

Project Narrative

“There is no collective memory that is not constructed within a spatial framework.”

— Maurice Halbwachs

This project responds to the 2025 Interior Educators Conference theme “Imagining Interiors” by redefining the library as a spatial system that carries collective memory.

Using Gracemount Mansion as the site, the project transforms abstract memory into an experiential interior environment through collage, drawing, model-making, and spatial storytelling.

The design understands the interior as both an inhabited space and an imagined and constructed image, establishing connections between memory, representation, and lived experience. By collecting, reorganizing, and presenting community histories and personal narratives, the project explores how interior design can serve as a medium that encourages public engagement, shapes collective identity, and imagines future social relations.

The collage explores the idea of space as a collective memory system. Through a playful arrangement of interconnected elements, it visualises memory as an active and evolving network rather than a static record. Stories, archives, people, and spatial experiences are brought into dialogue, illustrating how collective identity is continuously shaped through interaction, occupation, and shared experience.



Memory Embedded In Space

Overview

Located in Edinburgh, Gracemount Mansion embodies layers of collective memory shaped by changing patterns of occupation and community use. Originally built as a country house, it later served as a nursing home and youth centre, becoming a significant civic presence within the surrounding neighbourhood.

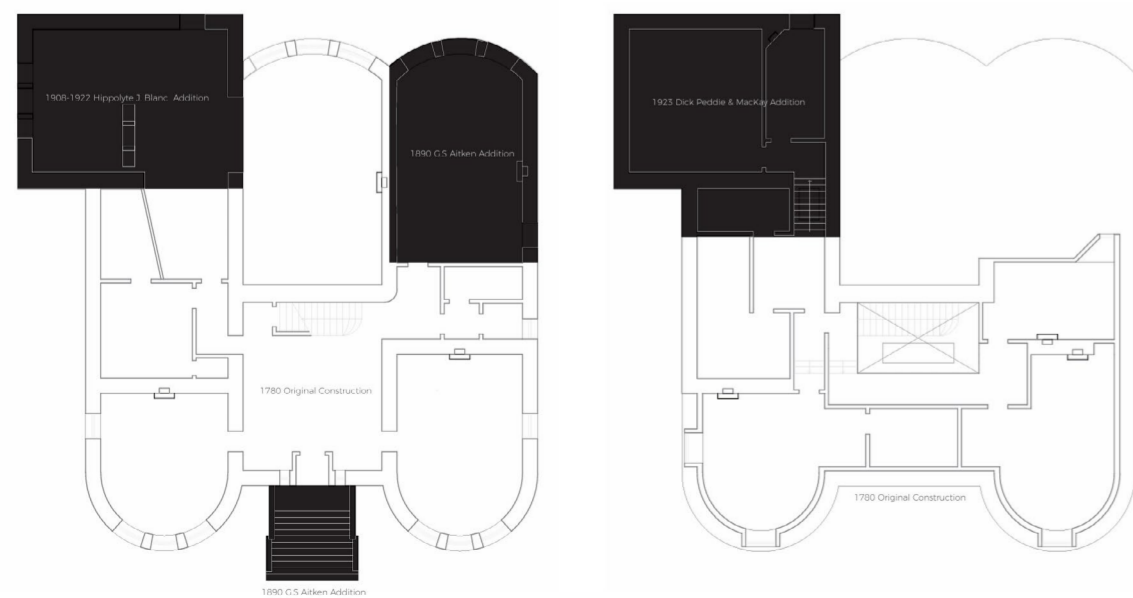
Although currently vacant, the listed building remains a repository of shared experiences, offering an opportunity to reimagine how memory, community, and public life can be sustained through interior space.



Layered Presence of History

Gracemount Mansion reveals memory as a process of accumulation. Extensions from different periods record changing patterns of occupation, while its transformation from a private residence into a public community space layers new uses onto existing structures. Traces of everyday life, including graffiti, murals, and improvised interventions, remain embedded within the building. Together, these layers create an interior that has been continuously written, adapted, and reimaged over time.

Gracemount Mansion records memory through layers of occupation, decay, and intervention. Together, these traces create an interior shaped by continuous accumulation and change.



Venue of Collective Memories

Through decades of community use, Gracemount Mansion became a repository of collective memory embedded in both the building and the wider neighbourhood.

Despite the provision of local services, Gracemount lacks spaces for informal gathering and collective exchange, creating a need for a civic interior that supports community life and memory.



Challenges As Design Opportunities

Gracemount faces a range of social challenges - including poverty, health inequality, limited opportunities for young people, and concerns around safety and social isolation. Rather than treating these issues as problems to be solved directly, the project understands them as symptoms of deeper social, cultural, and spatial conditions.

These challenges reveal an opportunity to re-examine the relationship between people, place, and collective memory. Through moments of reflection, encounter, and shared experience, the interior becomes a space where overlooked stories, traces, and community identities can be rediscovered and reimaged.



What Is Collective Memory?

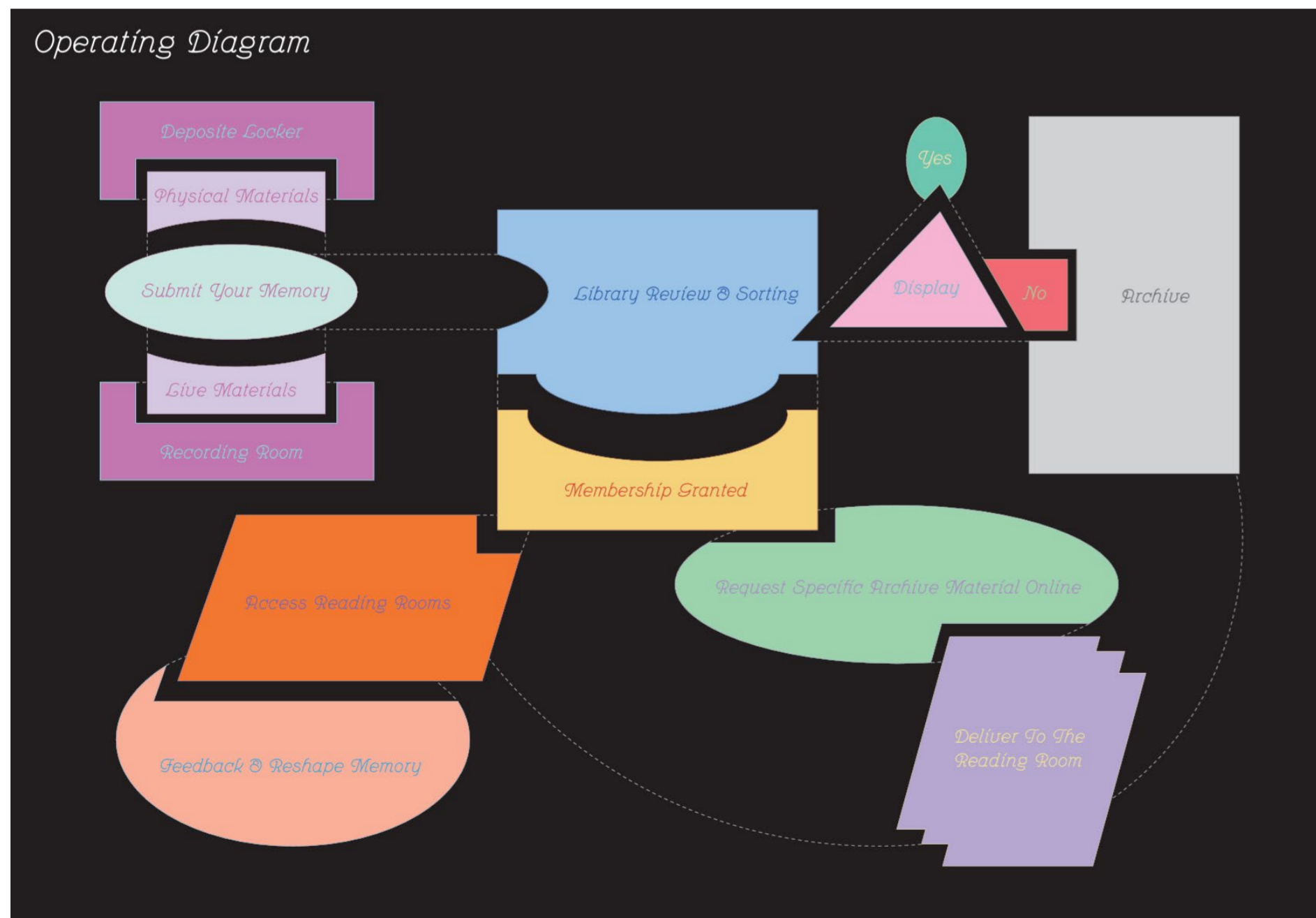
Memory ≠ Fact

Collective Memory

Memory is not a fixed record of the past, but a shared construction shaped through experiences, narratives, spaces, and social relationships. Collective memory helps communities understand their history, build identity, and maintain connections across generations.

Strategy 01: Gracemount as a System of Memory

Building on Gracemount's existing collective memory, the library becomes a place where personal memories are gathered, curated, and shared. Individual experiences are transformed into a visible collective archive, connecting generations and reinforcing a sense of community identity. Memories are recorded, archived, and experienced through space.



Strategy 02: Layering

Gracemount is understood as a structure shaped by continuous accumulation rather than a single historical moment. New interventions form an additional layer within the existing fabric, allowing past and present to remain visible simultaneously and extending the building's ongoing narrative.



Concept Model 1:50

Strategy 03: A Playful Journey

Six reading rooms create a journey through different aspects of community memory. Moving between them becomes an act of exploration, where visitors encounter multiple stories, perspectives, and experiences. Memory is understood through discovery, curiosity, and play.

Ground

Belonging / Foundation

Exploring personal and collective origins to understand who we are and where we come from.

Polyphony

Difference / Multiplicity

Highlighting diverse perspectives and multiple voices within the community.

Labour

Sustenance / Capacity

Revealing the skills, practices, and daily efforts that sustain community life.

Projection

Future / Imagination

Opening space for hopes, visions, and creative possibilities for the community's future.

Ritual

Connection / Social Rhythm

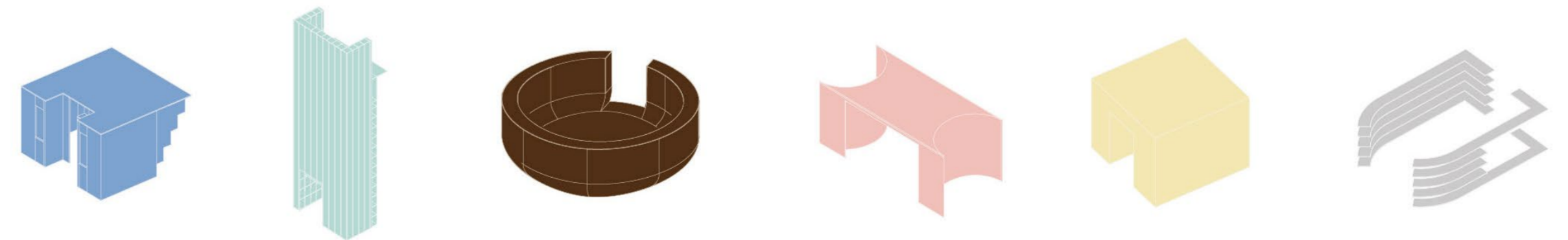
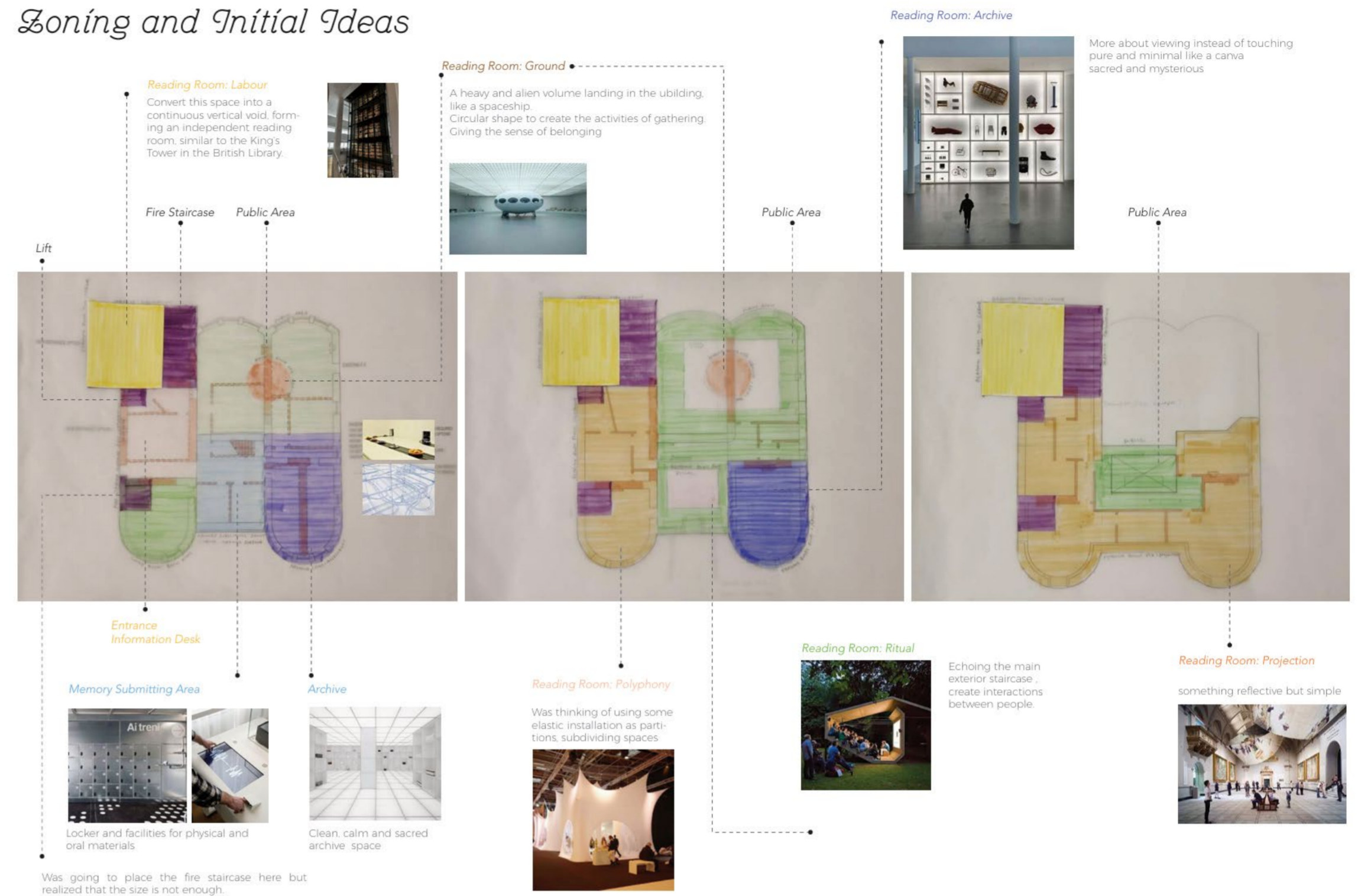
Understanding the shared rhythms and cultural practices that connect people over time.

Archive

Preservation / Continuity

Safeguarding and structuring memories to allow reflection, reinterpretation, and continuity.

Zoning and Initial Ideas



Axonometrics of Reading Rooms



Section 1:20 @ A0



Reading Room - Ground Visualization

