

The Charles Oakley Library

Project Overview

The Charles Oakley Library reimagines an existing brutalist structure as a central haven for social and cultural agency. In a city where 1 in 4 adults face daily difficulties due to low literacy, this project creates an inclusive refuge for learning, resource access and guidance. By centralizing vital but disconnected city services under one roof, including family services and the Citizens Advice Bureau, the design solves a critical issue of public accessibility. The resulting environment is a socially useful space, that empowers a marginalized demographic, unifies a fragmented community, and restores the art of reading within Glasgow.

[Click to View The Charles Oakley Library Trailer](#)



Or scan to view video

Evidence of Need



For Glasgow low literacy is not just a rumour, it is a silent barrier that stifles human potential and traps one in four adults in a cycle of daily vulnerability. For the city's hugely multicultural population, speaking English as a second language can turn everyday life into isolation, fracturing the ability to forge meaningful community connections. Crucially, with over 58% of Glasgow's children growing up in severe deprivation, thousands of families are effectively locked out of the resources needed to thrive, leaving them isolated in their own neighbourhoods.

There are many more statistics like these calling out for notice and intervention. This project directly dismantles these obstacles. Through intentionally crafted spaces for quiet reading, collaborative digital learning, and unified civic services. The project aims to restore communication and offer Glasgow's most vulnerable families a rightful place to belong.

Methodology Research

As part of my research I conducted two tasks. One being an observation task of The Mitchell Library, The East Kilbride Library and The Ottoman Coffeehouse. And the other being a research probe completed by 10 people aged 21-78 which included a daily diary, a collage task to design an ideal reading space, and a furniture comfort test.

The results found that there has been a shift in library usage with the majority of people using it to study/ work in private or with each other instead of borrowing resources. Environmental factors such as noise, temperature, and furniture drastically impact productivity.

| Furniture | Score | Preference |
|------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Sofa | 2.3 | Most favourite |
| Bed - Sitting Up | 3.2 | |
| Desk Chair | 3.7 | |
| Dining Chair | 4.8 | |
| Coffee Shop | 5.1 | |
| Bed - Lying Down | 5.4 | |
| Seat Outside | 5.5 | |
| Library | 6.2 | |
| Floor | 6.8 | Least favourite |

Furniture test results

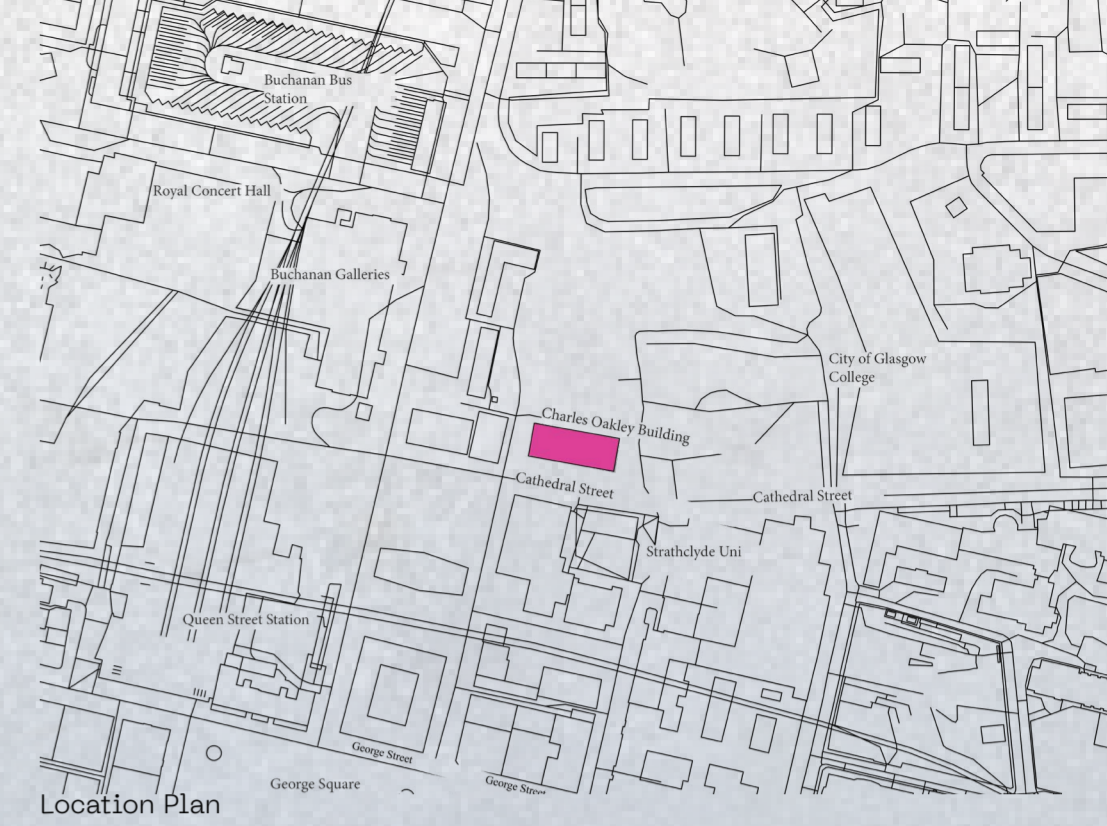
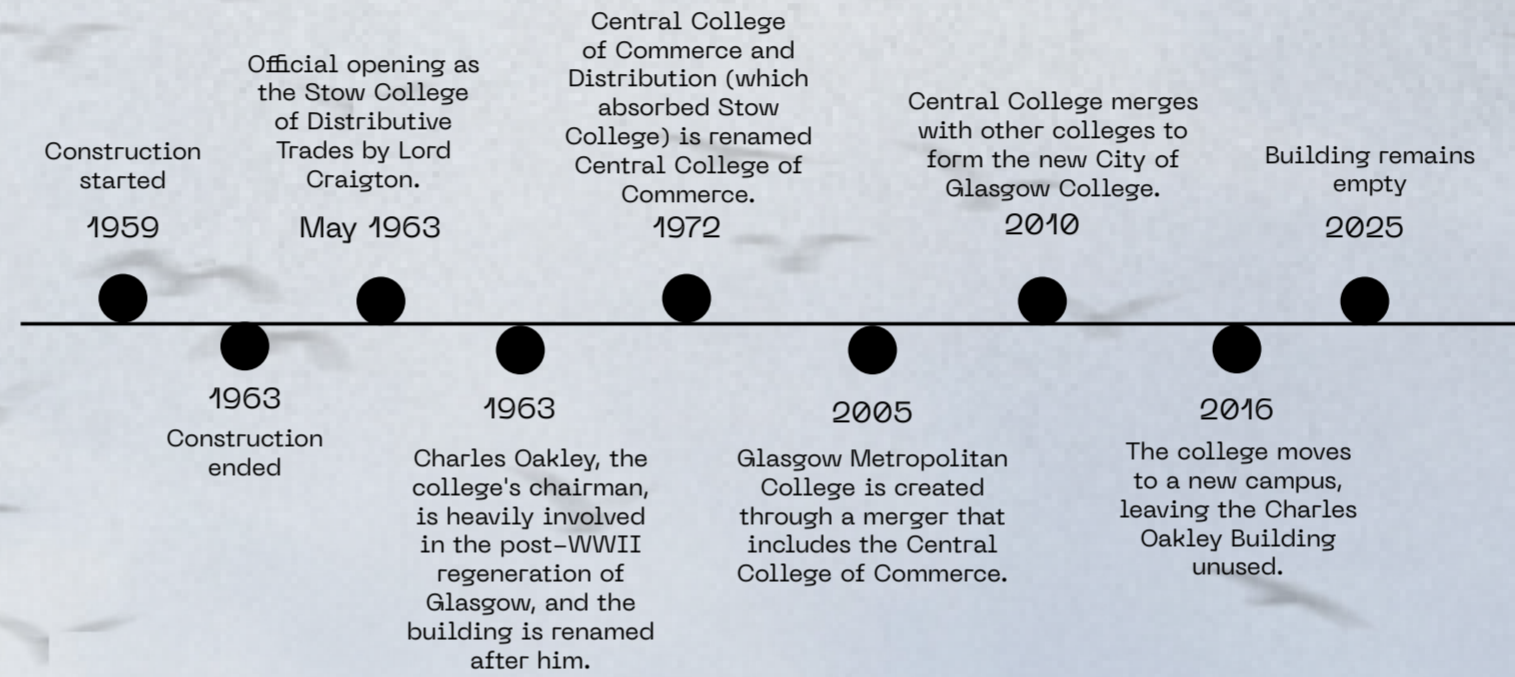
Site

The Charles Oakley Building

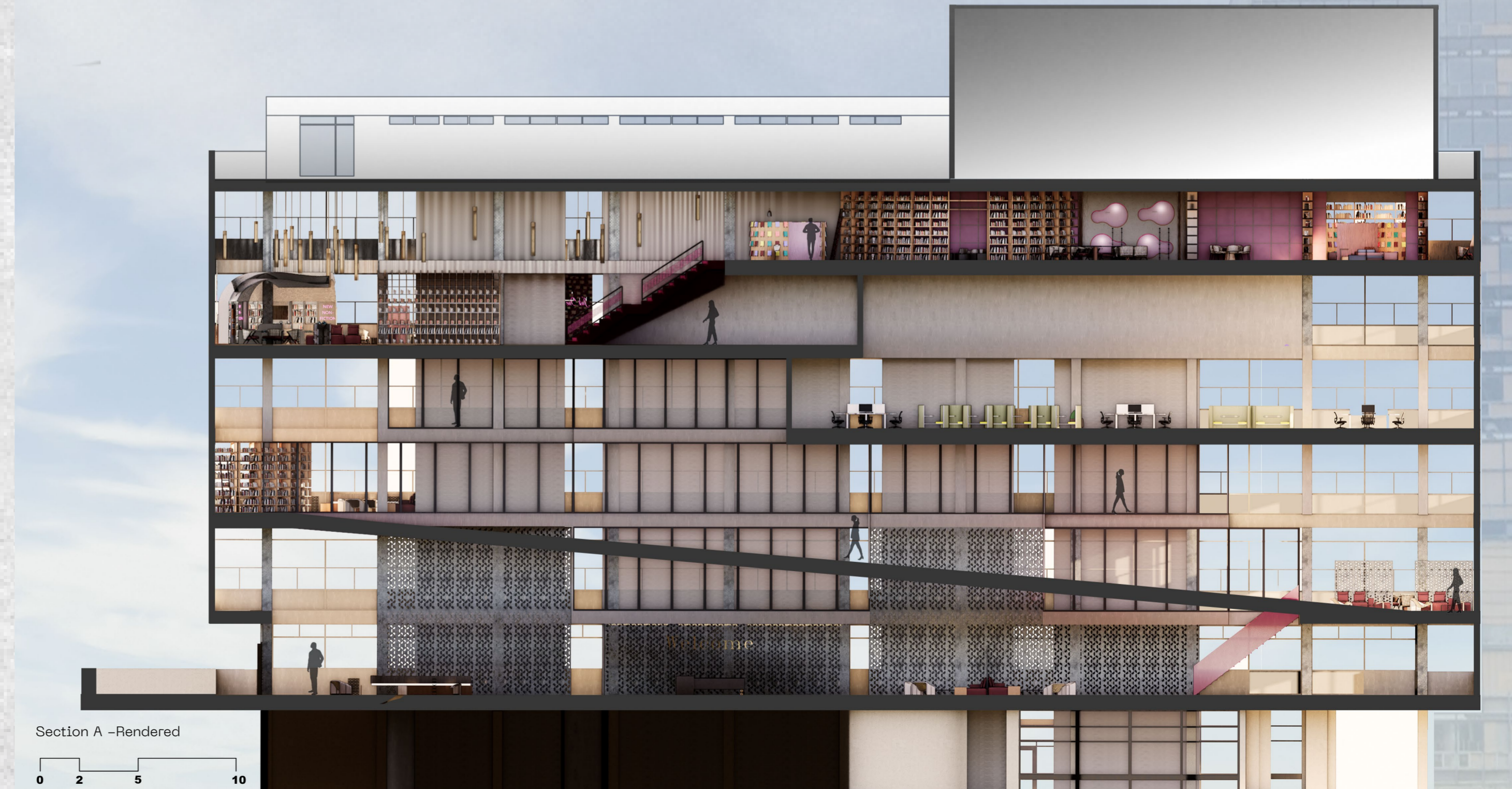
The Charles Oakley Building is located at 300 Cathedral Street and was built as part of Glasgow Caledonian University's campus facilities. It is the perfect site for this project with its link to education; by converting it into a library it will keep those education roots and fulfil its purpose. It is also located next to many education campuses so it will be well used by students in the area. This building is a Category B Listed structure. This imposes constraints on structural alteration but also provides opportunities for celebrating existing concrete forms, pilotis and rhythmic facades. The project will embrace these constraints as design drivers.

It is a modernist structure with solid infrastructure but also with scope for internal transformation. The building's scale allows for zoning: quiet study areas, active community hubs, digital media labs, sensory spaces, etc, its large, open-plan interiors can be reconfigured easily for multipurpose use. Its design already emphasizes accessibility and circulation, making it easier to retrofit inclusive features such as ramps and elevators. N.I.A approximately 10,000sqm

Building Timeline



Existing Building Images



The Charles Oakley Library – User Groups, Needs and Journeys

User Groups and Needs

People working & Studying

This group will need multiple places to study and work, from co-working spaces, private study rooms and quiet rooms for calls. These spaces will need good access to plug sockets as laptops etc will need charged, they should also have multiple different seating options for different preferences. Good lighting and limited distractions are also required in these areas. Spaces near the books and PCs would also be good so there is a proximity to information for research.

People improving literacy

This group requires spaces near books to read and do research, these spaces should have open spaces, quiet spaces and sensory spaces. Other types of literacy such as audiobooks and access to newspapers would be beneficial. Classrooms for teaching would be well used when classes are put on. Early literacy area geared for young children to start the development of literacy skills young. A Storytime/ read-aloud zone to build language, listening and social literacy. Writing and language labs with desks and writing supplies and resources to aid with grammar, technique and creative writing. A multilingual corner for those who don't speak English.

People improving Digital literacy

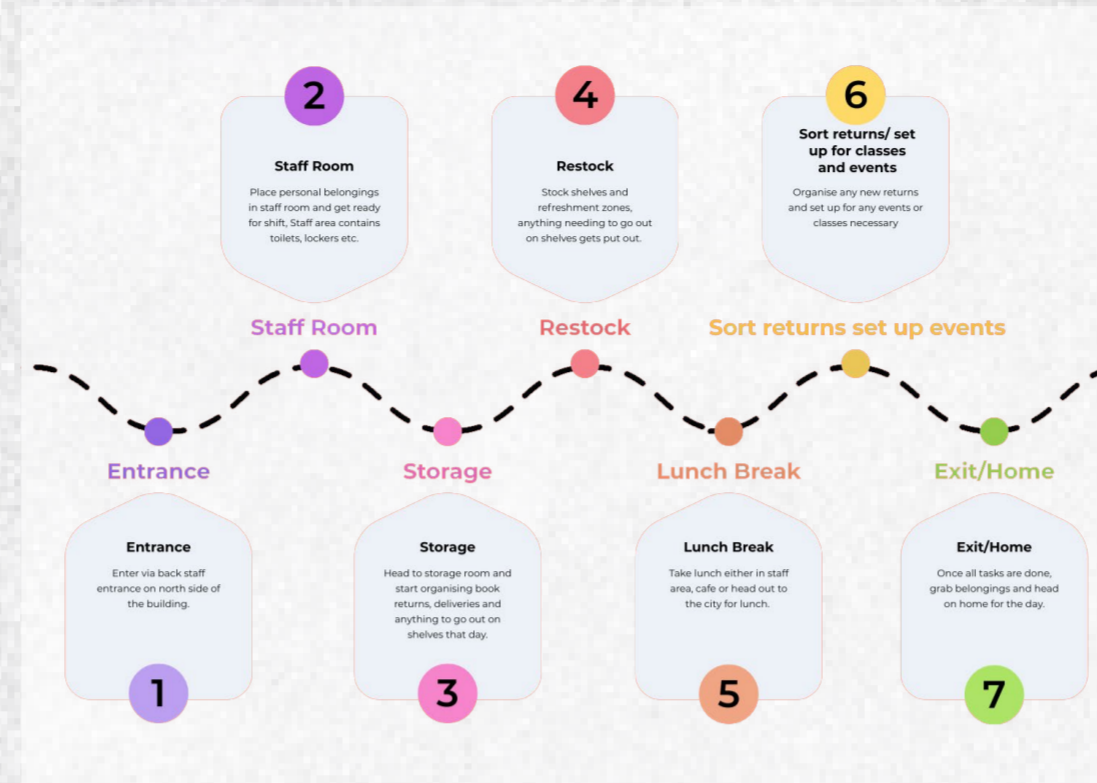
This group will require PC spaces both free to use and in a classroom setting with fully updated software, high speed internet and accessibility tools such as screen readers and adaptive keyboards. Other forms of technology such as tablets and phones will be stored and used for classes. Makerspaces and digital creation lab with 3D printers, VR headsets, Robotics kits, Coding and audio/visual equipment etc would teach advances digital skills, creativity and STEM skills. A tech and one-on-one support desk manned to help anyone who needs it. A device lending hub to level the playing field outside of the library.

People Seeking Community & Belonging

This group will need community gathering areas with flexible, moving seats, informal meeting spots and bulletin boards with information on community activities. A multipurpose hall that can be rented out for meetings, cultural events, author signings and more. Zones for different age groups to encourage mingling between peers with games etc. A cafe contributes relaxed community engagement and sustenance for those using the library. Community services such as the Citizens Advice Bureau also aids the community. The classes and makerspaces will also contribute to community engagement.

User Journeys and Navigation

Staff



Public – Community Services



Public – Library



These user journeys are based on a hypothetical day in the life of the user. This project contains so many spaces all designed to help people flourish, each user will have a different journey based on their needs. The aim of this exercise was to ensure all of the spaces within the building are connected and easy to navigate so any user on any journey can find their way with ease.

Spaces

Public

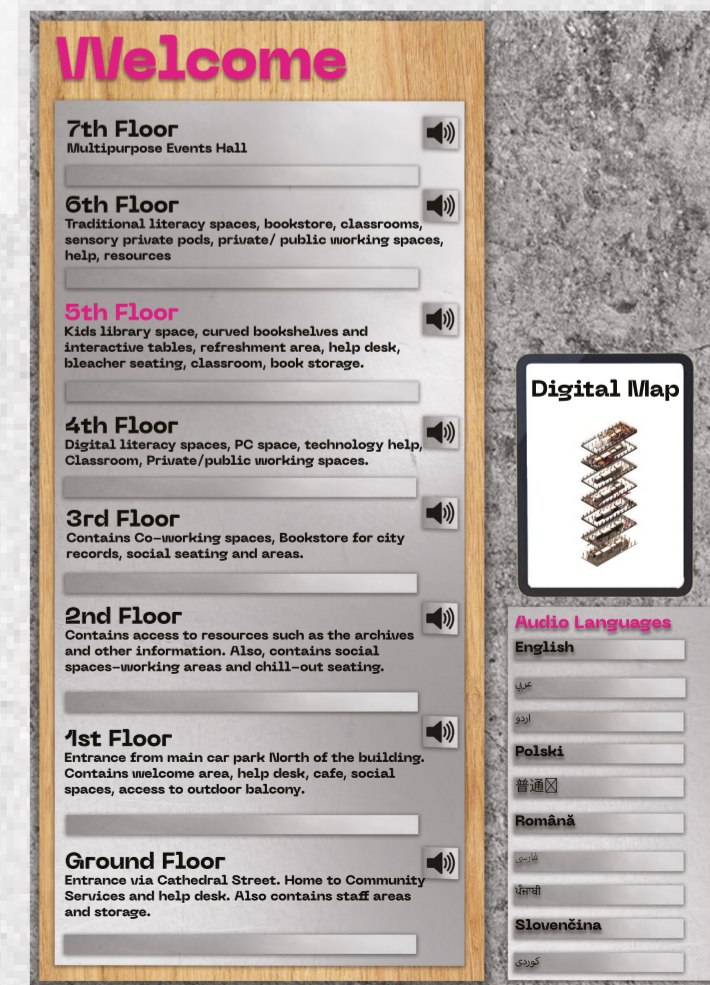
- Entrance/ welcome area
- Community services
- Circulation space (stairs, lifts)
- Toilets (public)
- Balcony
- Social Seating
- Café
- Archives/Info space
- Classrooms
- Co-working spaces
- Computer area
- Book storage
- Kids library
- Private pods
- Study spaces
- Event space

Private

- Storage
- Staff area
- Toilets (staff)
- Lift maintenance room
- Service duct
- Kitchen/ behind café

This sign will be located at the top of the stairs on each floor and outside each lift stop. The matching text for the floor where the sign is located will be in pink to indicate the current location. There is then a list of what is located on each floor, this information will also be in brail below the text. To the right of each floors information there is a button with an audio icon, when pressed an audio description of each floor will play, the language for this can be chosen through the buttons on the bottom right of the sign which has the top languages spoken in the country. There will also be a tablet embedded which will display a digital and interactive map. This sign will ensure ease of navigation through the building for all people.

Sign Mock Up



The Charles Oakley Library – Concept, Models, Details and Plans Ground-3

Concept Diagram In model concept sketches



Concept Collages

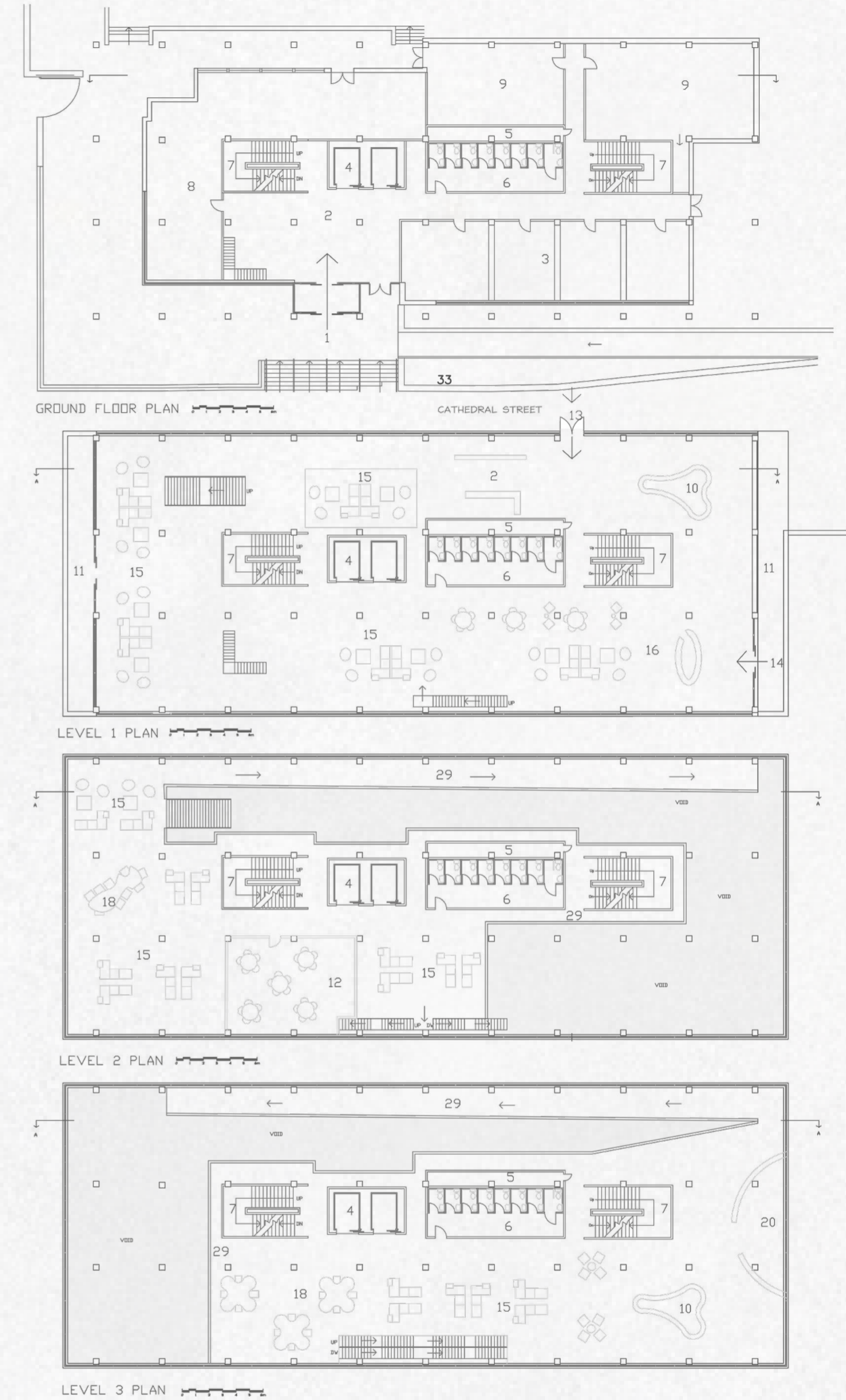


Scale Models – Full Building scale 1:100 and Section scale 1:50



All scale models were made from laser cut mount board, and built to fully understand the space and how the users will connect with it.

Floor Plans



- Key
- 1. Entrance 1 – to Community Services
 - 2. Welcome Area
 - 3. Community Services
 - 4. Lift
 - 5. Service Duct
 - 6. Toilets
 - 7. Hidden Stairs
 - 8. Storage
 - 9. Staff Areas
 - 10. Planter
 - 11. Balcony
 - 12. Archives/Info
 - 13. Entrance 2 – to Main Library
 - 14. Entrance 3 – to Café
 - 15. Social Seating
 - 16. Café
 - 17. Classroom
 - 18. Co-Working
 - 19. Computer Area
 - 20. Book Storage
 - 21. Kids Library
 - 22. Private Pods
 - 23. Private Study Space
 - 24. Stair Seats
 - 25. Arched Bookcase
 - 26. Interactive Tables
 - 27. Refreshment Area
 - 28. Wall Pod Seating
 - 29. Walkway
 - 30. Multifunctional Event Space
 - 31. Lift Maintenance Room
 - 32. Social Space
 - 33. Open Exhibition Space

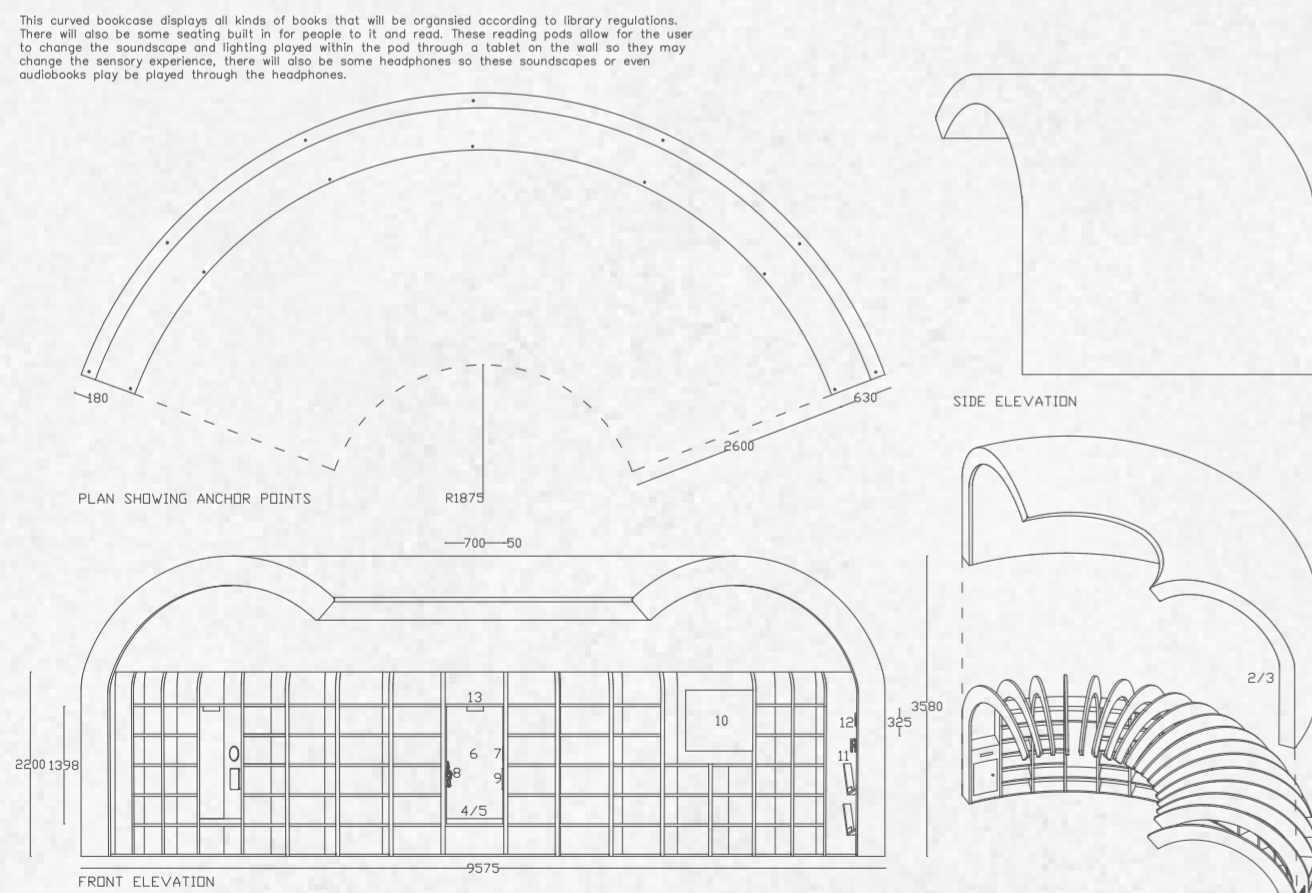
Materials Board



Materials were chosen based on how they may aid the space such as acoustic panels and natural materials to enhance the brutalist building and history. All materials are socially conscious, including the sustainable micro cement in place of concrete.

Detail Design

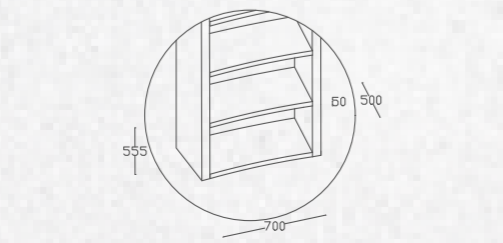
Curved Bookcase Detail Drawings



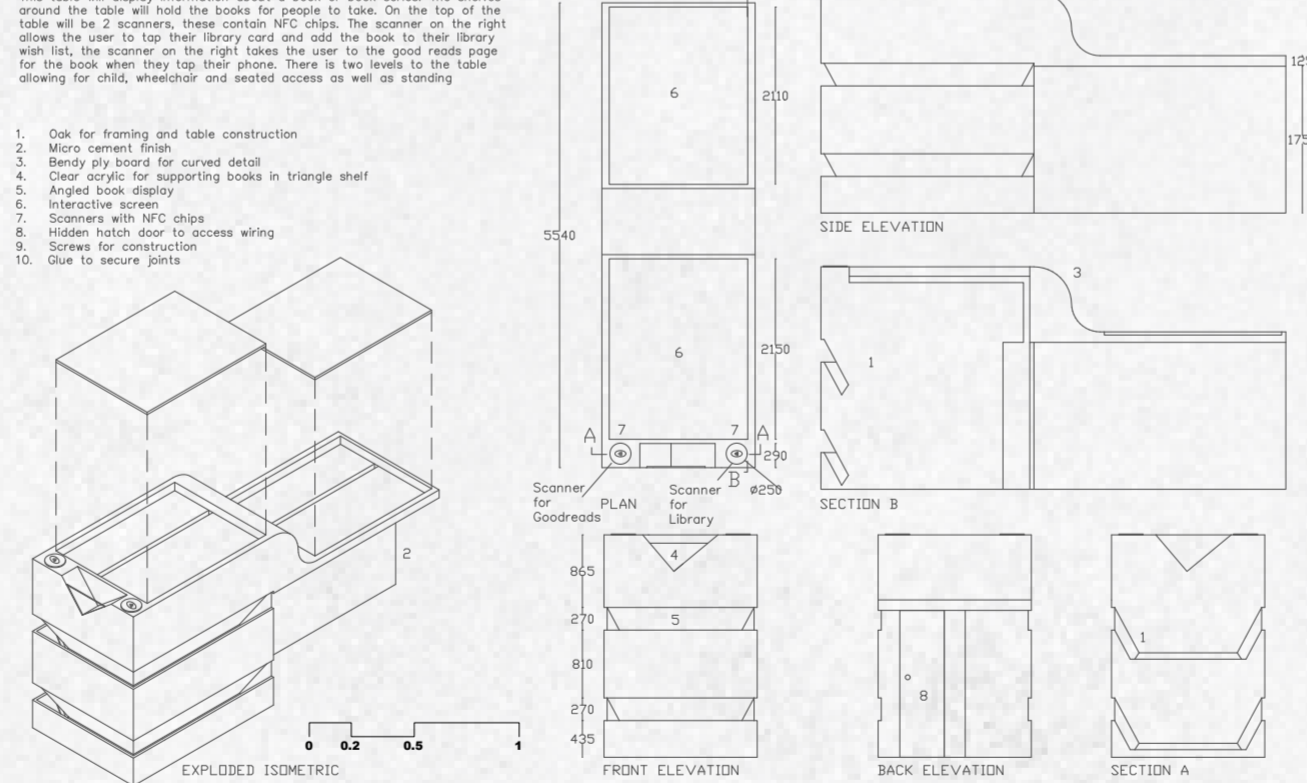
The bookcase will need to be secured to the ground to support it. This will be done by anchoring the ribs to the concrete floor with wedge anchors placed along the bottom layer of timber. (See plan for positioning). Once secured the bottom shelf will slot in above the anchor points, this will be removable so the anchor points are accessible when necessary, the power lines will also run through this bottom level and must also be accessible.

1. Oak planks for ribs
2. Bendy ply sheets for casing
3. Sustainable micro cement
4. Foam padding for seat
5. Faux leather cushion covering
6. Acoustic panels
7. Speakers
8. Hook for headphones
9. Stand for tablet
10. TV
11. L-shaped shelves
12. Neon letter light
13. Brushed metal spotlight
14. Concrete wedge anchor
15. Nails for bendy ply
16. Screws for securing shelves to ribs

The Bookcase will be constructed with a rib structure at the base, these ribs will make up the individual shelves and will be screwed together. The outer casing will then be added. This will be constructed of a bendy ply base which will be nailed to each rib and then covered in a sustainable micro cement to give it a smooth finish.



Interactive Table Detail Drawings



1. Oak for framing and table construction
2. Micro cement finish
3. Bendy ply board for curved detail
4. Clear acrylic for supporting books in triangle shelf
5. Angled book display
6. Interactive screen
7. Scanners with NFC chips
8. Hidden hatch door to access wiring
9. Screws for construction
10. Glue to secure joints

Detail Design – Visual



Scale 1:20 Model



The Charles Oakley Library — Visuals and Plans floors 4-7



Located on floors 5 and 6, the main library space contains all traditional literacy resources to develop these skills. The space is divided by bookshelves, creating a haven of literature and comfortable seating. The space contains, pods, co-working spaces, study spaces, book storage, kids' library, refreshments and classrooms. All of these spaces are designed with intention to be functional and open to encourage communication and co-working but also to be welcoming and comfortable so even in the more open spaces one can find a quiet place to sit and engage with the resources, this is done through warm lighting, materials and public/private areas.



The individual study areas on the 6th floor, first and foremost provide exceptional views of the city and the nearby college and university buildings as well as a large greenspace. They are a series of wooden desks divided by micro cement covered partitions. Each desk has a built-in lamp and plugs sockets for both USB, USB-C and regular UK plugs. The desks also have wooden slat window coverings; each slat can be turned individually to block out as much sun as each user would like. These desks are tucked away behind a solid wall bookcase to make users comfortable as their backs won't be to an open room.



The 5th floor also contains bleacher seating connecting to the 6th floor. This seating is clad in pink brick like the main staircase and other circulation areas, this pink comes from the iconic "People Make Glasgow" sign across the road from the site. The bleachers are split in three, one part is a regular staircase with landings and a central banister, the middle section is a stair/seating section with double height steps covered in a soft leather cushion for sitting. Lastly the other section is divided into nooks, some have a desk and chairs, others have shaped group tables and the last ones have armchairs and sofas, each has plugs and individual lighting.



Individual pods located on floor 6. These pods are designed as a private place to engage in resources, take calls without causing disruption, as a refuge from the public spaces or to eliminate distractions. They are controlled via a multi-lingual tablet, as well as manual dials for temperature etc for people not comfortable with technology. The user can adjust the temperature, lighting and sounds within the pod to meet their individual sensory needs. Soundscapes, music or audiobooks can be played in the pod through speakers. The pods are lined with acoustic panels to minimise noise, there is also a curtain to add privacy. Each pod has different furniture, some with a desk and chair and others with an armchair.

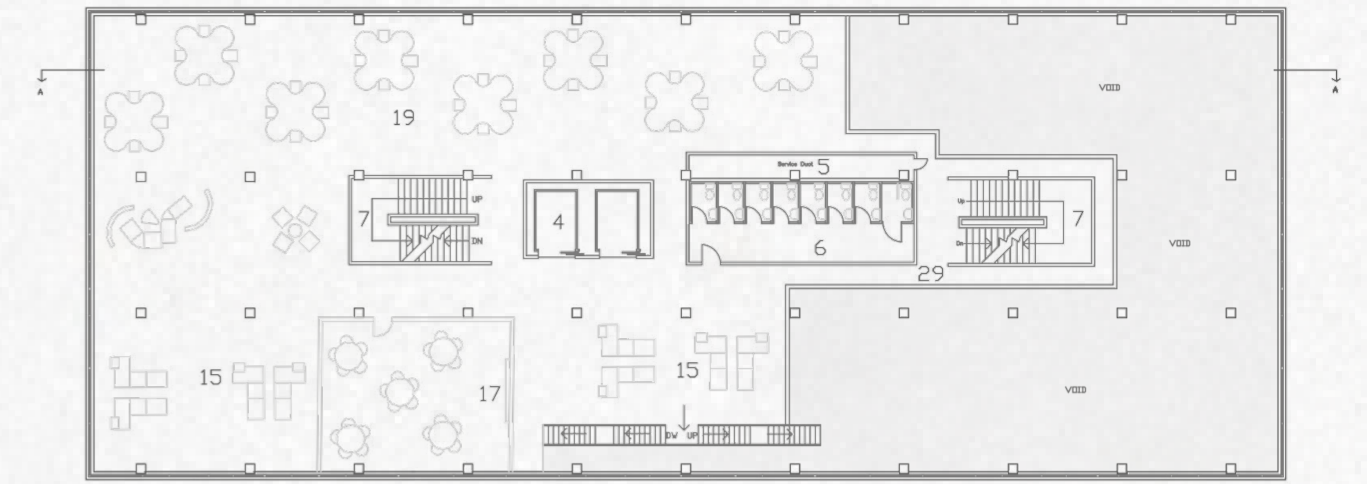


The main space on the 5th floor is home to many spaces, from book storage to interactive tables. It also has a refreshment area, so users don't have to go to the café on the 1st floor, there is coffee machines as well as access to vending machines. The two curved bookcases (Fiction and Non-Fiction) are located in the two corners of the double height space, and contain book storage, pods for people to sit, a highlight space for new releases of each genre and a space for videos/ interviews. They cover the interactive tables which showcase an individual book, see previous page for more information and detail drawings.

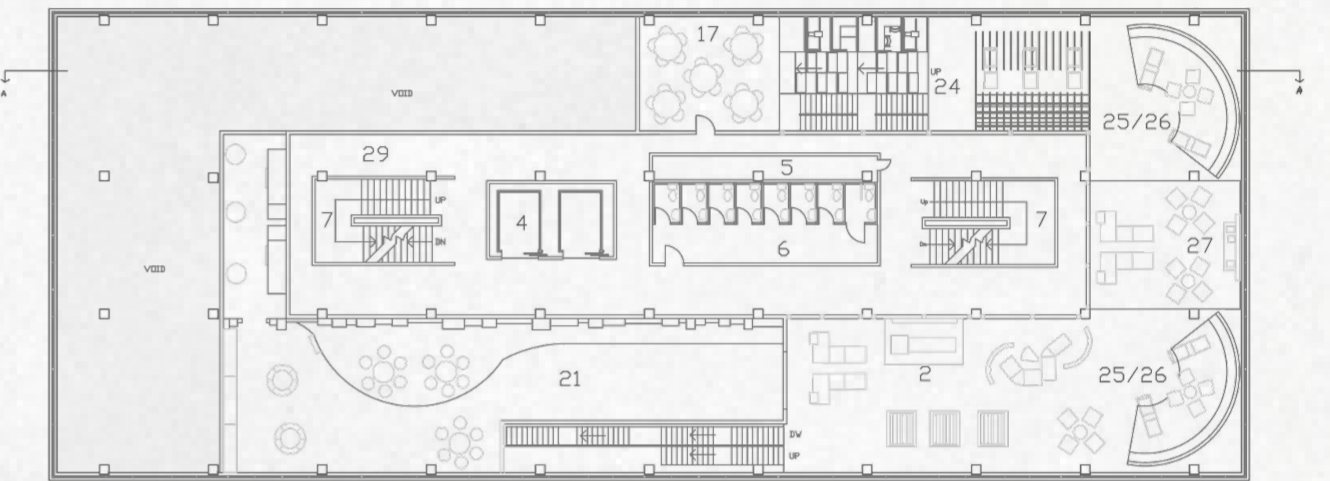


The rest of this floor is filled with different kinds of social seating from tables and chairs to collections of armchairs and sofas. Here people are encouraged to interact and connect, these will also be used for the refreshment area. The double height space allows in a lot of natural light, so the space feels open and comfortable. Under the bleacher seating there is also a classroom that can be used for literacy classes, workshops, events and more.

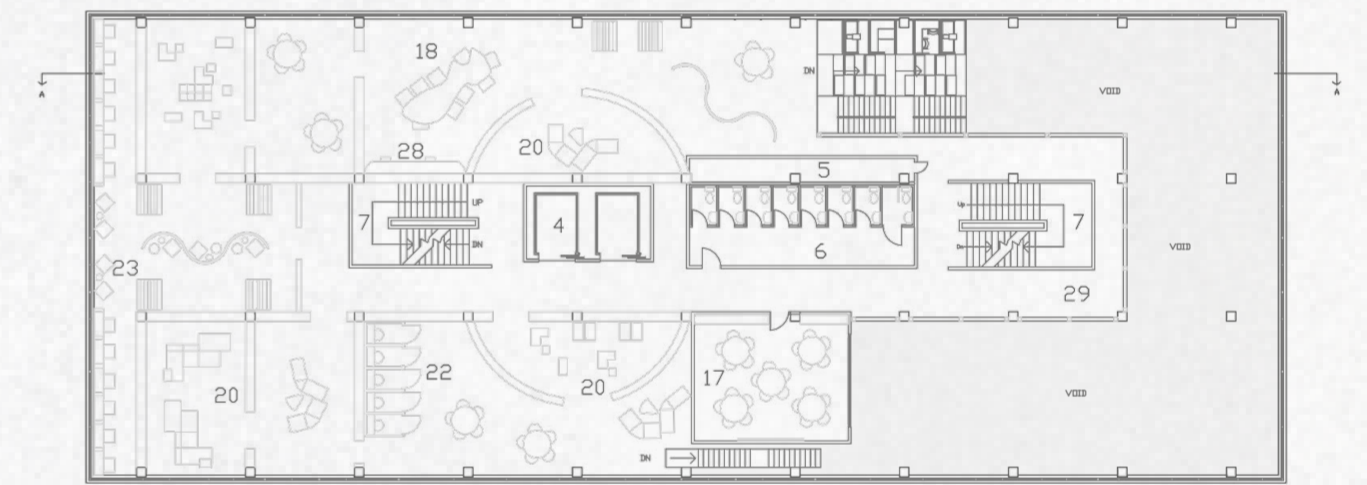
Floor Plans



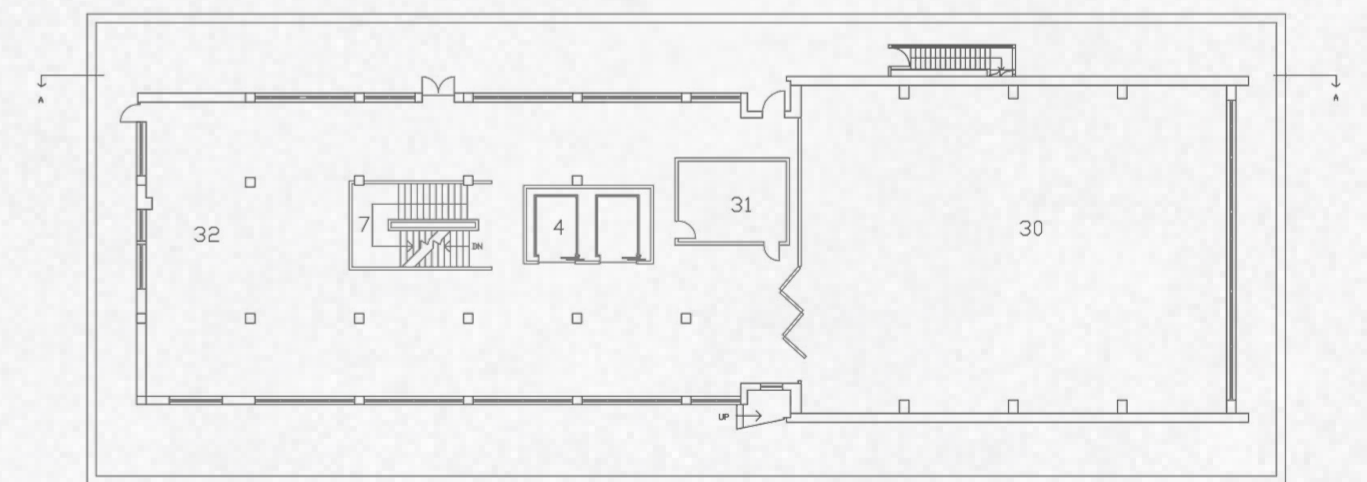
LEVEL 4 PLAN



LEVEL 5 PLAN



LEVEL 6 PLAN



LEVEL 7 PLAN

Key

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Entrance 1 - to Community Services | 17. Classroom |
| 2. Welcome Area | 18. Co-Working |
| 3. Community Services | 19. Computer Area |
| 4. Lift | 20. Book Storage |
| 5. Service Duct | 21. Kids Library |
| 6. Toilets | 22. Private Pods |
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| | 33. Open Exhibition Space |

The Charles Oakley Library — Visuals and Exploded Isometric



The kid's library is designed to feel open and inviting to the kids so they can engage with all materials and improve their skills, the large selection of seating and more open spaces also helps to engage the families of these children as building literacy skills is easier when the whole family is present and engaging. The space provides, private reading pods, toys, a large selection of books, comfortable seating and space for workshops and classes. Colour and textures are used to make it more inviting.



The digital literacy spaces located on the 4th floor provide all digital literacy resources require to build these skills, from computer access to other technologies like tablets as well as any help required at the fully manned desk. Here people can access any software they like weather that's word for essay writing, indeed for job hunting, governmental websites or even for streaming online movies as this space is primarily for building literacy but also to bridge the gap of access for those who cannot do they things at home due to lack of resources.



The Entrance into the 1st floor utilises the full double height space with large aluminium panels which cast amazing shadows, this space is designed to be entirely welcoming to any people with interesting design, a range of comfortable seating, a lot of greenery and a help desk at the front door. The space also has an open exhibition space where a permanent exhibition about Glasgow and its history will be on show, this exhibition will showcase history and highlight the range of cultures in Glasgow, this space can also be used for different exhibitions about a range of events, cultures, art or anything else that will benefit the community.

Structural Core
Contains toilets,
lifts and hidden stairs

5th Floor
**Kids library space, curved
bookshelves and interactive
tables, refreshment area, help
desk, bleacher seating,
classroom, book storage.**

3rd Floor
Contains Co-working
spaces, Bookstore primarily
for city records, social seating
and areas.

1st Floor
Entrance from main car park
North of the building.
Contains welcome area,
help desk, cafe, social spaces,
access to outdoor balcony.



6th Floor
Traditional literacy
spaces, book storage, classrooms,
sensory private pods, private/ public
working spaces, help, resources

4th Floor
Digital literacy spaces,
PC space, technology help,
Classroom, Private/public
working spaces.

2nd Floor
Contains access to
resources such as the
archives and other
information.
Also contains social
spaces-working areas
and chill-out seating.

Ground Floor
Entrance via Cathedral
Street.
Home to Community
Services and help desk.
Also contains staff areas
and storage.