

Chainbuilding: A New Building for the *New New School*

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Abstract Until a souring national and local economy led them to scale back their plans in 2008, The New School in New York City had been designing a new, 500,000-ft² “signature building” intended to embody what administrators were calling The new New School, a university committed to progressive, interdisciplinary, urban, global education. The building was to offer glimpses of the horizon of academic infrastructure and media and their potential impact—structural, pedagogic, and symbolic—on the university and its communities. Although the building will not be realized in the form presented to the public in spring 2008, the design deliberations that generated that proposal offer valuable insights into how a university might reembody its ideals in a time of intense globalization and mediatization. Complementing Robert Kirkbride’s paper on the pedagogical practice of chainmaking and its historical relationship to learning spaces, we examine in this paper how media can be instrumental in wayfinding, how they can help to organize a building into various “processual” paths that reflect different approaches to learning, and how their presence in learning spaces can enhance teaching and learning. We also discuss how the building can serve as a *mediator* within the community, reflecting the institution’s identity and its pedagogical philosophy.

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Potential Narratives

If all had gone according to plan, the exterior of the completed signature building for The New School might well have provoked the following responses from several pedestrians standing at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Fourteenth Street. A local resident scans the

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marquee for the evening's performances—a tribute to Ornette Coleman, a lecture by Orhan Pamuk, a double-bill of Pinter one-acts—while an instructor in Environmental Studies makes a mental adjustment to her presentation in light of the ventilation system visible in the facade, and a student glances up at the library's reading room, glowing high above Union Square, wondering if his study group has already assembled in the skygarden (see Fig. 1).

Inside the building, one would have encountered an urban reef of activity,¹ offering manifold options:

Entering the lobby, the resident descends the generous amphitheatrical stairs partway and finds a less trafficked area to sit down and wait for a friend (Fig. 2). He watches the theater crowds gather below while others ascend to floors overhead and imagines the lobby ceiling as another facade, whose perforation by suspended, lantern-like spaces evoke different zones of activity beyond.

Entering the lobby, the lecturer pauses to examine the global news and weather array and, as the wireless signal alerts her handheld device,² consults the university's online room reservation system for an available seminar room with multiscreen projection.³ Even as she joins the queue for the Liberal Arts elevator, a room is confirmed on the seventh floor, and her device is prompted with a navigational map that reveals an alternate route via the Design Chain. Recalling the crossover faculty lounges on every third floor, she realizes she can take the Design elevator to the sixth floor, finalizes her presentation at one of the stations, forwards it, and takes the stairs to her final destination.

Entering the lobby, the student proceeds directly to the massive storage tank, where he studies the weather array for a graphic update on the level of rainwater. Following the recent hurricane, it is relatively full: He enters data into his handheld device. No message yet from his group, so he checks in briefly at the project room on the tenth floor before heading to Design's roof pavilion for a shot of wheatgrass and a quick review of the materials. His device buzzes with good news. One of the multiscreen rooms was available after all. Seventh floor. Should be interesting to compare their presentation techniques.

The multicursal narratives that coalesced for The New School's new signature building offered enticing glimpses of the horizon of academic infrastructure and media and their potential impact—structural, pedagogic, and symbolic—on the university and its communities. The ubiquity of media suggested intriguing opportunities for collaborative experimentation, as well as personal interaction with the building. This seamless integration of built and virtual environments offered a tantalizing dream to current New School faculty members and students: The combination of digital and analog cues in the building—whether for wayfinding or as expressions of its pedagogical vision—held promise for its future users. While the building program was schematic and the ideas expressed in the following report were provisional, a genetic code of intriguing learning spaces had taken shape. We will reflect on the planning process up through The New School's public design presentation in spring 2008, examining the potential roles played by media in planning a new academic building while inquiring how a *building* might serve as *mediator* within the university and among the university, its immediate and global communities.

¹ What would a visitor find inside the new building? Much would depend on the visitor and objectives, but it is likely that the destination will have been partially revealed through the building's exterior, alternately described as a "theatrical mask," or a legible text that "extrovertedly embodies the university's commitment to civic engagement, and a pedagogy rooted in sustainability" (Colin Koop, personal interview, 25 October 2007).

² Whether a Personal Digital Assistant, cellphone, or their progeny 4 years hence.

³ Polyvision's "Room Wizard," for example.

Fig. 1 Rendering of roof garden, courtesy of SOM.



Background of the New School

The New School was founded in 1917 in several adjacent townhouses on West 23rd Street in New York City, where Charles Beard, James Robinson, Thorstein Veblen, and John Dewey envisioned a university for adult learners that promoted academic freedom, civic engagement, and the integration of theory and practice. Eleven years later, the university moved downtown to new headquarters, one of the first International Style buildings in the city, on West 12th Street. In the following years, the Milano School for Management and Urban Policy, the Parsons School of Design, the Mannes School of Music, Eugene Lang College, the School of Jazz and Contemporary Music, and the Actor's Studio (all since renamed to incorporate the New School moniker) joined the university's original division for adult learners and the New School for Social Research (Rutkoff and Scott 1986).

“Practice” and “making” have been integrated into scholarship and pedagogy since The New School's founding—but today, former Provost Ben Lee said in his 2007 convocation address, “we are rethinking what a ‘practice oriented education’ means in a world where the

Fig. 2 Rendering of atrium, courtesy of SOM.



challenges facing humanity are increasingly non-linear, socially complex, and riddled with feedback loops that change the nature of the problem even as solutions are enacted.” Such “wicked problems” call for collaborative work that crosses disciplinary boundaries, confounds traditional university administrative structures, and outgrows conventional facilities—particularly the old, inflexible buildings, scattered between Midtown and Greenwich Village—that The New School’s eight divisions currently inhabit.

Recognizing that old structures, both political and architectural, are impeding this development, Lee (2007) announced that “We are on the verge of transforming our whole institution into what can only be called the new New School.” Part of that transformation would have been the creation of a new 500,000-ft² “signature building”, containing classrooms, libraries, and performance spaces, on the southeast corner of 14th Street and 5th Avenue, where the Graduate Faculty building, originally a Lanes Department Store, once stood. This, Lee said, “will become the space in which design, social science, performance, humanities, and the liberal arts intertwine.” He continues,

The programming and design of the new building mirror the pedagogic space we are developing to launch The new New School. Students in our cross-divisional programs and the honors college will develop a combination of capacities that allow them to identify and define problems and analyze their historical, cultural, political and economic roots. They will also develop skills to enable them to design and plan for solutions, participate in their implementation, and assess their impact over time. These students will study in a process rich environment in which projects organize knowledge, studio methodology is interwoven with seminar and service learning, and lectures from leading international scholars serve to frame the challenges of our time. The new library and cutting edge information technologies will support real time in-the-classroom collaborations with foreign colleagues and students. These synchronous collaborations will train students to work in a global environment even as they participate in remaking their own local landscape. The new New School will be a holding environment for pedagogical innovation that will not only transform the New School, but also be a model for higher education in a globalizing world.

In the fall of 2007, as we wrote this piece, IDEO, a design consultancy, had finished conducting hundreds of interviews and several charrettes and following dozens of students, faculty, and staff through and among The New School’s buildings to determine both how they use the existing space and what these populations need in the new building. Geoffrey Freeman of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson, and Abbott (SBRA), a firm renowned for its long history of designing libraries, had consulted on the design of the new and interim libraries. And, Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), the project architects, were deep in the programming phase—that is, determining what would go where and how much space should be allocated to particular functions in the new building. The participation of students and faculty in this process was unprecedented for the university and paralleled similar faculty engagement in developing the curriculum of new university-wide programs, as well as the realignment of pedagogic and governance structures within and across The New School’s divisions.

Amid the many simultaneous transformations at The new New School, there was one apparent certainty on the approaching horizon: As of early 2009, the old Graduate Faculty building at 65 5th Avenue would be demolished, opening the site for a new structure. The New School’s administration has repeatedly reinforced its commitment to making this new building an environmentally sound, distinctively urban structure—President Bob Kerrey wants to see “New York in the building” – that embodies a new institutional identity and a progressive, global approach to pedagogy. Examining the design *process*, as well as the

evolving design itself, can reveal how these aspirations were negotiated, occasionally altered or compromised, and ultimately concretized in a physical form.

Media scholar and artist Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) has argued for the importance of examining physical places of learning and how media are integrated into those places to better understand how an embodied “learning self” emerges—and how to design more effective learning spaces. She explains how pedagogical experiences can be designed:

Architects, artists, performers, media producers, and designers of content-based experiences, museum exhibitions, and public spaces are inventing ‘processual paths,’ ‘communicative instruments,’ urban ‘critical vehicles,’ theatrical performances, provocative interaction encounters, architectural spaces, and mediated cityscapes—with pedagogical intent, and they are doing so in ways that emphasize noncognitive, nonrepresentational processes and events such as movement, sensation, intensity, rhythm, passage, and self-augmenting change. They seem to aim their designs at involving their users in ways that exceed physical mechanisms such as memory, recognition, or cognition (p. 6).

Although Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill is not inclined to use such language, their design was, in fact, inspired by some of the techniques described by Ellsworth. The new building was to offer pathways of exploration, encourage communication between faculty and students currently isolated in different departments and separate buildings, expose inhabitants to the scholarly and creative work produced by practitioners in myriad fields, and facilitate collaborative research and teaching. The way the building would achieve these goals *would be* in part cognitive, but it would also teach through movement, sensation, intensity, and rhythm—all of which were enhanced by the building’s integration of media.

Ellsworth’s “places of learning” are primarily *mediaspaces*—places where media are inextricable from architecture, where screens become walls and broadcasted sounds establish spatial boundaries. Architectural historian Beatriz Colomina also examines the integration of “architecture and information flow” in the exhibition design of Charles and Ray Eames, the quintessential pedagogical designers (2001: 17). There is a vast body of history and theory examining the relationships between media and architecture; much twentieth century work draws connections between the lens or screen and the window or wall (Virilio 1991; Spigel 1992; Colomina 1994; Friedberg 2006). “The vertical surfaces of the buildings [are] conceived no longer architectonically but as screens receiving and emitting extraarchitectural information,” writes design theorist Michael Hays (1995: 44). But the new hope is that

architecture’s surfaces (as much as its spaces) will produce unexpected and spontaneous affects, that the surfaces will engender virtual intensities whose manifestations as actual information or as programmatic activities emerge as a kind of *après-coup*. The building is a surface to be read not as a projection screen but as a diagram of potentials for activity, a *dispositif* for differential forms, functions, contents, and expressions from incommensurable registers pressed together into a single tissue (Hays 1995: 44).

Artist and critic Saul Ostrow agrees, writing recently that some architects have brought their work “in line with a totalizing model of media space by emphasizing it as a site of display—that is, as an integral part of the image/event that is becoming the sphere of human activity, rather than highlighting its instrumental function as a network for information and distribution” (2004: 14–15).

The surfaces of the New Schools' signature building would function as a "site of display", revealing student work taking shape inside its classrooms and shops, offering glimpses of performances in one of the three below-grade theaters, exhibiting the breadth of activity that characterizes the institution—teaching, scholarship, design, production, performance, and exhibition. Those surfaces would also broadcast information about upcoming special events, current news, and, as proposed in a "green building" report, even the building's energy consumption. At the same time, the architectural surfaces were to "diagram [the] potentials for activity" both inside and out. The exterior facades and interior walls would reveal the intersecting circulation routes that (1) bring different populations and different disciplines into contact; (2) juxtapose disparate activities, disparate modes of learning; and (3) make manifest the translation of theory into practice, information intake into material output. And, at the ground level, a transparent and open facade would convey potential links between the school and its urban context.

While the building's surfaces were to function as screens and diagrams of activity, the spaces enclosed by those surfaces would be enhanced with media, as well. In this paper, we will show how media, instrumental in wayfinding and integrated into libraries and teaching spaces, were to become a structural, pedagogical, and symbolic backbone for the new signature building. We will examine first how media were to be organized in various "processual paths", or chains that weave through the building, "diagram[ming]...potentials for activity" between seemingly disparate disciplines and ways of learning. We will then look at various media-enhanced learning spaces to assess how the integration of media and architecture might impact teaching and learning. Finally, we will address how these various forms of mediation—from the building's display surfaces to its classroom media—reflect the pedagogical philosophy and identity of the institution.

Structural Integration of Media

Media are simply "inherent to the design", says SOM architect Colin Koop (personal interview, 25 October 2007). Because the building was not to be completed until 2011, designers had to plan for a technological infrastructure that would not yet exist. Lisa Browar, former New School University Librarian, says that the library, at least, was planning for an "infrastructure as robust as we can afford" and "as flexible as the building can allow" (personal interview, 24 October 2007). Will the conventional computer lab still exist or should designers instead be creating spaces to accommodate personal laptops—and what Browar calls the "ubiquitous personal screens"? Before we start "populating a building with machines", she says, we need to ask "what do you want to do [with technology]?" Koop agrees that planning should be driven not by formulas and growth algorithms—by numbers of books and computers—but by the "spatial character" best suited for the activity that will take place in each space. Faculty member Dominic Pettman says that "a lot of information should be ambient, built into the design"; for instance, a Room Wizard system, accessed via a touch screen outside every room in the building, should tell anyone whether or when a room is being used and by whom—and when it might be free for extemporaneous use or reservable for future use (email interview, 23 October 2007). Such a digital system would have an architectural analog: IDEO proposed that many classrooms have walls of variable transparency, so that activities taking place within could be broadcasted to passersby.

Media were also integral to the various processual paths, to borrow Ellsworth's terminology, winding throughout the building. The architects, in consultation with IDEO,

had identified four “chains” that would draw the building together vertically and horizontally, integrating this vertical campus and clarifying paths among analogous functions (see Fig. 3). Yet the designers decided to distribute some functions that would once have been housed together—all the library collections or all the media labs, for instance, to encourage people to venture from their “home” territory and interact with people from other communities. This distribution of functions had the potential to create unique juxtapositions and link traditionally disparate disciplines and functions.

Earlier in the planning process, IDEO had referred to these chains as “paths for inspiration”, reflecting a strong desire to provide alternative routes through the building and, thereby, to produce serendipitous encounters among the variety of students that comprise the New School’s student body. Here, IDEO’s ethnographic investigations helped the university see through the discreet horizontal cultures that have emerged in response to New York City real estate and elevator dependence, revealing four categories of New School students: specialists, samplers, hedgers, and hybrids (June 2007: 38–46). Their preliminary findings emphasized that the signature building should have three primary characteristics: (1) As a Storyteller, it should provide the “evidence of interdisciplinary work”; (2) as a Gracious Host, its formal and informal spaces should encourage chance encounters, “where much of the real learning occurs”; and (3) as an Academic Lab, whose “learning spaces will need to ‘learn’ along the way, too” (June 2007: 49–51).

Ellsworth agrees that inspiration can arise from the “ramif[ication] and scatter[ing] of thoughts and images into new and different alignments and practices”; these chains would serve to “juxtapose, complicate, and creatively mate [disparate] source material in ways that overlap and ‘wildly mix’ things that are supposed to be separate and never thought or seen together” and to “complicate definition by opening up volatile spaces of difference between things and ideas that are often seen as being the same” (2005: 13). The chains thus

Atrium Study

The New School | Quads in the Sky

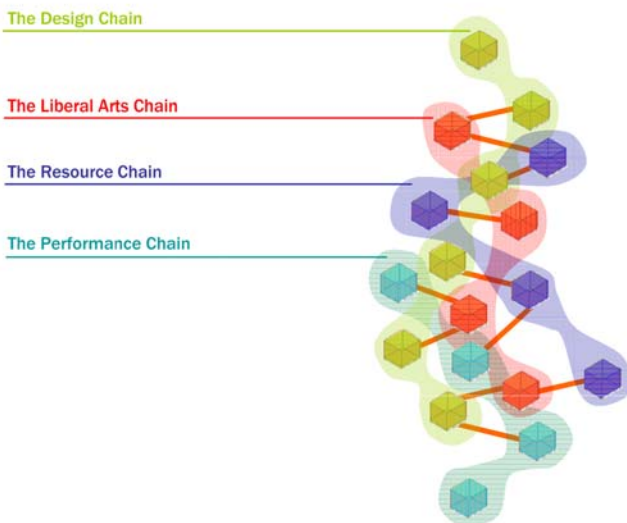


Fig. 3 Conceptual diagram of linked thematic chains, courtesy of SOM.

promoted interdisciplinarity, creating productive juxtapositions, and suggesting new collaborations by encouraging circulation through unfamiliar territories.

Colin Koop said that there was at one time a separate “media chain”, but that media were eventually recognized as integral to nearly every programmatic area in the building; because media are ubiquitous, they cannot be localized in a specific chain. Ultimately, the four chains were (1) Design, (2) Performance, (3) Liberal Arts, and (4) Resource. Each chain would announce its presence at the building’s lobby, perhaps with color-coded materials or some other intuitive wayfinding system; these analog circulation cues would likely be supplemented by a digital wayfinding system accessed via kiosks distributed throughout the building and via handheld locative media devices. The Resource Chain, Koop said, would be distinguished from the others by its publicity; all users of the building would have access to and would undoubtedly need the resources in the Resource Chain. The other chains were designed to represent the specialized functionality and identity of the various communities they served. Design, Performance, and Liberal Arts would intermingle at various nodes—but these chains would serve disparate populations who only occasionally overlapped.

Media would be woven through each of the chains. First, the Design Chain included various “making” spaces arranged along two parallel “stacks,” the material and the virtual, with the more “material” at the bottom and the more “immaterial” at the top. A September 7, 2007, charrette with IDEO generated a diagram that showed one “stack” featuring a textiles shop at the lower levels, with a wood shop, metal shop, cinema theater, and light labs and photography studio above (see Fig. 4). An adjacent stack had a gallery and critique space at the lower levels, with a digital textiles lab, CAD/CAM lab, computer lab, video and audio editing lab, and digital imaging and animation studio above. The adjacent physical and digital labs would support various forms of production that crossed over between the physical and the digital; the CAD/CAM lab, for instance, sat adjacent to both the wood and metal shop, spaces of material production that rely on computer-generated

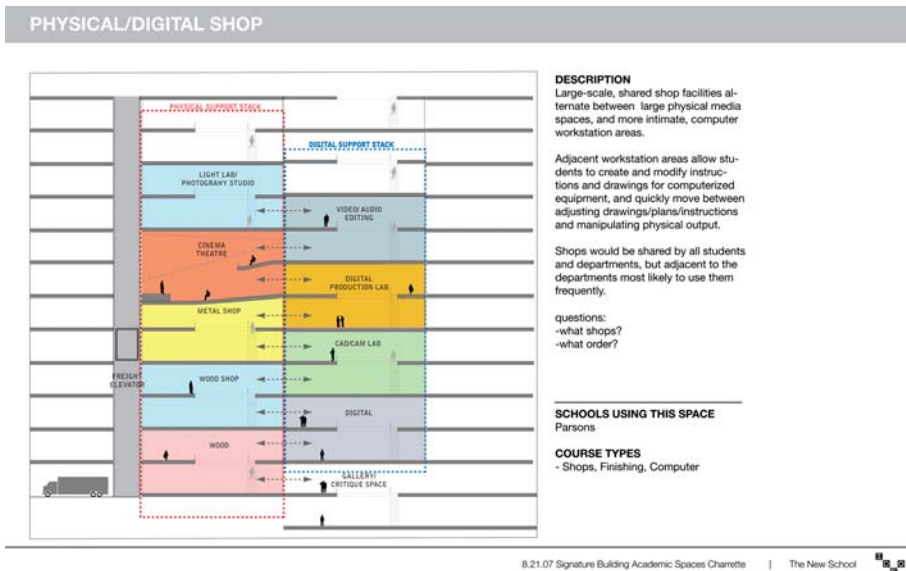


Fig. 4 Sectional floor study, courtesy of IDEO.

designs. Similarly, the video and audio editing suites were to be adjacent to both the photography studio and the cinema theater, reflecting that both of the latter spaces rely on the former. These facilities were to be used by students and faculty from all divisions in the university; Communication Design and Technology, Documentary Studies, and Media Studies students would all meet in the Video Editing lab.

Second, the Performance Chain was concentrated, for practical reasons, in the lower levels. The three below-grade performance spaces—a 200-seat recital hall, a 200-seat black box theater, and an 800-seat theater for larger events—were designed primarily to meet the complex demands of musical and theatrical performances, but all would be capable of accommodating screenings and other media art performances. The Media Studies Program has been eager to offer courses in audio and video installation, and the availability of the black box theater would make such courses possible. Meanwhile, students from the newly forming School of Constructed Environments in Parsons (including Product, Lighting, Architecture and Interior Design) might have created lighting and stage sets for black box productions featuring students in the drama program.

Third, because most liberal arts instructors at The New School teach relatively small seminars, the Liberal Arts chain would be composed primarily of seminar rooms, “smart rooms” with built-in video and audio and internet access; we will speak more later about some unique media-equipped seminar rooms. Koop says that the chain might have also featured some special curricular areas, like an environmental studies node.

Finally, the Resource Chain was to contain the media resources, including those held by the library, that are likely to be used by everyone in the university. The New School administration had initially proposed that the signature building would feature a “distributed library”, with various collections spread throughout the building in myriad subject-specific or “neighborhood” libraries. But, as Paul Goldberger, the Joseph Urban Professor of Design, noted, if the library is everywhere, the library is nowhere. The library is just as much a “communal space” as it is its collection. Library consultant Geoffrey Freeman similarly advocated maintaining a “core collection”—both because of the staffing and security problems a distributed collection would present and because a concentrated, multidisciplinary collection brings students and faculty from all disciplines together in one space (Lisa Browar, personal interview, 24 October 2007). SOM adopted a “spatial definition of the library”; they recognized that the library was defined more by the quality of its spaces and the interaction they promote than by the books and computers it contains (Colin Koop, personal interview, 25 October 2007).

The latest plan was to consolidate the research services and collections and a main reading room in a “core library” in the top two floors of the building (see Fig. 5). Originally, all three of the university’s libraries were to come together in the new space, but, for various reasons, the Mannes music library was to be kept separate, near the performance spaces at the base of the building. Browar regarded the Mannes exclusion as a “missed opportunity to become format agnostic”—a single university library could have integrated all media on all subjects in all formats—but the presence of all libraries in one building, if not all on the same floors of that building, would allow for the combination of back-office functions.

Thus, the “distributed library” survived. The new music library would form the base and the “core library” the top of a resource chain that wove throughout the building. The planners had also “lop[ped] off chunks” of related collections and research spaces to distribute within the chain (Colin Koop, personal interview, 25 October 2007). The materials library, which featured textiles and architectural materials, was “pulled out and made more public”, in order to shed the perception that the collection is open only to

Fig. 5 Rendering of new university library, courtesy of SOM.



Parsons students. The designers were also considering including separate area-of-study-specific “neighborhood” collections—a vestige of the old “distributed library” idea—although Browar, concerned about the maintenance of such satellite collections, was not keen on the idea.

The New School has never been “burdened” with a large book collection.⁴ To some this is a shortcoming, but to others—namely, outside librarians with large holdings—this is an advantage, making The New School an ideal candidate to push the frontier of media and academic technologies and explore the library and collections of the future. While the size and accessibility of The New School’s collection is of concern to many in the University, some prefer to regard the libraries instead as “light-footed”. Perhaps this is a euphemism, but, pragmatically speaking, the move to an interim library, and eventually into the new building, would be much easier than for other university libraries with a greater “burden” of books. Furthermore, the impetus to establish a visionary archive of electronic resources and creative scholarship was greater. Since we do not have the “baggage of being a formal, traditional library”, as Browar noted, there is no pressure to adhere to a traditional architectural typology for the new library. In planning the new library, The New School was “not talking about the things that other [academic] libraries are doing”, Browar said, in large part because The New School’s library is so unlike other institutions’ libraries; while “innovation” for other schools means “more computers, fewer books, and coffee shops,... we’re out on the ledge.” The New School had and still has the potential to dramatically reshape and reprogram the academic library.

Early library programs from SBRA and SOM described several new media spaces that would appear in the new library. The News Room, for instance, would feature “current newspapers and periodicals from around the world, large screens for global newscasts, computer terminals with large flat screens for browsing on-line news and periodical resources” (Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott *n.d.*). The Sound and Film Suite would include not only group and individual viewing rooms but also limited video editing equipment—thus integrating media consumption with production. There had also been discussion of placing this suite in close proximity to the audio and video labs in the Resources Chain to take advantage of adjacencies between production spaces and relevant

⁴ The university has had an agreement with New York University that allows New School faculty and students to use NYU’s Bobst Library.

media collections. Even more progressive—particularly for The New School, where information technology has historically (and controversially) been separate from academic technology—there were discussions of integrating the interface to the Knowledge Union, our primary cross-platform production facility and production equipment rental center, with the Library Service portal, again reinforcing an epistemological and pedagogical link between research and *making*, between facilitating access to completed, published works and providing students with the tools to make their own scholarly and creative contributions. While the new building was to be under construction, the interim library would be distributed throughout and around the existing Knowledge Union in Arnhold Hall, at 55 West 13th Street; this interim placement was to give the university an opportunity to experiment with strategies for mixing traditional library resources and production facilities—strategies that may eventually be reproduced in the other academic or library buildings.

Other media-centric Resource Chain spaces would include Content Exhibit Areas, where students and faculty might display designs or artwork created as part of a class or special project; and a Listening Center, a Listening Room, a Keyboard Lab, and a Recording Studio, which were once conceived as part of the Performance Chain, but came to be regarded as universal “resources”. This change of classification and reprogramming reflects the designers’ and university’s acknowledgement that these media access and production centers would serve the entire university and should be open to populations outside the performing arts majors in order to accommodate interdisciplinary scholarship and creativity. Another space, tentatively labeled the Rehearsal/Presentation/Global Conferencing Space, would function both as a practice room for students and faculty preparing presentations—they will be able to record their presentations and play them back for critique—and for video conferencing and recording.

As of Fall 2007, SOM was still engaged in programming the building, and Koop admitted that they had not yet given much consideration to the “nodes” where chains would meet—where, for instance, the Resource Chain would meet the Design Chain and media access would translate into media creation or where the Design Chain would meet the Performance Chain—where film students’ productions would be screened or product designs students’ stage sets would serve as a backdrop for a drama production. Had the planning proceeded, these “nodes” would have been of primary importance, and there would have had to have been a carefully considered logic behind their placement in relation to all four chains; Koop acknowledged that they planned to have a “choreographed relationship to each other”. Still, Koop wanted this choreography to allow for improvisation; users of the building should “feel the presence” of other nearby nodes, so that they could choose which of a myriad of paths through the building—and paths of learning—they wished to follow. Ellsworth agrees that architecture and the pedagogy it embodies or facilitates might “function less as finished object and more as ‘spatial process,’ open to whatever use it may be put in an indeterminate future, not as a container of solids but as a facilitator of flows” (2005: 125). The “chains”—and their integration of media as a structural and infrastructural material—simultaneously respect the distinct cultural identities of the academic divisions and their pedagogical traditions while also provoking new opportunities for connection and exploiting unforeseen overlaps. Innovation arises from new flows, new associations made in quotidian processes.

Pedagogical Integration of Media

The integration and circulation of people and media throughout the building can have pedagogical implications, as can the integration of media into dedicated learning spaces.

Questions from library planners about the multimedia collections should inform choices regarding appropriate media for classrooms, labs, and shops. “Should we be thinking more broadly [than] moving image and recorded sound?” Browar wondered. What forms of media do not yet exist or are only nascent that might be widespread by 2011, and how could the new library and classrooms accommodate them? How might legal restrictions on the licensing of digital content, for instance, determine how library resources could be accessed in classrooms throughout the building? Might it be necessary to have a specific media room where protected content is made available? And as for the content that can be accessed from anywhere in the building, planners wonder, would faculty and students *want* to access all media via a computer screen? Planners must consider how particular forms of content lend themselves to presentation in different environments and how particular media formats and subject areas might lend themselves to different learning styles. Tables adjacent to light fabrication areas support research-and-development design work; quiet, solitary spaces support intense reading or listening; and screening rooms adjacent to production classrooms allow media students to screen and critique their work.

Media should be integrated into classrooms “organically” and “seamlessly”, Pettman said. “The entire room should be considered holistically in terms of its ability to mediate, without [media] being intrusive, or there for its own sake. We should make the most of wireless technologies, to enable mobility in lectures” (email interview, 23 October 2007). Furthermore, noting the university’s commitment to global collaboration, Pettman argued that “tele-present students”—or faculty, guest speakers, critics, etc.—“are not sci-fi anymore; they should be a real possibility,” and classrooms should be able to accommodate these virtual presences. Koop had proposed that video and audio capture in the classrooms and lecture halls could likewise document learning based at The New School and make content available to a wider audience online.

Media are often foregrounded in production or design learning spaces, but Pettman, who typically teaches seminar-style courses at Eugene Lang College The New School for the Liberal Arts, argues that the seminar room is also a potentially media-rich pedagogical space. In particular, “we should think architectonically about more intimate sessions, such as seminars, to avoid constant shuffling of chairs to see one screen”. Parsons faculty member Scott Pobiner agrees that the standard classroom set-up, as well as the classroom “media and the technology that delivers it”, require “predictability in order to function” (email interview, October 29, 2007; see also Pobiner 2006). Projected or broadcasted content is typically pulled from a single source and is often presented via software that organizes content in a predictable format. “Students should be able to send an image to a public digital display in a classroom during a conversation”, notes Pobiner (2007), freeing the class from a “single linear narrative of images and text”. Furthermore, “faculty should be able to use every surface”—walls, tables, ceilings, floors—“to display media,” and “each public display should be accessible by every person in the classroom and ‘scalable’ to support the widest array of opportunities (see Fig. 6). A group should be able to gather around a large display of a landscape while a couple breaks off to discuss a smaller feature of that landscape.” A media infrastructure would need to be in place to support this real-time exchange and collaboration, and the classroom’s lighting would have to be adjustable to accommodate varying patterns of projection.

Pettman proposed a multiscreen seminar room, with multiple projectors, or one multilens projector, casting images on each of the rooms’ four walls simultaneously. Discussions in the IDEO charrettes generated a sketch of seminar rooms with translucent or transparent walls, so that the projected image, and thus the class content, would be made visible (even if in reverse) to passersby; the walls would thus transition from transparency to opacity as

Fig. 6 Rendering of media seminar room, courtesy of SOM.



they became screens for information display (see Fig. 7). Similarly, charrette participants envisioned “glass-fronted lecture spaces which share and broadcast lectures to the public” (IDEO 2007: 71). In both examples, architectural surfaces broadcast course content, serving as a pedagogical tool, and also help to share the diverse content of The New School’s courses, bringing students and faculty into contact with the ideas of disparate fields and practices.

Participants in IDEO’s charrettes and Parsons planning meetings envisioned other media-centric learning spaces: A “simulation room” would be equipped with projection, camera, and lighting equipment “to support drama rehearsals, media installation and screenings,” and would serve as a “training ground for verbal presentations, where students

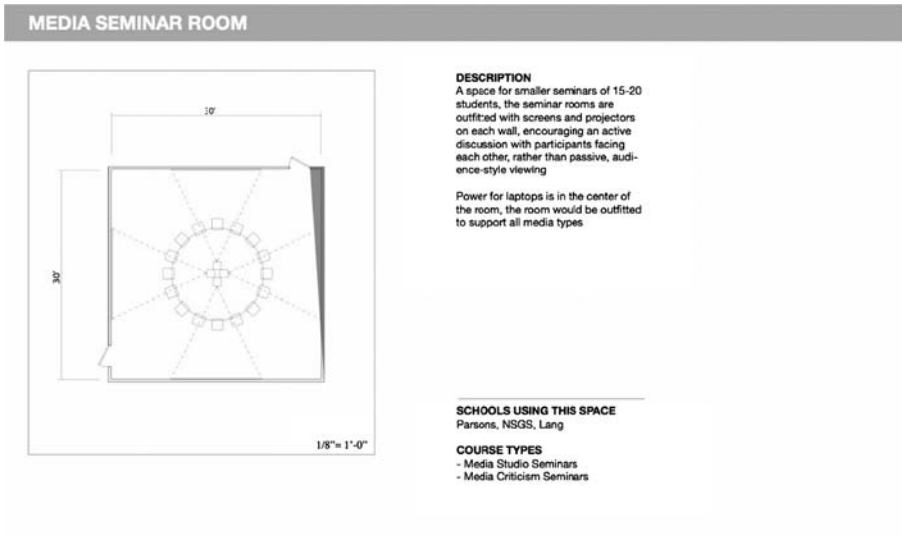


Fig. 7 Plan of media seminar room, courtesy of IDEO.

can speak to an audience and review their presentations with faculty” (IDEO n.d.: 12; see Fig. 8). A “media research and development lab” would provide space for faculty and students from various disciplines to work together on projects with external partners; Parsons’ Department of Communication Design and Technology, for instance, manages several collaborative projects with the Open Society Institute, Games for Change, Electronic Arts, and Nokia. Parsons administrators note that the lab would be “desirable as a high-profile showcase for the department’s projects and [would] serve a recruitment tool”; the space would function as an architecture of display, an exhibition of and advertisement for the innovative work taking place at the university (Parsons The New School for Design 2007). A “design research lab,” a “sound proof room with [a] one-way glass view window and ample space for usability studies, multi-angle audio and video recording equipment with digital output and straight to DVD capabilities,” would be integral for “teaching methods, techniques, and theories associated with design research and development”, Parsons planners said. Here, the window served not to display but to provide a view onto a controlled testing environment. A “3D modeling and animation lab” would include motion capture for animation, game design, and interactive design work, while a “simulation lab” would offer a “black box set-up” for virtual prototyping.

The Parsons planning meetings and IDEO charrettes generated proposals for a “student media center” or “dissemination lab” that would support and showcase university media: the student newspaper and other publications, a new university radio station, web development, and digital publishing (IDEO 2007: 72; see Fig. 9). Some proposed making this space a “community-centered” media hub for the university. In an early scenario proposed by IDEO, the “hub” was visible from the street, making student journalists and producers aware of their position within and responsibility to their urban context while exhibiting The New School’s scholarly and creative work. However, for many reasons, this “media center” might have better fit in or near the library, in the Resource Chain. One new venture that might have been housed within is a scholarly e-publishing unit, New School University Press, which Pettman said would tap into the scholarly and creative resources of

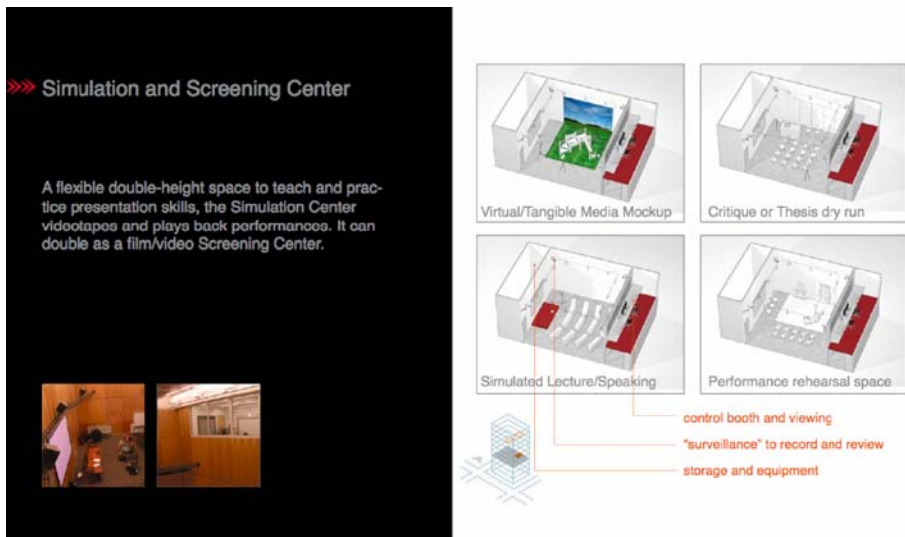


Fig. 8 Proposed simulation and screening center, courtesy of IDEO.

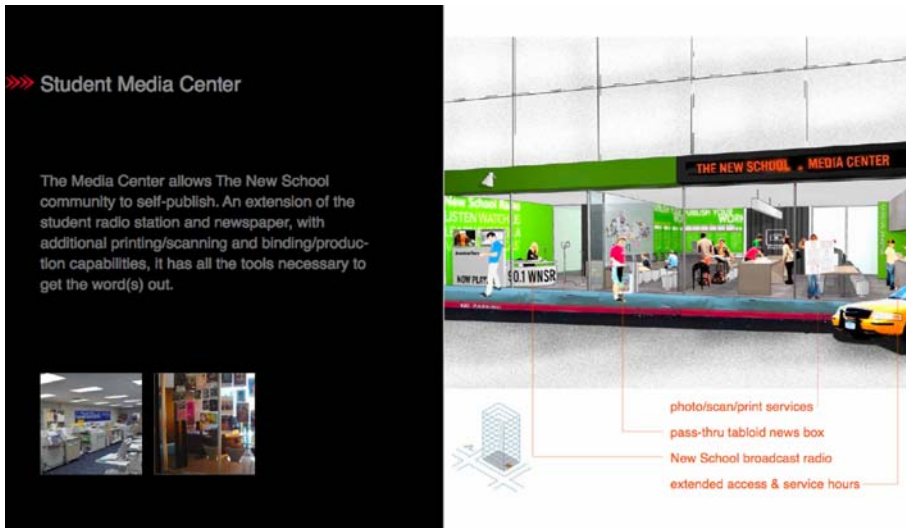


Fig. 9 Proposed student media center, courtesy of IDEO.

the university and feature the collaboratively created, nontraditional scholarship produced at The New School. The Press's publications could be printed on-demand at kiosks throughout the building and would exemplify a sustainable production model—one consistent with the university's commitment to using the building as a "teaching tool" for its global environmental program (Pettman 2007; Lee 2007).

In these proposed learning spaces, integrated media served variously to (1) facilitate access to networked resources, (2) allow for comfortable and variable viewing conditions, (3) permit the creative and constructive juxtaposition of myriad sources and images, (4) test design prototypes, (5) record and allow for the review of performances and presentations, (6) permit collaboration among students and with global partners, (7) showcase high-profile projects, (8) publicly broadcast classroom content and thereby bring passersby into contact with ideas from disparate disciplines, (9) publicize the scholarly and creative activities of the university to the world outside, and (10) mediate the relationship between The New School and New York City. But, even more informal uses of media ultimately supported teaching and learning. The designers had proposed to create exhibition and display areas in interim spaces, perhaps in the nodes between chains. Scattered throughout the building would be project rooms dedicated to specific long-term, resource-intensive project-based learning initiatives; these rooms would feature poster or video displays that introduce the project and its participants to passersby (see Fig. 10). Something as simple as an alcove exhibit or a classroom "label" would have served an important function in broadcasting the rich diversity of projects taking place within the building and reflecting the university's commitment to progressive pedagogy. Pobiner (2007) reminds us that in the midst of increasing focus on collaborative, digital media, it is important to remember and provide spaces for "old media", like the chalkboard, pin-up surfaces, the private display monitor, and even books, watercolors, pencils, and paper. A particular challenge is designing learning spaces that accommodate both digital and analog media—a hand drawing and a computer rendering, a physical mock-up and a digital model—simultaneously (see Fig. 11).



Fig. 10 Proposed project room, courtesy of IDEO.

Symbolic Integration of Media

Through its ethnographic research, IDEO identified several shared values that together compose the “nature” of The New School: value in civic engagement, pride in history, delight in being urban, and egalitarian community. From these values, they said, a “design language” would emerge: the design should be activist, articulate, eclectic, open, and creative (IDEO 2007 June : 52). The building could reflect the university’s activism through the use of sustainable materials and progressive construction strategies. The building would articulate “visual intelligence [by] creating thought-provoking juxtapositions of materials,

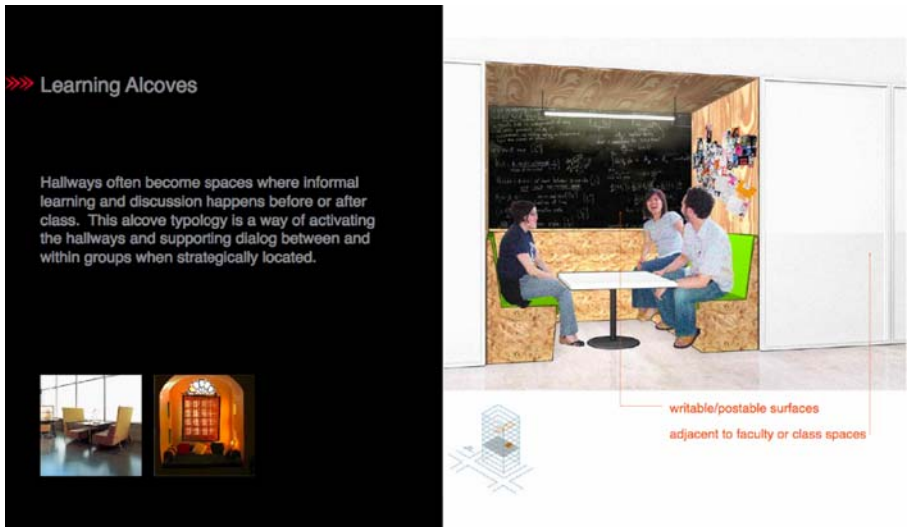


Fig. 11 Proposed learning alcove, courtesy of IDEO.

scale, or imagery”, demonstrating its eclecticism through a “sophisticated urban mixture of old and new, high and low, familiar and novel”. Its openness would be manifested through the use of materials and surfaces that invite participation and provide evidence of what is going on inside. Finally, the creative building would act “like the study, not the gallery” and feel “a little rough around the edges” (IDEO 2007 June: 53–57).

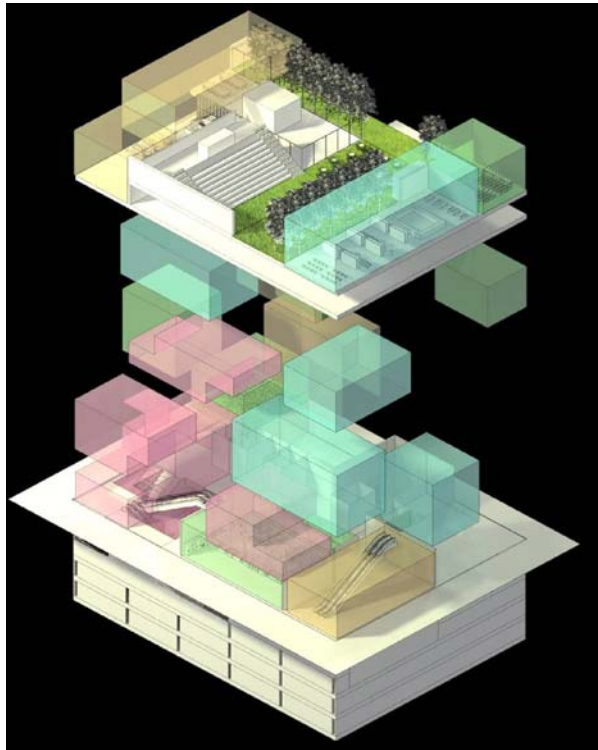
The proposed building was to broadcast its environmental activism by transforming sustainability into an aesthetic. The New School expected that this building would meet the highest “green” standards, and it intended to publicize these efforts through digital displays—perhaps both internal and external—that record the building’s energy use and through the “explicit extroversion”, Koop says, of other overtly sustainable materials and systems; there had been talk of placing a water tank, which would collect rainwater from the building’s roof, in the lobby—to put ecological activism on display in the most public of the building’s spaces. These materials and devices would exist not only for show, though; they would also allow the building to function as a teaching tool for urban sustainability.

The building’s “articulateness” would first become apparent at the facade. Depending upon the nature of the activities and their needs for varying degrees of daylight, the external skin would range between transparency and opacity. Where the facade allowed for an interior view, visitors would see all four chains winding through the interior space and, at various points, program areas that reveal the pedagogical objectives of each chain: The library at the top of the building would identify the Resource Chain, views to the below-grade theaters would identify the Performance Chain, peeks into a seminar room might have identified the Liberal Arts Chain, and glimpses of a wood shop or computer lab might have identified the Design Chain. The visual juxtaposition of these spaces, apparent from both outside and inside the building, would articulate, to borrow Hays’s (1995) words, “a diagram of potentials for activity”, from liberal arts to libraries to lighting design, “pressed together into a single tissue”.

Eclecticism was embodied through the building’s embrace of the old and the new, the classical, and the progressive. IDEO explained that the signature building, “the newest, most visible symbol of The New School...should tell inspiring stories about the university’s history and provide tangible evidence of interdisciplinary work” (June 2007: 49). Koop believed that the building’s facade plays a role in this storytelling; he regarded the facade as a “mask”, in the dramaturgical sense, in that it “filters things that underscore the nature” of the masked character—in this case, the university (personal interview, 25 October 2007). Koop explained that the building evidenced the classical structure of base, shaft, and capital—but with a contemporary application. At the base were the performance spaces, the radio station, perhaps the university newspaper and other publications—all representing the intersection of the university with the community and even welcoming the community inside to various public spaces. The shaft revealed the intersection of the chains and thus represented the interdisciplinarity and embrace of myriad pedagogical traditions that characterize the university. Finally, at the capital, all four chains would “empty out” onto a green roof, again epitomizing the university’s commitment to sustainability and functioning effectively as the university’s “commons”. Here, the university engaged *with itself*; performance and design would mingle with research and liberal arts, with all of these communities reintroduced to the vast metropolis, an unbounded classroom (see Fig. 12).

The building’s openness was mediated through material transparency. “From the very first glance”, IDEO said, “the school’s identity is clear: active students are voicing their opinions, lecture content is being broadcast to the street, creative activity is on display, and experimental, collaborative work is front and center” (June 2007: 60). “Transparency is a buzz word here”, Pettman says. “Making knowledge accessible. Connecting to the street.

Fig. 12 Schematic distribution of thematic chains through building, courtesy of SOM.



Contra ivory towers” (email interview, 23 October 2007). The university would be visually and physically open to the city and virtually open to a global community. “There should be global nodes (i.e., switching points between other affiliated campuses and centers around the world),” Pettman said. “Information should be easily accessed and shared, allowing people” wherever they are, “to brainstorm on the spot, and walk away with the same resulting file”.

Finally, the proposed building creatively embodied and broadcasted The New School’s unique identity. “In contrast to the facilities plans featured in the campaigns of some of our competitors, such as NYU and Columbia”, former Provost Lee reported, the new building’s “library and auditoria”, both of which would be highly visible, “offer us an unprecedented opportunity to define and promote The New School’s unique learning opportunities and artistic and intellectual creativity and accomplishment” (2006: 15). The New School’s strengths in “performance, liberal arts, and design [also]...allow it to distinguish itself from liberal arts colleges and research universities, with the liberal arts-design interaction providing an unprecedented opportunity to build a unique educational identity” (Lee 2006: 12). These interactions were given space in the new building, where the various chains converged.

Media have also been identified as the focus of one of five signature curriculum development initiatives; the university is currently creating new undergraduate programs in media studies and production, and the centrality of media to the new building’s design would have made it a fitting home for these new programs. IDEO acknowledged that “The New School is entering a period of pedagogical prototyping with new interdisciplinary structures that will, by necessity, evolve over time. It follows that learning spaces will need to ‘learn’ along the way, too” (June 2007: 51). Pettman agreed: “The technology should be

light, flexible and adaptive”, and as designers experimented with ways to “organically” and “seamlessly” integrate media, he warned, they should “strive to distinguish [the building] from a ‘trendy’ corporate environment like Google HQ.” After all, The New School takes pride in that it is, unlike its academic neighbors, “a little rough around the edges”.

Ultimately, the building’s integrated media and classrooms would have enabled it to “learn” and adapt, distinguishing it from other academic facilities. Koop highlighted the building’s “embrace of temporality” and “the fact that it’s constantly in flux”. Constant newness is certainly aligned with The New School’s identity. As compared with the traditional ambition of an academic building to present an air of permanence and “pastness”, the uniqueness of this project, in the eyes of its architects, was its willingness to capitalize on uncertainty and transition, interpreting architecture as both a screen for projecting this newness and a “diagram for [new] potentials”—in interdisciplinary collaboration, in global partnerships, in sustainability, in pedagogy, in civic engagement, in the function of the urban university. The irony is stark, then, that it was the prevailing uncertainty of the current economic climate (and its global reach) that has derailed the realization of this forward-looking project, at present.

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