

The City University of New York

The Graduate Center, Mina S. Rees Library
New York, New York



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The new campus of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York is a vertical complex organized on twelve levels of a Renaissance Revival landmark, the former B. Altman's Department Store in midtown Manhattan. The challenges of the 580,000-square-foot renovation included not only the updating of a nearly 100-year-old building, but the design of a wide variety of educational and cultural facilities including the new library which is at the intellectual heart of the campus.

Library visitors enter from building's 17-foot-high lobby into the 92,000-square-foot facility, which occupies a portion of the first floor, concourse and entire second floor. Combining print and high-tech media, it offers open shelving for more than 250,000 periodicals and monographs, over 500 work stations which are wired to support lap-top and desk-top computers, and fully equipped state of the art electronic training rooms.

The library also offers group study areas, miscellaneous special collection rooms, dissertation archives and a media library complete with music listening stations. In its previous quarters, the library was in the basement. Now library users have the luxury of sitting next to 12-foot-high windows that look out onto Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, and 35th Street.

The facility's high-tech capabilities are announced at the library reference desks with LED signage strips running along the edge of the desk canopies. Flexibility is key throughout the facility, typified by the workstations' adjustable perforated dividers which provide lateral flexibility, create a discrete territory, and are handicapped accessible. Cabling in the walls and floor are easily accessible for upgrades. Sight lines extend down the length of the library, allowing easy supervision by library staff.

One special part of the library design was the reclaiming of select historic interior elements. The most visible result was the restoration and replication of one of the original stairs and elevators as the main circulation between the library's three floors.

Opposite the entrance to the library is the cultural complex that includes three theaters, an art gallery, bookstore, coffee bar, and television production facilities. Academic and research areas, located on the middle five floors, include classrooms, lecture halls, computer labs, faculty and student offices and study areas. The top floors house administrative offices, a skylit conference room and a conference center, organized around the central dining commons.

1 *Front façade*

2 *Main lobby*

3 *Elevator lobby*



Restored library stair

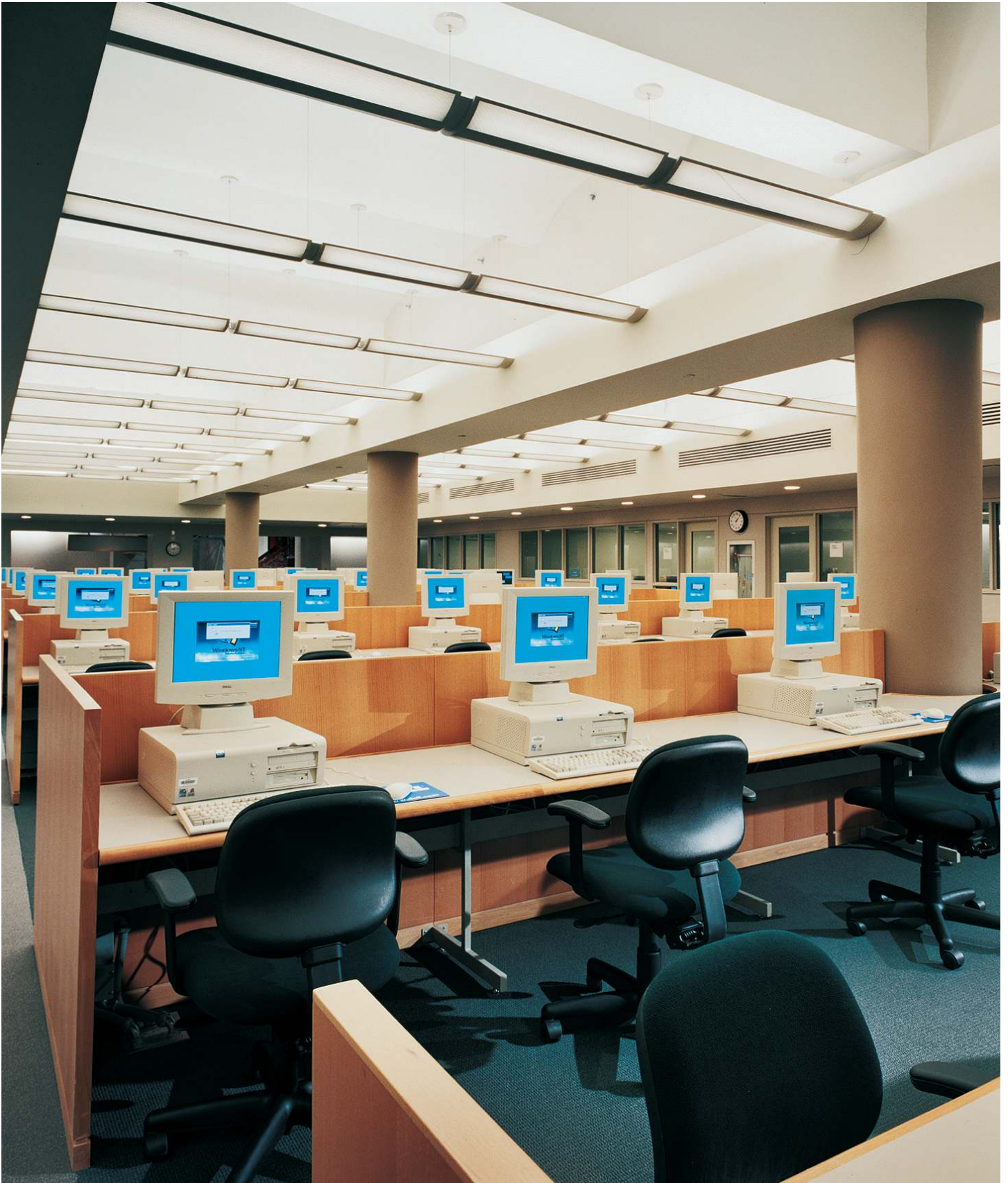


Service desk, first floor



Mina Rees Library, second floor

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Electronic Commons, concourse level

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Key Project Information

- historic restoration of designated areas with complete technological infrastructure replacement
 - auditorium
 - recital hall
 - black box theater/screening room
 - TV studio
 - art gallery
 - bookstore/coffee bar
 - conference center
 - classrooms, computer labs, offices and study areas
 - 92,000 sf research library with open shelving for over 250,000 periodicals and monographs and over 500 workstations
-
- completed 2000
 - gsf 582,000

*2000 Modernization Awards
Buildings Magazine*



Dining Commons