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Big-Picture-Overview Exhibit Displays Books, Visuals, Virtual

[abstract - 100 words]

USC's 2012 library system is a constellation of 'learning cafeterias'—with 'knowledge curator' librarians collaborating on dynamic 'knowledge exhibits' with faculty as 'learners' being taught by students learning.

Each campus library consists of a media-storage and visual-information-display structure surrounded by a 'knowledge arcade,' observation galleries, study nooks and collaboration labs.

The central library is organized chronologically, a visual timeline display leading to a 'present' gallery, 'current-situation-room' theater and ongoing 'town hall' idea-and-learning forum also serving adjoining galleries on 'future challenges' and 'future visions.'

Satellite libraries display big-picture overviews of major knowledge themes—media in Communications, processes in Management, creativity in Art.

a **vision of the future** in 1,000 words
from a 2002 **academic library** association competition
seeking visions for the academic library
10 years in the future
—a referendum on the **future of the book**
as well as on **technology, architecture** and **learning**

visual communications are at the heart of it

[paper - 1000 words]

USC 2012 — Years ago this school evolved into a 'learning cafeteria' with the main library at its center. Faculty are 'learners' now, taught by students learning. Librarians are 'curators of knowledge.'

Over the past decade, physical books came to be seen as objects to display for their beauty, feel and content—still important media in the spectrum of print-virtual-environment.

Meanwhile, new infovisual, big-picture-overview 'books' became popular in a range of forms—posters, loose-leaves, kits, paks, foldouts, 3-d models and web portals. Print books were scanned for greater versatility and accessibility. Our libraries transformed, primarily, into 'windows on knowledge' with, secondarily, supporting 'museums of the pre-digital.'

The libraries evolved also as faculty-student-librarian knowledge packaging and publishing centers for the various media technologies available on campus—from posters and books, to virtual and moving images, to physical and immersive spatial environments, events, performances and gatherings.

The virtual is totally integrated into the libraries and each library is totally accessible virtually—elevating the physical library into a daytime, evening and weekend social magnet, providing unique physical and immersive experiences, educational while also entertaining and game-like interactive.

The university maintains building clusters focused around various themes—communications, health, management, arts—each of which maintains its own thematic library.

Each library building now consists of a series of functional 'skeins' radiating outward from a central, multistory, controlled-access media storage facility with glass walls and windows, rising up through the center of the building. Inside this glass core is an innovative reconceptualization of traditional library 'stacks:' a collection of first-rate books and other 'hard' media integrated into a big-picture-overview display of that building's theme. These displays are frequently updated, offering new data, fresh slants and provocative interpretations of enduring themes.

Around this controlled-access, media-storage core is a 'knowledge arcade,' flush against the glass wall and spiraling around it in a chronological, interactive multimedia display. Open books within the core are visible through glass windows in the arcade wall, along with objects, ephemera, video, navigational signage, graphics and commentary. Along the arcade wall are computer-based opportunities for participatory, collaborative, authoring and learning-by-doing projects.

Around the knowledge arcade is a corridor which in turn is bounded by the next skein: stacked floors whose displays constitute horizontal sub-bands of the visual timeline themes—drilling down into threads and subthreads of the core theme. Interspersed callout displays feature persons, places, things, ideas, organizations and journals.

Thus, from the glass core through the adjacent knowledge arcade to the surrounding galleries, these learning environments provide a progressive hierarchy of knowledge from generalistic, pattern-recognizable, simply understandable principles to detailed data and documents, much of it virtual.