## Alone Together

A world unto itself, no more. In the ancient monastic libraries, reading was pursued as a solitary, all encompassing activity. The engines for self enlightenment that followed, in the form of the first public libraries, radically (at the time) opened their collections to an expanded public. Today's branch libraries, with their networks of physical and digital information artifacts, have even further democratized access to ever expanding databases of knowledge. We go to libraries to be alone together. This desire – for individuals in civic spaces, users of collective databases, participants of collective experiences – persists today. Yet, the notion of being alone together has been paradoxically co-opted to describe our relationship to technology – we interact together online while inhabiting physical space alone. We detach from each other in our immediate environment, in a perpetual state of distraction and virtual connectivity. What then, are the spatial structures of being alone together? This studio will relentlessly zoom in and out to interrogate the relationship between the part and the whole, across the frameworks of the organizational, morphological and social.

Organizational:  What are the criteria for your library's organizational logic? Varying degrees or ratios of interiority/exteriority, light, noise, scale of spaces, type of use, etc. might order, or dis-order, how spaces are deployed in your library. In exploring these criteria (and the frameworks below), what spatial framework connects the part to the whole – as a spectrum, gradient, sequential, field, nested or binary relationship?  And how do these concepts reflect your critical position related to the individual in the public realm and privacy vs. information access?

Morphological:  What constitutes the morphology of your building? We might distill its logic into specific elements, forms or materials. More important however, are the co-relational ideas that situate: the element to the armature, a book to its networked database, a geometric form to a larger system, one floor in the ground to roof progression, a partition to the envelope, a detail to the overall structure, a material tectonic to your library's identity...

Social:  What structures the spaces of social interaction, from the intimate to the collective to the urban? This question touches on the subjective as well as the objective – how the social dynamics of libraries, whether they are structured or serendipitous, are shaped by their physical, spatial structures.

*Alone Together* is a provocation to consider the form and content of the library as a relational construct that is never fixed nor absolute. Whereas libraries were conceived as entire worlds unto themselves up until the 19th C., their contemporary identity has atomized into a myriad of possibilities and territories. Your challenge resides in physically expressing the many, fluctuating and sometimes contradictory relationships between the part to the whole. As much as libraries accommodate the smorgasbord of public needs, they also represent the physical and virtual sites where we project our contested identities, histories and interpretations of facts. You cannot design a library without articulating a deeply personal, critical position about your architecture and its engagement with the city. This studio therefore requires: deep dives into readings, your own research and precedents to project into the future with a nuanced understanding of the past; and a dogged pursuit to iterate and synthesize the formal, graphic, written and verbal languages that you will use to arrive at a conceptually rigorous and spatially inventive library for the 21st Century.