Innovator Educator Jamshed Bharucha Inaugurated as 12th President of The Cooper Union

NEW YORK, Oct. 19, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ -- The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art ushered in a new era for the esteemed 152-year-old institution with the inauguration of its 12th president, cognitive neuroscientist Jamshed Bharucha. The ceremony took place in the historic Great Hall on October 18, 2011. The academic procession crossed from the institution's LEED Platinum academic building at 41 Cooper Square to its landmarked Foundation Building. Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament, India offered video congratulations and provided insight into the influence of our global community on education. Frances Fergusson, President Emerita of Vassar College, James Wright, President Emeritus of Dartmouth College and Lawrence S. Bacow, President Emeritus of Tufts University offered their impressions of President Bharucha, lauding his intellectual curiosity, capacity for innovation and ability to lead.

Drawing inspiration from the genius of founder Peter Cooper, President Bharucha, standing at the lectern where candidate Lincoln spoke in 1860, pointed to "four areas that stand out as academic challenges and opportunities: fostering innovation, promoting access, serving the public good and embracing a global perspective - while maintaining the highest standards."

President Bharucha, a classically trained violinist, joined violinist Andy Stein and other friends to perform selected movements from Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 and Mendelssohn's Octet. The award-winning Gallim Dance company also performed.

Mark L. Epstein, President of the Board of Trustees, formally invested the new president. Vartan Gregorian, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and President Emeritus, Brown University, closed by offering his congratulations.

Fareed Zakaria of CNN, TIME and The Washington Post led a pre-inaugural colloquium on October 17. Dr. Bharucha has been a pioneer in studying how the brain responds to music. Prior to joining The Cooper Union, he was Provost and Senior Vice President of Tufts University. Before joining Tufts, Dr. Bharucha spent his academic career at Dartmouth College. He also served as a Trustee of Vassar College. Founded in 1859 by Peter Cooper, an inventor, industrialist and philanthropist, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art is a preeminent institution providing degrees in the disciplines of art, architecture and engineering as well as courses in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Additional Inauguration press release coverage, including but not limited to the 235 media outlets listed below:

1. AlipesNews
2. Atlanta Business Chronicle
3. Association of Energy Engineers
4. Austin American-Statesman (Austin, TX)
5. Austin Business Journal
7. Birmingham Business Journal
8. Bizjournals.com, Inc.
9. Bolsamania (Web Financial Group)
11. Business First of Buffalo
12. Business First of Columbus
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104. KXLT FOX-47 (Rochester, MN)
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106. KXXV-TV ABC-25 (Waco, TX)
107. KYTX CBS-19 (Tyler, TX)
108. Las Vegas Business Press
109. Las Vegas Review-Journal
110. Los Angeles Business from bizjournals
111. Manchester Matters (UK) MarketWatch
112. Mega News Network: Art
113. Mega News Network: Education
114. Memphis Business Journal
115. Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal
117. National Association of Academic Assessor (NAOAA)
118. NebraskaTV (Kearney, NE)
119. New Jersey Newsroom
120. New Mexico Business Weekly
121. News Blaze
122. NOCO-TV CBS-5 (Fort Collins, CO)
123. NorthWest Cable News (Seattle, WA)
124. Orlando Business Journal
125. Pacific Business News
126. Packaging International
127. Philadelphia Business Journal
128. Pittsburgh Business Times
129. Portland Business Journal
130. PR Newswire
131. Puget Sound Business Journal
132. Resource Nation
133. Reuters
134. Sacramento Business Journal
135. Salinas Californian (Salinas, CA)
136. San Antonio Business Journal
137. San Francisco Business Times
138. San Jose Business Journal
139. SILive: Everything Staten Island
140. South Florida Business Journal
141. St. Louis Business Journal
142. Syracuse.com (Advance Internet)
143. SYS-CON Media
144. Tampa Bay Business Journal
145. The Telegraph (India)
146. TheStreet.com
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152. WAFB CBS-9 (Baton Rouge, LA)
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174. WEHT-TV ABC-25 (Evansville, IN)
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Reuters Building, Times Square
Inauguration Announcement Featured on Reuters’ Ticker with Cooper Union’s Logo
on
Fri Oct 21 at 5:35:38 PM
Tues October 19 at 4:24:52 PM
Jamshed jams at inauguration as Cooper’s president
By Lincoln Anderson

An accomplished violinist, Bharucha is an expert in the study of how the brain processes music.

The son of an American mother from Oregon and a father from India, he graduated from Vassar, where he studied biopsychology.

He went on to receive a master’s degree in philosophy from Yale in 1979 and a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology from Harvard in 1983.
He taught at Dartmouth, where he became deputy provost and faculty dean. In 2002, he was appointed provost and senior vice president of Tufts.

In his remarks, Bharucha said his academic interest in music and the brain is a combination of his father and his mother: His dad was the first engineer in Mumbai to use a computer for architectural design, while his mom once composed a performance piece for organ, dentist’s drill and shattering glass.

“In just over three months at Cooper Union, I have learned more than any equivalent period,” he said. “Cooper Union students are committed to their work in a way I have never seen before.”

The new president related an inspiring tale of the free-tuition school’s founder and namesake, Peter Cooper, to help give an idea about the kind of man he was: The effort to lay the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable in the mid-19th century foundered when it broke off 600 miles before reaching Ireland. While other partners in the venture despaired and gave up, Cooper stuck with it; a year later, the cable was amazingly retrieved from the ocean floor and fixed, and the trans-oceanic cable was hooked up.

Sounding a bit like N.Y.U., Bharucha said, “Cooper Union has no walls — we are in and of the city.” He noted that he had just experienced that fact firsthand during the procession of faculty and administration members from 41 Cooper Square to the Great Hall in the Foundation Building: While the procession had marched on, Bharucha had to wait on the east side of Third Ave. after the light turned red.

President emeriti of Dartmouth, Vassar and Tufts spoke, all testifying to Bharucha’s abilities and talents.
After his remarks and being draped with The Cooper Union medal, signifying his presidency, Bharucha joined a group of fellow musicians from the schools where he’d worked in a performance of Bach’s “Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, 1st Movement” and Felix Mendelssohn’s “Octet, 1st Movement.”

Meanwhile, activists trying to save the St. Mark’s Bookshop hoped Bharucha was able to neurally process the meaning of a protest performance they gave before his inauguration.

During the procession to the Great Hall, members of the Cooper Square Committee serenaded Bharucha with some music of their own. They were accompanied by Robyn Creswell, an N.Y.U. Ph.D. student, on violin. The song was sung to the tune of “Home on the Range,” with lyrics by legendary activist Frances Goldin. It was Goldin, 87, who started the petition effort to save the Third Ave. bookshop by trying to get landlord Cooper Union to drop its rent by $5,000 a month.
NEW YORK—America has, for better or worse, led the way in opening the world to globalization. “They just forgot, along the way, to globalize themselves,” said Fareed Zakaria, host of CNN foreign affairs show Fareed Zakaria GPS.

Zakaria was part of a panel that broached the broad topic of “Educating Students to Lead in a Global Context” at the Cooper Union on Monday. They discussed how American and New York colleges can better equip students to keep pace with a rapidly shifting climate.

“We don’t have that feeling that we have to learn about the world,” said Zakaria.

The Oct. 17 event was held to celebrate the newly named twelfth president of The Cooper Union, Jamshed Bharucha, and was moderated by Vikas Kapoor, a member of the Cooper Union Board of Trustees.

An Indian native, Zakaria described Indian kids in the 1960s and ’70s as knowledge seekers. “That was your ticket out of poverty,” he said. “People don’t feel that way in America because we’re at the top of it.”

He added that “The only way we’ll sustain this position, the only way we’ll have a radical reinvention, is to recognize that we have to get globalized.”

Panelists said as the world becomes more connected by technology, people could become less interested in culture and ideas outside their own.

Valli Nasr, a professor of International Politics at Tufts University, believes this is already happening. He said that with increased security after 9/11, “fewer foreign students were allowed to come to the United States.” Many of those who were denied entry simply went elsewhere—including New Zealand and Australia.

This has contributed to American universities expanding internationally, such as New York University (NYU) that has an Abu Dhabi campus, 10 international study centers, and more than 40 percent of its undergraduates studying abroad. *Atina Grossman*, professor of History at The Cooper Union, suggested finding ways to make studying abroad an option for all students—whether rich or poor.

“We as Americans have to be more open-minded toward the world,” said Wilmer Montosbaca, a Cooper Union graduate and engineering student at NYU. “A word they didn’t mention is that we are ego-centric in a way, and maybe thinking we are the world, when we’re really not.”

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*
By Chance, St. Mark’s Bookshop Supporters Meet With Cooper Union President
By JAMIE LARSON, 20 Cooper Square

By Chance, St. Mark’s Bookshop Supporters Meet With Cooper Union President

With the aid of some fortunate timing, the petition asking Cooper Union to grant a $5,000-per-month rent break to the St. Mark’s Bookshop was delivered right into the hands of the school’s president, Jamshed Bharucha, shortly after noon today.

According to Joyce Ravitz, president of the Cooper Square Committee, the group’s phone calls to set up a time to meet with Mr. Bharucha today had not been returned, but when they walked into the lobby of the Cooper Union Foundation Building, they found him walking towards the door. Ms. Ravitz flagged down the president and handed him a box full of comments as well as 43,789 signatures. Mr. Bharucha invited Ms. Ravitz, a couple of her supporters and The Local up to his office for an impromptu discussion.

Mr. Bharucha estimated, from e-mails he had received, that there were probably close to 50,000 supporters of the bookshop in the neighborhood and around the world.

“We understand fully the passions people have about the St. Mark’s Bookshop. It’s a very iconic place,” he said. “[The store] has obviously worked its way into the hearts of 50,000 people.”

Mr. Bharucha then voiced some criticism about the petition’s focus, telling the Committee members that he wished it had included language encouraging people to buy books at the shop.

“If everybody [who signed the petition] had bought a book at $14.95, they’d be in business for years,” the president said.

Yesterday, a representative of Cooper Union told The Local that a decision on the Bookshop’s rent was expected by the end of the month.
Design for drugs in NYC.
Exhibition will explore the graphic world of pharmaceutical products

A new exhibition at The Herb Lubalin Study Center at The Cooper Union will explore the graphic world of pharmaceutical design. Work by Andy Warhol, Lester Beall, Will Burtin and Herb Lubalin features in the show, which charts design for drugs from the 1940s to the present day. Here, curator Alexander Tochilovsky shares his thoughts about what he sees as a ‘golden age’ in US pharmaceutical design, the 1940s and 50s.

Top: Ad designed for Wm. S. Merrell Company by Herb Lubalin, photo by Carl Fischer (1954).

Tochilovsky: ‘The discovery of “miracle drugs” in the mid-1930s (mainly sulfonamides), capable of controlling bacterial infections, led to the formation and rapid expansion of the pharmaceutical industry. The Second World War helped stimulate that growth immensely, due to the need for such drugs in the war effort, while simultaneously forcing many of the leading European artists and designers to emigrate to the United States. The artists found a home in the new climate of American commercial arts, and in the art schools. Their teachings inspired generations of talented American designers, many of whom found a steady stream of work in the rapidly growing pharmaceutical industry.’

Below: Promotional booklets for Sharp & Dohme, designed by Alexander Ross (1940s).

Above: Promotional mailer for Ciba, designed and illustrated by Jerome Snyder (1950s).

Tochilovsky: ‘The relatively young industry was receptive of new visual ideas and able to afford these young designers a platform to showcase their talents. I can also speculate that because the majority of the promotional material was aimed directly at the physicians, rather than the general public, it tended to be more visually sophisticated, and more influenced by the modern art movements. Similar things occurred in Europe, especially in Switzerland, as the pharmaceutical industry was being born.’

For more pharmaceutical design, see ‘The romance of chemicals’, a portrait of Swiss designer Max Schmid, father of the ‘Geigy style’ while working at J. R. Geigy Pharmaceutical Corporation (now Novartis) in the 1950s and 60s.

Below: Package design by Max Schmid for the antidepressant Pertofran (1962). When the perforated strip in the middle of the box is torn open, the links in the ball and chain illustration are broken, symbolising liberation from the patient’s depressive state.

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PHARMA
Herb Lubalin Study Center, 41 Cooper Square, New York, NY 10003 cooper.edu

*A’39
**Director of the Herb Lubalin Study Center, A’00
FORMULA SAE TEAMS GET BEHIND THE WHEEL OF RACING SIMULATORS FROM HOTSEAT CHASSIS INC. TO PREPARE FOR UPCOMING COMPETITIONS.

Adam Vaughn, now a Cooper Union alum after completing degrees in mechanical engineering, uses one of the HotSeat Chassis simulators at Cooper Union.

The team received the simulator three months before the 2009 Formula SAE Michigan competition. When the competition arrived, some of the Cooper Union drivers were behind the wheel of the racecar for the first time. Yet the team increased its ranking by 38 places from the previous year; an increase it believes was due in part to using the simulator to improve its driving.

"Training is essential for improving the driver’s awareness of the physics and handling characteristics of an open-wheel car," said LeBoff. "The simulators allow them to train day or night, rain or shine."

Today, Yale University, Columbia University, and Cooper Union use the HotSeat Chassis Racer GTX PC simulator with iRacing online simulation software, with some teams using the simulator for last-minute training a week before the race and others teams training drivers on the simulator months before the competition.

LeBoff, a former Formula Ford driver, designed the simulator with a focus on creating a realistic cockpit experience, so that the driver sits in correct position with the seat, the wheel, and the gear shift in their actual locations, the display accurately replicating the view of the road, and the surround sound speakers immersing the driver in the sounds of racing.

For schools located in urban environments where even empty parking lots are a rare luxury, these simulators offer an irreplaceable advantage. At Cooper Union, George Delagrammatikas, the faculty adviser for the FSAE team, also requires students in his automotive engineering course to use the simulators as part of a homework assignment.
“For many of us, driving the HotSeat is the closest we get to driving for a few months,” said Cooper Motorsport team member Dale Short. “In some ways I feel like I’m maintaining my ability to drive a car down the street, let alone race competitively.”

The simulators record lap times so that after even a few hours of practice, a novice driver can see his or her driving improve. LeBoff believes the simulator allows students to gain a better understanding of vehicle control, with the drivers learning things they otherwise wouldn’t—like how a change in brake bias can affect the handling of a vehicle as it enters a turn or how an off-camber curve can make a difference in how fast you’re able to take a turn. Drivers also learn the pressure of driving competitively, picking up maneuvers to prevent opponents from passing them, and experiencing the difficulty of keeping track of the cars that trail them.

Jay LeBoff, founder of HotSeat Chassis, speaks at a reception at Columbia University for SAE students and alumni. (Char Smulyan)

The simulators are also useful in evaluating and selecting the drivers for upcoming competitions. Plus, Short admits, they’re a lot of fun and they get everyone in the lab talking about driving technique, vehicle handling, and lap times. “I see it as both an educational tool and the awesome arcade machine we get to have in our lab,” said Short. “After working long hours in the shop, doing a few laps and getting excited again about auto racing isn’t counterproductive at all.”
Member Spotlight

Susan Davidson

By Jackie Taylor- Assistant Director of Admissions, Daemen College

Susan Davidson, Assistant Dean of Admissions at The Cooper Union, is a remarkable example of a NYSACAC member who has climbed the ranks in higher education admissions and utilized professional networking opportunities to grow in her career and advocate for the students she is most passionate about. You may know Susan as a NYSACAC College Delegate and Co-Chair of the Government Relations Committee. Susan is also active at the national level of higher education and recently assumed the role of Chair of the NACAC Government Relations Committee for a two year term. Susan also won the NYSACAC Human Relations Award in 2010. So, how does she do it all?

Susan began her admissions career six years ago at The Cooper Union. After graduating from Cornell University with her Bachelor’s Degree in Education, Susan moved to Washington, DC. There, she worked for an education research organization, and her research focused on testing projects. She also learned about the admissions field as she served as an alumni interviewer for students applying to Cornell from the DC area. While working at the research organization, Susan became very interested in the transition from high school to college as well as access to college for underrepresented students. She asked the organization she was working for to put her on a higher education project, and when they refused, she decided to go back to school for her Master’s Degree in Higher Education Administration from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Susan completed her degree at Harvard and began working at Cooper in August of 2005. She started as the Assistant Director of Admissions and soon became the Associate Director of Admissions. In her current role as Assistant Dean of Admissions, Susan works primarily with undergraduate students. She does recruitment travel, reviews applications, manages Cooper’s Facebook page, and arranges campus tours among many other duties. Because there are only three people in their admissions office, Susan works with all applicants from various regions.

“My favorite part of my job is working with students,” Susan said. “They all have amazing stories.” Susan went on to tell the story of one particular student who was studying art at Cooper and wanted to go on to medical school after graduation to combine her love of art with her passion for medicine and helping people. The student’s mother worked in textiles, and Susan was impressed as the student talked about comparing patterns on fabric to patterns in the human body. “I’m constantly learning from the students,” Susan added.

Susan has a number of people to credit for teaching her about admissions and helping her achieve her goals. “My dean and colleagues have taught me everything I know. Dean of Admissions, Records and Registrar at The Cooper Union, Mitchell Lipton, and my colleague, John Falls, and I have worked closely for six years,” she said. Her faculty advisor at Harvard, Dr. Bridget Terry Long, inspired her to work on access issues for underrepresented groups.

Susan also has high regard for past NYSACAC Presidents. “They have inspired me to keep working, keep volunteering my time, and stay involved in the professional networks. I have really benefited from being part of these professional networks,” Susan said. Susan has been the Co-Chair of the NYSACAC Government Relations Committee since 2007. She was put on the NACAC Government Relations Committee in 2010 and attended her sixth NACAC conference this past September.

Susan has a wonderful story of involvement in professional networks and passion for student access. She is also an excellent resource for new NYSACAC members who want to get more involved in advocacy, access, student success, and NYSACAC’s committees, professional development opportunities, and conferences. ★

*Assistant Dean of Admissions
Design Education: Interview with Dina Ravvin, Design Student at Cooper Union

In the first interview of this series, I interviewed Nathan Shedroff, an educator and design professional about the expectations and experiences surrounding design education. Now, I welcome the thoughts of Dina Ravvin, a fourth-year design student at The Cooper Union and an aspiring art director who has learned the importance of perfecting process before the outcome.

When you began at Cooper, what were your expectations for a design program? And what has your experience been? How has your experience evolved since your first year in the program?

I knew that Cooper’s design program would be somewhat unconventional in comparison to other schools’ agendas, so I was not actually sure what to expect. I was told from the get-go that you went to this school for the experience and not for the portfolio you walked out with. Beyond keeping an open mind, I had hoped to learn about the history of design and what separated the most commonly agreed upon “good” examples from the poor (and how to create something that fell into the former category).

Like most other programs, the first year at Cooper is foundational and requires its students to complete courses across various fields of art. This taught me how to structure my own methods of working, like time and stress management, but also reassured me that design was what I came there to practice. Initial projects involved some of the basics—to give us a sense of typography, use of imagery, symbols, etc. The more advanced classes focused on learning to discover, source and analyze information, create systems through which to fuel the findings, and use visual means to effectively communicate an idea to a large audience.

It seems to me that the underlying core to most of Cooper’s classes was to perfect the process before the outcome. I was taught the necessities to methodically undertake any project, regardless of whether it had anything to do with design. Overall, the program curriculum I underwent was extremely rigorous and fast-paced, but the resulting experience was truly worthwhile.

In your opinion, what qualities and skills cut across disciplines and should be core to design education?

The ability to think conceptually and communicate with purpose.

Thinking back to when I was in design school, a lot of incoming students think that being a designer means knowing how to use design software. I frequently hear other professionals complain that recent graduates don’t have any of the critical “soft” skills in areas like client communication or strategic thinking, or in areas like research and business analysis. What has your experience been like? How has your program helped you develop these “soft” skills or how have you found ways to develop these skills outside of your program?

I think that these “soft” skills are significant to learn but maybe secondary in undergraduate study. Most professors at Cooper steer away from lengthy discussions on the commercial aspects of the industry, but I found that a select few are increasingly
eager to help if you simply ask the right questions. Since classes are small and intimate, professors tend to slip in stories about their own work on projects and how they handled situations that arose, which are both a privilege to hear and helpful as reference of what to do in a similar setting.

**What would you encourage incoming freshman to look for in a design program?**

**Any red flags students should be aware of?**

A program that provides the basics but pushes you to look past the very things you learn. I would encourage freshman to look for a program that does not focus on production, but rather on teaching the tools and methods that could be used to successfully transform an experience into a piece of design. A school that holds a distinct place and reputation within the design community, as well as providing connections to the field post-graduation, is very determinant. I think that any program which restricts the mediums or subjects you can take on is counterproductive. I would be wary of what a school boasting as well. For instance, if it highlights its technological resources, then its design program might not be the best at teaching students to think critically about a problem prior to jumping onto the computer (but that might just be a personal preference).

**Now that you’re wrapping up your undergraduate studies, where do you see yourself going forward?**

After years of leaning towards making books, magazines and printed pieces—and loving the tangibility of such design matter—I knew I’d found my niche in publication. I’ve been interning at Print magazine for some time and really enjoy the work I have done there. My next step? To art direct a major title. One day soon.

**About Dina Ravvin**

_Dina Ravvin is a graphic designer finishing her last semester at the Cooper Union. She was born in Moscow, raised in Brooklyn, and is now based in Manhattan. She has worked and interned with Print Magazine, Studio Kudos, Made Her Think, Studio 5in1, and Vitaly Komar. Dina speaks almost four languages fluently and avidly color coordinates all her bookshelves. You can view her work at www.dinaravvin.com._
New York’s Public Architecture Gets a Face-Lift

By MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

It was business as usual when I stopped at the Queens Central Library in downtown Jamaica the other morning. Visitors were nosing through racks of dog-eared best sellers, schmoozing near the circulation desk and peering into banks of computers on long tables in the lobby.

Across the room, beneath “Discover!” in red lettering, light poured through a large candy-colored doorway opening onto a new addition, a children’s science center. Immaculate and all white, the place gave off the cheery, vaguely techno vibe of a Swatch shop on the Ginza.

Designed by 1100 Architect with an interior by *Lee H. Skolnick Architecture & Design Partnership, the Children’s Library Discovery Center, as it’s called, is part of a quiet revolution reshaping the city’s public architecture. Piecemeal across the five boroughs, New York is gradually being remade.

These changes come largely thanks to David J. Burney, a polite Englishman who has lived here for 30-odd years and, since 2004, has been Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s commissioner for the Department of Design and Construction. Under him, and mostly under the radar, dozens of new and refurbished libraries, firehouses, emergency medical stations, police precincts, homeless processing centers and museums have been designed by gifted and occasionally famous architects. Taken together, they have brought fresh architectural standards to the city’s infrastructure and, often, to poor, middle- and working-class neighborhoods that have long been overlooked.

It’s a big change from decades ago, when city bureaucrats considered good design a costly frill. The quality of construction was allowed to suffer to serve the bottom line. This message of official indifference contributed to a climate of public skepticism about government and the city that, in turn, dimmed expectations for urban improvements, large or small.

And it’s the small things, after all — some greenery, good lighting, well-maintained sidewalks and well-made buildings — that shape our perceptions of where we live, whether or not we’re always conscious of them.

“The little interventions add up,” is how Mr. Burney put it to me recently. The projects his department has been overseeing aspire to improve the general quality of street life and, in a few cases, tip the balance in neglected corners of the city. For instance, an E.M.S. station on Bond Street in Brooklyn, by Beyhan Karahan Architects, has added eyes on the street to what had been a fairly deserted and derelict stretch near the Gowanus Canal. The area has become safer since.

A century ago Gilded Age patrons, inspired by progressive ideas, enlisted lions of Beaux-Arts architecture to devise landmark schools, firehouses and police stations throughout the city. Andrew Carnegie distributed branch libraries — raised like temples or courthouses a few steps above the street, with stony facades and lofty reading rooms — to serve the masses as silent palaces for public improvement.

Today libraries double as centers for the elderly and toddler playrooms. They’re safe after-school havens for teenagers of working parents, with rooms set aside that are stocked with computers and, at a few branches, like the Rockaways, even with recording studios.

Libraries have also learned from retailers like Starbucks and Barnes & Noble about what people expect when they leave
their homes to go someplace public to sit and read. Libraries have become modern town squares and gathering places; they offer millions of New Yorkers employment counseling, English-language classes and, crucially, Internet access. Quiet rooms, like those Carnegie built, tend to be smaller and set aside these days, almost like smoking sections in airports.

Is that a bad thing? Times change. Research libraries still survive. To imagine that libraries could remain as they were half a century ago would entail wishing away the Web and the demands of old people, immigrants, the unemployed, schoolchildren and parents who want constructive places to keep their young children occupied at a time when public resources and political good will are in increasingly short supply.

“We need to be less introverted,” is how Thomas W. Galante, the chief executive officer of the Queens Library, summed up the challenge for libraries today.

The Discovery Center, which he oversaw and raised $30 million to build, occupies what used to be the site of a nightclub on a corner lot next to the Central Library. At two stories, it is scaled to match the mix of low-rises in the area, although its shiny, sleek facade of textured and opaque glass makes it look about as inconspicuous in this context as Angelina Jolie at a Wendy’s drive-through.

A 22,000-square-foot glass box, the center comes with a wonderland interior by Mr. Skolnick’s firm. Its sculptured central stairway, encouraging people to walk rather than take the elevator, links easy-to-decipher displays of planets and animals that show different parts of the science collection.

The aging Central Library building next door, by York & Sawyer from 1966 and trimmed in limestone and granite, is by comparison a glum, modernist affair, conceived to face down the bus depot and commercial strip across Merrick Boulevard. Its interior is mostly concealed from passers-by.

The Discovery Center is the opposite: all transparency and nonchalance. Its facade, pierced by large windows opening the interior to the street, and vice versa, glows as day turns to night, acting like a beacon in the neighborhood and redefining a humdrum, bus-clogged block.

The new building illustrates what can happen when architects, even without an outsize budget, have a creative agenda and a supportive client. When New York authorities used to hire only the lowest bidders for projects, good architects didn’t bother to compete. There was no one in government who would watch their backs. That proved costlier for the public in the long run.

“All the money the city thought it saved, it lost,” Mr. Burney told me, “because projects were often left unfinished or in disrepair. People tend to think design means more money. But the truth is that the tighter the budget, the more expertise you need to squeeze something good out of the process.”

This was the argument he took to Mayor Bloomberg’s budget crunchers. After a dozen years as chief architect for the New York City Housing Authority, and as the first architect to take over the Department of Design and Construction, he was hired by the mayor with a mandate to create a Design and Construction Excellence program, along the lines of a federal plan, that brought better design to government buildings, starting in the mid-1990s.

The New York program reaches out to good architects, guaranteeing them market-rate fees. It sets aside money for projects — under $10 million at first, and now $15 million — for small firms, to encourage fresh ideas and young talent in the city. Crucially, it appoints project managers whose sole task is safeguarding design through construction when “the risk,” as Mr. Burney put it, “is that because budgets and schedules can be quantified, but design can’t, design is always the first place people look to cut.”
Mr. Skolnick echoed that thought the other day. “Those of us who went into architecture to do some public good felt that if you didn’t go into the public realm, you weren’t doing your job,” he said. “But for years you were hesitant to take on projects with the city because you knew there would be trouble. With David, it’s all changed now.”

It’s changing, certainly. At the corner of Mulberry and Jersey streets in SoHo, I stopped in at the Mulberry Street Branch Library, another public library that opened a few years back. It fills a storefront and two floors below ground in a former chocolate factory. On a tight budget of about $7 million, Rogers Marvel Architects, the firm hired by the New York Public Library and overseen by Mr. Burney’s department, restored the building’s old cast-iron columns, masonry walls and timber beams, and inserted a stairwell to bring daylight and at least a partial view of the street to the subterranean levels. Separate areas were carved out downstairs for teenagers and for toddlers, and a reading room with a tall ceiling was devoted to adults who want peace and quiet.

It’s a modest project, and that reading room seemed to me like the bottom of a well when it was empty that morning. But then I returned in the late afternoon. The teenage and toddler areas were bustling, the desks in the reading room all taken, and the benches beneath the big plate-glass windows on the ground floor occupied by older people mulling over shelves of DVDs. The place felt warm and welcoming.

Like the center in Queens, the SoHo library, easily overlooked when public attention tends toward more glamorous projects, points toward something larger than itself. It is a reminder that humane cities don’t reserve quality architecture just for rich people, that small urban improvements help everyone because city neighborhoods are interdependent.

And that governments actually do get things right sometimes.
Occupy Wall Street protesters have amassed $230,000 and supplies
By MELISSA KLEIN, JENNIFER BAIN and AARON FEIS

The Wall Street protesters have amassed a $230,000 war chest and a warehouse full of supplies for their long-haul campaign.
And the money continues to pour in -- through online donations, money orders and about $1,000 a day dropped in a plastic jug and paint buckets in Zuccotti Park.
Occupy Wall Street has also been flooded with goods -- everything from peanut butter to tampons -- at a rate of about 100-400 new packages a day that has overwhelmed the local UPS branch.
Most of the supplies are being stashed in a United Federation of Teachers storage facility near the park.
They include so-called “jail support kits,” which include a blanket, granola bar and sanitary wipes to give to people as they get out of the slammer.
The movement’s CFO is a 21-year-old art student at Cooper Union with no financial experience -- though it’s unclear how Victoria Sobel wound up with the lofty post.
But she has plenty of help with money matters, as any expenditure greater than $100 requires a vote by the hundreds who gather for daily “general assembly.”
The spending decisions occur during rituals called “temperature checks” -- where raised hands mean “yes” and hands pointed down signal “no.”
General assembly is not quick to part with the dough, though.
A proposal last week to buy $2,250 worth of MetroCard swipes so protesters could get to yesterday’s Times Square rally got the thumbs down.
Another plan by the arts and culture committee to spend $1,750 on paint, wire and tape to create giant puppets -- including one of a Wall Street bull -- was debated for close to an hour.
Questions were raised about whether buying the material was a prudent use of resources.
The consensus? Spend $500 and seek online donations for the rest of the goods.
Occupy Wall Street has raised about $229,500 in three funds, according to the group’s Web site.
One $4,500 fund for administrative costs including cellphones and travel is closed because the site says it has enough cash.
About $75,000 has been raised through the buckets in Zuccotti Park since the occupation began on Sept. 17, the New York Observer reported.
Activist Michael Moore kicked in $1,000 and an anonymous donor gave $5,000 to the cause, according to the paper.
But hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons’ cash was oddly declined by the Occupy Wall Street group at a recent general assembly.
The piles of money, meanwhile, are not being stuffed in the Zuccotti tents.
Despite the group’s harsh stance on banks, they still take their cash to two of them -- the Lower East Side People’s Credit Union and an Amalgamated Bank branch near the park.
Amalgamated, a union-owned bank, offered to waive all fees and service charges, said Ed Meedham, a member of Occupy Wall Street’s media outreach group.
Meedham said none of the donated money has gone toward legal fees for arrested protesters.
Donated goods have deluged the UPS store on Fulton Street, where the group is paying just $40 a month for a small mailbox even though the intake demands a space that costs approximately $500.
The boxes contain jars of peanut butter, boxes of cereal, tampons, soap, batteries, energy bars and supplies for the coming colder weather, including sweatshirts and blankets.
Donors have sent peppers from their garden and brownies, often with supportive notes attached.
The store asked the group to pay more for the space, leading to a lengthy debate over alternative solutions.
The corporate office refuses to grant a price exemption.
Also, some of the OWS protesters are looking for a place to sleep away from the unwashed masses.
“The public-relations team is looking for an apartment in Manhattan’s Financial District with modest furnishings (like bunk beds) that can shelter/shower six-plus full-time activists,” according to the OWS Web site.
BAN THE BUILDER | Shigeru Ban
Shigeru Ban is a household name, if you happen to dwell among architects. But to the expanding ranks of refugees with homes wiped out by earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunami, the 54-year-old architect is an on-the-ground savior for creating temporary housing using plastic beer cartons and a grab bag of available materials. In addition to his humanitarian work, Mr. Ban's high-visibility projects include a paper-tube villa showcasing Hermès furniture in Milan and new commissions for an art museum in Aspen, an office building in Zurich and resorts in China, India and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Last year, his Centre Pompidou in Metz, a satellite of the Paris museum, opened to wide acclaim for its shape inspired by a Chinese bamboo hat. Mr. Ban responded to winning the career-making Pompidou competition by setting up a cabana-sized office—made from paper tubes, naturally—on a balcony of the Pompidou, so he could oversee every detail relating to his design. This fall, the 11-story Shutter House condo in West Chelsea, his first building in New York, is ready for occupancy.

His apartment in Tokyo
Lending it the look of a big, shimmering gift box, the tower's metal screens are motorized, allowing each 20-foot-tall dwelling extravagant views. With a busy schedule that has him shuttling between bases in Tokyo, Paris and the rest of the world, Mr. Ban paused in midstride to ponder how little difference there really is between temporary and permanent.

When I started as an architect I was disappointed because architects mainly work for privileged people, big corporations and rich developers who want to show their power and money through buildings. I thought I would be working for a more general public or for people who needed houses. The reality is totally different.

The Centre Pompidou in Metz, France
After I saw photographs of the plastic sheets given to refugees to live under in Rwanda, in 1994, I went to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to propose ideas for better shelters. Ever since then I have worked in disaster areas. Right now I am designing a paper-tube cathedral seating 700 for Christchurch in New Zealand, where this year there were earthquakes.

Home for me is inside an airplane. I have an apartment in Paris, where I stay for two weeks every month, and one in Tokyo that I designed. It is almost in the middle of Tokyo but inside a small forest. It is like a tree house. I am not interested in the World Trade Center. That kind of work is very political and I don't want to make monuments.

Shutter House in New York
The opportunity to make a building in Manhattan is so rare that, of course, I wanted to do it. When I went to the site in Chelsea, I saw so many galleries and storage places shuttered, and that's why I chose shutters for the new building. Normally apartments in New York are turned in, and I wanted to open it all up to the townscape. Wherever I go, I always take a sketchbook and a novel to read, usually something historical or a who-done-it. I look up to Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, **John Hejduk and Frei Otto. Otto because he was so innovative about lightweight structures, and it was because of John Hejduk that I came to the United States in 1977 to study at the Cooper Union, where he was dean. But Aalto's work is very important to me, too. Whenever I can I visit his Villa Mairea in Finland, because of its absolute sense of context and the touch of materials. The most useful product invented? Of course, it's the pencil.

*AR’84
**Former Arch Dean, A'50
NYC’s best lecture series and spots

You’ll always learn something new at these discussion destinations, featuring big-name celebs, ruminations on science and more nerdy fun. By Amanda Angel, Andrew Friciano and Amy Pitt

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This week in New York

Good For

Big-name talent, Classic New York, Culture vultures, Education & learning, Feed your brain, History, History buffs, Notable talent, Take your parents

The Cooper Union, Great Hall

Since it opened in 1858, this grand room has been witness to great moments in American History: Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have all spoken there, while organizations like the American Red Cross and NAACP have roots there as well. The Cooper Union will often rent out the space to organizations in need of an auspicious venue for a glitzy event. 7 E 7th St at Third Ave (212-353-4195, cooperunion.edu). Next event: “Educating Students to Lead in a Global Context,” Oct 17 at 1pm; free.

Additional listings:

More Codes in the News

Energy Code Compliance in New York City
Friday, September 16, 2011 12:00 AM

Cooper Union Continuing Education: Using six modules developed by the NYC Department of Buildings under an ARRA grant, The Cooper Union and the Department will provide this comprehensive two-day training in the 2011 New York City Energy Conservation Code and procedural requirements.

Source: Cooper Union Continuing Education

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