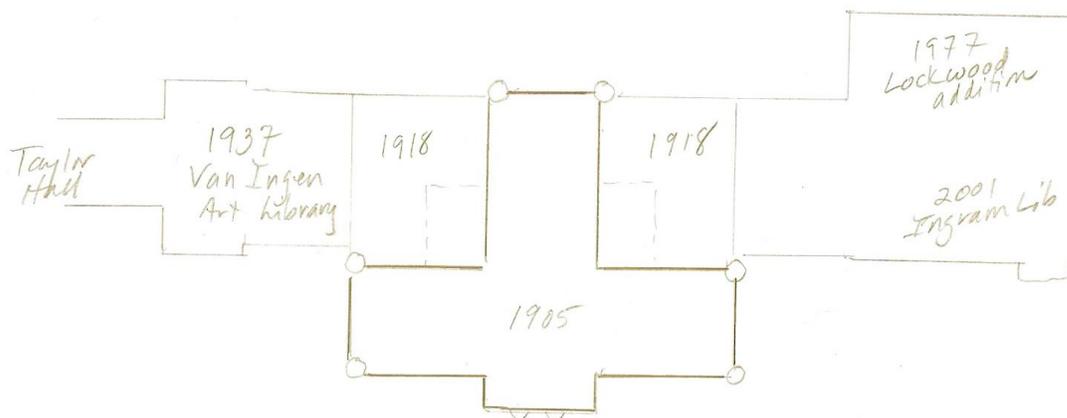
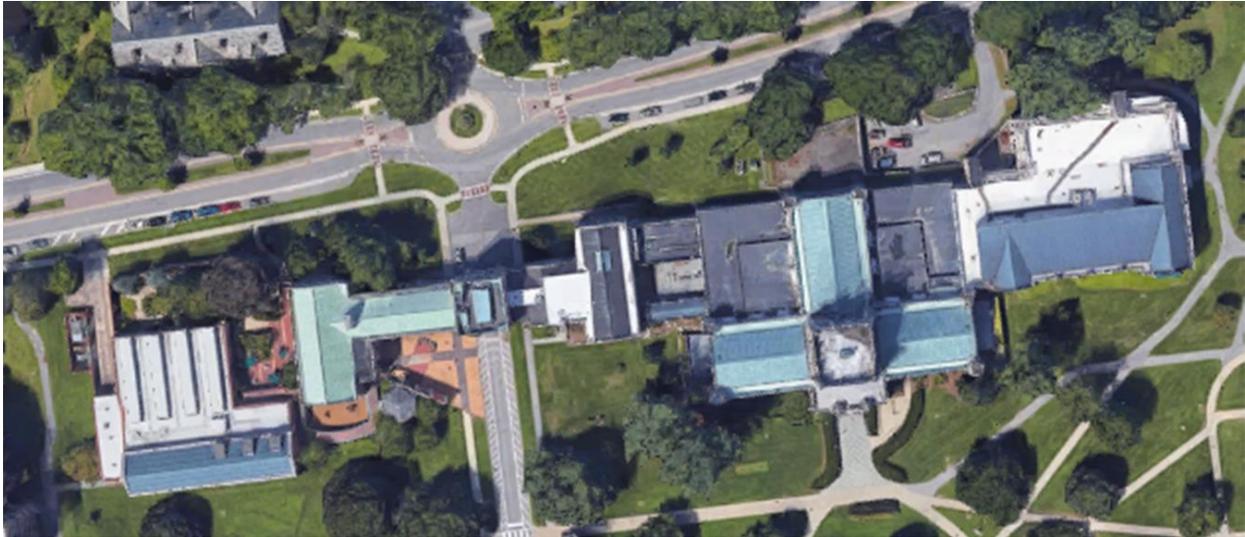


**Itinerary: The Library: from cathedral of learning to glass house**  
CLCS/Art 120  
Yvonne Elet

This visit takes you to a space that is familiar to you all – the Main Library – to consider some aspects of the building that may be less than familiar. Start by walking all the way around the outside of the building, studying the various additions over time, which you can distinguish using this aerial view and schematic:



Notice the very different architectural styles, from Collegiate Gothic, to modernist, and post-modern. How have these various additions, in different styles, been designed in dialogue with the adjoining sections? Consider the details where one building section meets another.

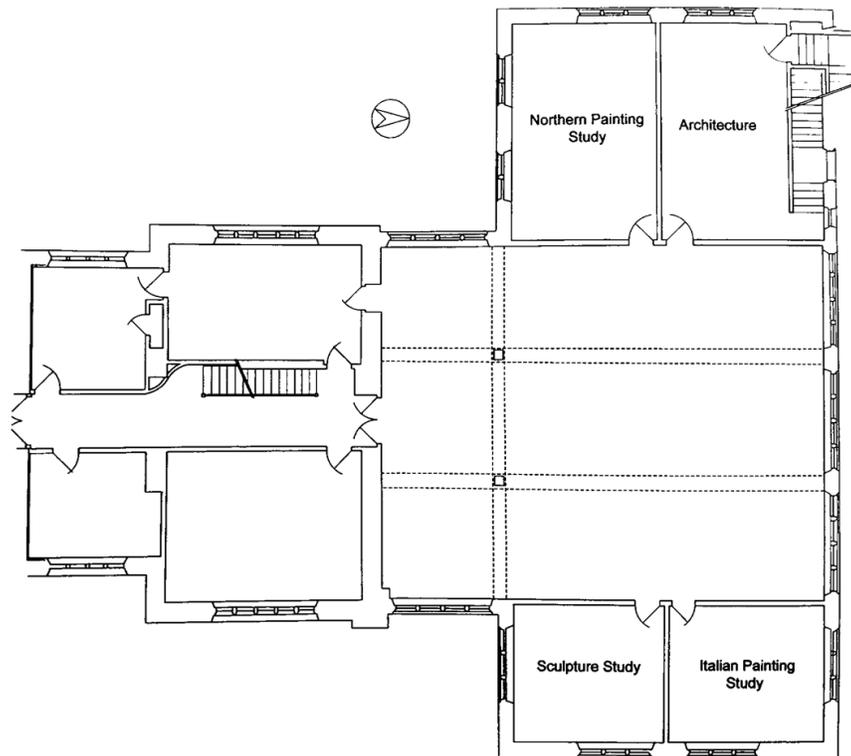
What is the first thing you notice about the form of the plan of the original library? Note the many other ecclesiastical elements of design and decoration as you go.

In 1918, two courtyards were added for outdoor study, which were later roofed in and enclosed. When you go inside, follow the original exterior walls of the 1905 structure, which are still visible.

Then, go to the very north end of the library, still inside, and make your way along the long north-south corridor that leads through the library, the Art Library, and Taylor Hall, and finally, descend the staircase by T203, make a right, and you end in the Loeb Art Center. This corridor is not perfectly straight, or all on one level, but it traces a connection, physical and symbolic, between the collections of the written word and of works of art, which have both been central to a Vassar education since the founding of the College. This corridor thus reflects the inseparability of the study of word and image.

Along the way, stop in the Art Library, on the main floor, and study the central open space and some of the reading rooms.

**Figure 2.13**  
John McAndrew (with  
Theodore Muller).  
Plan of the second  
floor of the Art  
Library and Taylor  
Hall, Vassar College,  
T19, 1937, redrawn  
by Antoine Robinson  
(Courtesy Vassar  
College Libraries)



In this novel space –the first modernist interior in any academic building on an American campus – architect John McAndrew rejected historicism and academic ornament in favor of materials, colors, furniture, and fixtures that proclaim its modernity. Note the glass block walls, cork floors, light fixtures, and chairs. But the exterior of this space is wrapped in a neo-Gothic shell; there is a strong disconnect between interior/exterior. Since the Art Library was an infill building between Taylor Hall and the Main Library, the exterior was treated as a continuation of Taylor Hall. Once you exit at the south end of the long corridor, by the Loeb, take another look at this juncture between Taylor and the Library.