary libraries as:

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<sup>20</sup> For detailed information of Carnegie libraries see: Abigail A. Van Slyck. Free to All Carnegie Libraries & American Culture / 1890-1920, The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Shannon Mattern. The New Downtown Library, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. preface ix.

<sup>22</sup> Tripti G-Chandorkar. Users, technology, and space in libraries in the digital age, unpublished phd thesis, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, p.11

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p.16

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Dillon. Accelerating Learning & Discovery: Refining the Role of Academic Librarians, Texas: The University of Texas, 2008.

In rejecting an obligation to conform to an architectural type, today's public libraries are free to choose shapes and styles that speak to the cities and populations they serve. They are newly transparent, legible, accessible, responsive to context. They facilitate new patterns of interaction with media and new patterns of library service. In the process, they make possible new roles for the library patron and librarian.<sup>25</sup>

Arguably, the libraries of today do not carry a pre-defined typological or programmatic characteristic and any physical restrictions. However, there are several institutions regulating the norms and standards for libraries. The norms of ALA (American Library Association) can be given as an example. ALA is a non-profit organization founded in Philadelphia in 1876; continuously inquires and declares norms and regulations about the conditions of collecting, cataloguing and presenting the archive as well as providing models for administrative organization of libraries. Besides these norms, ALA emphasizes certain qualities to be provided within public libraries, which are enhancing an open society learning, free access to knowledge, freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry, and tolerance. In this regard, a mission statement published by ALA in 1978 states that "all information must be available to all people in all formats purveyed through all communication channels and delivered at all levels of comprehension."<sup>26</sup>

Specific for SPL, another initiative should be mentioned here. Named as "Libraries for All" (LFA), this initiative claims to "vitalize the outdated library program" both by renewing the physical conditions as well as redefining the role of libraries. By the efforts of this organization, in 1998 The State Washington residents accepted rebuilding and renewal of The Seattle Public Library besides renewing and adding 22 branch libraries with their votes. Related with this issue, a report was published and a new understanding of "public" libraries is defined as follows:

The Library is a place for the community to gather, learn, teach, celebrate and listen. Libraries are unlike any other institution— they are open to all, whether an individual is wearing a three-piece suit or a three day-old beard. No committee decides who may enter, no tuition is charged, and no visa is required. Everyone who walks through a library door has equal privileges. And everyone who walks through a library door has an equal voice.<sup>27</sup>

Reiterating, in the LFA report, the aim of renewing the library program is to build a place enhancing the communal interaction, and fostering a love of reading as well as engaging with the issues of technology, transparency, sustainability.

To summarize here, library program continues to evolve under the needs of society and with the changes of values, uses, concepts, technology and norms by regulating authorities. In addition, the recent changes occurred in means for storing and accessing of knowledge will definitely search its new representation means in library. From this perspective by dwelling on SPL, one of the objectives of this study is to understand the transformation of library program under current circumstances.

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<sup>25</sup> Shannon Mattern. The New Downtown Library, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, pp. preface ix-x

<sup>26</sup> David Kaser. "Toward a Conceptual Foundation for a National Information Policy", Wilson Library Bulletin 52, 1978, p.545

<sup>27</sup> OMA/LMN Architects. LFA Report, from Official web page of the SPL  
Accessed on 24.01.2013.  
<[http://www.spl.org/Documents/about/libraries\\_for\\_all\\_report.pdf](http://www.spl.org/Documents/about/libraries_for_all_report.pdf)>



#### 1.4. Technology and Publicity as the Catalysts

As mentioned in previous sections, latest information technologies bring about rapid alteration of notions, conceptions, values, and uses. Thus, the transformation (or re-invention) of library has numerous reasons however, “publicity” and “technology” are the main catalysts that have transformed library in terms of program and then space. Here, a brief introduction to these themes is provided.

##### Technology as the Catalyst

Libraries are evolving institutions with the company of technological developments. There are four main issues that trigger the evolution of library in terms of technology. The first issue is the shift in the type of the library holding. That is, the medium of information storage in library holdings are shifting from solid books to e-books, e-articles, and multiple media files like audio records, or videos. Besides the conventional solid library holdings such as the book, maps and so on, the digital information is also accommodated in libraries. Subsequently, space of library is adapting to store these wide range formats of e-information.

The second issue is the transmission of this new type of holdings to the library user. In order to or convey the information which is stored in new medium, the tools of these mediums should also be provided. The most significant tools can be stated as the computers and multiple media players. Thus, library should not only adapt to store the new type of holdings but also accommodate the tools for information retrieval of this type.

The third issue is the use of internet technology. Remote-access to library’s digital holdings availability, arrangement of online circulation, availability of reach to digital libraries like *Project MUSE*, *Sciencedirect*, *Jstor*, and various other databases from the library can be counted as the services that library should fulfill by means of internet technology. It is almost impossible to see the direct reflection of this issue on program or space of library, but the operation of the library is influenced.

The final issue is the utilization technology in the building of the library. The classification and categorization of digital information, automated systems like RFID, energy efficiency, and similar utilization of technological advances regarding the building entity itself, may lead to an evolution of the library.

##### Publicity as the Catalyst

The definition of public space is not homogenous and solid entity; rather it is a widely discussed and criticized issue of academic work as a spatial organization, a political arena, a symbolic construction and a social space.<sup>28</sup> A definition of the “democratic public space in the library” is done by John Buschman on the basis of Jürgen Habermas’ discourse on public sphere:<sup>29</sup>

As an ideal type, the public sphere is the space in between the state (and its formal systems of voting and legislation) and private life. It is where unfettered and equally available information is gathered and argumentation and critique (i.e., discourse) takes place among people as the basis of

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<sup>28</sup> For A Detailed Study On Public Space see: Gülçin Tunç. Transformation Of Public Space: The Case Of Migros Akköprü Shopping Center, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara: METU, 2003

<sup>29</sup> For detailed information and arguments about the “public sphere”, see: Jürgen Habermas. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Thomas Burger, German1962 (English Translation 1989), Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press

rational public will formation: the genesis of legitimacy in laws, decisions, and ethical norms in a democracy.<sup>30</sup>

However, this study will assess “public space” in terms of accessibility and social interaction. Concerning accessibility, public space refers to a space where each person has equal rights in respect to access and usage. Thus, a true public space does not imply or operate any kind of social segregation or limitation of activities.<sup>31</sup> From this point of view, the success of a public space depends on two factors; on one hand its triumph to attract people while on the other the cost of access in terms of transportation and experience. In other words, the success of a public space depends on attracting more and more people to that space while keeping the cost of this access at the minimum.<sup>32</sup>

Concerning social interaction, public space can be defined as the place in which a wide range of people can interact with other people whom they do not necessarily know, and moreover in which they can engage in a range of public and private activities”.<sup>33</sup> According to this definition, a public space can house individuals with private activities while keeping mutual respect to each other; as well as a group of people with shared interests or public activity.

The main properties of a public space are defined as responsive, democratic and meaningful. <sup>34</sup> Responsiveness of a public space refers to its ability to accomplish the need of the users such as “comfort, relaxation, active and passive engagement and discovery”.<sup>35</sup> In terms of democracy; a public space should be accessible to all groups and should protect the rights of the users. In other words, public spaces should provide a place, where people act more freely, and the control over the users of the space should be limited only by the rights of the other users.<sup>36</sup>

From the definitions above, one can deduct that public space in the library is a responsive and a democratic space where accessibility for everyone, their social interaction and individual rights are ensured. Having defined the public space, it is time to move on to the role of the publicity as the catalyst that is inserted to the program, and is transforming the space. Publicity as a catalyst fosters the alteration of library space in two ways. In the first way the issue of publicity is inserted as a new program element to increase the use of space and to attract public. In the second way, public spaces replace those spaces that are freed from books, resulting from developments in technological storage means.

Regarding the first way, the remote access to information has decreased the use of library physically. One does not need to be physically in the library to access the information anymore. In parallel, the seriousness of library space and difficulty of reach to library physically leads the user to online sources more. Thus, it is intended to attract more people to use library by turning the library into a more comfortable space to compensate the decrease in the number of users. In other words, library is

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<sup>30</sup> John Buschman. Dismantling the Public Sphere : Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the Age of the New Public Philosophy, Westport, Connecticut. : Libraries Unlimited, 2003, p.42

<sup>31</sup> L.Lofland. A World of Strangers, New York: Basic Books In, 1973, pp.17-24

<sup>32</sup> Gülçin Tunç. Transformation Of Public Space: The Case Of Migros Akköprü Shopping Center, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara: METU, 2003, p.35

<sup>33</sup> S. Carr, M. Francis, L.G Rivlin, A.M. Stone. Public Space, New York:Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.12-16

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.18

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.18

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.21

turning out to be a public space like parks, squares, shorelines or any other free but recreational space to attract more user. As one does not need to walk on toes to keep silence within the library, it is believed to attract more users. This brings about the issue of publicity as the catalyst injected to the library transforming its space to sustain the continuity of its use. The use of publicity in these terms is referred as “promotional publicity” by Ari D. Seligmann.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the second way, publicity may still be regarded catalyst to compensate the (negative) outcomes of technological developments. To illustrate, today's publications are available in digital format as well.<sup>38</sup> One can buy an e-book via internet and began to read in minutes. That is, we are building our own libraries in one device independent of a designated space. Therefore, the necessity for bookshelves is decreasing while more hard disk space for e-information is increasing. As a result, the space required for bookshelves has turned into a space for social activities and events. Anna Klingmann states that:

As information storage is gradually reduced through the extended use of digital media, additional space is freed up for more social experiences to take place. In this sense the library is conceived as a seamless environment providing smooth transitions from virtual forms of information exchange to concrete physical communication spaces.<sup>39</sup>

Libraries will not only keep up with technological alterations but also will be enriched with new technologies. Arguably, these circumstances will not lead to extinction of the library but an alteration in its space.<sup>40</sup> Considering the data that cannot be translated into digital bits and the necessities of lower and middle class who cannot afford prices of this e-info, the library should exist. But how and under which circumstances libraries will continue to exist remain as a main question. Indeed, it can be stated that these places will only be appropriated if they adapt to circumstances and alter simultaneously.

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<sup>37</sup> For Further information on “promotional publicity” see: Ari D. Seligmann. Architectural Publicity in the Age of Globalization, unpublished PhD. thesis, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> We have witnessed a very similar alteration like in 15 years time after mp3 file format was created and released in 1995. Apple Inc. introduced iPod, a portable media player in 2001. It was a revolution in the music field. Since then, one has been able to carry any sort of music files with him to anywhere without carrying compact disks from numerous albums, unlike the preceding cassette or compact disk players. Subsequently, Apple Inc. began to sell the songs individually separated from the albums via iTunes. The users created their own music libraries in one device. E-books which were originally designed to be read on computers—any computer are replacing the publications with the introduction of wide computer use and internet technology. Thus, it can be claimed that publishers will publish less books in paper but more in digital format. Computers and tablet computers performing this task created their own e-stores. In addition to this digitalization via computer, this alteration led book sellers even invent their own e-book readers like kindle by Amazon, Nook by Barnes&Noble, iPad by Apple Inc. and many others eventually.

<sup>39</sup> Anna Klingmann. "Datascapes: Libraries as Information Landscapes", Building for Books, Eds. Susanne Bieri and Walter Fuchs, Birkhäuser 2001, p.10  
Accessed on 24.01.2013  
<<http://www.klingmann.com/new/NEWS/byklingmann/017/017.pdf>>

<sup>40</sup> Mark Y. Herring. "10 Reasons Why the Internet Is No Substitute for a Library", American Libraries, April 2001, pp. 76–78

### 1.5. Selected Contemporary Library Examples

There are several examples of recently built libraries that intend to create an appropriated public space and utilize the latest advances and advantages of technology. An illustration for a recent library regarding these issues can be stated as the Surrey City Centre Library by Bing Thom Architects Inc., opened in 2011.



Figure 0.8 Surrey City Centre Library Model, by Bing Thom Architects Inc., 2011. Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/70482/surrey-city-centre-library-by-bing-thom-architects/3d-view-south-towards-atrium-from-4th-floor/>

Bing Thom Architects Inc. state that the role of the library is altering simultaneously and in addition, the book lost its central position in library.<sup>41</sup> They claim that libraries have become a spot for association and a meeting place for the community. Thom refines his statement as:

The design evolves out of the need to provide a space for reading, studying, and above all, gathering as a community. This building is very flexible and will accommodate all of these purposes, but does so in a way that will intrigue and entice the users through the building.<sup>42</sup>

As a result, the space is intended to be arranged according to the needs of both a research and of a gathering place. The denomination for the entrance space as a “living room,” which is also utilized in the Seattle Public Library is a term, used for making the library user feel at their home: “In all cases, the spaces have been deliberately kept informal to make the library feel like an extension of the patron’s [user’s] home.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, the library as a public space utilizes “private” and “domestic” terms, and intends to carry partial domestic properties specific spaces in order to increase the use.

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<sup>41</sup> P, Amber. "In Progress: Surrey City Centre Library / Bing Thom Architects" 18 Aug 2011. ArchDaily. Accessed 10 Mar 2013. <<http://www.archdaily.com/70482>>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Another significant example regarding the publicity in libraries can be given as The Hague City Hall & Central Library by Richard Meier, opened in 1995.<sup>44</sup> Known as the Citizens Hall, an internal atrium is designed as an indoor public space. This central area is one of the largest public spaces dedicated to public use. All local municipal offices, central and public desk-facilities are located around the atrium along with an office building and an extensive shopping facade on the ground floor. The central library within this context however, with a separated entrance is located at the extreme northwestern corner. It can be argued here that, the intention of the architect by locating the library as an extension of shops (or windows of shops) is to increase the publicity through the utilization of consumer culture and commodification.



Figure 0.9 Hague City Hall & Central Library by Richard Meier, 1995. Source: <http://www.richardmeier.com/www/#/projects/architecture/location/europe-n-z/netherlands/1/374/0/>

In addition to these libraries, there are several library examples which can be evaluated in this regard such as; The Peckam Library in London(2000) by Alsop and Störmer, Royal Library of Denmark or Black Diamond (1999) by Schmidt Hammer Lassen, Brighton Public Library (2005) by Bennetts Associates and Brighton firm LCE Architects. In each of these libraries, there is a reserved or designed public space. All of these libraries worth to study intensively however, within the scope of this thesis, The Seattle Public Library will be examined as the subject. By dwelling on this particular library, it is aimed to observe and extract wider assumptions and results about the evolution of libraries.

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<sup>44</sup> Richard Meier and Partners Architects Official Website. Accessed 10 Mar 2013.  
<<<http://www.richardmeier.com/www/#/projects/architecture/location/europe-n-z/netherlands/1/374/0/>>>

## 1.6. Structure of the Thesis

The aim of this study is to scrutinize and argue the circumstances that have transformed program and space of library. In order to conduct this research, the study will focus on The Seattle Public Library. To decipher the library program and to investigate its physical existence, this study will analyze the building by referring to Rem Koolhaas' discussions on the tools of design in ever changing conditions. At the very end, the outcomes of the analysis will be discussed in order to evaluate how and by what means the library program has been changed under the influences of alterations occurred in technology and publicity.

The thesis is organized under four chapters. The first chapter provides brief information on the subject area. It introduces a short history of libraries and forms of information storage. This section also discusses the evolution of libraries with respect to the themes of publicity and technology as the main catalysts.

The second chapter reveals the background of The Seattle Public Library. This chapter is discussed in two parts. With the intention of comprehending SPL in detail, the first and second part focuses on the main theoretical issues underlined by OMA, and on their former libraries.

The third chapter is the analysis on SPL. This analysis is conducted in two sections. In the first section, the *Concept Book* that is prepared to present SPL as a proposal is analyzed under three headings: (1) concepts of the *Concept Book*, (2) program construction, and (3) tools and operations. In the second section, the space of SPL is analyzed through the themes which are extracted from the *Concept Book* besides the themes of technology and publicity.

The fourth chapter makes a discussion on the reinvented library program of SPL and its reflections to the space in SPL. The final chapter summarizes the thesis by drawing some general conclusions on the contemporary library program in the light of the previous chapters.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND OF SPL

In order to comprehend alterations and transformations of public library and particularly, the case Seattle Public Library, the circumstances that participated in the design of SPL should be clarified. Here, the intervention of OMA is regarded as a key to understand how the library space is reinterpreted. This is moreover an attempt to reveal how these studies have contributed to construction of the library program. With this goal in agenda, this chapter is composed of three sections: (1) theoretical framework of OMA (and Rem Koolhaas), (2) former library projects of OMA, and (3) reflections of these former studies on SPL.

The first section studies the theoretical background of OMA in order to find out the sources of the design approach that outline their projects. In this section, an examination on *Delirious New York: A Retrospective Manifesto* (1978) by Rem Koolhaas, will be held to observe the theoretical inheritances/legacies and to figure out the oeuvre of OMA leading to Seattle Public Library. In addition to that, AMO<sup>45</sup>, the extension of OMA, which is specialized in gathering data about the altering conditions of culture, technology, and media for the conceptual studies of OMA's projects, will be discussed briefly. The study on AMO is conducted to relate data gathering and representation of this data through graphic design practice in Koolhaas' projects.

The second section studies the two former library projects of OMA; namely National Library of France (1992) and Jussieu Libraries (1989), both of which are unrealized library proposals. Examining the similar architectural program studies of OMA will provide us with the assessments of OMA on library program in general. Thus, their approach to the library program can be inferred from these libraries.

Finally, in the third section, the legacies of these assessments which are extracted from the former studies of OMA on the case of Seattle Public Library will be stated as item by item. Consequently, here the main aim is to figure out the conceptual approach of OMA that has shaped SPL.

#### 2.1. Re-Examining the *Delirious New York*

Here, *Delirious New York: A Retrospective Manifesto* is re-examined in order to derive the main arguments and concepts regarding the library program of SPL. To do so, firstly, *Delirious New York: A Retrospective Manifesto* is studied to explore the theoretical and conceptual ideas of Koolhaas, in creating architecture responding to the ever-changing urban conditions. This section particularly focuses on the term of "Manhattanism"<sup>46</sup> from which it is believed that Koolhaas generated the methodology to cope with these conditions. Secondly, AMO is examined as the extension of OMA. The conceptual and representational contribution of AMO to the projects of OMA cannot be

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<sup>45</sup> Although the abbreviation is not clearly stated, AMO refers to the reverse of OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture). Aaron Betsky. "Rem Koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism", Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA, NAI Publishers, 2003, p.35

<sup>46</sup> Aaron Betsky defines *Manhattanism* as the togetherness of the myth of urbanity, a "fetid stew of human culture" and "modernism" as the cool realm of data, rationality and organization. The term will be elaborated more later on in this chapter.  
Aaron Betsky. "Rem Koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism", Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA, NAI Publishers, 2003, p. 28

disregarded as it plays a crucial role in constructing the conceptual framework of the projects. In other words, AMO deals with the construction of the conceptual studies of projects, while OMA deals with the realization of the projects in architectural terms.

To begin with, *Delirious New York* can be stated as a quest for understanding the alteration in city. When Koolhaas produced *Delirious New York*, he was participating in The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS).<sup>47</sup> In order to develop a new approach in thinking about the city, this institute studied the complexity of New York.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it can be stated that Koolhaas' investigation on the city and ideas about city's condition as a catalyst for new architecture dates back to this period.

There are five fractions, which can be deduced from *Delirious New York*, namely: "Prehistory", "Coney Island", "The Skyscraper", "The Rockefeller Centre", and "Europeans". Within the scope of this study, in particular, "Prehistory", "Coney Island", and "The Skyscraper" are analyzed and referred more in detail, since it is believed that the references of SPL go back to *Delirious New York*. Moreover, these fractions compose a vital part of the theoretical approach, and conceptual ideas of Rem Koolhaas in structuring his designs by considering the ever-changing urban conditions.<sup>49</sup> Later in the design for Parc de La Villette, (Paris, 1982) he refers to this ever-changing conditions as "programmatic indeterminacy".<sup>50</sup>

To begin with, Prehistory part deals with the period beginning from the discovery of Manhattan till the implementation of the "Grid" in 1811. It designates the necessity to create an order to dominate the irregular arrangement. Hal Foster states that although the implementation of "Grid" was for real estate speculation, the interest of Koolhaas in the *Grid* indeed, can be stated as the *flexibility* of it, which enables the juxtaposition of different functions, and outlines the scale of the block.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the Grid indeed provides both the order and flexibility.

Following, in the "Coney Island" part, Koolhaas studies on three amusement parks and their continuous and rapid modifications due to the necessities to create an amusing space that maintain the appropriation of the guests. To elaborate, Koolhaas observes how these parks are simultaneously modified and equipped with new facilities both to meet the requirements of the technological changes, and demands of the participants (in terms of attracting people). Koolhaas defines the circumstance as follows:

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<sup>47</sup> IAUS, an incubator of neo-avant-garde practices, was founded in 1967 with Peter Eisenman as the director. It is closed in 1984 and up to that time was a focal point of the so-called New York Five: Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk and Richard Meier. The IAUS is re-opened in 2003. It is stated that: "Institute emphasizes the exploration of architecture as a mode of cultural production, and aims to develop students' understanding of the built environment's engagement with broader social, political, and environmental systems." Accessed on 24.01.2013. <<http://institute-ny.org/>>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Rem Koolhaas. "Definitive Instability: The Downtown Athletic Club", *Delirious New York: a retrospective manifesto*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994.

<sup>50</sup> Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau. *S, M, L, XL*, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998, p.923. In fact, his attempt for searching methods to adapt his design in altering circumstances is grounded also in his study on Russian Constructivists' Social Condenser. However, this relation is out of scope for this thesis. For further information on the this issue see M.Arhan thesis of Ozay Ozkan.

<sup>51</sup> Hal Foster. "Architecture and Empire", *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)*, 2003, Verso p.46



...to survive as a resort, Coney Island forced to mutate: it must turn itself into the total opposite of Nature, it has no choice but to counteract the artificiality of the new metropolis with its own Super- Natural.<sup>52</sup>

Learning through the Coney Island leads Koolhaas to assess the redefinition of relationships between “*site, program, form and technology*.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, the flexibility and adaptation of an entity can be achieved through the alterations in the site, program, form, and technology. Before moving on, it is considered as valid to define what “Culture of Congestion” refers. “Culture of Congestion” can be illustrated in the case of Manhattan: It refers to the creation and testing of the lifestyle throughout the simultaneous increase of “human density” and “invasion of new technologies”, from 1850 onwards in Manhattan. As mentioned above it is the condition which caused the simultaneous modification to meet the requirements of the technological changes, and demands of the participant, however, in the city scale. Therefore, “Culture of Congestion” can be defined as the rapid alterations in social and technological demands of mass number of people that cannot be controlled. Thus, it implies the culture of the 20th century.<sup>54</sup>

Then, in “The Skyscraper” part, Koolhaas examines the program of the Downtown Athletic Club (1931).<sup>55</sup> He states that, this building represents a successful example of “lobotomy” in architectural sense. Koolhaas defines lobotomy as follows:

In the deliberate discrepancy between container and contained New York’s makers discover an area of unprecedented freedom. They exploit and formalize it in the architectural equivalent of a lobotomy—the surgical severance of the connection between frontal lobes and the rest of the brain to relieve some mental disorders by disconnecting thought processes from emotions.<sup>56</sup>

*Lobotomy* in architectural sense stands for the theoretical and physical disconnection between the inner function and mechanism of a building and its exterior appearance, and dialogue with the surrounding context.<sup>57</sup> It is stated that an edifice, which is enormous in scale justifies “the distance between center and perimeter, or core and skin, becomes so vast that the exterior can no longer hope to make any precise disclosure as to what happens on the interior.”<sup>56</sup> An edifice of large scale affects the interior and the exterior relation in regard to the program. Particularly in here, the actual concern is the relationship of program and outer features of the Downtown Athletic Club. One cannot deduct the program from the exterior.

Thus, Downtown Athletic Club destabilizes the usual uniformity of the high-rise (or tower) and becomes the “apotheosis of the Skyscraper as instrument of the Culture of Congestion.”<sup>58</sup> The Downtown Athletic Club includes a surreal collection of activities such as; squash courts, a swimming pool, a colonic center, an indoor golf course, and such within the same entity (figure 3.1). These activities are placed in 13 floors and connected by elevators that bond and service them from the circulatory core. In the 9th floor, unconnected activities are gathered together like a room for punching bags and an oyster bar, both occupying the same floor. Here, Koolhaas declares that “Eating

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<sup>52</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York: a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan, New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994, p.33.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p.62

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p.87

<sup>55</sup> Downtown Athletic Club was designed by Starrett & Van Vleck, architect; Duncan Hunter, associate architect. Ibid. p.153

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.82

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.153

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.152



Thus it can be inferred that, the floors of the traditional skyscraper is generic, divided into sections which are placed on top of each other regardless of their connection in vertical. This reminds the Grid that regulates the plots of Manhattan. Though, the floor is flexible and generic, the elevator is rigid at the block level; and while grid provides a rigid layout at the plot level, it provides a flexibility in the third dimension, and “culture of congestion” is the driving force of this flexibility.<sup>61</sup>

To conclude, *Delirious New York* can be stated as the “consistency and coherence of the seemingly unrelated episodes of Manhattan's urbanism: it is an interpretation that establishes New York as the product of an unformulated movement, *Manhattanism*, whose true program was so outrageous that in order for it to be realized it could never be openly declared.”<sup>62</sup> According to Frederic Jameson, Koolhaas insists on the connection of “randomness and freedom” and the existence of “rigid, inhuman, nondifferential form” that permits the adjustment to alteration.<sup>63</sup>

Consequently, it can be extracted from the reading of *Delirious New York* that there are two inferences at the plot level: (1) “the Culture of Congestion”, (2) “the Grid”. Koolhaas investigates the relationship of these two inferences while the former refers to the instable and uncontrolled part of urban life, the latter, “the Grid”, refers to the stable, rigid and controlled part. Regarding the high-rise block, while the floor is the instable part, the elevator constitutes the stable part. Yet, we can observe from his previous works, Koolhaas has been searching to find a way to make his works enduring and to adapt them to time. For him, in order to challenge with the instability of metropolitan circumstances, these two inferences, namely rigid or stable and instable, should be occupied together.

In each project of Koolhaas, it is legitimate to state that there is a rationalization process without aesthetic considerations. Indeed, he attempts to destabilize and ruin the stable. By doing so, he believes that “programmatic indeterminacy” will be unraveled. Then, AMO can be regarded as an attempt or an extension of this rationalization process: the translation of the statistical data to graphics and representations.

AMO, the reverse of OMA, is founded in late 1990s due to the fast growth in media and virtual research domain, and rapid change in culture, by Rem Koolhaas.<sup>64</sup> Basically, the function of AMO is to interrogate the alteration of organization, identity, culture, and program. Their intention, on the other hand, can be stated as identifying the ways of dealing with the “problem -from the conceptual to the operative-” in order to comprehend and relate the projects to the contemporary condition.<sup>65</sup> It is found to intensify OMA’s independent research projects.<sup>66</sup> Thus, AMO deals with the vast raw information selection, their collection, and processing, whereas OMA uses this (semi-)processed data in order to realize their architectural projects.

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<sup>61</sup> Frederic Jameson; Michael Speaks, “Enveloped and Enclaves: The Space of Post-Civil Society” (An Architectural Discussion), *Assemblage*, No.17, Apr 1992, pp.30-37.

Hal Foster. “Architecture and Empire” Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes), 2003, Verso p.46

<sup>62</sup> OMA Publications’ explanation for “[Delirious New York: a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan](http://oma.eu/publications/delirious-new-york)” Accessed on 24.01.2013  
<<http://oma.eu/publications/delirious-new-york>>

<sup>63</sup> Frederic Jameson; Michael Speaks, “Enveloped and Enclaves: The Space of Post-Civil Society” (An Architectural Discussion), *Assemblage*, No.17, Apr 1992, pp.30-37.

<sup>64</sup> Aaron Betsky. “Rem Koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism” [Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA](#), NAI Publishers, 2003, p. 35

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.179

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.35

Neil Leach, correspondingly, claims that the common point of the studies undertaken by AMO is that they are to recognize the mechanism of contemporary culture. By the employment of graphs, diagrams and other forms of representation, which depends on statistical analysis, they investigate the features that manipulate society.<sup>67</sup> In parallel, according to Aaron Betsky, AMO is the direct result of Koolhaas' character; he defines his statement as follows:

The historical ground Koolhaas has constructed has two seemingly contradictory impulses. The first is a narrative about the hero architect able to condense, shape, and celebrate urbanism in highly allusive form. The second is the obsessive gathering of statistical data in order to ground architecture not in form, but in analysis and prognosis.<sup>68</sup>

What Betsky argues here, is actually the issue of Koolhaas' "obsessive gathering of statistical data," and he assesses that in order not to derive design out of the form, Koolhaas depends on data.<sup>69</sup> Neil Leach adds to this statement by adding that AMO's "emphasis is on the processes that lie beneath the surface level manifestations."<sup>70</sup>

It is not easy to dismiss Rem Koolhaas. He has managed, as the only major architect working today, to purpose the building blocks for a post-urban condition in which the essential elements of what makes a cohesive culture are dispersed more and more around the globe and appear only floating, unstable images. *Architecture here is no longer just a question of building, but of condensing data into form that is both insubstantial (modernist) and seductive (Manhattanist) enough to become mythic.* That is an ability Koolhaas has had for several decades, and that he continues to refine and develop. He liberated architecture from place, from its maker and even materiality, without letting it disappear into nothing. .... *Rem Koolhaas had used the image of architecture to produce a convincing architecture of image.*<sup>71</sup>

Thus, these statements can be abridged to the methodology of Koolhaas. The collection of up to date data related with culture and technology, and gathering and analysis of these data (with the reliance on process rather than form) constitute a great deal of Koolhaas' methodology in design. Moreover, the related information is condensed into the form of the building or to create the building's form by means of graphic representation. In other words, AMO can be seen as an attempt not only to free the architecture from only producing building entities but also to perceive architecture as a system of deep thinking.

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<sup>67</sup> Neil Leach. "C<AMO>UFLAGE", Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA, NAI Publishers, 2003, p. 91

<sup>68</sup> Aaron Betsky. "Rem Koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism." Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA, NAI Publishers, 2003, p. 28

<sup>69</sup> These studies fit broadly within the methodological approach common in contemporary architectural culture, inspired by the thinking of Gilles Deleuze, where as a design strategy, process is privileged over representation. However, it should be reminded that in Deleuze's terms, process is always linked to representation.

<sup>70</sup> Neil Leach. "C<AMO>UFLAGE", Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office For Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA, NAI Publishers, 2003, p. 91

<sup>71</sup> Aaron Betsky, "Rem koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism". Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Ed. by Veronique Patteeuw, NAI Publishers, 2003, pp.38-39, Emphasis by author.

## 2.2. Former Library Proposals of OMA

Seattle Public Library is not the first library of OMA. There are two similar projects that OMA studied before. It is valid to expect that, besides the learning from New York and the involvement of AMO, the inheritances of the earlier library studies also contribute to OMA's conception of SPL. Très Grande Bibliothèque (1989) OMA's competition project for National Library in Paris, and a competition project for Bibliothèques Jussieu (1993) designed for university campus in Paris are unbuilt libraries of OMA. Thus, these two libraries are discussed briefly here in order to find out their relevance to SPL.

### 2.2.1. Très Grande Bibliothèque (National Library of France, 1989)

The unbuilt competition project for National Library of France in 1989, which is located in Paris, nearby the Seine (River), is OMA's first library study. The proposal consists of five different libraries that are to be housed, namely; a cinémathèque, a library of recent acquisitions, reference, catalog, and a scientific library. It is stated that each library is regarded with its "*its own public*."<sup>72</sup> OMA defines their objective in the library design as follows:

The ambition of this project is to rid architecture of responsibilities it can no longer sustain and to explore this new freedom aggressively. It suggests that, liberated from its former obligations, architecture's last function will be the creation of the symbolic spaces that accommodate the persistent desire for collectivity.<sup>73</sup>

By stating as such, OMA indeed attempts to validate their re-configuration of the typical library layout. In order to free the architecture from "*its former obligations*", OMA introduces a rational analysis of program and introduces programmatic sections relying on this analysis.

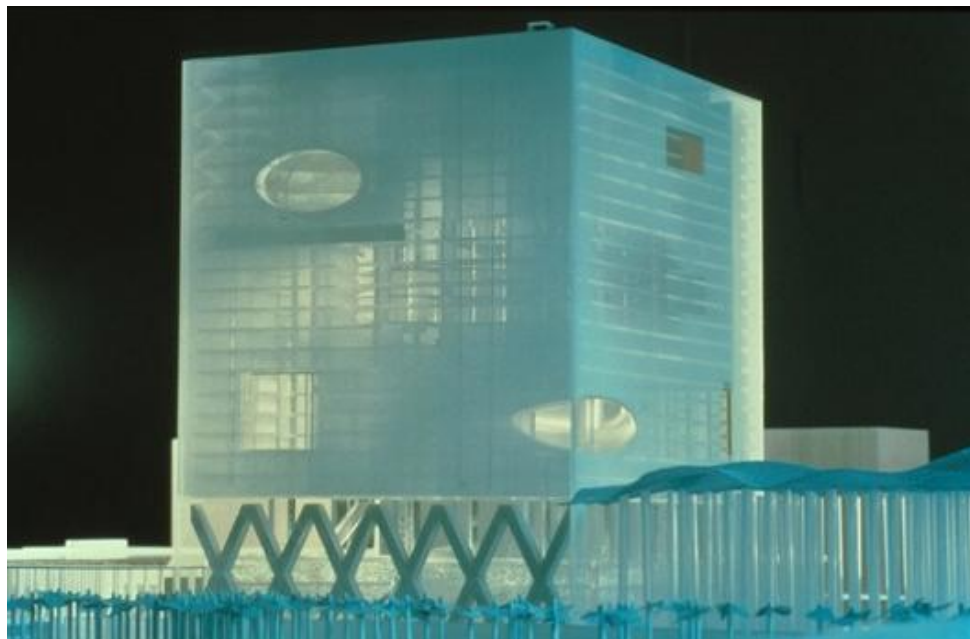


Figure 0.11 Model of Très Grande Bibliothèque, 1989, OMA. Accessed on 21.12.2012 Source: <http://oma.eu/projects/1989/très-grande-bibliothèque>

<sup>72</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau. S, M, L, XL, The Monacelli Press, 1995, p.669

<sup>73</sup> OMA Projects. Accessed on 24.01.2013 <<http://oma.eu/projects/1989/très-grande-bibliothèque>>

OMA discusses that the scheme is derived from probable technological circumstances (*scenarios*). With respect to the alterations due to technology and its effects on library, they state that “At the moment when the electronics revolution seems about to melt all that is solid - to eliminate all necessity for concentration and physical embodiment - it seems absurd to imagine the ultimate library.”<sup>74</sup> Thus, due to this technological alterations and the endeavor to sustain them, OMA states that it is almost impossible to reach absolute architecture. Yet, OMA developed their approach in the guidance of inventors, systems analysts, writers, and electronics companies in order to keep pace with time and understand the nature of alteration. Consequently, their expectation was “an entirely included information system”; however, the future would not bring about the end of the book, yet, would cause *new equalities*.<sup>75</sup>

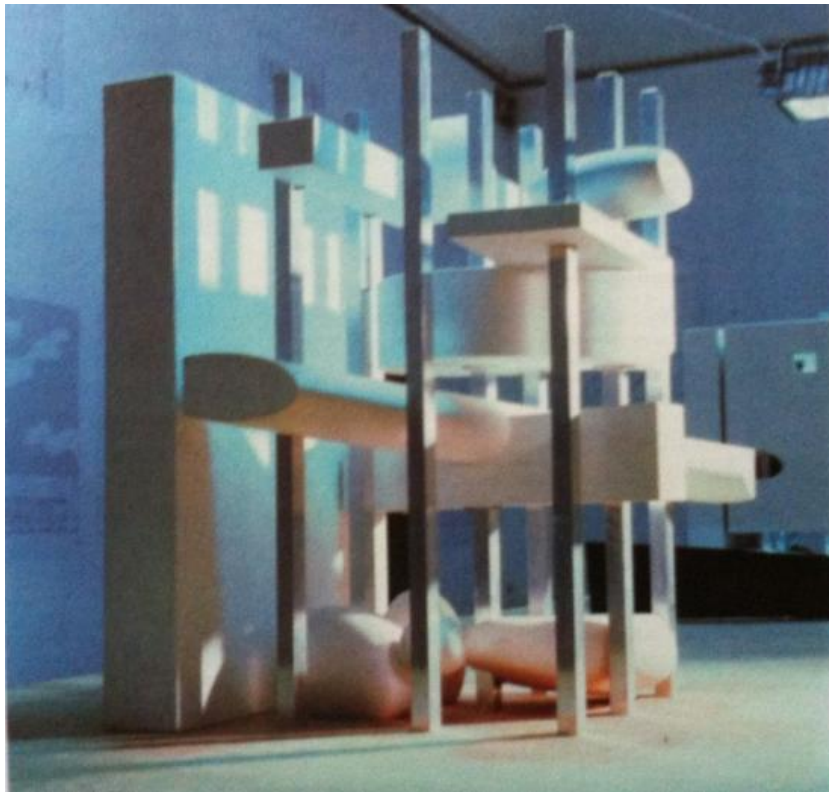


Figure 0.12 Model of Très Grande Bibliothèque revealing the voids, OMA. Source: Roberto Gargiani. Rem Koolhaas / OMA The Construction of Merveilles, 2008, p. 163

Regarding the program, the library involves two main parts. The first part is composed of the stacks, which is layering of floors on top of each other to create “a solid information repository to accommodate all forms of data.”<sup>76</sup> Holdings of different libraries are located in these floors independently. Thereby, different libraries are disconnected. The second part is public spaces which are “carved out” from the *information solid* (the first part) as “voids”.<sup>77</sup> These voids are defined by

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Roberto Gargiani. Rem Koolhaas / OMA The Construction of Merveilles, 2008, p.161

OMA as “Floating in memory, they are multiple embryos, each with its own technological placenta.”<sup>78</sup> Each of the voids is individualized by a distinct form in regard to its spatial and technological requirements. Even though each public area varies in form and function, they are all connected by a grid of nine elevators throughout the library. Yet, it is important to mention that, the information stacks literally are not solid instead, the block is covered with an envelope which is transparent and luminous. Thus, the library turns out to be a medium to be read.

To conclude, from the studies of National Library of France, one can deduct that OMA assigns different spaces for information repository areas and public spaces. This division of the program as such, is their first attempt to approach the duality of library program in order to liberate from the (former library layout) architectural compulsions.

### 2.2.2. Bibliothèques Jussieu (Jussieu Libraries, 1993)

Jussieu Libraries<sup>79</sup> of OMA entails the design of two libraries, namely, science and humanities and their integration with the existing *parvis*<sup>80</sup> of Jussieu Campus at Sorbonne University. The design of Koolhaas can be stated as an attempt to create an urban experience within the building while re-considering the state of information. It is argued that, two concepts are highlighted in the building. The first concept is the creation of the building as an urban artifact, and the second one is the alternative organization scheme for circulation. In the proposal of OMA, the science and humanity libraries are superimposed. While the science library is located on the ground level, the humanity library is ascended and in-between them *parvis* is placed which connects metro station and Seine (River).<sup>81</sup> In addition, the activities of the campus are collected and carried as an extension into this single artifact. The streets, parks, squares, parks, cafes, and shops are interpreted as “supra-programmatic urban elements” in order to form the library.<sup>82</sup> By doing so, OMA claims that the particular elements of the libraries are relocated as the “buildings in a city” and created a “new public realm”.<sup>83</sup> As a result, the building is *urbanized*.<sup>84</sup>



Figure 0.13 OMA's studies for Jussieu Libraries, sequence of photographs. Source: Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce. *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1995, p. 1311.

<sup>78</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau. *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1995, p.669.

<sup>79</sup> Jussieu Libraries construction had started in 1960s with the project of Edouard Albert, but cannot be completed due to the events of May 1968. Thus the authorities held a competition for a new library project for the campus. Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce. *S, M, L, XL* (The Monacelli Press, 1995), p.1307.

<sup>80</sup> Alley or courtyard

<sup>81</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau. *S, M, L, XL*, The Monacelli Press, 1995, pp.1314-1316.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.1317

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.

Subsequently, the second concept explored in the library is that of circulation, is an attempt to reconfigure the library layout. OMA proposes folding surfaces which are sliced and warped in such a way, with the intention of connecting the levels above and below. It is declared that these surfaces (in particular the floors) are flexible and bendable. They are defined as “pliable surfaces” and like “a social magic carpet; we fold it to generate density, then form a “stacking of platforms; minimal enclosure makes it a building - the culmination of the Jussieu network.”<sup>85</sup> What OMA proposes as “pliable surfaces” can actually be considered as the tools to connect the adjacent floors, in which also programmatic parts are accommodated.<sup>86</sup> The subdivisions of the continuous platforms are actually ramp that composes the circulation boulevard, connecting the parts of the program, and leading the user to wander around. The “pliable surfaces” are illustrated with a sequence of photographs, which emphasizes the design process in a film scroll.<sup>87</sup> (Figure 2.4) OMA defines the library’s space and the experience of the visitor in the circulation boulevard:

Instead of a simple stacking of floors, sections of each level are manipulated to touch those above and below; all the planes are connected by a single trajectory, a warped interior boulevard that exposes and relates all programmatic elements. The visitor becomes a Baudelairean *flâneur*, inspecting and being seduced by a world of books and information- by the urban scenario.<sup>88</sup>

The uninterrupted circulation scheme provided by “pliable surfaces” enables the user to be seduced by the books or choose of an alternative path. Instead of stacking one level on top of another, regardless of their connection, floor surfaces are connected, and consequently, alternative paths or a *boulevard* are created. This circulation in the building, besides elevators and stairs, turns the participant into a “Baudelairean *flâneur*”<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. pp.1310-1312

<sup>86</sup> Folding the floors is also seen in Rem Koolhaas’ project of Hotel and Convention Center, Agadir, 1990. However, the articulation of the floors in this project remains modest, that is, they do not touch upper slab.

<sup>87</sup> This process, based on representation, is stated as the resulting from the Koolhaas’ former profession as journalist and screen writer Roberto Gargiani. Rem Koolhaas / OMA The Construction of Merveilles, 2008, p.193

<sup>88</sup> Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau. S, M, L, XL, The Monacelli Press, 1995, pp.1318-1325.

<sup>89</sup> The *flâneur*, meaning "stroller", "lounger" was a literary type from 19th century France, wandering around the streets of Paris. “It was Walter Benjamin, drawing on the poetry of Charles Baudelaire, who made him the object of scholarly interest in the twentieth century, as an emblematic figure of urban, modern experience.” Accessed on 24.01.2013 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fl%C3%A2neur>>



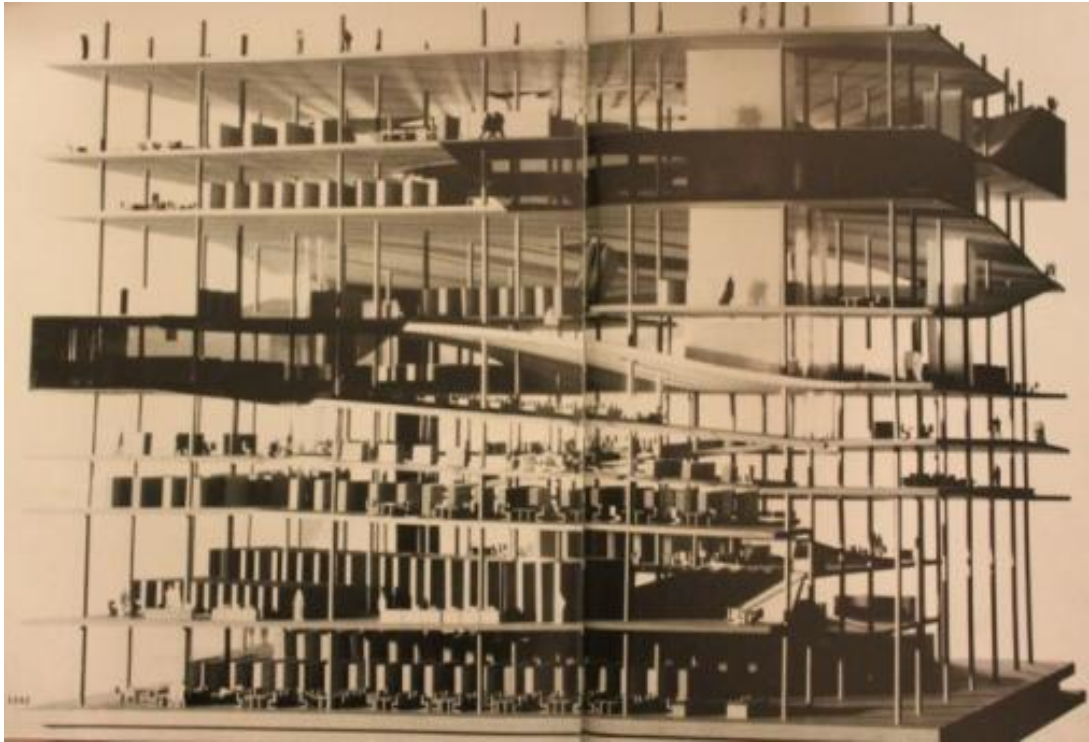


Figure 0.14 Model of Jussieu Libraries by OMA. Source: Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce. *S, M, L, XL* The Monacelli Press, 1995, pp. 1343-1343

The boulevard creates unforeseen and spontaneous experience. Visitors may wander around, search, and browse the stacks through the entire library with diverging routes. In these routes, one may be attracted by the book covers or other types of mediums, such as display screens, unintentionally. This may trigger the user to discover through serendipity. While the circulation provided by the elevator is fixed and linear, the ramps (pliable surfaces) and escalators allow for an indeterminate and complex circulation. Utilization of these two types of circulation tools at the same time, also results in new relations between different program parts. Thus, the scheme enables new relations, social interaction and multiple experiences while the user walks around to select books inside the library.

Moreover, OMA claims for the particular library that “The architecture represents a serene background against which “life” unfolds in the foreground.”<sup>90</sup> In this regard, the structure remains stable, maintaining the architectural character while enabling continuous program change brought by *life*. Thus it can be stated that the library also is adaptable for future program insertion and alteration through time.

In brief, it is legitimate to infer that regarding the library, the most remarkable attempts here are the “pliable surfaces,” which can imply an interrogation in the stratification of floors and a query of *Plan Libre*<sup>91</sup>, and the approach to the library program as an urban construct that triggers experience through space.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.1328

<sup>91</sup> Plan Libre can be defined as the Open Plan, based on the ideas of the US architect Frank Lloyd Wright and French architect Le Corbusier. Accessed on 24.01.2013  
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/open-plan.html#ixzz2Ic5ReapB>

### 2.3. The main inferences that might shape SPL

In this section, the inheritances of the abovementioned assessments from the former studies are stated regarding their relevance to SPL. Here, the aim is to formulate the main issues that are considered to be reflected to the program and space of SPL in reference to the theoretical studies and former library projects of OMA. There are four issues which are inferred from the former studies and are believed to be utilized to liberate from the conventional library layout.

The first issue is the re-interpretation of “Grid” and “Culture of Congestion”. Through the studies conducted on Manhattan, Rem Koolhaas states that the “Grid” regulates and controls the use of plot. Meanwhile, it provides flexibility beneath this control by enabling variability in the third dimension. On the other hand, “Culture of Congestion” is the condition of the city that results from the altering requests of dense populations and rapid technological changes, both of which cannot be controlled. In other words, it represents the uncontrolled condition of the urban life which leads to rapid alterations. As a result, “Grid” denotes the *stable* part of the city while “Culture of Congestion” is *instable part*. According to Koolhaas, these two parts should be utilized together to deal with the *programmatic indeterminacy* in metropolitan conditions.

Regarding the library in particular, OMA applies this strategy and utilizes this togetherness of the *stable and instable* to resolve the *programmatic indeterminacy* in library program. The library program is separated in two distinct parts in this regard considering the functional sections, which are believed to remain mostly stable, and the functional sections, which are more open for alteration. This separation is also arises from the dual nature of library: that is preserving and accessing to information. The program parts related with the **preservation** of information are denoted as **stable**, while the program parts related with **accessing** to the information are denoted as **instable**. To illustrate, in National Library of France, OMA interprets spaces with a similar consideration as “*solid information repository stacks*” and “*carved out voids*” for public spaces in order to resolve the programmatic indeterminacy.

The second issue is the redefinition of the physical relations between programmatic parts of library by the help of architectural elements. Architectural elements of surfaces, ramps, or even void are utilized to create visual and physical connections. In particular, an alternative circulation is defined. This circulation provided by the ramps is the alternative to the fixed and vertical circulation provided by the elevators. For instance, in Jussieu Libraries by the use of “pliable surfaces” and ramps, new sets of relations are created between the different programmatic parts of library besides the alternative routes.

The third issue is the involvement of *Plan Libre*, which enables the flexibility for a program change or a new program insertion. It is parallel with the discussion of “*lobotomy*” in architecture. The clear-cut division between the programmatic parts of the library is vanished, and then the library space becomes adaptable to provide flexibility for programmatic change, due to the alterations in time.

The fourth issue is the reassessment of library as an urban construct. That is, the library is approached as an extension of the city fabric and as a public cityscape. In doing so, the publicity of the library and its appropriation is intended to be promoted. For example, Jussieu Libraries are regarded as an extension of the campus in which it is located. The attempt to create a boulevard as an extension of the existing alley is to connect the library with its surrounding and increase its publicity. Then, the main inferences can be listed as follows:

- Differentiation of program parts as **stable** and **instable**.
- Utilization of the duality of relations emerging with the existence of stable and instable in order to cope with the programmatic indeterminacy.
- Redefinition of the physical relations between programmatic parts of library in order to increase possible interactions.

- Utilization of *Plan Libre* and *Pliable Surfaces* to create flexibility and new relations between different programmatic parts.
- Reassessment of library as an urban construct in order to locate library in relation with the city and increase its publicity.

Having discussed the former theoretical and practical works of OMA with respect to their approach to architectural program and in particular library program, it is valid to move on to SPL in order to observe how library program and its space are reinterpreted in relation to the current changes in information technologies.



## CHAPTER 3

### CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

In the previous chapters it is discussed that library alters and evolves in conjunction with the alterations of publicity and technology. In the light of these discussions, how library is designed to fit into these altering conditions will be explored within this chapter. This analysis will be conducted by focusing mainly on the book conceptualizing the SPL, which is an e-book titled as *Seattle Public Library Proposal* (1999), and lately referred as the *Concept Book*<sup>92</sup>, and then by observing the building itself (SPL). Here, the aim is to explore the reflections and materialization of the concepts in the building.

Firstly, the concepts that are highlighted the *Concept Book* will be examined. This examination is conducted in two parts. In the first part, since there is no solid information about the images of the *Concept Book* there will be speculations on the images in order to extract the concepts. In the second part, according to the information provided for the re-construction of the program in the *Concept Book*, an examination is conducted to figure out the tools and operations of this re-construction.

Secondly, the artifact (building itself) is analyzed. In doing so, it is aimed to reveal the reflections of the theories of OMA in the library design. In other words, it is a search for the relations in the rhetoric and the reality. However, it is important to mention that, this evaluation will also provide us with the nature of alteration of public library in general; which is the issue that this thesis focuses on.

#### 3.1. The Book: The *Concept Book*

This section aims to understand SPL through the critical reading of the proposal of SPL; commonly known as the *Concept Book*. Firstly by focusing on the images in order to find out the concepts and draw the overall framework of OMA's approach to library, the images will be tried to be read in reference to their contexts and historical significances. Following, the solid data on the *Concept Book* defining the interpretation of OMA to library program will be analyzed to figure out the tools and operations regulating their ideas on library.

##### 3.1.1. Concepts of the *Concept Book* (Speculations on Images)

In this section, the concepts that are highlighted in the *Concept Book* will be discussed.<sup>93</sup> It provides clues about overall framework of the design decisions and connections with library's historical references, and precedents. Besides, it searches for an answer to the question of what the library will become in the 21st century.

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<sup>92</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999.

Accessed on: 05.01.2012 <<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-building-facts/cen-OMAlmn-concept-book>>

This proposal is mainly known as the "Concept Book" and presented by this name in SPL's official website. In parallel to that, the book "Seattle Public Library OMA/LMN" published after the construction of SPL will also be referred. Michael Kubo, Ramón Prat, Seattle Public Library OMA/LMN, Actar May 2005

<sup>93</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999

current url "<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-building-facts/cen-OMAlmn-concept-book>", last accessed 05.01.2012

This assessment will be conducted by either speculating on the images, or on the concrete data provided. In order to identify the approach; the *Concept Book* will be studied through the concepts of “publicity,” “technology” (i.e. flexibility and compression), and “locality” (i.e. context and aura) of the library. In doing so, the images in the *Concept Book* will be supportive to understand the concepts and the perception of the designers. Through this assessment, it is aimed to reveal how OMA collected related data, and how they interpreted these data in order to construct the program of the library.

**Publicity in the *Concept Book*:**



Figure3.1 Brooklyn Public Library Front Gate, 1940. Original architect Raymond Almirall, design revision by Alfred Morton Githens & Francis Keally. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.2

In the *Concept Book*, the first image appears as Brooklyn Public Library's outsized front gate (Figure 3.1). It reveals a citizen standing alone in front of a massive gate while keeping rather a distance. The gate is an implication of a public access that announces the existence of the public space. As mentioned in the first chapter, public access dates back to Renaissance and library gradually gained a public dimension with the invention of rapid replication means.<sup>94</sup> This existence of more public dimension yielded to an alteration in the spatial organization of the library, which started from the entrance gate.

This issue of publicity introduced with this image, has been widely discussed in the *Concept Book*. In the *Concept Book* it is stated that the "The Library represents, maybe with the prison, the last of the uncontested moral universes: communal accommodations for 'good' (or necessary) activities..."<sup>95</sup> For OMA, library is respected at most for its public duty and as a place housing "communal accommodations for good".

However, This statement may also be regarded as the expression which reveals the anxiety of OMA about "library as an institution" and as "a public space". The "electronic" which is denominated with the "Barbaric" exposes OMA's concern.<sup>96</sup> It implies the invasion of the current system by new kinds of media. In addition to this, the library is defined as a "fortress ready to be 'taken' by potential enemies." In this regard, the library is defined with the metaphor of a "castle": "library as the fortification" to protect the books, and "electronic as the enemy" leaking to this fortified castle.<sup>97</sup> Library is criticized for not attempting to adapt to new technologies; but instead, "packaging" itself in "a new way." However, this threat is not limited only to books. As Amy Murphy stresses "It is not only the traditional book and library that has become threatened by new digital and electronic media, but traditional forums of public life itself."<sup>98</sup> Both statements confirm the breaking point of the commitment of the library only to books. The "invasion" will change the library as a public space. Thus, library will endure if it can only accommodate all available technologies besides the books and provides a new type of publicity.

Therefore, it is probable to anticipate that unlike the classical libraries, OMA's approach will reserve room for these new kinds of media while reconsidering the human-space relation in scale while being accessible to whole public and maintain public space. This idea is supported by another image from the *Concept Book*: Étienne-Louis Boullée's utopian library proposal for Bibliothèque Roi (Royal Library) in 1785.

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<sup>94</sup> Nan,Dahlkild. "The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy." *Library Trends*, Volume 60, Number 1, Summer 2011, p.12 (revise)

<sup>95</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.2

Accessed on: 05.01.2012

<<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-building-facts/cen-OMAlmn-concept-book> >

<sup>96</sup> It is stated that "Its ubiquity and its uncontrollable accessibility seem to represent a loss of control, depth, tradition, civilization. In response, the language of the Library has become moralistic and defensive: its rhetoric proclaims - implicitly and explicitly - a sense of superiority in mission, in social responsibility, in value..."

OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.4.

Accessed on: 05.01.2012

<<http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-building-facts/cen-OMAlmn-concept-book> >

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Amy Murphy. "Seattle Central Library: Civic Architecture in the Age of Media" *Places* in December 2006. available on: <http://m.designobserver.com/places/feature/seattle-central-library-civic-architecture-in-the-age-of-media/813/>



Figure 3.2 Étienne-Louis Boullée's utopian library project for Bibliothèque Roi in 1785, edited by the author.  
Source: Andrew McClellan. *The Art Museum From Boullée To Bilbao*. University of California Press, 2008, p.62

Bibliothèque Roi proposed just before French Revolution and the concepts of enlightenment were rising at that time, such as; “democracy,” “tolerance,” and “enlightenment”.<sup>99</sup> The reflection of these concepts in architecture can be observed in the grand reading room. This library supposed to contain all existing knowledge likely the French encyclopedia, and after the French Revolution it would become *Bibliothèque Nationale*.<sup>100</sup> Similar to other well-known projects of Boullée, Bibliothèque Roi proposal is composed of simple volumes and is devoted to the citizen.<sup>101</sup> The luminous gigantic space under the massive vault is reserved for human interaction and social activities. One can observe from the image that users are sitting, relaxing, and interacting besides reading activities. The proposed social public space was far beyond its time.<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned before, in that context, due to the developments in printing technology, information; namely the books, were widely opened for public use. Thanks to this printing technology, the number of the books rapidly increased which attuned the space. In the Boullée's utopian library, the books are placed on two sides under the vast vault, and book sections are leveled like an amphitheatre (Figure.3.2). The space is gigantic since, more space is required not only to house more books but also to create a public space. According to Pier Vittorio Aureli, the projects of Boullée were for creating the city space.<sup>103</sup> For Aureli, Boullée's approach also differs from so-called French Classicism due to his critical and revolutionary approach to the public space. Thus, the choice of Boullée's library as an illustration among thousands of libraries in the *Concept Book*, is not a coincidence. It is related with this *critical* and *revolutionary* approach to public space and the city.

<sup>99</sup> Nan, Dahlkild. “The Emergence and Challenge of the Modern Library Building: Ideal Types, Model Libraries, and Guidelines, from the Enlightenment to the Experience Economy.” *Library Trends*, Volume 60, Number 1, Summer 2011, p.12

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13

<sup>101</sup> Pier Vittorio Aureli, MIT Press, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, 2011, p.141

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142

<sup>103</sup> Aureli refines his argument as: “Boullée’s principles were a reflection of architecture not only as an autonomous discipline but also as a project on the city, and his theory both exhibits and counters the spatial transformations of the city. In other words, the scale and composition of his architecture manifest a new vision of the public, as exemplified through his civic monuments, and provide a limit to the totalizing spatiality implied in the evolving tradition of so-called French classicism and its urban applications. In this context, Boullée’s project was not a “revolutionary” negation of the existing architectural tradition, but rather a critical, postrevolutionary appropriation of this tradition for addressing public space.” Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of An Absolute Architecture*, MIT Press, 2011, p. 146



In brief, it can be inferred from this image selection that, SPL proposal will put forward a statement about public space. Boullée's approach to reading room as a social space and the alteration of storage system may also provide a model to evaluate for SPL. Besides, Boullée's library can be regarded as a "public monument". Yet, it is not intended to symbolize "character" or formal references, but provide us with clues for specific programmatic and technical requirements such as accessibility, safety, and circulation.<sup>104</sup>

Consequently, it is valuable to define what publicity means for OMA. Publicity and public space is somehow stated with accessibility for every citizen.<sup>105</sup> Yet, the real indication of the Public for OMA is that of being "free" that is not only in terms of money but also in social and physical sense.<sup>106</sup> Koolhaas states that, especially in the last decade, "public domain" has undergone "erosion" and substituted with similar structures of the "private". This "privatization" brings about "quasi-public",<sup>107</sup> spaces, which in fact "makes the user pay while suggesting welcome".<sup>108</sup> Thus, the library is stated to be "the last breathing space", both free and public.<sup>109</sup> To conclude, the public space for OMA, is "free social space" to interact which is not pre-defined and restricted yet spontaneous.

### **Technology in the *Concept Book*:**

Each library today houses a proliferation of adjunct conditions that creates a conceptual imbalance: since its format has never been fundamentally adjusted to accommodate its new social role, the Library is like a host organism overwhelmed by its parasites.<sup>110</sup>

Regarding the technological alterations, the first image of the *Concept Book* is the time line chart, which reveals the introduction of new concepts and innovations that affected the library holdings and reading culture with respect to years. It is obvious that, these charts by OMA are illustrated to understand the nature of alteration through time. In Figure 3.3.A, there are constant library holdings like the book, and temporal holdings like the floppy disk. It is observed that the unstable ones are denoted as "parasites" which are believed to survive with the main organism during a limited time period. They are not an integrated part of the main organism but parasites attached to its structure temporarily. Therefore, it is assumed that these program parts live with the library for an uncertain period. This argument is parallel with the "Barbaric" denomination mentioned before.<sup>111</sup> However, the electronic is stable while this parasite programs are temporary. As a result, these parasites are to be replaced when another intervention is triggered by cultural, social, or technological alterations. In Figure 3.3.B, the social role of the library alteration is illustrated. With respect to years, the social duty of the library has enlarged and new roles have entered, such as the specialized sections for different age groups, and other services like remote access.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp.142-143

<sup>105</sup> It is stated that homeless was also considered during the design process in the Seattle Post Intelligencer on May 20th 2004. There were also utopian suggestions of OMA, such as placing hospital units for homeless within the library. However, there is no solid reputation of these ideas exists in SPL.

<sup>106</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.6

<sup>107</sup> Essentially public (as in services rendered) although under private ownership or control

<sup>108</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.6

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p.17

<sup>111</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.4

Accessed on : 05.01.2012,

< <http://www.spl.org/locations/central-library/cen-building-facts/cen-OMAlmn-concept-book> >

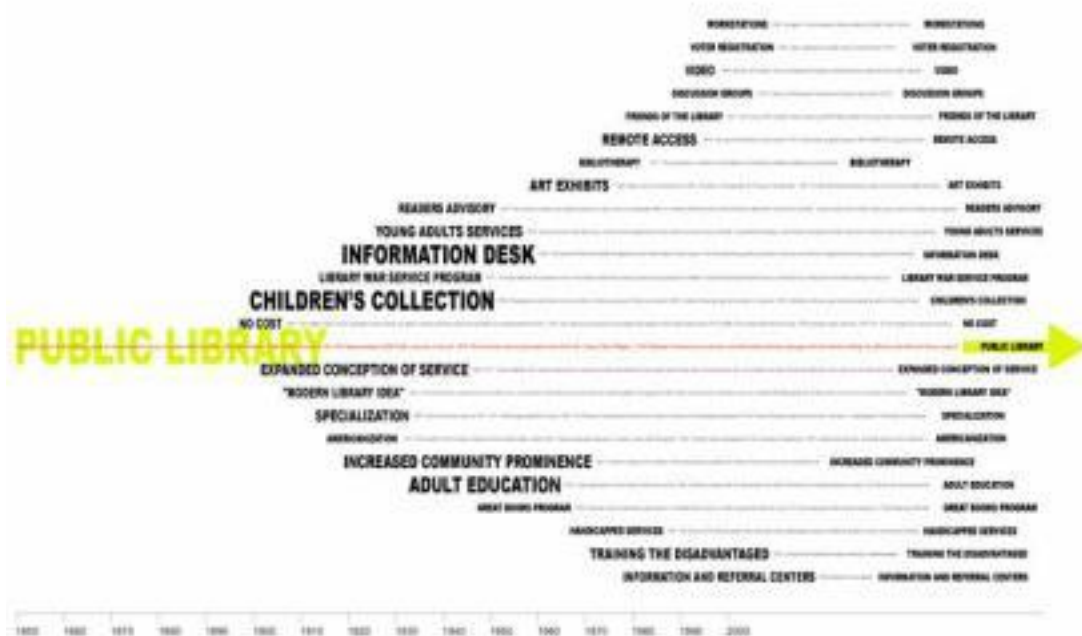
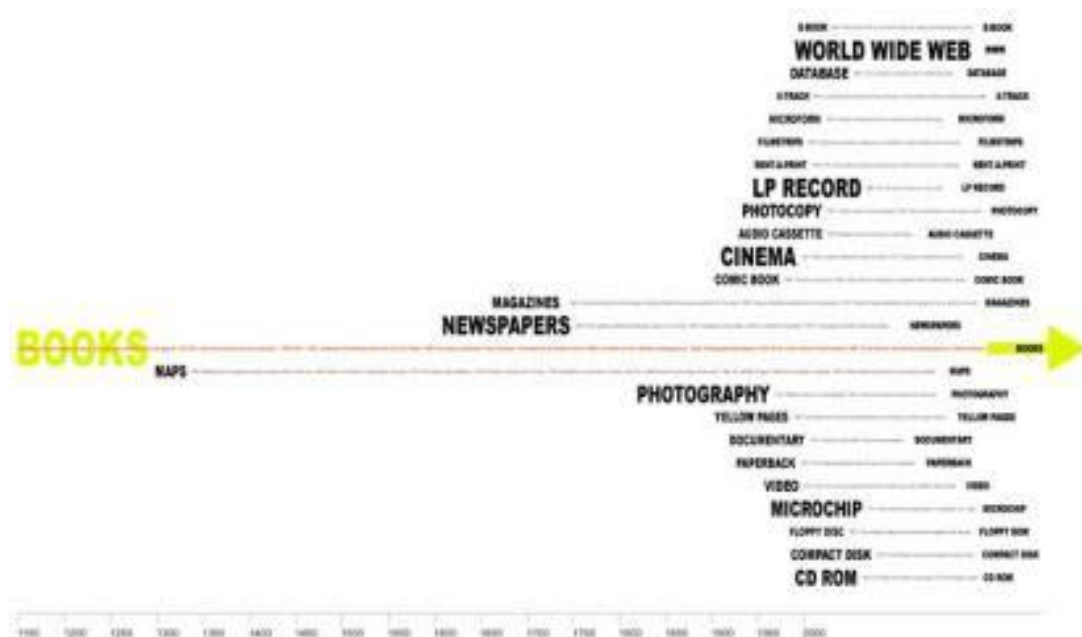


Figure 3.3 Time Line Charts, A: new equalities( top), B: new social role (bottom). SPL Concept Book time line diagram, p.15-16, p.17-18

It can be argued that OMA tries to understand the nature of programmatic indeterminacy in the case of library. By the help of these analyses, they assign the space for both the constant and temporal library holdings, and probable social spaces according to program requirements. The last issue that should be mentioned here is that, the electronic is the invader, while the new types of media and social roles are regarded as parasites. Thus, it is valuable to observe how OMA approaches to this invader.

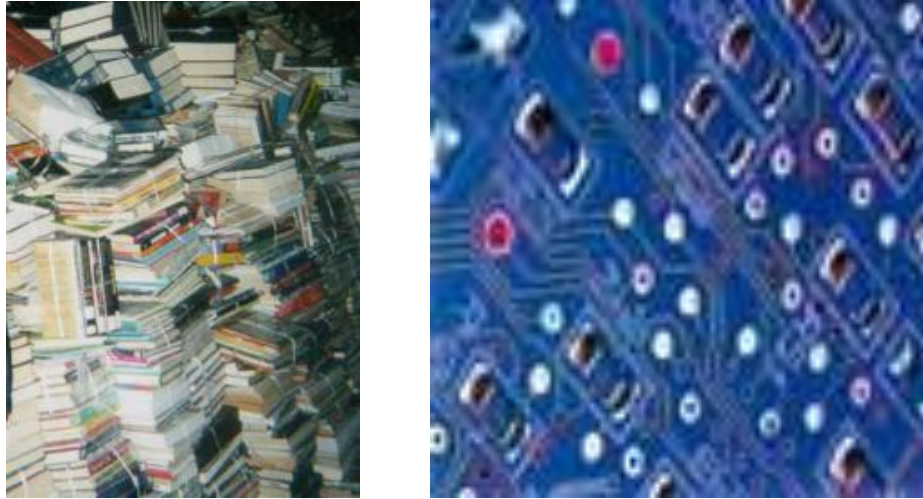


Figure 3.4 A, B, and C Concept book images without explanations and complimentary texts. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.12,p. 51

Information, knowledge, or data is cumulatively increasing. However, it is also shrinking in size and mass as the result of technological collecting means(Figure 3.4 A-B). Via computer and internet technology, the dependence and compulsion to physical space lost its meaning. The illustration in Figure 3.4 C, showing a flying man using a computer monitor, interrogates the boundary and function of the physical space. In other words, the dependence to a physical space is also questioned, while access to information is free of boundaries. Thus, library should be adapted to these circumstances and should house new media and provide tools and means to store and to access the new media.

### Locality (Context) in the *Concept Book*:

OMA examines the context of Seattle, and illustrates its culture with a collage of various images including people, planes, digital chips, and the Starbucks icon. Seattle, an expanding city of the last decades, indeed, has given direction to technology. The city performs to be aircraft, coffee, computer, and internet technology center, where the world-wide leading firms in these fields were founded, namely, Microsoft, Amazon.com, Boeing, and Starbucks. Besides, Seattle houses a considerable amount of emigrants, which makes it a real metropolis. Figure 3.5 illustrates also this multicultural structure of Seattle. For Koolhaas, Seattle's culture is specific and he defines this culture as follows:

There is a very highly developed common sensibility and a highly developed sense of solidarity between the rich and the poor. I think it's the only part of America where the rich are angst-ridden and want to do good. It is also a culture where many people have been involved in the digital world. What connects everyone is a dedication to reason and to reasoning, and I think that enabled us to do the project and explains the way it turned out.<sup>112</sup>



Figure 3.5 Concept book image without explanations and complimentary texts. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.13, p. 53

Figure 3.6 illustrates a scene from a cockpit of a plane, Boeing. While one of its windshields reveals the microchips, and the other reveals the book stacks. The library led to the collection of information which has resulted in the accumulation of knowledge, and this knowledge led to the development in technology. Therefore, library and technology relation is twofold. Both helped to sustain and feed the each other. Besides, this illustration may also imply leaking of technology to library with several means.

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<sup>112</sup> Rem Koolhaas declaration cited from: Lynn Becker. "Sleekness in Seattle", e-article. Accessed on: 16.03.2012  
<<http://lynnbecker.com/repeat/seattle/seattlepl.html>>





Figure 3.6 Concept book image without explanations and complimentary texts. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.13,p. 54



Figure 3.7 Concept book images without explanations and complimentary texts. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.52

Following; with a sarcastic attitude, OMA interrogates the relevance of stability of the architectural space through time. The image in Figure 3.7 demonstrates half-naked men, which are lying and dancing, tumbling, and even skating in this classical ordered, arched, and domed space. These activities are tremendously extraordinary incidents for that space. The deliberate attempt of OMA to reveal the freedom of the user, to get away both from the institutional restrictions and the prescribed activities, is obvious. Library used to be more formal and strict in operational terms, and the activities were restricted to research and reading. It can be claimed that OMA criticizes this restricted and excessively formal space of the library.

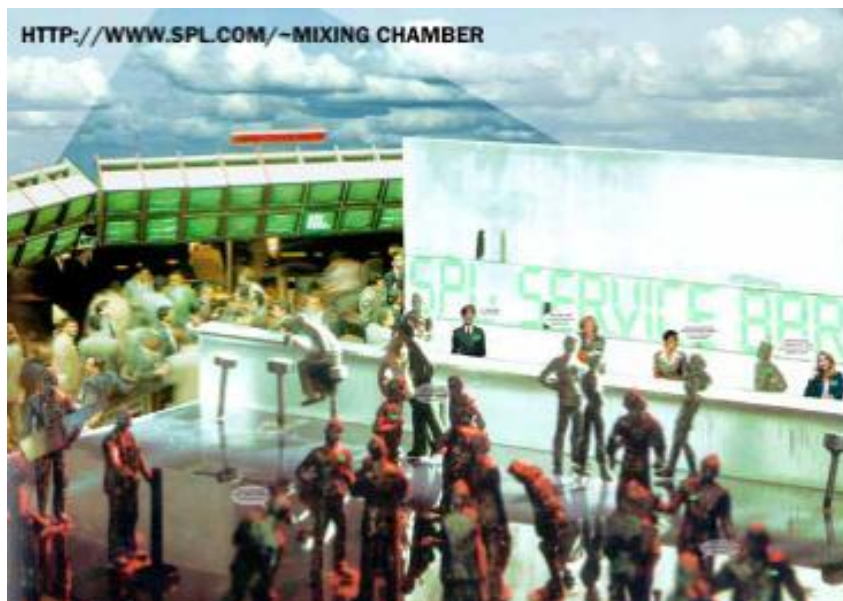


Figure 3.8 Concept book images without explanations and complimentary texts. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.52

The next image (Figure 3.8) is the illustration of the *mixing chamber* proposal which can be referred as the reference section in a traditional library. Here, librarians are assigned to wait for the users and lead them to corresponding sections of the library. Librarians are illustrated as salesmen concerned with customers, or bar tenders who are ready to help for the required information. The image reveals groups of people; chatting, waiting, hanging around, watching the screens likely in stock exchange or in a sports bar. *Librarian help service* is presumed operation for this section. Collaged items and especially the stock exchange resemblance in the image, provides reference to the global economy. Anna Klingman states that "Positioning the Seattle Library conceptually between the commercial network of international corporations and the public demands of the city the building is conceived as an urban hybrid in an attempt to mediate both realities: the local context of the city and the dislocated network of international corporations."<sup>113</sup> This implication can be stated as the screens are for information trading as an extension of "commodification" of knowledge.

In brief, publicity, technology and locality are the key concepts that manipulate the program of library. The analysis of OMA in this *Concept Book*, strengthens the library program with particular emphasis on the forces of the site (both local and global), economy and social life. Each analysis has a concern to evaluate the instability of the existing conditions, and gathering data for building up an approach to compose the library program. From now on, how OMA uses this information to compose program parts and re-construct these program parts will be analyzed through the *Concept Book*.

<sup>113</sup> Anna Klingmann. "Datascape: Libraries as Information Landscapes", *Building for Books*, Eds. Susanne Bieri and Walter Fuchs, Birkhäuser 2001, p. 7

### 3.1.2. Program Construction

The following section tries to understand how OMA re-constructed the library program. The struggle of OMA to find a way to prolong the lifespan of their works, to compensate the necessities of everyday, and to stand through time which has already mentioned under the rubric of Chapter 2, can also be observed in the creation of SPL. In order to find this path, leading to an enduring architecture in the rapidly altering world, designing for today and for future simultaneously can be stated as their objective. Having analyzed the necessities and possible requirements of the library and collecting miscellaneous data, OMA attempts to re-define the library program and re-structure the relations between its parts to fulfill this objective. In order to comprehend this, an analysis is conducted on the re-construction of the library program of OMA through examining the program related sections of the proposal (*Concept Book*) for SPL. By doing so, (referring back to the theories of Koolhaas), it is aimed to find out the tools, operations, and outcomes of their attempt. Here, it is also valid to indicate that this section is structured through the use of the sequence of the images in the Concept Book.

Koolhaas states that, architecture limits the free use of space. He states in the book *S, M, L, XL* that: "Where there is nothing, everything is possible. Where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible."<sup>114</sup> Thus, freedom of space-use and alteration should not be restricted by architectural limitations. As learned through 'Culture of Congestion', the program can be used as a tool to satisfy this flexibility. Thus OMA uses program to fulfill the altering circumstances in library. Anthony Vidler states a parallel approach to program that architectural concerns in the conventional sense should not be privileged, but instead the development and creation of environments, which will adapt "technologies of the everyday" should be stimulated.<sup>115</sup> Vidler refines his argument by declaring that architecture should be "flexible and adaptive, inventive and mobile in its response to environmental conditions and technological possibilities."<sup>116</sup> Correspondingly, OMA attempts to satisfy this challenge by inserting new program parts and "re-shuffling" (re-ordering) these program parts. Shannon Mattern highlights the importance of this program construction as follows;

The writing of the building program is one such basic decision-making moment. This document is essentially the textual blueprint of the library building; it identifies all the programmatic elements that are to be included- from reading rooms and stacks to staff workrooms, restrooms, and loading docks - and how they are to be sized, staffed, and organized within the building; it estimates how much floor space and shelf space is needed to house the library's collection today, and ten, twenty, and thirty years into the future; it addresses interior design, building and information systems, and a host of other elements. And in laying out all of these requirements, it prescribes the environment within which the public and staff will eventually work and shapes the quality of experience they will have in the building.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce. *S, M, L, XL* (The Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 199.

<sup>115</sup> Vidler, Anthony, "Toward a Theory of the Architectural Program" pg.59

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p.60

<sup>117</sup> Shannon Mattern. *The New Downtown Library/Designing with Communities*. pg.15

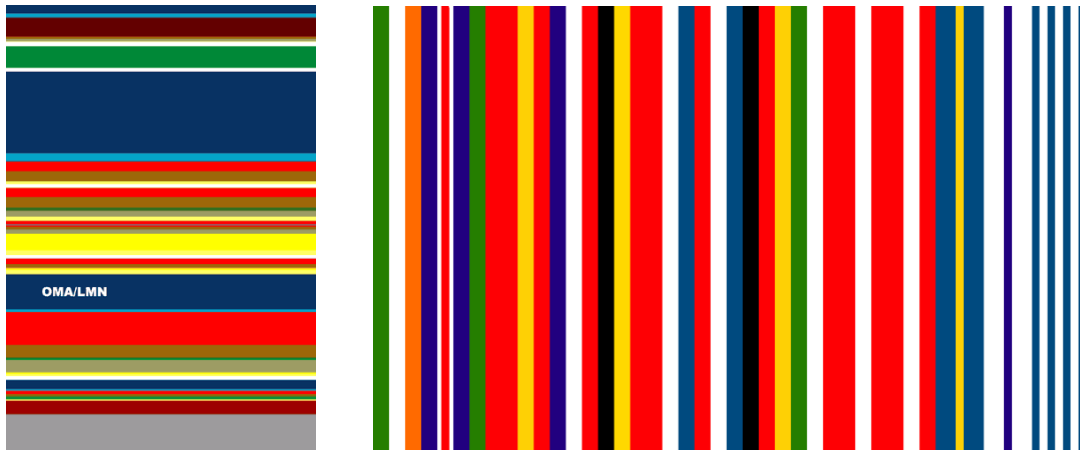


Figure 3.9 (A) SPL Concept Book Cover Page by LMN/OMA on the left (B) European Flag Proposal by AMO on the right. Sources: (A)OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.1; (B)Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Ed. by Veronique Patteeuw, NAI Publishers, 2003, p.137

The first attempt regarding the program interpretation is to emphasize the relation between the concepts of flexibility and identity, which is actually illustrated by the cover page of the *Concept Book*. It is a colorful stripe diagram that corresponds to the program analysis of SPL(Figure 3.9.A). Each program part in SPL is represented by one color stripe differing in size according to the need of space. This diagram indeed, recalls a former proposal of AMO for the European Union Flag Design(Figure 3.9.B). The offered barcode design consists of various colors taken from the flags of the different European Union member countries, each of which symbolizes one country.<sup>118</sup> Here, it is valid to analyze the former European Union Flag to observe the difference between the former and the offered flag in order to grasp the underlying statement of OMA. The current European Union (EU) Flag contains a fixed number of stars whereas the Barcode EU Flag proposal enables new member additions without space limitation. According to Charles Jenks, unlike former, this barcode design, not only provides a flexible structure but also symbolizes the EU identity.<sup>119</sup> Thus, it can be inferred that the resemblance of these two diagrams declares the concept of flexibility and identity. It can be argued that here, the main concern of OMA is to enable flexibility for variables and create an adaptable design for library with regard to its new identity.

<sup>118</sup> Charles, Jenks. *The Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma*. Printed in China (Kwong Fat Offset Printing Co. Ltd.) 2005. p.103

<sup>119</sup> Charles, Jenks. *The Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma*. Printed in China (Kwong Fat Offset Printing Co. Ltd.) 2005. p.103



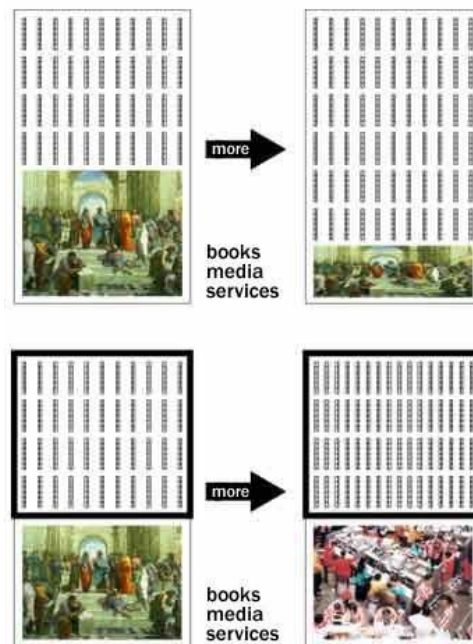


Figure 3.10 Flexibility diagrams of space in SPL. Upper two diagrams illustrate uniform flexibility, the lower two diagrams illustrates "compartmentalized flexibility", Source: Michael Kubo, Ramón Prat , Seattle Public Library OMA/LMN, Actar May 2005, pp.14-15.

The second attempt is the introduction of "compartmentalized flexibility", for the space allocation (Figure 3.10). In contrast to the flexibility proposed on the cover page, OMA divides the space of library in compartments, and places programmatic clusters (which can be one program or more program parts that accompany each other in the same space according to need) in these compartments. In other words, the space is divided into controlled parts, parallel with the activities assigned within these spaces. OMA names this spatial division as "compartmentalized flexibility".<sup>120</sup> Besides, by doing so, separate spaces are achieved. These separate spaces are flexible and enables the replacement of the program in each compartment if it is needed in future as a result of new program introductions to library. OMA defines this type of flexibility as follows:

A more plausible strategy divides the building into spatial compartments dedicated to and equipped for specific duties. Flexibility can exist within each section, but not at the expense of any of the other compartments. Change is possible by deliberately redefining use, rededicating compartments to new programs.<sup>121</sup>

According to Lynn Becker, unlike the standardization, which limits possibilities and reduces human experience to a predictable and a controllable one; Koolhaas reveals a very different attitude in terms of flexibility.<sup>122</sup> This type of flexibility prevents the dominance of one program part over. By preventing the "surpass" of one program over another, books, and new media (the information) and social space are given the same importance. However, each compartment is still flexible within its defined space. Above and beyond, it proves architect's intention of creating adaptable space without losing the autonomy in space use. In addition to these, this attempt recalls the issue of the "culture of congestion" which is previously discussed under the rubric of Chapter 2. Reminding the theories of Koolhaas, *compartmentalized flexibility* is an intervention which can also enable the *lobotomy*; a complete change or replacement of the program.

<sup>120</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, p.10

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Lynn Becker. "Sleekness in Seattle", e-article. current URL: <http://lynnbecker.com/repeat/seattle/seattlepl.htm>

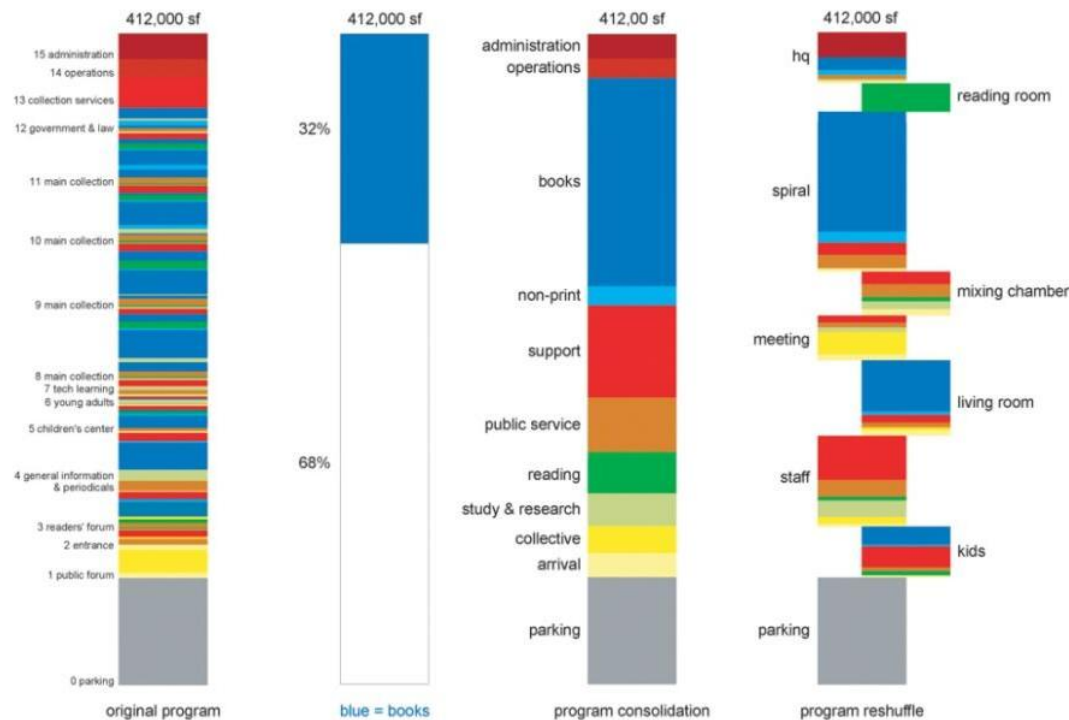


Figure 3.11 OMA/LMN Program analysis 1. Source: [http://www.archdaily.com/11651/seattle-central-library-oma-lmn/887383014\\_spl-program-diagram-i-rex/](http://www.archdaily.com/11651/seattle-central-library-oma-lmn/887383014_spl-program-diagram-i-rex/), (Last accessed: September 4, 2012)

The third attempt is the redefinition of the relations between the various program parts. In doing so, he introduces the concepts of “reshuffling” of various program parts, and then grouping of these parts as “platforms” and “in-between spaces”. This attempt consists of five main steps. In order to comprehend these steps, the program parts should be analyzed (Figure 3.11). With the intention of creating a base for the program, Seattle City Library authorities have employed RPG to define the requirements of the library (Figure 3.11, 1<sup>st</sup> column).<sup>123</sup> As the first step, OMA has used this data to construct their own library program by considering the probable future expansion (regarding the expansion till year 2025). The unexpected result here is that, the area required to hold books covers only 32% of the whole library including the expansion (Figure 3.11, 2<sup>nd</sup> column). Indeed, this value can be regarded as a verification showing the fact that the dedication to book fades away in library, whereas supportive, social, and other media spaces have expanded and covers a remarkable amount of space in library. Koolhaas briefs their intervention to the program as follows:

<sup>123</sup>The RPG Partnership, *Seattle Public Library Facility Program*, (Seattle, Wash.: RPG Partnership, 1999)

the following quotation is cited in *The New Downtown Library*, Shannon Mattern

"The RPG Partnership, which has worked with several libraries, including Seattle, in the creation of their facility programs, explains that the document's primary purposes are to (1) provide the approving and funding authorities, the library and the Seattle community with a detailed description of the facilities needed to accommodate the proposed project; (2) provide the design team with an understanding of the activities and facilities required in the proposed Central Library and of the functional criteria to be addressed during the schematic stages of the design process; and (3) provide library staff with a reference manual from which to discuss and evaluate design schemes, and to develop administrative and organizational policies for the new facility."

Our first operation has been the ‘combing’ and consolidation of the apparently ungovernable proliferation of programs and media. By combining like with like, we have identified five **platforms**, each a programmatic cluster that is architecturally defined and equipped for maximum, dedicated performance. Because each platform is designed for a unique purpose, they are different in size, density, opacity.<sup>124</sup>

The second step; named this as "program consolidation", is the gathering of similar program parts together and to analyze the space requirements (Figure 3.11, 3<sup>rd</sup> column). By doing so, the complexity resulting from the miscellaneous program parts are governed and the necessary area for each program type is seen. For instance, the total area need for the administration is calculated regardless of any functional, physical, and spatial requirements. After this simplification of program, OMA introduces a new set of relations between these parts by taking bits of the program parts and re-grouping them within controlled boxes. These controlled boxes are named, "*platforms*". This implementation or program *re-shuffle* constitutes the third step of the process (Figure 3.11, 4<sup>th</sup> column). To illustrate, kids space in the library is composed by combining of storage space (child books), social space (story room) and service space (i.e. resting rooms). The fourth step, is deciding on the program parts which will become the ‘platforms’. As mentioned above, *platforms* can be defined as the closed boxes, tailored for a designated usage. They are diverging in "size, density and opacity" according to the requirements of that particular usage.<sup>125</sup> The fifth and the last step is to locate the secondary program parts in the interface of these platforms (may also be referred as *voids* or *in-between* spaces). These *in-between spaces* are allocated for "work, interaction, and play. (And reading)"<sup>126</sup>. For example, the "*trading floor*" is an in-between space of interaction, where the librarians serves to the user and the user is directed according to his/her request.<sup>127</sup> In brief, by this program interpretation, 5 stable *platforms*, and 4 instable( *in-between*) spaces are created (Figure 3.12).

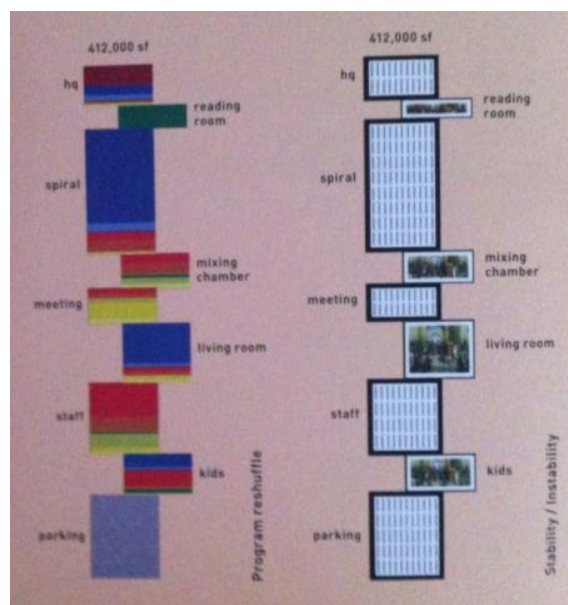


Figure 3.12 OMA/LMN Program analysis section. Source: Michael Kubo, Ramón Prat , Seattle Public Library OMA/LMN, Actar May 2005, p.18.

<sup>124</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.21

<sup>125</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.21

<sup>126</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.21

<sup>127</sup> OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.21

OMA; having defined the program spaces and interrelations of these spaces in the library, used this analysis as a base (recalling Koolhaas and AMO' dependence on data) in creating the form of SPL. Even though the direct reflection of the program is not possible on built form, the form is designed with respect to the abovementioned program interpretation. In other words, the logic that guides the design of the program also provides guidelines for the form. Indeed, this form creating approach dates back to 1960s. Vidler, clarifies this approach by referring Louis Sullivan's famous quote as follows:

In 1960, the fundamental question was the nature of the "program" conceived of in the widest possible sense, adopted for architecture, a program that comprehended and subsumed both function and form. Not "form follows function," but form as, in a real sense, program and vice versa.<sup>128</sup>

Here, in the case of SPL, it is undeniable that program has contributed to the creation of form. *Platforms* and *in-between spaces* can be regarded as the outcomes of the program analysis and construction. They are the *tools* to implement the space of SPL.

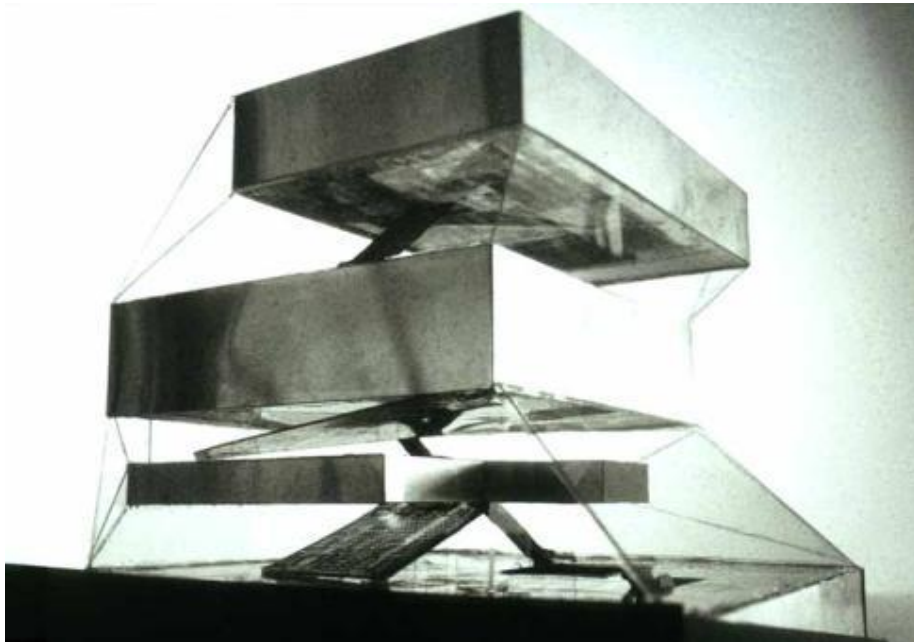


Figure 3.13 SPL Model. Source: OMA/LMN Architects "Concept Book", Dec. 1999, pg.56

In brief, OMA used the collected data to re-examine the program parts. Then, new parts are added to the program. Next, a new interpretation of the library program, namely "re-shuffling" and grouping, as a new order of relations between spaces are proposed. Subsequently, by "shifting" and "detaching" these re-shuffled groups, the in-between spaces are created (Figure 3.13). The following section is an elaborated analysis on this process.

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<sup>128</sup>Vidler, Anthony, "Toward a Theory of the Architectural Program" pg.73

### 3.1.3. Tools and Operations

In this section, firstly the tools, then the operations that lead the re-interpretation of library program will be examined. The tools of OMA can be stated as the combination of outcome of the theories and learning from the former projects, and the conceptual and programmatic studies conducted in the *Concept Book*. As the conglomeration/ accumulation of these studies on program, particularly in libraries, a set of tools that OMA uses can be extracted. One can list at least four tools as: the compartments, void, circulation paths, and the envelope (Figure 3.14).

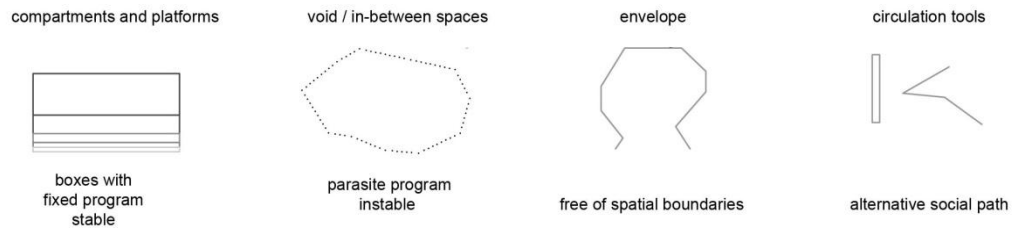


Figure 3.14 Tools in SPL 1. Produced by the author.

Besides the tools mentioned briefly in the previous chapters, OMA also utilizes “operations” in design process. Operations can be defined as the logical processes that are assigned to regulate the tools in order to create the space. It could be argued that operations are more case specific and derived from the very design problem. There are three main operations that OMA entails in case of SPL. The operations can be listed as: (1) zoning or ordering of spaces according to their privacy level, (2) the interpretation of a typical high-rise building, (3) leaving spaces for improvisation, and creating unexpected visual connections.

The first operation performed to compose the library, is zoning or ordering of spaces according to their privacy level. From bottom levels to the top, an ascending privacy level is proposed in respect to the needs of the usage. By doing so, the crowd, noise, and social interaction issues are somehow controlled. To illustrate, the headquarters are placed on the top level and almost no irrelevant user reaches this section, whereas the living room placed on the entrance level is reached by almost everyone entering the library (Figure 3.15).

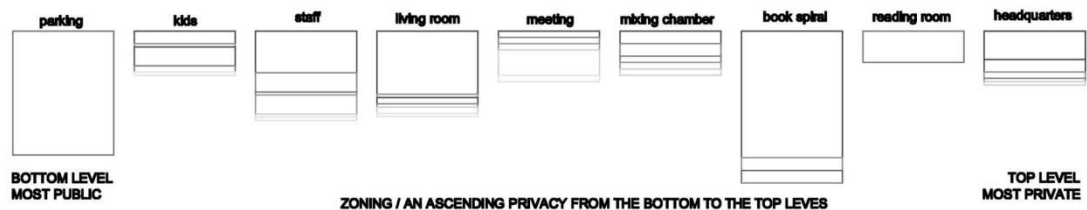


Figure 3.15 Operations in SPL 1. Produced by the author.

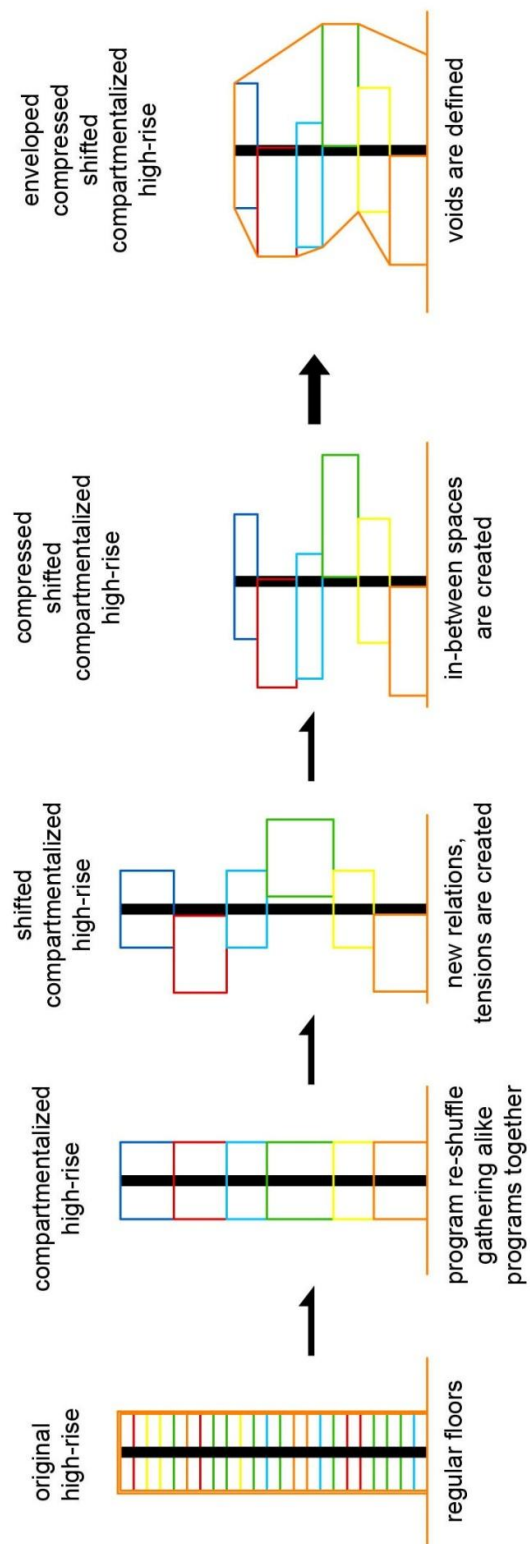


Figure 3.16 Operations in SPL 2. Produced by the author.

Interpretation of a typical high-rise building is the second operation in re-creating the relations and form in SPL. In a typical high rise, the program parts are placed on top of each other, regardless of their relation in vertical. The slab or the ceiling, which two flats share only in common is not penetrable and blocks all type of relations by acting as a real boundary. By detaching and shifting the floors, and at least by providing visual connection; OMA obtained new spaces and unforeseen relations between different program parts (Figure 3.16). These new spaces, namely, in-between spaces, are more flexible in character than the simple housing of its components. To clarify, the floors are detached and then shifted to create the *in-between* spaces. In fact, the overall mass remains constant, however, by shifting the floors, shortening or compressing, and widening them, interrelations of spaces and the form altered. The stability of the typical high-rise is interrupted while instabilities created. For instance, by detaching book spiral and meeting spaces, an in-between space is created where the mixing chamber is placed. Mixing chamber can be regarded as the reinterpretation of the reference room in the traditional library. However, in mixing chamber, the definitions of information supply and the role of users are not limited to traditional reference room. By doing so, in-between spaces permit the insertion of new functions beyond convention (Figure 3.16).

The third operation can be listed as leaving spaces for improvisation, and creating unexpected connections and relations via visual links (Figure 3.17). This third attempt is similar to the second one. However, there also exist cross-relations between different program parts, in some cases regardless of their proximity. Besides, designated spaces for targeted groups such as the spaces reserved for teenagers and kids can also be seen as the spaces for improvisation. The activities provided in these areas are diverse, and change often. Thus, unlike a conventional well-defined functioned space, the spaces of improvisation are able to house altering functions.

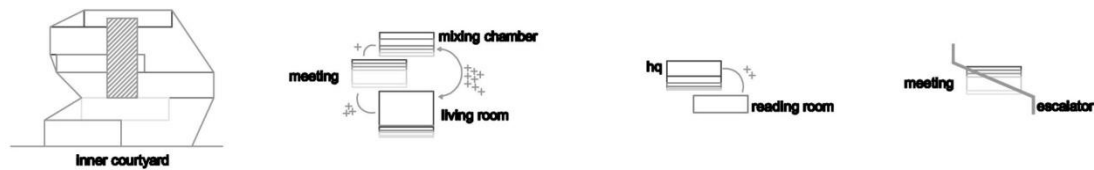


Figure 3.17 Operations in SPL 3. Produced by the author.

To conclude, the tools and operations extracted from the learning of several sources, OMA constructs their new library. The next section, is an analysis of the building (SPL) in order to observe how these tools and operations are employed.

### 3.2. The Building: Seattle Public Library

Until now, related theoretical and former works of OMA are discussed and the Seattle Public Library is analyzed by means of studying on the *Concept Book*. In this section, it is aimed to observe the reflections of these on the built edifice. The section is composed of two parts. In the first part; under the headings of publicity and technology; an analysis will be conducted to observe the inheritance of their former works (both regarding *Delirious New York* and former unbuilt libraries), and the reflections of the studies in the *Concept Book* on the literal space of SPL. In the second part, the thesis re-assesses the building in the terms of technology and publicity as to locate any similarities and differences of the architectural program of SPL compared to common library program.

#### 3.2.1. In terms of Publicity & Technology

This section aims to conduct an analysis on the built space: the building of The Seattle Public Library. In order to do so, the previous sections; namely *Delirious New York*, AMO, and Libraries of OMA will be referred as contributors and eventually their connection is explored. Following, *Concept Book*



will be used to provide a guideline for the analysis, which will be conducted in two parts. In the initial part, firstly by referring to the studies in Chapter 2, the relations of the building will be interrogated. Secondly, through the themes of publicity and technology, the built space will be discussed. Besides, their contribution to the library program will be explored.

### Reflections from Former Studies

Analyzing some theoretical and former studies of OMA, one can deduct that Rem Koolhaas' Seattle Public Library has perceptible origins within his earlier works. SPL can be regarded as a materialization and an extension of OMA's architectural discourse accumulating since 1978. However, the most significant references are covered under the rubric of Chapter 2.

Starting apparently with the manifesto, "*Delirious New York*," the architect searches the ways to adapt his architectural productions to time. The necessities and functions assigned to space alter so rapid that one cannot presume the next function that will be allocated to space. Koolhaas names this as "*programmatic indeterminacy*."<sup>129</sup> Koolhaas proposes that the program is one of the main tools to handle this indeterminacy. In order to deal with it, OMA utilizes program and duality of relations. OMA states, "Nevertheless, we try to build structures with unstable identities -- that is, buildings with depth."<sup>130</sup>

In parallel, this attitude can be seen in SPL. The program parts are categorized as the ones that have more possibility to change and the ones that remain as constants. Thus, by utilizing the stable and instable program parts together, it is believed to solve the problem of adapting space to altering conditions or "life." In our case, headquarters, book spiral, meeting rooms, staff work spaces, and parking area are the *rigid* spaces and named as *platforms*; whereas the reading room, mixing chamber, living room, and kids area *instable* spaces and named as *in-between* spaces. The platforms are, enveloped with walls or windows even in the interior and assigned for functional sections of the program. Whereas the in-between spaces are assigned for work, play, interaction, and reading and almost have no wall or even ceiling.



Figure 3.18 Outer view of SPL. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

<sup>129</sup> Koolhaas refers to this term first, in the project of Parc de La Villette

<sup>130</sup> Conversation with Rem Koolhaas. "Rem Koolhaas: 'An Obsessive Compulsion towards the Spectacular'" <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/rem-koolhaas-an-obsessive-compulsion-towards-the-spectacular-a-566655-2.html>



The implication of the platforms (stable parts) and in-between spaces (instable parts) are almost visible even from the outside by observing the orientation of the surfaces of the envelope (Figure 3.18). The vertical covering or walls of platforms are orthographic. However, the in-between spaces, which are reserved for public space, are enveloped with inclined surfaces.

In the same order with chapter two, the reflection of AMO can also be observed in SPL. Large amount of data presented in the *Concept Book* ensures the involvement of AMO. According to Aaron Betsky, "Koolhaas adopted and adapted his methodology, creating an architecture that was itself a form of three-dimensional graphic design. It was an architecture that dissolved into data, or rather surfed on it."<sup>131</sup> The related raw data is processed by AMO. Indeed, it could be argued that the *Concept Book* is produced by AMO, whereas the building is produced by OMA.

Following, the reflections of former unbuilt libraries on SPL can be re-introduced. Regarding the Jussieu Libraries, the similarities can be listed as the utilization of a social path and a continuous archival space. Similar to the *flaneur* wandering around in serendipity through the floors and ramps of Jussieu Libraries, a social path is provided for the user in SPL, yet with a slightly different attitude. In Jussieu Libraries the path of the *flaneur* was indeterminate as a result of the pliable surface, whereas in SPL a more controlled and a pre-defined social path is introduced by the escalators (Figure 3.19 A) besides the main circulation core. That is, the in-between spaces (social spaces) are connected to each other, by omitting the platforms (functional sections) through the escalators (Figure 3.19 B-Figure 3.20) in SPL whereas this connection was achieved by the “pliable surfaces” in Jussieu Libraries.

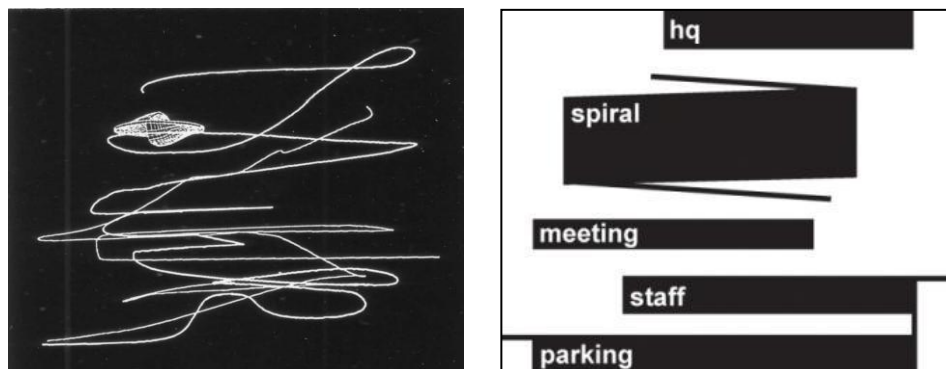


Figure 3.19 (A) Conceptual diagram showing the path of the flaneur in Jussieu Libraries on the left, (B) Main and in-between spaces in SPL on the right. Source: Koolhaas, Rem and Mau, Bruce. S, M, L, XL (The Monacelli Press, 1995), pp. 1343-1343

<sup>131</sup> Aaron Betsky, "Rem koolhaas: The Fire of Manhattanism Inside the Iceberg of Modernism". *Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, Ed. by Veronique Patteeuw, NAI Publishers, 2003, p.34

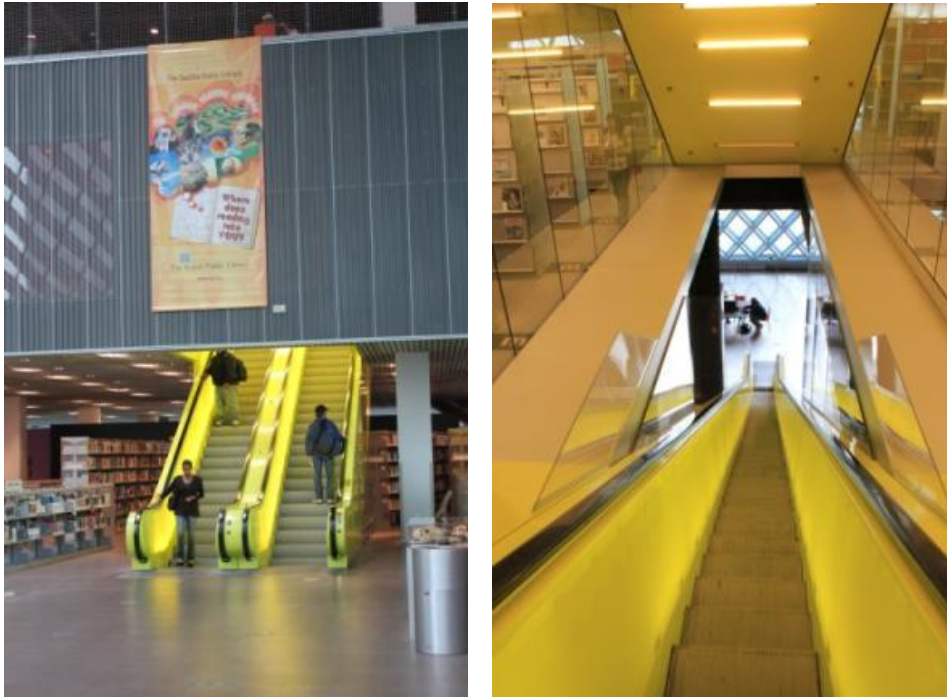


Figure 3.20 A,B Escalators connecting the in-between spaces. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

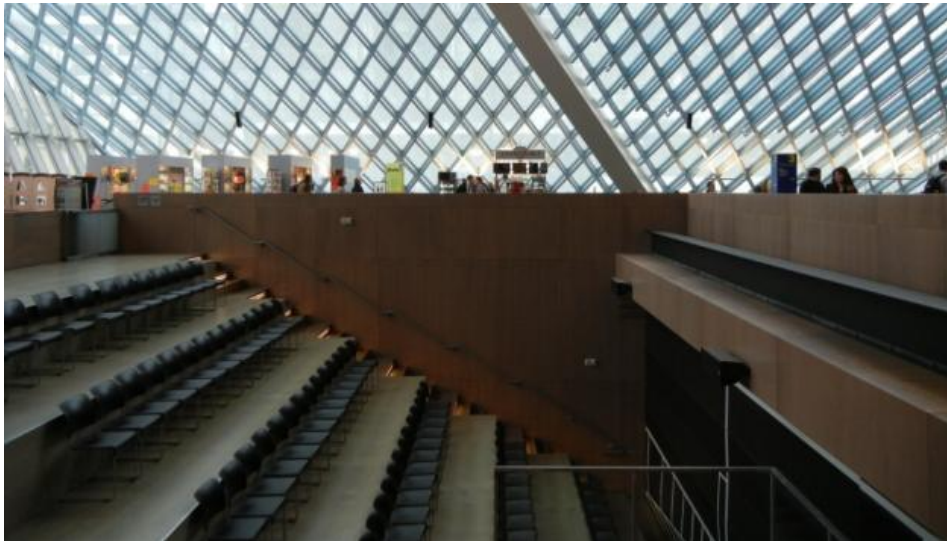


Figure 3.21 Auditorium as an in-between spaces, Auditorium and Living Room connection.  
Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 3.22 View from the Mixing Chamber. Book Spiral box above and Meeting Rooms below. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

Another inheritance to observe is the continuous archival space of SPL. Similar to the arrangement of book stacks in Jussieu Libraries, the Book Spiral in SPL is structured as a continuous ramp travelling between the all storage levels (Figure 3.20 B). However, the Book Spiral is located in the *compartment* and separated from the other spaces of the library by means of a controlled box.

The strategy of void can also be examined in this regard. The utilization of void in SPL resembles the Très Grande Bibliothèque. The void is utilized for public spaces in both libraries, yet with different attitudes. In Très Grande Bibliothèque, voids are produced by carving out from the information solid, whereas in SPL the voids are defined by shifting of the floors and surrounded with the envelope. This envelope or the transparent skin of both libraries constitutes another similarity. In general, libraries have opaque facades to control lighting, privacy, noise. In OMA's libraries, these opaque facades are replaced with the transparent envelopes. By doing so, OMA aims to produce a critical opponent to the introverted, visually controlled, and opaque facades of libraries in common. These transparent envelopes are utilized to increase the visual connection as well as create curiosity.



## Publicity

After analyzing the reflections of the former studies of OMA to the built space of SPL; in this section the thesis will re-assess the SPL in terms of publicity and technology as these two concepts are accepted as the catalysis of the changes occurred in the library program.

The effort of OMA to comprehend the public space in library is observed in the *Concept Book*. As mentioned before, the definition of public space requires social interaction, accessibility for everyone, and ensured individual rights. Another objective of this section is to assess whether SPL provides public spaces fulfilling such qualities of publicness.

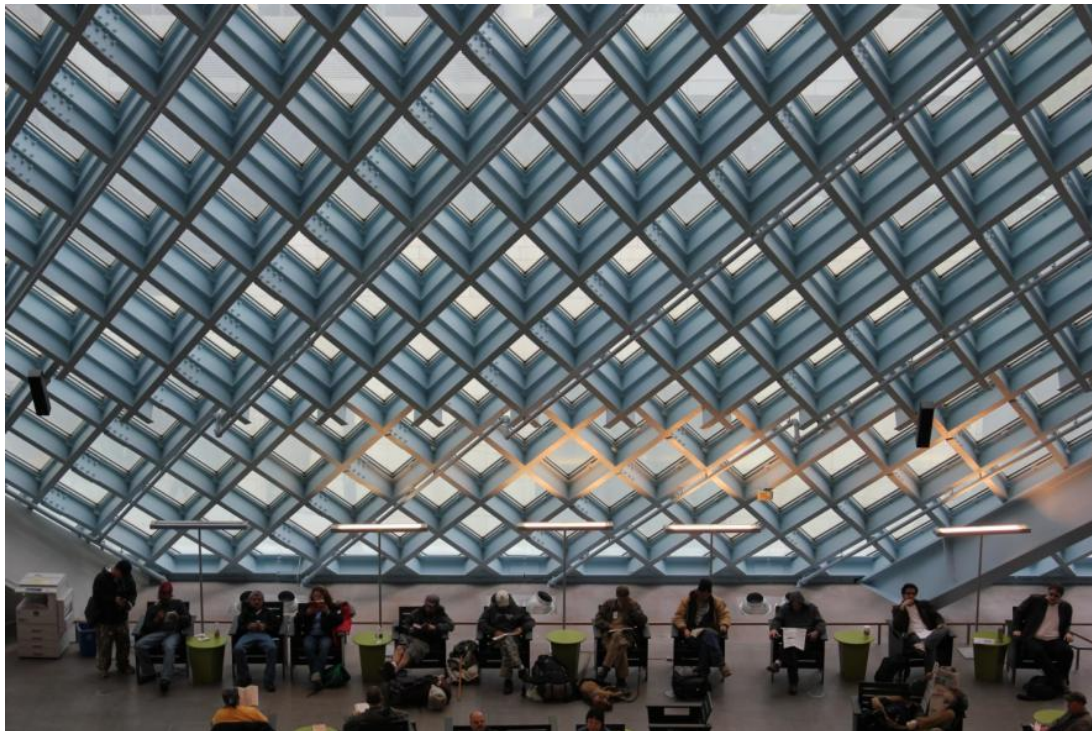


Figure 3.23 View from Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 3.24 Coffee Chart in Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 3.25 Friendshop in Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

It is fair to state here; SPL is widely accepted and frequently used by the community members as a gathering space (Figure 3.23). SPL mainly owes this property to its vast area designated for free public use; namely The Living Room. The Living Room constitutes the main part of library housing the entrance and main circulation area which can be reached from the city level. This section recalls Boullée's Utopian Library where the reading room was regarded as a social public space for the city. Similar to an urban space, The Living Room provides open access for everyone while being equipped with diverging facilities such as a coffee chart (Figure 3.24) or shop (Figure 3.25).

Another property highlighting the public qualities of this space is the fact that there are no strict rules regulating the use of space. Users in many parts of the building, especially within the Living Room are not required to keep all the old rules of libraries, like keeping silence, no beverages etc (Figure 3.26). In other words, library has changed its strict rule policy, as being a quiet and organized place only for books. To be more specific, unlike a reading room limiting the activity only to researching and reading; thus requiring a silent and activity-wise controlled space; the Living room promotes divergent activities. To illustrate; it is used as a café, as gathering spot, and even as a dance stage.<sup>132</sup>



Figure 3.26 “Free” user. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

Moreover, this publicity of Living Room is promoted by introducing complimentary programs. In this regard, the placement of the Auditorium and its relation with Living room is remarkable (Figure 3.27). Conventionally, Auditoriums within a building complex have separate entrances and foyers. However, in SPL the Auditorium is designed as an extension of the Living Room while connecting it to the Children Center. Moreover, there is a mutual relation between the Living Room and Auditorium. The Auditorium serves the Living Room as a sacred hub for designated activities, whereas the Living Room acts as the foyer of the Auditorium, enhancing its publicity.

<sup>132</sup> For a Dance Show Took place in SPL See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iITUxFo9hB4>



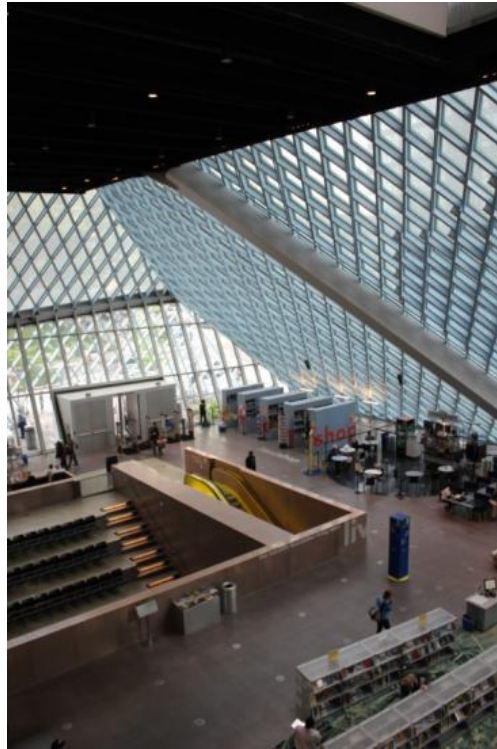


Figure 3.27 Living Room and Auditorium Connection view. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

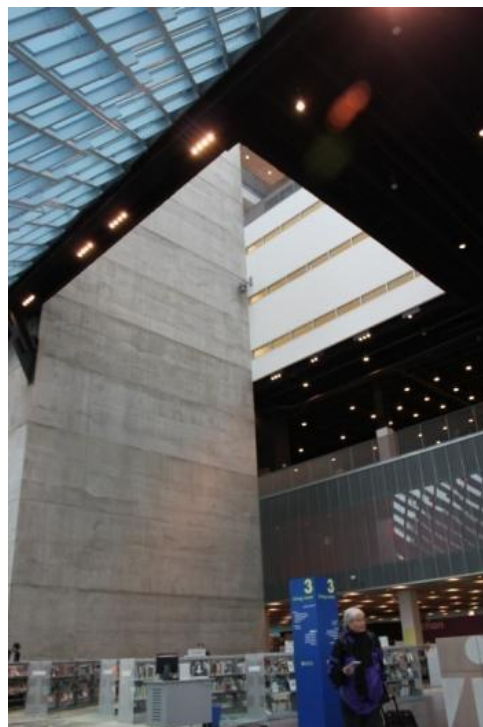


Figure 3.28 Atrium view from Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 3.29 Children's Center. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

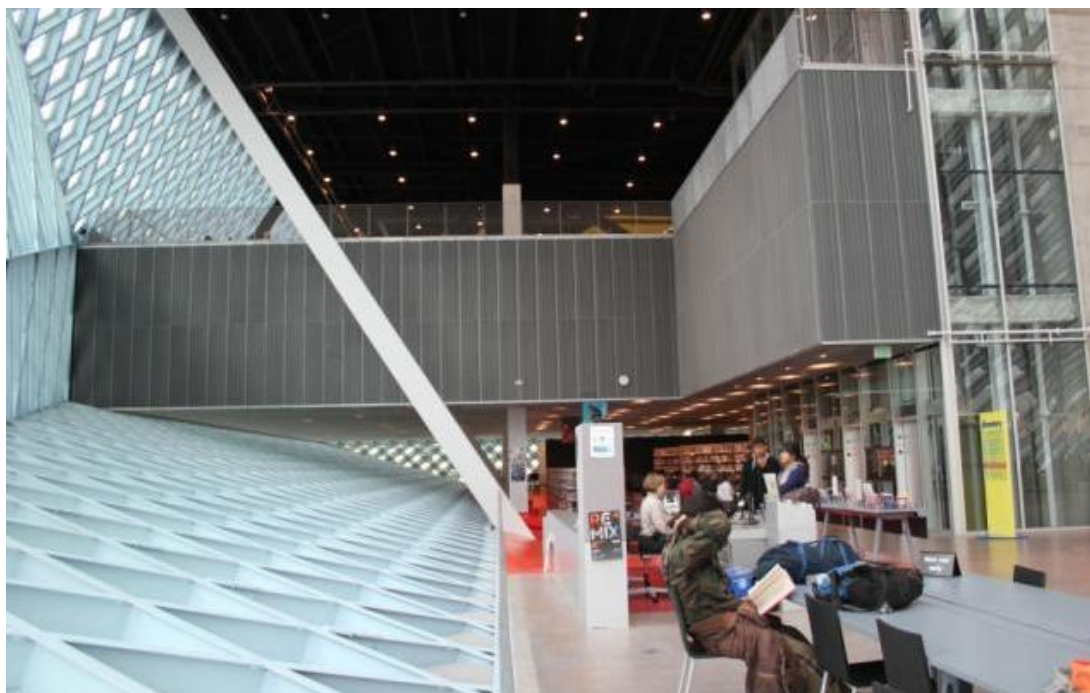


Figure 3.30 View from Teen Center from Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Another architectural element enhancing the publicity of Living Room and connecting it to the deeper parts of building is the atrium (Figure 3.28). The inner courtyard (or atrium), which pierces the levels beginning from the living room up to the top level of headquarters, creates visual links and tensions between various spaces and activities. While one searching a book in the book spiral, may see the dancing people in the living room. Herbert Muschamp states that wondering around in the library is "narrative" similar to see "series of episodes in urban space."<sup>133</sup> He continues his argument by claiming, "Over here, you're an actor, over there a spectator. Don't look now, but the library could be reading you."<sup>134</sup> To conclude, the atrium is utilized to connect all public spaces with each other, That is, the void encircles all in-between spaces except the children's center. This attempt is defined by Koolhaas as creating spaces with depth.<sup>135</sup> By doing so, a social space penetrating each other and breathing the same air is achieved.

Still another attempt to promote the publicity is to diversify the user groups of the library. To accomplish this, the library introduces targeted user spaces for different age groups. To illustrate, Children's Center (Figure 3.29) and Teen's Center (Figure 3.30) are included to attract these age groups by providing selected collections and activities enhancing their interest; such as playground for kids or a media center for a teenagers.

Last but not least, in order to widen its accessibility, all areas in the building comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, it is the Book Stack where this sensibility is monumentalized. Concerning this sensibility, The Book Spiral is designed as a continuous ramp, which enables people with mobility difficulties to circulate all through literacy section. Besides, this uninterrupted circulation through the collection in Book Spiral, enables easy future expansion of the catalogue without fragmenting the sections (Figure 3.31).



Figure 3.31 Book Spiral. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

<sup>133</sup> Herbert Muschamp. "ARCHITECTURE; The Library That Puts on Fishnets and Hits the Disco". The New York Times. May 16, 2004. Available on: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/16/arts/architecture-the-library-that-puts-on-fishnets-and-hits-the-disco.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>. Accessed in: September 10,2012.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Rem Koolhaas. Interview conducted by Stephan Burgdorff and Bernhard Zand. "An Obsessive Compulsion towards the Spectacular", Spiegel Online International. Available: [www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,566655-2,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,566655-2,00.html).

## Technology

The reason to the involvement of technology in library space is basically results from the alteration of information, that is, the introduction of digital data. Considering the alterations occurred in the storage of information, there are several interventions of OMA reflected to space. Here, it can be stated that the storage area for digital data is considerably small when compared to the solid library holdings. Thus, the space reserved for expansion in future of solid library holdings, is expected to decrease. As a result, the space freed from the book stacks can be occupied with another library program.

Another issue in this regard is to provide a space for the new conveying means of digital data; namely the computers. SPL responded this need by introducing a new program part, namely the Mixing Chamber. This section houses a considerable amount of free public-use computers besides the computers located both in the entrance and in reading levels (Figure 3.32). This attempt to provide access to the digital data is not limited to Mixing Chamber or public computers rather the whole building is equipped with internet connection and electricity (Figure 3.33).

Regarding the technology in this space again, public computers and internet access are provided here. Therefore, most of the users are here to use the free internet and stay connected rather than consulting to a librarian. In fact, this computerization does not only result from the urge to stay connected but also from the altered type of research. The user first conducts an electronic search through keywords before searching the book, even to find the relevant book.



Figure 3.32 Mixing Chamber. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 3.33 Utilities for personal and public computer use. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



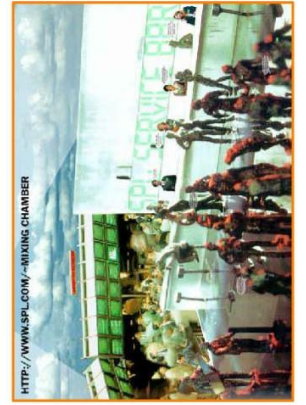
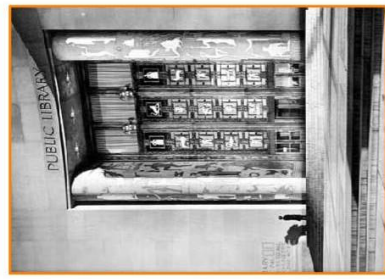
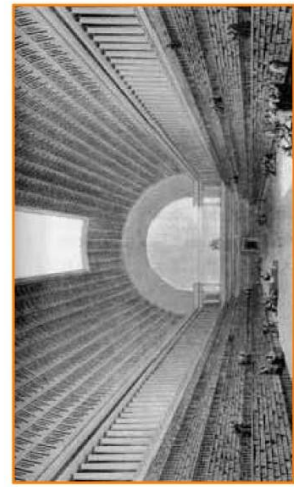
Figure 3.34 Book Return ATM and Check Out. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

Another section within the library program affected from these technological changes is the borrowing section or the reference section. As stated before, the reference section used to hold the center of the library whereas the controlling of the borrowings/lending were significant in terms of administration. Moreover, particularly in SPL, also ATM like machines for book return and self-check out means for lending are utilized (Figure 3.34). It can be claimed that the issue of borrowing both in physical and operational terms has lost importance to some degree with the technological advance in cataloging, searching, and finding. Thus, the central position of reference section is no longer seen within SPL. On the contrary, the borrowing/lending activity is scattered throughout the building from the façade to the Mixing Chamber.

Consequently, the duty of the librarian is re-defined. In the former organization, the duty of librarian was mostly related with the authority to secure the circulation of the books more than being an advisor for research. However, the ease of borrowing and lending of the books in latter condition resulted in a change in librarian's duty from being an eye-keeper in to a mentor. Arguably, this change reflected to space. It is fair to claim that the Mixing Chamber is an interpretation of the typical reference room as the assigned space for mentor librarian. The Mixing Chamber owes this property to avoid utilizing a scheme, which forces the authority of the librarian upon the user. Rather it offers a space, which strengthens a more democratic relation between these two actors. The complete analysis visuals can be observed in the following pages.



# CONCEPT BOOK IMAGES



# SPL IMAGES

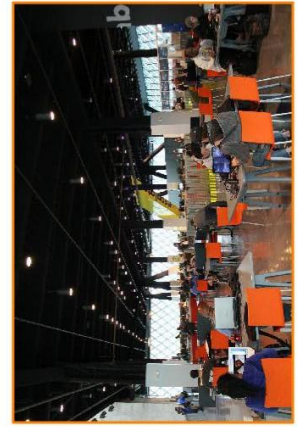
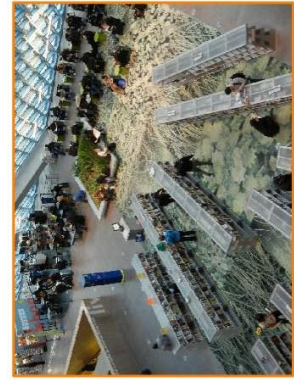
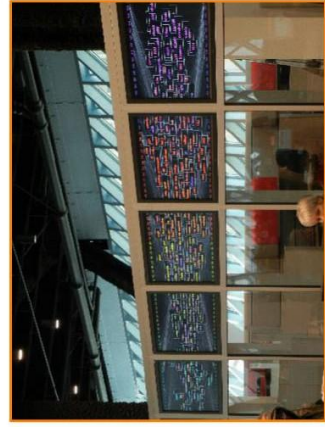


Figure 3.35 Comparison of images from the Concept Book (on the left column) with the actual space photographs(on the right column). Produced by the author.

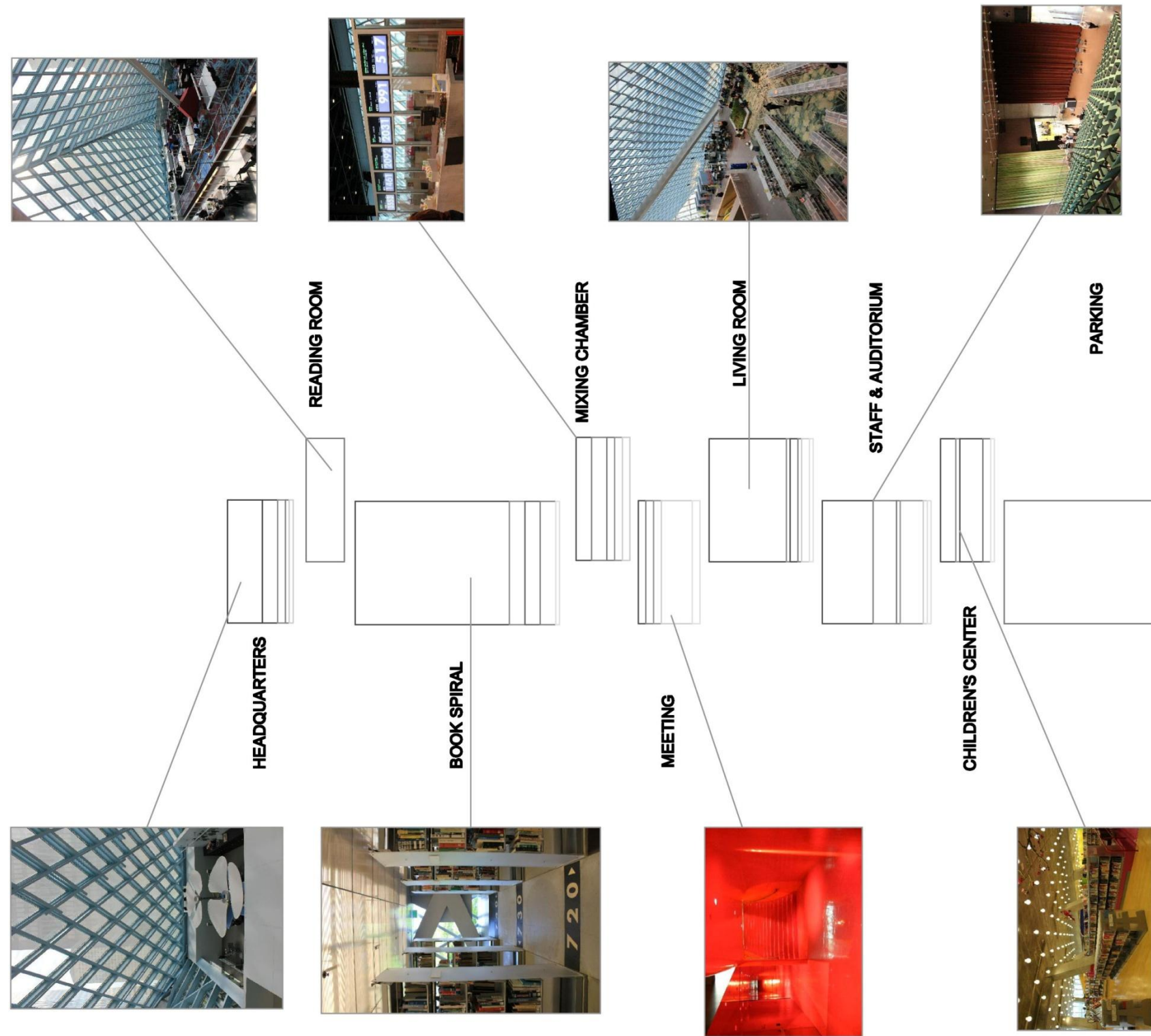


Figure 3.36 Program and Space illustration. Produced by the author.









## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION: LIBRARY AS “A THIRD SPACE”

Under the rubric of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the circumstances that alter the library program are analyzed, and the reflections of these circumstances on the built edifice are observed. Concerning these studies, what the library has evolved into will be discussed within this chapter. The discussion will be carried out by focusing on three main issues observed in The Seattle Public Library that are evaluated as unusual milieus for a public library. The first issue is the *domestication* of library in order to endorse its use by public. The second issue is the *commodification* of library and its relation with the global economy. The final issue is a more comprehensive one that encompasses the former two issues and goes beyond to discuss the new space of the library: *third spaces*. **Domestication of the Library**

The terminology used to denominate the altered spaces such as the “Living Room”, “Seattle Room”, or “Mixing Chamber” calls for the *domestication* of the library. The identification of these spaces and indication of each name on the signboards or even on walls are deliberate attempts to convince the user (Figure 4.1). This identification connotes the themes related with the house, such as the domestic privacy or comfort. It can be claimed that this is an implicit intervention to turn the library into the *house of the city*, or as a *room for the city* in order to increase the use and publicity.

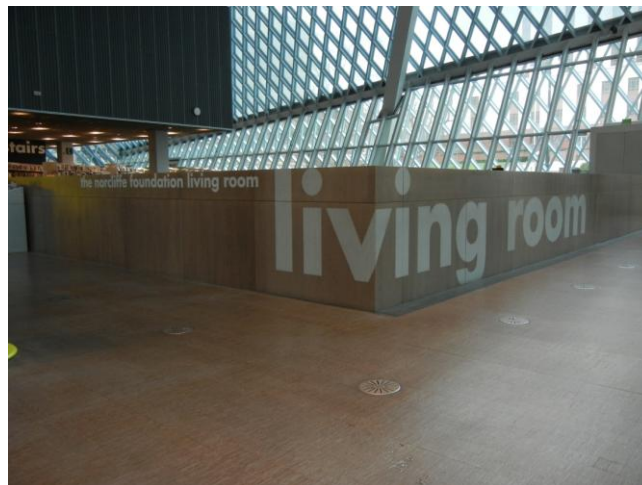


Figure 4.1 Living Room label. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

Living room refers to the most public space of the house in convention. Similarly, the most public space that is the entrance of SPL is denominated with the “Living Room.” The interpretation here can be regarded as the extension of an intention to bring the two extremities, which are namely, public library and private house, together. These two extremities blur in this Living Room. This blurring condition of publicity and privacy leads to alteration in the library space. Thus, through this reference to living room of the private house, the library is intended to be appropriated more by the user.

In parallel, it can be argued that the *domestication* is moreover supported by the insertion of new activities and by the attempts to create a homely atmosphere. For instance, the placement of the coffee chart in the Living Room can be claimed as an activity-wise comfort provided especially for this area

to promote the space use. Besides, the type of furniture (Figure 4.2) and finishing details like the floral patterned carpet or planting pool (Figure 4.3) are also attempts to create a domestic atmosphere for the library user. Indeed they remind us the first guidelines, introduced in Chapter 1, which were proposed by Gabriel Naudé for arranging the collection, furnishing and equipping of library spaces. However, the application of this furniture in a domestic sense in that huge public space is still questionable. To fit in the scale and bring the space to the human scale, the furniture is located at the very corner of the Living Room, where the space is narrowed due to the inclination of the glass envelope. Other than that, many of the abovementioned *domestication* attempts can be claimed as satisfactory in several terms since it is observed that the users act freely and comfortably in “the *rooms*” of the library.

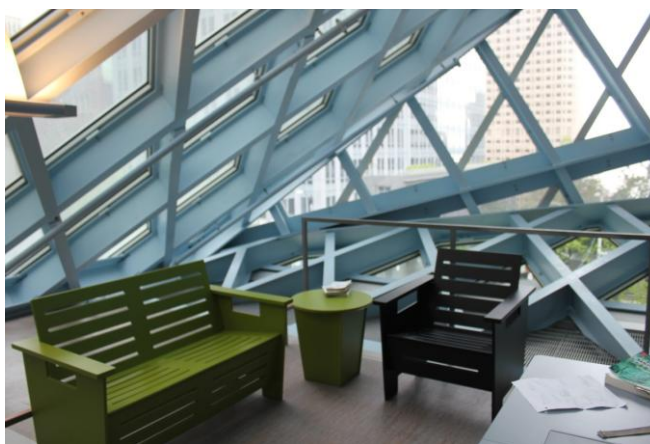


Figure 4.2 Living Room corner. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.



Figure 4.3 Living Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

On the other hand, it can be claimed that in order to achieve this comfort, the library sacrifices one of its main previous property: being a silent work space. The Living Room and almost all spaces of library are highly criticized by those library users who are mainly concerned with study and research. However the ones who came to library to socialize and spend time are more satisfied. Unlike the expectation, the most silent space in the library is not the Reading Room but the Book Spiral. The noise control in the Reading Room is lost due to the atrium and escalators that connects the public

spaces. In contrast, this control is achieved in the Meeting Rooms and Book Spiral, as they are bounded by the walls or windows, and separated from the social spaces of the library. Thus it is questionable to connect all these diverse-functioned public spaces with each other and unite them to achieve a continuous space. Moreover, the continuity of the space is controversial since in some cases, such as in the relation of the Reading Room and the Living Room, there is almost no visual and physical interaction.

To conclude here, the attempt of turning the library into **a room of the city** is intentional. It is obvious that it is a pre-given decision but its success is controversial. It can be argued that the main concern of domestication of library is to attract the public, or in a broader perspective is an attempt to re-locate the library of today (in programmatic sense).

## 4.2. Commodification of the Library

Another discussion can be the *commodification* of the knowledge and the reflection of this *commodification* on library space. To begin with, each functional section of the Seattle Public Library is supported by funds and donations. Donation is widely seen when a library or a communal benefit is in concern. According to Peter Burke, “In the USA, a great deal of research, in the humanities as well as in the natural and social sciences, has been supported by three wealthy foundations: Rockefeller, Carnegie and Ford”.<sup>136</sup> Similarly, Seattle Public Library owes a considerable amount of its sections to its donators.

The names of the donators are assigned to the spaces such as the “Microsoft Auditorium”, “Boeing Technology Training Center”, “Maritz Map Room” (Figure 4.4), “Starbucks Teen Center”, or “SirsiDynix Gallery.” Indeed the support of dissemination and advance of knowledge by the wealthy ones is not new.<sup>137</sup> However, the announcement of the company donator names in this manner, the existence of the marketing terms like *check out* and the placement of surplus-oriented entities such as coffee or gift shop in a free public space can be regarded as new. Therefore, they may also refer to the *commodification* of information, and their extensional existence in library reflects the consumer culture of today.



Figure 4.4 Maritz Map Room. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

<sup>136</sup> Peter Burke. A Social History Of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopedie to Wikipedia Cambridge, UK : Polity Press ; Malden, Mass. : Polity Press, 2012, p.220

<sup>137</sup> For extensive information on the commodification of knowledge and its reflection on space, see David Harvey and Peter Burke.

The twofold relation between the technology and information, which feeds each other indeed is triggered and supported by the capital. However, it should be argued here that, this support “come with strings attached.”<sup>138</sup> As said by Burke, “It is fair to say that the funding of research by companies is usually an investment, expected to produce returns.”<sup>139</sup> Library as a public space and its relation with public is under threat in this regard. The statement of Burke can moreover be comprehended as an argument revealing the direct relation of the economics of knowledge with its politics. That is, the transmission of a certain political idea or ideology can also be a shortcoming of a similar support; however it is out of the scope of this thesis.

In parallel, recalling the denomination of the Mixing Chamber as the “Trading Floor” of information in the *Concept Book* calls for the *commodification* of information again. This seems highly related with the use and assessment of technology in the library, since the Mixing Chamber is regarded as the central location of this technology. As proposed in the *Concept Book*, the digital screens are placed in the Mixing Chamber (Figure 4.5). They do not connote *commodification* of information in “global economy” as mentioned in the *Concept Book*, however, the library uses these screens to inform and *advertise* itself. They display the number and genre of the books in circulation, DVDs, and the location of the books in Book Spiral according to the keywords besides several data about the library. It is debatable that whether the existence of these screens contributes to the use or property of this space.



Figure 4.5 Mixing Chamber. Photographed by author, 4/3/2011.

Related with commodification of library is the e-mail news sent to the users by the library to announce monthly events regarding the technology. With these monthly e-mails, besides the information

<sup>138</sup> Peter Burke. *A Social History Of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopedie to Wikipedia* Cambridge, UK : Polity Press ; Malden, Mass. : Polity Press, 2012, p.221

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

provided, a small advertisement is also attached. For instance, each time library provides a public activity in Microsoft Auditorium; the user is informed and reminded about the Microsoft.

Concerning the issue of commodification, Anna Klingmann declares that Seattle Public Library is deliberately located in between “public demands and commercial network of international corporations”:

Koolhaas seems highly attentive to the progressive disintegration of urban territories to become part of a corporate network which can no longer be localized. Positioning the Seattle Library conceptually between the commercial network of international corporations and the public demands of the city the building is conceived as an urban hybrid in an attempt to mediate both realities: the local context of the city and the dislocated network of international corporations. Operating both as a public as well as private enterprise the library is simultaneously informed by the demands of the local community and sponsored by international Internet enterprises such as Microsoft, amazon.com and Teledesic.<sup>140</sup>

In conclusion, it can be argued that the main concern of *commodification* of library is to attract the public, or in a broader perspective to re-locate the library of today.

#### 4.3. Library as a *Third Space*

From a broader perspective, as mentioned in the previous sections, it is fair to consider that the current condition of the libraries is an intermediary condition regarding the terms of storage and access of information. The two extremities of this condition can be defined as follows: on one hand, a library, which is bounded to only the printed medium, and on the other hand, a library based upon a fully digitalized catalogue. However, the library in concern cannot be listed under these captions, and requires a new definition. Related with this issue, Anna Klingmann states that this is the “third condition” of libraries. She clarifies her argument as follows:

Encompassing both aspects - concrete delimitation, as well as the potential of unlimited space - the new library constitutes an *emergent* typology. Neither restricted to territorial boundaries of physical enclosure nor to a space entirely aterritorialized, it constitutes a third condition. This *third space must thus allow for certain fixed parameters on one hand, yet has to be flexible enough to accommodate the variables of a globalizing information network.*<sup>141</sup>

Library in the digital age is neither conventional nor fully digitalized; it is an in-between space carrying both but more properties. Under these circumstances, the identity of library has also shifted from the dedicated institution to the book into the “new,” which constitutes the “third space” discussed by Klingmann.

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<sup>140</sup> Anna Klingmann, "Datascapes: Libraries as Information Landscapes", *Building for Books*, eds. Susanne Bieri and Walter Fuchs, Birkhäuser 2001. pp.6-7. Accessed on 24.01.2013  
<<http://www.klingmann.com/new/NEWS/byklingmann/017/017.pdf>>

<sup>141</sup> Anna Klingmann, "Datascapes: Libraries as Information Landscapes", *Building for Books*, eds. Susanne Bieri and Walter Fuchs, Birkhäuser 2001. p.3-4. Emphasis by author. Accessed on 24.01.2013  
<<http://www.klingmann.com/new/NEWS/byklingmann/017/017.pdf>>



If we are to search the roots of this third space, as stated in the analysis part, OMA emphasizes the dualistic nature of the library program for accessing and preserving information as the main theme. It is this duality that enables OMA to blur borders, to generate thresholds, and to create tensions between the different program parts of library in order to activate unforeseen relations free of obligations and rules. By this means, OMA uncovers the potential of new relations, and turns the space into something else which is unexpected.

Obviously, this duality of preserving and accessing is inherited within the library program. However, the affinity of OMA to work on this duality as a driving force is not solely based on the nature of library program. Rather, dualities have been a prominent factor shaping the theoretical framework of OMA starting with the *Delirious New York*. From this point of view, the attempt of OMA within SPL can be re-defined according to this assumption.

To be more specific, OMA interprets the parts of the program as *stable* and *instable*. The stable program parts are categorized as the ones that are less likely to change and that remain as constants. In our case, Book Spiral and Headquarters are the stable parts whereas the Children's Center, Teen's Center and Auditorium constitute the instable parts of the program. OMA utilizes these dualities of stable-instable or accessing-preserving, and deliberately manipulates their relations. In other words, by shifting, detaching, and increasing their visual and spatial relation between these stable and instable program parts, OMA produces a space that is neither stable nor instable. These spaces are **third spaces** of SPL, which act as an intermediary condition as the Mixing Chamber and Living Room. It is difficult to define the function of these spaces, or the program allocated to the space. Anything may happen; more than one function can be loaded or removed simultaneously. These spaces may enable a different kind of flexibility and carry more than one identity at the same time. For instance the Living Room acts as an entrance for library, foyer for the auditorium, social public space, resting and relaxing area, besides being a reading and researching space, and all these functions can take place simultaneously. In short, these spaces are the results of the tensions and thresholds generated from the existence of the dualities.

Turning back to OMA's point, the stable may refer to the conventional library, while the instable may refer to a library, which is completely digital and reachable from everywhere. Thus, OMA's attempt in SPL can be re-named as to create a library within the third condition as Klingmann argues. In addition, the library becomes a cityscape regarding the resemblance to the recreational spaces of the city, freer and unrestrained. Therefore, library in the digital age can be claimed as an in-between space that embodies both stable and instable program parts yet goes beyond them as a "third space".

In conclusion, it can be argued that the library today has evolved into an intermediary condition. This condition has produced flexible spaces that allow programmatic changes. In addition, the idea of domestication has started to shape the library space in a way to attract public; and the commodification culture of the market economy has started to control the library space. Library has become an in-between space that is intended to be *domesticated* and *commodified* at the same time. Although the book still remains as the heart of the library; the aforementioned alterations have created new spaces that are able to accommodate new programs. Consequently, the library today has evolved from a more rigid and defined organization to a more flexible one and moreover can be defined as a threshold.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Considering the changes occurred in the accessing and storing of information, the library as a place dedicated for housing knowledge is definitely affected. Departing from that, in order to understand the change in public library, the thesis has examined the library in terms of architectural program and spatial organization. To do so, this study has focused on The Seattle Public Library in order to decipher the library program and to investigate its physical manifestation. To conduct this study, the first chapter has provided brief information on libraries, on subject and themes leading to alteration in library program. The second chapter has analyzed theoretical framework of OMA to comprehend the subject of the thesis, Seattle Public Library; whereas the third chapter has conducted an analysis both of the *Concept Book* and of the built edifice. Following, the fourth chapter has discussed in the case of SPL the question of what the library of today has evolved into.

Departing from the analyses, it is obvious that the main functions of the library as the places of preservation and places of accessing has altered dramatically within SPL due to technological alterations. In addition, the public duty of the library is emphasized to compensate the results of these technological alterations. One can argue that, under such an influence the physical space is re-organized through the reinterpretation of the conventional library program by injecting new program parts and proposing new relationships between these parts. While some program parts such as lending or reference section are recessed and shrank, some program parts such as meeting and reading spaces have gained more importance and expanded. In fact, the whole building has gone under a change in organization however in particular, Book Spiral, Mixing Chamber, and Living Room in SPL are the places where this alteration is observed clearly.

Concerning the libraries designed by OMA, their approach to the problem of designing a library highlights the significance of technology and publicity. Although in all of these libraries OMA focused on the dualities of the library program, each library is reinvented in a different yet complementary way. These different reinventions can possibly be the result of their critical approach that focuses on the “specificity” of each design problem. However, it can be stated that compared with the former libraries of OMA, the Seattle Public Library has different positioning in the sense that it has the most expressive and iconic character.<sup>142</sup>

From a broader perspective, the identity of the library is affected. Libraries were basically for study and research. However today, library has also become a social public space in recreational sense; it is a space not only to be used for reading and research but also to be experienced. In parallel to the new activities introduced to the library space, new roles are attached to the library beyond the former primary functions of storing and conveying information. These activities can be counted as meeting, gathering, entertaining, and the use of the space to spend leisure time. Therefore, it can be claimed that library space has gained new identities and become a more social and recreational public space.

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<sup>142</sup> For a detailed discussion on the libraries of OMA and the evolution of their character to iconic see:

Peter Eisenman, “Strategies of the Void: Rem Koolhaas, Jussieu Libraries, 1992-93 ” *Ten Canonical Buildings 1950-2000*, Rizzoli, 2008

According to Peter Eisenman, in the most of earlier works, Koolhaas approaches “the diagram as a symbolic form”. For him Koolhaas utilized the diagram and program evaluation in symbolic sense in *The Downtown Athletic Club*.<sup>142</sup> That is, Koolhaas derived the themes and concepts that structure his ideas and created a methodology for design within the altering conditions. However, Eisenman claims that in Koolhaas’ later works the shift from symbolic to iconic utilization of diagram. That is, the built form is designed to become an icon at the end. This iconic utilization of the diagram can also be stated for the Seattle Public Library.

Related to this discussion, Shannon Mattern asserts that libraries of today simultaneously display multiple identities: It has turned into a multimedia, multipurpose, commercial, and civic institution. Simultaneous existence of these various identities creates a tension in the space of library. This tension presents itself in the form of “third space.” Actually, third space is not an in-between space; although it embraces dualities and conflicting conditions, it goes beyond as to accommodate indeterminate programmatic changes.

As mentioned in discussion chapter, to attract public use the specific areas of library is connoted with the domestic terms and turned into a more comfortable and homely environment. On the other hand, the terms of market economy have also taken place in the library as a consequence of the consumption culture of today. The issues of *domestication* and *commodification* that simultaneously shape and control today’s library space open up the way for the emergence of third spaces. Domestication and commodification are conflicting issues that bring privacy and publicity together in the library space. Therefore, it can be stated that the space of library turns into third space that accommodates the duality of privacy and publicity by blurring the borders between them.

Accompanying to these blurring dualities in the third space, the library of today has started to gain an iconic character.<sup>143</sup> With regard to the contemporary library examples mentioned in the first chapter, it can be claimed that they are instantly recognizable with their expressive appearance. They appeal the public and become landmarks or monuments in the contemporary architecture. Recalling the aforementioned Brooklyn Public Library’s front gate (Figure 3.1) which announces publicity with the existence of authority, today’s library building itself intends to declare its *commodified publicness* by its expressive or even iconic character. As an extension to this thesis, why an iconic character is attached to the public library of today could be a research question for a further study.

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<sup>143</sup> On iconic building discussion see: Charles Jencks. The iconic building : the power of enigma, London : Frances Lincoln, 2005.



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