



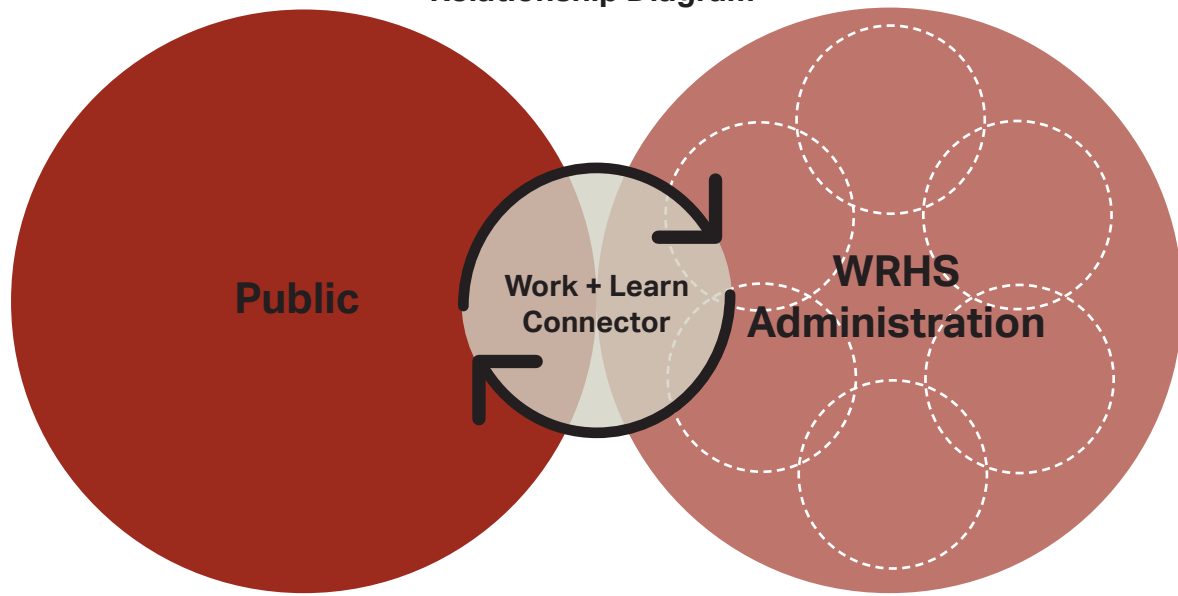
Research Library and HQ Renovation

Located in the heart of Cleveland's cultural district, the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS) is the City's oldest cultural institution and consists of a series of historic mansions, museums, and research facilities. This research Library renovation transforms nearly 16,000 square-feet of space into a community focused learning and administration headquarters experience.

Before the renovation, WRHS spread out 80 staff members in six departments throughout several campus buildings. Most of the administration worked in inefficient spaces with a limited ability to interact with the visitors and community they serve. This lack of physical and social connectivity to the patrons challenged their core values and created organizational barriers. At the same time, their existing four-level, 68,000 square-foot research Library, built in 1983, entered a phase where functional and system inefficiencies, combined with underutilized spaces, started to constrain various activities and research operations. The vision to combine both of these challenges in one project inspired WRHS and the design team to look towards the future, not only by modernizing the library, but by elevating the value and community-centric role of the organization while enhancing its ability to preserve and communicate important stories of the community's history.

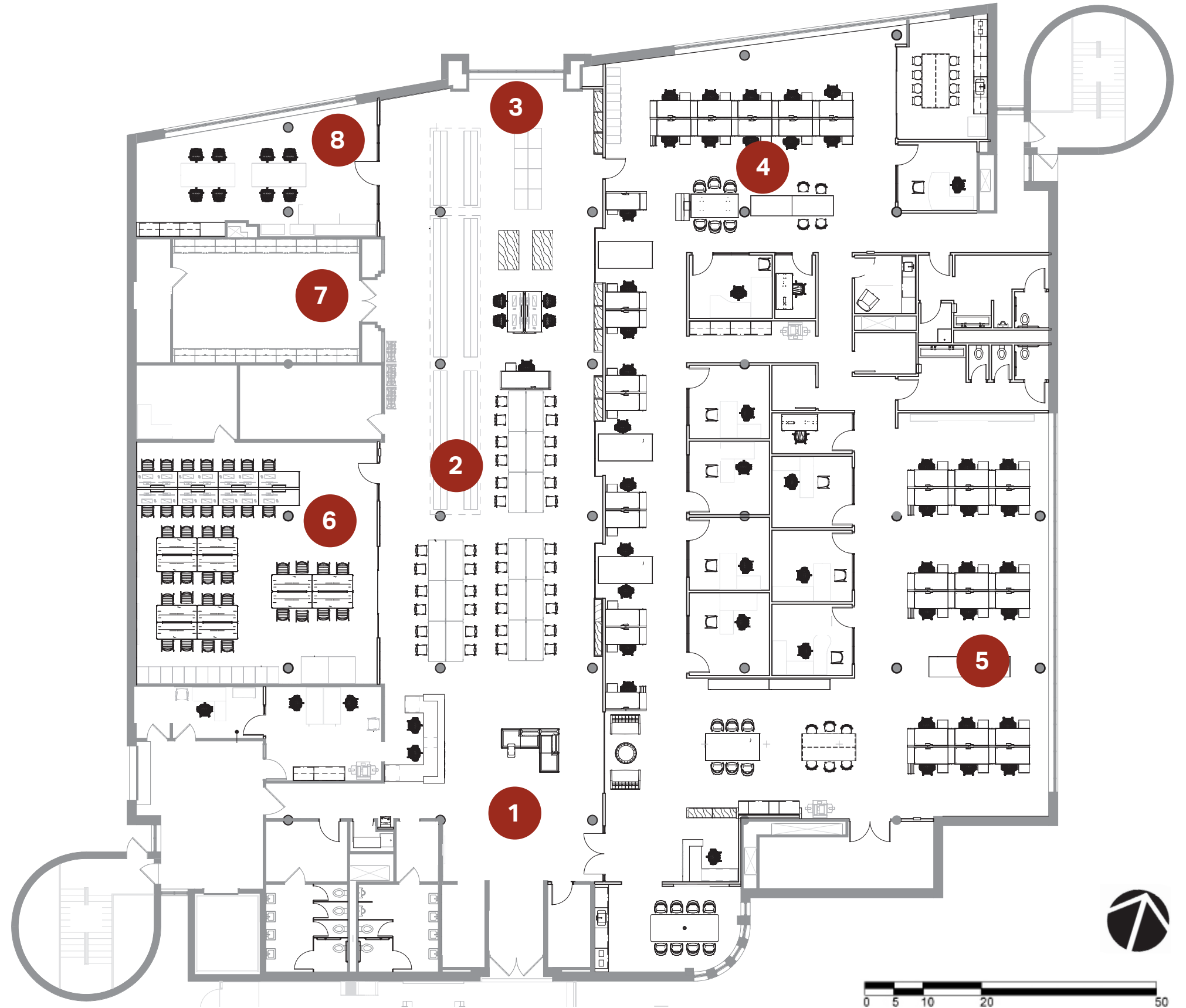
This pivotal renovation combines a new WRHS administration headquarters with its existing research Library. Founded as a historical branch of the Cleveland Library Association, WRHS's mission is of collections and preservation. This mission is now reflected upon entering the reading room as the once obstructed arched 'Cuyahoga Window' is now a focal point and iconic reminder of preservation. Inspired by the window, a new reading room wall forms a series of floor to ceiling windows and built-in bookshelves which allow the visitors and researchers to visually connect to the institutional activities. Patrons performing historical research can at the same time look forward through the glass as archivists and experience designers work on future projects.

Relationship Diagram



Floor Plan

1. Library Entrance Lobby
2. Reading Room
3. Cuyahoga Window
4. Staff Research Hub
5. WRHS Staff Office Area
6. Multi-purpose Room & Digital Learning Lab
7. Rare Book Room
8. Archives Processing Room





The new WRHS branding motif was inspired by the Cuyahoga Window. This pattern was repeated on the reception desk fronts to create an immediate historical connection for the patrons.

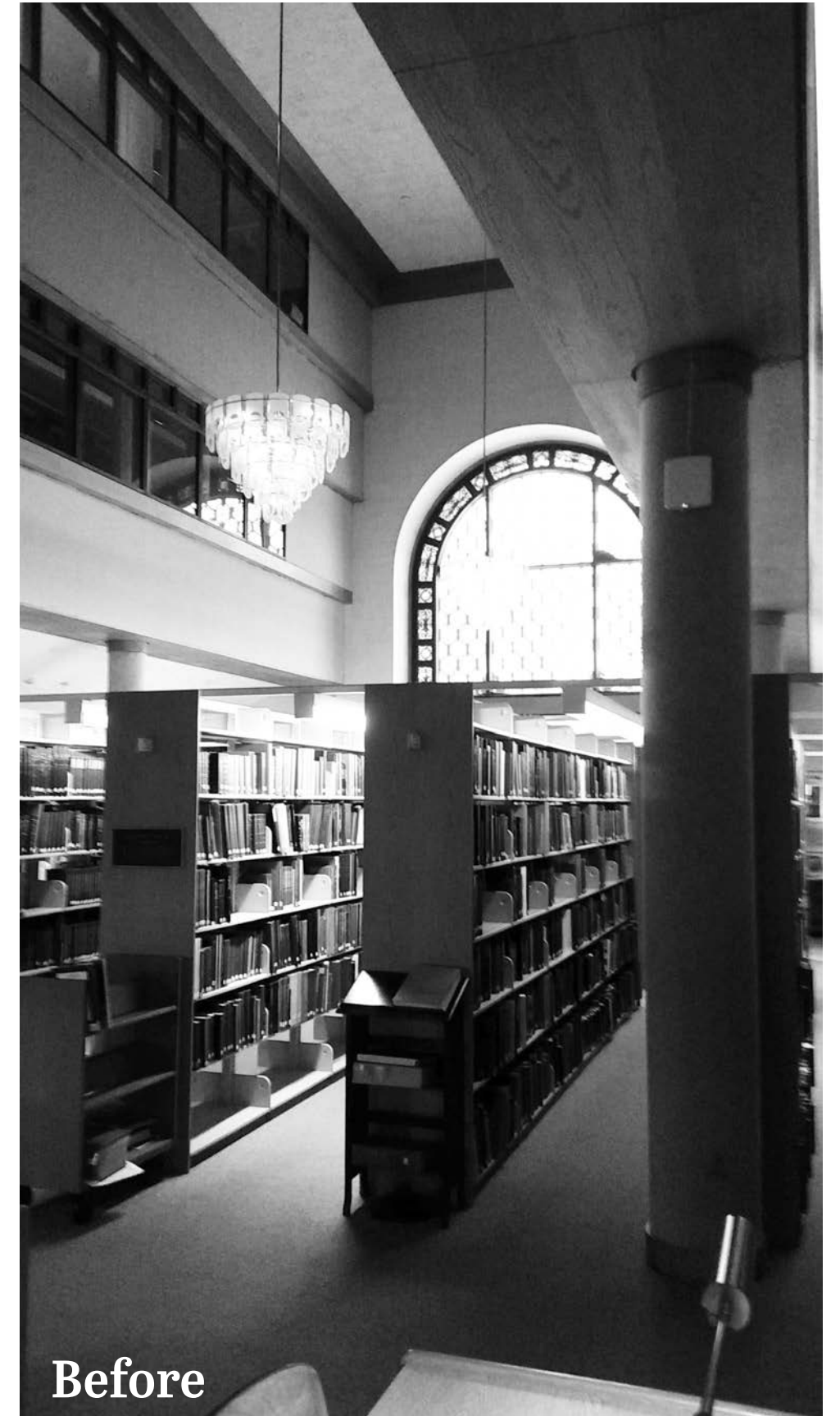


A wood ceiling to match the existing trim details in the library was used over the lobby area to create a sense of welcome and cohesiveness.



Library Entrance Lobby

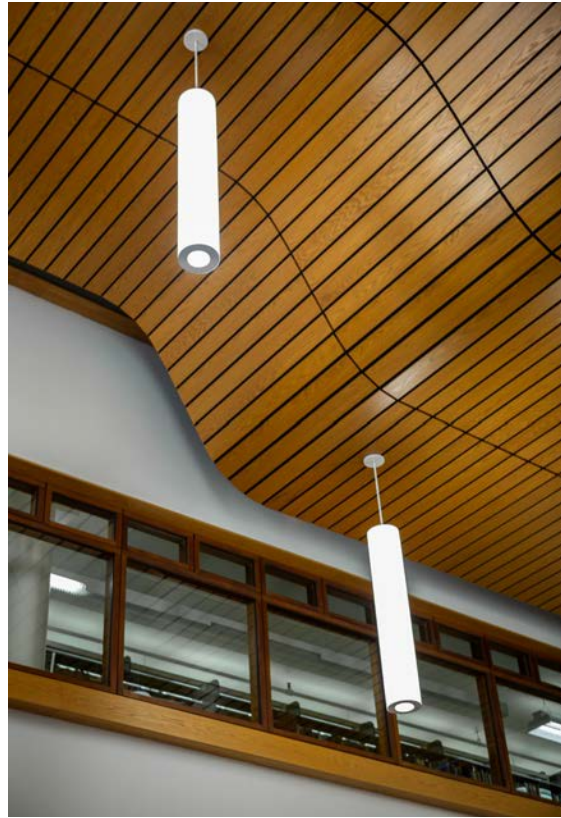
The lobby presents a welcoming environment for patrons visiting the Library and Western Reserve Historical Society's headquarters. Visitors are immediately immersed in history with the iconic scene of the Hope Memorial Bridge. Metal flourish detailing, inspired by the Cuyahoga Window, add to a balance of past and present finishes which shape the renovated library.



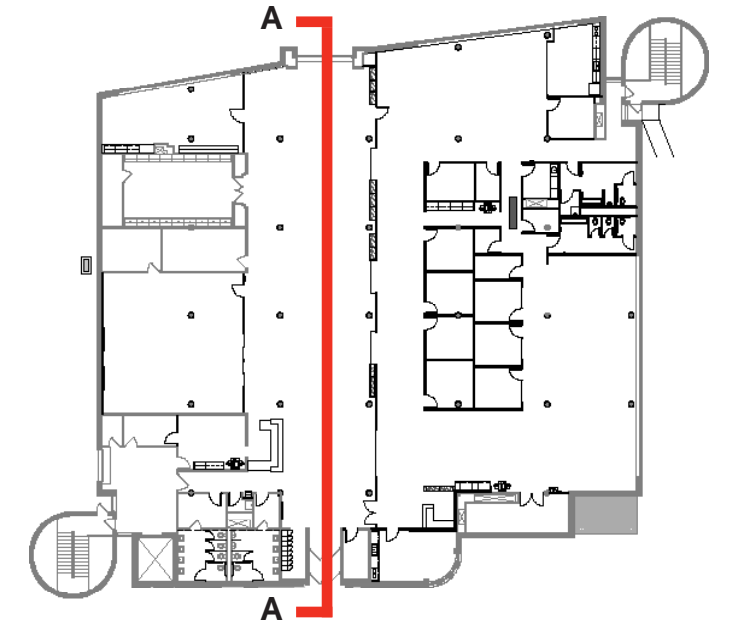
Before

Reading Room

The previously outdated, dark, stepped ceiling created an oppressive and acoustically challenging space. A well-illuminated undulating acoustic ceiling plane was introduced and layered over the existing ceiling. The Reading Room is now an uplifting, acoustically warmer, and visually brighter space that is more conducive to group work and socialization.



Close-up of new undulating ceiling with lighting



Section A





The strategic use of the WRHS branded red color on the floor breaks up a long space and incorporates a soft floral motif that is a nod to the past, but used in a modern way.

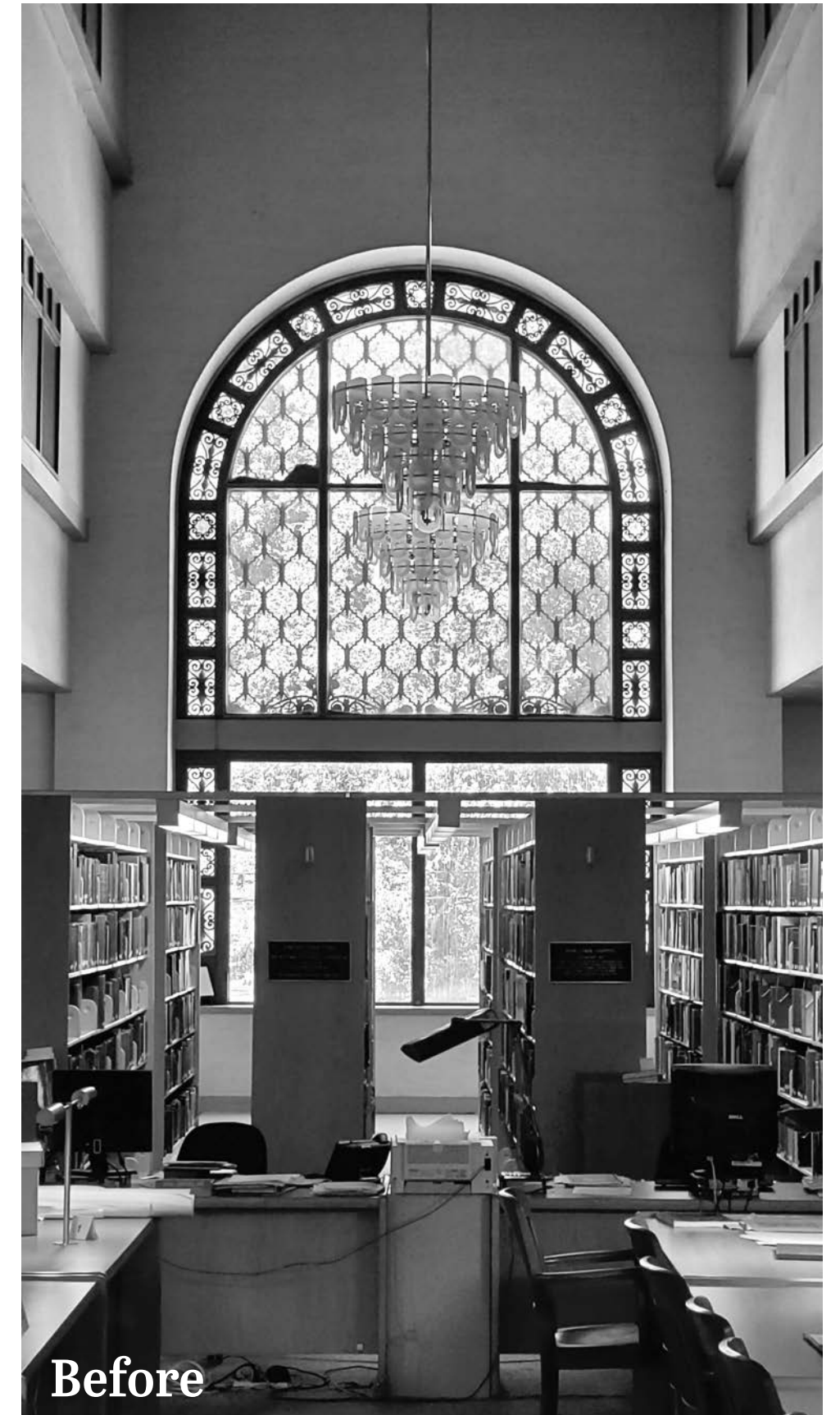


Acoustic wall-covering was used throughout the reading room to create a comfortable and acoustically appropriate environment.



Reading Room

The reading room, a once dark and functionally challenged space, now boasts ample natural light and a new undulating wood ceiling that leads visitors to the unobstructed Cuyahoga Window. Adjacent to the reading room, a new digital classroom allows for community research and learning events.



Before

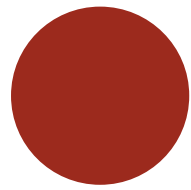


Before

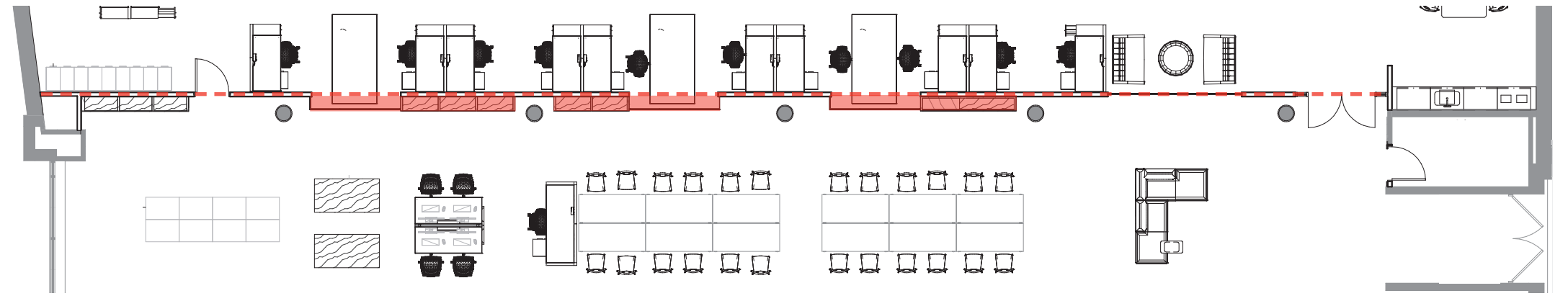
The ceiling in the reading room has a series of busy stepped planes. A new undulating wood ceiling softens the character of the narrow space, simplifies the vertical soffit edges, and leads the researchers to the preserved Cuyahoga Window. Cylindrical pendants provide ample lighting across various library functions.



Reading Room



Red paint was used to accent the pop-up ceiling over the documents processing tables to further highlight the importance of this process and the desire to share this with patrons.



Library and Office Connecting Wall



Reading Room

Introducing transparency and connecting patrons to staff activities is elegantly showcased along the library wall as a series of windows. These windows act as extensions of the adjacent bookshelves. Preservation displayed not only in the form of books but in the form of conservation work being done behind the glass.



LOBBY VIEW INTO STAFF RESEARCH HUB

Fronting the Library reception desk, this window allows visitors to visually connect to the Staff Research Hub within the new WRHS headquarters. The wood ceiling pulls the lobby into the headquarters while the red color defines a moment of change.



STAFF RESEARCH HUB

The Staff Research Hub inside the Western Reserve Historical Society headquarters area is a key component of the staff workspace. Previously, staff did not have space that supported collaboration. This area can be viewed directly off the research Library entrance, emphasizing transparency and community connectivity.



STAFF RESEARCH HUB (ALTERNATE VIEW)

The design pulls important elements of the Library into areas throughout the Western Reserve Historical Society headquarters. Floor to ceiling wood shelving screens the reception desk from the Research Hub and provides a highly visible place for rotating research books and historical artifacts.

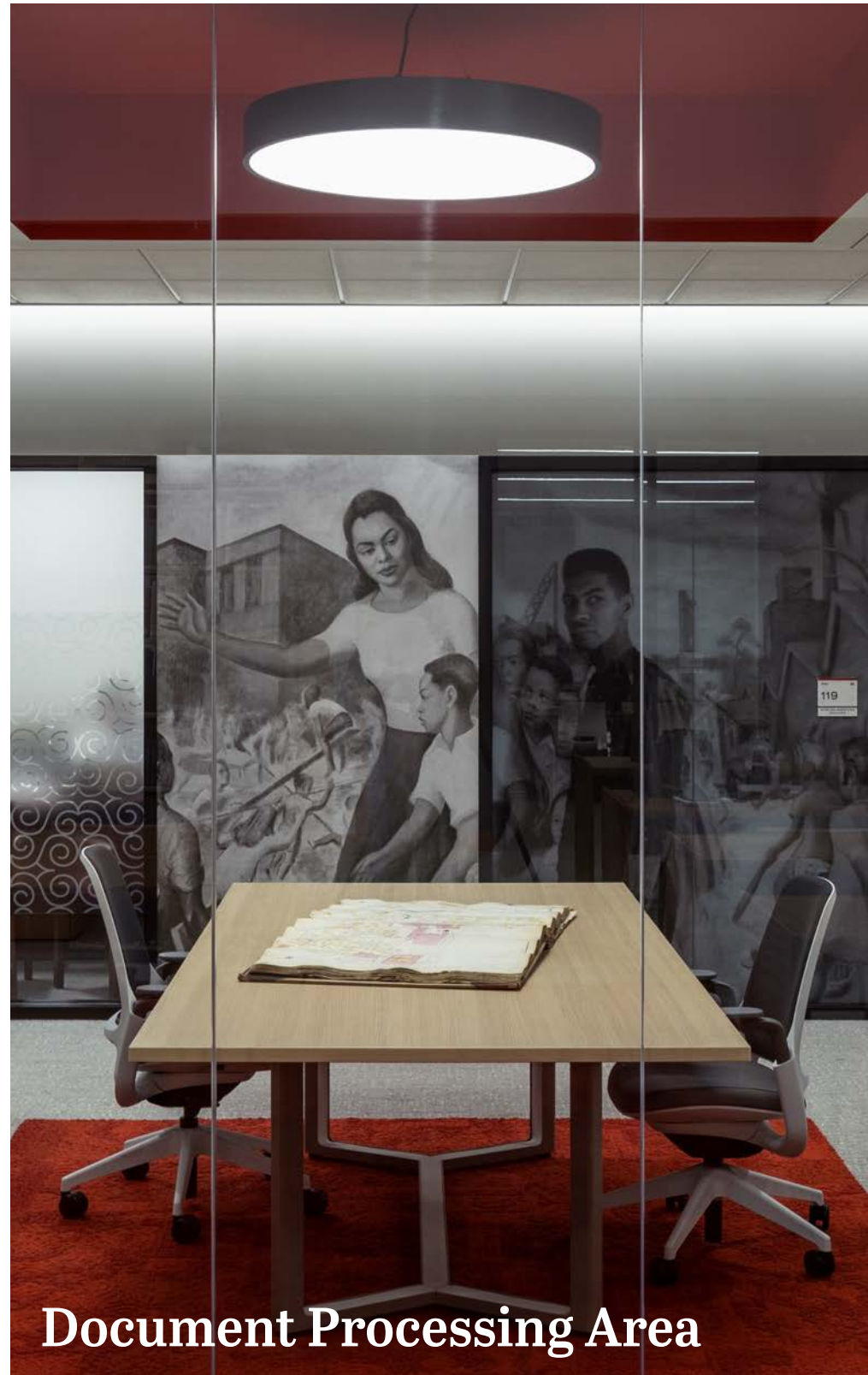


LIBRARY ROW

This area of the headquarters is named Library Row due to its direct visual connection to the Reading Room. Workstations and discover tables are on display and allow the public to directly interact with the archivists and experience designers.



Library Reception



Document Processing Area



Office Reception

Storytelling images pulled from the client's collections are strategically located to signify the location of the philanthropic programs and are in direct view from the reading room. It was important for WRHS to highlight these community focused teams with accessible spaces that allow visitors and archivists to interact.