The first of our occasional journals marks Penoyre and Prasad’s 21st anniversary. Rather than looking back, we’re taking this opportunity to look at some of the key issues shaping not only our designs, but all our futures.

Climate change, the continuing communications revolution and economic crisis are all posing difficult questions about the shape our future should take. But there will be an upside to the downturn, and it will come through the stripping away of the wasteful and unnecessary, with a new freedom to focus on what’s really important, such as the value of long term organisational success.

Against a backdrop of unprecedented change, architecture is not just about designing buildings. It’s about designing the future, about understanding our clients’ organisational and cultural goals and helping them to get where they need to be in order to meet their own specific challenges.

Good design can help embed cultural objectives such as social participation, community cohesion and individual empowerment, and can facilitate the kind of joined-up thinking essential to solving the global and local issues we face. We believe that our projects can truly be of value if we continue to design in the widest possible context and actively contribute to these debates.

Our thanks to all those who have contributed to the success of the projects featured in this journal, and to the many collaborators and colleagues who have contributed to the success of Penoyre and Prasad since 1988.

A New Face For Health

Guy’s Tower is an unusual icon. Not only is it a public building, it’s a health building, and as such makes a poignant contribution to the rapidly changing London skyline.

After more than 3 decades of intensive service, the Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust have decided that the 34 storey tower is itself in need of some surgery to ensure that the façade is fit for the next 30 years, and also to reduce the building’s energy consumption. Penoyre and Prasad, with Arup have been appointed to consider the future of this, if not best-loved, at least well-used, friend, assessing its functionality, physicality, and long-term sustainability.

A tall public building is rare in the city, but Guy’s is more than just a visual icon; it offers a chance to showcase public health in the city amongst neighbours soon to include Europe’s tallest building.

Current proposals include a linking building, or ‘wafer’ between the two towers of Guy’s to provide additional accommodation, offer fantastic views, and also improves the building’s city-wide profile.

Guy’s is an operational hospital – almost half of the overall floor area is contained within the tower itself, but it is also a neighbourhood building and has a role to play in defining the immediate urban fabric of a diverse area of London. Experienced differently by the passing commuter, the local resident or the staff and patients, the transformation of Guy’s offers the opportunity to re-value the public realm with the creation of new public spaces at ground and roof level and integrated art projects.

The transformation will elevate the status of Guy’s Tower as an elegant and engaging ambassador for the future of health.

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Integrated health and social care centres, recently built under the guidance of Northern Ireland Health Estates are a demonstration of the region’s joined up thinking, creating bespoke, high quality spaces, designed to serve the needs of both patients and staff.

Thanks to the visionary policies of Chief Executive John Cole, Northern Ireland has more than one award-winning, state of the art hospital, and Belfast’s residents now have access to a growing family of inspirational community healthcare facilities, whose architecture signals the region’s progressive, collaborative and public spirited stance and which have become a regional and national benchmark for high quality public design.

Key to their success is their emergence from an organic and systematic analysis of what the population they serve needed from their community health services. South and East Belfast Trust (SEBT), as it was then known, came to Cole in 1999 with a particularly knotty problem. With 42 individual facilities scattered around the city, the Trust was facing a backlog of repairs amounting to £10m. The issue was whether to repair them or rethink the Trust’s provision altogether. Says Cole: “We came to the conclusion that we needed to reorganise, and came up with the idea of replacing 42 buildings with three Community Care and Treatment Centres (CCTCs), funded entirely by the sale of these 42 existing buildings.”

The new buildings were to represent a radical change in community healthcare provision. Says Cole: “We wanted to provide everything people needed in one building, a one-stop shop, or gateway to health.” Given the NI government’s continued grouping of social and health services within one department, it made sense to combine them in these care and treatment hubs. The centres offer GP facilities where appropriate, but mainly provide an holistic array of social and healthcare services, including children’s services, podiatry, chiropody, physiotherapy, dentistry and Citizens Advice Bureau while also serving as bases for Health Visitors and District Nurses who take care into people’s homes.

This integrated provision is at the heart of the notion of patient focused care, not only centralising expertise and accessibility for patients, but providing an organisational base and the ability to share knowledge and best practice for staff. Both contribute to the shift towards a joined-up approach to the care of individuals and families.

The character and impact of the buildings, inside and out, was to be as much of a priority as the facilities they housed. They are intended to be buildings that welcome the community and put the care of customers – and the wellbeing of the staff who serve them – to the fore.

Both the Trust and Cole, an architect by training, were keen to achieve the best buildings possible. This involved two further investments of time and energy: one into examining exactly how care practice needed to be transformed, working with staff to examine and facilitate the necessary cultural changes; and the other involving setting up a system of procurement that would operate to reward good practice and design excellence.
For the first task SEBT manager Gillian Rankin with the support of the Trust’s team leaders as well as John Cole, instigated a cultural change programme, employing psychologists and workplace consultants DEGW to analyse the most desirable and effective use of space and human resources. The idea of cross-disciplinary collaboration between health and social services, and shared-desking for the many outreach and shift workers took a lot of bedding in. Says Cole: “We took it very seriously. We were very inclusive of staff during that process. We even included questions about the ambience of the place that they would like to work in, what they’d like it to look and feel like.”

A key intellectual shift occurred when the staff took on board the notion of viewing ‘space as a resource, not as territory’ a phrase borrowed from the Medical Architecture Research Unit in London. Shared desk space meant a reduction in overall floor areas, with the savings reallocated to better quality staff facilities where staff can meet informally during and after the working day, fostering a collaborative spirit of best practice.

Under an innovative ‘performance related partnering’ procurement process whereby projects are awarded in groups to the same design team and contractor, Penoyre and Prasad won the first design competition in 2003 for the first of SEBT’s Community Treatment and Care Centres (CTCCs) and subsequently worked on several projects, all in conjunction with Belfast based Todd Architects. Key aims of the designs are to minimise dull, dead circulation spaces, clarify wayfinding, incorporate natural light and ensure a high degree of clinical functionality and adaptability. The designers worked closely with the many care teams and pursued an ambitious programme of public art, to create truly public, community buildings that people would enjoy using and which would benefit the surrounding area.

The first three buildings for SEBT are now up and running - The Arches, Bradbury and Knockbreda Centres, along with the first of three projects for the North and West Belfast NHS Trust, the Carlisle Centre, also won in competition in 2003. Each of the buildings are located at what Cole calls ‘key nodes,’ areas close to good transport links where people pass through for work and shopping, and each serves a local population of 70,000 people. The long term partnering aspect of the procurement process has resulted in a set of buildings which build successively on lessons learnt in terms of design, construction and value. In that respect it’s a unique body of work. Even though each building is a specific architectural response to the challenges of the site, there are also common principles of design manifest throughout. In addition to efficient, adaptable clinical consulting and meeting suites these include a central 3 or 4 storey atrium, a light filled welcoming area for all visitors and the main device for wayfinding within the building, with all sub-reception and waiting areas arranged around, and visible from it. Café spaces, and quality waiting areas with views into the atrium, or beyond to the surrounding landscape, also typify the buildings and contribute to their non-institutional character.

This connection to the wider environment is crucial to the way in which these facilities have become embedded in, and welcomed by, the community. Belfast is set in a bowl of hills with the city on a grid plan so that at the end of almost every street is a view to the hills beyond. These buildings facilitate that enjoyment and make their own statement about civic pride and cohesion, a particular sensitivity in post-Troubles Belfast.

‘These buildings spell out something positive, something bright and fresh. They’ve been recognised as something good in Northern Ireland.’

John Cole, Chief Executive, NI Health Estates
John Cole is unsurprised that some four years on in some cases, the centres remain well maintained. ‘Staff saw the level of interest and effort that has gone into making buildings, creating places which seem to value people and respect them. I think if you give people something that shows that kind of care and respect, they treat it accordingly.’ The buildings themselves appear to aid communication and minimise the need for the ad hoc signage, notices and posters which blight many health centres. Here the opportunities to communicate and disseminate information are built into the organisation and the building layouts which facilitate its operations.

The procurement related partnering model has also proved to be robust. John Cole says: ‘We’ve now done over 40 buildings under this framework and we’ve found that the attitude of both the design team and the contractor is different from when it’s a single project. It’s less adversarial. We make them think in a different way about adding value to the process rather than trying to optimise profit. We don’t have (contractor’s) claims any more. Buildings are getting better all the time in terms of the quality outcomes.’ This is certainly confirmed by a cluster of awards – RIBA, BBH and the International Academy for Design and Health – garnered by the projects.

So why has this been such a successful exercise in the provision of integrated healthcare? Are there any factors at work here that mean this scale of success cannot be achieved outside of Belfast? The combination of a visionary client, a commitment to the cultural change required to make new models of care work, and an innovative partnering process is unusual but not unique. In Belfast though, perhaps the very factors which inhibited the region’s economic growth for the last half of the 20th century have contributed to its success in the early 21st. The fact that the Troubles were an inhibitor to institutional innovation, also meant an inbuilt continuity in the region’s institutional behaviour, in contrast to the mainland’s ‘revolving door’ of policies and the consequent difficulty in taking the long term view.

Now within some of the more innovative LIFT Programmes in England we can see the same ideas emerging. Indeed Ara Darzi, the UK Government’s Health Minister announced in 2008 that such ‘polyclinics’ would be a crucial part of the future primary care-led National Health Service.

The far sightedness of NI Health Trusts and Health Estates has enabled them to pioneer the joining up, not only of various aspects of care, but of the design of care with the design of the buildings in which it is provided.
Co-Creating Architecture

‘If I’d asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.’
Henry Ford

Co-creation is a powerful concept that embraces but also transcends the clitch of practices previously known as collaboration, participation, consultation, user involvement, even customisation. It puts the consumers and producers of goods and services on an equal footing in making fundamental decisions to determine the nature and design of goods and services. But, as Henry Ford’s famous statement trenchantly reminds us, co-creation cannot merely be about ‘asking people what they want’. What can it be then?

The fundamental insight behind co-creation is that consumers hold knowledge that is as vital to the quality of goods and services as is the knowledge that their producers deploy. Whereas collaboration amongst the members of professional teams relies on the mutual recognition of different specialisms or strengths, co-creation requires us to rethink the nature of expertise itself, as captured so well in this extract from a recent British Medical Journal:

‘The key to the doctor patient relationship is to recognise that patients are experts too. The doctor is well informed about diagnostic techniques, the cause of disease, prognosis, treatment options and preventive strategies, the cause of disease, prognosis, treatment options and preventive strategies, but only the patient knows about his or her experience of illness, social circumstances, habit and behaviour, attitudes to risk, values and preferences. Both types of knowledge are needed to manage illness successfully, so both parties should be prepared to share information and take decisions jointly.’

The ‘supplier/consumer’ relationship in this case is a relatively simple and direct one but the principle can be extended to far more complex scenarios for the delivery of products and services such as the creation of our built environment.

The adoption of co-creation requires a paradigm shift in the way companies and organisations view their customers, away from the traditional company-centric concept of marketing and strategy to competition of value by the company and the consumer as put by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in their pioneering book The Future of Competition. They continue: ‘the company does not just try to please the consumer but works with the consumer to co-create the service experience to suit his/her preferences’.

There is good reason to think that the theme will be increasingly relevant as we try and find new practices in creating our public and private environments in the new conditions that are emerging: a transformed market in finance and credit, the shift to carbon as a currency, the loss of trust in public institutions and its consequences for the professions, the continuing revolution in mass communication. These changes will catalyse a widening of the pool of people who actively contribute to decision making at all scales, which is exactly the promise of co-creation.

To return to Henry Ford, it is easier to see how co-creation would work in the health service than in making motorcars, but a managed fusion of consumers’ and producers’ knowledge will open opportunities for achieving quality and innovation in any field. Just a few principles adapted by producers/suppliers will help the practice to flourish: value the consumers not only as customers but specifically as holders of essential knowledge, be determined about and skilled in listening and communicating clearly, provide the consumers with the tools to participate in co-creation, such as a full induction into the creative process and access to basic information; ensure the creative process is iterative to ensure a virtuous cycle of learning, innovation and refinement.

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Over the life of the practice, the Penoyre and Prasad approach to working with clients has consistently had strong resonance with the idea of co-creation, literally or loosely. This is not surprising given the ancestry of the practice, which includes Royal Gold Medal winner Ted Cullinan, an early champion of involving users. But for Ted and for us, that has never meant relinquishing responsibility or diluting design aspiration, quite the contrary. He used to say remember you hold the pencil’, meaning on the one hand that the responsibility for the solution is the designer’s alone, and on the other that the designer’s freedom to invent and offer solutions is undiminished no matter how large the input from clients or others with a stake. That is why we see co-creation not as a means of consensus building but as a method to provoke effective innovation by ensuring that the best intelligence and information underpins the design process.

And it is for this potential for innovation, commonly seen nowadays as the greatest factor in the success of companies and organisations, that the ideas of co-creation have gained traction in recent years.

Architecture and design manifest as both products and services. The process of creation starts long before the need for a constructed or manufactured solution is decided upon. Particularly in the early stages of identifying the business or organisation’s need, devising a strategy for the desired change, investigating the relationship with what the city or context already offers, co-creation offers a powerful recipe for success. At the Roller Coaster young people’s centre the students that we were working with on the siting of the building to avoid territorial identification with one group or another. Later they took part in design workshops. At the official opening they showed round the visiting dignitaries as if they had designed the building. This was more than the ‘buy-in’ that is often given as the reason for consultation. It was real ownership. More importantly, their knowledge would prove crucial to the building’s success.

To co-create architecture is more than to simply invite the client and users into the design process. It also requires a particular confidence from the architect to ‘swim upstream’ to areas of concern hitherto the client’s and business planner’s domain. The skill set, and more importantly, the attitude that is needed for effective co-creation has fascinating implications for the learning required to be an architect. Equally exciting is the prospect of users and clients learning how to release their knowledge to co-create buildings and places that exceed all our expectations.


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An inspiring school building can provide a framework for imagination and development, and empower individuals to participate fully in their own education.

What makes a design an inspiring one? Given the current scale of building and redevelopment, how do we ensure that schools across the country will create the right learning environments for many generations to come?

There has been a shift in educational focus over the last 20 years from the institution to the individual and, with that, a shift from teaching to learning. This has brought a corresponding change in aspiration for school design from one of containment and control of the group, to one of inspiration and encouragement of the individual. How then shall we create an environment to inspire and engage disgruntled adolescents in the learning process, given their obligatory presence for what amounts to nearly a third of their life-to-date in secondary school? The ‘wow factor’ – a single dazzling or bolt-on architectural element – is not enough. A more meaningful and enriching response is required to sustain inspiration in such demanding circumstances.

There is currently a real momentum within the education sector, encouraged by organisations such as the BCSE, the Sorrell Foundation and Learning Through Landscapes, to recognise and reward the development of new learning environments which will contribute to inspired learning, inspired teaching and the engagement of young people in their own education.

An inspiring school needs to be a place where students want to learn and staff to teach, where parents feel able to participate, and where the community feels a sense of pride and comfort in the visible progress being made. It needs to be secure and comfortable, welcoming and nurturing, and be able to engage the imagination of the students, within a framework that is adaptable and flexible enough to accommodate the ambitions of the teachers.

There will perhaps always be some who believe in authoritarian rule but culturally we now recognise the need to value and respect the views and choices of young people. Design has an integral part to play in this cultural shift, allowing opportunity and choice. Where to go, where to sit, what to look at? These daily and momentary choices – and our freedom to make them – have a significant impact on our sense of connection to a place which in turn affects attitude and behaviour.

A school which offers multiple routes between key spaces, a variety of views into and out of it, a choice of social spaces inside and out, different furniture, colours, textures and materials will offer its students the optimum conditions for personal expression.

At the Merchants’ Academy, Bristol, these principles have been realised in the organisation as well as the detail of the school design. In sponsoring this academy, the Society of Merchant Venturers wanted to create a truly excellent educational establishment for some of Bristol’s poorest and most disadvantaged secondary students. Attendance and behaviour are key challenges for the school, given the high rate of truancy and exclusions of its previous incarnation. A school that didn’t feel like a school was therefore important to help re-engage the disenfranchised local community as well as the students in their education.
The first view of the school is of a striking, colourful mural by artist Tod Hanson across the length of the front façade. Described by the artist as ‘a fanfare for new possibility’ this, and original artworks like it, add texture and impact, setting up a non-institutional feel. The local and school community have become strongly attached to this new expression of their identity.

A key feature of the design is the strong dynamic between the building and its landscaping, facilitated by a cloistered courtyard arrangement which sees the school’s seven faculties or ‘pavilions’ distributed around an active yet calm inner courtyard with imaginatively planted teaching gardens between the pavilions. This central courtyard acts as the main circulation space, gathering students and teachers at every changeover period into the heart of the school space, rather than dispersing them along unmonitored corridors. Not only does this feature ensure a regular breath of fresh air and sense of calm for students and staff, but it also offers unlimited choices of movement and opportunities for social interaction, safely within the bounds of the school and with views out to the surrounding hills beyond.

Personal lockers are embedded around the cloister walls, offering 360 degree passive supervision. In this way, the design reinforces a democratic sense of both community and security. Here, circulation and containment are devices to guide and delight, not constrain and deprive.

The colourful courtyard is visible from every corridor, all internal windows and the dining space, increasing a sense of both place and belonging for students, and importantly, in a building whose business it is to help young minds develop, the notion of possibility beyond their immediate environment.

The quality of the materials and finishes has enhanced a respect for the built fabric of the school. A lack of graffiti, chewing gum and general abuse indicate to head teacher Stephen Kings that the children appreciate their new school. He says: ‘There’s a lot of evidence that the children are responding very positively to the new building. We’re in a high crime, high problem area here and we’ve had absolutely no one coming on site to do any damage out of school hours. What’s more, the full site hadn’t yet been available (additional external works are now complete). We’ve had 720 kids and 100 adults cooped up in a relatively small space, and we’ve come through this year with the building looking scarcely as if it’s been lived in.’

Though the building has been designed to accommodate more flexible teaching formats, Kings and his teaching staff are currently keeping to a very traditional classroom-based and teacher-focused agenda. As behaviour continues to improve, outdoor learning spaces will be used more widely, consolidating notions of respect, reward and freedom.

Attendance at the January parent and student day was up from 40% the previous year to 85%, indicating an increase in parental support.

‘There’s a community feeling that there’s something important here, something special and positive,’ says Stephen Kings. ‘We had our first awards evening in the hall recently. About 100 children had won awards and turned up in uniform looking immaculate. That does say a lot. There were 200 parents there as well, and they were as pleased as punch.’

In the case of Merchants’ Academy then, an inspiring design is one which has made an immediate impact on behaviour and morale but which also provides a framework for the school to develop and change. Its all about possibility. ‘There’s no doubt we are significantly different as an institution today than we were back in September 2008’, says Kings, ‘and we are in a really strong position to move forward. A building on its own won’t do it, but I don’t think we could do it without a building like this.’
This building never lets us down – whatever we ask of it.

Phil Blinston, Principal, Minster School
Working internationally, Cape Farewell pioneers the cultural response to climate change, stimulating the production of art founded in scientific research and evolving a creative language which will communicate on a human scale the urgency of the global climate challenge.

In September 2008 a crew of artists, scientists, architects, comedians, musicians, playwrights, composers, engineers, film-makers and journalists journeyed aboard a science research vessel to the spectacular Disko Bay and across the front of the Jakobshavn Glacier, one of Greenland’s largest glaciers moving at a faster rate than ever before, losing 20 million tons of ice every day.

My installation, on land exposed by this rapidly retreating glacier, used four weather balloons to delineate the volume of one tonne of CO₂, the average emission per person per month in the UK. By 2050 we have to make the same amount last six months. The people in this crew have access to a huge global audience and are in a strong position to communicate not only the urgency of the condition we are in but also the huge scope for action that almost everyone in the world has, both collectively and individually.”

Sunand Prasad
The complex issues of global warming are beyond the understanding of many of us. We are informed by others how to act in order to halt the ever-failing conditions, and we do, some of us, act.

Then what? We can’t see how everyone else in the world acts so we don’t know if we are part of a wave or standing alone against a tide. This can be a rather depressing thought. So when you look at these photos try and see something special, something amazing, something worth trying to save – it helps.

Nathan Gallagher

All photography Nathan Gallagher, courtesy of Cape Farewell

Chris Wainwright
I have always believed that one of the key roles of artists is to tell us how they see the world. Being part of the Cape Farewell experience in the Arctic with fellow artists reminded me just how complex, fragile and inspiring that world is.

Working with other artists, musicians and scientists proved to me that we have much more of a shared voice and commitment to urgently address climate change through creative thought, partnerships and action. I have no problem with how artists see the world. Is a question of how big that world is.

Joe Smith
This cultural work around climate change is essential. If we are to make sense of this issue and the way it appears to cope with it “Coping” means both reducing emissions of carbon dioxide (mitigation) and learning to adapt to the environmental changes that past emissions have already locked us all into. I also realized bringing the future and the non-human world into our politics and ethics.

It’s a huge task, and one that is going to need not only that human creativity can thrive but…

Lemm Sissy
Cape Farewell to the forest and if nobody saw it or heard it, then did it? We have an obligation to share what we see. The act of sharing is as important as the information it carries, the action of description and acknowledgement is the greatest gift of language. I blog because it gives me a point of record or reference that I was alive at any given time. In acknowledging the disappearance of the ice from our world is blogging. A simple act of description, we are acknowledging that they were there. Did the tree fall in the forest? Nobody saw it or heard it. I think, I think, I think. And if I didn’t say it now there’d be none left to fall.

Jude Kelly
We can’t provide akosable for everyone to visit the Arctic and show the profound reality of a shift in climate and its catastrophic impact on our most vulnerable places, but art can be the transmitter of the message to millions of others. The Cape Farewell voyage changes the lives of a few individuals who then commit to changing the lives of us all.

Jonathan Dove
I went on Cape Farewell to Disko Bay was a real wake up call for me. To experience such immense natural beauty and mystery is more privileged to learn, at the same time, how it is threatened by us, and how we need to change is to call an action that cannot be ignored. My spirit went through the planet, but artists can help develop a culture in which everyone is thinking about this issue all the time, and looking for new solutions.

All photography courtesy of Cape Farewell

Marcus Briggstocke
The Arctic is a poetic, magic and poetic place. To be there is to find yourself in something fantastical and surreal, riffs your imagination.

Yet at the same time you are in the centre of a growing and urgent reality full of fear and uncertainty. You can’t bring this back with you (it would melt on the plane) and you can’t change it while you are there (but so no one would notice anyway). So why go?

Ker Tunnell
5 hours sailing down the frozen jagged coast of Sondre Stromfjord, the light seems to get sucked up by the time. Like a wailing dreamer. Milky green sea that looks alive.

A beautifully perfected valley scraped out of the landscape as our guide,生命 out of its mouth.

KT Tunstall
The weirdness. The spook. That half-light that makes your blood run cold. A lovelying cloud that turns a norhth landscape into a science fiction set. The bos is full and buzzing like a bee.

David Buckland
Founder, Cape Farewell

Climate change is no longer a science fiction. It is a cultural, social and economic problem and not one beyond a scientific debate.

Cape Farewell is committed to the vision that artists can engage the public in this issue. Through creative insight and vision, the Arctic is an extraordinary place to visit. It is a place in which to be inspired, a place which urges us to face up to what we are about to lose.

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The whole higher education landscape has changed radically in the last twenty years. Something like four times the number of students now pass through university and the range of degrees and other qualifications available is broader than ever. Universities have evolved with this to become a quite different offer. Not only are there considerably more since 1992, when John Major changed the status of many polytechnics, but universities have themselves grown significantly in student numbers, courses and research capacity.

These changes have also meant a different approach to the student group - the ‘customers’. No more the ivory tower where you might learn something if you are grudgingly admitted, our universities are available, accessible institutions competing for students and high quality staff. In short they have had to become more attractive. There are also now more urban universities whose campuses are integrated into their cities and more universities with links to other institutions and services – schools, healthcare, business etc. These changes have provided a new challenge for the architect: less calm secluded cloisters, more civic buildings to showcase higher education and invite broad participation.

Coupled with this, courses and course structures are now more varied and, importantly for the architect, are continuously changing. This means state of the art learning spaces and facilities which themselves may need to be organised quite differently in a few years time.

The University of Portsmouth is a typical city centre university successfully addressing today’s challenges for higher education, and the new Library building was designed with these issues very much in mind. The University is embedded in the urban grain of central Portsmouth with a concentration of university buildings in a ‘campus’ to the north and a more dispersed group of buildings in Southsea to the South and East. The original library designed in 1977 by Ahrends Burton and Koralek for the then Portsmouth Polytechnic, had served extremely well for many years. It is a fine building, a classic of its kind - a mechanistic modernist building skilfully designed to serve its uses well but not with its civic presence in urban Portsmouth as a priority. The stepped section and clever rooflit reading areas have provided access to learning for many students over the years. The building was extended in the 80s but by the early 2000s was simply too small for the central facility and symbol of learning which the University needed. Contrary to what one might think in this age of the internet, there is more demand for books than ever in academic and public libraries, so significantly more book space was needed.

Today’s libraries also need to support new ways of ICT rich learning, for the increasingly independent learning habits of students. Above all they must be a visible symbol of accessible learning – an invitation to the perhaps less academic students to engage. This was the brief for the library which was the subject of a design competition in 2004 - a new extension doubling the size of the existing building in Ravelin Park.

Architects are working to new agendas in Higher Education as the University of Portsmouth Library illustrates.
The Penoyre and Prasad solution was to provide a completely new frontage to the library, glassy and open, and with a lofty entrance hall placed on a through route across the university, designed to encourage visitors and passing students. Entered off a newly created public plaza, the building has been designed to realign the library with the surrounding city and park and to better connect it to the University itself. Substantially more book space to ease pressure on existing collections and allow for growth and a variety of work areas are provided over three floors. Lofty study areas look over the park to the south and bookable group work rooms look down into the central atrium.

All areas are deliberately more acoustically alive than traditional libraries have been, supporting different sorts of use.

This is also a highly sustainable design. Environmental measures integrated into the design include a hybrid natural and mechanical ventilation system with heat recovery using the ‘stack effect’ of air movement in the lofty atrium space; passive cooling using the thermal mass of the exposed concrete structure; orientation and solar shading to minimise heat gains while maximising daylighting; and high levels of insulation throughout. All of these have contributed to a BREEAM rating of Excellent. A post-occupancy evaluation is currently underway and findings will be used to further tune this low energy building and its operation.

It is anticipated that the balance of library to teaching space will change with time and the building is designed to be easily adaptable at minimal cost. This ‘long life loose fit’ approach will ensure the long term sustainability of this new centre of learning at the heart of the University.
In 1988 I was playing in a band and working on the side, but I wanted to be a rock star. Sharing one pack of opal fruits with five siblings, and six into 14 doesn’t go. I was six years old and have a clear memory of pretending to run away and hiding under the dining room table. I made my own makeshift house with the tablecloth for walls. I was one and living in Cork. I was 8 so 1988 means dancing to Bad, swingball tournaments, a straw boater in summer and green beret in winter. I remember seeing a slideshow by Sunand on Old Delhi, and I bought a one-way ticket to India, met Ian Goodfellow, and I went overland through Pakistan and China, to arrive in Hong Kong with $10 left. Mum-knitted school jumpers with wings for arms. Drawing area schedules for my den in the ditch at the end of the field. Rising red head, Boris Becker, Boris Becker, Boris Becker, delicious. Whisked away from the life that I knew to live in New Zealand for 6 months. We went to amazing places along the way... the most memorable time of my childhood. Cutting my architectural teeth on-site at the Lloyds 58 building. I was a waitress in an Argentinian restaurant in Jerusalem and saving up to travel. Drawing temples in the South of India. The sight and sound of temples. Baking heat and dust. I lived in a village for 4 months, washed in the river. Baboons ate my washing powder. Studying A levels while working as a carpenter. I’d just moved to London. We were sleeping on the floor of a rowing club in Chiswick, waking at 4am because there were no curtains. Aged thirteen in rural Germany. Just happiness, I guess, hanging out, first love... Growing up occupied me for sure. Laying on the operating table. I was only three but I remember it vividly, blood pouring down my cheek. I had snakeskin print denim jeans. It was all feel the fear but don’t necessarily do it anyway. Sunand was doing a PhD and I had set up on my own. We decided to buy a computer to share, so that he could write up his thesis and I could write my letters. Then we decided to enter a competition and if we won it we’d start a practice. We lost it and started a practice anyway. I used to go ice skating with my dad on a Saturday night to keep me out of trouble. You wouldn’t think people could copulate on those flip-down orange seats but they could. My dad looked the other way but I had a good stare. This couple had their own skates. They were pros. I was 7 and wanted to be an inventor. I used to draw shoes with rockets on the back. I probably had a perm. It was the year I got serious about architecture... I spent January making a huge model. Plaster, varnish, pollyfiller, papier mache. The 16-storey tower with cable suspended balconies that Greg and I designed for the Fire Station site, slightly against the rules, was widely admired, but our developers bid was only half of the winner’s. So we used the design for our office shelving and postcards. I was doing ballet and tap, watching Rainbow and Button Moon. We just worked or sat in fields having picnics. Lots of picnics. I had this massive grey shapeless jumper. Too textured. Formless collar. I was living in Iowa and wanted out. Still at school, living with parents, girlfriend problems. I went to Debate classes where I learned to mumble and talk fast. Queuing with my mother and grandmother in Serbia for chocolate, coffee and sugar. There was nothing. I think I was still married then. But he was off with his Russian gymnast Svetlana while I was at home looking after the kids. My office got its first Apple Mac. I said ‘That’ll never catch on’... I did a 3 week tour of the States, playing drums in a marching band. New Orleans. Kansas. Sleeping on floors. A few parties with stripey shirts and rolled up sleeves and moccasins. I think Don Johnson was big then. I went to Cambre Sands and met a girl called Louise. I kissed her. First love... No hang on, that might have been Majorca. I did judo and horse riding and Irish dancing and ballet and tap. My parents were trying to wear me out. We went to Greece for 6 weeks and overdid it. I wish I could remember the name of that bar... ‘The Something Donkey’... I was class prefect and a bully. I had a pony tail and shoulder pads. I had a full head of hair then. At boarding school, it was the year I discovered what happened underneath the stage... First day at school. I went in all combed and brushed, ribbons in my hair and it was all trashed when I got home. I gave up piano lessons to watch Thundercats. Playing football in Finland. A very hot summer in New England learning to drive with E-Zee Motors. Wearing Nylon spider man pants. My first Guns and Roses album. Kurdish folklore dancing in a big kaftan and a red headscarf with gold ribbon. I had a mullet and was into Heavy Metal. I thought I was going to be an engineer. I was evicted from a dodgy bedsit in Stoke Newington by a landlord who had served a prison sentence for murder. We had an argument over an electricity bill and he wanted to continue the discussion outside... I spent some of 1988 sitting on kerbs: Kerb 1: Embankment outside Heaven celebrating the end of finals. Kerb 2: Edinburgh Festival, the morning after the night before sorting all my stuff into two carrier bags. I was going out with a girl who had the same name as me. I had orange hair and DMs. I’d just started college on Holloway Road. I’m called Holloway so I thought that was a good sign. Barbie, bunches in my hair and Button Moon live! I saw Public Enemy at the Electric Ballroom and James Brown at the Forum. Wasting time in Belgrade. I think I’d just discovered the Violent Femmes. The Ivory Coast. Going to school. I loved school. I used to have sleepovers at my teacher’s house. We visited England that summer from Germany. Stonehenge and Cornwall. I loved B&B’s and the English Breakfast. I swapped a sea view for a graden in the country. We went to Turkey, Greece, Italy. We tried to find Jenny in Turkey but didn’t. It was before mobile phones...