

Program Summary:

Much more than a place for books, this technology-rich downtown library is a cultural and civic hub that hosts robust community programming for all ages.

Program Statement:

The library's cantilevered form is a result of a careful study of the program and the local climate. The stacked arrangement of unequally sized floors for Children, Adults, Teens, and Events provides both a shaded public plaza at street level and a large public roof terrace offering sweeping views of the Mississippi River and downtown. Although budget constraints precluded the use of costly finishes and materials, a fusion of exuberant colors, patterns, and textures – inspired by the city's love of jazz – create rich, memorable spaces that reflect the vibrant energy of the community.

The facility creates a new model for library services for Baton Rouge. In addition to traditional library functions, its community-led programming effort resulted in an array of spaces for new neighborhood initiatives, outreach, and creative collaboration, including a media lab, business pods for local entrepreneurs, a makerspace, and even a podcast studio. The library hosts public forums, televised debates, election recounts, vaccine clinics, volunteer training groups, and numerous art and jazz festivals.

Designed to be the centerpiece of downtown revitalization and civic identity, the architecture is uplifting, engaging, and a true oasis for those in need. It has spurred new businesses, cultural programming, and supports a robust schedule of outdoor concerts and events.

A155.01

Building Area: (sf)
49,900

Cost per Square Foot:
\$370.76

Construction Cost
\$18,167,043

Date of Completion:
June 2020



A155.02

The project is in the heart of downtown Baton Rouge, a newly vibrant urban center featuring new restaurants, public parks, a town square, museums and a performing arts center. It was designed to create connections and opportunity.

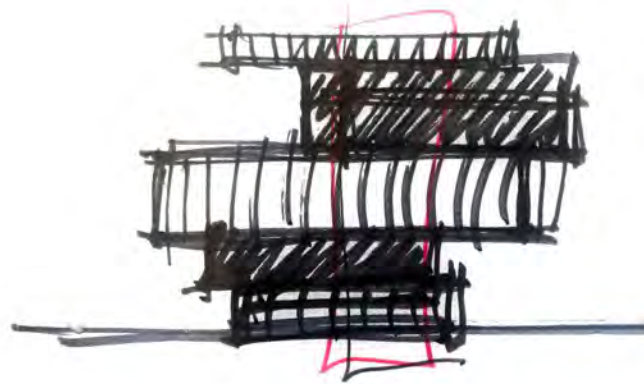
The building utilizes the full area of the site. A large covered public plaza faces Town Square to the north. An outdoor media wall faces an outdoor performance space to the west. A wrap-around public roof terrace features expansive views of the Mississippi River.

The project's downtown siting means that patrons can reach the site by foot, bus, or bicycle. There is ample off-street and on-street parking in the immediate vicinity.

A155.03

The library's distinctive cantilevered form came from a careful study of the program and the local climate.

There was a strong desire to provide children with their own dedicated floor for safety reasons, but the program area for this age group was a relatively small part of the total building area. By stacking children's services above high-use browsing and computer areas on the street level, upper floors would need to be larger, creating a form that provides weather protection without an additional tacked-on canopy. In the evening, and on more temperate days, the large third floorplate provides a platform for a landscaped roof deck with sweeping views of the Mississippi River.



concept sketch



program stacking diagram



building section

A155.04

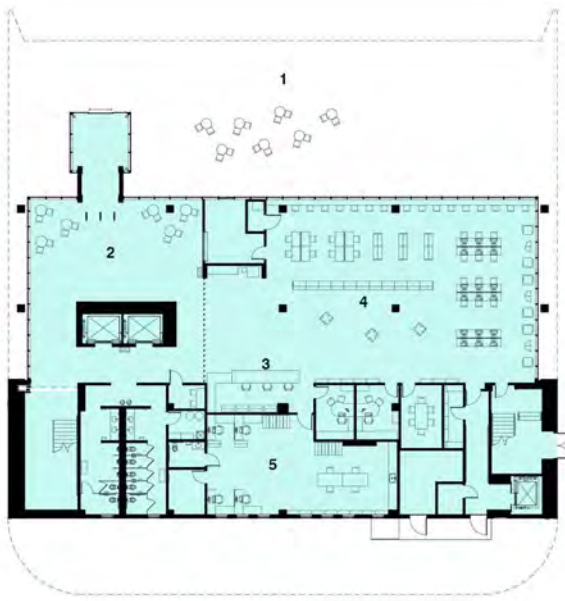
The four floors are organized by use and age group: circulation and browsing, children's services, adults and teens, and community events.



level 3: adults + teens



level 4: community events



level 1: circulation + browsing



level 2: children's services

- 1 covered plaza
- 2 lobby / café
- 3 circulation
- 4 browsing / computers
- 5 staff workroom
- 6 children's room
- 7 staff workroom
- 8 children's programs
- 9 exterior media wall
- 10 quiet study
- 11 adult collections
- 12 computer commons
- 13 teens
- 14 teen programs
- 15 technology lab
- 16 recording studio
- 17 maker room
- 18 staff workroom
- 19 roof terrace
- 20 gallery
- 21 multipurpose room
- 22 staff break room
- 23 meeting room
- 24 mechanical room



A155.05

The cantilevered structure is an iconic civic symbol, providing a shaded public entry plaza facing Town Square.

The North façade is almost entirely glazed, set within shading fins at the cornice and shaded by the cantilevered canopy on the lower floors. The design was developed to maximize daylight while minimizing direct sunlight, reducing glare and solar heat gain.

The shading of the cantilevered floor, the upper-level overhead shading, and the low albedo roofing reduce the building cooling load.



A155.06

The building is clad in aluminum panels. Perforated aluminum sunshades, angled to maximize views while mitigating heat and solar gain, line the windows on the east, west and south facades. Louvered sunshades shield the roof terrace from intense heat overhead.

The third floor is hung from large trusses at the roof terrace in order to maintain an open floor plan for community events and bookstacks below.

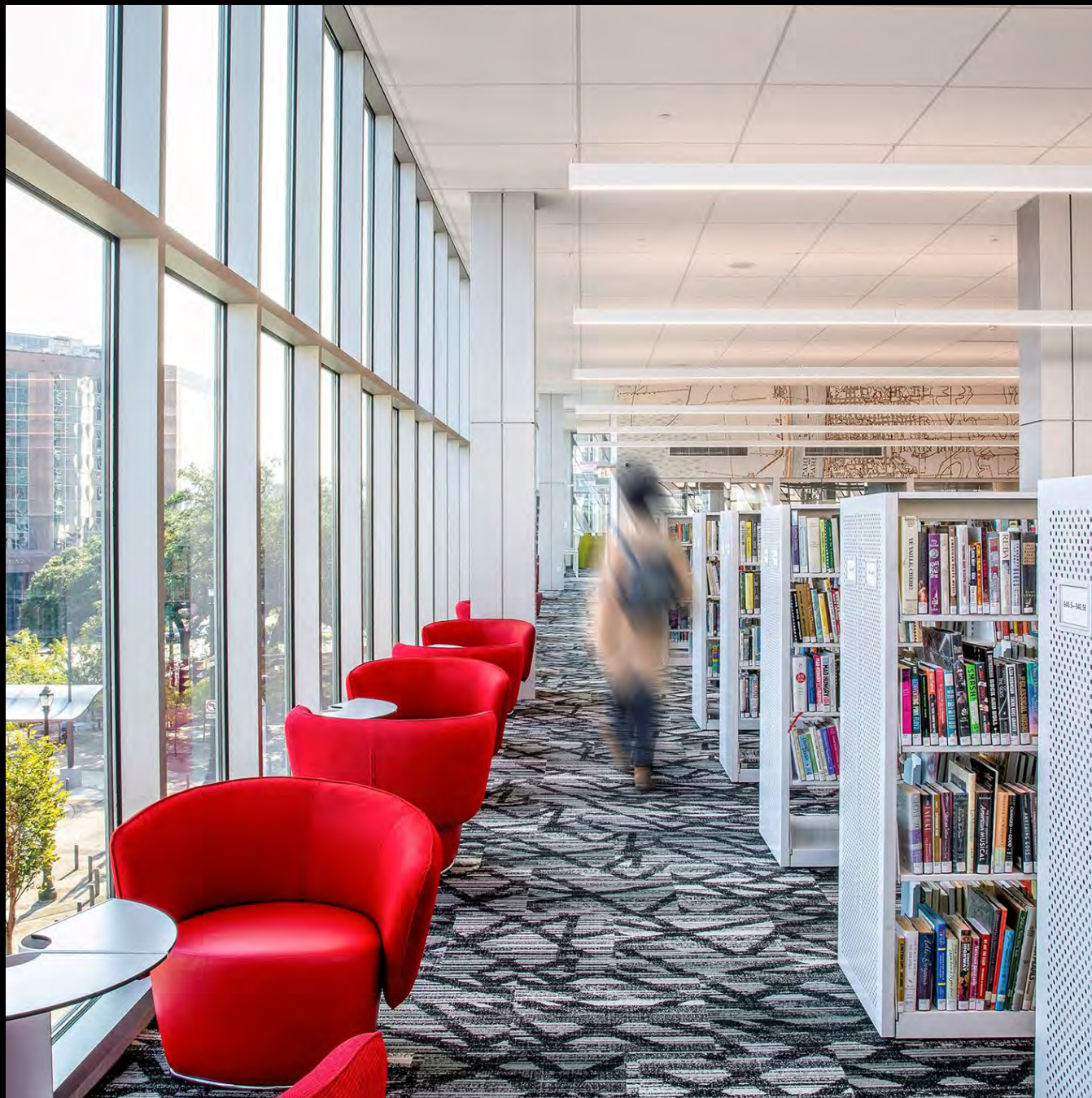


A155.07

level 2: Children's Room

The Children's Room is tucked under the overhang and occupies the entire second floor, providing a safe environment for children and their caregivers. Unlike the other floors, this floor has a relatively modest ceiling height with windows scaled to little learners. The space overlooks Town Square – perfect for watching many activities on the street below. The floor also features a dedicated space for story hour and other programs.

Finishes and furnishings were selected to be highly durable, easily cleanable and cheerful. Mobile shelving allows for easy reconfiguration, and even the librarian service desks are on casters to allow for complete flexibility.



A155.08

level 3: Adult Collections

The large north-facing windows provide abundant natural light in the building without glare. In all, 92% of all regularly inhabited spaces have access to views outside, and 40% of the regularly inhabited spaces have access to natural light.

Many interior spaces have glass walls that allow for borrowed light and views to the exterior. LED lighting with daylight sensors and a sophisticated control system augments the natural light.



A155.09

level 3: Collaboration Zone

The library spaces are designed to be flexible, usable, and efficient. The building has an 80% efficiency – much higher than the standard benchmark for libraries. One way the design team made this happen was by devising “Jack-and-Jill” group study rooms situated between the adult and teen spaces, accessible by either group. This “collaboration zone” also helps buffer sound between the adults and teens, while providing excellent supervision of both.

The interiors were inspired by the City’s love affair with jazz music. Colorful historical maps of Baton Rouge and the Mississippi line the major walls and are scaled to be seen from the street.



A155.10

level 3: Quiet Study

The Quiet Study Room features a breathtaking view of the Old State Capitol. The space features a sumptuous mix of colors and textures.

The windows on the east, west and south facades have angled perforated aluminum sunshades to control glare while preserving views outside. Motorized PVC-free mesh window shades are tuned to each façade exposure for additional glare control.



A155.11

level 4: Multipurpose Room

The top floor of the library is dedicated to public events. It features an array of flexible spaces for the community to meet, learn and engage with each other. The Multipurpose Room, the largest of these spaces, opens directly onto the public roof terrace.

The library operates seven days a week with spaces available for rent or sponsorship at night. It is a heavily used and occupied facility, and occupant loads fluctuate greatly. The CO2 system and demand ventilation are key to addressing the occupant load variability.



A155.12

level 4: Roof Terrace

The Mississippi River is the main economic driver of the region, and illuminating the relationship of the river to the cultural heritage of Baton Rouge was an important goal for the project.

The highest floor of the building features a public roof terrace and roof garden connected to a suite of large meeting rooms.

The roof terrace is one of the few publicly accessible outdoor spaces in the City with views of the Mississippi over the levee. It supports a wide variety of public and non-profit programs and events, reconnecting the community to the river.



A155.13

Sited at the gateway to downtown, the Library is easily accessible by foot, bicycle and bus, and proximate to dozens of schools and learning centers. Once visitors arrive, there is much more to do than browse books. The library is a place to learn about gardening, woodworking, or bicycle repair; to record an audition or podcast; to explore an extensive array of online and physical collections.

The library has become Baton Rouge's "living room," a place for the community to connect and collaborate, which the pandemic has taught us is so incredibly important to our quality of life.

Project Name:
River Center Branch Library

Project Location:
250 North Blvd.
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Owner/Client:
East Baton Rouge Parish Library and the City of Baton Rouge

Architect(s) of Record:
WHLC Architecture | Schwartz/Silver Architects, A Joint Venture
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Baton Rouge, LA 70810

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Nelson Liu

Landscape Architect:
Reich Associates

Consultants:
Structural: SCA Consulting
MEPFP: Associated Design Group, Inc.
Civil: CSRS
Technology: Shen Milsom Wilke

General Contractor:
Buquet & LeBlanc Inc.

Photographer(s):
Tim Mueller: slides 5- 13,
publicity image #1
Matthew Caillouet:
publicity image #2

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