



PEB Exchange, Programme on Educational Building 2004/03

A New Library for Galway- Mayo Institute of Technology

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In addition to input from the key stakeholders, the project team studied a number of references and examples. More than 20 upper secondary schools, universities and lifelong learning centres participated in interviews and shared “lessons-learned” with Project Manager Hronn Petursdottir. The upper secondary school in Selfoss, designed by Maggi Jónsson, a school built in the 1980’s as a prototype, was a useful model of a successful design with emphasis on the social environment. Another important precedent for this project was an innovative primary school, Ingunnarskoli, designed by Bruce Jilk with VA Architects in 2001 for the City of Reykjavik (see *PEB Exchange*, no. 47). On the eastern coast of Iceland, Framhaldsskoli, an upper secondary school constructed as an educational building and community centre, was a unique model for the project. The principle of this school, Eyjolfur Gudmundsson, agreed to join the workshops and share his experience. References also included schools from other Nordic countries and elsewhere, such as the Australian Science and Mathematics School recently opened in Adelaide (see *PEB Exchange*, no. 46).

Economic drivers

The Snaefellsnes community was concerned that the absence of an upper secondary school was significantly diminishing their ability to cope with their future. Without an upper secondary school, parents have had no choice but to send their youth to another region or to a city to continue their education. The effect has been economic and qualitative. “We miss our young people,” the parents explained, “we can’t have proper sports teams, and we miss the energy of this generation.”

The existence of an upper secondary school is important to maintain economic and social well-being in the rural Icelandic communities. Increasingly, Icelanders are leaving the rural and small towns and re-locating to the capital (approximately 75% of the population now resides in the Reykjavik region). Social, employment and educational opportunities are leading reasons for this migration.

The success of the Snaefellsnes Upper Secondary School to sustain the rural community will be important for Iceland and may impact other school programmes in the country. Economic and environmental conditions and new possibilities with the use of information technology are changing the value set and opportunities for the Snaefellsnes region. Skills required for employment demand retraining and continuous learning. The region hopes to compete for new industries to locate within the region, in addition to seeing existing ones succeed.

In these ways, the new school will be critical to the effort to continue to maintain the rural community and to improve its quality of life.

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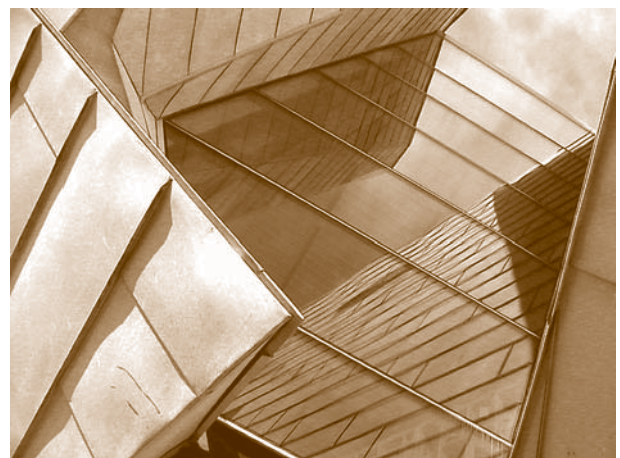
More information on this project can also be found in English at

<http://www.menntagatt.is/default.aspx?pageid=160>

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A NEW LIBRARY FOR GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

The newly-built library at Ireland’s Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) is innovative in design, responds to environmental conditions and identifies the campus with its location. The library is part of the Learning Resource Centre recently constructed to meet the institute’s objective for a new landmark frontage. The campus, overlooking Galway Bay, dates back to the 1970s and reflected the standard regional technical college building throughout Ireland at that time: pre-cast concrete cladding panels combined with ribbon windows, which lack a sense of





identity. For the new construction, the designers chose to use local materials such as painted render, native limestone and patinated copper, the latter for its vibrant colour and malleable qualities.

The Learning Resource Centre is divided into two rectangular volumes: a library/IT block and a lecture block consisting of lecture theatres, auditoria and the Administration Department. The library area is constructed on two levels stacked above the IT Department, with its 200-plus workstations; a central staircase connects the three floors. The library is designed for 670 student spaces with 17 project rooms and ancillary librarian spaces.

Form and function are intertwined in three sculptures adjacent to the library. The free-form compositions reflect the shape of trapezoidal sails and take cognisance of Galway's location on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and its maritime past. The copper-clad forms shield the library areas from solar gain and act as acoustic baffles

and light reflectors. They also serve as large air dispensers and make up part of the library's natural ventilation strategy. Stainless steel strip windows, inserted at the sail junctions, provide framed views of Galway Bay.

The library interior reflects the organic external forms. Racked columns push "islands" of floor plane towards the sails. The floor plane fractures, and trapezoidal voids are formed. Light filters through these voids to the lower library floor where the majority of the book stacks are located. The concept is developed further at roof level with glazed elements peeling off the roof plane as if suspended in air.

At the east end of the library the floor is cut back and reveals the volumetric qualities of the space. A glazed wall encloses this space, spanning between the final copper sail and the rectilinear building form. The structural glass wall has a horizontal emphasis utilising steel trusses, which seem to restrain the sails from breaking free from the main building mass. At this point light filters into this area from 360 degrees at various levels of intensity, modelling the interior and the changing ambiance which reflect the orientation of the sun.

Just prior to its opening in November 2003, the Learning Resource Centre won the Opus Building of the Year award. The project is 10 264 m² in size and was built at a cost of EUR 20 million.

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