



ADVANCED DESIGN STUDIO · GSAPP COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
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**Andrés Jaque**

[www.officeforpoliticalinnovation.com](http://www.officeforpoliticalinnovation.com)

**Patrick Craine**

[www.practicearchitecturaloffice.com](http://www.practicearchitecturaloffice.com)

**Sabine Meister**

**The urban is no longer in New York, but in the New York Public Library**

At the same pace that New York is increasing its power to produce social inequality, the founded-in-1911 New York Public Library is progressively confirming its capacity for inclusivity and to articulate difference. Whereas the city is seeing its human diversity be replaced by a sanitized healthy and safe homogeneity, it could be argued that the New York Public Library is confirming its capacity to host conflict, accommodate minorities and to innovate modes of citizenship. The *New York Public Ghost Advanced Studio* explores the potential for architectural design unchained by a process in which the urban (as the place where social encounter and politics is performed) might no longer be enacted by the city, but by architectural devices such as the New York Public Library.



Bobst Library, New York University, after Hurricane Sandy. [Photos by bettyx1138]. NYPL, Main Branch building.

### **Material politics and phantoms. Associative design. Collection. Distribution, object and share agencies**

Public society remains as a phantom -invisible, unnoticed, detached from the collective and unable to take responsibility- unless material devices such as buildings, trucks or information supports circulating daily from ones to others are made available (Walter Lippmann, 1925<sup>1</sup>). NYPL's architecture has played a key role rendering the "phantom publics" (as Lippmann called them) as a visible agent equipped with political agency. Its capacity to associate different institutions (Astor Library, Lenox Library and Tilden Trust) in the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building (1902-11 John Carrère and Thomas Hastings, architects)<sup>2</sup>, to collect the world's state of knowledges in its 7 story stacks body<sup>3</sup> -and the 1980-added 40 miles of stacks of its 11.600 m2 extension below Brian Park<sup>4</sup>-, to bring together the popular and the scholarly public with inventions like the Rose Gallery, to provide proximity to readers through its 39 branches, to make supports circulate with its logistic and sorting center in Long Island City and its extra storage space in Princeton NJ<sup>5</sup>, depends on NYPL's configuration as both a collection of independent architectural objects and as a networked enactment, by which those independent architectures collaborate together.



Books Ops Sorting Facility in Long Island City. Stacks at the NYPL Main Branch Building.

### **What will be doing in the studio?**

The studio will transform the NYPL Main Branch building on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and the way it relates to the NYPL networked facilities and to NYC as a way to empower, through architectural design, the NYPL's capacity to promote social inclusivity and political articulation of the different publics contained by NYC.

### **How?**

**Step 01.** Based on existing cartography, the whole group will construct in the studio a big sized model of the NYPL (with its Main Branch and its underground occupation of Bryant Park's site, its 39 branches, its warehouse in Princeton, NJ and its Book Ops sorting facility in Long Island City. The model will become a table for design negotiation.

**Step 02.** The studio will engage on field work visits to the NYPL buildings both guided by experts from the NYPL (what will make it possible to visit back house parts of the library) and independently programmed.

**Step 03.** The studio members will rapidly develop a number of architectural patents for social inclusivity.

<sup>1</sup> Lippmann, W. (1925) *The Phantom Public*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company Inc.

<sup>2</sup> Building Dimensions: 390' x 270' = 10,382,600 cubic feet; height 68' front; 98' back.

<sup>3</sup> Lying underneath the Main Branch is an original storage space comprising seven tiers of underground 80 miles shelving made of Carnegie steel.

<sup>4</sup> Six feet below Bryant Park's level: 40 miles of library stacks shelving 1.5 million books and 500,000 reels of microfilm.

<sup>5</sup> NYPL has moved three million items to an off-site storage facility in Princeton, N.J. There are plans to bring the total number of books shelved to 3.2 million.

**Step 04.** The studio members will apply the patents for social inclusivity in the reconstruction of the NYPL's architecture, negotiating on the model the dependencies and collaborations between different transformations.