

Redesign of the Surakarta City Library and Archives Service Building with a Hybrid Architectural Design Idea

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ABSTRACT

Surakarta citizens show strong reading enthusiasm, yet local public library facilities remain inadequate. The Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives faces layout constraints, poor circulation, and low spatial comfort. This study redesigns the library interior by applying a hybrid architectural concept, connecting literacy spaces with green transitional areas to improve user experience. The design adopts a Zen interior style for focus and quietude, alongside Batik Kawung motifs to reflect regional identity. Guided by John M. Kurtz's design programming method—covering orientation, basic programming, program synthesis, and designing—the project incorporates continuous evaluation and user feedback. The result is a flexible, contextually rooted interior layout featuring integrated indoor and semi-outdoor reading zones, ergonomic shelf spacing, and custom furniture elements derived from traditional Javanese patterns. This redesign transforms the civic library into a comfortable, functional, and culturally meaningful public space.

KEYWORDS

Hybrid architecture
Batik Kawung
Kurtz method
Surakarta
Zen interior

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1. Introduction

Public engagement in reading within Surakarta is notably strong. A survey conducted by the Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives between October and November 2021 revealed a Reading Interest Index of 74.54 and a Reading Habit Index of 79.37 (on a scale of 0–100) across five sub-districts and 54 urban villages (Dinas Perpustakaan dan Kearsipan Kota Surakarta, 2021). While these statistics confirm that literacy is vital to daily life in Surakarta, the quality and spatial charm of the available civic library facilities lag behind. Multiple field studies highlight recurring spatial and environmental deficiencies in Surakarta's libraries (Mulyawan et al., 2023; Sholihah et al., 2022), a pattern that mirrors broader international evidence that library facilities frequently underperform in spatial comfort even where baseline standards are met (Peng et al., 2022). Even when facilities meet national minimum standards, spatial arrangement and visitor comfort often remain unoptimized (Adetayo & Lawal, 2024). Furthermore, spatial inefficiency hinders public libraries from realizing their full potential as vibrant community hubs (Lee, 2024). Ultimately, the success of regional libraries and archives relies heavily on physical environment quality and service excellence (Leorke & Wyatt, 2019). According to Indonesian Law No. 43 of 2007 on Libraries, a library acts not only as a repository of written works but also as an inclusive cultural anchor promoting art, education, and local wisdom.

As lifestyles evolve, public expectations of libraries have expanded. Libraries are no longer seen merely as places for reading and borrowing books, but also as inclusive, comfortable, and inspirational public spaces that support learning and exploration (Wood, 2021). The Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives—located on a strategic 1,474 m² plot with a 2,195 m² three-story building constructed in 1971 at Jalan Hasanudin No. 112, Banjarsari—was chosen as the redesign subject. Direct site observations reveal that despite its accessibility and open public access, longstanding spatial limitations continue to persist, including cramped shelving aisles, unclear functional zoning, poor interior comfort, and significant unutilized area on the upper floor.

To solve these spatial bottlenecks, this project proposes a hybrid architectural design strategy. Redesign involves revising and improving existing spatial structures for functional development (Honey-Rosés et al., 2021). Hybrid architecture merges distinct functions through adaptive blending techniques such as penetration, embracing, clamping, and interlacing (Hendryanto et al., 2025). In this facility, interior literacy spaces are synthesized with green transitional zones dedicated to passive recreation and environmental comfort (Gierbienis, 2019). Integrated hybrid buildings achieve superior utility when internal functions are interconnected rather than isolated (Wang & Pan, 2024). This functional synthesis seamlessly integrates interior and exterior boundaries to enhance human spatial perception (Dalay, 2020).

To foster deep focus, a Zen interior style is employed. Derived from Zen philosophy, this style prioritizes simplicity, balance, and visual stillness (Jia et al., 2025). Zen interior principles utilize natural materials, clean lines, indirect natural lighting, indoor vegetation, and uncluttered layouts to encourage mental tranquility and restorative focus (Sornubol & Lekagul, 2024). Furthermore, local cultural identity is infused via the Batik Kawung motif. Batik is an internationally recognized Indonesian textile heritage. The Batik Kawung pattern—originating from Surakarta and Yogyakarta—uses geometric intersecting circles reminiscent of the kolang-kaling (palm fruit), symbolizing purity, self-control, and spiritual integrity. It embodies the Pancasila concept, representing four-cardinal harmony centered around human, natural, and divine alignment (Widayanti & Handayani, 2024). Combining Zen minimalism with Batik Kawung philosophy yields a tranquil, contextually grounded educational environment (Munteanu, 2020).

The primary objective of this study is to redesign the interior of the Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives by applying a hybrid spatial layout that integrates green transitional zones, ergonomic furniture solutions, and Javanese cultural identity. By resolving current physical deficiencies, this redesign is expected to provide an adaptive, comfortable, and inspirational literacy environment. The resulting design aims to serve as a model for civic institutions seeking to transform traditional library spaces into vibrant, culturally representative public anchors.

2. Method

This redesign employs a qualitative architectural design programming approach that balances spatial logic with qualitative user experiences (Kurtz, 1984). The methodology prioritizes thorough evaluation, spatial comfort, and functional relevance over rapid development (Cahyani, n.d.). Guided by this framework, the redesign process of the Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives follows four iterative stages, each integrated with continuous evaluation to ensure design decisions directly address site-specific deficiencies:

2.1 Orientation

The initial phase focused on defining core problem statements, analyzing site constraints, and understanding institutional goals. Primary spatial data were gathered through direct field observations of existing interior conditions, visitor activity mapping, and spatial flow tracking (Ma et al., 2025). Qualitative insights regarding administrative needs, collection growth, and operational challenges were collected through semi-structured interviews with library management and staff. Historical documents and municipal literacy policies were also reviewed to establish contextual background.

2.2 Basic Programming

This phase translated qualitative observations into structured quantitative and functional space requirements. Space lists, room capacities, and functional relationships were established based on user activity patterns. Dimensional clearances and aisle width requirements were benchmarked against human factors and interior ergonomic reference standards (Panero & Zelnik, 1979). The programming process specifically calculated minimum aisle clearance standards to resolve current overcrowding issues between book storage racks.

2.3 Program Synthesis

Collected spatial requirements were synthesized into preliminary spatial strategies and design concepts. Functional spaces were organized into four distinct zones: public, semi-public, private, and service areas to eliminate activity interference. A hybrid circulation model combining linear and radial pathways was developed to optimize user flow. Simultaneously, design concepts were translated into physical interior elements by formulating the Zen interior aesthetic and abstracting the geometric motifs of Batik Kawung into wall panels, ceiling grids, partitions, and custom furniture.

2.4 Designing and Evaluation

The final phase involved developing comprehensive design solutions and testing them against predefined functional, ergonomic, and cultural criteria. Preliminary spatial layouts and 3D interior renderings were presented to library managers and domain experts through review sessions. Feedback from these evaluations guided iterative refinements in spatial layout, material selection, and lighting integration, culminating in the final interior redesign scheme.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Existing Conditions and Design Problem

The Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives is situated on Jalan Hasanudin No. 112, in the Punggawan area of Banjarsari District, Surakarta City, Central Java (57132), occupying a strategic position within a dense urban fabric (Figure 1). The building stands between two notable landmarks—Apotek Rahma to the west and the Secretariat of the DPD Partai Golkar to the east—with a narrow street, Jalan Nusa Indah VII, providing side access to the site. The library's main façade faces north, directly opposite Masjid At-Taubah Srambatan, offering clear visual orientation and accessibility from the main road. This central location, surrounded by both public and commercial facilities, supports the library's role as an accessible hub for community literacy and archival services, and helps explain why deficiencies in its interior condition carry disproportionate weight for the city's broader literacy infrastructure (Sholihah et al., 2022).



Fig. 1. Site location of the Surakarta City Office of Library and Archives relative to surrounding landmarks (Apotek Rahma, Secretariat of DPD Partai Golkar, Masjid At-Taubah Srambatan)
(Source: author's documentation, 2025)

Despite this locational advantage, direct field observation reveals a building whose interior condition falls well short of its strategic potential. The most immediate problem is bookshelf density: as shown in Figure 2, shelving units are packed too closely together, aisles are narrow and irregular, and book arrangement does not consistently follow classification order—forcing visitors to navigate awkwardly between rows rather than browse comfortably. Measured on site, the current distance between shelves ranges from only 80 to 100 cm. This falls well short of the ergonomic standard set by (Panero and Zelnik 1979), who establish a minimum of 167 cm for comfortable three-person passage and 76.2 cm for single-person clearance. The resulting congestion is not a cosmetic issue: it is consistent with recent empirical findings that inadequate physical space comfort is among the leading factors reducing both the frequency and duration of library visits (Peng et al. 2022)—meaning the shelving problem visible in Figure 2 plausibly translates into fewer people using the library at all, not merely a less pleasant experience for those who do.



Fig. 2. Existing bookshelf arrangement showing dense, irregular spacing and narrow aisle clearance.
(Source: author's documentation, 2025)

The building's shortcomings extend beyond the shelving itself. As documented in Figure 3, the library still lacks a varied or comfortable range of seating arrangements to support different visitor activities—the limited wooden seating available is concentrated near the entrance rather than distributed to support reading or study elsewhere in the building. Meanwhile, circulation and access areas, including the building's entrance drop-off and adjacent parking zone, are functionally underdeveloped, doubling informally as a children's play and vehicle-parking area with no clear separation between these incompatible uses. In addition, field observation found that the second floor contains a very large area that remains largely empty and underutilized, representing unrealized spatial capacity within a building that is simultaneously overcrowded at ground level. Taken together, these conditions—crowded shelving, insufficient seating variety, undifferentiated circulation zones, and an underused upper floor—constitute the core design problem this redesign addresses, and they directly substantiate the broader claim raised in the Introduction that Surakarta's civic libraries continue to underperform in spatial comfort and organization despite meeting baseline institutional standards (Sholihah, Murtini, and Susantiningrum 2022; Peng et al. 2022).

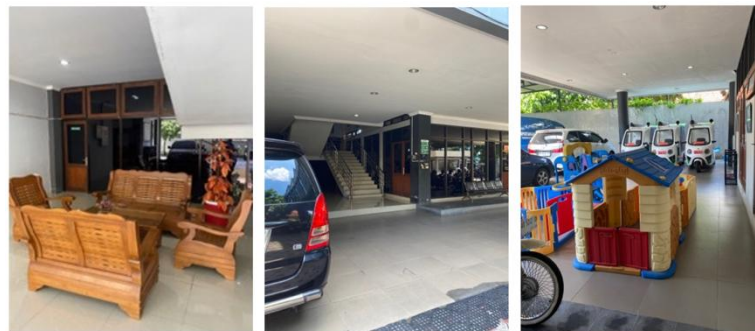


Fig. 3. Existing seating area, entrance access, and outdoor/parking zone showing limited and undifferentiated use of space.
(Source: author's documentation, 2025)

3.2 Design Concept: Hybrid Architecture, Zen Interior, and Batik Kawung

The design concept translates the orientation and basic programming findings outlined in the Method section into three interlocking design decisions: a hybrid architectural strategy, a Zen interior style, and the Batik Kawung motif as cultural identity. Rather than being layered on independently, these three elements are treated as a single, mutually reinforcing design language, consistent with the principle that hybrid buildings achieve greater value when their constituent functions and expressions are interrelated rather than isolated (Fenton, 1985; Hendryanto et al., 2025).

The hybrid strategy itself responds directly to the spatial problems documented in Section 3.1. Rather than treating the library's literacy function and its need for restorative, comfortable space as separate concerns to be addressed independently, this redesign merges them into a single spatial system through adaptive blending—penetration, embracing, clamping, and interlacing (Dovey, 2010)—so that green transitional space is not an amenity appended to the reading areas but a

structural part of how those areas function. This approach is grounded in evidence that transitional zones bridging interior and exterior space deliver measurable environmental and comfort benefits (Gehl, 2011), benefits that are increasingly substantiated by biophilic design research showing that integrating natural elements into built environments improves occupant wellbeing and reduces stress compared with conventional institutional interiors (Zhong et al., 2022).

To give this hybrid spatial strategy an atmospheric character suited to a literacy facility, a Zen interior style is adopted. Derived from Zen philosophy, this style prioritizes simplicity, balance, and visual stillness (Jia et al., 2025), qualities directly relevant to a building whose core function—reading and concentration—depends on minimizing visual and spatial distraction. Zen interior principles are operationalized here through natural materials, clean lines, indirect natural lighting, indoor vegetation, and uncluttered layouts, an approach shown to measurably enhance restorative focus and reduce self-reported stress in comparable interior settings (Jia et al., 2025; Sornubol & Lekagul, 2024).

Cultural identity is layered onto this Zen-hybrid foundation through the Batik Kawung motif, selected specifically because its underlying philosophy mirrors the Zen principles already structuring the space. Batik Kawung—originating from Surakarta and Yogyakarta—consists of geometric, intersecting circular forms reminiscent of the kolang-kaling (palm fruit), traditionally read as a symbol of purity, self-control, and spiritual integrity (Dinas Kebudayaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2025; Widayanti & Handayani, 2024). The motif also carries the Pancapat concept: a four-cardinal structure representing harmony between the human, natural, and spiritual realms (Widayanti & Handayani, 2024). Both Zen minimalism and Batik Kawung's Pancapat symbolism converge on the same underlying value—balance achieved through restraint rather than ornamentation—which is precisely what allows the two to be combined into a single coherent design language rather than functioning as two competing aesthetic references (Munteanu, 2020). This combined approach is not without local precedent: a comparable strategy of using a regional batik motif as the organizing cultural theme for the interior revitalization of a Surakarta civic building has been documented by Wijayanto (2024), whose redesign of the former SMP Negeri 13 Widuran into the Surakarta City KONI Office applied the Sidomukti Batik theme to a similarly underutilized public facility—reinforcing that batik-based cultural theming is a viable and increasingly established strategy for civic interior redesign within this specific urban context.

3.3 Spatial Programming: Zoning Circulation, and Layout

Building directly on the deficiencies identified in Section 3.1—cramped shelving, undifferentiated circulation, and an underutilized upper floor—the spatial programming phase organizes the building's three floors into four zone categories: public, semi-public, private, and service (Figure 4). On the ground floor, public zones dominate and are organized around a central lobby (*Area Lobby*) connecting the children's creation room (*Ruang Kreasi Anak*), Braille collection room, and main entrance, while semi-public functions—the archive processing room and visitor counter—are positioned to mediate between public circulation and the more restricted spaces of the head office (*Ruang Kepala Dinas*), which is designated private. The second floor is organized almost entirely as public reading space, wrapped around a central void, with only the storage room (*gudang*) retained as service zone. The third floor reverses this pattern: private administrative functions (offices, secretary's room, meeting hall) and service functions (staff area, book repair room) dominate, with public space limited to the canteen. This vertical distribution—public functions concentrated on lower/middle floors, private and service functions pushed upward—directly resolves the zoning ambiguity identified as a core problem in Section 3.1, and is consistent with recent evidence that clear functional zoning is a prerequisite for the spatial comfort outcomes that determine whether visitors return to a library at all (Peng et al. 2022).

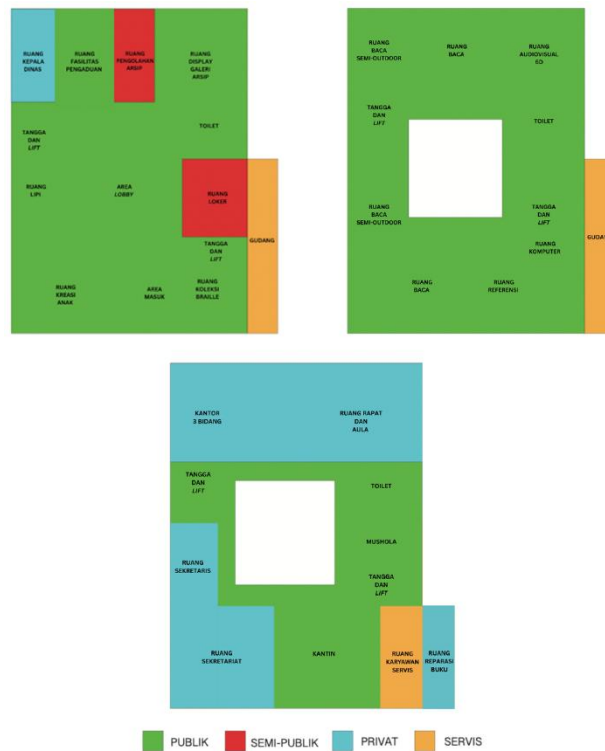


Fig. 4. Zoning diagram across three floors, categorized into public, semi-public, private, and service zones.
(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

To operationalize this zoning into a working circulation system, the redesign adopts a combined linear and radial circulation pattern, applied consistently across all three floors (Figure 5a). On the second and third floors, this takes the form of a radial pathway wrapping around a central void, from which visitor, management, and service routes—shown as distinct color-coded paths—branch outward to reading rooms, offices, and support spaces respectively. On the ground floor, where the void condition does not apply, circulation instead follows a more linear sequence from the main entrance through the lobby to the reading and children's areas. This hybrid arrangement is a deliberate response to the shortcomings of the existing building, where undifferentiated circulation contributed to the crowding documented in Figure 2; separating visitor, management, and service paths is intended to prevent staff and delivery movement from interfering with the visitor experience, a separation shown to measurably reduce wayfinding difficulty in comparably scaled public facilities, although the strongest evidence for this specific benefit comes from healthcare rather than library settings and should be read as suggestive rather than directly proven for this building type (Pouyan et al., 2021).

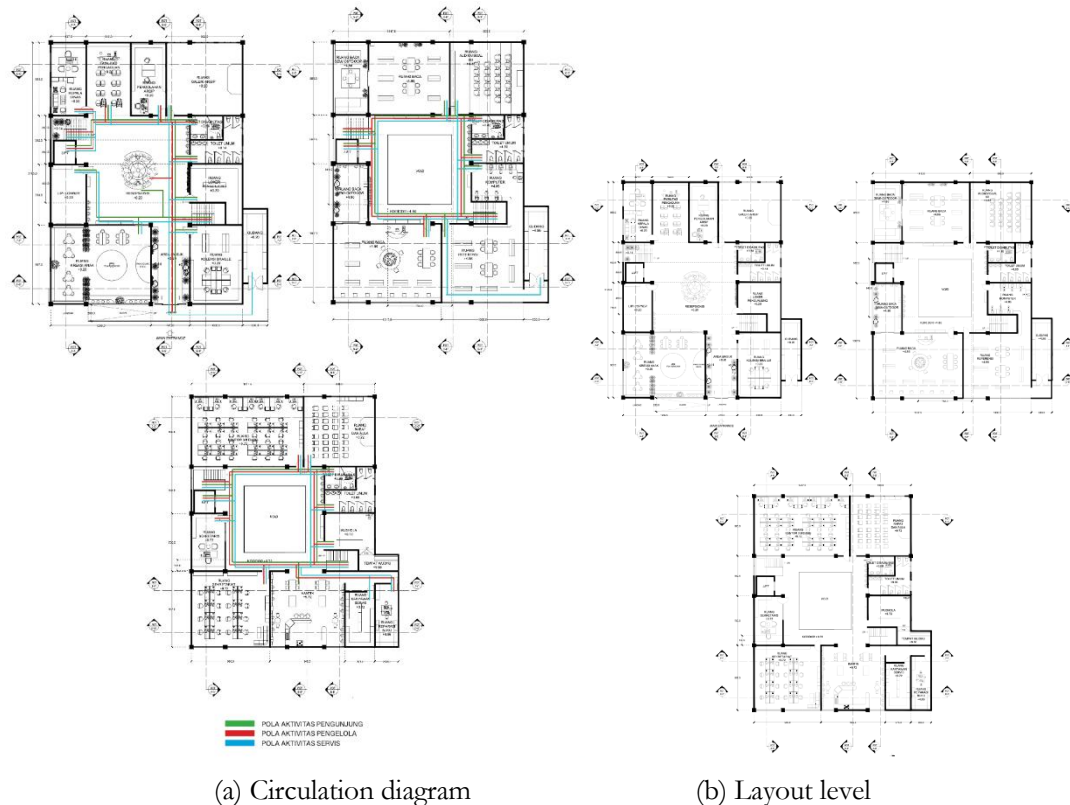


Fig. 5. Circulation diagram and colored layout across three floors.
(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

These zoning and circulation decisions are translated into a detailed furnished layout for each floor (Figure 5b). The ground floor layout accommodates the reception desk, children's creation area with a circular activity zone, Braille collection room, and LIPI corner around the main lobby, while the second floor is furnished predominantly with reading tables and shelving arranged around the central corridor void, including a dedicated audiovisual room and computer room. The third floor layout separates the administrative wing—open-plan staff desks in the three-division office and an enclosed meeting hall—from the service wing containing the canteen, book repair room, and staff service area. Compared to the existing condition documented in Section 3.1, where the second floor's large open area went largely unused, this layout deliberately fills that capacity with defined reading and support functions, directly addressing the spatial underutilization identified as part of the original design problem.

3.4 Design Transformation: Batik Kawung into Interior Elements

The Batik Kawung motif, selected in Section 3.2 for its philosophical alignment with the Zen design language, is translated into physical interior elements through a consistent formal transformation process (Figure 6). Although Batik Kawung exists in several regional variations, its underlying geometry remains stable: repeating curved-cornered squares, each containing a form resembling the *kolang-kaling* (palm fruit) at its center.

This redesign isolates the core repeating unit—a central point surrounded by four petal-shaped forms—and abstracts it into a simplified geometric module that can be scaled and repeated across different materials and building components, an approach consistent with recent evidence that batik motifs can be reinterpreted as functional interior elements without losing their original aesthetic and philosophical meaning (Sugiarto et al., 2023).

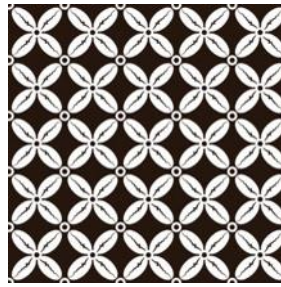


Fig. 6. Base Batik Kawung pattern used as the source geometry for interior transformation.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

This abstraction process is most fully demonstrated in the redesign of the reception desk (Figure 7). As the first point of contact for visitors, the reception desk carries particular weight in representing the building's identity, so the core Kawung unit is extracted from the surrounding pattern, isolated, and repeated decoratively across the desk's front panel. The pattern is produced using 5 mm glossy-finished acrylic with a laser-cutting process, with a fluorescent light green UV-printed finish applied to give the motif a glowing appearance—a deliberate departure from the pattern's traditional brown-and-cream palette, intended to signal that the motif is being reinterpreted for a contemporary civic context rather than reproduced as a literal historical replica.

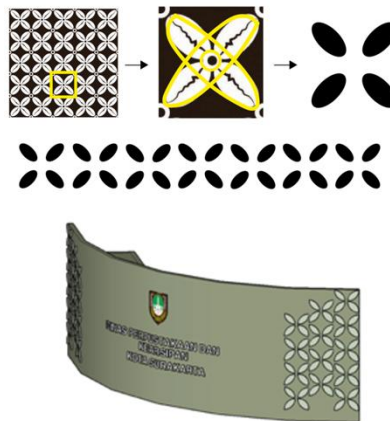


Fig. 7. Transformation process of the Batik Kawung core unit applied to the reception desk front panel.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

The same underlying logic is applied to the ceiling, though using a different source variation of the Kawung pattern to avoid visual repetition across building elements (Figure 8). The ceiling is constructed from multiplex panels finished with wood-patterned HPL, arranged as a modular square grid consistent with the beam-and-grid ceiling conventions typical of Zen interiors. The Kawung-derived motif is concentrated along the ceiling's perimeter, framing the grid rather than covering it entirely—a restraint consistent with the Zen principle, established in Section 3.2, of achieving visual interest through selective emphasis rather than uniform ornamentation.

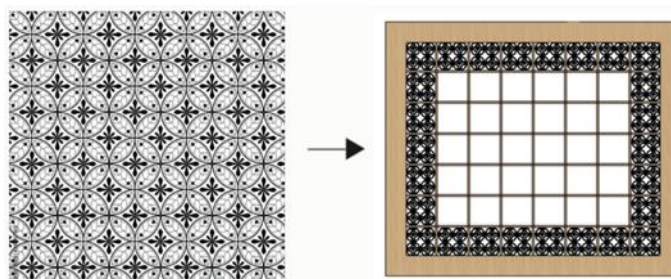


Fig. 8. Transformation process of a Batik Kawung variation applied to the modular ceiling grid.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

The motif is applied a third time to the building's interior partitions (Figure 9), where it takes on a more functional role than in the reception desk or ceiling. Using the same core unit—a central point surrounded by four palm-fruit forms—the partition design perforates the pattern through the

material rather than applying it as surface decoration, allowing light to filter through in patterned shadow while still permitting air circulation between separated zones. This dual function is significant given the ventilation and daylighting constraints noted in the existing-condition assessment in Section 3.1: rather than treating partitions purely as visual dividers, the perforated Kawung pattern allows spatial separation without sacrificing the openness and natural light distribution that Zen interiors depend on for their calming effect.

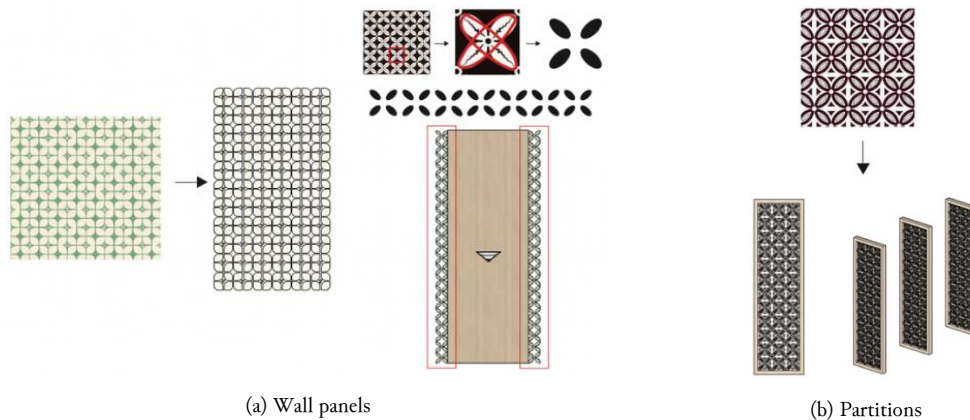


Fig. 9. Transformation process of the Batik Kawung core unit applied to perforated interior partitions and wall panels.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

Color completes the transformation. The brown tones traditionally associated with Batik Kawung—read as symbols of balance, calmness, and warmth (Widayanti and Handayani 2024)—are extended into a five-tone palette ranging from dark brown through taupe to muted sage green and off-white cream (Figure 10), allowing the traditional color association to be preserved while shifting the overall impression toward the calmer, more neutral register expected of a Zen interior. This palette is applied consistently across the furniture, ceiling, and partition elements described above, ensuring that the three physical transformations function as a single coherent material language rather than three unrelated design decisions.



Fig. 10. Final color palette applied across Batik Kawung-derived interior elements.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

3.5 Integrated Design Results

The design concept and physical transformations described above converge in four key zones of the finished interior (Figures 11–14).

The entrance corridor and reception lobby merge with the green transitional zone to establish the building's first impression (Figure 11): a vertical garden, an olive tree at the reception counter, and Zen-style plant arrangements introduce a cooling, organic atmosphere that departs deliberately from the sterile character typical of civic institutional lobbies. Along the corridor, infographic panels narrating the library's history and the Batik Kawung philosophy turn the space into a linear gallery, allowing visitors to absorb cultural and institutional context while moving through the building rather than requiring a separate stop. The palette here—earthen browns from Batik Kawung against Zen-neutral tones—establishes the material language that recurs through the remaining zones.



(a) Entrance



(b) Lobby area

Fig. 11. Entrance corridor and reception lobby integrated with green transitional planting.

Source: author's drawing, 2025.

The children's creative room (Figure 12) applies the same green-integration principle to a very different user group. Low plant shelves, child-safe live plants paired with identifying infographics, and interactive learning aids let children engage with nature and literacy simultaneously rather than treating "reading" and "play" as competing uses of time. This is the clearest instance in the design of green transitional space being adapted to a specific demographic rather than applied uniformly.



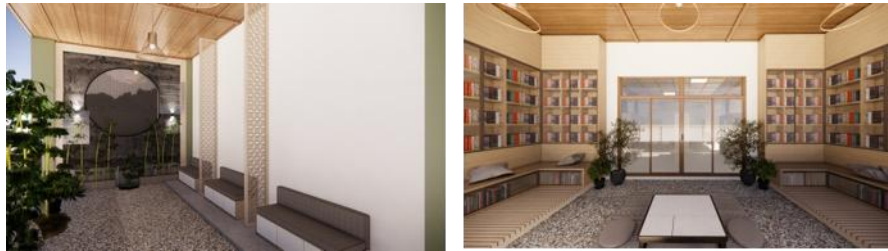
Fig. 12. Children's creative room integrated with child-safe planting and interactive learning elements.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

The literacy zone itself—the building's core reading area—achieves the most complete interior–exterior blend in the redesign (Figure 13). An olive tree anchored within the reading floor, a translucent wood-grid ceiling admitting filtered daylight, and open lounge seating produce a semi-outdoor character that softens the boundary between the library's interior and the green transitional space established in Section 3.2. This directly resolves the seating-variety deficiency documented in Section 3.1: rather than adding more of the same fixed wooden seating, this zone offers a distinct, lower-intensity reading mode alongside the more structured reading rooms shown in Section 3.3.



(a) Reading Room



(b) Semi-outdoor reading room

Fig. 13. Literacy zone with semi-outdoor character achieved through natural lighting and integrated planting.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

Finally, the canteen (Figure 14) extends the same design language into a support function rather than treating food service as separate from the library's literacy mission. Warm-toned wood furniture, hanging planters, and a perforated Batik Kawung partition screen above the service counter carry the material palette established in Section 3.4 directly into the dining space, consistent with evidence that combining rest or dining functions with biophilic elements improves perceived comfort in mixed-use interiors (Wang & Pan, 2024). A wall-mounted bookshelf stocked with light reading material converts the canteen into an informal literacy corner, reinforcing the redesign's central premise that literacy, rest, and nature should function as one integrated system rather than three separated zones.



Fig. 14. Figure 14. Canteen area integrated with a perforated Batik Kawung partition screen and informal reading corner.

(Source: author's drawing, 2025.)

4. Conclusion

This redesign initiative for the Surakarta City Library and Archives Office demonstrates that the persistent gap between Surakarta's strong public reading interest and the inadequate condition of its civic library facilities—documented through the crowded shelving, undifferentiated circulation, and underutilized upper floor identified in Section 3.1—can be resolved through a single, integrated design strategy rather than piecemeal fixes. By combining hybrid architecture, a Zen interior style, and the cultural symbolism of Batik Kawung into one coherent design language (Section 3.2), the redesign moves beyond simply upgrading the physical facility: it restructures how literacy, rest, and green space function together within the building.

This integration is carried through at every scale of the design. At the spatial level, reorganized zoning and a combined linear-radial circulation system directly resolve the crowding and undifferentiated movement patterns identified in the existing building (Section 3.3). At the material level, the Batik Kawung motif is consistently abstracted across furniture, ceiling, and partition elements, translating cultural symbolism into functional interior components rather than applying it as surface decoration (Section 3.4). At the experiential level, the entrance lobby, children's room, literacy zone, and canteen each demonstrate that green transitional space can be adapted to different user groups and functions without diluting the overall design language (Section 3.5). Across all three scales, the redesign is guided by the four-stage Kurtz programming process established in the Method section, ensuring that spatial strategies respond directly to the site-specific deficiencies identified during orientation and basic programming, rather than being imposed independently of them.

The resulting interior is flexible, immersive, and culturally grounded, bridging traditional Javanese identity with the expectations of a modern civic knowledge institution. In doing so, the redesign of the Surakarta City Library and Archives Office building offers a transferable model for how underperforming civic facilities can be transformed into inclusive cultural anchors—reinforcing the broader role that well-designed public libraries play in strengthening community resilience amid changing urban and social dynamics (Lee, 2024).

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