Escaping Gravity:  
Reimagining the Academic Library

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A culture of learning

- social
- integrative
- collaborative
- playful

Johanna Drucker, “The University as a Fully Integrated and Distributed Platform,” Portal 1, 3 (July 2014), 325-328.
Student-centered learning

learner autonomy  collaborative thinking
lifelong learning  learning independence
problem solving    peer-to-peer
individual, not entire    active participant in own
class    learning
The value of academic libraries

Products → Services
Collections → Experience
Mediation → Enabling
Resources → Educational Impact
Facilities → People
Access → Sense-making

From a presentation by Megan Oakleaf on The ACRL report “The Value of Academic Libraries,” May 9, 2012
How do we design libraries to support and encourage deeper, more engaged learning?
Shopping Mall

everything in one place
customer chooses
contagious energy
serendipity
Great European train stations

many destinations
affinity with fellow travelers
contagious energy
serendipity
The Living Room
Pre-design question:

What about the books?
150,300 assignable SF

Collections required:
75,000 SF fixed shelving
50,000 SF compact shelving
3500 SF ASRS
Compromise

150,000 on open shelves = 15,000 sq. ft. & 600,000 in vault below 3,500 sq. ft.
Pre-design question: Who owns the space?
Roles of Librarians and Staff
(distinguishing ‘back of house’ from ‘front of house’)
Align library with students’ preferred environments

Give them tools to manage their own learning

Inspire, energize + engage them
Goal one: Align library with students’ preferred environments
Observe, Ask, Consider

- skills needed for assignments?
- help-seeking behaviors?
- what do they bring with them?
- what makes them efficient, comfortable?
- what empowers them?
- rhythm of their days/semesters?
- grad vs. undergrad needs
students helping students
few signs
implied permissions
modeling academic behavior for each other
different postures
food | comfort
power outlets
places to put their stuff
31 types of seating accommodating infinite number of postures
contemplative spaces
comfortable seating for long sessions
noise system to reduce sound