

Minneapolis Central Library

Location	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Total Area	353,000 square feet
Date of Completion	2006
Client	City of Minneapolis

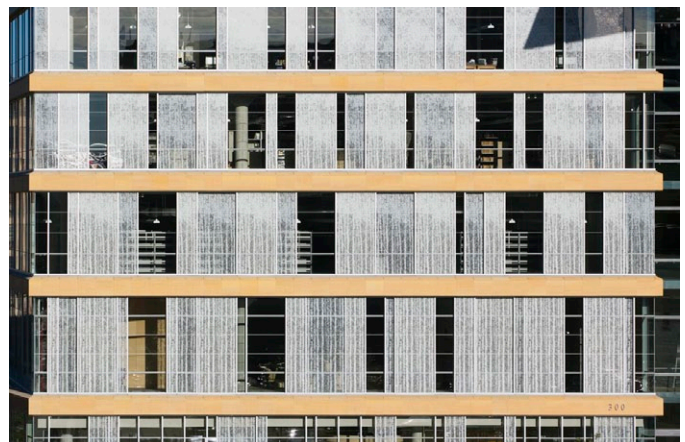
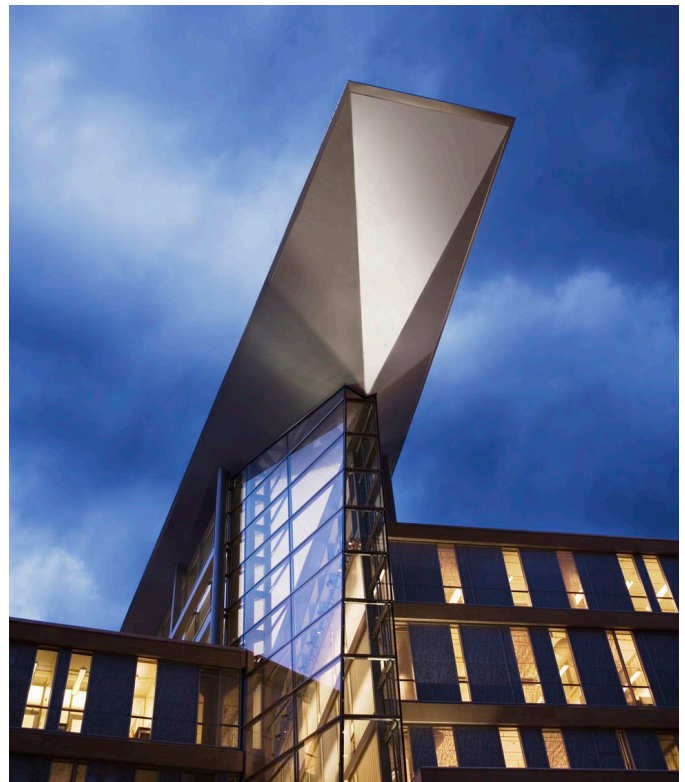
The Minneapolis Central Library is a vital civic and cultural center, a hub for information and community. The building's highly sustainable design—the result of a collaborative, public process—reinvigorates the idea of the grand urban library for new generations.

The library is located between two of the city's most active thoroughfares: Nicollet Mall, the central shopping and business district, and Hennepin Avenue, the city's main street for the performing arts. Two street grids meet at the site, inspiring the building's design: two rectangular volumes, one aligned with each grid. The two volumes come together at the Commons, a six-story atrium that connects the two avenues. This popular enclosed public space is topped by a metal "wing" that appears to hover overhead, extending beyond the building at both ends. Visible from afar, the wing is a landmark for downtown Minneapolis.

The Commons both separates and connects the main areas of the building that contain library services. The most accessible elements of the library, such as the reading rooms and open stacks, are contained in the northern volume, where the natural light is conducive to reading. The more private work rooms and storage areas are in the southern volume, whose walls are more opaque. Bridges span the Commons, linking to stairs and escalators.

Architecturally, the two halves of the building are reminiscent of warehouse lofts, with large open floors structured by a grid of concrete columns. A strip of ochre Minnesota limestone outlines the edges of the floor plates on the building's exterior. Glass walls that vary in width and transparency stretch from floor to ceiling. The windows include surface patterns digitally translated from photographs of four Minnesota landscapes: water ripples, birch trees, snowy branches, and prairie grasses. The result is an active, lively composition that references the city's natural environment.

The library incorporates many sustainable design strategies. The roof is planted with drought-resistant ground cover, creating a 1,700-square-meter (18,500-square-foot) roof garden that slows storm-water runoff and reduces the urban heat island effect. An under-floor ventilation system reduces cooling costs, and the combination of generous daylight and energy-efficient light fixtures contributes to a building that exceeds the state's energy code requirements. Materials with high-recycled content and low volatile organic compounds were specified and 96 percent of demolition and construction waste was recycled.



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