The Library as Civic Space

Katja Hogenboom
PhD research - Architect
UMeA school of architecture - Umeå University

ARLIS/Norden Annual Meeting and Conference
Umeå 29. 08. 2015

photograph Katja Hogenboom, 2015
New Equalities

Books have to share attention with other media of potent performance and attraction.

A parallel exists between the vast proliferation and incredible intricacy of program in the New Library, and the equally explosive multiplication of information media and social obligations that has to be accommodated within it.
Social Role

The Library has been transformed from a space to read into a social center with multiple responsibilities.

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.
contemporary libraries
flexibility compressing public space

compartments
with densification
guaranteeing public space

image courtesy of OMA: www.oma.eu
program

image courtesy of OMA : www.oma.eu
stable and unstable platforms
book spiral

image courtesy of OMA : www.oma.eu
book spiral
Dewey Decimal System

image courtesy of OMA : www.oma.eu
stable and unstable platforms
• Just passing through the library - escalator provides a shortcut.
• Will not veer far from the escalator when he gets off.
• Will pick up a coffee, if it is convenient.
• Not concerned about finding anything other than the exit.
• May spot an event on the Information Wall.

Hill Climber + Coffee
- An occasional user of the library.
- Not familiar with the building and all its aspects and amenities.
- Requires one-on-one help from librarians to find a topic or book.
- Not comfortable with the technology in the building - will ask before using the online catalogue and will need help navigating through the interface.

Casual Book Searcher
- Familiar with the library landscape and all its information systems.
- Spends her day variously in meetings, helping patrons and supervising others.
- Is often in the back stacks, which also require clear signage.

SPL Employee
• Very familiar with the library and its functions.
• Comfortable with computerized catalogues and other technology.
• Is there for an indefinite period of time – until she finds what she is looking for.
• More likely to engage in in-depth research.

Graduate Student
• May or may not be familiar with the library.
• Will ask someone for directions to the meeting room or look at the Information Wall to find out meeting location.
• May wander around on a break, most likely to toilets, get a coffee, or food - but not too far from the meeting room.