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ADD Inc designs new library for Dartmouth College's medical school

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ADD Inc was tasked with designing the temporary space for Dartmouth College's Dana Biomedical Library. The short-term home for the college's medical school library is located at 37 Dewey Field Rd.

The permanent Dana Medical Library will be part of the college's North Campus Academic Center, which will be completed in 2016.

"Technology and students' expectations have changed the role of academic libraries," said B.K. Boley, principal, ADD Inc. "The new design reflects the way that libraries function now as learning environments with more study and collaboration spaces and fewer open stacks."

ADD Inc took their design inspiration for the new space from illustrative, pop-up anatomy books, some of the earliest forms of pop-up books. Following this concept, the space's millwork and finishes look like they are unfolding, revealing different layers. The main table in one of the study rooms resembles folded paper and is suggestive of the slightly askew shapes formed when one gradually opens a pop-up book.

The display wall at the entrance is a significant element of the space. It showcases the library's carefully curated medical manuscripts as works of art. The librarian's desk is also a highlight and was designed to resemble a book, with side-lit resin panels as its pages.

The space's palette of vivid reds and blues recall depictions of the circulatory system in medical textbooks. Mixtures of high-tech and tactile materials were used throughout the project, resulting in a space that represents the new role of the library in the digital age.

ADD Inc's greatest challenge was fitting the school's rigorous program requirements, which included three seminar rooms, a reference librarian desk, six offices, an open study area and café, into the smaller 8,300 s/f space, while still providing staff and students with an atmosphere conducive to study. By breaking the plan into distinct zones, each designed to support varying levels of acoustical and visual privacy, the team was able to provide an environment that supports both collaborative learning and quiet study.

The end result of the medical library's previously raw space is a bright, colorful and vibrant place for staff members and students to gather, study, and share resources.

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