Contemporary Concept of Community Library

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Introduction

The typology of the library has undergone a drastic transformation in recent times with the advent of media and technologies that revolutionise the way we store and consume information (Bender, 2000). The connected era of today warrants the changing functionality of the traditional library as a repository of books to a rather larger function of a receptacle of digital information (Bafna, 2005). Hence, the civic and public portion of the functionality of the library which has always been present in the evolving program of the library becomes so much more important.

A recent clear example of this is the Seattle Public Library project by OMA (Office of Metropolitan Architecture) which is driven by the undeniable realisation that the public library program needs to be more civic (Corr, 1999). The program employs grouping of the various functional elements which are interconnected in a predetermined path (Hinshaw,1999). Procedurally, social staging is inferred in the arrangement by first describing contrived routes taken by users undertaking particular use/task and then characterizing their experience based on the values of standard syntactical variables in the spaces at selected points along these routes (Koch, 2000). It has resulted in the library becoming a more people friendly place and experiential space as well as becoming a truly 'public' space (Figure 1).
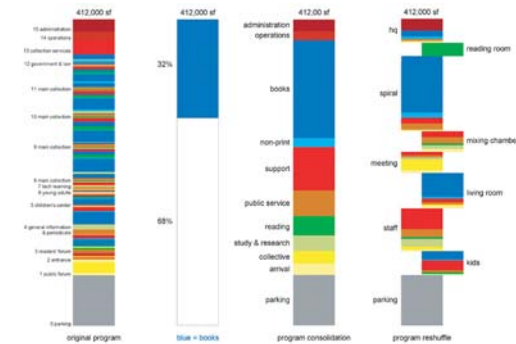

Figure 1

The project tries to explore this liberalisation of the community library to incorporate more public friendly programmes and community centric elements. In doing so it also tries to inculcate the exploration of various media types, storages and knowledge forms that the modern libraries must contend with (Chanchani, 2002).

Project Brief

The library project is sited in a new and constantly growing sub-urban neighbourhood of Bukit Jelutong. The site is in close proximity to the neighbourhood masjid as well as the main developer s office in the form of a standalone iconic pavilion. The library is envisioned to engage this immediate neighbourhood and also the greater Bukit Jelutong Area. Due to the great number of youths in this relatively young

neighbourhood, the library's focus shall be concentrated on youth activities. The library should be designed as a centre for youth to be stimulated in a communal sense with activities such as free tuition, homework-help programs, life-skills guidance, volunteer opportunities, internship programs and other such activities. Ultimately, the building is to function as a community hub dispersing knowledge and to benefit the local community, especially youths, through friendly engagement programs.

Background
The project objective is to expose the students to spatial and contextual planning as well as challenging them through hybridisation of main functions of the building and the communal aspect that form the core argument of the brief.

The issue of low literacy and slow absorption of knowledge in Malaysian society especially among the youth is one aspect that is directly relevant to the project (Fong, 2012). Hence, many strategies involve in attracting the users to actually utilise and engage the library. This emphasis is commensurate to the focus given to the issue of the changing typology that is the library itself and how it functions as a communal hub. This is then juxtaposed with the further challenge of placing and relating the building in the actual sub-urban context.

Design Solution
Five student projects were selected as case studies under this particular topic. They are as shown below:

Social Media Scapes
By Fadhli Anas

Utilising the growth in popularity of the usage of social media, this scheme tries to marry the architectural programming of a functional library and the freedom of communication that a user may derive from using social media. The spaces are information aware as users will be able to use their devices to interact with the building and its services. This acts as real world grounding for virtual services such as sharing of information, knowledge disbursement and such. The resulting architectural solution focuses more on creating a pleasant ambience to fit this objective as well as respecting the local contextual site issues (Figure 2-4).

Figure 2: Social Media Scapes Library approach view from the main road

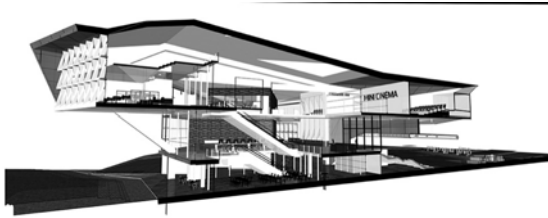Figure 3: Social Media Scapes Library plans and sections

Figure 4: Social Media Scapes Library Sectional perspective showing the spatial interplay inside the building

Rendezvous Library
By Firdauz Ahmad
The idea of the library as a meeting place is fully explored in this scheme. In the relatively monotonous building-scape of the suburban context, the scheme provides an enticing and iconic design serving as both landmark and place maker for the area. The scheme utilises the juxtaposition of lines in the facade to reflect the actual planning which is based on the meeting of lines and creation of nodes. The forms created are unconventional and provide a pleasant and friendly atmosphere for the visitor. The architectural language used is bold and exciting but is not overtly brutal in nature which fits very well with the designated functionality of the building as a communal hub. The internal layout has also been programmed in such a way to facilitate and promote more frequent congregations and accidental meetings.

Flow Library
By Suliza Kassiron
The theme of movement and flow of the public is the main area of exploration in this design. The idea that the context given has two different pedestrian flows and the library form is manipulated into funnelling this flow towards the inner sanctum of the building. The planning is based on the idea of balance where two equally flowing shapes entwine one another creating a central open courtyard. This gives the users the choice whether to experience the journey along the same path through the internal path or the external one (Figure 5-9).

Figure 5: Rendezvous Librar Entrance area depicts a very human approach to the building even among the chaos of the intersecting lines
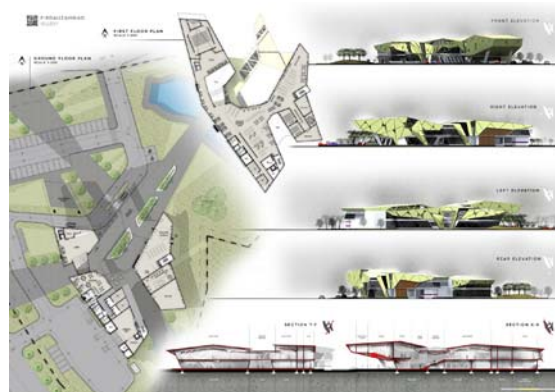

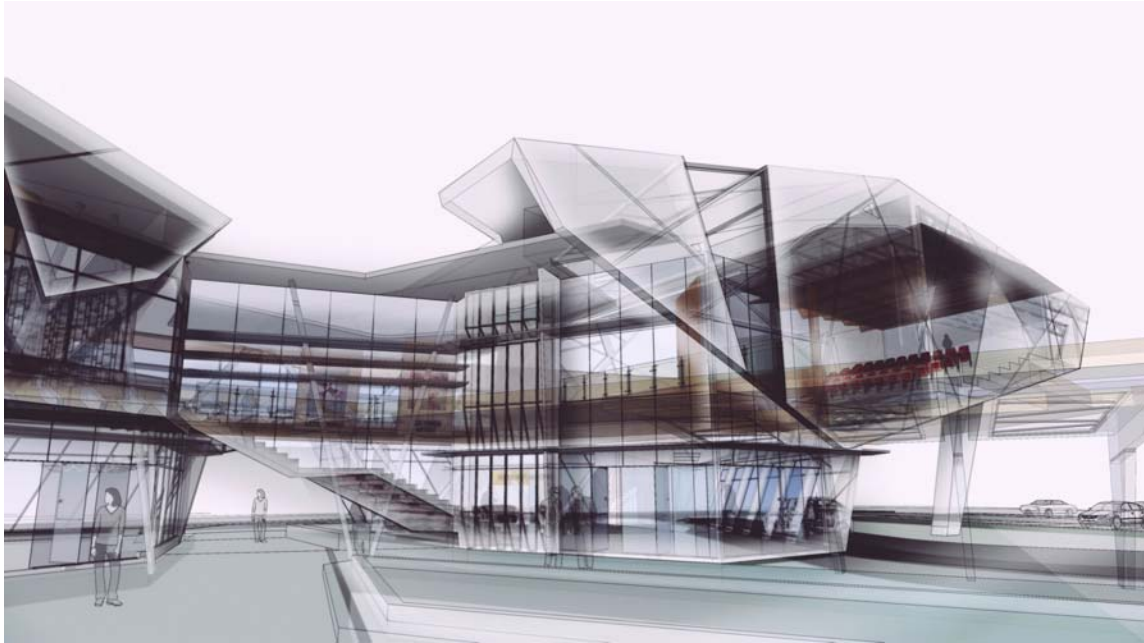Figure 6: Rendezvous Library Plans, Elevations and Sections

Figure 7: Rendezvous Library See through perspective showing the dynamic spatial ar-
ragement inside the building

Figure 8: Flow Library Perspective view from the main road
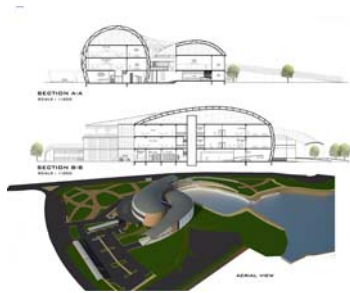
Figure 9: Flow Library Plan, sections and aerial view

Figure 9.1: Flow Library Plan, sections and aerial view

Divaricated Library
By Noor Hazwani

The design centres on the notion that the central nexus activities are extended outward towards the many contextual nodes in the site. This gives the library its tentacle-like appearance and organic arrangement of spaces. Imbued into the design are various environmental design strategies which not only improve the performance of the building but also provide the building with a unique aesthetic look. The design explores how a centralised journey space can be used as a focal point and hub to facilitate social interactions among users. It is envisaged that the central space will be used in many ways by the youths which will extend beyond meeting such as skating, events, eating and etc (Figure 10-12).
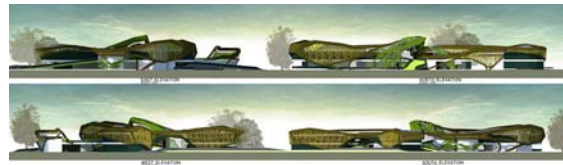

Figure 10: Divaricated Library Elevations clearly shows the undulation that the designer intends to achieve
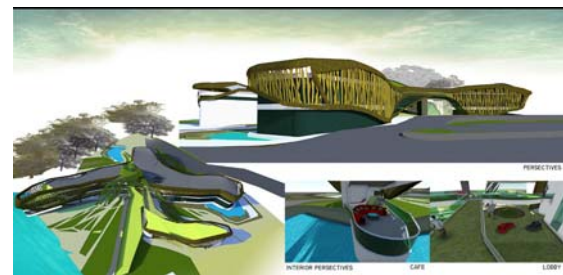

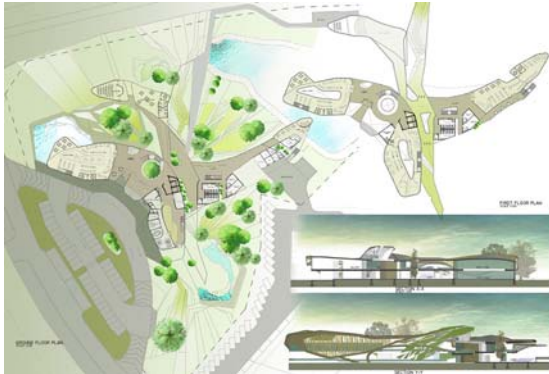Figure 11: Divaricated Library Perspective views

Figure 12: Divaricated Library Plans and Sections

Culturaa Library

By Nur Syafinaz Shahar

The design concentrates on the creation of activity spaces as an important catalyst for user to visit and continuously frequent the library. The internal spaces are designed to be dynamic and interactive; this is in direct contradiction to the traditional clinical and formal approach to the creation of the public or communal library. The spatial arrangement which is organised in a linear form is done so as there is maximum exposure to the contextual views of the site. The design aims to create reading and "hanging out" at the library as a new trend or cultural phenomenon among the youth.

Figure 13: Culturaa Library Internal Perspectives showing the playful intern of the design

Figure 14: Culturaa Library external Perspectives displaying the building relationship with the lake

Figure 15: Culturaa Library - Plans

Discussion/Future Study

As a whole, the students have pushed the boundary of the traditional forms of a communal library. It is also very interesting to observe how individual designers circumnavigate the issue of declining interest in reading. Many have come up with various strategies for place making and combined them with popular activities which are relevant to the youth. Many of the designs

are also cognizant of the fact that the target user group, the youth, consumes knowledge differently. There is a huge emphasis towards digital media which included not only written information but also information in other forms such as audio and visual information.

As a continuation, the study should further explore how the communal library can evolve to become a more civic building in the age whereby "on demand" media and information is a commonplace. The largest repository of knowledge ever, the Internet, is now almost readily accessible by most of the users anywhere and anytime. The key underlying question that needs to be answered is, how will the library morph its usability and relevance to fit a society in which the availability of knowledge will not be dictated by any physical location. The library will need to once again find its relevance by providing functionality which is geared towards even more civic and communal functions than ever before. This should also be reflected in the study of the issues of functionality in terms of security and the relevant methodologies required in transforming the inner sanctum of the library to be more accessible to all. Perhaps the library of the future will be more of a social experience rather than just a purely intellectual one.

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