Fact Sheet: Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, MD
Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners

Historic Preservation Fact Sheet
Beyer Blinder Belle’s partnership with the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL) extends back to 1998, when BBB was initially engaged to develop a comprehensive renovation, restoration, and infrastructure upgrade plan for the historic main building. Put on hold for financing reasons, Maryland state funding was eventually allocated in 2014, and the design team was re-assembled to complete the construction documentation.

However, in the intervening decade between design and funding, the function of libraries evolved considerably. Major changes in building and safety codes, sustainability requirements, and technology also occurred; the state of the structure itself had further deteriorated, as well. Accordingly, BBB went back to the drawing board to re-think many aspects of the design.

The refreshed design recognizes the shift in priorities from collections and their maintenance to providing active, multipurpose community spaces outfitted with a full range of digital equipment. This new program prudently extends beyond satisfying current requirements and anticipates the future needs of the library’s staff and users, while respecting the architectural heritage of the EPFL.

The three-and-a-half-year construction process was phased to avoid interrupting library services; the institution remained largely open to the public for the duration of the project.

Reprogramming historic spaces
Sensitively integrating new programmatic elements into the historic shell of the building is key to the project’s success. To create these areas, BBB consistently utilizes steel and glass partitions to define space. The materials selection is strategic: the steel echoes the mullions of the original windows, and glass minimizes impact on the views to original finishes.

New functional spaces created from existing areas include:
• Teen Wing. Incorporated into the Maryland Department/African American Collection and the State Library Resource Center, this space carefully bridges old and new with an 18-foot-tall steel-and-glass partition that delineates the classroom and allows a visual connection to the historic reading room. An audio-visual production room, editing booth, and adaptable classroom are similarly integrated into the old State Library Resource Center, creating the Teen Learning and Leadership Room that provides access and training for audio and video equipment.

• Creative Arts Center. Formerly the Fine Arts Room, this multi-purpose space accommodates different furniture layouts and is equipped with an audio/visual system.

• Job and Career Center. Created with a new steel and glass assembly on the south side of the First
Floor Reading Room, the center features classrooms and job training studios.

**Systems restoration and improvements**
The renovation scope included modernizing the building’s entire MEP infrastructure. The library had no fire protection system; it was newly installed as part of BBB’s work, which also includes upgrades to:

- HVAC systems, including temperature and humidity controls
- Lighting and associated controls
- IT and AV systems
- Security system
- Vertical transport (elevators and dumbwaiter)
- Plumbing and toilets
- All new life safety systems

In areas where historic elements were removed for restoration, and where conditions allowed, BBB utilized existing chases to conceal ductwork, wiring, and piping, preserving the elegant interior detailing while ensuring safe and optimal operation.

**Interior restoration: finishes, furnishings, and equipment**

- **Finishes**
  Stone, terrazzo, wood, metal, and plaster surfaces were all repaired and refinished as needed.

- **Decorative elements**
  Consulting EPFL’s 1933 photos, EverGreene Architectural Arts carried out site investigations to expose underlying stencil paintings and then collected pigment samples for microscopic analysis to ensure accurate color matching for the restoration. At window surrounds, wood trim suffered extensive water damage, and required refinishing.

- **Furnishings**
  The original wood furniture, including the reading tables, was in poor condition. Before refinishing, the furniture was surveyed, cataloged, and new locations identified to highlight the historic setting.

- **Lighting**
  Throughout the library, light levels were not in keeping and/or compliance with current industry standards, nor did it effectively highlight historic elements of the building. Furthermore, many of the original fixtures had been removed in a 1950s renovation. BBB worked with Tillotson Lighting Design, who were responsible for the design of both existing to remain historic lighting and new replicated fixtures.

**Exterior restoration**
The first major renovation of the library since its 1933 construction included:

- Limestone exterior cleaned and repointed
- Steel-framed windows repaired/realigned and selective replacement
- Roof replaced
Design for sustainability
The EPFL is targeting LEED Silver certification through the US Green Building Council for new construction. Energy efficient design strategies are anticipated to reduce annual energy expenses by 29% compared to the previous EPFL. The following design features contribute to the project’s LEED goals:

- New high-performance mechanical systems, including variable air volume, demand-based controlled ventilation; dedicated heat recovery chiller; and low-temperature water heaters
- Covering 82% of the roof in highly reflective material to reduce urban heat-island effect
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures to reduce potable water use by 37%
- CO2 monitoring to support indoor air quality
- Lighting control includes daylight harvesting, occupancy/vacancy sensors, preset scenes, and timers for public spaces. Each row of book stacks has individual occupancy sensors
- Recycling infrastructure for both staff and patrons
- Bicycle racks, showers, and changing rooms

Enoch Pratt Free Library: By the numbers
- Building gross square footage: 290,000 SF
- Building gross square footage, not including stacks: 204,500 SF
- Number of floors: Seven. Three full-floors below grade with partial sub-basement and three full-floors above grade with mezzanine and penthouse
- Project cost: $115,000,000

Enoch Pratt Free Library: Quick Facts
- Library founded in 1882 by Baltimore businessman/philanthropist Enoch Pratt, who declared “My library shall be for all, rich and poor without distinction of race or color.”
- Construction on the original Central Library began in 1931 and was completed in 1933. Architects: Clyde N. and Nelson Friz (Baltimore), with consulting library-specialist architects Tilton & Githens (New York)
- Designated as the State Library Resource Center: 1971
- The first public library in Maryland to offer Internet access to customers: 1994
- New annex completed: 2003
- Beyer Blinder Belle renovation completed: 2019

Project credits
Lead Architect: Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners
Managing Architect: Ayers Saint Gross
Consulting Architect: Sandra Vicchio Associates
Construction Manager: Gilbane Building Company
Mechanical Electrical Engineer: Mueller Associates
Plumbing Engineer: WFT Engineering
Structural Engineer: ReStl Designers
Decorative Restoration: EverGreene Architectural Arts
Lighting Design: Tillotson Design Associates
Acoustic Design: Cerami Associates
AV/Teledata/Security Design: SpeyXsys
Code Consultant: Rolf Jensen & Associates
Elevator Consulting: VDA
Civil Engineer: A Morton Thomas
Environmental Consultant: Jenkins Environmental
Cost Estimator: DMS Consulting Services