



RATIO



**BUTLER**  
UNIVERSITY

BUTLER UNIVERSITY  
**Irwin Library**  
**Re-Imagination**



## Purpose

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The University Libraries mission is to advance the academic mission of Butler University by providing expertise, resources, and services that stimulate learning. Central to the mission is preparing undergraduate students to navigate a complex information environment.

The libraries also have a responsibility to support teaching and scholarship, to promote the ethical use and creation of information, and to preserve the intellectual heritage that is at the core of the University.

The Library seeks to be a 21st century learning and research center that inspires academic excellence, digital scholarship, student engagement and lifelong curiosity. At the onset of this project, the library sought strategic visioning to determine physical opportunities that would set a clear and impactful future for the aging Irwin Library facility – an esteemed academic structure instrumental to the success of Butler University students, faculty, staff, and community.

Rather than being an exhaustive technical building analysis of the building's thermal envelope, structural conditions or mechanical equipment longevity, the intent of this conceptual study was geared toward creative program utilization and student/staff-centric opportunities that will address current deficiencies within the storied structure. Our primary focus was to create concepts that enhance library operations, wayfinding, service, and accessibility concerns, and the integration of students and faculty spaces that better serve the library's evolving pedagogy.

## Approach

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As with any good master plan, the approach for the facility improvements to Irwin Library should respond to both the needs and challenges of the facility, but also the reachable funding. The approach taken in this study evaluated short-term and longer-term projects that can build organically upon one another. An advantage of this strategy is to create a series of modest projects that all lead to achieving the overall vision. Initial projects of relatively modest cost, but with great potential impact might be recentralization and reconfiguration of the main help desk or improved accessibility to the building restroom, I.T. Help desk, and study spaces.

The concept plan should be a series of flexible steps to achieving a much larger vision. Phases are intended as non-prescriptive in their priority, but based more on dependencies of natural sequences.

For example, moving of the service desk to a more visible location frees the north-east quadrant of the first floor space for new functions such as a student lounge space or the creation of a Makerspace. Logical and natural phasing should guide renovations that will minimize unnecessary duplication or repeated improvements in any one area.

## Process

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The RATIO Team organized on-site visits focused on gaining a deep understanding of library functions from both staff and student perspectives. The first visit comprised of field observations of existing conditions, interviews with key library departmental staff, visioning workshops, and high level discussions with University Leadership staff.

On-site observations included a narrated tour of the facility and grounds with Josh Petrusa, Director of the Library. The history of the current and past space functional issues were explained, along with expectations for some envisioned improvements for the future. Every staff space, instructional space, building support space, and public space were visited. Additionally, the RATIO Team spent time observing student use and documenting shelving and public seating of the library. The focus of this study revolved around Irwin Library, and did not include investigating the Ruth Lilly Science Library or Educational Resource Library, which are additional library collections across campus. Visioning workshops and working group interviews were conducted with a comprehensive range of stakeholders including: Students, Library Staff, and Campus Leadership.

The second on-site visit involved planning workshops exploring various improvements ranging from near-term low cost options to larger more comprehensive investigations including building additions to the south and west of the library. These interactive workshops weighed pros and cons of various schemes and informed the team in their final recommendations included in this report.



The Irwin Library at Butler University opened in September 1963 and was designed by architect Minoru Yamasaki, who also designed the original World Trade Center. Named in honor of Butler benefactor William G. Irwin, the library was built at a cost of \$2.25 million, partially funded by the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation. The building's unique architecture is a blend of Middle Eastern, Classical Greek, Italian Gothic, and Japanese influences, and it features an atrium, arched windows, and cylindrical chandeliers.





OVERVIEW



BUTLER UNIVERSITY IRWIN LIBRARY RE-IMAGINATION



## Keep, Toss, Create

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Individuals were asked what would a successful library renovation look like and then to identify items which would be of interest to keep, what can be tossed, and what needs to be created.

## Keep

- Natural light
- Variety of seating and study spaces
- Unique architecture (skylights, atrium, fountain)
- Flexibility and transparency
- Instruction spaces
- Special collections, rare books and archives
- Staff adjacency to collections
- Library shelving
- Quiet and cozy feel
- Seating by the windows
- Library as a 3rd place (not home or class space)

## Toss

- Acoustic issues
- Outdated facility issues, including aging carpet, lighting, peeling wall finishes, water infiltration
- Repurpose underutilized spaces
- Staff cubicles - need more acoustic privacy
- Aging and inflexible furniture and shelving
- Bland color palette
- Book gates
- Clocks - have to adjust each one individually

## Create

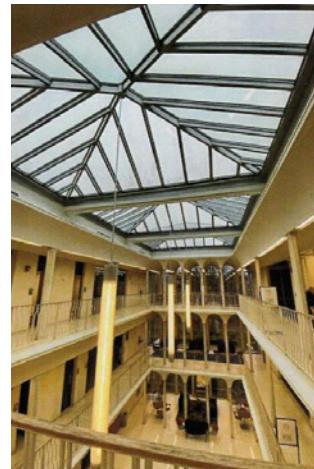
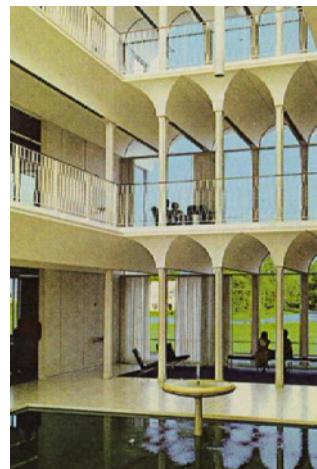
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bigger elevator</li> <li>- Climate-controlled storage for special collections and rare books</li> <li>- Coffee and food area</li> <li>- More study rooms</li> <li>- Lower Level digitization studio</li> <li>- Info commons desk - better location (more visible)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessibility (narrow doors, restrooms, etc.)</li> <li>- Holistic resources supporting students + staff</li> <li>- Community programs - strengthen community</li> <li>- More storage</li> <li>- Outdoor space connection</li> <li>- More private offices</li> <li>- Transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gallery for displaying art and collections creatively</li> <li>- Improved wayfinding and signage</li> <li>- First Level accessible restrooms</li> <li>- More whiteboards</li> <li>- Power at every seat</li> </ul>
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## Phototyping

User-focused library design requires us to get to know building users on a deeper level, more than just demographics and statistics. The data alone doesn't give us a full picture of how the people of Butler live and use the Irwin Library. The "phototyping" exercise is one way we gathered information about the library inhabitants, in smaller meetings with focused user groups.

Attendees were asked to bring in photos representing ideas on how they use the library, how they interact with their community, and the things that inspire them about their culture. These photos were then shared and discussed in the group setting. The stories that emerged highlighted rich areas of opportunity and allowed our design team to more fully understand the values, attitudes and driving forces at Butler.

## What's your favorite thing about the Irwin Library?

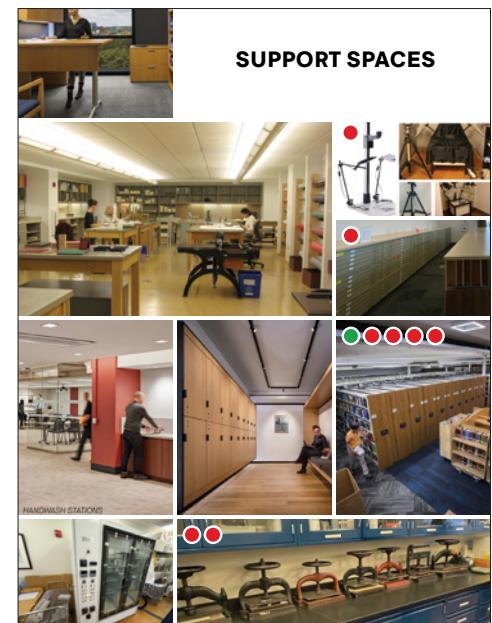
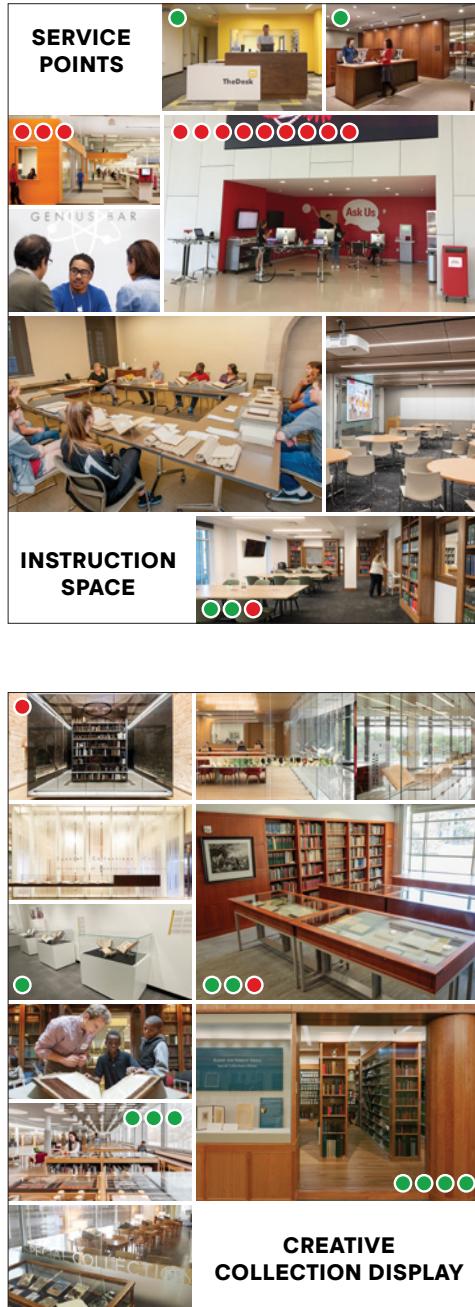
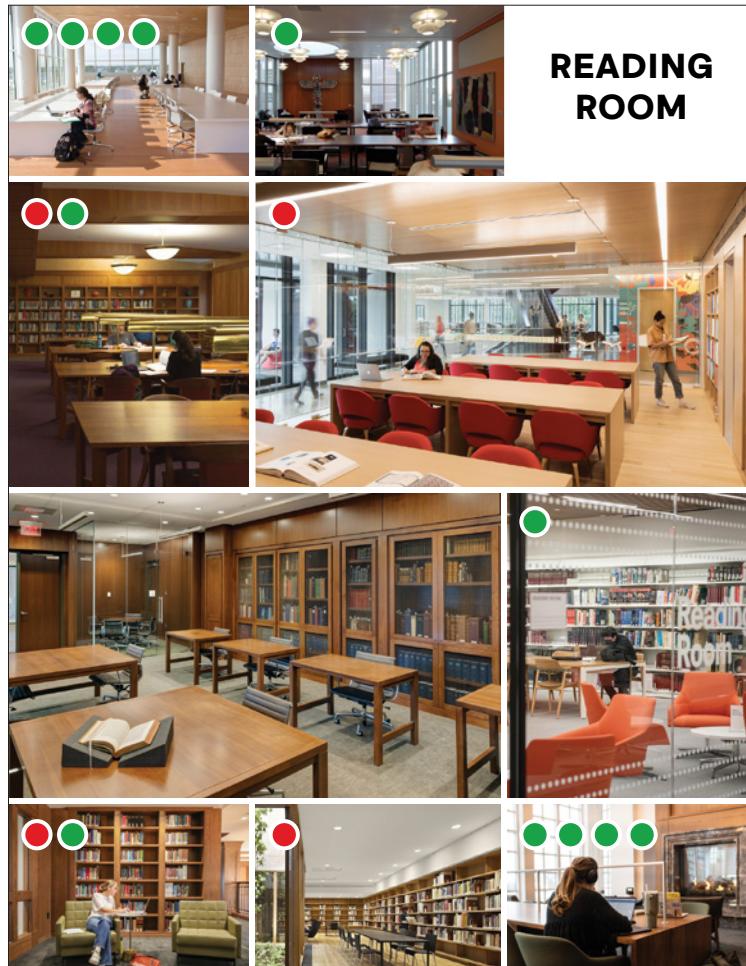


**What's one thing you would change about the Special Collections space?**



**What would a successful renovation look like for the Special Collections space?**

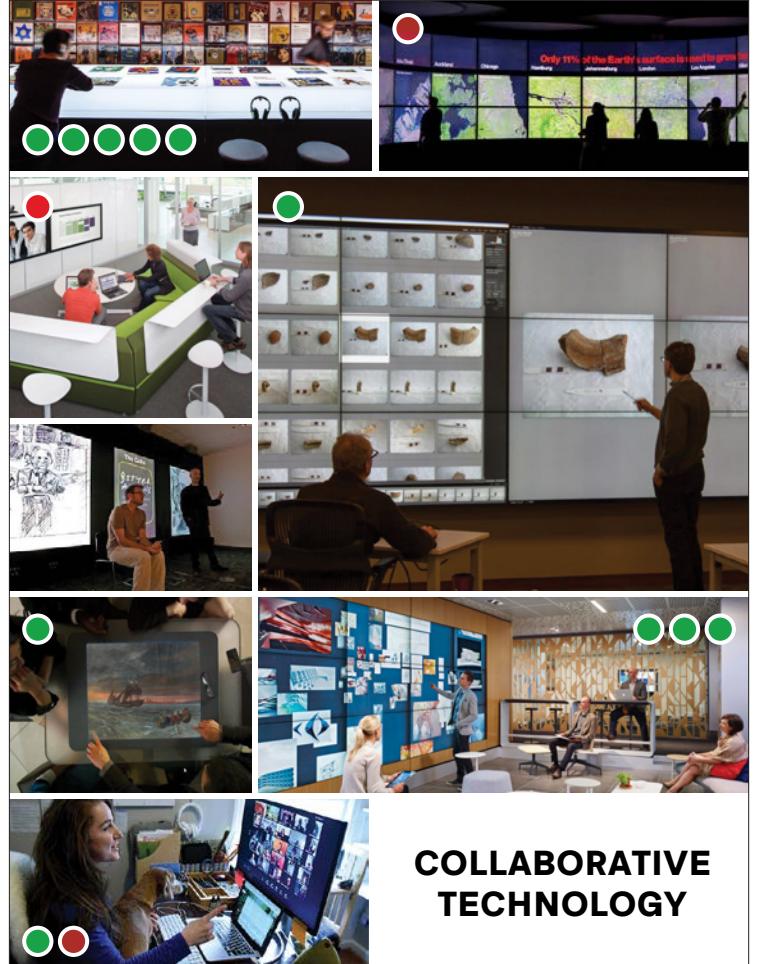






## Red Dot, Green Dot

Gaining consensus on design features can be challenging. Using red and green dot stickers, library student workers evaluated the precedent images. Each received five dots of each color to mark their favorite (green) and least favorite (red) vision elements, voting once per image. After voting, participants shared their reasoning. This dot exercise effectively highlights elements that influence a project's success.



## COLLABORATIVE TECHNOLOGY

## First Level

The proposed design changes for Butler's Irwin Library focus on enhancing functionality, accessibility, and collaborative spaces through targeted renovations. In the northwest quadrant, we propose renovating the area to incorporate a new gallery space while preserving existing student seating and the Dean's Suite. To optimize first-level space for student-centric use, digitization operations can shift downstairs, which opens space for the creation of a Makerspace equipped with a work room, staff office and storage room.

Additional improvements include relocating the Information Commons desk to a more prominent, visible location for visitors entering the main entry or traveling from Dugen Hall. The relocated desk is supported by an Information Commons office in the southeast quadrant. The former Information Commons desk area will be transformed into a vibrant student lounge featuring games, quiet booths, and seamless connections to adjacent staff office areas. To ensure continued quick access for students, desktop computers, scanners, and printers will be maintained in the southeast quadrant. Additionally, an open collaboration area will be established outside the Instruction Room in the southeast quadrant, fostering interactive learning environments.

In an effort to provide publicly accessible restrooms on the first level, space within the central utility core are repurposed to create two new accessible gender-neutral restrooms while maintaining a dedicated vending space.

1	General Storage	15	Associate Dean
2	Mail Room	16	Entry Vestibule
3	Processing	17	Fountain
4	Info. Commons Staff	18	Open Seating
5	Maker Space	19	Info. Commons Librarian Office
6	Maker Space Office	20	Info. Commons Desk
7	Student Lounge	21	Scan / Copy / Print
8	Vending	22	Open Collaboration
9	Restroom	23	Instruction Room
10	Elevator	24	Visual Art Librarian
11	Study	25	Business Librarian
12	Gallery	26	Open Seating + Event Space
13	Dean's Office	27	Great Books Room
14	Dean Assistant		

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<span style="background-color: #80E6E6; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></span>	INDIVIDUAL & GROUP STUDY	<span style="background-color: #E67E22; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></span>	DIGITIZATION STUDIO
<span style="background-color: #FFC107; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></span>	MAKERSPACE	<span style="background-color: #7F8EAE; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px;"></span>	BUILDING SERVICES
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## Second Level

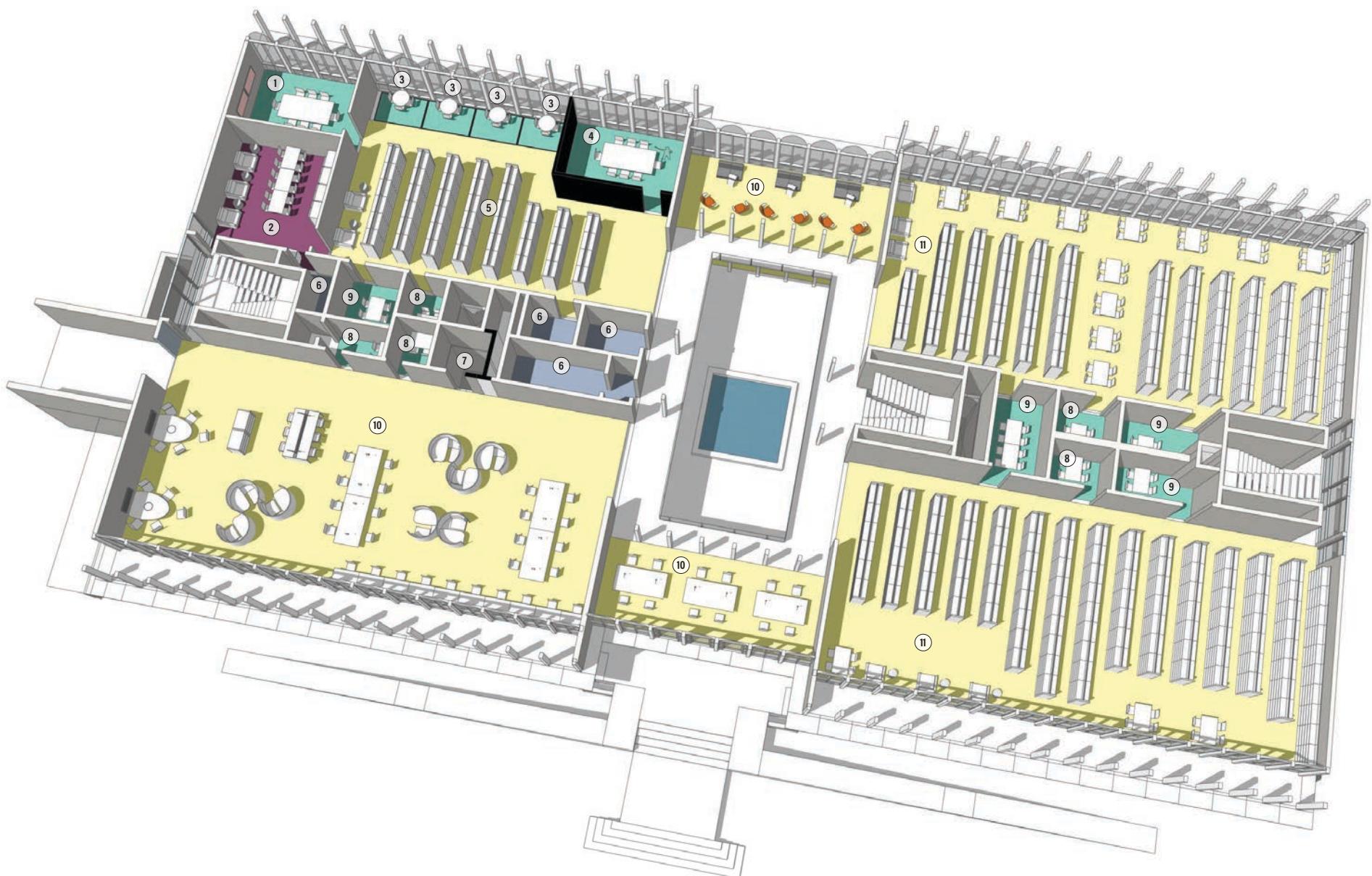
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On the second level, the proposed layout prioritized collaborative and functional spaces while preserving much of the existing layout. In the northeast quadrant, we propose creating additional small and medium-sized meeting rooms by reducing the quantity of stacks. Shifting some collections to the Lower Level, will allow for creating more study areas. Overall, most areas on the second floor will remain similar, with targeted adjustments to shelving and furniture aimed at maximizing table placements near windows for optimal natural light and views, as well as lowering some shelving to improve sight lines and create a more open atmosphere.

1	Ex. Meeting Room	7	Elevator
2	Library + I.T. Staff Breakroom	8	Solo Study Room
3	Huddle Rooms	9	Study Room
4	New Meeting Room	10	Open Seating
5	Collections	11	Collections + Seating
6	Restroom		

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<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	GENERAL SEATING	<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	SPECIAL COLLECTIONS + ARCHIVES
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span>	INDIVIDUAL & GROUP STUDY	<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	DIGITIZATION STUDIO
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	MAKERSPACE	<span style="color: slateblue;">■</span>	BUILDING SERVICES
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## Third Level

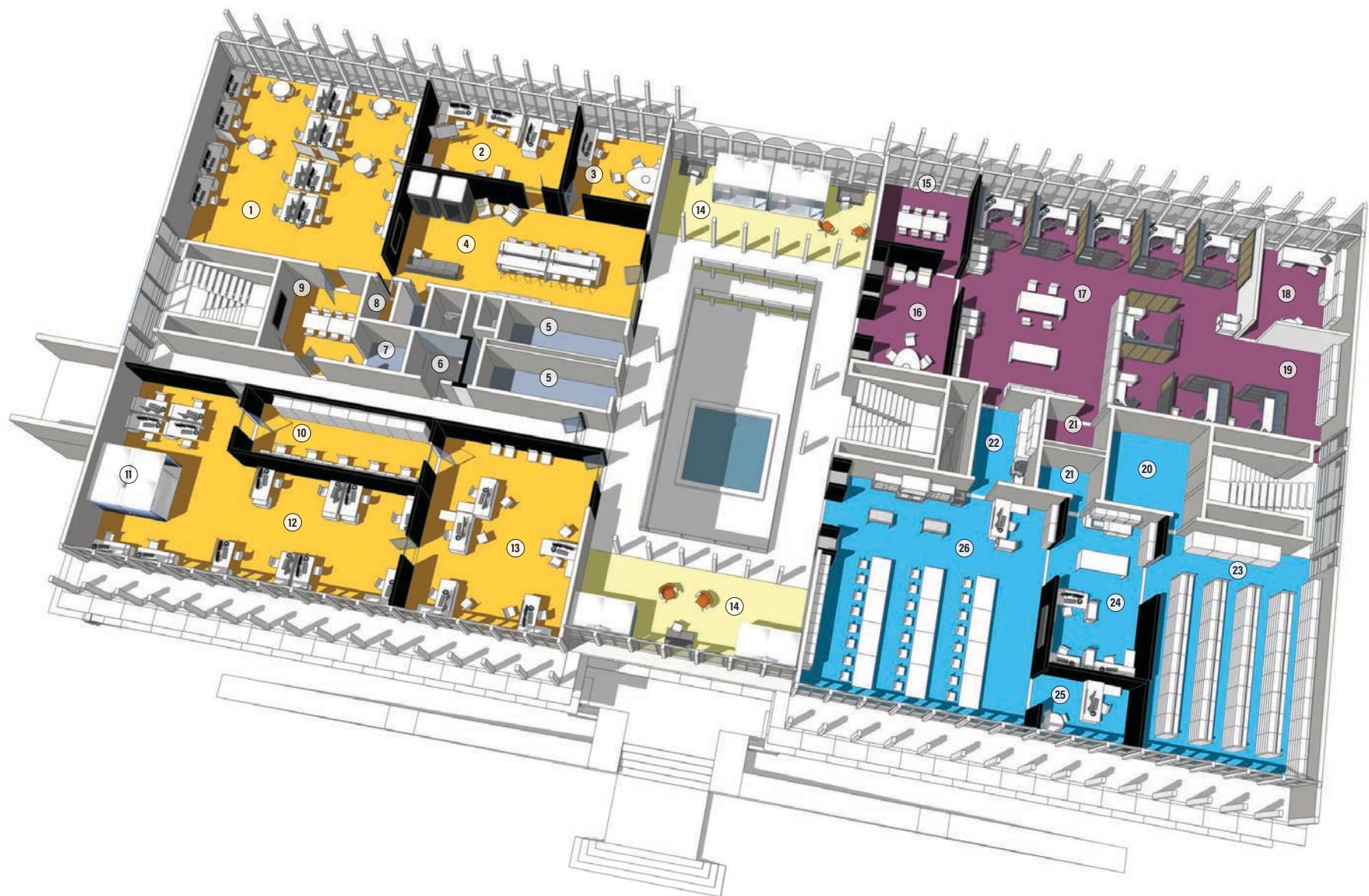
Recent campus needs have required repurposing the north half of 3rd Level for campus I.T. Department. This strategic partnership locates I.T. at the heart of campus, creating a staff and student support network that parallels the Library's mission to "advance the academic mission of the University by providing expertise, resources, and services that stimulate learning. Central to our mission is preparing undergraduate students to navigate a complex information environment. The libraries also have a responsibility to support teaching and scholarship, to promote the ethical use and creation of information, and to preserve the intellectual heritage that is at the core of the University."

The Special Collections, Rare Books and University Archives department seeks to be reorganized to feature a large Reading Room and Exhibit space suitable for instruction or personal research, a processing workroom that overlooks the Reading Room and provides direct access to ready reference materials. Relocation of the Archivist Office to the exterior wall will enable a direct connection to the RSS office space in the south-east quad, creating a shared copy/print station while preserving some dark storage in the building core, and a collection room for ready reference to the south.

The RSS office area will maintain in the south-east quadrant, enhanced with better furniture and space organization, offering greater audio privacy for staff members who require it.

1	Team Collaboration Rm	15	Group Meeting
2	Director Suite	16	Entry / Meeting
3	CIO Suite	17	R.S.S. Open Office Space
4	Dawg Bowl	18	R.S.S. Manager
5	Restroom	19	Rare Books Collection Surplus
6	Elevator	20	Dark Storage
7	Mechanical	21	Storage
8	Phone Booth	22	Print / Copy
9	Huddle Room	23	Rare Books Collection
10	I.T. Work Room	24	Rare Books Staff Processing
11	Small Huddle Room	25	Rare Books Librarian Office
12	I.T. Help Desk (Tier 2)	26	Rare Books Reading Room + Exhibit Space
13	I.T. Help Desk (Tier 1)		
14	Open Seating		

<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	GENERAL SEATING	<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	SPECIAL COLLECTIONS + ARCHIVES
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span>	INDIVIDUAL & GROUP STUDY	<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	DIGITIZATION STUDIO
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	MAKERSPACE	<span style="color: grey;">■</span>	BUILDING SERVICES
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES		



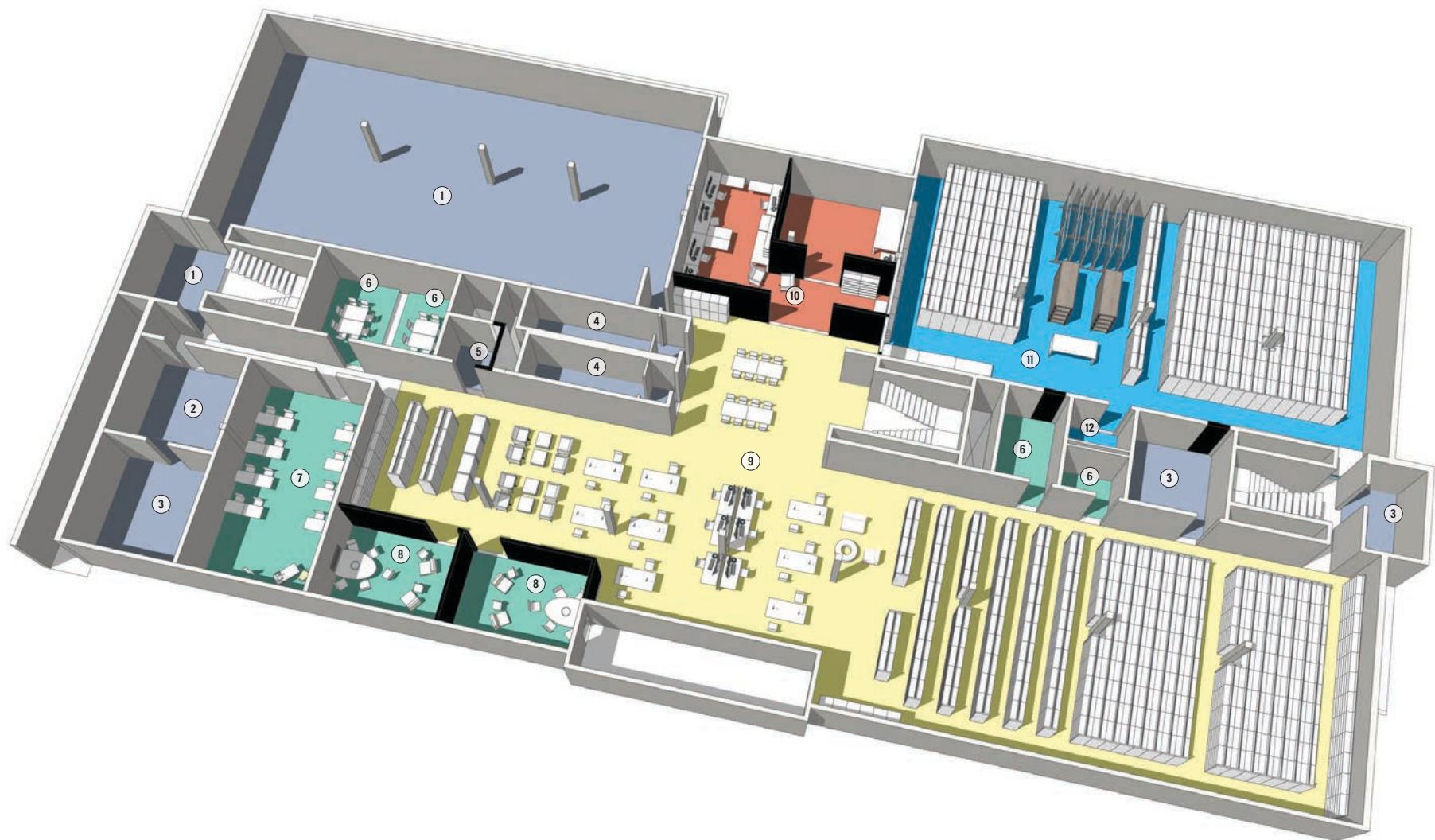
## Lower Level

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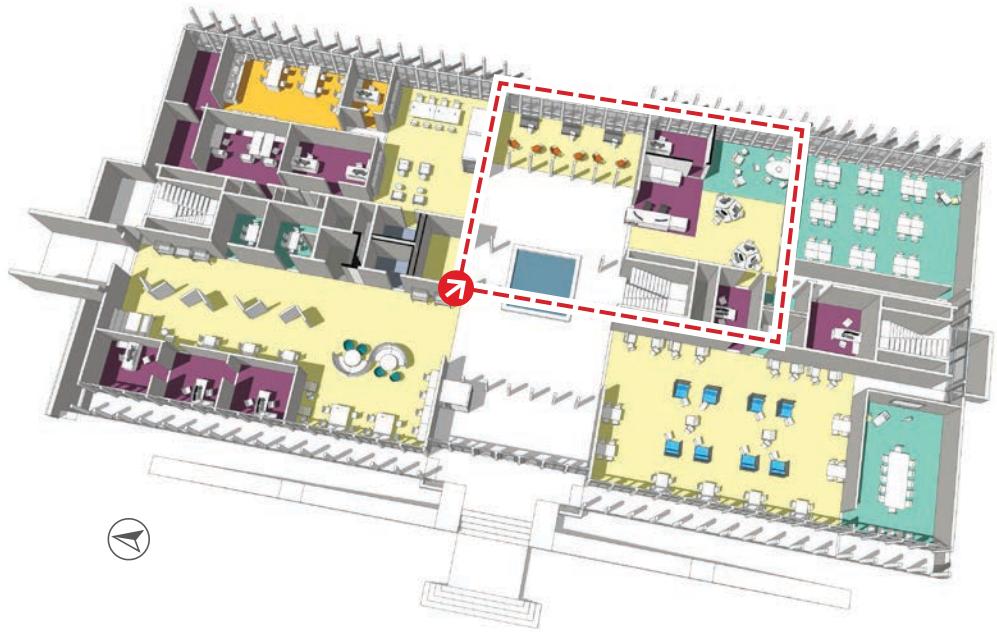
On the lower level, the proposed design shifts Digitization operations to the east side, where open seating currently exists, with an adjusted layout to best incorporate department space goals. A new climate-controlled storage room for special collections, rare books and archives can be created, utilizing high-capacity mobile storage on rails, featuring various shelving heights, art racks, and bulk storage space, along with a staff workstation and processing table. Collections will be maintained along the west side of the lower level, enhanced by the addition of small lounge rooms designed for students to listen to music in small groups while studying, each equipped with a record player and speakers.

1	Mechanical / Storage	7	Instruction Room
2	Electrical	8	Small Lounge
3	Storage	9	Open Collections & Seating
4	Restrooms	10	Digitization Studio
5	Elevator	11	Archives
6	Study Room	12	Archives Storage

<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	GENERAL SEATING	<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	SPECIAL COLLECTIONS + ARCHIVES
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span>	INDIVIDUAL & GROUP STUDY	<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	DIGITIZATION STUDIO
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	MAKERSPACE	<span style="color: slateblue;">■</span>	BUILDING SERVICES
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES		



## 1st Floor Atrium New Learning Commons Desk





NEW LEARNING COMMONS DESK

## 1st Floor Gallery at Northwest Quad

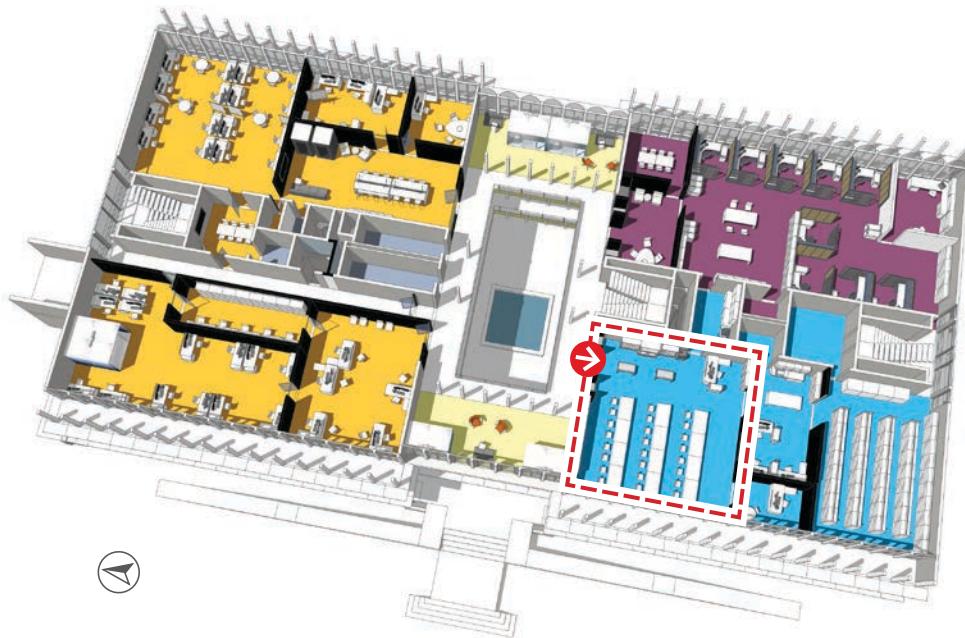


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## 3rd Floor Special Collections Reading Room at Southwest Quad



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for  
Impact.**

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