INSTITUTE FOR DIGITAL RESEARCH AND NEW OFFICES FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENTS FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES LOCATED IN THE COLUMBIA HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

by Pollyann E. Myers
Institute for Digital Research and New Offices
for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities
Located in the Columbia Heights Neighborhood
of Washington, D.C.

Pollyann Elizabeth Myers

Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Architecture in Architecture

Steve Thompson, Chair
Humberto Rodriguez-Camilloni
L. Bailey Van Hook

April 20, 2015
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords:
architecture; digital research; digital library; digital media;
office space; classroom; conference room; meeting room;
media room; gym; reception; nook; escalator; elevator;
Columbia Heights; Washington, D.C.; District of Columbia; National
Endowment for the Arts; National Endowment for the Humanities;
community; Digital DC Corridor.

© Copyright 2015
Institute for Digital Research and New Offices
for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities
Located in the Columbia Heights Neighborhood
of Washington, D.C.

Pollyann Elizabeth Myers

Abstract:
The proposed 42,000 square foot facility is envisioned to be a satellite office for both the
National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well
as a digital research institute. The institute seeks to provide integrated collaboration with
the NEA and NEH, although it is also open to collaboration with other organizations related
to arts and humanities scholarship.

The proposed site is located at the intersection of 14th Street and Park Rd NW, in the
Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, D.C. At this time, the neighborhood is
experiencing a revival in development that began approximately 10-15 years ago.
Community residents describe the site as being the “core area” of the neighborhood and
also consider it to be the number one priority area for redevelopment of the entire
neighborhood.

Strategically locating the building at the main intersection of the neighborhood facilitates
community involvement and cognition as well as encourages the surrounding arts and
humanities related organizations to become more closely involved with the NEA & NEH
and their research. This development is meant to be a cultural marker.

Functionally, this facility will utilize the most advanced information technology and the most
extensive humanities and arts related databases as tools for scholarly research.
Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank first and foremost my dad, Hal Myers, for making my graduate school dreams come true. I would not have been able to be where I am today, at the end of that journey, without you. Thank you so much, you have given me much to be grateful for!

I would also like to thank my advisory committee members, Steve Thompson, Humberto Rodriguez, and Bailey Van Hook for patiently reviewing my work and for your guidance in creating a project centered thesis. I also want to thank you for helping me create my very best work, it gives me much to build upon in my future career endeavors.
Table of Contents:

Department Cover
Abstract
Acknowledgments iii
Table of Contents iv

Building in Context on 14th Street 1
View of 14th Street From Building 3
Map of Neighborhoods D1 5
Map of Neighborhoods D2 6
Aerial Photograph 7
Concepts 8
Sketch Model Pictures 9
Introduction 10
Evolution of Form: From Parti to Figure Ground [Page 01] 13
Evolution of Form: From Parti to Figure Ground [Page 02] 14
Perspective View 'A' 15
Perspective View 'B' 16
Perspective View 'C' 17
Perspective View 'D' 18
Perspective View 'E' 19
Perspective View 'F' 20
First Floor Plan 21
First Floor View Location Diagram 22
First Floor Views 01-35 23
Second Floor Plan 58
Second Floor View Location Diagram 59
Second Floor Views 36-46 60
Third Floor Plan 71
Third Floor View Location Diagram 72
Third Floor Views 47-61 73
Building Sections 88
Wall Sections 100
Front Facade Detail 102
Bibliography 103
Appendix 'A' Reflected Ceiling Plans 104
Appendix 'B' Framing Plans 108
Appendix 'C' Building Program 112
Aerial Photograph

Received via CD from the National Capital Planning Commission
Initial Sketch of the Concept “Shift”
For a Site in Transition and a New Building Use Type

Parti Diagram of the Concept “Bound/Unbound”
For the Conceptual Movement from Bound to Unbound
Media by Scholars and the Public
Sketch Model Pictures

14th Street Perspective View

Park Road Perspective View

Initial Sketch Model (Day View)

14th Street Perspective View

Park Road Perspective View

Initial Sketch Model (Night View)
Introduction

Overview:
This building's main public function is to give space to digital research. The digital research institute seeks to provide integrated collaboration with the NEA and NEH, although it is also open to collaboration with other organizations related to arts and humanities scholarship. The institute is organized to provide a facility to further research in the arts and humanities and to also provide a hub to distribute open access to information for the general public as a means of community engagement. The institute is not intended to be a public library in the sense that non-scholarly work or meetings would take place in the facility without a directed purpose. That is, it is not intended to facilitate free web surfing, hence the limited number of computer stations available for continual public use. It would be appropriate for seminars to be held to bolster community interest and for directed and interested individuals to use the facility for their educational purposes. The institute would support students interested in the arts and humanities to use the facility for projects and papers to be prepared for district community schools, of any level, by appointment. That restriction is meant to control the amount of people to what can reasonably be accommodated by the facility, not to discriminate against well-meaning public individuals. The facility is open to some degree of random inquiry as long as an appointment is made.

In addition, seminars can be held at the digital research institute that will give community training in arts grant application writing and other useful educational devices related to the endeavors of the NEA & NEH. The institute can also aid in giving the community the resources they need to become involved in the arts and humanities and by helping them to know where and how to contribute. Seminars can also provide advanced training in a relaxed environment to those who wish to seek it and could also create programs that stimulate interest from all ages of people the community, including pre-college students. Equipped to allow tech businesses to meet in classrooms and media rooms.

Functionally, this facility will utilize the most advanced information technology and the most extensive humanities and arts related databases as tools for scholarly research. It has been designed so that the building could potentially be used for another type of high-tech office at some point in the future, but that adequately addresses the use of the present. To do so stresses the idea of permanence of place within the surrounding community.

It is important to note that this development proposal reduces the square footage of the retail development at DCUSA by a relatively minimal amount in order to anchor the main intersection with a facility that contributes to the creative realm. While having a retail development in this area does help draw people into the central area of the neighborhood, the development isn't a great fit as far as anchoring the main intersection of the neighborhood with a building that can provide lasting value in an architectural sense. There is still a need for good quality retail in the neighborhood and my proposal does not deny that. I only mean to adjust its placement slightly in order to anchor the main intersection with a government entity, which belies stability, that makes the connection to the existing creative culture within the community.

Strategically locating the building at the main intersection of the neighborhood facilitates community involvement and cognition as well as encourages the surrounding arts and humanities related organizations to become more closely involved with the NEA & NEH and their research. This development is meant to be a cultural marker.

Directly behind the site, is the site of Bell Multicultural SHS and Lincoln Middle School. Mount Pleasant Public Library is also located in the near vicinity of the site. It is a small building that serves as a traditional library with books, that is targeted toward the youth sector that would work in conjunction with the digital research center to emphasize lifelong learning within the neighborhood. Several elementary schools are located in the neighborhood as well, which serve the existing residential public that currently resides there.

The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities also developed a public art framework plan that identifies opportunities within the neighborhood for public art installations. The District of Columbia transit authority also places community created art in the metrorail (metro) stations within and around the city. The Columbia Heights metro station is one of them, with a cubic mural called "Woven Identities." These, taken together, certainly represent an amazing commitment by the city to promotion of the arts by creating opportunities for art visibility around the city. The Columbia Heights metro is within a 5 minute walking distance to the site.
Residents identified these neighborhood characteristics: a commitment to embrace the past while looking forward to the future. Community residents describe the site as “soulful, personal, intimate, people focused, not object focused, and ‘we/the people’ as art.” It is wonderful to see the repeated references to art as an integral piece of the redevelopment of the area, which helps to reinforce the notion that this particular neighborhood would receive well as a part of their community a dedicated center focused on proliferating future arts and humanities research.

Planning:
The Columbia Heights neighborhood is a diverse community filled with longstanding residents and new home owning residents that have the capability and drive to renovate existing homes in the area. This is significant, because, until recently, the core area has been largely in disrepair, following extreme violence and rioting that followed the assassination of religious, civil rights and political leader Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee in 1968. The riots destroyed businesses along 14th St, starting from U St NW, extending north past the site location by several blocks. This destruction also caused a widespread exodus of businesses and residents that continued over three decades following the initial incidents that occurred over only a few days. “Gang houses” became the norm for buildings that were unusable and abandoned in many areas along 14th Street.

This documented history is a powerful example of how instability and the lack of normal function can affect residents’ immediate sense of the character of place. Many small business owners simply abandoned their businesses within the city and moved them elsewhere. For construction crews attempting to rebuild, they endured the sound of regular gunfire and built sod berms to protect themselves from stray bullets. What an incredible reality to be faced with daily.

At this time, the neighborhood is experiencing a revival in development that began approximately 10-15 years ago. With each new development that fills a vacancy, the character of the neighborhood changes in a small way, which bolsters faith in the residents who choose to continue to reside there. Further, their expression of support has influenced developers’ willingness to consider the neighborhood as a feasible location for their construction projects.

Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework Plan:
In early 2003 the DC Office of Planning began a planning initiative to guide the redevelopment efforts of the central commercial corridor in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. In coordination with local residents, the plan that they created lists community concerns and also suggests specific improvements that could help make a more visually unified center of the neighborhood. Residents identified these neighborhood characteristics: a commitment to embrace the extraordinary cultural and economic diversity, and an interest in promoting development which respects its past while looking forward to the future. Community residents describe the site as being the “core area” of the neighborhood and identify it as a “civic/cultural and commercial heart.” They also consider it to be the number one priority area for redevelopment of the entire neighborhood. The plan indicates that core intersection currently has the highest pedestrian volume in the neighborhood.

It is unique to have access to this much planning information when evaluating a site for a development project [in this case, fictitious]. Though not all of the information was useful to this specific development, the documents that were reviewed were very informative about the concerns of the community residents and their ultimate hopes for the future of the neighborhood they inhabit. “The primary strategy of this plan has been to capture the essential and evolving character of Columbia Heights and to identify a ‘design character’ for the public realm... The community described the site as soulful, personal, intimate, people focused, not object focused, and ‘we/the people’ as art.” It is wonderful to see the repeated references to art as an integral piece of the redevelopment of the area, which helps to reinforce the notion that this particular neighborhood would receive well as a part of their community a dedicated center focused on proliferating future arts and humanities research.

Related:
All of the District public libraries went through extensive retrofitting around 2011 in order to bring digital technologies to the existing facilities. There is now free wi fi and broadband access in all District public libraries. The District public libraries are also starting to avail job and scholarship training in topics involving digital technology.
The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library is the main public library for the district and was designed by Mies van der Rohe. It broke ground in 1968, was renamed in 1971, and was declared a historical landmark in 2007. The renaming of the library would forever symbolize the connection between public scholarship and the name of Martin Luther King Jr in the city of Washington DC. The designation of the building to historical landmark status will ensure, at the very least, that the building will not ever be completely torn down, which is very significant. It is currently undergoing renovations and an addition that will sit atop of the current facility.

Although printed media is still used, largely, the trend is toward a mostly digital future as far as research is concerned. Hence there is a conceptual movement from bound media toward unbound media. The parti diagram that follows is meant to express this concept in a way that can be adaptable to architecture.
Evolution of Form: From Parti Diagram to Figure Ground

Parti Diagram
PERSPECTIVE VIEW 'D'
PERSPECTIVE VIEW 'F'
View 2: Front Entry. View of Stair and Escalators
View 7: View of both Small Classrooms beyond and printing station.
View 8: View toward the front of Small Classroom.
View 9: View of Public Research Area bathrooms and lounge.
View 10: View rear entry underneath stair and escalators beyond.
View 11: View of Rear Entry underneath stair and escalators. Small corridor leads to NEA/NEH office spaces and front entry.
View 12: Rear Entrance. View of stair/escalators beyond and second floor atrium leading to NEA/NEH office and Digital Research Institute.
View 13: Rear entrance to atrium to the right and entrance to private corridor leading to NEA/NEH reception.
View 14: Private corridor passing by private offices and leading to reception.
View 15: Just past reception. View of elevator doors to the right and private entrance doors to NEA/NEH office space beyond.
View 16: Reception and private entrance doors to NEA/NEH office space beyond.
View 17: View of Private Office.
View 18: View from Reception desk. View of private NEA/NEH entry doors beyond and private office to the right.
View 19: View of NEA/NEH Open Office Area.
View 20: View of Employee Gym.
View 21: View of small corridor in Employee Gym leading to rear exit door.
View 22: View of Employee Gym.
View 23: View of Employee Gym.
View 24: View of Kitchenette.
View 25: View of NEA/NEH Open Office space.
View 26: View of small conference table to the right and Conference Room beyond.
View 28: View from Open Office space of Mechanical Room door to the right and Shower Room door to the left.
View 29: Shower Room.
View 30: Exit Stair located at NEA/NEH Reception.
View 31: Employee Gym.
View 32: View of Bathroom at Digital Research Institute.
View 33: View of Small Classroom beyond.
View 34: View of public computer station nook beyond in Public Research Area.
View 35: View of person walking along the front facade of building.
View 36: View of Employee Gym from second floor lounge window.
View 37; View of Employee Gym from second floor lounge window.
View 38: View of second floor Lookout.
View 39: View of second floor Lounge storefront windows.
View 40: View of Exit Stair enclosure at NEA/NEH Reception from second floor. Glass curtain wall may house promotional banners.
View 41: View of second floor atrium and corridor at Private Offices and Reception.
View 42: View of second floor atrium above front Entry.
View 43: View of second floor atrium above front Entry.
View 44: View of second floor atrium corridor above rear Entry.
View 45: Second floor Public Research Area nooks and public wi-fi tables.
View 46: Large Classroom.
View 47: View of third floor Lounge storefront windows.
View 4B: View of third floor corridor to Media Room and third floor Lounge storefront windows.
View 49: View of third floor Lounge and storefront windows.
View 50: View of third floor Lounge.
View 51: Double door entrance to third floor Meeting Room.
View 52: View of third floor Meeting Room beyond.
View 53: View of Media Room.
View 54: View of corridor between Media Room and Meeting Room. Third floor Lookout in distance at right.
View 55: Double door entry to the third floor Meeting Room.
View 56: View of third floor Meeting Room beyond.
View 57: Third floor Meeting Room.
View 58: View of Public Research Area from above, at third floor Open to Below. Exposed structure allows for hanging lighting and lets natural light to permeate the space. Future third floor space is possible.
View 59: View from third floor Open to Below. View through main facade opening highlights the structure supporting it.
View 60: View of second floor Public Research Area nooks from above.
View 61: View of second floor Lounge area and Public Research Area nooks from above.
BUILDING SECTION 8

GRAPHIC SCALE

0' 10' 20' 30'
Front Facade Detail
Bibliography

Appendix ‘A’:
Reflected Ceiling Plans
FIRST FLOOR REFLECTED CEILING PLAN
Appendix ‘B’:
Framing Plans
Appendix ‘C’:
Building Program
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>277 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>554 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Room</td>
<td>122 sq. ft. x 4</td>
<td>1319 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee's Gym</td>
<td>43 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>86 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclosed Office</td>
<td>171 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>342 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitor's Closet</td>
<td></td>
<td>86 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchenette</td>
<td></td>
<td>436 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td></td>
<td>308 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Room</td>
<td>934 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>1668 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>1171 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>2561 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>5122 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Research Area</td>
<td>133 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>266 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>60 sq. ft. x 6</td>
<td>360 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restroom</td>
<td>80 sq. ft. x 6</td>
<td>480 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower Room</td>
<td>189 sq. ft. x 2</td>
<td>378 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wi-Fi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Footprint</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>17,467 sq. ft.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>