

Bibliotheca II: Library Test Kitchen

Harvard Graduate School of Design

Spring 2012

Thursdays, 11:30 am – 2 pm

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Aims: with the financial support of the Harvard Library Lab, to design, build and deploy products, services & experiences that model the future of the Harvard Libraries.

Questions: what form should the Harvard Libraries assume in the 21st century? Should they simply vanish into virtual desktops and merge into a timeless and placeless universal database? Should they alter their identity and become workshops, laboratories, innovation incubators where emerging and future forms interact and dialogue with the relics of the past? Or should they simply merge with the university itself as a place of knowledge production and reproduction?

Bibliotheca II: The Library Test Kitchen

The Harvard Library is amidst an enormous transition and these questions are all on the table. As a collaboration between the Graduate School of Design and the Harvard Library, The Test Kitchen is an invitation for students to define new dimensions of the library experience.

After a brief crash-course in library history, theory and practice, we will shift to creative work. We will begin with two design exercises before beginning work on our main projects. As they gel, we will deploy these projects in «Test Kitchens» -- partner libraries, such as the Loeb and Widener Libraries, that allocate portions of their public space to these experiments.

Please note that each course session is 2.5 hours long, one half hour shorter than other courses at the GSD. Other workshop sessions will be scheduled as needed, as well as one-on-one project reviews.

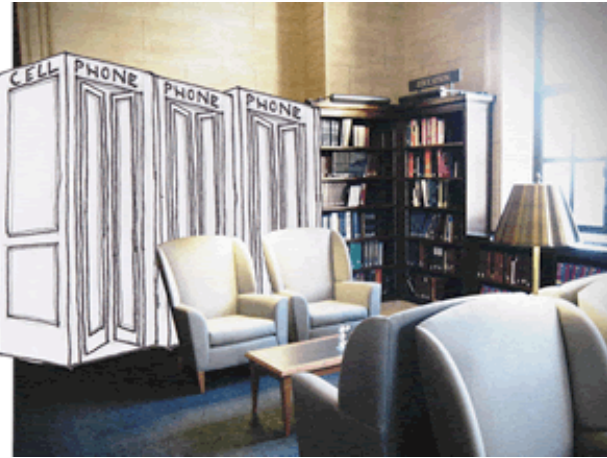
Projects

Projects may assume a range of forms. They may be built, grown, coded or performed. They may involve redesigning existing library websites. They may be pieces of furniture or library appliances. New reference desk services -- perhaps a “critic” in residence at Loeb, or create a new “artist-in-reference” initiative. Projects may address existing problems or serve as speculative probes or provocations.

Library Test Kitchen is an open call.



Interior plantings and watering infrastructure



In-library Cell Phone Booths

Other project ideas could include:

- Sleeping pods
- Acoustic baffles and interventions
- New information capture work-flows
- Curatorial stations
- Strategies to make a library with 73 branches feel unified



Advance the diybookscanner.org project



Construct new spaces and atmospheres

Funded Research & Sharing our Findings

Library Test Kitchen is funded research, supported by the [Harvard Library Lab](#). As such we have a responsibility to share our work. To best communicate our findings to the Harvard Library Lab and the greater Harvard community, we will take two tacks:

- 1) Each participant will set up a blog to which all assignments, progress reports, and media documentation will be posted.
- 2) We will compile and publish selections of our work with [MagCloud](#) to rapidly distribute our findings in mobile-friendly and four-color print magazine formats.

Projects and Grading

Warm-up Exercise I: 15%

Warm-up Exercise II: 5%

Pitch Video: 10%

Project & Project Documentation: 50%

Participation: 20%

Provisional Course Schedule

Jan 26.

Library Test Kitchen: class culture, course expectations, overview of syllabus.

Introductions by everybody, explanations of why we're here, etc.

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1. Set up personal blogs, adding to central bibliotheca blog

2. **Stewart Brand**, article about his button campaign; excerpts from *How Buildings Learn*, Penguin Books 1995

3. **W. Brian Arthur**, excerpts from *The Nature of Technology*, Free Press, 2009.

Feb 2.

Framing Questions, Solving Problems, What is Innovation?

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1. **A Library Primer**

Selected materials covering several library roles/functions

Feb 9.

Library Crash Course, Ann Whiteside, Others

Library History, Libraries Big Picture, a discussion led by Matthew Battles?

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Exercise I

Document your research process with video.

Feb 16.

The Future of Libraries, opportunities for innovation / invention

The Problem: people don't need the Harvard Library like they used to

The Opportunity: We have an institution ripe for reprogramming

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Exercise II

Respond creatively to library provocations. (*May respond to one, all, or another provocation of your own creation. If you respond to provocations of your own, please be clear to state them explicitly.*)

1. The Library as University Appliance

2. The Messy Library
3. Your Perfect Study/Research/Environment (cost,space,time no object -- pure fantasy)

Feb 23.

Ethnographic Research Presentation, Nicole Hennig, MIT Library User Experience Group
How to give a pitch, how to sketch with video, what's all this kickstarter business?

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Come up with your Projects and Teams etc. Be ready to discuss and refine ideas.

1. How do you plan to pitch, prototype and iterate on the idea?
2. Provide a roadmap and rough budget. Allot appropriate amounts of time for each stage, *everything, as you all know, takes at least twice as long as you think it will....*

Mar 1.

Project Refinement: In-class presentation and discussion of projects, warm up for March 8th presentation to the Harvard Library Lab

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Complete and post your "kickstarter"-style video pitch

Mar 8.

Present video to Sue Kriegsman (possibly others) from the Harvard Library Lab

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Begin iterating. Make drafts. Office hour meetings with each group.

Mar 15.

Spring Recess -- think about how you're gonna make your projects happen.

Mar 22.

Test Kitchen Workshopping - our goal is to release early and often

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Mock-up prototype. Rough is perfect. If you can release, begin releasing ASAP.

Mar 29.

Test Kitchen Workshopping

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If it hasn't happened yet, Install projects in the Library by April 5.

Apr 5.

Visit the Projects, Site Visits, discussion.

Perhaps something else special for the second half of the class.

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Document projects for final publication, write 700(?) word description. Write photo captions.

Apr 12.

Go over how to produce, begin layout/production

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Finish documentation and text, deliver in MagCloud -ready inDesign files. This will not be edited by anybody but you, so go over it. Then print it out, and go over it two more times.

Apr 19 - Reflection. How would we do it differently. What worked. What didn't. Next iteration?