

Environments in Public Libraries for Young Children around the World

Santiago Public Library: A Challenge for Children and Youth
Gonzalo Oyarzun

A Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman
James R. Keller, AIA

Children's Spaces from around the World
Kathleen R.T. Imhoff

Santiago Public Library: A Challenge for Children and Youth Adults
Gonzalo Oyarzun

Santiago Public Library: A Challenge for Children and Youth
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Slide 1



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 1 Text

A library as a public square, where children and youngster's can go and have fun.

A library as a public space, where children and youngster's can feel free to choose, explore and know.

A library as an intimate place where children and youngster's can meet and interact with others,
assuming and respecting their differences and times.

Slide 2



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 2 Text

A library as a place where parents and children can talk and know each other.

A library as an environment in which teachers and students can experience, together, reading far from the school's curricular pressure.

A library as a multimedia and interactive zone in which children have free access to books, technologies, activities, highly trained professionals, comfortable furnishings, state-of-the-art infrastructure - to their own scale, in adequate opening times – and always having the chance to listen a good story.

A child's and youngster's library as an experience.

Slide 3



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 3 Text

Santiago Public Library

Located in the Chilean Capital, Santiago Public Library was opened in November 11th, 2005. This 22.000 m² (236,806 sq.ft.) library appears with the aim of bringing a modern and efficient public library service to the whole community and inserted into the national public library network. From its inception, this library is the model and experimental service for the development of other libraries in our country. Children and youngsters are essentially the main users, representing more than 65% of visits.

Slide 4



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 4 Text

Design.

The protagonist role children and youth have today in a country's undertaking and political decision making must be considered at the moment of designing and building of such features.

Most of the library users belong to the poorest areas of the city. In their small and generally over populated houses, it is unlikely to have adequate spaces for comfortable study or leisure activities. Then, the library must be a comfortable and cozy space, an expansion of home, a place they can feel of their own.

Slide 5



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 5 Text

Neither should the library have signage of any prohibition at all: talking, even speaking aloud is permitted, eating a sandwich or drinking a soda is accepted as well. Why not? We bet more to education than to banning. It is better for that kid to be in the library, it is a more comfortable place. It is our task to teach him not to damage the books and share them with others at the same time.

Slide 6



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: VITETTA Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 6 Text

We also had to ask our community what kind of infant and juvenile library they expected or longed for. That is why a year before the inauguration, meetings with teachers, parents, specialists and, obviously with children and youths were held in order to know about their expectations and understanding of a facility like this one.

Finally, the books needed to be thematically organized instead of books arranged according to numeric and alphabetical codes. That is the reason why thematic areas were created so any child or youngster could understand.

Also, the library's staff is different. The configuration of interdisciplinary teams was a keystone of the project success. Librarians, teachers, performers, story-tellers, sketch artists, and a vast team constituted by hired and voluntary personnel are essential.

Slide 7



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 7 Text

Children's Library

Deemed to children aged 0 to 8, this is a playful area which main purpose is to promote imagination including well defined areas for babies, infants, and children. It aims to be a space for entertainment, where children get to books and develop their imagination through games, but as if they were in a park.

Everything has been carefully thought: the areas for babies are implemented with appropriate spaces for pushchairs, and some collections of parental interest at the same time.

In this room there is a space dedicated to early readers, form 0 to 3 years old, where together with their parents they can share reading, in different formats. This area has changing nappies tables and toilets which dimensions and designs are adequate for the younger ones.

As a basic concept of the whole room, every component element is movable in order to create new environments.

Slide 8



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: VITETTA Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 8 Text

Library youth

Connected to the Infant area through an interior stair, this room is the logical continuation of the previous one. Its collections are focused to children aged 8 to 16, and aims to intensify their imagination and enjoyment for reading.

It can be defined as a space in which the youths could explore a world of new possibilities by means of reading, comic workshops, theatre, films, Internet, role-playing games, among others. Its setting has been specially designed to offer the young users a place which invites and welcomes them.

Slide 9



Biblioteca di Santiago, Chile

Consultants: **VITETTA** Architects: Cox y Ugarte

Slide 9 Text

Impact and projection.

With the bringing on of “Santiago Public library”, public libraries have started to be considered as relevant places of national matters. Public libraries are part of the political and economical agenda of the country. The principal meetings related to childhood, youth, and secondary student’s topics take place in our facilities. Thus, “Santiago Public library” has become a benchmark of public policies.



A Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman
James R. Keller, AIA

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Slide 1

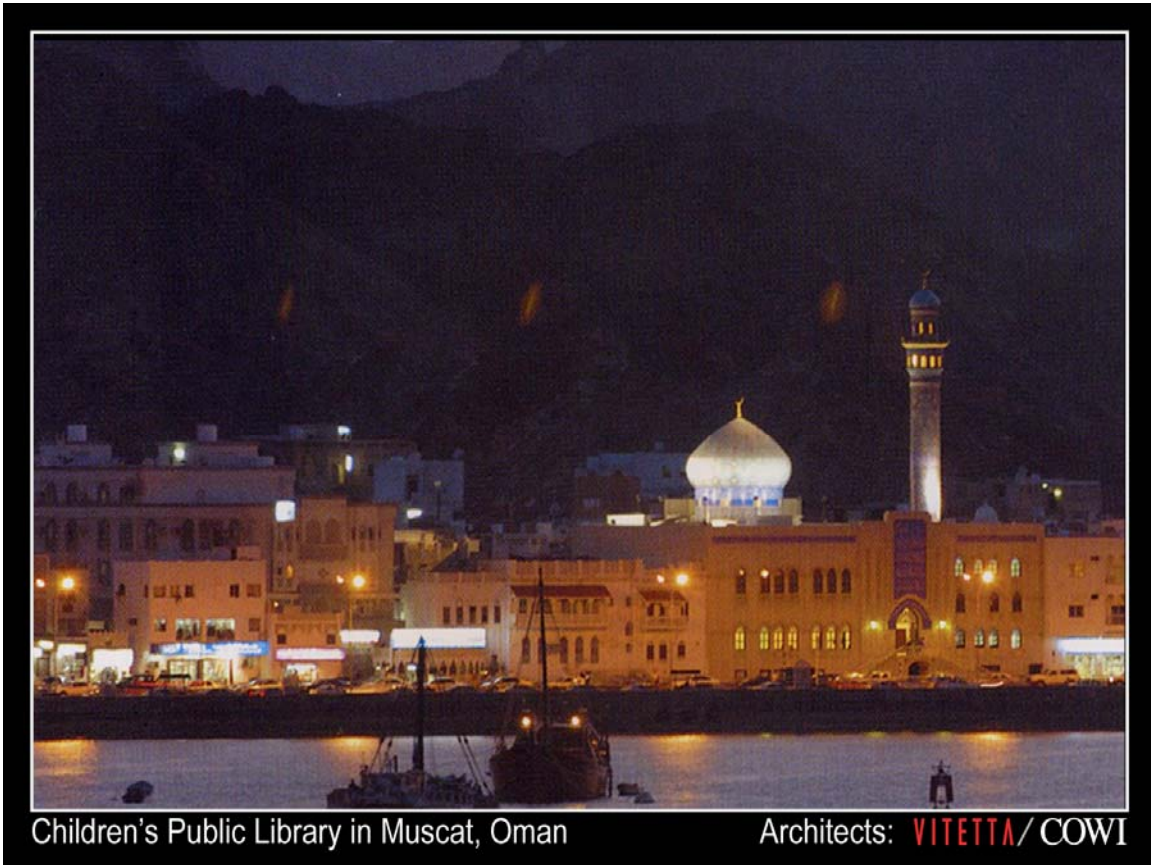
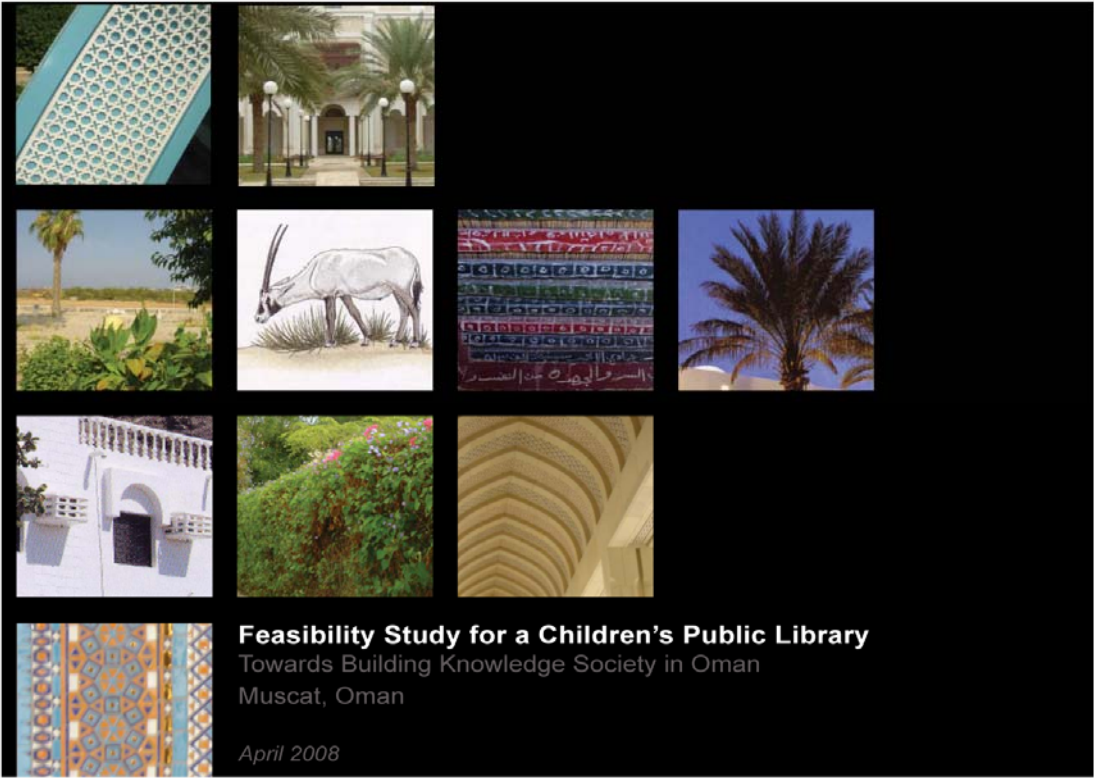


Image – Croese, Jaap. 2006 “Oman - A Pictorial Tour”, Motivate Publishing: 55.

Slide 1 Text

In the summer of 2007 approximately forty interested citizens developed the concept of the first Public Library for Children and Families in Oman. The founders formed a Board of Directors to realize their vision - with Her Highness Seyyida, Dr. Mona Al Said as the Honorary Chair and Dr. Samira Moosa as Board Chair.

Slide 2



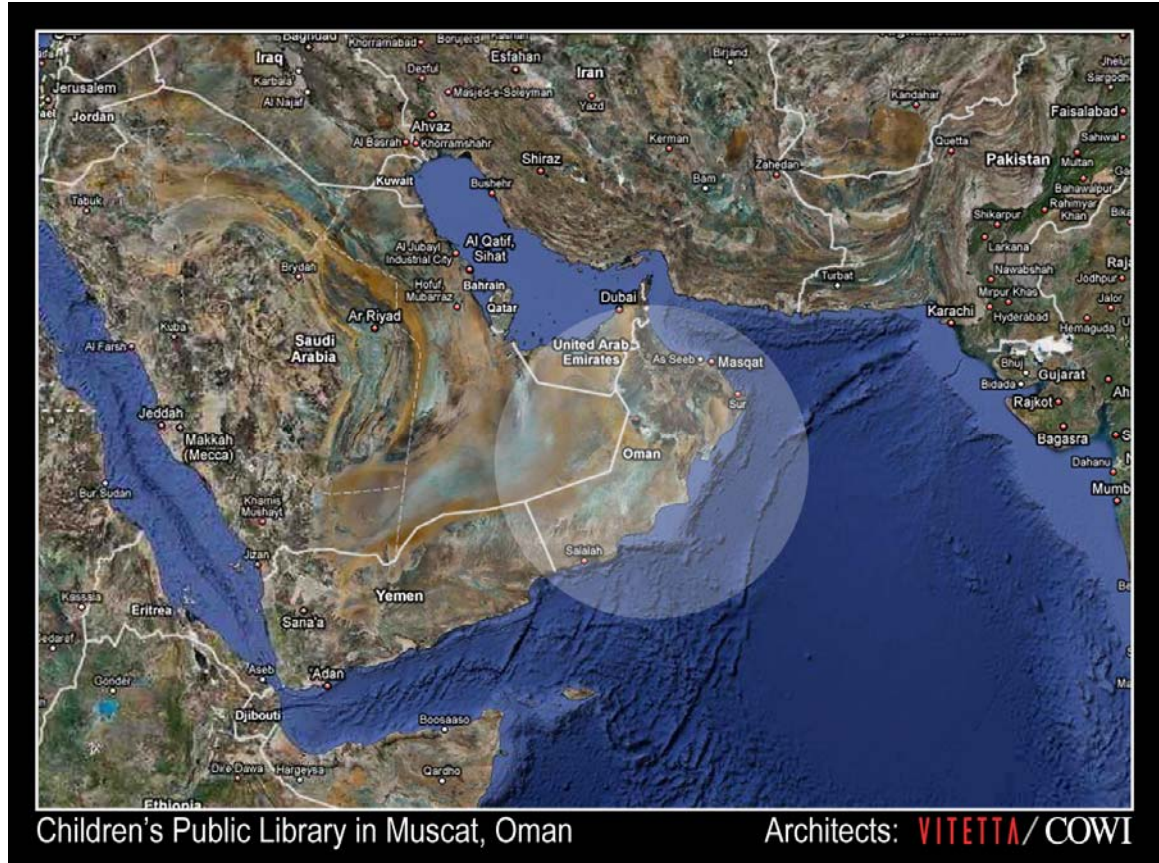
Feasibility Study for a Children's Public Library
Towards Building Knowledge Society in Oman
Muscat, Oman
April 2008

Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman Architects: **VITETTA/COWI**

Slide 2 Text

The Board created a Vision Statement in the autumn of 2007 and selected our firm - VITETTA of Philadelphia - to prepare a feasibility study and the subsequent architectural design.

Slide 3



Google Maps – www.google.com – 04_01_09

Slide 3 Text

The Sultanate of Oman is located on the Gulf of Oman. Its heritage features a great sea-faring tradition, as one might expect in a country with 3,165 km of coastline.

Slide 4

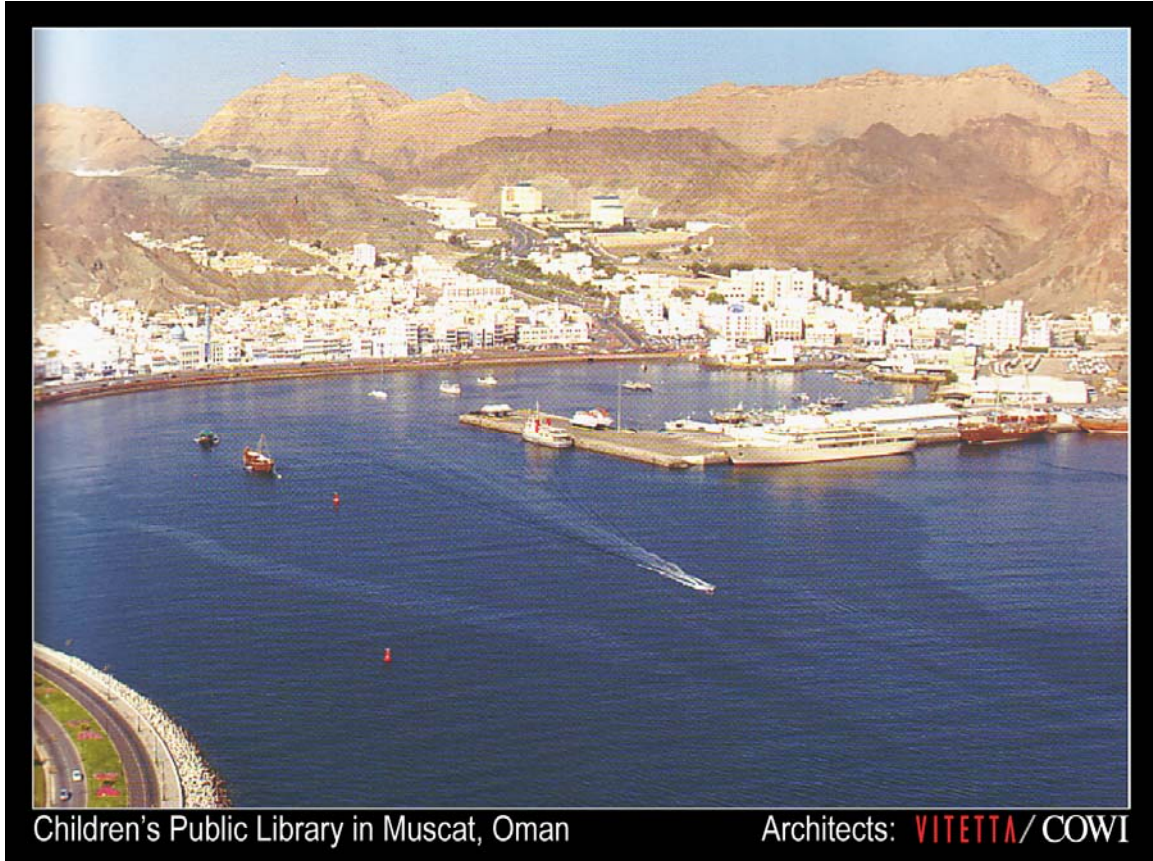


Image – Croese, Jaap. 2006 “Oman - A Pictorial Tour”, Motivate Publishing: 29.

Slide 4 Text

Oman has a population of 2.5 million - including almost 700,000 expatriates. Arabic is the official language and English is the language in common.

Slide 5



Left Image: www.travelblog.org/Photos/3290838.html - 04_13_09

Right Image: Hightet, Juliet. 2006 "Frankincense Oman's Gift to the World", Prestel: 16.

Slide 5 Text

For its size, Oman boasts significant UNESCO-classified World Heritage Sites including **Bat**—with tombs dating back to 3,000 BC, the **Fort of Bahla**, and the fascinating **Frankincense Route**.

Slide 6



Image -

Al Zubair, Mohammad. 2005. "Oman My Beautiful Country", A Bait Al Zubair Publication: 44.

Slide 6 Text

In January, 2008 the Board received the gift of the building site from His Highness Seyyid Haitham, Minister of Heritage and Culture, as well as financial support from the private sector - in particular funding for design from the Oman Oil Company, Mr. Ahmed Al Wahabi, C.E.O.

Slide 7



Slide 7 Text

The site for the Children's Public Library is located west of the Muttrah – the city market in Muscat - Oman's capital city. The site is relatively flat and narrow - stretching east to west. To the north is an ocean inlet and surrounding marsh that is rich with biodiversity.

Slide 8



Upper Left Image: Croese, Jaap. 2006 "Oman - A Pictorial Tour", Motivate Publishing: 56.

Upper Right and Lower Images: Dr. Samira Moosa

Slide 8 Text

As part of the planning, a focus group was conducted with twenty two boys and girls from Muscat. The children represented a cross section of socio-economic backgrounds and included several children from the local orphanage.

Slide 9



Images - Dr. Samira Moosa

Slide 9 Text

A recent survey indicates there are over 190,000 children between 6 months and 19 years of age in Muscat alone. Therefore, part of the Founders vision is that; “The Library is to provide free access to library resources and services - to the children of Oman from birth to 18 years of age.”

Slide 10



Image – Dutch Huff, VITETTA – Model by TAG Architectural Models

Slide 10 Text

The Library will be a destination for children and families of Oman, and will be a model for sustainable design and progressive library service concepts for the region. The architecture will embody the spirit, history and beauty of Omani architecture and yet will incorporate progressive elements that will define its character.

Slide 11



Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: **VITETTA**/COWI

Image – Dutch Huff, VITETTA – Model by TAG Architectural Models

Slide 11 Text

The Library will evoke its mission of literacy, learning and community through its materials, scale, spatial rhythm and the use of color.

Slide 12



Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: **VITETTA**/COWI

Slide 12 Text

Service to children will be celebrated through the use of imaginative interior spaces and light. Colored glass, tactile materials, textures of surfaces and other timeless architectural elements will be used in synthesis to create mystery, discovery, comfort and delight.

Slide 13

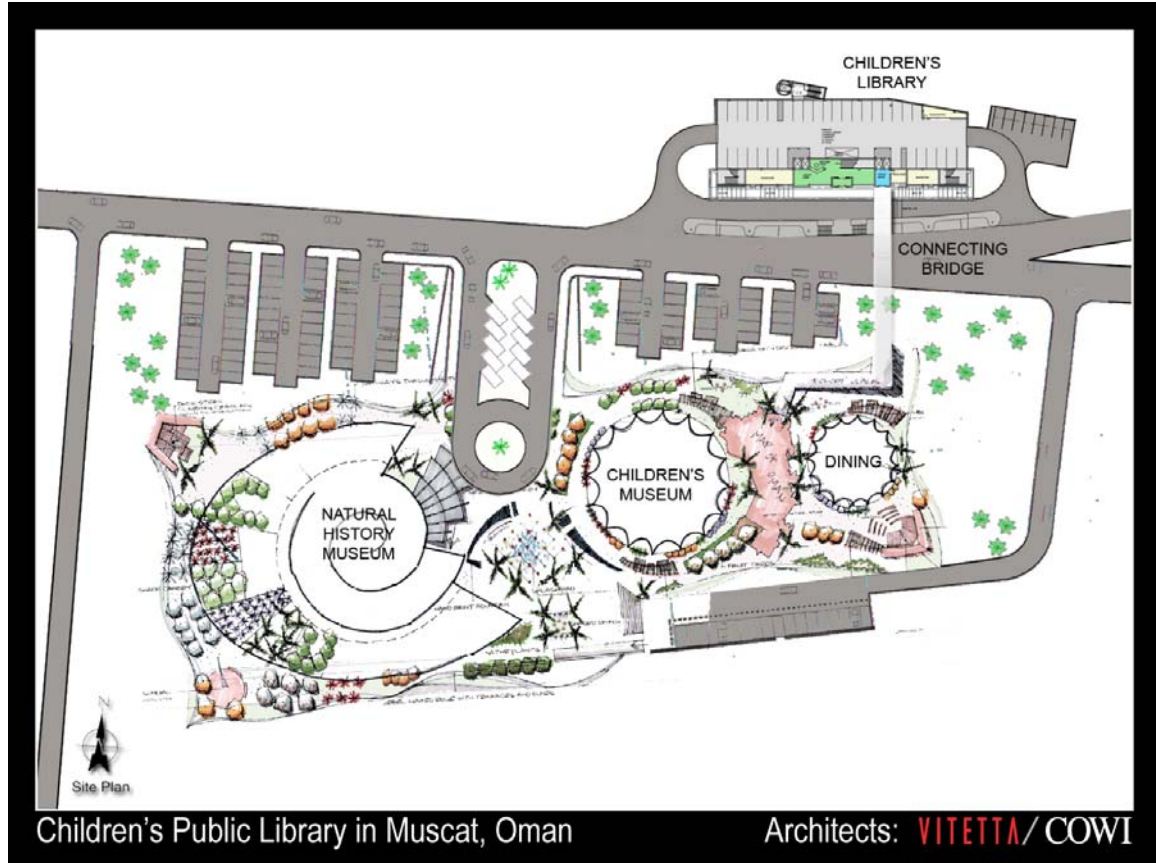


Image – VITETTA/Matt Arnn, Landscape Architect, US Forestry NE Division

Slide 13 Text

The Library will be a complement to the neighboring Children's Museum, Museum of Natural History and future Children's Theatre. The Library will connect with these buildings by means of learning gardens and pathways.

Slide 14



Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: **VITETTA**/COWI

Slide 14 Text

The Library will connect with its beautiful natural surroundings by orienting views and maximizing natural connections to the environment.

Slide 15



Slide 15 Text

The arrival at the Library will be an important part of the sequence of travel to, through, and from the building. The sequence of movement throughout the building will be clear and inviting.

Slide 16



Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: **VITETTA**/COWI

Slide 16 Text

The Library will be entered from the raised street level center entrance through the Lobby. The Atrium Lobby will feature colored glass discs that will cast prisms of color throughout the space by day and will glow from outside by night.

Slide 17



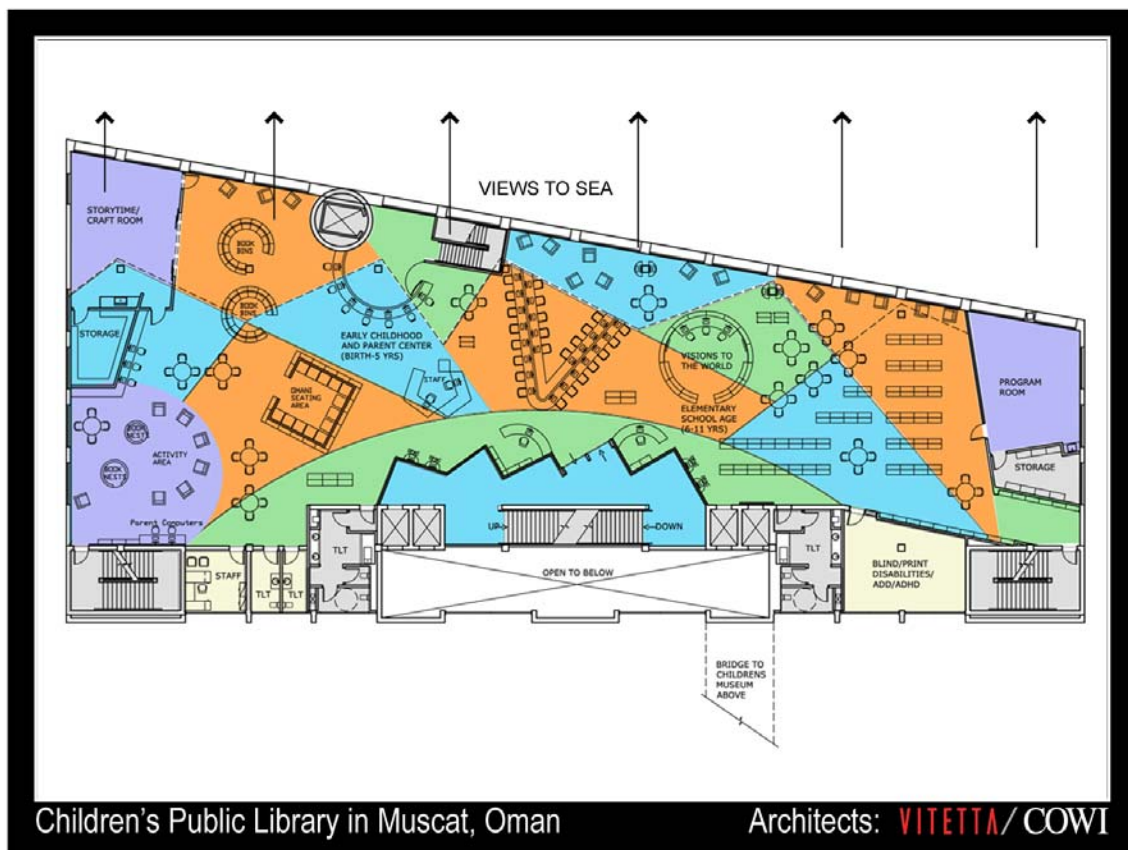
Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: **VITETTA**/COWI

Slide 17 Text

The design will maximize the use of architectural form, scale and materials in unusual ways to create interest and even drama. The second level of the library sets back from the north wall to provide dramatic views up and through the space from the first level. A zig zag formed cantilever informs and invites the first level customers - young and elementary school age children - that something exciting awaits above - the second level - where the teen and young adult space is found.

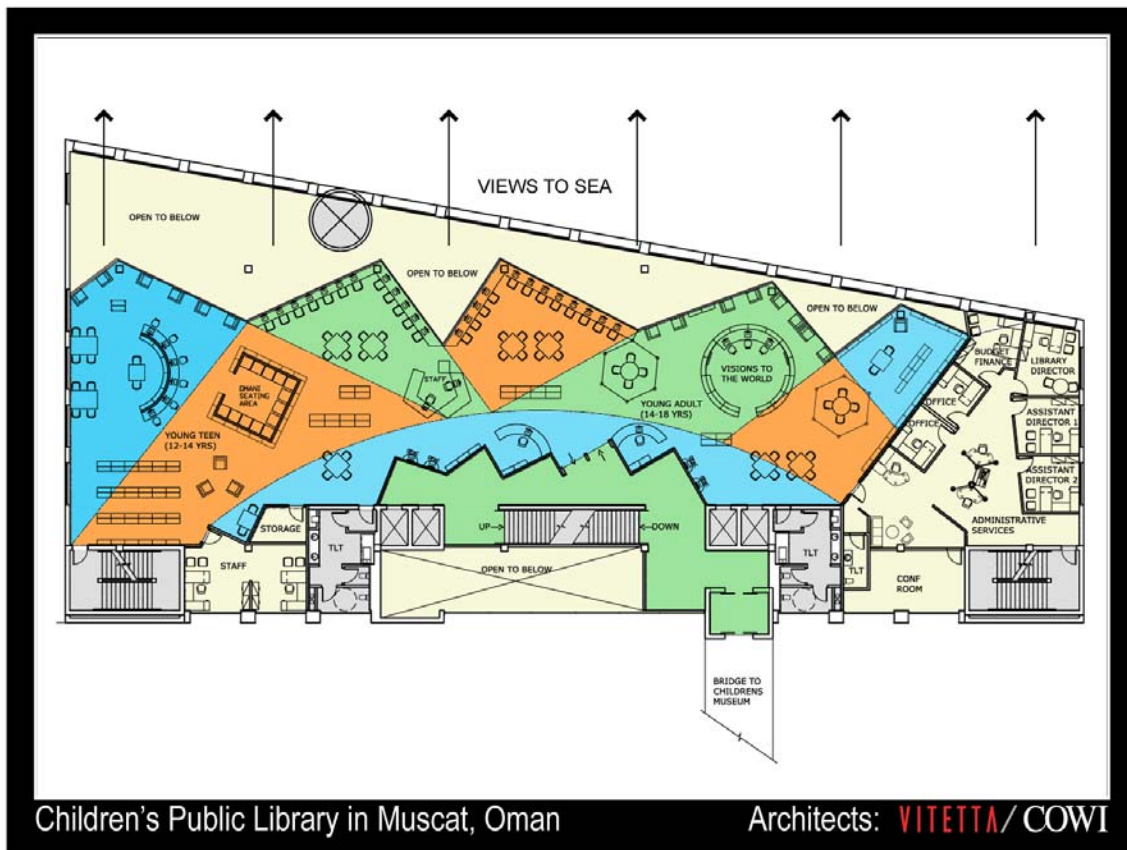
Slide 18



Slide 18 Text

The first level of the library will contain the early childhood and parenting area to the west (or left of the plan) and the elementary age area to the east (or right). Features of this floor are the Omani seating area – an area with cushions on the floor to create a traditional conversation area - and an area called “Visions to the World”. The “Visions to the World” area will have interactive display, computers and collections of world geography/culture and arts. This level is not only open to view the floor above at the north side, but also to expansive views of the sea.

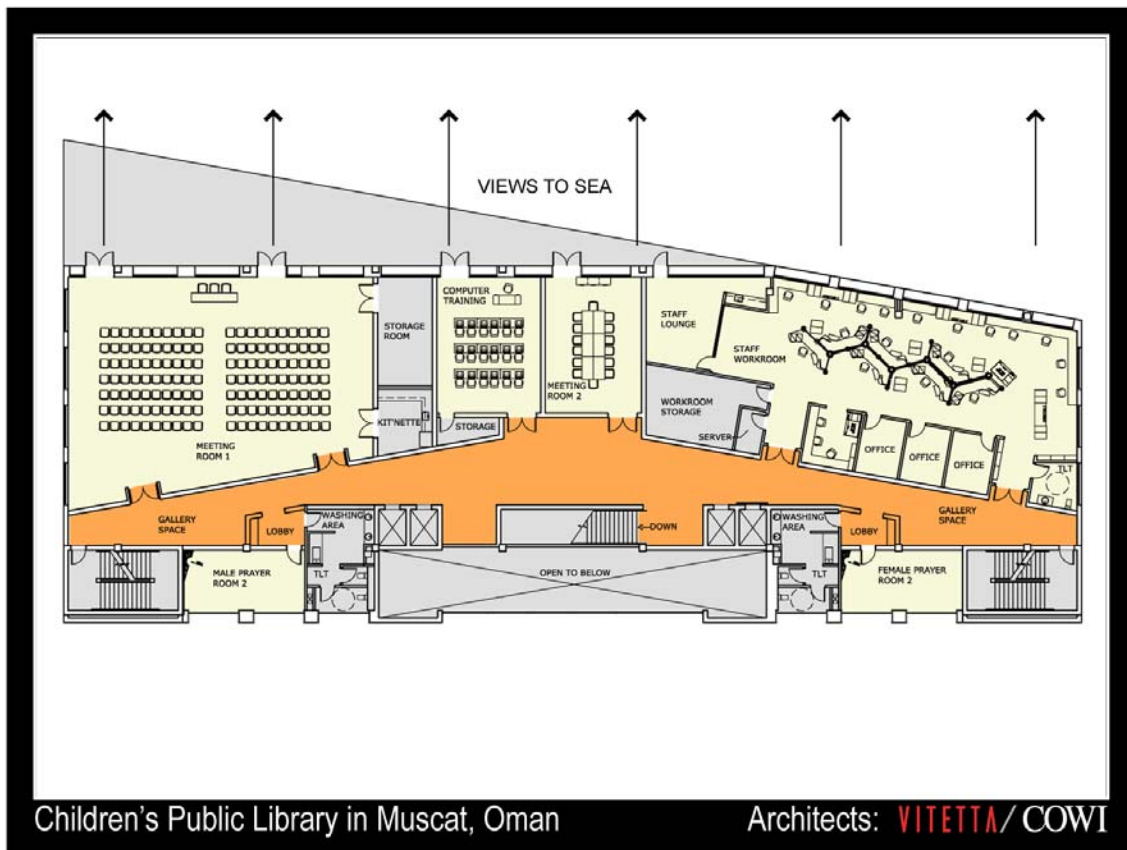
Slide 19



Slide 19 Text

The second level will contain the young teen area to the west (or left of the plan) and the young adult area to the east (or right). This level will also contain the administrative offices and a special collection area for persons with visual disabilities. This level overlooks level one through the cut out at the zig zag glass wall - sharing vistas to the park and sea.

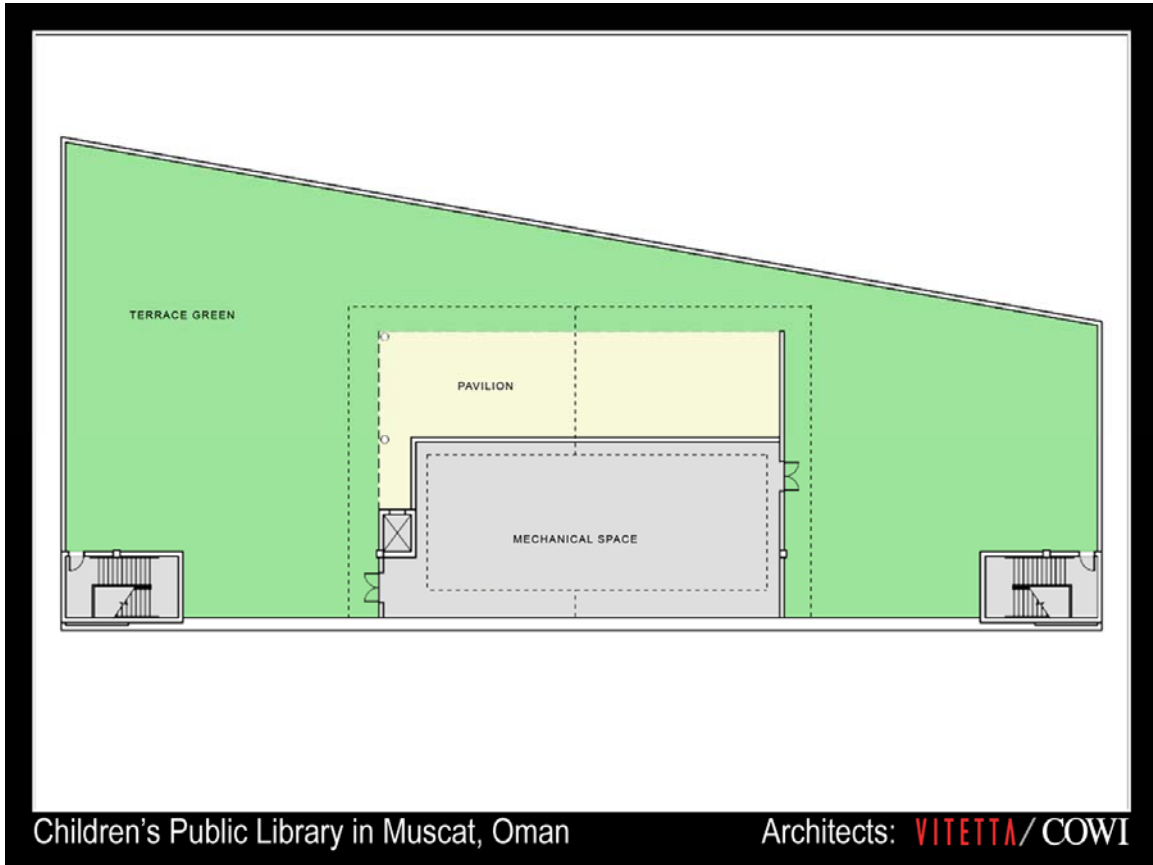
Slide 20



Slide 20 Text

The third level will contain a large meeting room, small meeting/conference room, a computer training lab, staff workroom and hall gallery. The fourth floor (not shown) is an open floor for tenant rental and income for the Library.

Slide 21



Slide 21 Text

Sustainable design elements include a green roof terrace for special programs.

Slide 22



Children's Public Library in Muscat, Oman

Architects: VITETTA/COWI

Image – Dutch Huff, VITETTA – Model by TAG Architectural Models

Slide 22 Text

The optimal direction for ambient light in Muscat is north, where large un-shaded windows will provide abundant light and breath-taking views of the coastline. The coloration of the window openings will provide a playful interaction of shape, form, void and color both by day and by night.

Slide 23



Image – Dutch Huff, VITETTA – Model by TAG Architectural Models

Slide 23 Text

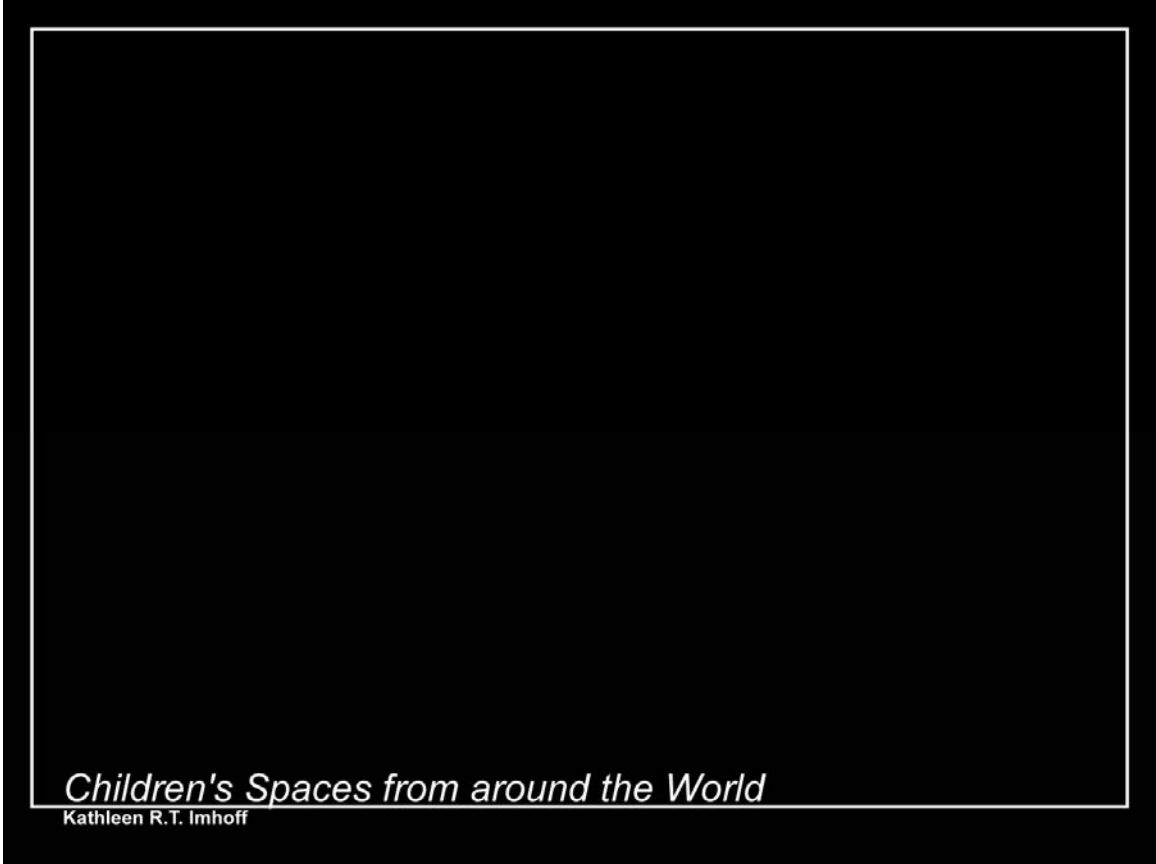
The Library will be a building that children and families will want to visit, both for its programs, collections and services, and also for its sense of place. The Library will inspire children of all ages to learn, grow, and be a part of the community - both in Oman and globally.

Slide 24



Slide 24 Text

The Library will be a place of calm and a place of activity, a place that inspires creativity and stirs the imagination.



Children's Spaces from around the World
Kathleen R.T. Imhoff

Intro Slide



Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Introduction

Integrating the three universal “A’s” of building design into the planning process is critical when designing spaces for young children anywhere in the world. The three “A’s” are Adaptability, Accessibility, and Aesthetics. In this paper I will focus on demonstrating these principles in innovative children’s spaces in the following public libraries in the world featuring the Amsterdam Public Library, the Netherlands, Lexington Public Library, Lexington, Kentucky, U.S.A., Asker Public Library in Oslo, Norway and the Indianapolis Public Library in Indianapolis, Indiana, U.S.A.

As the world for children continues to rapidly change pace, it is necessary to design adaptable, child centered spaces to meet the informational and recreational needs of children. In the past, children’s areas were well defined rooms separated from the rest of the library area. In addition, there often were separate, purpose built rooms for story telling or for craft activities. With the ever increasing building costs and the pace of world change, it is more difficult to foresee and plan what an ideal child center space will be five years from now. Adaptability of children’s space is increasingly important when planning a new or remodeled building.

Slide 1



Village Branch, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 1 Text

Shelves on wheels allow for maximum flexibility in children's space. This is the main area in the Village Branch Library, in Lexington.

Slide 2



Village Branch, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 2 Text

With the shelves being on wheels, staff can easily move the shelves together or into another room to allow for space for a children's program.

Slide 3



Slide 3 Text

Sliding glass doors allow for the same space to be used for two functions at different times of the day. At the Northside library the children's story space is glassed in and the doors are always open unless a story hour is being held.

Slide 4



Village Branch, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 4 Text

Multi-functional meeting spaces enhance the usability of children's areas.

Slide 5



Amsterdam, Netherlands

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 5 Text

Shelving that allows for multiple uses also works very well for children.

Slide 6



Slide 6 Text

Accessibility is of particular importance in areas to be used by children. It is necessary to define the age of the children the space should serve but, since children grow at their own pace, it should be easily accessible for all. Space for children in strollers, parking space for the strollers, designated, but defined, spaces for children who crawl as well as furniture of all sizes should be included in a children's area. Shelving that is height appropriate.

Slide 7



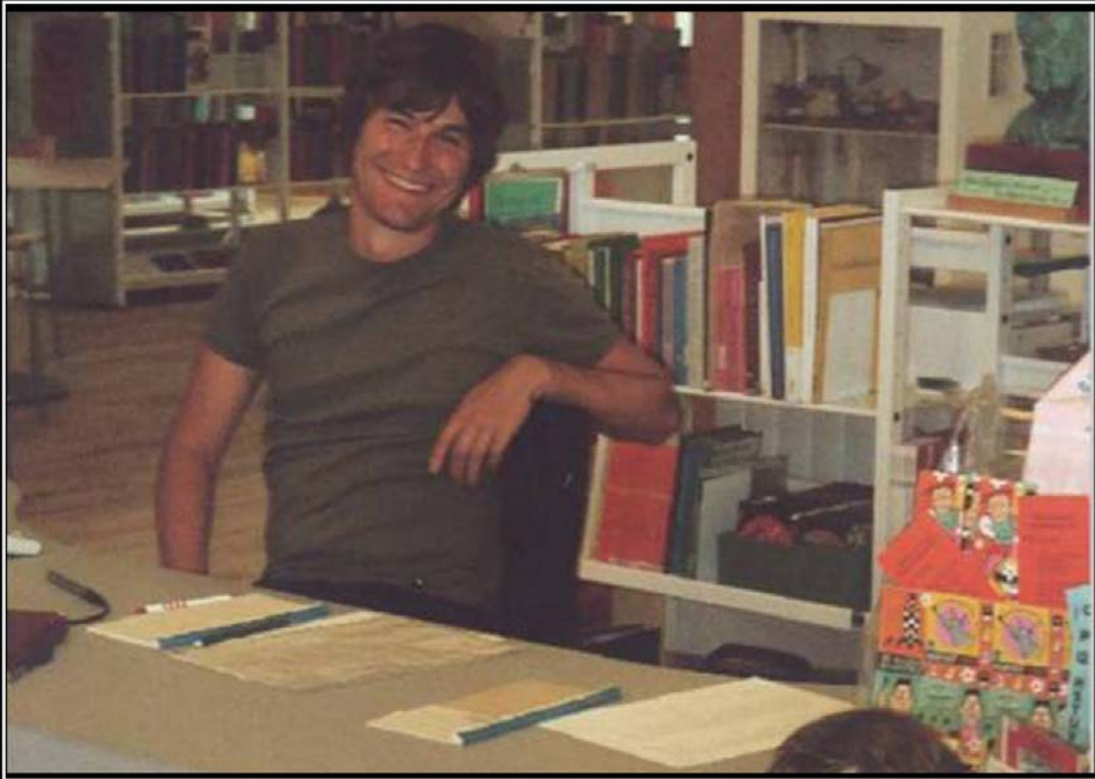
Village Branch, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 7 Text

as well as ways to house games, puzzles, board books, easy readers displayed face out and music needs to be considered in planning.

Slide 8



Vaxso, Sweden

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 8 Text

Service desks and tables need to be wheelchair accessible and approachable for younger children.

Slide 9



Braille Book

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 9 Text

Devices such as low vision machines, computers with adaptive devices and children's Braille books might require special spaces.

Slide 10



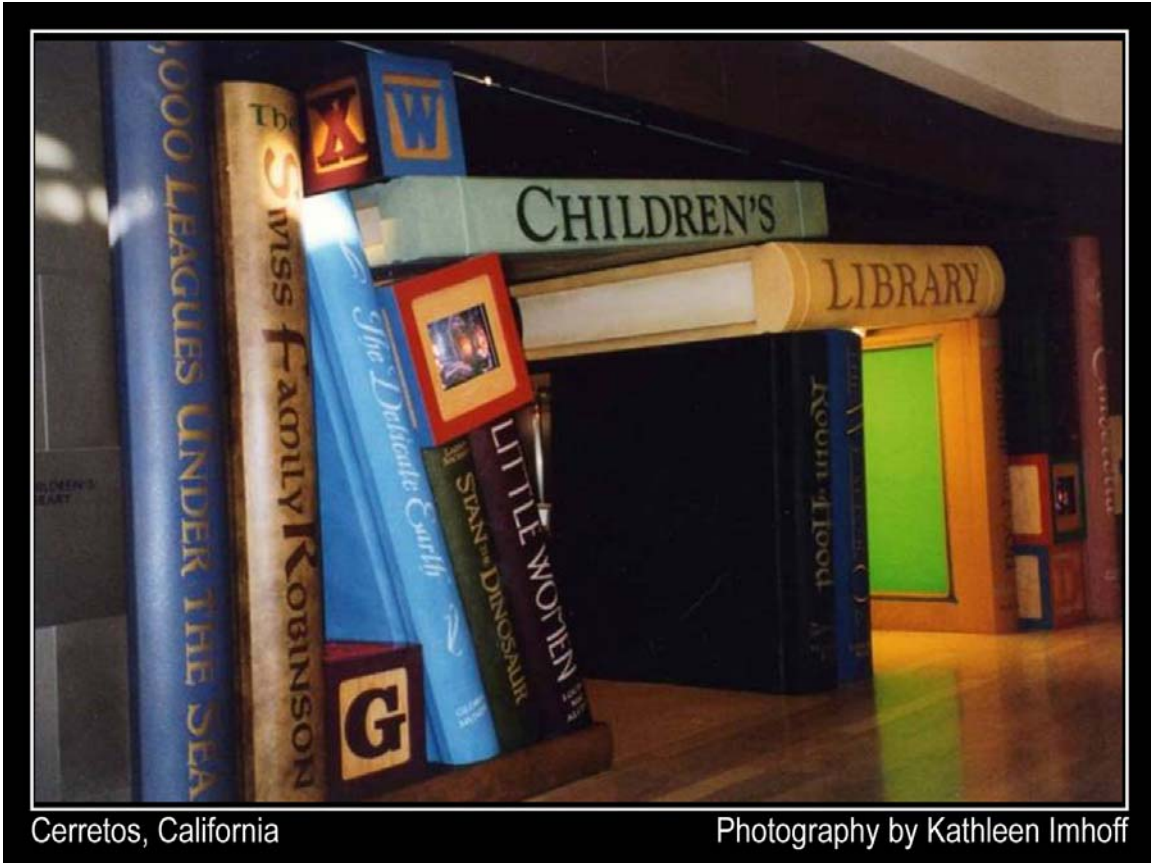
Richland, British Columbia

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 10 Text

Aesthetics are paramount when planning spaces for children.

Slide 11



Cerretos, California

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 11 Text

Decorative and innovative treatment to the entrances of a children's area automatically attracts children and invites them to explore the space.

Slides 12, 13, 14



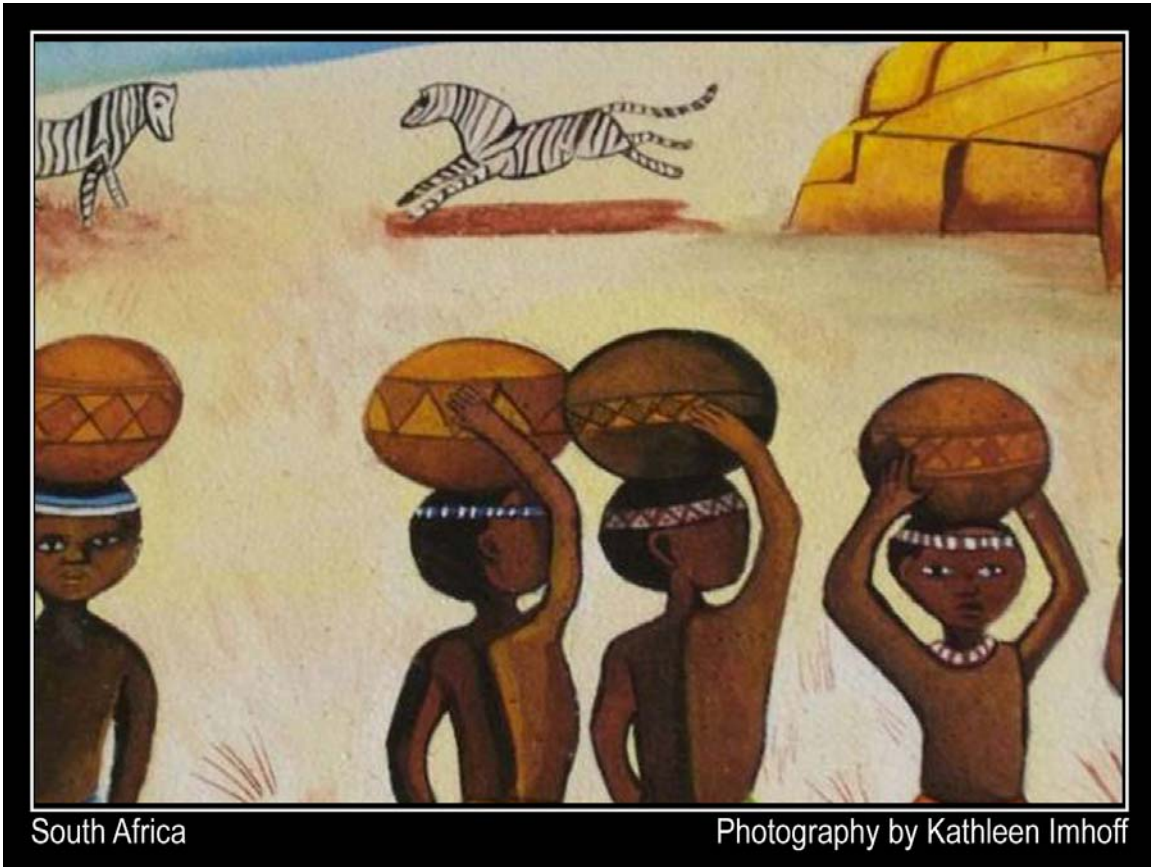
Columbia, South Carolina

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Oslo, Norway

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



South Africa

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slides 12, 13, 14 Text

Wall murals painted by local artists, famous illustrators of children's books or by children themselves serve as magnets to draw children to a space.

Slides 15, 16, 17, 18



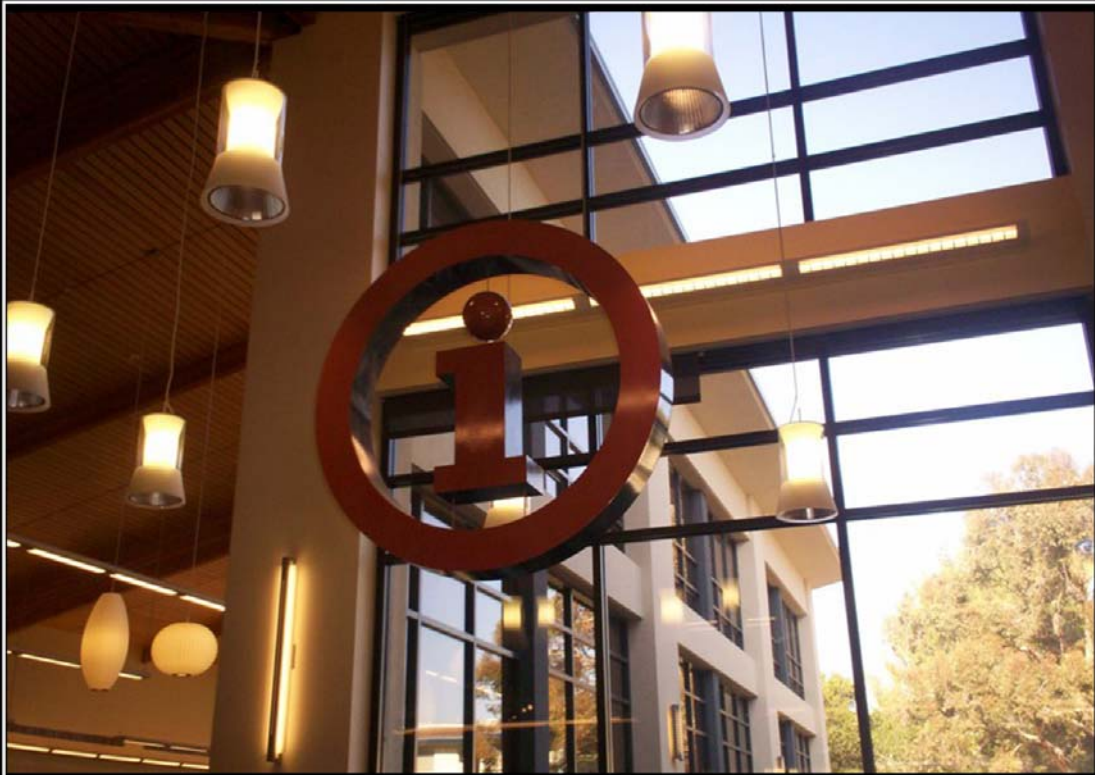
Cerretos, CA

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Seattle, WA

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Bellview, CA

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Northside, Lexington, KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slides 15, 16, 17, 18 Text

Aesthetically pleasing signage which provides way finding for children, their parents or caregivers can serve as a design element.

Slides 19, 20, 21



South Africa

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Minneapolis Public Library, MN

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Slides 19, 20, 21 Text

The use of strong colors can be a low cost way of defining children's spaces.

Slide 22



Northside Library, Lexington, KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 22 Text

Themed graphics appropriate to the local area is another way to attract children.

Slide 23



Cerretos, CA

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 23 Text

Children are attracted to interactive spaces with attractive features. A large scale elephant,

Slide 24



El Dorado Hills, CA

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 24 Text

a tree with a smiling cat,

Slide 25



Northside Library, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 25 Text
a play space,

Slide 26



Minneapolis Public Library, MN

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 26 Text

a tower with a climbing space,

Slide 27



Village Branch, Lexington KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 27 Text
a night sky,

Slide 28



Northside Library, Lexington, KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 28 Text

and horses, are a few feature items that have been used successfully in public library children's spaces.

Slide 29



Asker, Norway

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 29 Text

Think of the unique feature of your town or city and investigate if that feature could be integrated in the children's library area in an appealing way. If you have a local children's illustrator, see if you can get permission to enlarge their pictures on a children's wall as a feature.

Slides 30, 31



Richland County Public Library, Columbia, SC

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff



Northside Library, Lexington, KY

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slides 30, 31 Text

Many libraries have used puppet theatres as special interest items.

Slide 32



Minneapolis Public Library, MN

Photography by Kathleen Imhoff

Slide 32 Text

Visit other children's spaces: children's museums, innovative schools, children's theatres, children's bookstores and children's parks. Seek out pictures of children's libraries featured in architectural issues of library magazines, pick a few metropolitan cities from other parts of the world and take a virtual tour on the web and look at their children's areas. Look for places where children are and try to determine what attracted them to that space. Talk with children about their likes and dislikes.

Remember the three architectural "A's": adaptability, accessibility and aesthetics, learn from other successful children's libraries and spaces and have fun designing the best public library for the young children in your world.