

5th Innovative Learning Spaces Virtual Summit

26-27 November 2020



Marie-Pierre Pausch, University of Luxembourg

Reinventing the Library



Belval

Before - 1990



Now - 2000



Founded in 2003, the University of Luxembourg is the only public university of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

- Multilingual, international, research-oriented

Multilingualism: programmes generally taught in two languages French/English or French/German, some in three and some entirely taught in English

- 1,061 academic staff (including doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, research associates and others) supporting 268 professors, assistant professors and lecturers in their teaching
- 14 [bachelor degrees](#), 42 [master degrees](#) and [doctoral education](#) and 16 [vocational training](#) and [lifelong learning training](#) courses
- Academic staff originates from 94 different countries
- 6,714 students originating from 129 different countries

Before - 1990



Now - 2020

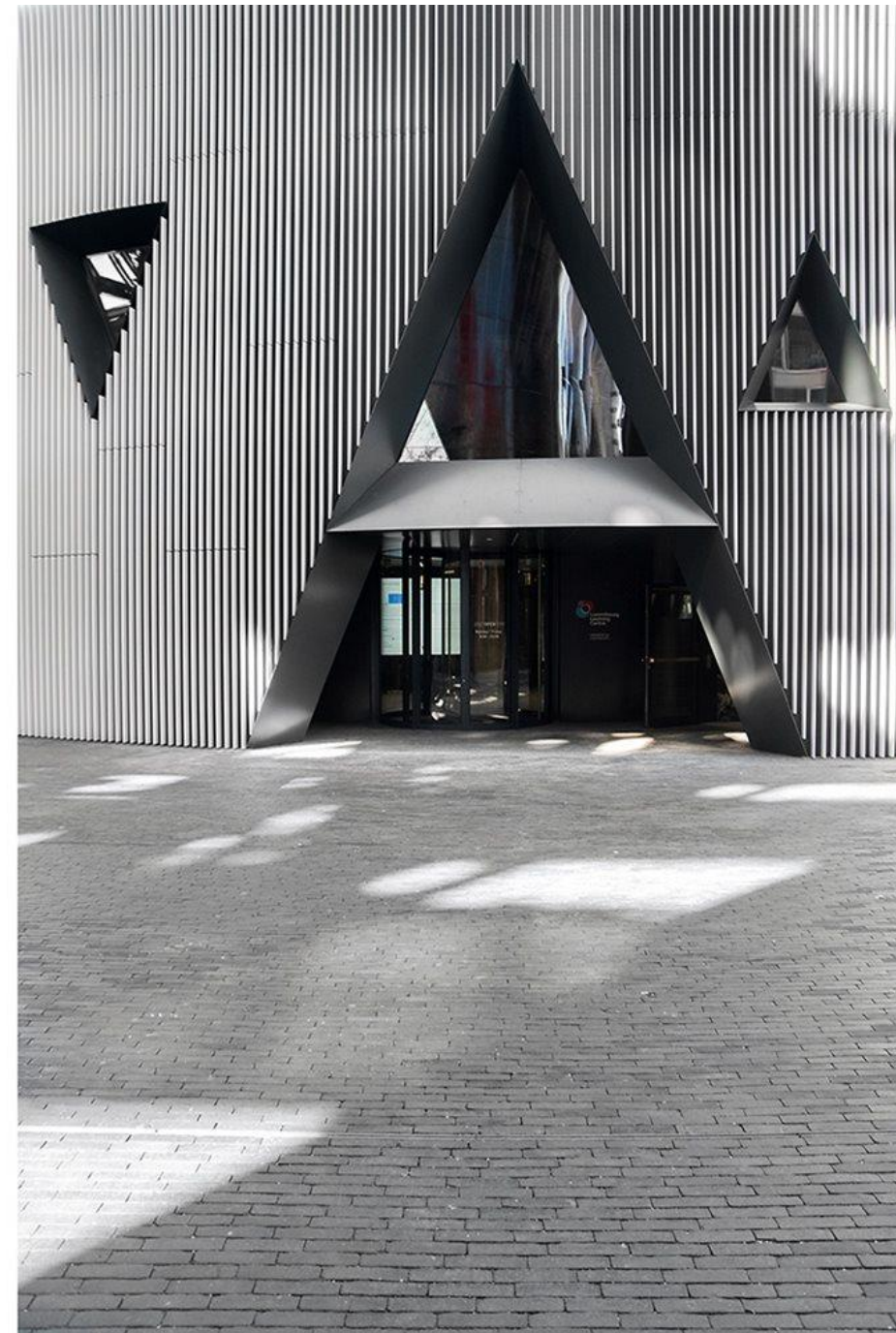






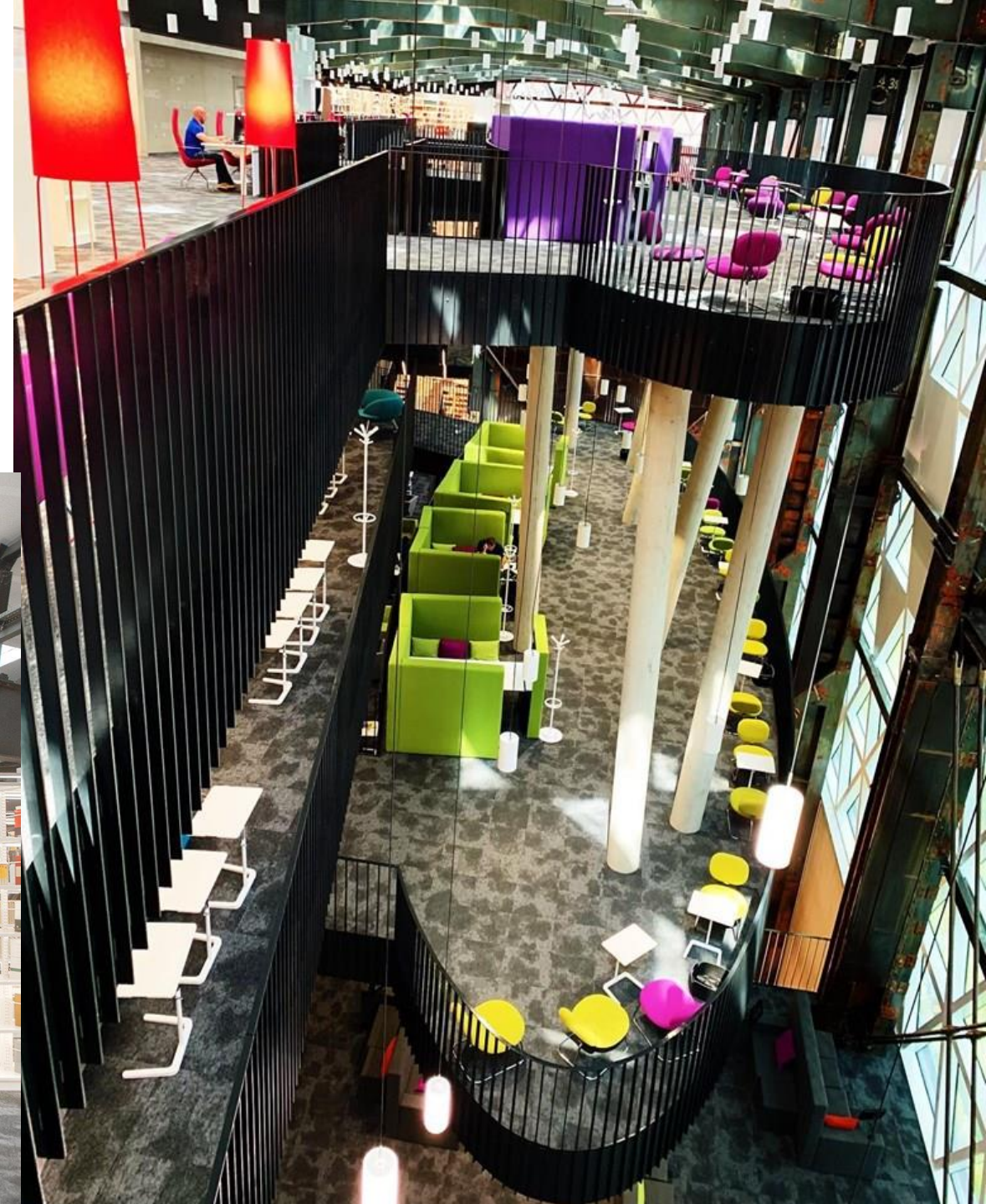
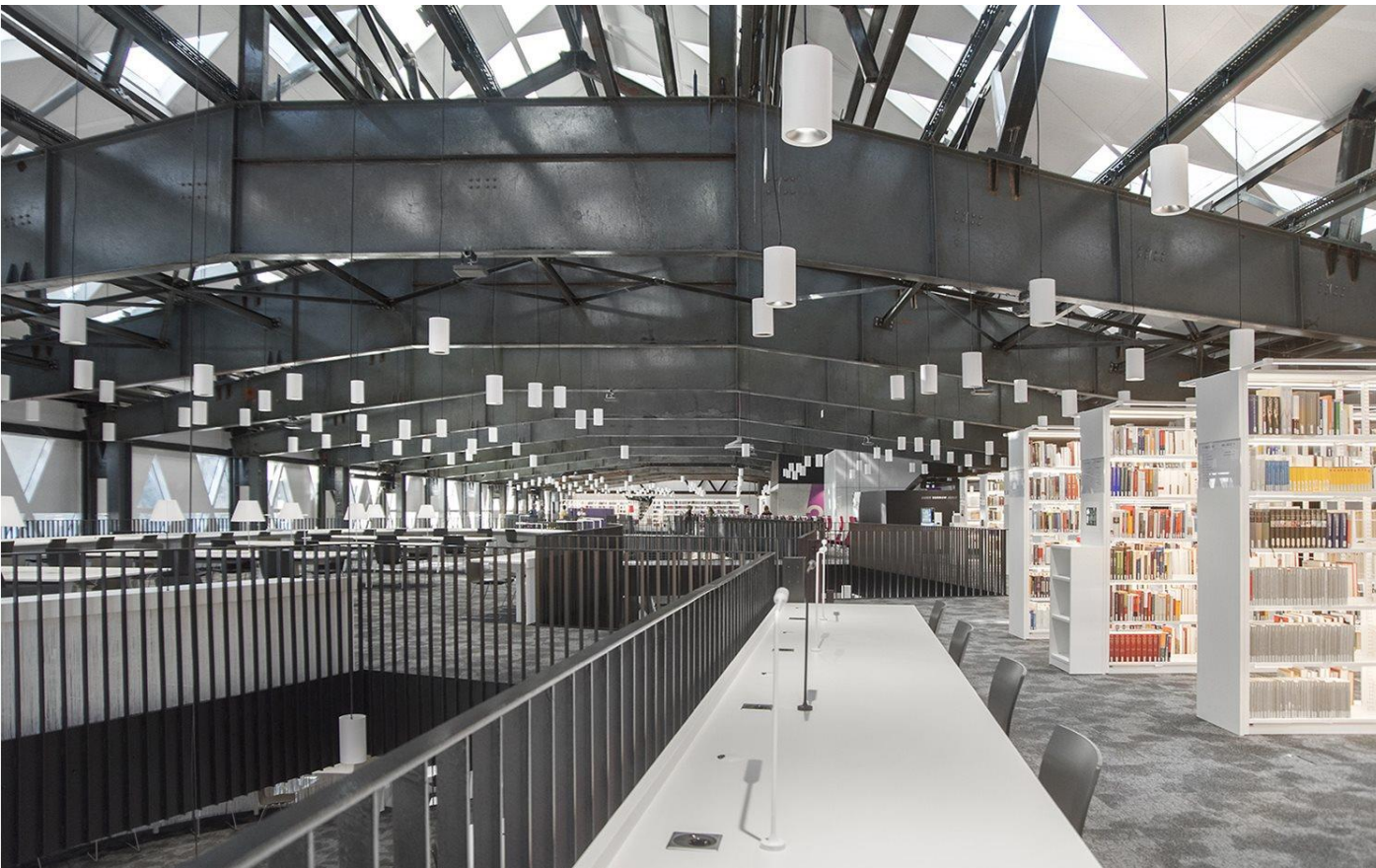
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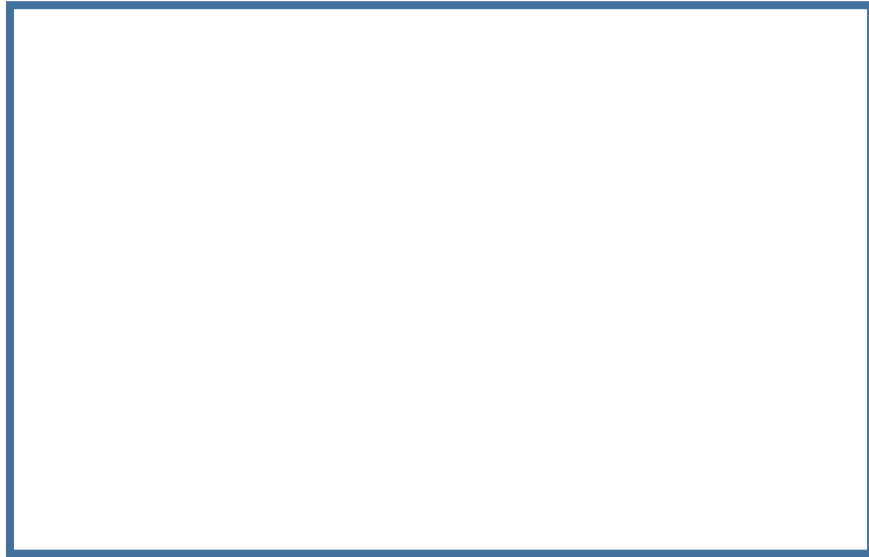
Inside Tour:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kU5G9Bexkk>

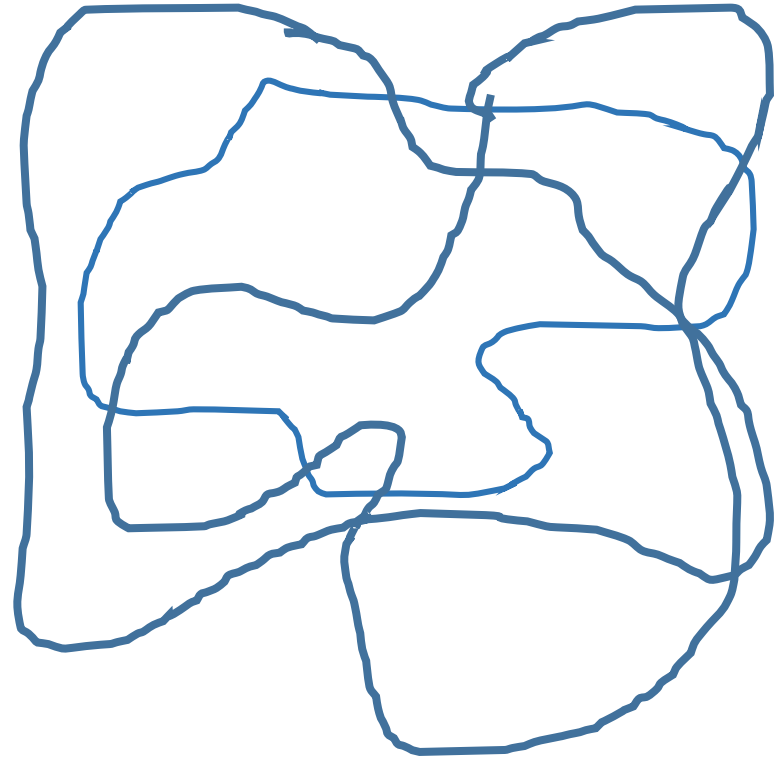


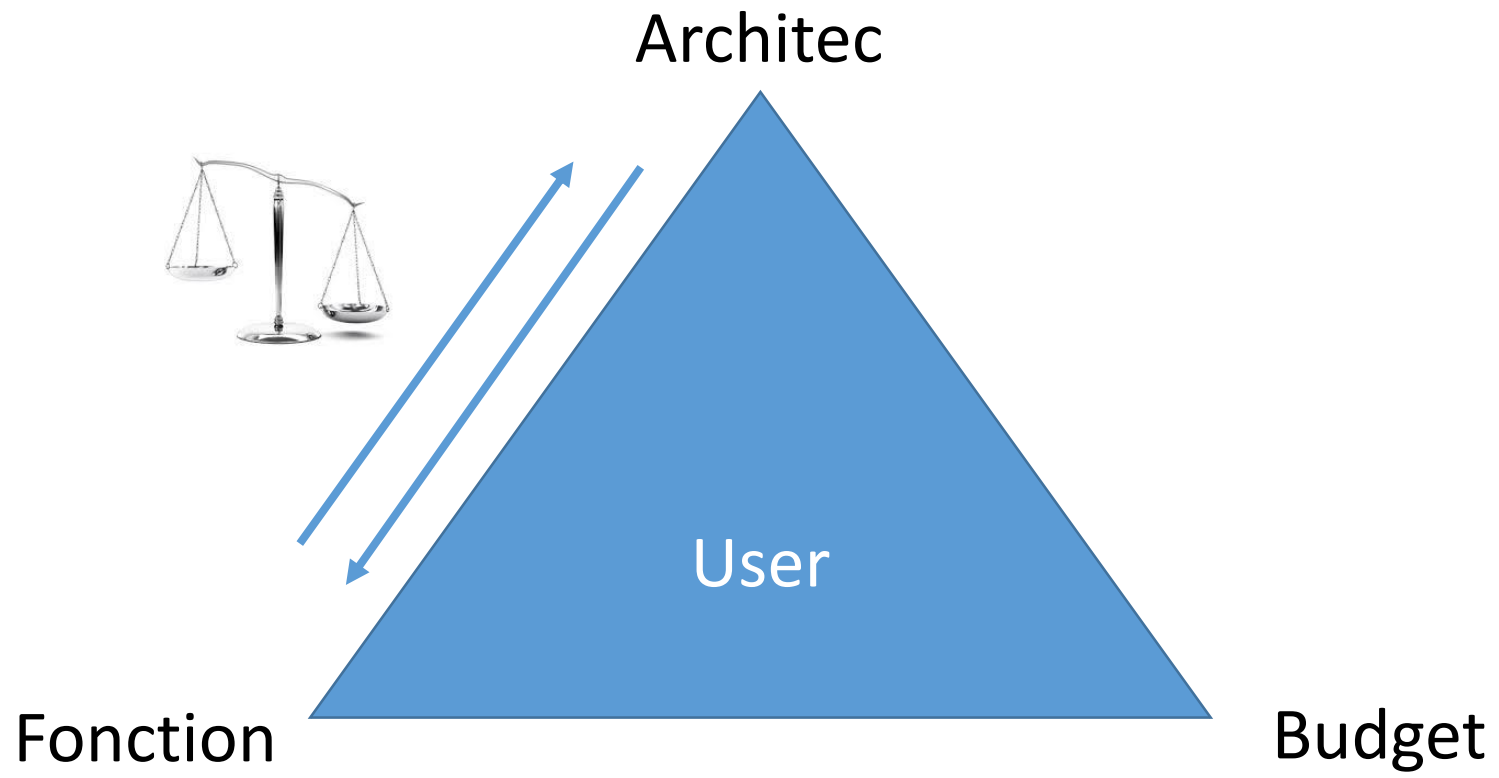
What is the « best » Architecture for a Library - Learning
Centre?
Architecture / Fonction

Model A



Model B







Fonction / Architecture: 5 challenges

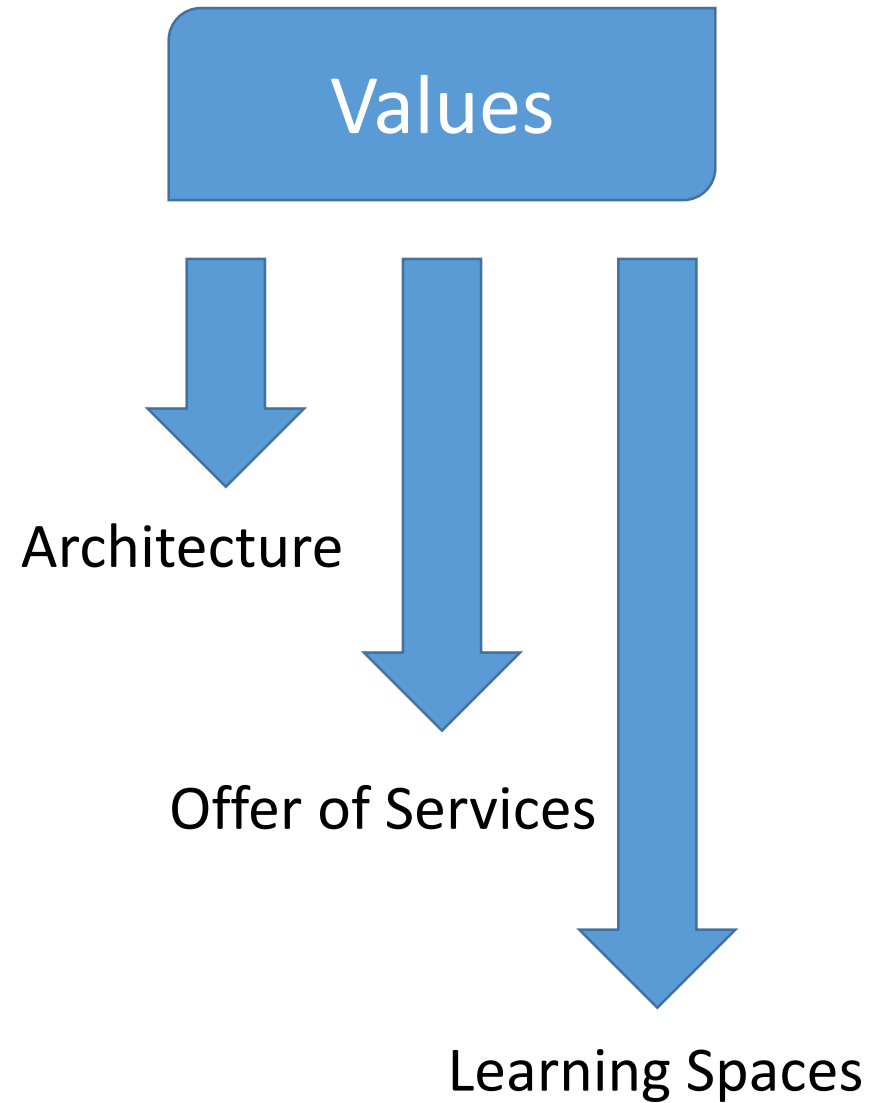
Becoming
Essential

Being Open-
minded

Dialoguing

Sharing
Values

User in the
center



Openness

Diversity

Flexibility

Openness / architecture



Openness / services



For everyone –
Free of charge –
Without barrier

INTERNAL USERS	
University students and staff	
UNLIMITED	1

Openness / Learning Spaces



Diversity

6 different types of spaces:

Classical individual work

Silent individual work

Individual work with a computer

Chill out zones

Collaborative work spaces in specific rooms

Collaborative work spaces outside of specific rooms



Architecture, Acoustics, Lighting



Diversity of Learning Spaces

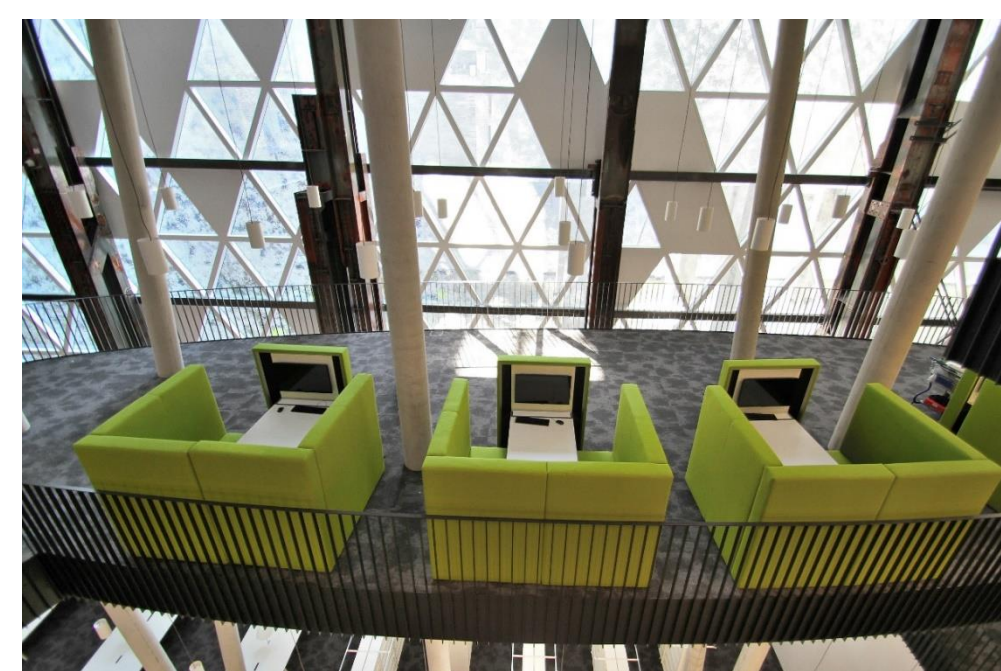
Diversity / Individual Work

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Diversity / Collaborative Work

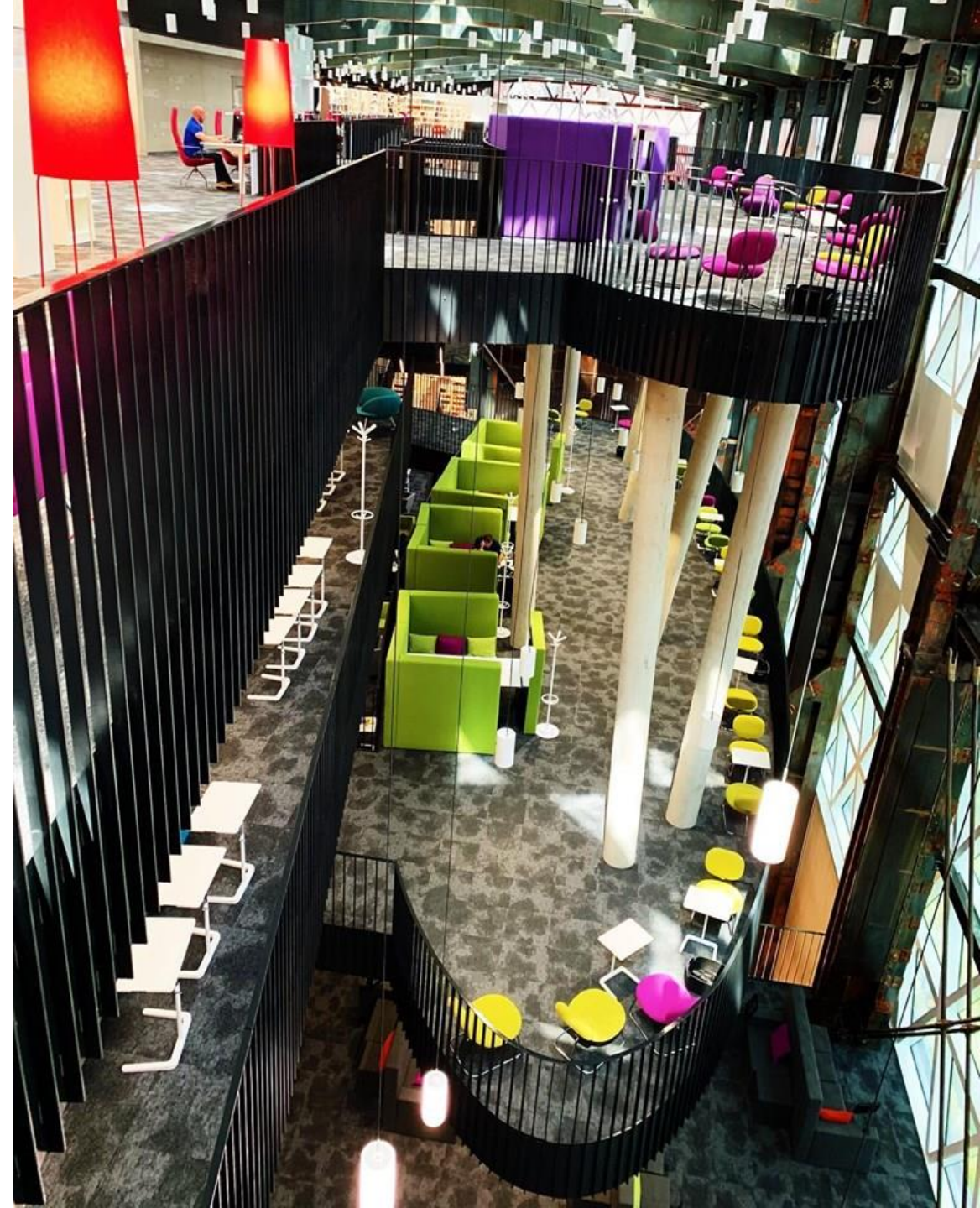
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Thanks a lot!

marie-pierre.pausch@uni.lu





5th Innovative Learning Spaces Virtual Summit – 26 November 2020

Reinventing the library / Marie-Pierre Pausch

Good afternoon,

First of all, I would like to thank Luxatia International for the invitation. I have participated in this conference twice before, in Prague and in Barcelona last year, and I found it to be very insightful and interesting.

In “Luxatia International”, there’s the word Lux(embourg). So this afternoon, my aim will be to transport you to Luxembourg.

And if you use your imagination, you will even be transported all the way to Belval, a brand-new university campus located in the south of the country.

On this map, you can see the capital Luxembourg City in the centre, and in the south the country’s second city, Esch-sur-Alzette, where our new Belval Campus is located.

Before the University of Luxembourg was founded in 2003, there was no university at all in this country of 600,000 inhabitants.

So as well as creating a university and giving it extraordinary financial resources, the government also decided to convert an old industrial site into a 21st-century campus. Millions have been invested in the construction of dozens of buildings for learning and research, with the aim of diversifying Luxembourg’s economic landscape.

From the 19th century until the 1990s, Luxembourg was an industrial country. It then became a financial centre, and now it is a leading player in innovation and research.

On this slide you can see the campus as it was before and as it is now.

I was lucky to be hired as the head of the University's library in 2006. Everything had to be built; everything had to be created, from scratch. And that's how I became project manager for the construction of one of the most important buildings, the Luxembourg Learning Centre. It was an extraordinary stroke of luck, a unique experience and at the same time an incredible challenge!

Today, the University has 6,700 students, with more than 129 nationalities and around 2,000 staff members. It is an international, multilingual University.

The Luxembourg Learning Centre is not really a new building; it is the restoration of an industrial building previously used for storing raw materials, located under the old blast furnaces.

Here you can see the building as it was when I first saw it in 2006 during the first meeting with the architect.

And this is what the building looks like today!

The Luxembourg Learning Centre opened its doors in September 2018. It is a vast building covering 14,000m², right in the middle of campus.

It has seven floors, five of which are accessible to the public.

It has nearly a thousand work spaces, 40% of which are intended for collaborative work.

Here some pictures of the façade, the garden and the main entrance.

Today, I will share with you my thoughts and my experience of these 12 years of project management, now that the building has been open for two years.

We will start our journey with a video presentation of the Learning Centre:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kU5G9Bexkk>

I would like to begin by asking you a question:

In your view, what is the best architectural design for a new library building?

Here are two possibilities.

Which do you think works best for a library? Difficult question?

Model A is extremely functional: it's a regular rectangle. It would be relatively easy to set up shelves, work spaces and learning areas. One might imagine floors that are independent from one another, very practical for arranging collections of books, a building that is sturdy and solid.

Model B is architecturally strong but functionally complex. The architect undoubtedly took a great deal of pleasure in being creative...

The Luxembourgish architect of the Luxembourg Learning Centre, François Valentiny, clearly chose model B.

It is a wonderful opportunity for a library to be designed by such a great architect. Today, the library has become emblematic for the University and also for the country. People come from far away to visit it, and our visitor numbers have shot up.

The LLC's slogan is "Inspiring, Innovative, Open". It's the place to be! It's a reinvention of the traditional library.

I don't think that the rectangular model would have enabled such a resounding success.

The challenge is how to reconcile architecture and functionality, how to design suitable learning spaces.

Here you can see a blueprint drawn up by the project's protagonists. We were in a three-way relationship, with the architect, the technical offices and those in charge of the interior layout; the contracting authority and the budget – very important as you know –; and the librarians, whose task was to defend the functional aspects. In the centre are the users. I'll come back to that later.

When we opt for a plan like model B, there are two possibilities: either the architect dominates the project – and in some library projects, the result may look fantastic but it isn't user friendly or flexible –, or the architect seeks to serve the library's functional needs.

If the architect is to serve the functional aspects, I see there being five challenges for the functional project manager.

1. They have to establish their role alongside the architect, become essential, take the lead, while remaining modest – because where one person's skills end, the next person's begin.

I remember the day when the acoustics office presented the plan. You know just how important acoustics are in an open building. The office manager looked me in the eyes for a long time and told me that the acoustics would be perfect, that I needed to trust him, and I must say that I have not been disappointed.

2. The functional project manager has to be open-minded and able to question themselves. No question is taboo. For example: should we add an open cafeteria or bar space without walls in the middle of the shelves? Our answer was no, but in fact it could have been a good idea because the building is so attractive that we are constantly having to turn down requests to host cocktail receptions and other events. Of course, the question here is more about the definition of the role of the library. But why not if the idea is to reinvent the library?
3. It's also important to have values and a vision, and to share these with the architect. For example, in our project, the values were openness (in every sense of the term), flexibility and diversity; we wanted to create an inspiring and very comfortable space.
4. And finally, probably the most important point of all: dialogue. Learning spaces that are successful have inevitably been the focus of hours of discussions. For example, in our project, the plan to have tables that also serve as guard rails was discussed and worked on for maybe 10 days.
5. Users have to be placed at the centre of the project, of course. We used UX design methods, user observation models, surveys. Our users are all different. They have different habits and needs, and that's

why providing a variety of spaces, services, atmospheres, comfort levels and colours was central to our project.

I'd like to come back to values, as in my view they are essential when it comes to truly reinventing library spaces. These values have to be linked to the services we want to offer, both now and in the future, and they have to be put into practice in the spaces, in conjunction with the architecture.

Let me explain.

Let's go back to the values of our project: openness, diversity and flexibility.

One of our values was openness.

The architectural embodiment of this value, for example, is a large open space, an atrium over six levels, the lack of barriers, and the use of glass for the collaborative workspaces and the façade. From inside the building, users are always in contact with the outside.

In terms of services, we chose to avoid banning things: users can eat, drink, make phone calls, speak out loud, sleep, watch a film, read, play, and get some fresh air or have lunch on the outside terrace. And it goes without saying that users can borrow an unlimited number of books. We offer library services, but it goes further than that. The library is a place where users can live their lives!

There is a sense of freedom.

We are open for everyone, free of charge, without barriers. The building was designed to be able to open 24/7.

Library staff members serve as guides, as intermediaries for the services on offer.

And all these services and this philosophy are reflected in the choice of spaces: for example, the furniture in the welcome zone is completely open, without any barriers; it could theoretically house any of the University's services, not just those of the library. There are spaces for making phone calls, watching TV, having a drink, etc.

Another strong concept of the project was diversity. All of our users are different, they have different needs and habits, and this diversity is reflected in a wide variety of open spaces, with different colours and different comfort levels.

We defined six different types of space:

- Standard individual workspaces
- Silent individual workspaces
- Individual workspaces with a computer
- Chill-out zones
- Collaborative workspaces in separate rooms
- Collaborative workspaces in open areas

These different spaces were created in a variety of styles.

We also linked this to the architecture, since the building is open to the public on six different architectural levels. Each level is different. We tried to create reference points in the layout; for example, when exiting the lift, collaborative workspaces are always on the right and individual spaces are on the left.

The choice of spaces was also guided by acoustic qualities and lighting. For example, since the third floor is the quietest area, furthest from the welcome zone, we added more individual workspaces and we placed the history collections there, as we know from experience that the users of these collections can sometimes be more demanding when it comes to their need for silence.

Here is an example of the individual workspaces. There are a wide variety of different spaces available.

And here are some examples of the different types of collaborative space.

The variety of different spaces does not mean that there is no flexibility; indeed, flexibility is another essential value of our project.

This is reflected by the fact that all the spaces can be reconfigured. The raised floor is vital for this flexibility, but it is not the only contributing feature. None of the furniture is really fixed and everything can be moved. The plan itself is not set in stone and it can be adapted to meet changing needs. This has been important during the COVID crisis. It was easy to close or reduce the spaces, reconfigure them, set up a booking system, etc.

Our experience here in Luxembourg shows the vital importance of maintaining a dialogue between architecture and functionality and how the values of openness, diversity and flexibility enabled us to reinvent the library, creating an innovative, inspiring venue in the middle of a campus.

Thank you for listening!

Marie-Pierre Pausch

marie-pierre.pausch@uni.lu