

**GSD 09125**

## **Library Test Kitchen III:**

## **Library Machines**

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[www.librarytestkitchen.org](http://www.librarytestkitchen.org)

## **Working Syllabus**

### **Introduction**

The Library, up there with the US Postal Service, represents one of the most exciting institutional design opportunities out there. Library Test Kitchen is a semester long immersion in this storied institution. New directions ahead will be explored through class discussion, exposure to the larger library landscape, and rapid prototyping.

Students with relevant thesis topics or outside interests are encouraged to use the seminar as a workshop to further develop and iterate on their current thinking. Our goal is to show the library world— not tell it— new futures with the projects we build.

Library Test Kitchen (LTK) is about making real things the world sees. Over the past two semesters, GSD 09125 Library Test Kitchen has been exploring new directions for libraries through prototyping projects on a 1:1 scale. It's been a unique opportunity, each semester, we operate with a \$10K materials, transit & research budget provided by the Harvard Library Lab and the Arcadia Foundation. These grants have situated Library Test Kitchen as the de facto research & development arm of the Harvard Library.

In the Fall of 2012, LTK created LABRARY, a Pop-Up Library in the center of Harvard Square. It was an exciting public project, a truly collaborative endeavor which earned our seminar the ear and curious eye of the national library community.

Library Test Kitchen III will focus on developing individual projects that we'll call Library Machines.

## **Library Test Kitchen III: Library Machines**

*"Library Machine - a mechanically or electronically operated device for performing library functions."*

Library Machines perform a library function. Our definition of “library function” is extremely broad. Library Machines do a job. They may create new experiences, effects, efficiencies — nearly anything that would be of relevance to a library or library user.

What our Library Machines will have in common by the end of the semester is they will be built. They will be operational prototypes we can experience for ourselves. They’ll also be packaged — polished, named and documented with print-ready copy and photography — so they may be pitched to media outlets.

Library Machines exist between industrial design and architecture. They may be built, coded, sewn, etc. They may be experiences, instruments, applications or efficiencies. They may be found in reading rooms, on the reference desk, deep in the stacks or outside the library altogether.

## Installation



This semester, our site is a [Sprinter Van](#) generously provided by the Harvard Depository. This is our new, Pop-Up LABRARY truck that will be parked in Harvard’s Common Spaces. Library Machines will be deployed from the truck and in March 2014, it will driven down to SXSW Interactive to show student work.

## Course Meetings

Each meeting will begin with updates and business after which we’ll jump into five-minute design warm-ups. The rest of the seminar will primarily be used as a presentation and discussion period to provide broader library context. Seminar discussions will touch on, among other topics: the history of US libraries; library architecture; contemporary case studies; forces of change; the evolution of library technologies; tools and assistive technologies; and the qualities and cultures of successful learning labs, makerspaces and other creative environments. Discussions will be supplemented by guest speakers and field trips.

LTK begins with a series of three, week-long design exercises which we will present to the class for brief discussion. By mid-semester we will begin identifying and building final projects, alone or in small teams.

Course culture will prioritize constructive engagement with other students’ work. Experimentation and risk-taking are encouraged. Project development -- the hands-on *making* of Library Machines -- will be expected of students between seminar meetings. We’ll rapidly iterate ideas through cycles of lo-tech making, presentation, and revision.

## General Experiences Acquired

- Ethnographic research
- Rapid idea creation
- Applied problem-solving
- Developing and pitching ideas
- Taking a project from concept to working prototype
- Effectively documenting projects for press outlets and publication

*Note: No previous experience with design or fabrication is required. Students from outside the GSD are encouraged to enroll. Resources and support for developing design skills will be provided throughout the semester.*

## Field Trips

- Harvard Depository, Southborough, MA
- Perkins School for the Blind
- Museum of Science, Mathematica Exhibit, Charles and Ray Eames, Cambridge MA

## Course Visitors

- Amy Ryan, President, Boston Public Library
- TBA

## Deliverables

- Brief (one week) design exercises (3) - 25%
- Light readings (including one session where you lead discussion) - 10%
- 5 minute case study presentation - 5%
- Final project: a built-out, ready to use, Library Machine - 50%
- Final project documentation (photos, press-ready copy) - 10%

*Note: Grading will account for the varied backgrounds and skills of students*

## Calendar

### Week 1: September 4th

Libraries: Definition, Domain, Opportunity

### Week 2: September 11th

FIELD TRIP: The Harvard Depository

### Week 3: September 18th

GUEST: Amy Ryan, President, Boston Public Library

The Library Landscape: Case Studies, Forces of change, Projects, etc.

*Due: Design Exercise I*

**Week 4: September 25th**

*Due: Design Exercise II*

*Part I: Exercise II Review and Observation*

*Part II: Library Machines... Case studies & discussion*

**Week 5: October 2nd**

*Due: Design Exercise III*

*Science Fair style show-n'-tell*

*Guest: Ben Brady GSD '12, LTK alum*

**Week 6: October 9th**

Derek Attig, Bookmobiles

*Due online: progress update as an animated GIF*

*Set up out of class meetings with one of us.*

**Week 7: October 16th**

*Part I: developing a pitch*

*Part II: practicing your pitch*

*Due: Final Project Pitches and Prototypes*

**Week 8: October 23rd**

MID REVIEW

**Week 9: October 30th**

FIELD TRIP: Perkins

**Week 10: November 6th**

metaLAB & NYPL

**Week 11: November 13th**

Workshop

Documenting project process.

**Week 12: November 20th**

Visitor

Final Review Warm-Up

**Week 13: November 27th**

Thanksgiving Recess, No Class

**Week 14: December 4th**

Project Documentation, Reflections

## Press Coverage

- The Boston Globe (*print edition*)
- Library Journal #1, Library Journal #2 (*print edition*)
- The Harvard Gazette, The Harvard Year in Pictures
- The Harvard Crimson 1st, Harvard Crimson 2nd

## Bibliography

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### II. Spaces of Making

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### III. Machines and Technology

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#### **IV. Experience**

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