Maja Mihevc
Faculty of Design, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 0009-0008-4770-6795

Zeynep Yılmaz
Selçuk University, Konya, Turkey, 0009-0000-3300-1972

Turgay Kenger
Işık University, Istanbul, Turkey, 0009-0005-0576-5533

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Maja Mihevc. Email: mihevc.majaop@gmail.com

A Library Meant For Our Tomorrow

Maja Mihevc, Zeynep Yılmaz and Turgay Kenger

Abstract

Throughout history libraries were primarily established as expansive troves meant to store knowledge and provide education. As the world has moved on from ancient times, however, libraries have expanded far beyond their original intentions to satisfy our needs and varied usage of these spaces. They are now not only echelons of hundreds of years of history and memory but also vibrant community centers enabling us to foster creativity, curiosity and social bonds between generations of all ages. To accommodate, or rather celebrate such an evolution, our team has developed several ideas through the Futuristic library project. Our goal is to create a library truly meant for society's tomorrow. The project's goal is to unite the rapid growth of technological innovation with nature inspired design to provide comfort, inclusivity, and accessibility in an environment which acknowledges human needs. The Futuristic Library demonstrates how technology and nature can converge to create a modern, interactive, and welcoming cultural space that redefines the role of libraries in the 21st century.

Keywords: design, sustainability, technology, library, public space, generative AI

Introduction

In the current age, libraries of the past, as simple quiet spaces for reading and borrowing books, no longer exist. They have transformed from mere public spaces into large community spaces, furthering education, idea sharing and socialization spanning all generations, interests and abilities. They have become centers to accommodate and include a large variety of people, from those looking for a simple, comfortable space to spend their time, to those lost and waiting to find something. The goal of the Futuristic Library was therefore to accommodate and satisfy all of these new needs, combining the clever technology of today to create a nature-inspired design for the future. Here the old and new meet – through long-standing materials and our thoughts, all encompassed in a beautiful, smart building (Dixon, 2019).

Inspiration and Influences

The Futuristic Library's primary inspiration for its shape and function was taken from what by many, could be considered the most 'natural' shape in existence. When we think of nature many envision a vast forest or meadow, perhaps even a beach – but the scenery is certain to contain at least the vague inkling of a tree in the distance. Thus, our inspiration as well has led us to use the outline of a large tree as its basis, providing organic shapes for its design. As a communal space that is meant to be a blend of both nature and technology it was important for the overall aesthetic of the library to retain the organic shapes of its base idea – both structurally and statically. From paper-drawn sketches and adjustments, to our contemplations of using a genuine, large tree as a basis the idealized visual materials were then further conceptualized with the help of AI software to create probable, realistic renders. This gave the sketches an earthier, tangible feel, providing us with clearer, more detailed, and exciting images of the Futuristic Library to share (Sullivan & Zimmerman, 2016).

Instead of traditional bookshelves, we opted for the use of large digital screens and tablets where visitors can instantly find and read thousands of books. This provides both space-saving solutions, makes searching faster, cuts down on paper consumption, and enables the building to follow an open concept floorplan. Last but not least it is also in step with the overall digitalization of reading material boosted by companies such as Kobo, Kindle and Amazon wherein the large majority of available titles, both journalistic as well as those under fiction and other prose are released only in EPUB, that is to say digital, formats. In order to contrast

and offset the use of digital space the Futuristic Library uses wood and glass as its primary building materials. Due to plans of, hopefully, building the library within the confines of a park or some other non-urban open space, a large portion of the glass is meant for its large windows, accommodating sunlight and view of the surrounding greenery (Coldewey, 2017). The Futuristic Library would also use innovative thermochromic surfaces that change color with sunlight and temperature (on hot days, they turn lighter to reflect heat; on cold days, they turn darker to absorb warmth from the sun). This helps regulate heat environmentally, reduces energy use and strengthens the library's connection to the landscape upon which it is situated. A portion of the energy consumption may also be managed with solar panels. Additionally, special care was also given to the library's layout, as it was mapped as a flexible space to accommodate all kinds of groups and needs: a play area for the children, comfortable hangout zones for teens, quiet reading spots for adults and a general, large open space for educational purposes, concerts and further cultural events. The individual usage of such spaces would be further enhanced by digitalized management depending on needs befitting a specific occasion, allowing for further enjoyment and efficiency.

Image 1

Futuristic Library

Note: Created using ChatGPT based on the in-classroom brainstormed ideas

Image 2

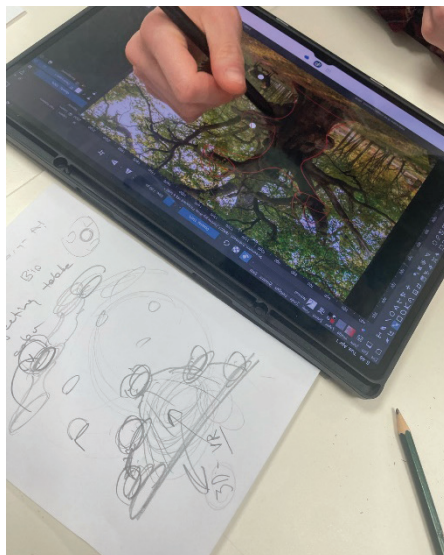*Futuristic Library*

Note: Created using ChatGPT based on the in-classroom brainstormed ideas

Image 3

Futuristic Library

Note: Created using ChatGPT based on the in-classroom brainstormed ideas

Contextualization

The Futuristic Library's primary goal was the creation of a communal space, particularly to use and adapt the ever-evolving technology in new ways. Younger generations are becoming ever more adept with the use of touch screens, mobile devices and other smart and portable gadgets, from watches to laptops and the rest of society is slowly shifting to follow suit, even among the older, less adept generations. Libraries such as this one would, due to its abundance of interactive materials (namely interactive displays), be of great help to the elderly or those troubled with technology as places where they could learn to operate such systems; this is achievable both through organized classes or general offered aid. It would enable the visitors to gain knowledge and confidence in their actions and bridge not only generational gaps but enable socialization of groups with increased diversity. Such all-inclusive spaces allow for a friendlier, more enjoyable environment. One of the strengths of the Futuristic Library is also its space-saving solutions. Unlike regular, physical databases, the Futuristic Library's inventory would be entirely digital, enabling both more usable physical space and greater customization of fonts, backdrops, and colors when reading for the visually impaired visitors.

Its open-space leaning concept provides variety in the type of furniture or accessories provided providing a cleaner layout and cutting back on crowd reduction during busier, more eligible days for visitors. Such design helps us create better places for everyone, enabling people of all ages and interests to find, within the Futuristic Library, a piece of something they may love and cherish. In such a way, design can help us ensure kindness towards our planet and its occupants through sustainability and energy friendly means.

Conclusion

With all of its strengths, the concept of the Futuristic Library represents not only a creative, smart idea but the essence of a building through which we can establish growth and comprehension to more securely shape the future. It is; by using its beauty, calm, and efficiency, a place meant to truly care about nature, provide happiness and ensure the continuous transition of knowledge, showing us, the conjunction of nature and bright usage of provided technological advancements can create truly amazing spaces. Growth and inspiration come not only from the communities which provide them but also spaces providing them a loving home. Of course, the Futuristic Library's base idea is the result of a shorter workshop –

as such it requires extensive further designing further improvements to become an authentic, realizable project. In the meantime, however, it is still a peek into what our future public spaces could look like, painting a very exciting picture indeed.

References

Coldewey, M. (2017). Designing libraries for the 21st century: How technology is reshaping library architecture. MIT Press.

Dixon, J. (2019). Public spaces and the social role of libraries: The evolution of libraries as community hubs. *Journal of Library Innovation*, 10(2), 45-58. https://doi.org/10.1234/jli.2019.0010

Sullivan, P., & Zimmerman, T. (2016). Libraries as public spaces: Integrating technology and nature for improved user experiences. *International Journal of Library Science*, 28(1), 66-81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijls.2016.01.005