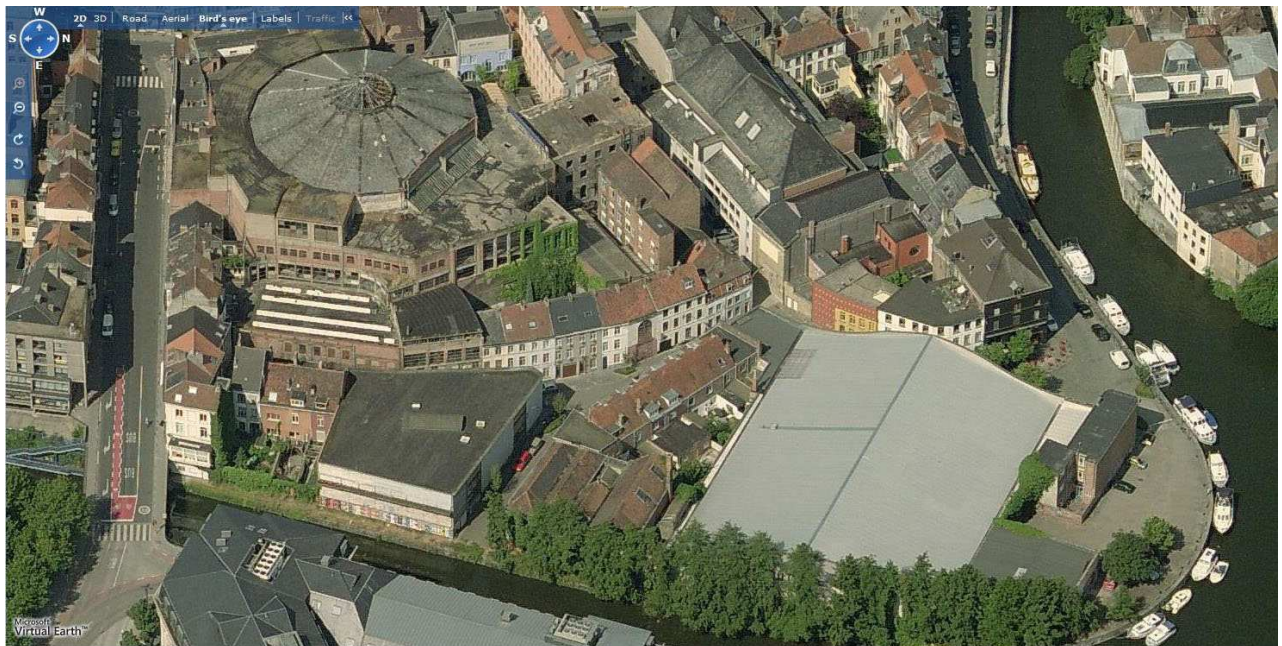


TOWARDS A NEW LIBRARY AT THE KROOK IN GHENT

The City of Ghent cooperates with the Province of East-Flanders, the Flemish government, the university of Ghent (UGhent) and the Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT) to create a **multi-media site** at the Waalse Krook. A **new main library** is an important part of this project. This text gives an overview of the :

1. starting point of the library
2. mission statement
3. goals
4. structural partners
5. subdivision and provisions of the new library
6. total area required
7. general features and charisma of the building



Waalse Krook (Ghent)

Introduction

There is no doubt about it: Ghent is a city of knowledge and culture. Its university and colleges have built up a strong reputation and made Ghent into the most important city of higher education in the country. Its monuments, museums, archives and libraries, its art and events are prominent in Flanders. But it is equally important that knowledge and culture be accessible to everyone. For unrestricted access to knowledge, science and culture entails in well informed citizens who participate constructively in social life and thus help shape democracy. The public library of Ghent wants to play a key role in this process. Its main purpose is to guarantee free and easy access to knowledge and culture.

This does not mean that it should confine its task to the acquisition and management of books and non-book materials, and just wait for borrowers to arrive. The library also aims to stimulate as many people as possible to participate in knowledge and culture, to partake in lifelong learning and to enjoy community life. This active approach assumes a well-adjusted organization in a functional building: a library built for the future.

1. Starting point

Since 1992 the Ghent main library has been housed in the renovated building of the former Gas, Water and Electricity Company at the Graaf van Vlaanderenplein. The city of Ghent is in complete charge of the library while both Flemish and provincial government provide important subsidies.



At present the collection of the main library consists of 364.000 printed and audiovisual media. Annually approximately 28.000 items are purchased, and just about as many discarded. Three quarters of the collection is available on open shelving. The collection aims to be as varied and universal as possible both in content and in form. Furthermore the library collects everything pertaining to Flemish and Dutch linguistics and literature, the city of Ghent, the province of East-Flanders and the history of the 19th and 20th century.

The library of Ghent has been Flanders' pioneer on central cataloguing and the integration of new technology in its services. Both quality and size of its collection and the accessibility of its services meet with strong approval from the general public and from other libraries. This appears from a Flemish user study done in 2005, and also from the fact that Ghent currently is the largest supplier for inter-library loan among Flemish public libraries.

Annually almost 1.5 million items are borrowed and 0.5 million references realised. The available floor area is 7.500 m². A hundred staff members, mainly part-time, work in the building. The library network of Ghent consists of a main library and 15 branches located in the suburbs and districts of Ghent. Back office is situated in the main library. Parallel to the plans for a new building for the main library, a master plan is in progress for more efficient spreading and housing of the branches, to be completed before 2015. The digital library which offers several services via the internet forms the third component of this network.

During the last 20 years the total amount of borrowers more than tripled: from 26.000 in 1986 to 80.000 in 2008. With an average of more than 2.500 visitors a day (50 opening hours a week) the main library is undisputedly the most frequently visited municipal building in Ghent. On the city of Ghent

website, the library links are amongst those most frequently used. A recent inquiry into user satisfaction about municipal services shows that the library scores highest.

The citizens of Ghent are the library's first target group. But because of its elaborate collection and services, it also attracts borrowers from within a far wider perimeter. For a large part these are students, commuters and visitors of Ghent. The library collaborates with several social, cultural and educational partners.

At first, the scope of the building stimulated the possibilities and growth of the library. But within a few years the building changed from a stimulus to an impediment to further growth. On very busy days the rush is so great that it is hardly agreeable to linger. A quote from the policy statement for 2002-2007 says:

'The main library is undisputedly the most frequented municipal building in Ghent. With 800.000 visitors a year it exceeds by far the anticipations of 1992, when the building was moved into. In fact, we need to start looking for larger accommodation.'

At the same time library work itself has strongly evolved during the past few years.

Where the public just came to borrow and consult, they now like to linger, to study and meet with others, to browse and experience. This goes for individuals as well as groups.

The present building offers no room to meet these new needs. On the other hand there is the rise of importance of all sorts of digital services which beg for new infrastructure and space.

2. Mission statement

The mission statement of the library of Ghent, as formulated in the policy for 2008-2013, summarizes what course the library wants to steer over the following years:

“Through its collection and services, the municipal public library of Ghent intends

LIBRARY OF GHENT	DECREE LOCAL CULTURAL POLICY
<i>to guarantee free and easy access to knowledge and culture</i>	The public library should be a basic provision open to all in need of knowledge, culture, information and recreation.
<i>to stimulate participation in culture and knowledge</i>	The public library should mediate to actively answer these needs. Thus it should contribute towards the spread of and participation in culture.
<i>to support lifelong learning</i>	The public library should provide the opportunity for lifelong learning and cultural development of individuals, and thus contribute to a democratic society.
<i>to help strengthen community life.</i>	The library should serve as a meeting point for its users and actively promote social contact.

Since the essence of this policy is hardly likely to change before 2013, it is bound to be applicable to the new building.

This will be made clearer further on through the goals Ghent intends to accomplish with its ‘library for the future.’

In order to visualise the concept of the new library, its main functions are represented by a diagram.

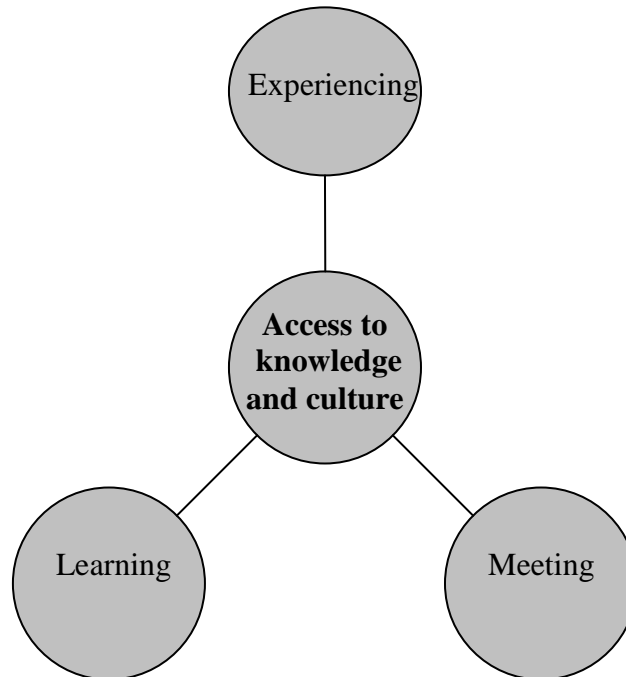
Focusing on the user's perspective the 4 above mentioned functions have each been given a simple name, respectively:

Access to knowledge & information (at the core)

Experiencing

Learning

Meeting



This diagram wants to clarify the relation between the core task of the library and the new opportunities it aims to offer to the public: learning, experiencing and meeting. These extra functions focus specifically on the interaction between the core product and its potential consumer, they deal with communication in general. This signifies a clear shift of attention from information and culture as a 'product', to information and culture as a 'process'. It should be noted that 'learning', 'experiencing' and 'meeting' will not occur separately: they are sure to overlap. The new functions will enhance the core task of the library which remains as ever: to guarantee free and easy access to knowledge and culture.

3. Goals

- to guarantee free and easy access to knowledge and culture

Open to a wider public

The new building has to allow for an important increase to the present average of 2.500 visitors a day and should herein be inspired by some of the most successful libraries abroad. A user study in 2005 made apparent that the actual library fails to reach all layers of the population. The profile of library users in Ghent shows a clear underrepresentation of the more socially vulnerable such as the lower skilled and the elderly. The library intends to try and reduce this imbalance.

Moreover, the library wishes to pay special attention to an entirely new category of users: the generation 'tech', the 'Googlers' who expect everything to be easy, portable, wireless, flexible and permanently available by means of the new media.

New media

Developments on the internet are a strong stimulus for library innovation and at the same time a

metaphor for what 'a library for the future' could mean in practice. Important in this context is the appearance of Web 2.0, introduced in 2004, when the World Wide Web changed from a collection of separate websites to a complete platform of interactive applications, using so-called social software on open servers.

As a provider of public information, the library realises the need to keep up with recent developments and to use them to maximum benefit. Therefore it wishes to project itself as a transition area, a hybrid place, a bridge between the digital and the physical, between man and technology.

The library must be a place which encourages interaction between people and quality content, be it digital or physical.

In Ghent the public library, the Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT) and the university (UGhent) have been offered a unique opportunity: they are to work together on a project which will benefit the general public, exploring exciting new possibilities concerning media- and information technology.

This partnership has been structured as follows:

-the library will guarantee free and easy access to the existing media (from books to the internet), using digital technology.

-IBBT/UGhent will provide new access to innovative media, making use of experimental technology. Some of these applications will, in due course, be integrated in the regular library offer.

IBBT/UGhent will set up a 'Centre for New Media' (CNM) at the Krook (for further details on this partnership see no 4, further on in the text).

The library will take due care to adhere to its acquired values and traditional functions whilst elaborating the new concept. It will seek a synthesis, a 'best of two worlds.' More than once the printed book has been pronounced dead. Good policy implies that this doom scenario is to be taken into account, but optimal policy suggests that the library dedicate itself to the promotion of reading as well as information skills, thus safeguarding its own future.

It is unlikely that everything will change dramatically, but there is sure to be an exponential growth of information and an ever-increasing need to learn and communicate. This need not mean the end of the traditional media.



Idea Store (London)

Library users themselves creating knowledge and culture

Another important development is that it has become far easier to simultaneously create knowledge, and make it available to others. Digital media are an outstanding means to get users involved in the production of knowledge. Not only virtually (read: on the Web 2.0) but also in reality (read: in the library) they can offer an easily accessible platform for creation and exchange, if necessary under the guidance of professionals. The new library will therefore allow users to find as well as create and exchange information. It is to be a place where knowledge and culture can be gathered, created, indexed and used, both in the traditional way, printed on paper, and in the new way, by means of high tech.

- to stimulate participation in culture and knowledge

The experience library

Besides living up to its main role as a provider of knowledge and culture, the new library will encourage people to participate actively, to use their own creativity in a context of non-formal learning, to explore, experience and discover. This is referred to by the term 'experience library'. By organizing a constant flow of events, in the form of exhibitions, lectures and debates, installations and performances, and by offering free podiums for music and poetry, it will stimulate people towards active participation. This will be backed up by continuous cross-references to relevant materials from the library collection. The new library will always have new experiences on offer, for individuals as well as groups. Users will be surprised again and again, discovering unexpected aspects of the collection, and being introduced to new media in flexible frames.

The library building itself should enhance this experience of discovery and surprise through its architecture, furnishings and atmosphere.

However, it should be kept in mind that the thrill of surprise and the kick of experience aren't the ultimate goal. They are only the means by which people are enticed to discover the real treasures the library has to offer. Experience only begets its meaning when backed up by strong content.

In order to set up activities, the library seeks to cooperate with a wide spectrum of social and cultural organizations. This will be to mutual benefit, since it thus offers these organizations a platform to become better-known by the public.



- to support lifelong learning

The library as an environment for learning

Situated in Ghent, city of knowledge, the library aims to support lifelong learning and to offer an environment for learning to everyone regardless of schooling, competence and skills, whilst targeting more specifically the more socially vulnerable, and this as a complement to other educational institutions and scientific departments. This presupposes sufficient room for study, facilities for self-tuition, quality introduction and instruction of visiting groups (be they children or adults), and courses and activities to do with reading promotion and information skills. To this effect, the library will cooperate with the broad educational field.

Multimedia learning centre

Though access to knowledge and culture remains the library's core task, this doesn't necessarily emancipate all user groups. As a multimedia learning centre the library will offer plenty of opportunities to all who just wish to be introduced to the use of new media and technology.

- to help strengthen community life

The library as a municipal meeting place

In order to broaden its present scope and reach a wider public, the library will have to manifest itself as a 'living room of the city', a place which invites people to linger, a 'home away from home', to be cherished by Ghent citizens and visitors. A place with room aplenty to share experiences and insights, to organize meetings and partake in informal chats. The library will get to be seen as a 'third place': a physical space which, while distinct from home, work or school, makes one feel equally comfortable and 'at home'. Whatever the virtual benefits of Web 2.0, the library will be the physical point of focus in the socio-cultural tissue of the city: prominently visible, easily accessible and an entrance gate to so much more than library collections alone.



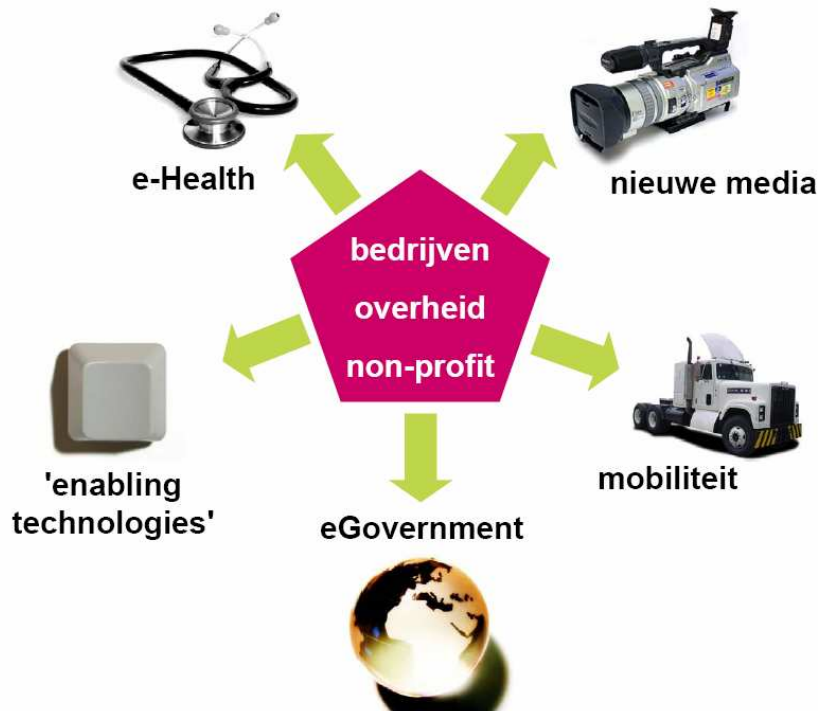
Vancouver Public Library

4. Structural partners

All around the world new libraries have been firmly invested in, very often, combined projects. Their social significance and wide scope make them into much sought after partners. While cooperating all along with participants from the broad social, cultural and educational sector, the library of Ghent has elected the following associates for future structural cooperation within the building itself:

The Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT) and the University of Ghent (UGhent)

The IBBT is a centre for strategic research into information- and communication technology. It was established by the Flemish Government and cooperates closely with Flemish universities. It focuses partly on health care (mainly in Leuven) and on media (mainly in Ghent).



The important role of the University of Ghent in the development of multimedia technology and ICT can be a permanent source of inspiration and innovation for the Krook. The Krook acts as an antenna or a 'living lab' where tech researchers are confronted with library users.

People will be introduced to new applications, get acquainted with their potentialities and follow supplementary training. Researchers on the other hand will get feedback about the appeal and use of new applications. Within the building IBBT/UGhent will have its own premises, called the Centre for New Media (CNM), but it will also share floor space with the library.

The Bibliographical Centre (Bibnet)

Bibnet is an organization established by the Flemish government in order to integrate digital information in public libraries. The Flemish Central Catalogue (VLACC) is of crucial importance to the future expansion of the digital library. This database, created in 1978 on the initiative of the Flemish government, covers all references to library collections in Flemish libraries. In 2008 a total of 120 people were needed for the input of data. This implied a scattering of expertise and high cost. To increase the efficiency of central cataloguing, it was decided to fuse all efforts into one bibliographic centre and make it part of Bibnet. This centre will be situated at the Krook, thanks to the important financial contribution by the Flemish government towards the project. In order to work efficiently, a bibliographic centre needs the physical proximity of books and related materials, in other words of a big library.

The library of Ghent will benefit from the help of Bibnet for the implementation of new technology in its public services. The new bibliographic centre will on estimate employ up to ten people.

The Regional Libraries of the Province of East-Flanders (SBB)

The Regional Library System (SBB) aims to have libraries all over the province work more effectively and more efficiently. Special attention is paid to upscaling and networking, realized in the first place through joint ventures of libraries. The SBB also focuses on library promotion and readers' guidance. The province of East-Flanders wishes to expand its central catalogue for public libraries (OVINO) and its automated Library System (PBS). The SBB will eventually number up to eleven employees. The library of Ghent, which formerly acted as central public library for East-Flanders, initiated various services and activities which have now been taken over and improved upon by the SBB. The SBB sharing the same premises with the library will give this old partnership a new breath. Absorbing the heritage collection of the province will strengthen the library's position as the most important reference library for East-Flanders.

This synergy at the Krook of the library, IBBT/UGhent, Bibnet and Provincial Libraries will make the site into a laboratory for library innovation.

5. Subdivision and provisions of the new library

The new library consists of 3 large public units:

1. The AGORA, open for longer hours than the library itself
2. The LIBRARY proper, open 50 hours a week and divided in 3 sections:
 - the youth library
 - the library of culture
 - the library of knowledge
3. The AUDITORIUM and the RESTAURANT, also open for longer hours than the library.

The **AGORA** acts as front piece and centre of attraction. Visitors are allowed a tempting first taste of the wide range of services on offer in the library. Access to knowledge and culture, experiencing and meeting are prominently present already, not yet so is the learning aspect. Thus the agora is a place to linger as well as a transit area luring on towards the rest of the library. It offers a thematic zone with a collection of approximately 18.000 materials - both non-fiction on topical and popular subjects, and easier fiction such as thrillers, detectives, romance-, a wide range of newspapers and magazines, and access to the internet. This zone targets the library user who wants to snap up some reading matter or collect reserved items.

The agora also includes an 'experience area', the forum, where library and CNM, often jointly, organize a mixed variety of exhibitions, installations, performances and audiovisual presentations. This is why the forum needs to be very flexible in lay-out, logistics and technology.

Visitors should enjoy and use the whole of the agora as one large meeting place and continuous source of experience. Therefore the agora needs to be open in the evening as well as on Sundays.

Situated immediately next to the agora is a café which also serves as reading room, offering a choice of newspapers and magazines. The café has a terrace overlooking the Krook, and a wardrobe and toilets nearby. The café enhances both quality and atmosphere in the agora and is therefore indispensable: it cannot have separate opening hours or entrances.



Montreal La Grande Bibliothèque

The **LIBRARY** consists of three clusters:

- Youth:** a range of media and happenings suitable for all ages, from nippers and toddlers to children and young adults
- Culture:** a range of media and happenings for adults covering literature, languages, feature films, comic books, music and art, both in Dutch and in foreign languages.
- Knowledge:** a range of media and happenings covering non-fiction for adults.

The three clusters youth/culture /knowledge are subdivided in a similar way. Each cluster reflects through its subdivision the four functions: access to knowledge and culture, experiencing, learning and meeting

This is translated into the following four spaces:

1. an **agora of its own**, as primary meeting space and starting point for orientation towards the rest of the cluster.
2. a **collection, offering access to knowledge and culture** : the total capacity of all clusters (including the focus-collection) is 234.000 items on open shelves and 114.000 items in the stacks.

In each of the clusters, collections are displayed in three different ways.

- a - the focus collection zooms in upon interesting topical, special themes, subjects, persons, organizations, trends, etc. using particularly attractive and highly flexible shelving and presentation. Outside organizations can be given a forum here, offering information through publications, exhibitions and possibly 'consulting-hours' at an information desk.
- b - the open access area, where items are presented in the traditional way, meaning that fiction is put on the shelves in alphabetic, and non-fiction in systematic order. Bookcases are arranged clearly and conveniently. They consist of no more than four bookshelves and allow for maximum transparency.
- c - the stacks, storing precious materials and items in less demand, are shared by the library of culture and the library of knowledge. The stack room can be locked up, but can also be opened up to the public occasionally.

Interspersed everywhere are seats for reading, listening, working, studying and using the computer. Along with the stacks, the library of culture and the library of knowledge also share a separate (silent) reading room with approximately 160 seats.

The youth library also disposes of a storytelling corner. In the library of knowledge there

is a media learning centre, where library users can learn to use new media.

3. a **forum**, freely accessible and with a capacity to the equivalent of two school classes or about 50 people, where open activities of all kinds can be staged.
4. a **workshop** which can be locked up, for introduction, instruction and other activities that stimulate learning and co-creation. In each of the workshops a media lab is planned, where new applications can be demonstrated and tested in cooperation with CNM.

AUDITORIUM AND RESTAURANT

The auditorium offers 250 seats plus all the necessary technical equipment and facilities. The restaurant is equipped to prepare hot meals and has 100 seats. This area, including toilets and wardrobe, is calculated for 350 persons attending simultaneously. Auditorium and restaurant have their own opening hours, possibly later than the agora.

The table below gives an idea of the diversity of services, materials and amenities available to the public in the new library.

Blue stands for the core function: access to knowledge and information, orange stands for learning, red for experiencing and green for meeting.

The table shows that blue, red and green are to be found in the whole building and that orange is not manifest in the agora, the auditorium and the restaurant.

		ACCESS	LEARNING	EXPERIENCING	MEETING
AGORA		newspapers and magazines		leaflets/billboard	common agora
		thematic room		common forum: exhibitions performances, audiovisual aids, installations	reading café
		internet			

YOUTH LIBRARY					
		information desks	study places	youth forum	youth agora
		computers for the public	youth workshop	reading and listening spots	
		focus		storytelling corner	
		open access library			
		stack room			

LIBRARY OF CULTURE					
		information desks	study places	culture forum	culture agora
		computers for the public	culture workshop	reading and listening spots	
		focus	reading room		
		open access library			
		stack room			

LIBRARY OF KNOWLEDGE					
		information desks	study places	knowledge forum	knowledge agora
		computers for the public	knowledge workshop	reading and listening spots	
		focus	reading room		
		open access library	media learning centre		
		stack room			

ROOMS					
				auditorium	restaurant

Circulation of the collection

The total collection of about **370.000 materials** should circulate at an even faster rate than at present : the library aims for **2 million loans a year**, an average of 6.000 a day.

Borrowing is decentralized by means of self-service in each of the three clusters and the agora. Library users register their materials at self-service machines. All returned items are registered automatically at a central point in front of the entrance (and not in the agora itself). Library materials can also be dropped in after opening hours by means of automatons.

Sorting and transport of materials to the clusters youth, culture and knowledge are completely automatized, using sorting robots and conveyor belts.

In a way the library should be built around the conveyor system and not the other way round. A conveyor system added on afterwards is likely to be less functional and to take up more room. It is imperious that the sorting of returned materials by robots and the distribution to the clusters take place in a space which is properly isolated: they must be neither seen nor heard.

Seating

Because spending a lot of time at the library becomes more and more important, the new library is able to seat **700 visitors**. It provides multi-functional seating: comfortable seats to read, listen or watch scattered all over the clusters, seats for individual interaction, as in the café or the storytelling corner, and seats for active participation, as in the three workshops. When not in use, workshops remain open to the public, now functioning as (silent) reading rooms.

Spots for studying and working are equipped with all the necessary ICT-facilities. The following ICT-services could be offered on the public computers :

- access to the catalogue and other databases of the library
- access to the internet
- office software, educational software, graphic software...



Amsterdam Public Library

Offices

The library contains 5 offices.

One near each public cluster:

- customer service in the agora: 8 employees
- youth library: 10
- library of culture: 15
- library of knowledge: 16

and a central office block for 72 employees divided over :

- board of management and central staff of the library : 51
- provincial library centre for East-Flanders (SBB) :11
- bibliographical centre Bibnet : 10

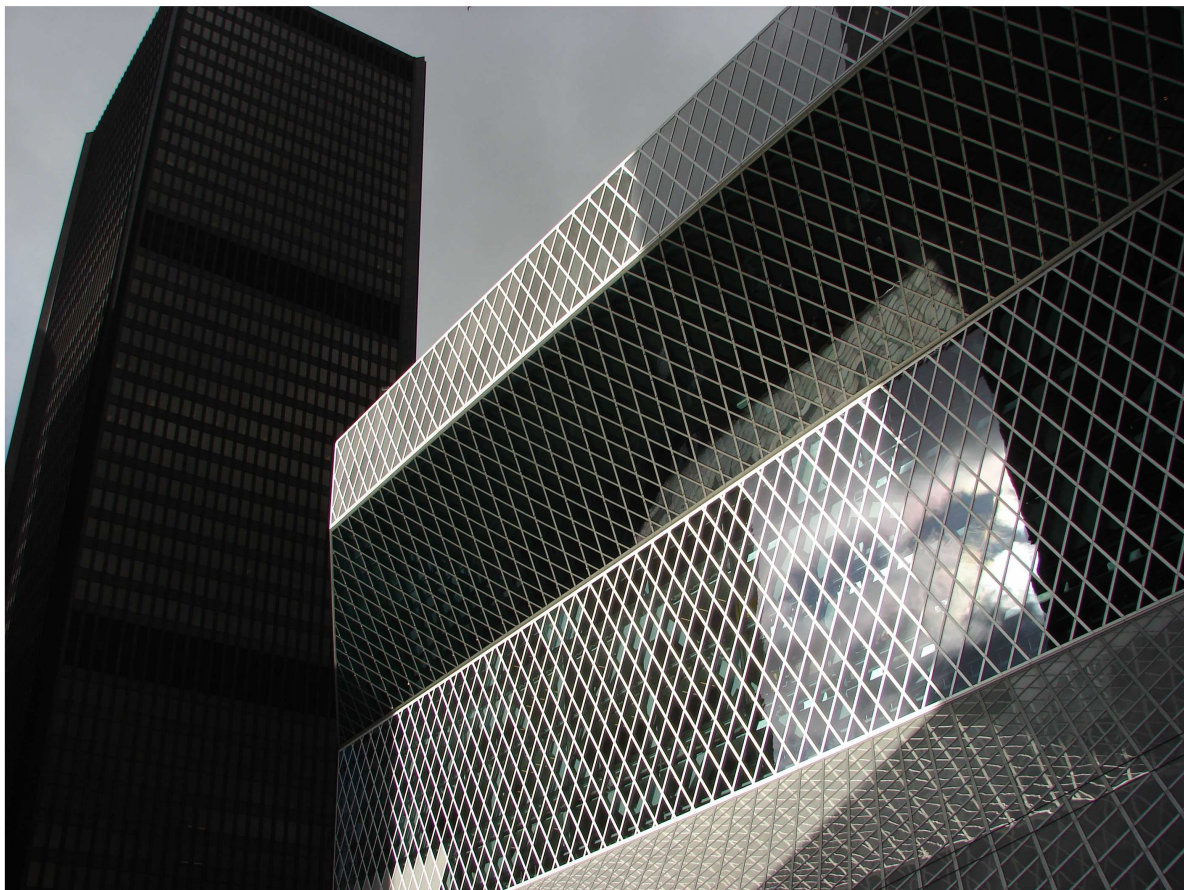
Auxiliary spaces such as meeting rooms, administrative archives, storage, sanitary facilities (e.g. including showers for cyclists), canteen, repro, post room, server room etc. are located in the central block.

Logistics

There is a room for the maintenance of library materials, a sorting area, a depot for materials destined for the branch libraries, and a storage room for discarded media and waste. Both depot and storeroom are accessed by a berth for loading and a discharging.

Parking facilities

Limited parking facilities are provided for services and for the handicapped. A very spacious roofed-over and secure bicycle shed for public and staff is indispensable.



Seattle Public Library

6. Total area required

The table below sketches the floor space calculated in m² required for each of the above-mentioned sections.

Column 3 states the storage factor for the areas needed for circulation by the public, for sanitary and technical rooms and for construction. That factor is 150 for the agora, auditorium and restaurant, 130 for the other rooms.

Column 4 gives the gross area required.

Column 5 states each cluster's share of the total gross area.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>area</i>	<i>effective</i>	<i>factor</i>	<i>gross</i>	<i>% of the total</i>
	<i>floor</i>			
	<i>area</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>area</i>	<i>area</i>
agora	1228,7	150%	1843,1	13,4
youth library	1191,5	130%	1548,9	11,3
library of culture	1684,0	130%	2189,2	16,0
shared stack room +reading room	1598,0	130%	2077,4	15,1
library of knowledge	1810,0	130%	2353,0	17,2
auditorium and restaurant	391,0	150%	586,5	4,3
offices	1197,0	130%	1556,1	11,3
technical spaces (including sorting system and convey system)	1200,0	130%	1560,0	11,4
TOTAL	10300,2		13714,2	100,0
bicycle shed/ car park			1000,0	

7. General features and charisma of the building

-The new library will serve as an architectural **landmark**, radiating the goals mentioned above, arousing curiosity and offering a point of reference for Ghent citizens to be proud of. There is no real need for spectacular architecture, rather: the building should excel through its aesthetics, its transparency, atmosphere and furnishings. There is to be harmony throughout in spite of the diversity of functions. The building should be easy to find, inviting and accessible for all.

-As for creativity and cooperation, the library aims to become a *bèta* organization, constantly learning, developing, cooperating and searching to improve its services in a permanently evolving environment. This requires a building which is third-millennium-proof, flexible enough to **evolve** on the rhythm of technological and social development, still functional and aesthetic after 2030. A relatively high floor load (a variable load of 7kN/m²) in all public areas and in the stacks allows for flexible shelving of the collection, now and in the future.

- The new library is an example of **sustainability**. Its strong public character may inspire visitors to follow suit.

- The library will offer an ergonomical environment to read, learn, experience and meet. More particularly the building will facilitate and stimulate **active participation** by library users, using self-service machines, gathering information autonomously, trying out new technologies and applications and co-creating new content.

- A substantial part of all floor space is located on the ground floor. The number of floors for public

use is kept to a minimum.

- The library should be easily recognizable as such from the outside. From the agora, it should be easy for the public to orientate themselves towards the rest of the library.

- A general aura of openness signals free and easy **access** for all.

For safety reasons there is only one entrance, freely accessible and inviting, and within easy and safe reach of bicycle shed and parking area. A regular stream of 250 to 500 visitors an hour can be expected, with peaks of circa 1.000 persons at rush-hour.

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