



FORT YORK BRANCH LIBRARY

OLA NEW LIBRARY BUILDING AWARD • KPMB ARCHITECTS • TORONTO, CANADA



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ARCHITECTS STATEMENT

The Toronto Public Library (TPL) system is the largest in North America and one of the most used per capita in the world. The new Fort York Branch has become an important community centre in a highly diverse, rapidly evolving neighbourhood in downtown Toronto.

UNIQUE HERITAGE CONTEXT

The building sits on what was once the original forested shoreline of Lake Ontario at the mouth of Garrison Creek. The library building is designed to allow pedestrian access from Fort York Boulevard to the south, to the future park to the north. This pedestrian pathway system will connect under the Bathurst Street Bridge to the historic fort and its grounds. The angular trapezoidal geometry of the pavilion building references the ramparts of the fort, and the extensive use of wood in the interior of the building recalls the old wooden cribbing found buried on site during the archaeological survey.

Fort York now finds itself buried in today’s urban fabric. The second floor of the library functions as an extraordinary viewing platform to the heritage site, the city and the lake.

THE URBAN LIVING ROOM

In order to fulfill the client’s vision to be the social heart of the neighbourhood – to provide a resource for not only books and CD’s, but also community programs, classes, digital studios and study spaces, and to be the first stop for new immigrants – the functional layout of the building had to provide a high level of flexibility for future program development. Durability and ease of maintenance were also important criteria as the building is constantly in heavy use.

The building has accommodated the unanticipated high number of users well because of the robustness and generosity of its public spaces. And the modest construction budget imposed a discipline of strategic use of warm materials – such as the wood – and bright primary colours to animate the interior.

INTEGRATED ART

Given the site’s unique history, the clients suggested using Margaret Atwood’s poetry collection, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* as a theme for integrated art. Poetry excerpts are featured on the exterior of the building, while *The Planters* drawing by Charles Pachter is reproduced on the perforated metal fins on the west façade along Bathurst Street. The image is visible from the interior and casts extraordinary patterns of shadow and light at different times of the day. The fins at the second level provide sun protection during the day and transparency into the library at dusk.

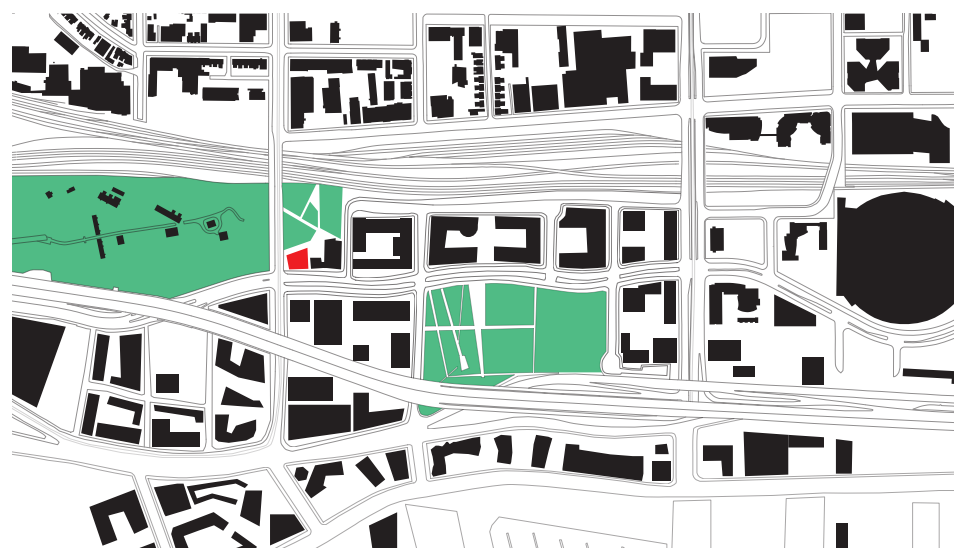
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The selection of the site at the corner of Bathurst Street and Fort York Boulevard was an important step in the overall success of this project. In order to contribute to street animation and encourage use of nearby public transit, there is no public parking provided on site. A dedicated green roof makes up 52% of the total area. The exterior fins mitigate heat gain, operable windows allow for natural cross-ventilation and passive cooling in the shoulder seasons, and motorized interior blinds control direct sunlight and heat gain.

CLIENT:	Toronto Public Library
ARCHITECT:	KPMB Architects
STATUS:	Completed 2014
LOCATION:	190 Fort York Boulevard, Toronto
SIZE:	16,000 SF
TEAM:	Shirley Blumberg (partner-in-charge), Andrew Dyke (associate-in-charge), Richard Unterthiner (project architect), Sanaz Shirshekar, Lynn Pilon (project manager), Dave Smythe (contract administration), David Poloway, Carolyn Lee, Rachel Cyr, Jordan Evans
PROGRAM:	Two-storey library with book stacks and reading areas along with digital multimedia labs, learning labs, study pods and an integrated public art project.



SENSE OF HISTORY



View east from historic Fort York towards library and downtown Toronto; Site Plan

“It is the gateway visually and physically to Fort York and a way of connecting the fort to the city. The location is historically loaded and should be very public. Garrison Creek came through here once. From the start, we wanted to design the library – and the two other buildings we designed next to it, the Library District Condos – so that they would have some kind of resonance with the ramparts of Fort York with all their angularity. The colours we used are a metaphor for the landscape of 200 years ago. Even now there are traces of the past everywhere you turn.” - Shirley Blumberg, Design Architect

TPL STATEMENT

Fort York branch opened its doors in May 2014 bringing library services into a brand new vertical community built in the heart of downtown Toronto, next door to historic Fort York.

The branch is bright, with modern spaces and spectacular views. It offers many opportunities to linger and work: study pods, laptop bar, huge old growth wood table and comfortable lounge seating. An attractive and welcoming community space that offers services for everyone, with zoned areas for adults, teens and children; the branch provides access to information, collections, technology or a new focus on innovation.

Fort York branch features a two room digital innovation hub outfitted with the latest technology. With audio equipment, 3D scanners and printers, portable green screen, mobile media carts, multiple digital screens, and more, this vibrant space brings people together to experiment with new technology, access expert staff or learn and collaborate together.

This library was built with flexibility in mind. The program room on the main floor fully opens out to the large atrium. All of the shelving on the main floor of the branch is moveable to allow the space to be opened up for larger events, raised access flooring on the second floor means more flexibility for the introduction of new services in the future. A terrace adjacent the library will overlook the Mouth of the Creek Park, providing connections between the library, Fort York and the community beyond. A public art installation on the exterior of the building features the Journals of Susanna Moodie, featuring the poetry of Margaret Atwood and the images Charles Pachter to bring history and culture alive in this historic setting.

COST DATA

Standalone project with a total budget of \$9.192 million.

\$3.713 million or 40.4% funded from development charges and \$5.479 million or 59.4% from a combination of development levies, Section 37 funds and developer contributions toward public art.

Represents approximately 3% of the 2014 – 2023 10 year capital budget for Toronto Public Library - \$301.099 million. This budget includes technology asset management, as well as virtual branch services in addition to building projects.





“The Fort York Library continues the architectural transformation of the conventional library into a communal living room, a continuation of the public realm ... this glass-clad branch includes old-fashioned bookshelves and high-tech facilities. It is clean, crisp and efficient, yet comfy and intimate. Sharing space with a park (that has yet to appear) and an unusually attractive condo tower, the library has been an integral part of the neighbourhood since it opened in May.”

- Christopher Hume for the *Toronto Star* “10 best architectural projects of 2014”

COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY



PARTNERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT

The Fort York branch is the result of a partnership between the Library, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the developer, Context, historic Fort York and the City of Toronto. As an important cultural asset and service in this new community, the library building was prominently located at the corner of Fort York Boulevard and Bathurst Street, as opposed to the ground floor of an amenity building as was originally planned. The relationship that developed between the partners resulted in public art contribution from the developer for the library project which enhances the library connection to the past on this significant site. The integration between historic Fort York, library and future Mouth of the Creek Park creates a unique gateway into this community that connects the library terrace and indoor public spaces with outdoor parkland and the national heritage site.



View north-east from Fort York Boulevard and Bathurst Street

The trapezoidal form of the Fort York Library gives the building a bold presence in its urban landscape. The low-rise geometrical form, in contrast to the larger high-rise tower and high-speed traffic corridor of the Gardiner Expressway, Bathurst Street and the train tracks, creates a moment of pause and paradoxical sense of expansiveness in a city that is in the process of rapid densification.





West Elevation at night

“The Fort York branch is a wonderful example of great public space and of how excellence in design matters in local communities.”

– Anne Baily, Director, Branch Libraries, Toronto Public Library

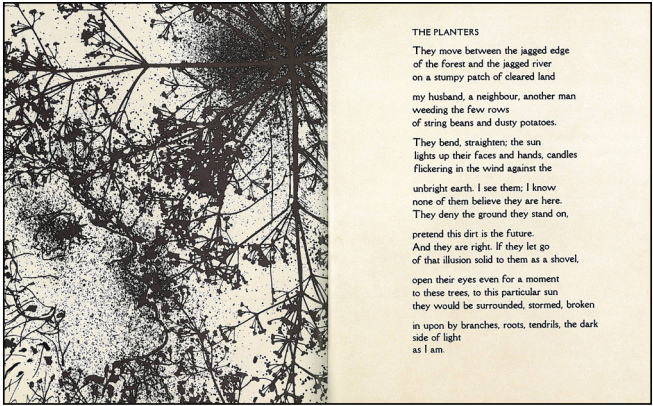


URBAN LIVINGROOM



TIME TRAVEL

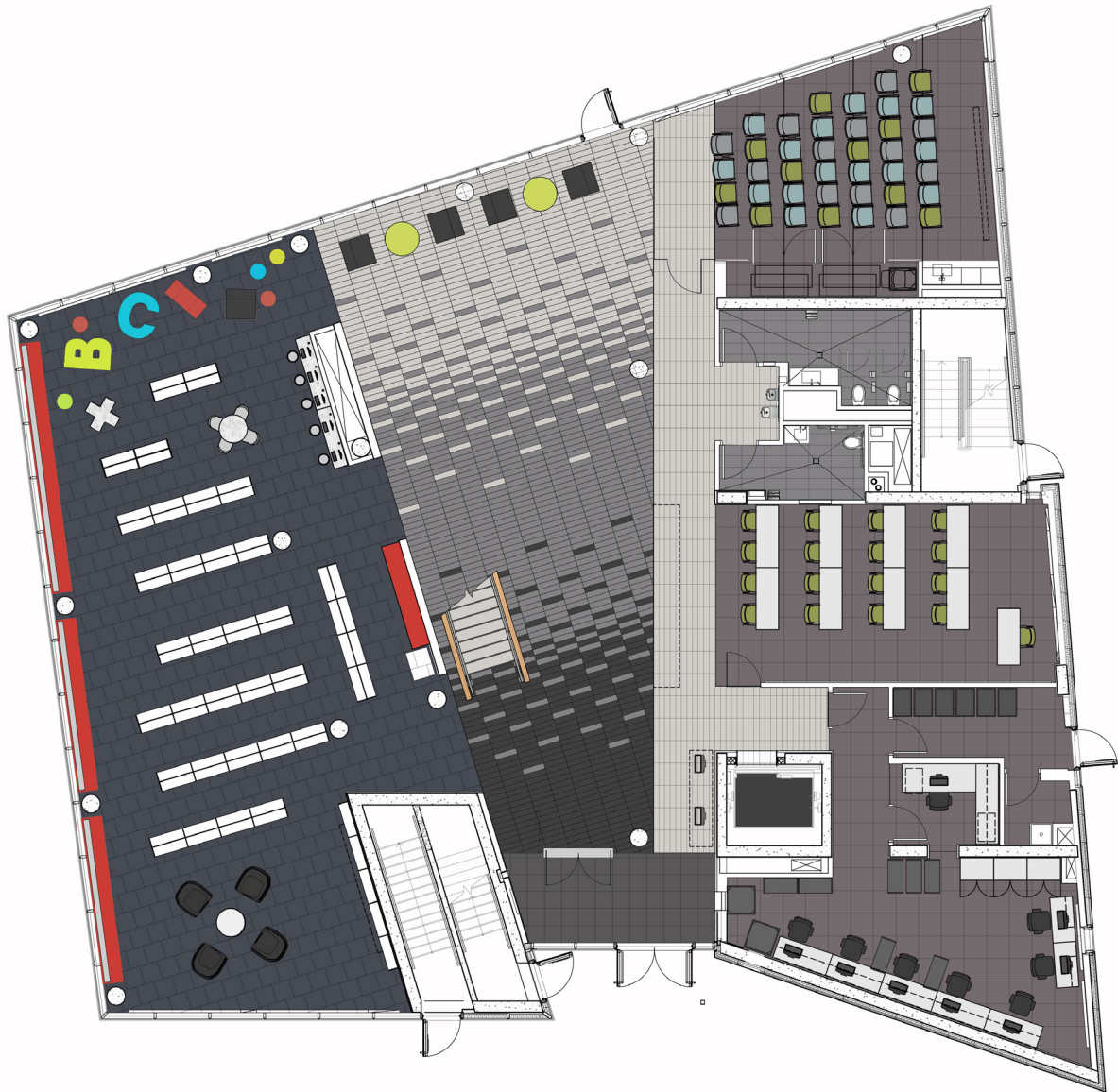
Libraries are in essence about time travel – through books, archives, and multi-media. This concept is reflected in the architecture of the Fort York Branch Library with views oriented towards Fort York, the City and the Lake, and the integrated art piece. Past and present are elegantly merged in the public art piece. The drawing of ‘The Planters’ by Pachter was originally created as a serigraph on paper in 1980, and was converted into a modern medium, metal fins with perforations, for the project. The drawing on the exterior metal fins animates the façade along Bathurst Street. The image is visible from the interior and casts extraordinary patterns of shadow and light at different times of the day. The Fort York Library is a truly urban branch that embraces the past and future of Toronto.



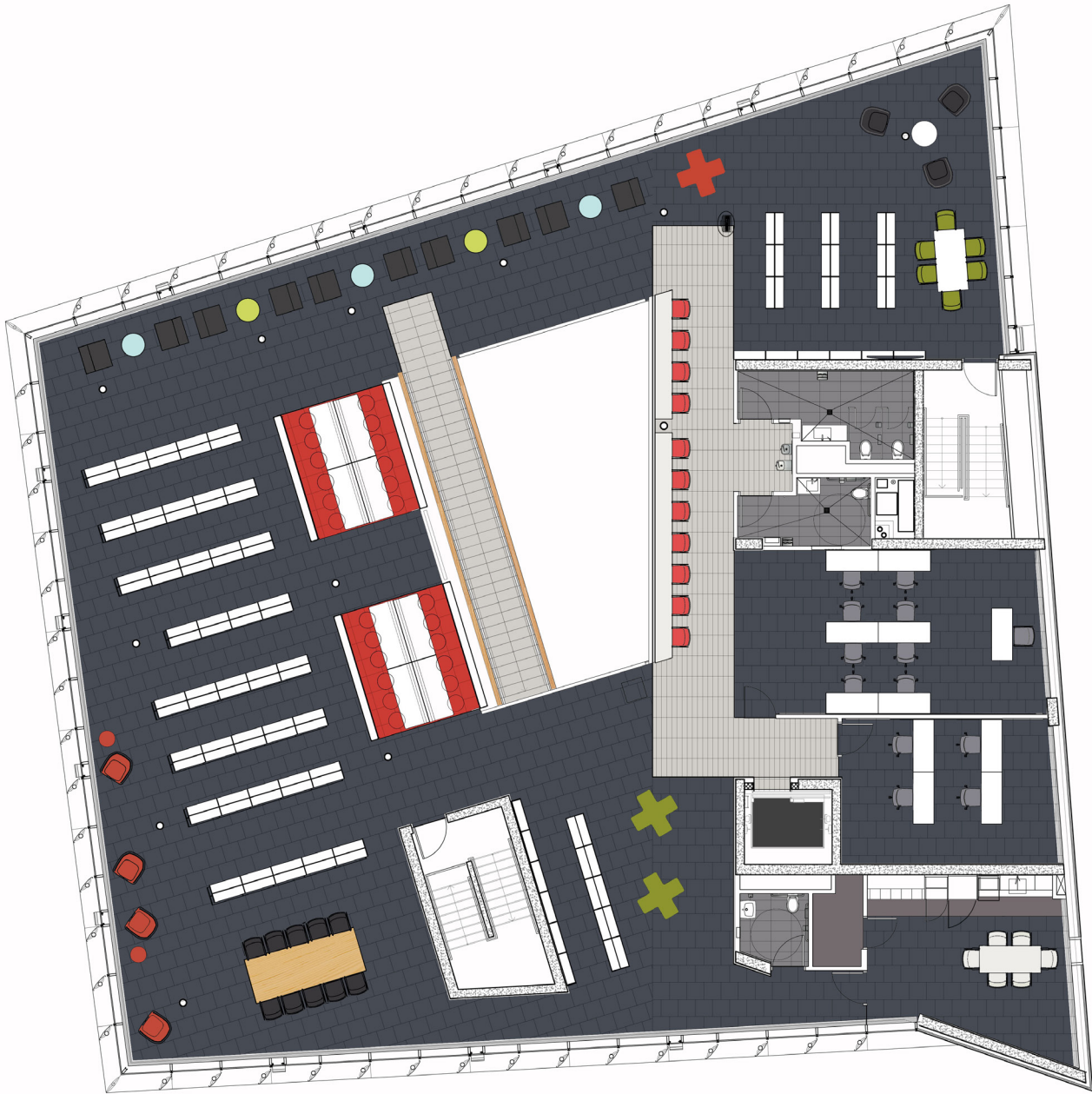
Original image (and text) of “The Planters” from
The Journals of Susanna Moodie



FLOOR PLANS

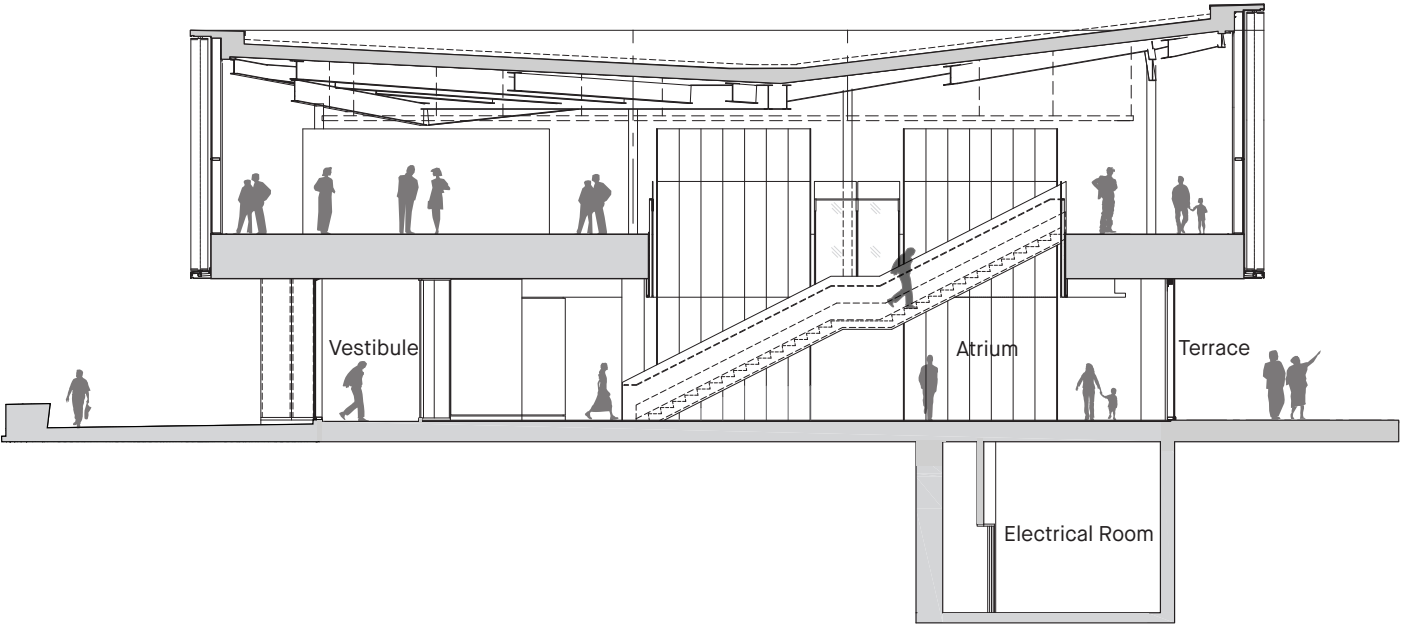


First Level

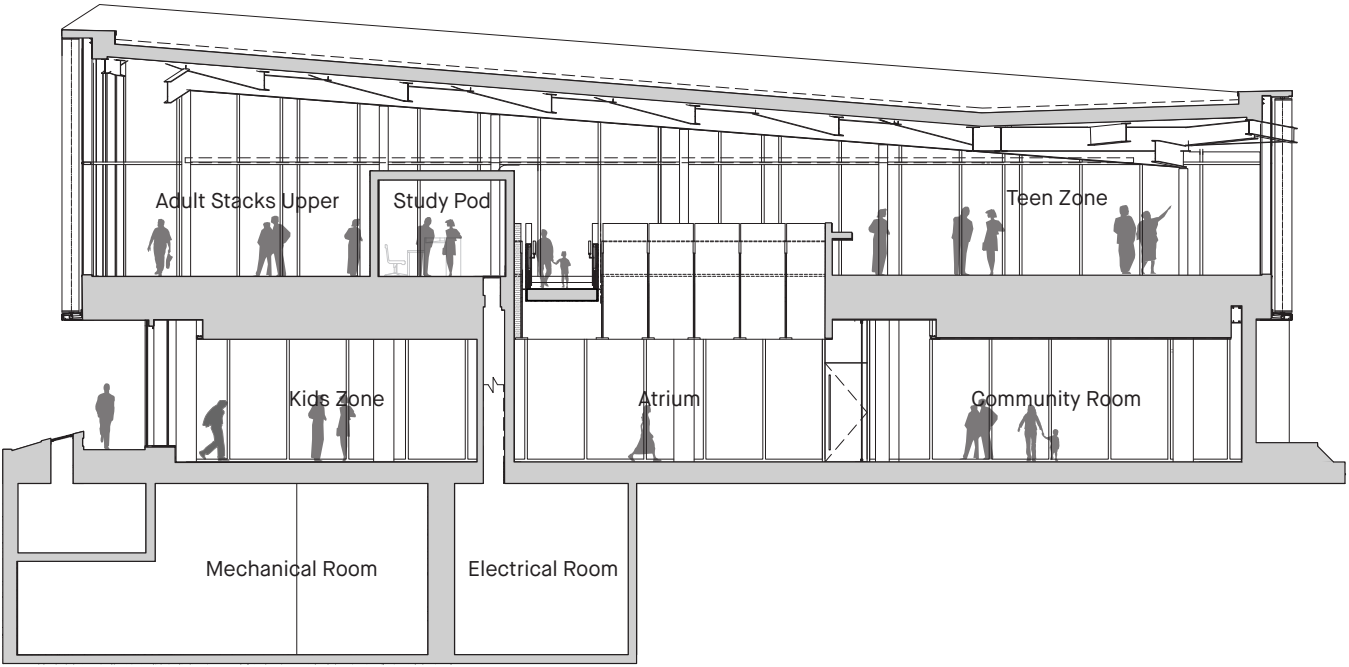


Second Level

SECTIONS



North South Section 1:100



East West Section 1:100

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE



Reception desk and digital lab beyond on first level



“The response from the community has been great. We’re surprised at how little tweaking we’ve had to do. The families here tend to be very young; there are a lot of babies. The Digital Innovation Hub has been a huge success, the 3D printer is in constant use and classes are booked in minutes. We’re happy to be part of the transition of the neighbourhood.” - Ted Belke, Branch Head, Fort York Branch, Toronto Public Library



View north from entrance



View south of entrance below and study pods on second level

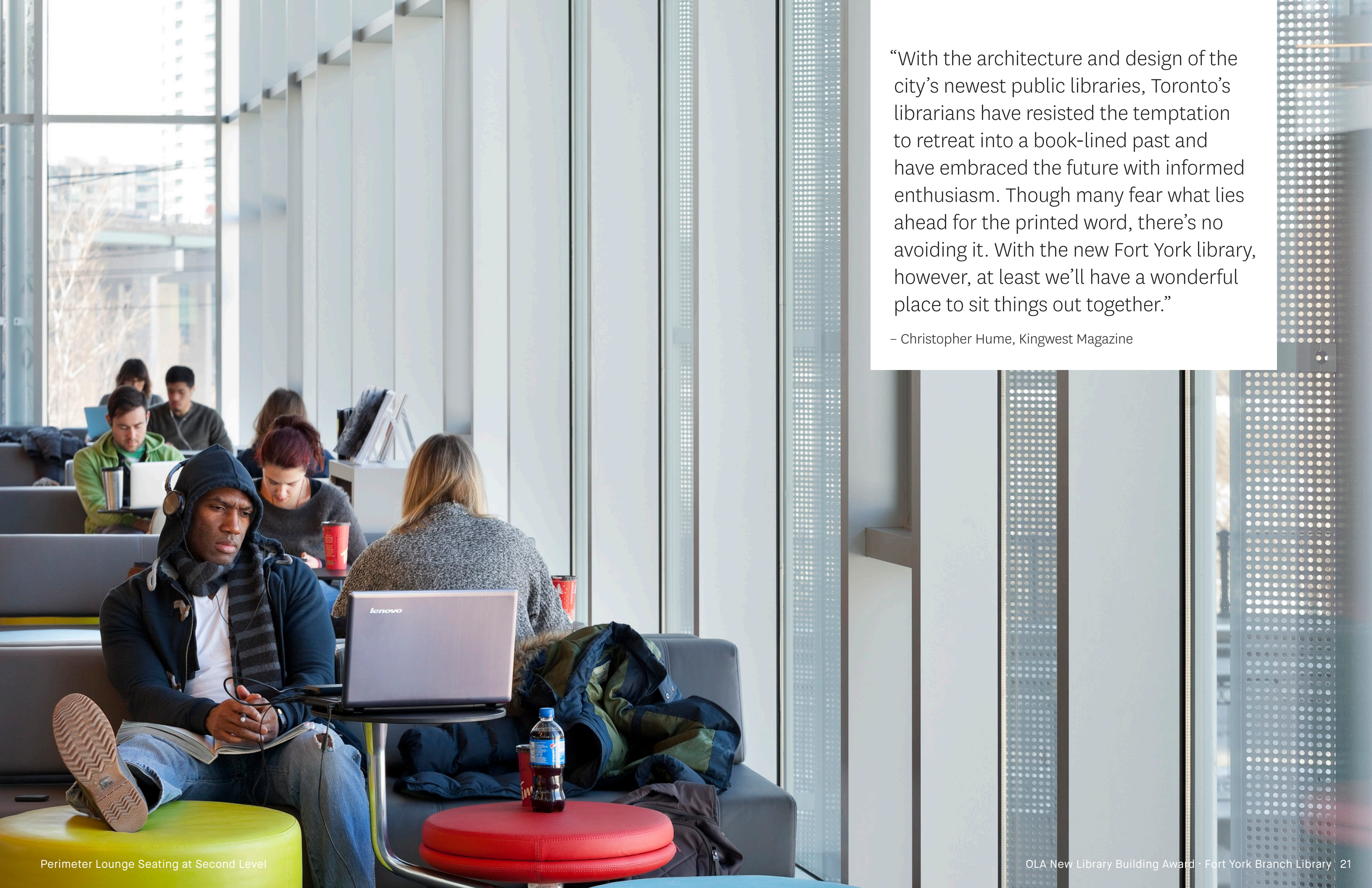






View west from second level





“With the architecture and design of the city’s newest public libraries, Toronto’s librarians have resisted the temptation to retreat into a book-lined past and have embraced the future with informed enthusiasm. Though many fear what lies ahead for the printed word, there’s no avoiding it. With the new Fort York library, however, at least we’ll have a wonderful place to sit things out together.”

– Christopher Hume, Kingwest Magazine



The adult stacks on the second level





Communal seating area within the adult stacks on the second level



LIBRARY

Fort York Branch
Now Open

THOSE WHO WENT AHEAD OF US IN THE FOREST BENT THE EARLY TREES SO THAT T



“From the moment the doors opened, the Fort York branch has been a hit!
The wonderful, well designed spaces adapt to everyone’s needs
– from digital innovation and e-services to more traditional collections
and programs. A true space for all that resonates with the community.”

– Anne Baily, Director, Branch Libraries, Toronto Public Library