

Research Report

Necessary Amenities Contributing to Public Assembly and Exhibition

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Introduction:
the formation of design proposal
and relevance of social research

After one week of the social research presentation, I have decided that the buildings in my design proposal will be designed based on the theme of guest house. It will become a guest house of TU Delft, who regularly invite important guests to join academic and social activities. The proposal will take on the function of a normal town house, with bedrooms for honoured guests, such as short-time visiting professors who come to TU Delft to give a lecture, or scholars who come for the resources of this university and need to research on them. The aura of a town house will help this building sit in comfortably into its context, while the complexity inside this building will serve as stages for various scenarios.

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The library and study room in this house will facilitate the university collections, and provide tranquil ambiance for those who are using these rooms. A kitchen and dining room will open its doors to both the invited and everyone else, and decent but inexpensive food should be available. A salon will become the place where formal or informal gathering happens, according to the events. This salon is multifunctional, and capable of staging public or private assemblies including exhibitions and lectures.

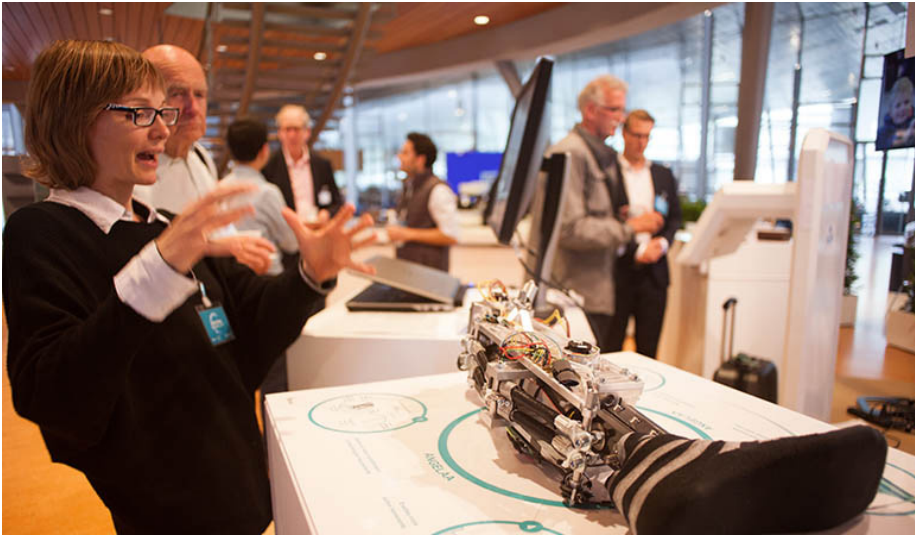
The idea to incorporate a space for event in the building was inspired by Research Exhibition TU Delft. It is an temporary exhibition which often lasts for one to three days where cutting-edge technology of TU Delft was presented and objects displayed to the public. The first edition of Research Exhibition was held in 2014, in the TU Delft Library. Two subsequent editions were held in 2016 in Aula and the Library respectively. During these events guests from the industry were invited by the university, and representatives from companies had come to the exhibition and got informed of where we are in the development of technology.



1 The 2016 teaser edition of Research Exhibition in TU Delft Library. Film still from promotion video. Credit: Valorisation Centre, TU Delft.

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Although the organiser of Research Exhibition, the Valorisation Centre, did not claim that the objects displayed belong to or were intended to make up any university collections, the way these objects function in the event corresponds very much to the first generation of university collections: object-based demonstration of science and comparison. This connection makes clear the relevance of Research Exhibition and other similar events in a building for university collections.

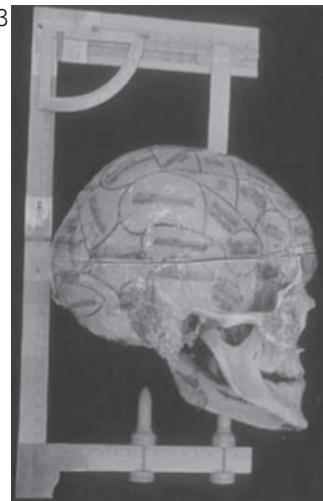


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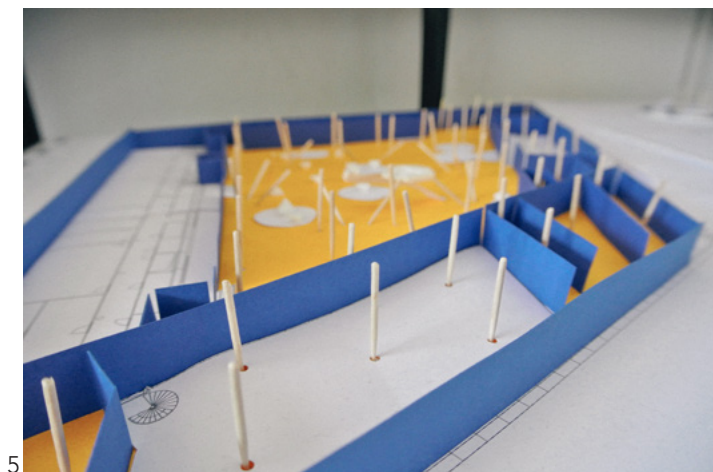


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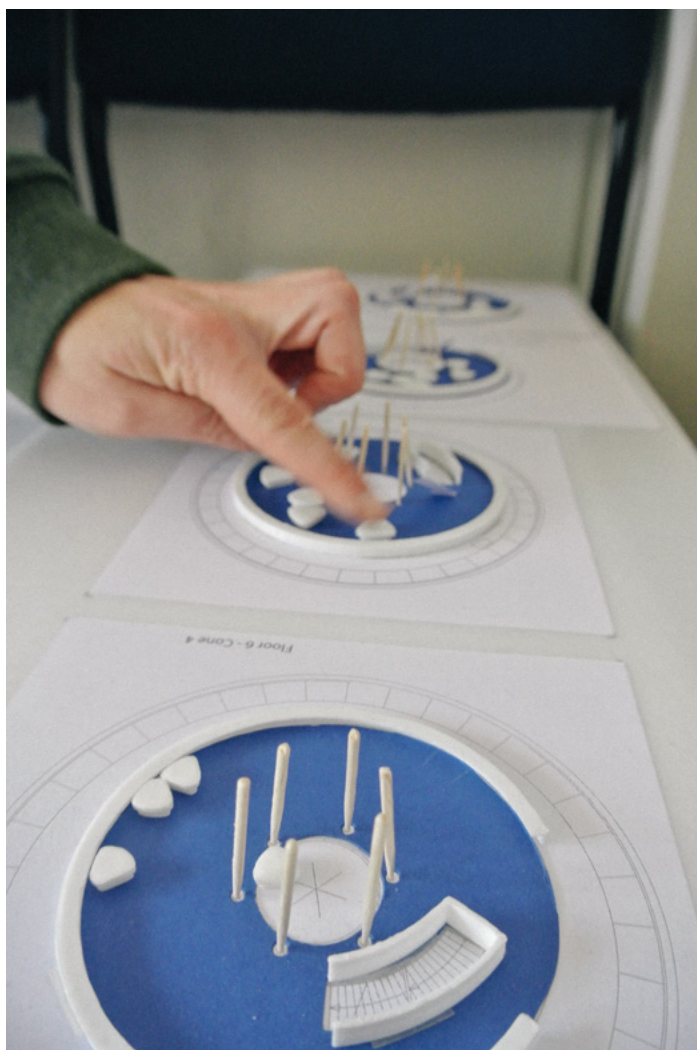
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- 2 The 2016 teaser edition of Research Exhibition in TU Delft Library. Credit: Valorisation Centre, TU Delft.
 - 3 Phrenological skull with measuring apparatus at Utrecht Universiteitsmuseum. Rosamond Purcell, courtesy of Utrecht University Museum.
 - 4 Device to illustrate the parabolic trajectory of projectiles at 18th century cabinet of physics of the University of Coimbra. José Pessoa © Divisão de Documentação Fotográfica do Instituto Português de Museus, reproduced with kind permission of the Museum of Physics, University of Coimbra.



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But the requirements engendered by an event as such are not easily extracted as those of an archive. An event is dynamic, with things and people going on. When we talk about an event, the first big picture that comes in our mind is often a portrait of the big main space, where events is going on, but is that all in the dynamic scene? Probably not. There is hardly an example of an event space which consists of only one single space and nothing else. If there are indeed

5&6 The team also make architectural models to try out the floor configurations for the 2017 Research Exhibition.



other spaces and requirements, what could they be? These information will be crucial for the success of the design.

Therefore this report, which comes third in a row, will be about a research into the design requirements of a multifunctional space, for events like exhibition, conference, lectures and so on. Requirements of these events could vary, and those of the most complicated one may cover those of less complicated ones. In this respect, the Research Exhibition could be considered a developed model of such an event, where object display, academic and social communication are facilitated.

Research Methods

The body that organises the Research Exhibition is Valorisation Centre, which functions as the medium bringing innovation in campus to the society. Since they are responsible for the previous editions and are indeed working on the next one, interviewing one of their staff could provide authentic information.

The interviewee was Susanne Sleehoff. She is the project manager of Research Exhibition. The interview was carried out on 12 December, 2016, at the lobby of EWI building in the TU Delft campus. The Valorisation Centre occupies the whole 19th floor of the same building, but they will have to relocate soon because the upper part of EWI building has to be evacuated for insufficient emergency staircase.

During the interview, pictures and floor configuration drawings of the 2016 edition of Research Exhibition were presented on the table so the interviewee could respond and refer to very specific details.

Research Results

The interview and its prepared question list⁸ was unfolded around an overarching question: What devices does Research Exhibition need? The subsequent design of the question list shows three concerns: 1) the preparation before Research Exhibition take place; 2) the on-site situation of Research Exhibition; 3) the visitors coming to Research Exhibition. There are several questions following each of these three concerns and during the interview Susanne mentioned information that was not covered by prepared questions but triggered by the pictures and drawings I presented to her.

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The TU Delft Identity

The location for a Research Exhibition was decided at the very beginning of the whole preparation schedule. But the TU Delft Library was not the only location considered by the project team of the exhibition (will be referred to as “the team” hereinafter). They first had a look at the AHOY Rotterdam, a multifunctional venue with mechanical audience stands which enable the big space a flexibility of transformation. However, the team was not satisfied.



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8 This question list could be found in the appendix on page 16.

9 The interior of AHOY Rotterdam.
Credit: <http://www.kuif.nl/2010/06/21/korfbal-ahoy-rotterdam/>



“It’s just a big space with (a) roof.” Commented Susanne. The flexibility of AHOY did not overcome its sterility. Hence the team moved their eyes onto the campus, and they started considering using the Library, which the team thought would be a great location.

Designed by Mecanoo, an architecture office based in Delft, the TU Delft Library was made to become an icon. Its white “cone”, as how it is called by students, spikes into the sky through a giant inclined carpet of grass, which make a great contrast to the next-door Aula. The cone is also tangible in its interior, where an atrium ascends and narrows upwards according to the section of the cone. The unexpected architectural arrangement makes it a unique TU Delft building since 1998 when construction was completed. By the time of the first edition of Research Exhibition, the image of this architecture has long been referred to the university itself—a TU Delft identity. The team was aware of that. So they asked the library manager for the permission to use the library for Research Exhibition.

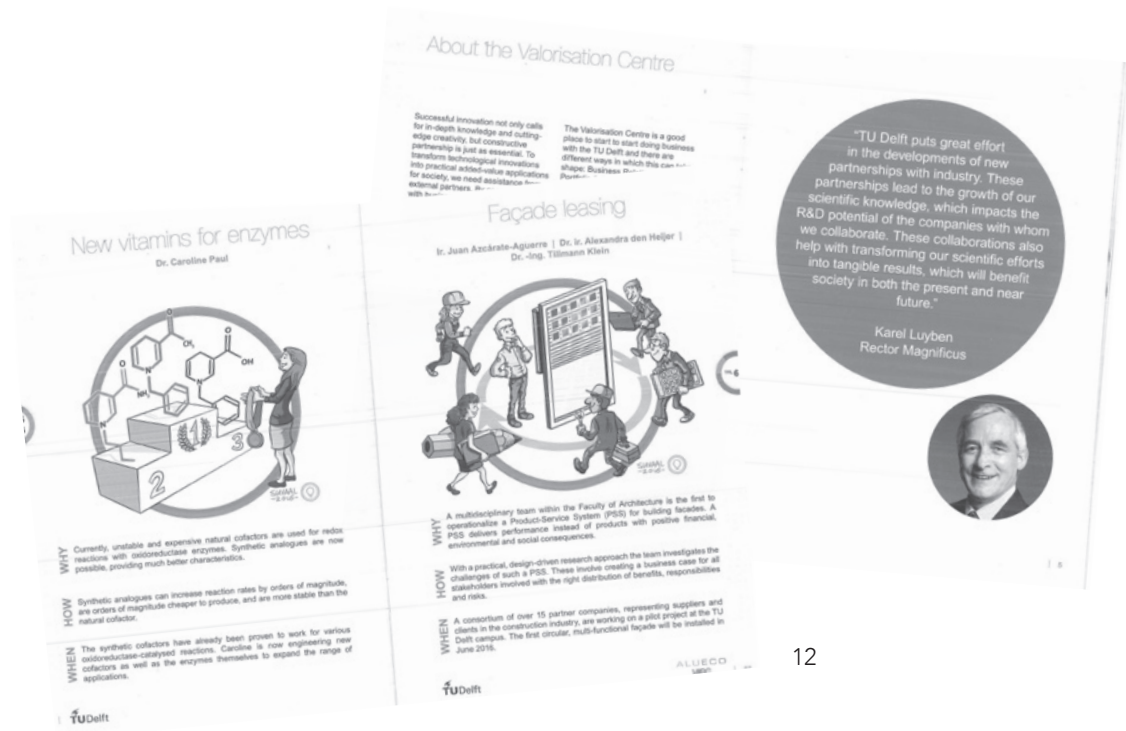
When talking about the Library, Susanne says: “The library is such an iconic building! We thought it will be awesome for this location.” Indeed, the Library satisfied the team very much and they have decided that part of the 2017 edition will also be held in the Library, on its ground floor and upper floors.

Actually using the Library has its price: when the space is occupied for exhibition, students have to find somewhere else to study. Because of this, the 2016 edition took place one week after the XXL opening time¹¹, in order to avoid troubles for the buildings’ frequent users. Despite the fact that the Library is not originally a building for exhibition, the team insist on using it. What could be seen is that a space with a TU Delft identity is favoured when making decisions on the location of a Research Exhibition.

Objects-oriented Display

When Susanne was asked about where they put the furnitures, she said there is no need to store them at all, because those tables and stalls belong to a decoration company who just brought them to the Library and took them away. All the team needed to do was choosing from the company’s catalogue the best models.

The team believed that a circle could be a good motif of display and furniture design for Research Exhibition because the shape of a circle makes people focus on what’s at the centre. Initially the idea was to put every single object at



11 In TU Delft, the XXL opening time refers to the period before and during exam weeks when faculties and libraries operate on a longer opening hour.
 12 The circle motif could also be found in the brochure of the 2016 teaser edition. Credit: Valorisation Centre, TU Delft.

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13& One of the finished objects stored in Susanne's office.
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the centre of a circle-shaped table. But unfortunately the round tables in the catalogue were not that good, so the team chose a white square table instead.

Given the object-centred idea, each object is better displayed on its own, instead of right next to each other. The relation between each object is therefore made unimportant. This is reasonable for an exhibition for innovation products which were researched and produced in different disciplines and labs, in contrary to the method used in most art galleries where art works from the same artist or same style are hung next to each other on the same wall so that comparison is allowed or even encouraged.

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But to divert attention to single object is not the only purpose of this object-oriented display. The free-standing stall and objects allows the researchers of the project stand next to it so interaction between researchers and guests could happen right next to the object. The researcher could then demonstrate the science or theory in his or her work, and explain them face to face without interfering other participants' demonstration.

In result, a favourable floor configuration for Research Exhibition should not be too compact so when demonstration of one project is going on, guests could focus on it and those of other projects will not be affected.

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15 Documents archived in Susanne's office. Most of them are related to Research Exhibition

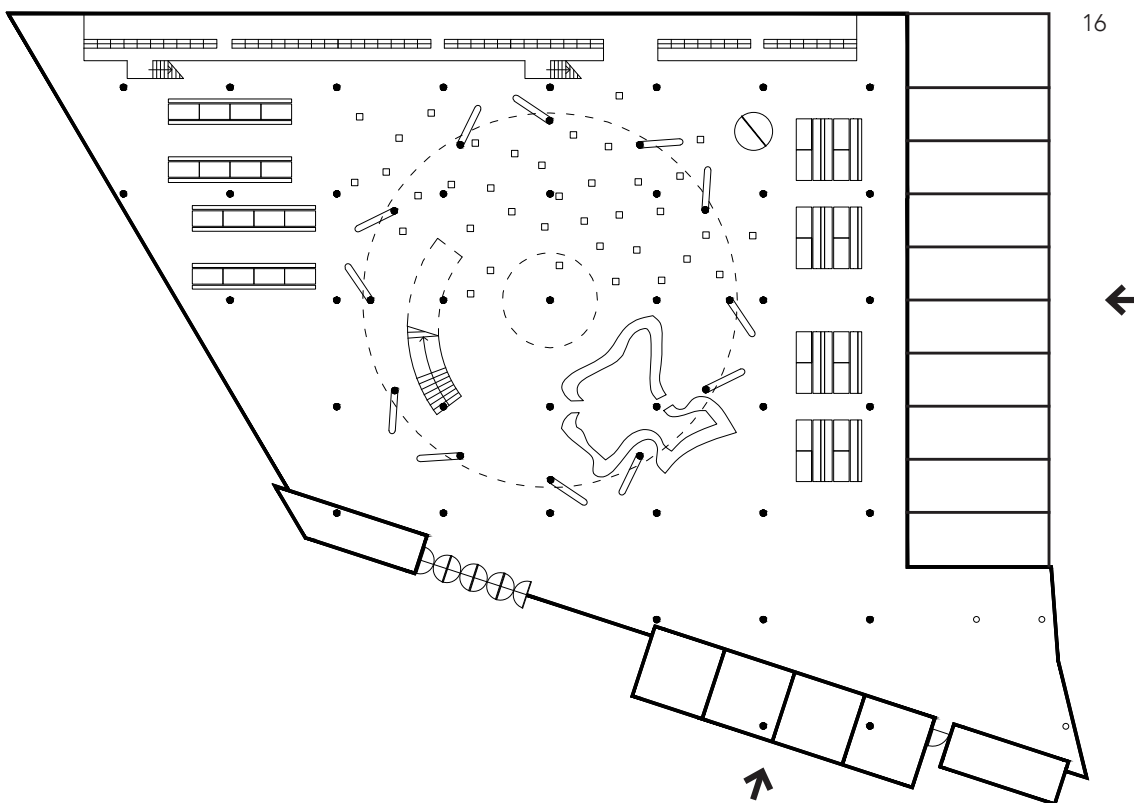
Soft Small Spaces

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One single big space will not suffice. To keep the event work, small spaces play an important role. When an exhibition is going on, there will be lights, noise, and movement in the exhibition room. Essentially, both researchers from university and guest from companies will receive a lot of input of information. When necessary they should also give output. In the program of the 2016 teaser edition, there were also speed lectures. Chosen presenter would walk onto the small circle stage and present his or her work. To carry out and pay attention to the whole package of activities demands considerable energy. “If the participants are not used to working in an exhibition environment, they will need somewhere quiet to have a rest.”

As was told by Susanne, people working in a big room with a lot of input will need to rest at some point, in a separate small space, so they can sit down on a comfortable furniture, have some drinks, and adjust themselves a bit. Every bit of effort for a better recover in this small space will contribute to the success of the whole event.

In the editions held in the Library, these small spaces found their places in the rooms surrounding the atrium. Their proximity to the exhibition room enables everyone to have a quick fix on their physical and mental condition. It is a kind of soft space because it does not need to be a totally enclosed space. As long as the space is good for the recovery of users, there should be freedom in its design, whether there is a door dividing it from the big room or not. This is different from the a hard small spaces, which will be elaborated in the coming paragraphs.



16 This drawing shows the smaller rooms that functioned as soft small spaces in the ground floor of the TU Delft Library. These rooms are easily accessed from the atrium.

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- 17& 18 Talk, talk and talk! These are photos of the 2016 teaser edition, where only 20 projects were displayed. But the atrium was already filled with a lot of information. Credit: Valorisation Centre, TU Delft.
- 19 This is a photo of the 2014 edition, where 80 projects were resented. As a result, the airy Library atrium was loaded with media of information. Film still from a digital panorama tour. Credit: Valorisation Centre, TU Delft.

Hard Small Spaces

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In addition to the soft small spaces where people can adjust themselves, the hard small spaces are also necessary for events like Research Exhibition. When different parties reach a point of formal negotiation, they might want to talk in private, but at the same location of the exhibition, because rearrange an appointment after the event could be difficult. Especially if the talk involves an intellectual property, the need for privacy is even stronger, which means both sides of the negotiation will have to leave the big exhibition room for a while, and migrate into an undisturbed room, according to Susanne.

But in the case of Research Exhibition's 2016 editions, no such rooms were provided. The interaction and negotiation between the guests and researchers mainly happened around the objects. Nevertheless these hard small spaces are important devices for the functioning of the whole event.

Cloakroom for Guests and Researchers

In any upscale exhibition, a cloakroom is necessary. Research Exhibition is no exception. Even though there is great flexibility in the configuration of this kind of space and little room for elaboration, some attention should be still paid to the types of things people bring to the exhibition. Because the researchers need to be ready for the situation that further information shall be displayed or explained in an negotiation, they usually bring their laptops to the exhibition, in addition to their coats and bags.

Kitchen

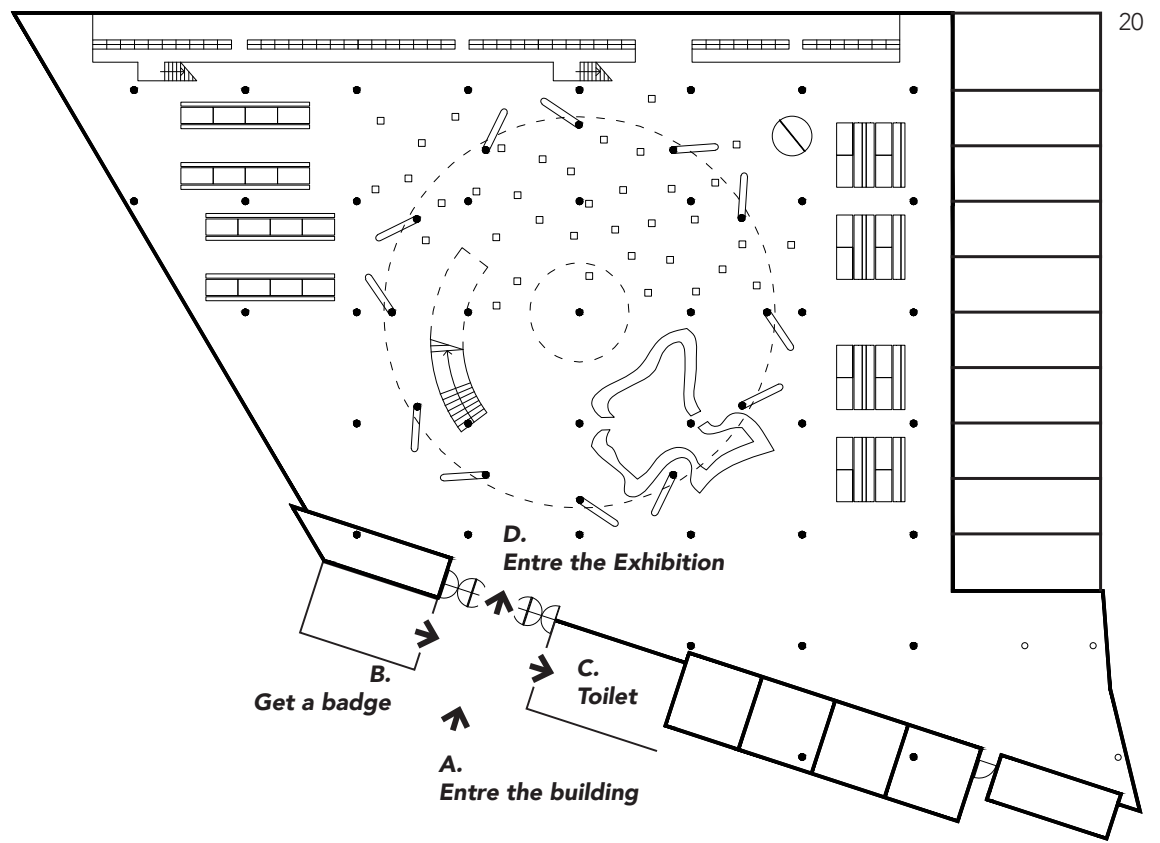
Although catering company could simply transport pre-cooked food into the location, a high-end catering standard will not be achieved by doing so. In addition to cold food and drinks, the team tried their best to bring hot and traditional food to the table. In the 2016 edition, they commissioned the catering company to make croquette, which have to be fried on site for best quality. However, it would be a disaster if students had smelt strange odour from the books they borrowed. So the catering team had to fry the croquettes outside, on Prometheusplein which is the square between the Library and Aula. Croquette was not the only thing that asks for a dedicated kitchen: there was also smoked salmon. When smoke salmon is being cooked there will be smoke. If the library was filled with smoke it would not only be a problem of smell, but also of safety. Hence a well equipped kitchen is a must if the exhibition sets the bar high.

People and Circulation

Research Exhibition is a compact event that happens in very short time. In the 2016 teaser edition, 400 visitors from 125 unique companies had visited the exhibition in one afternoon, from 13:00 till 19:00. However, the team is expecting more visitors for the 2017 edition: this fourth and biggest edition

will last 3 consecutive days, welcoming guests from companies, government, and rest of the public respectively on each day. For the first two days it's not a completely public event, since only the invited guests could enter this venue, which means admission and circulation should be handled carefully.

In the 2016 edition, the space between outdoor stairs and Library atrium became the gateway to the exhibition. Coming guests would first have to get their badge in order to be allowed inside. Also before the atrium is the café, which has direct connection to toilets. What was emphasised by Susanne is that, most female guests would like to stop by the toilet before they really go into the exhibition room. Thus the circulation in the Library was good in this respect.



20 Circulation diagram showing the entrance part of the 2016 edition in the Library.

Workshop and Storage for Objects

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A workshop is needed for the team to prepare the objects to be displayed. This is a place which does not necessarily have to be in the exhibition's proximity. The size of this workshop for the coming 2017 edition is roughly 60m².

Although some objects in the exhibition are working models or prototypes from labs, most of the objects are only made for demonstration in the exhibition, so the production starts only before the events. Because it is not realistic to ask the researchers spare additional time for objects-making, these objects are to be made by student assistants, guided by the team, in a workshop at the Science Centre Delft. The team first meet the researchers of one project, and discuss with them how to build the model of the innovation. When this is done, student assistants could start building it, in the 60m²-big workshop.

Once the building of a group of objects are done, they will be transported to basement storage rooms at the TPM²¹ and IO²² faculties. The location of these storage rooms were appointed by the Department of Logistics of the university, after the team approached them for help. The Department of Logistics searched all over the campus to find out suitable space. This reflects an advantage of an compact campus, where buildings are under unitised management and transportation distance remains acceptable.

21 TPM stands for Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management.

22 IO stands for Industrieel Ontwerpen in Dutch, which means Industrial Design.

Conclusions

An event like Research Exhibition demands very specific environment. It is not only an exposition of things, but also about how to communicate, how to maintain comfort and how to control the flows of people. A good sequence of entering the building provides spaces for necessary reception and management, and satisfy the need of guests. There should be a place where every participant could put their personal belongings so they can participate in the event without burden. In the main exhibition room, separately installed objects encourages focus of the guests and minimise the interference of other participants and projects in the room. When participants get tired of all the environment, they could find a quiet place to have a rest, maybe with the help of some energy supply. When negotiation becomes serious, participants could make use of the private rooms in the venue, and make a deal to put things forward. At a festive moment when people want to celebrate, delicious food and drinks, hot and cold, should come in from a kitchen nearby, where cater can work with good equipment without disturbing other users of the building. Not to forget is that, it enhances the event a lot if the place has a TU Delft identity. The inventory listed above provides a hint of how these places should be, and indicate which direction to go, but it shall never confine the idea of architecture. Also it has to be made clear that not all of the spaces mentioned in the Research Results have to be integrated into one building. For example the workshop and storage for the objects on display could be elsewhere, as long as things could be easily transported.

The results shed lights on the immediately overlooked aspects of an event or exhibition, which usually have only the big main space oriented to the audience. The talk with Susanne, along with these sorted results, helps make the preparation ready for the final decision on the full architectural programs of the design proposal.

Appendix

Question List

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Before Research Exhibition

1. How many people are there in the team that is responsible for the Research Exhibition? Are all of you working in the same office or you have different locations in the campus?
2. How often do you have to visit other faculties in the campus?
3. For the Support to Xplain part, where is the location that you help the participants make the artefacts? Is there a collective workshop?

On site Research Exhibition

1. Is there a written curatorial program or operation manual for the 2016 Research Exhibition?
2. When do you decide the location for a Research Exhibition? Do you make the decision at the beginning of the preparation or later?
3. What factors will affect the decision of this location?
4. In the 2016 edition in the Library, who decided the floor layout of the exhibition? Was it some one from the Library or your team? Was the layout decided according to former experience?
5. Is there any element not shown in the photos in addition to object display, food pantries and the stage for the speed lecture?
6. In the program of the 2016 edition, the “Networking & Drinks” is a very interesting part. It reminds me of those more relaxed social event. Besides the design studio I also take part in another course taught by a sociologist and anthropologist, and she told me in some conferences when the businessmen reach a deal, they will leave the hall and enter some smaller rooms to sign the contract and etc. Does the Research Exhibition go that far or participants develop their networks after the Exhibition?
7. How did the Library handle the problem of keeping coats and catering? Was the drinks prepared before hand or there is no preparation for the food? What is the amount of foods and drinks in need?

Visitors and participants

1. How many visitors have come to the 2016 edition?
2. I know there is an opportunity to register online to take part. But do you also invite visitors?
3. What is the ratio of different backgrounds of these visitors? Did the non-business sector involve much?
4. Do they give feedbacks?
5. How many staff were in need on site?

Internet Sources

<http://www.kuifj.nl/2010/06/21/korfbal-ahoy-rotterdam/> (4-1-2017)

<http://posad.nl/tu-delft-seminar-2/> (4-1-2017)