

## New Library, Birmingham University, New Library, Birmingham University

### Challenge:

As part of a major redevelopment of the Edgbaston campus, the new main library building has been purpose-designed to allow students to connect effectively with the information, resources, ideas, technology, creative outputs and research generated by this leading research university. The £43 million building provides 17,000sq.m of floor space over 5 levels, with open access facilities and vibrant circulation spaces, a café and high demand facilities taking up the ground floor, and a state-of-the-art research annex, with 50km of shelving to house the University's important heritage print collection, to the lower ground floor. To the front of the library, overlooking the centre of the campus, a transformational and engaging Research Gallery will showcase and explore the University's research across the arts and sciences. Sited in the north west corner of the campus adjacent to the site of the former library building, which is to be demolished to improve site circulation and create a new central green 'heart' for the campus, the new building has been designed with a contextual modern aesthetic to complement the University's existing historic brick and stone Aston Webb buildings.

### Solution:

Designers, Associated Architects, have created a building with intuitive, natural circulation and a 'user', rather than 'collection' focus. Bisecting the plan, a central street runs north-south, generating the internal planning and creating quiet study spaces around the building's perimeter. Externally the impressive colonnaded front elevation and upper section of the building is cloaked by banks of glazing, set within a regular framework of stone and brick infill. To optimise the natural light and control glare, glass louvres provide solar shading whilst adding a layer of detail to the elevations. To help sit the building within the local vernacular, Associated Architects have used brickwork to the lower ground floor, selecting a glazed brick cladding that effectively grounds the building whilst reinforcing the modern design. The choice of Ibstock 440x65mm gives linearity to the scheme, whilst working with the reflective glazing above to create a building that subtly alters appearance during the day, as the sun moves round and lighting conditions change. An existing substation, located alongside the new building, has also been cleverly overclad in specially manufactured slips of the identical linear silver black glazed brick, extending the visual and giving continuity throughout the scheme. As well as being an exciting and inspirational space for students, the new building has an EPC A rating which will offer a 50% reduction in energy usage for the University, with the sustainable brickwork cladding contributing to an Excellent BREEAM rating, and helping the University achieve its target 20% CO2 reduction by 2020.

*Architect:* Associated Architects

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### **Brick:**

Linear Silver Black Glazed