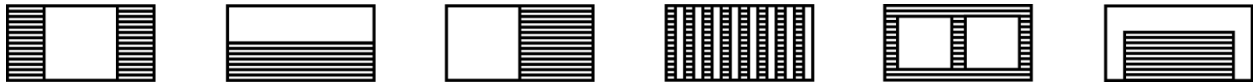


Double-Building (or, Books Are People Too)

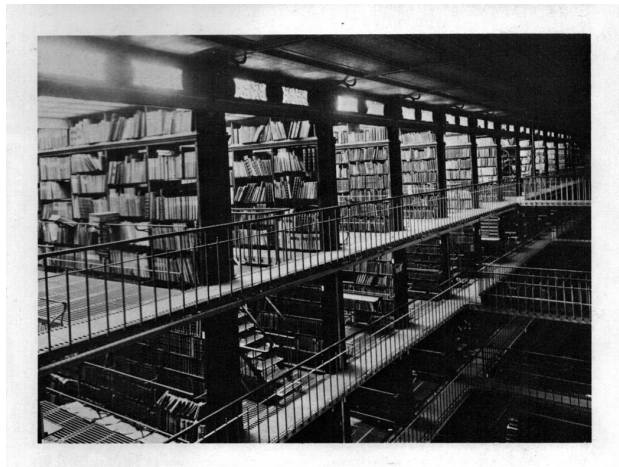
This studio begins from the premise that the program of a library must include both a component for the storage of information and a component for the use of that information. In whatever media or quantities, this collection of information is a constituent part of a library--the word library referring to both the collection and the space that contains it. A library is, in that sense, doubly a material instantiation of the values of a given institution or society. In the first instance in the forms of the objects collected, and in the second in the form of the building that houses them and facilitates their use. Precisely because most individuals today carry devices that enable access to quantities of information orders of magnitude greater than those held by the largest libraries only a few decades ago, the deliberate collection and dissemination of that information is essential to the formation of common knowledge.

The architectural history of libraries presents a vast range of diagrams of the relationship between storage and use. While constrained at any given moment by qualities of the collection (size, format, subject matter) and conceptions of the use to which it might be put (private, public, academic, religious), the library has been open to spatial and functional reorganization, proving more malleable than many other institutional programs (the church, for instance, or even, arguably, the school, which have tended towards stricter and more persistent power structures regarding the transmission of knowledge). The space for storage, and the information contained within it, has been accessible in different instances to regular and occasional visitors, to professional librarians, to automated retrieval systems or to other classes of users. The space for use has been lined by, has been above or below or next to, has been interlaced with, has occupied space within, has occupied the space around (etc.) the space for storage. Across these variations, however, an equivalence (and interdependence) between the two programs is generally asserted. When the space for storage greatly exceeds the space for use, the space for use tends to be given a prominent place and distinct form. Likewise, when the space for storage is relatively smaller, it tends to be integrated into the space for use and therefore made omnipresent to the user.



This studio will take up the problem of a “double” building. The library houses objects and it houses people, of different kinds and needs and at different physical and temporal scales. The objects might require dark, cool spaces, the people light, temperate ones. The objects are typically housed in vertically stacked rows (on shelves), their use typically requires horizontal surfaces (tables). The accumulation of collected objects tends to produce a material density, at times so great as to require structural support in excess of the norm for human occupation, while the people who use these objects tend to congregate at relatively low densities and to require relatively open spaces. Through the integration of automated storage and retrieval systems (e.g. Dominique Perrault’s Bibliothèque de France, Helmut Jahn’s Mansueto Library), the library has been at times a “posthuman” architectural program, continuing the dialectic of machine (for storage) and garden (for study) that persists in the architectural history of the library (and should perhaps be questioned today).

These dichotomies are simplistic but instructive. Many of the most compelling diagrams of the library, particularly as developed since the advent of modernism, with its transformations in media, social organization, and architectural technology, propose a “double” building, in which two distinct structural, material, spatial, environmental and programmatic systems are deployed to serve the purposes of storage on the one hand and use on the other (while also engaging the physical and social contexts in which they are located). These might include Henri Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Nationale, Gordon Bunshaft’s Beinecke Library, or OMA’s Très Grande Bibliothèque and Seattle Public Library. In some cases, the direct experience of the human user is not central in the formal organization of the library--it is literally peripheral to the space for storage. This suggests an approach as well to the problem of site, in which an external building might address the city, an internal building might address the collection, and individual users might occupy the space between. Through the precedent research and design project, our section will both study and contribute to this architectural trajectory of building(s) and/in/on building(s).



The reading room and stacks of Henri Labrouste's *Bibliothèque Nationale* (1854-75), as presented in *The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, ed. Arthur Drexler (New York: MoMA/MIT, 1977).

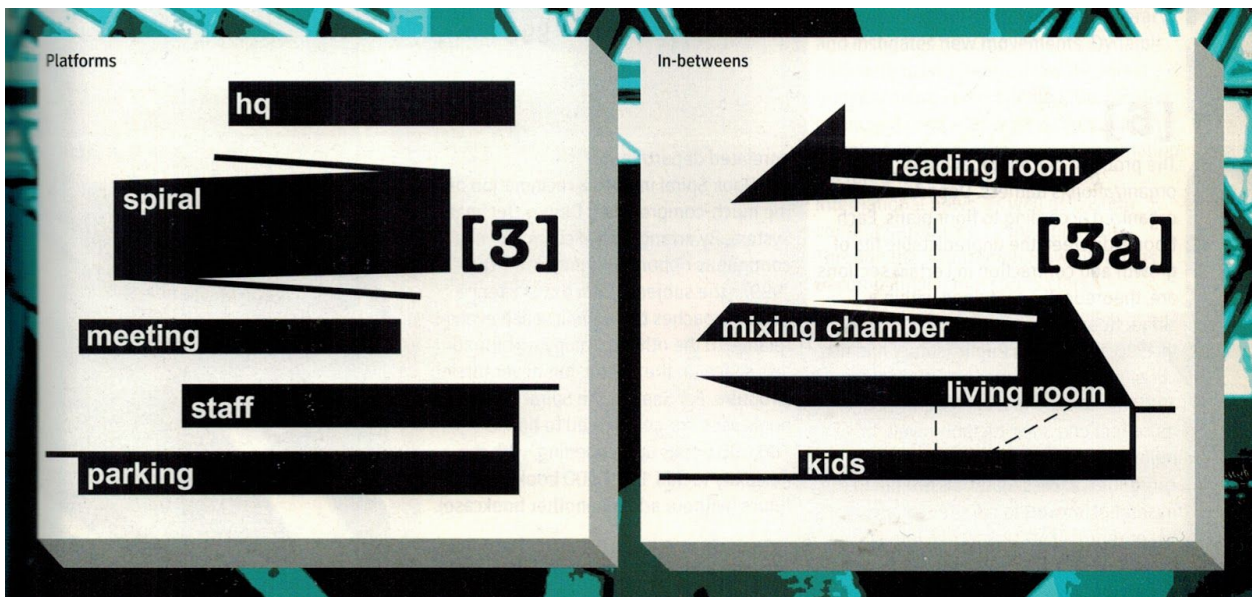


Figure-ground diagrams of OMA's *Seattle Public Library*, as presented in *Content*, ed. Rem Koolhaas (Cologne: Taschen, 2004).