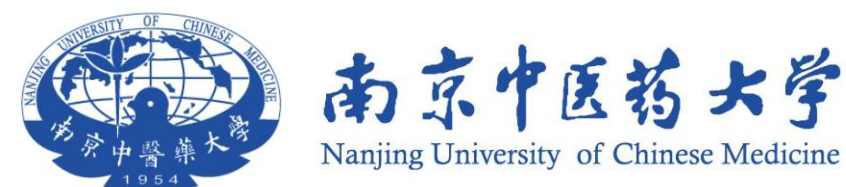




Transforming Library Spaces



Duke Kunshan University
Kunshan, China

昆山杜克大学， 中国

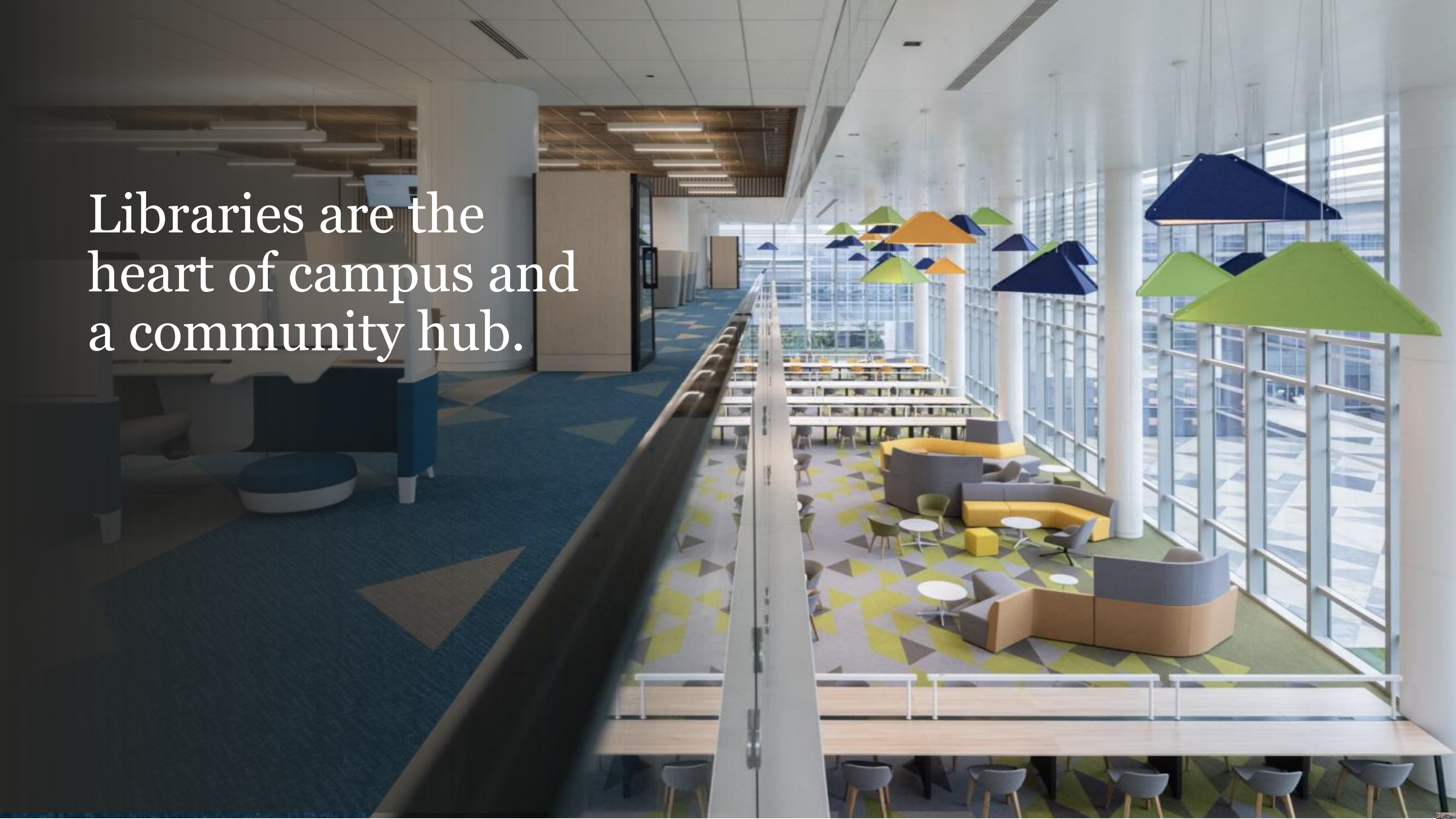
At Steelcase Learning, we inspire a life
of learning by creating places that engage
and ultimately empower people,
within and beyond the classroom.

Recall your most recent
experience visiting a library.

What was your purpose, what did you
explore and what stood out to you?

The Library's Role Today

Libraries are the
heart of campus and
a community hub.



The background image shows a modern library interior. In the foreground, there are several colorful, cylindrical armchairs in shades of purple, blue, and orange. Behind them is a long, low bookshelf filled with books. To the left, there is a small table with a white top and a metal frame. The background is a large window with vertical bars, looking out onto a green forest. The overall lighting is soft and even.

“We need to think about the library as not just a place to provide help and support, but also as a second home — a space that feels welcoming and not intimidating.”

Carlos Rodriguez
Dean of the University Library
at California State University - Los Angeles

Catalysts of Change

Positioned as "sandboxes of innovation," libraries are at the forefront of curricular, pedagogical and technological change, providing essential resources for skill development and experimentation.



Fundamental to Academic Success

Libraries foster academic fellowship and model what a scholarly community looks like, giving students meaningful ways to engage at various levels.

Librarians serve as educators, research consultants and digital literacy specialists, helping learners critically assess information and effectively navigate research tools.



Foster Collaboration, Social Interactions and Wellbeing

Libraries serve as both the heart of campus and a hub for community. As pillars of the academic environment, they are evolving into vibrant centers that foster social connection, support wellbeing and promote a sense of belonging through inclusive design and diverse programming.



About Our Research

Signals of Change in Learning Environments

Learners and Educators

From

Uniform



To

Inclusion

Teaching and Learning

From

Transactional



To

Engaging

Technology

From

Information

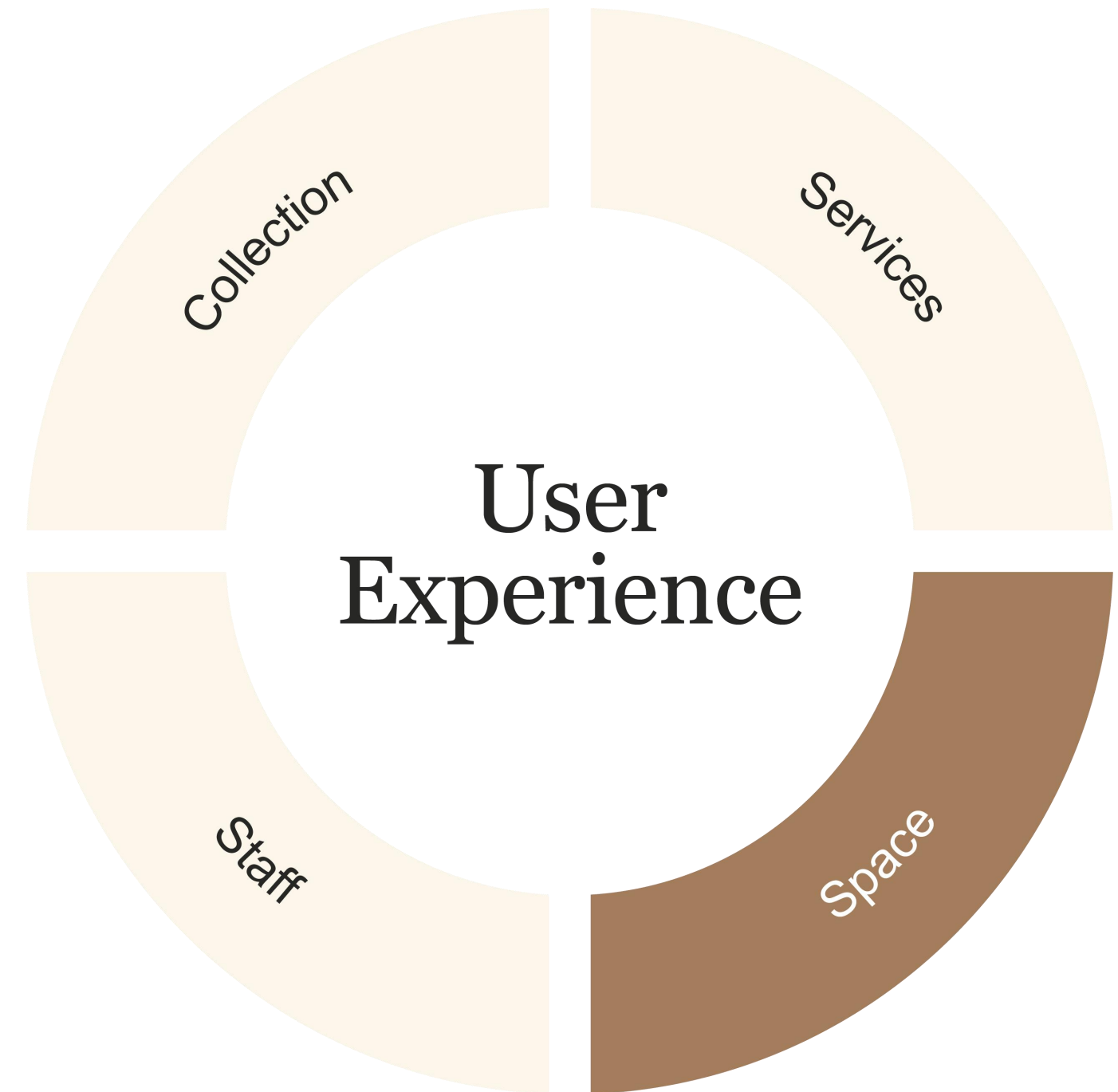


To

Augmentation

Central Question:

How do we design for
future-ready library
environments with
people at the center
of the design?



The research included qualitative approaches designed to understand the experiences of students, staff and partners at libraries across the North America, Asia and Europe.

Research Activities Included:	101 student survey responses
	19 student photo diary missions
	8 roundtable discussions with university librarians
	Over 20 interviews
	Over 50 hours of observation across 7 different locations
	4 Focus Group Interviews
	2 student groups
	1 Library Staff group
	1 Library Partners group

Librarians Share Their Vision for Library Space Design

Wants

Welcoming Space

Individual + Group Spaces

Support for Creativity

Flexibility/Movement

Expert + Peer Services

Nourishment + Respite

Don't Want

Book Warehouse

Fixed Spaces

Granite Service Desks

Obsolete Tech

Hidden Services

Perfectionism

Libraries are Being Asked to Balance Many Considerations

Information Retrieval	vs.	Content Creation
Individual Focus	vs.	Collaboration
Academic	vs.	Social
Permanent	vs.	Flexible
Analog	vs.	Digital
Students	vs.	Faculty
Campus	vs.	Community

Library Activities

Some library activities may include:

- Studying or working privately
- Collaborating in a group
- Attending a club meeting
- Having coffee with a friend
- Tutoring
- Participating in a virtual meeting
- Using specialized technology tools
- Accessing resources
- Receiving tech help
- Resting and relaxing
- Attending a workshop



Key Findings + Insights

People's activities vary across the semester, the week and throughout the day.

Furniture settings need to adapt to these changing needs.

How might individual and organizational
control be applied across the different
dimensions of flexibility?



People see the library
as a study sanctuary.



Individual study areas can better support the privacy and comfort needs of learners, while open areas can allow for collaboration and community.

How might comfort and privacy be provided for varying levels of focus, from shallow focus to deep focus?

People visit the library
for collaborative learning.



Physical and technological affordances can be further optimized for group studying and project work.

How might collaborative spaces support peer learning, equitable participation and team cohesion?



People seek spaces that
support their unique physical,
cognitive and emotional needs.



There is opportunity to provide settings that are accessible and inclusive for all learners.

How might equitable design be applied to ensure everyone's individual needs are met?



People are exposed to
new technologies and
bring their own devices.

Spaces can better accommodate a variety of devices and continually changing technologies.

How might user experience with technology be intuitive, flexible and effectively hosted?



Design Principles

Library Design Principles

01
Inclusive +
Inviting

02
Functional +
Varied

03
Flexible

04
High-performing



01 Inclusive + Inviting

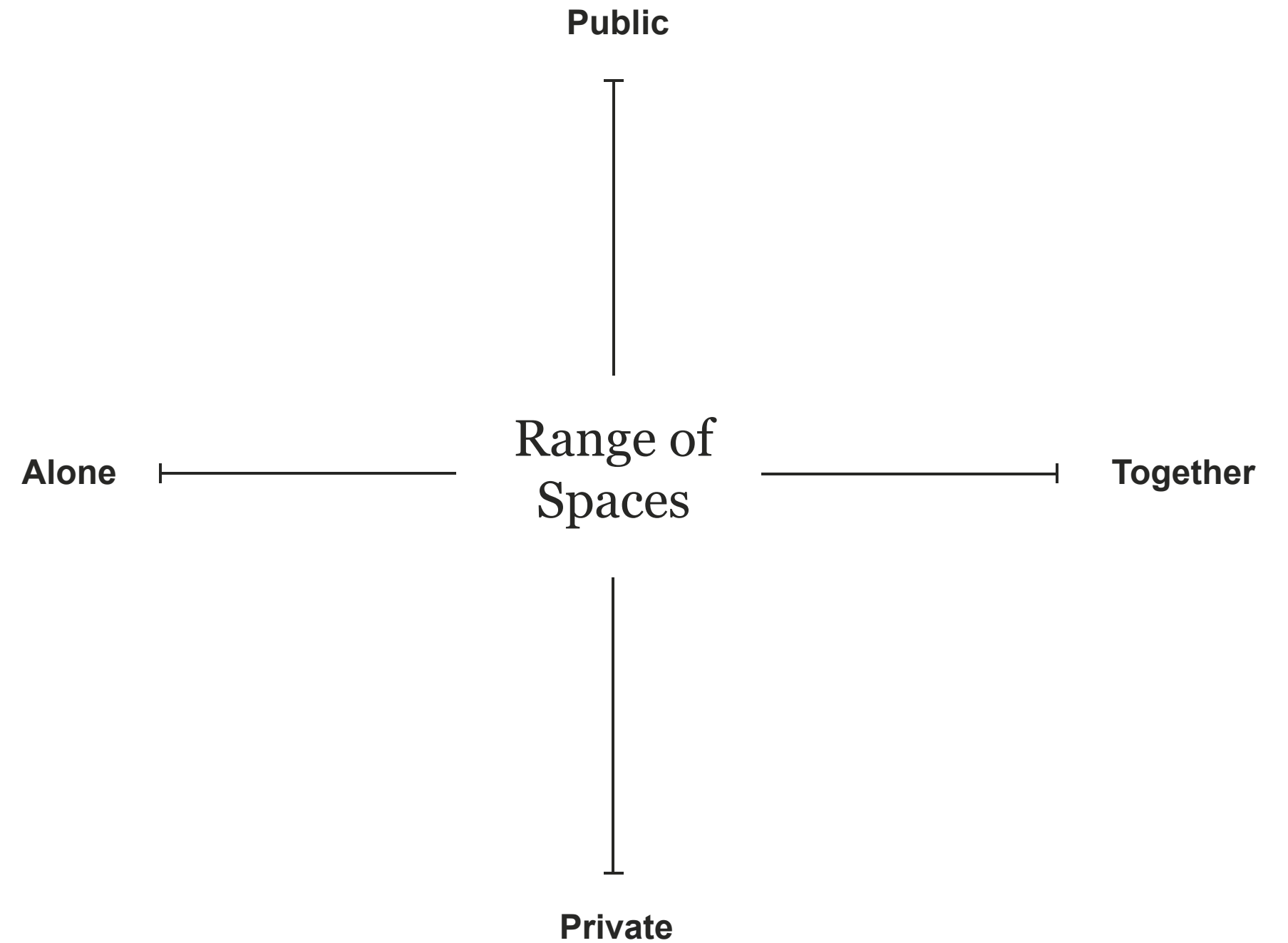
Design inclusive, welcoming spaces that foster a sense of belonging and safety for the full campus community.



02

Functional + Varied

Design the library with functional zones that support a variety of settings, thoughtfully addressing different activities, noise levels, social interactions and resource requirements.



03 Flexible

Create flexible spaces that provide user control and adapt to changing needs and technology, both now and into the future.



04 High- performing

Support physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs through high-performing spaces considering psychological comfort, privacy, proximity, posture, personality and productivity.



Applications

Flexible Library Spaces for Diverse Needs

The library is organized into distinct yet connected zones that support multiple modes of learning.

- Welcome and Reception
- Café and Commons
- Staff and Support
- Group Study
- Innovation and Instruction
- Individual Study
- Rejuvenation

