

Welcome to the Fun House—
 White Plains Redesigns Children's
 Space with The Trove
 Working in Action
 The History of Printmaking, Lighting,
 StoryTrove, and More

Welcome to the

FUN HOUSE

When is a children's room not a children's room? When it's The Trove

By Brian Kenney

If your idea of a children's library is a large rectangular room with books filed neatly along the perimeter, spine out; tables and chairs arranged in school-like rows; and maybe a bright, alphabet rug in the corner for story time, then brace yourself. To compare a traditional children's room to The Trove is like comparing your local theme park to Epicot Center: sure, the intent may be the same, but the experiences are a whole lot different.

What is The Trove? It's a children's space—library doesn't quite cut it—located in the White Plains Public Library, N.Y. The Trove is really many different things, as it provides different environments, and experiences, for children from birth through grade six. It's spacious (13,000 square feet), hi-tech (with flat screens for video and plenty of computers), quiet (crawl inside a ship's stern and read away the afternoon), social (share cookies with friends in the Copper Beech Garden), and fanciful (enter through a castle doorway for programs). In short, it's something very new.

Sandra Miranda, the library's director, came up with the idea for The Trove, although it took the work of many—from her staff to the architects to theatrical designers and fabricators—to realize her vision. "I wanted to re-create ourselves, the library, for a new generation," says Miranda. This new generation is used to being entertained, engaged, and active. "The old children's library isn't really meaning-



HOUSE



It has worked, says Rosemary Rasmusen, manager of The Trove. It sounds hip and cool to the kids, "and at 4:15 in the afternoon you can hear kids running up the stairs, telling their friends to 'meet me in The Trove,'" she says.

Check preconceptions at the door
 Kids enter The Trove through a jagged, brick opening in the wall on the library's second floor. The entrance itself is a metaphor for The Trove: the blown apart wall, with its books askew and splintered



BEHOLD, THE TROVE This miraculous space (left) explodes our preconceptions of the children's section. The Compass (right), the focal point of The Trove, serves multiple functions: information, reference, assistance with circulation and printing. Designed for a variety of ages (and sizes), it can even keep the youngest visitors amused (with StoryTrove (bottom left) won't shortchange our youngest library patrons and their families.



The Castle
 Activity room for crafts, tutoring, and play area for lots of after-school activities for up to 25 children.



Play Cottage
 This mini-performance and play area for tots features a puppet stage, dollhouse, and kitchen.



StoryTrove
 Program and play space for up to 45 babies, toddlers, and their families.



The Saliway
 Settle into a peaceful reading perch in the stern of a ship.



The Compass
 From this central service point, navigate the world of information and discover The Trove with our librarians.



Copper Beech Garden
 Gather under a leafy skylight oasis for a quick snack and a good read.



Galaxy Hall
 Auditorium space for up to 75 children to enjoy performances and events.



Tree Trail Gallery
 View children's artwork and educational displays along this pathway of starry lights under an archway of trees (detail far right).



Enter The Trove...
 Through what appears to be a break in the wall, where bookshelves have tumbled to reveal treasures beyond.

FLOOR PLAN ILLUSTRATION ©/O PINKIEWICZ MAZUR & CO INC.



egg and dart mulling, is the traditional library blown apart. Once you enter, you are standing in Tree Trail Gallery. It's a bit dark here; tree tops form a bower above, and stars peek down from a dark sky. You would swear the temperature

has dropped. Visitors can't help but slow down, if only to make sense of where they are. Ahead, a flat-screen monitor welcomes you; continuing onward you pass through an exhibit space featuring children's art.

The Compass, the central service point, lies ahead. Stunningly beautiful, it sets the tone for the entire space ("imagine, explore, discover" is The Trove's slogan) while serving as a valuable landmark for navigation—it's vis-



The Big Picture



You would never know from looking at it that the White Plains Public Library could contain so much...well...fun. The late modernist structure, which opened in 1974, is austere and institutional. "I've heard it described as the Brutalism school of architecture," jokes Director Sandra Miranda. The Trove was a bold attempt to carve out some room in the building and create a very different look and feel—supported by a new name and identity. It really is a library within a library. Planning for the project took several years, although the construction was completed in 12 months, and the space opened in October 2005. The Trove is located in what was the former children's room, although the space has doubled. This was achieved by relocating and consolidating services. "It's been like playing with a Jigsaw puzzle," Miranda says. The Trove is just the first project in what Miranda hopes will be a series of renovations to the building. The next possibility? "I'd love to see something for young adults," she says.

desk is a dramatic dome of the world created by a theatrical designer, attached to each region are the names of famous children's books set in these locations.

The Trove experience

By intent, The Trove isn't a linear experience: one room doesn't open into another. In fact, there seem to be as many curves in the design as there are



FANTASTIC IN EVERY DETAIL. Multiple environments and themes characterize The Trove. Within the reference collection, a caregiver and child can pause to enjoy a story together. The medieval motifs behind them are on a wall of The Castle, one of three programming rooms, each with its own look and feel. Attention to detail extends to the washroom sinks (inset), at several levels to help kids fit in.



straight lines. At the same time, the space feels intuitive rather than confusing: exploring The Trove is fun, not exasperating. In part, this is because there are prominent landmarks, like the



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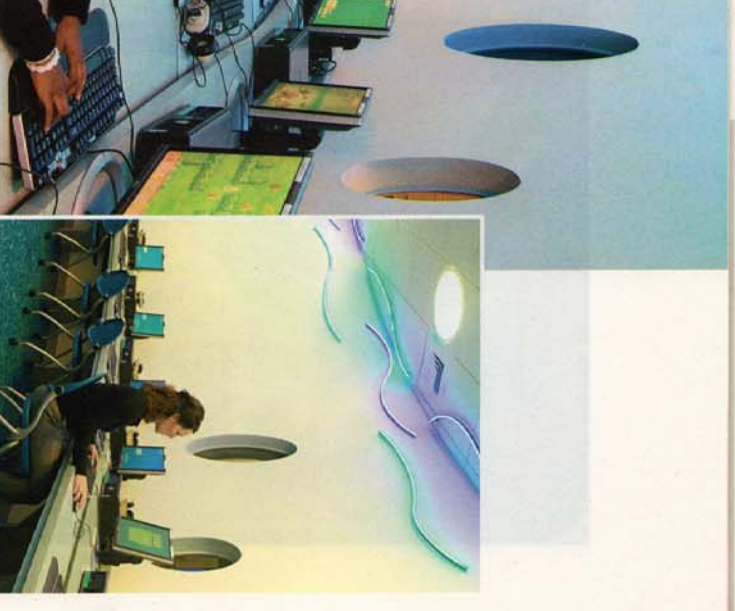


Compass, that help locate visitors. Also, Miranda and company made some smart decisions with regard to the floor plan.

For example, the areas closest to the opening are for older children. If I were a fourth-, fifth-, or sixth-grader, my Trove would consist of the very cool

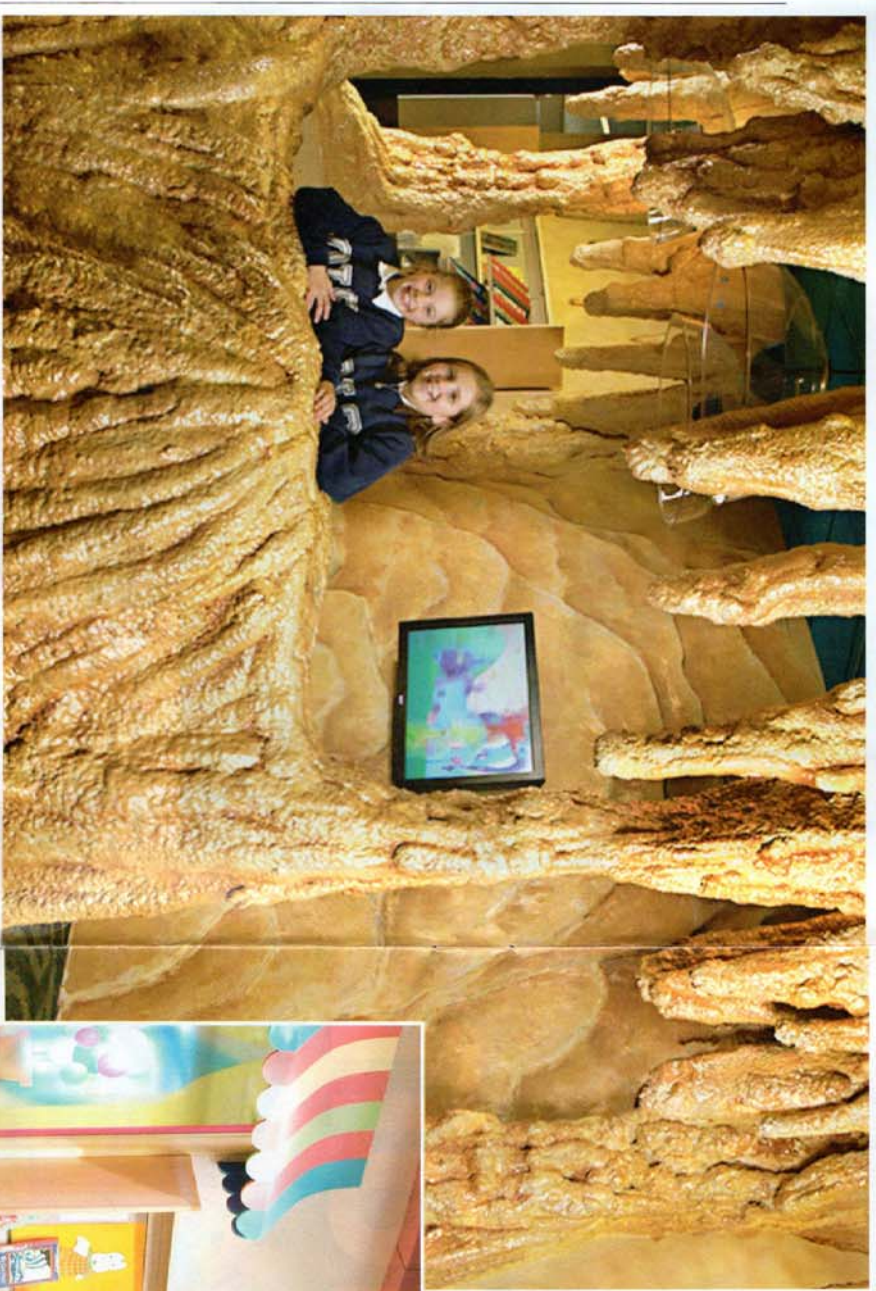
CyberPool, with 15 computers; Galaxy Hall, an auditorium for up to 75 children; and the Copper Beech Garden, where I could hang out with my friends in a fantasy garden while watching a hypnotic perpetual motion sculpture. Of course, there's the CyberPool, it would have

is most of my book collection, and off in the corner, where no one could find me, is the Sails-Copper Beech Garden, where I could hang out with my friends in a fantasy garden while watching a hypnotic perpetual motion sculpture. Of course, there's the CyberPool, it would have



ENVIRONMENTALLY RICH Ideas for The Trove came from many places—some unexpected.

The CyberPool's aquatic atmosphere, for example, was inspired by a local seafood restaurant. The room, which houses 15 workstations, can quickly become brighter



GET COZY What could be better on a rainy afternoon than watching a movie in The Cave? Partially open (above), a sound dome contains the noise. Another theme: the Play Cottage motif dominates the area for tots (right). It includes a puppet stage and dollhouse.

each of these environments is very different, while at the same time they are linked physically and aesthetically. Areas for younger children are deeper inside. The Trove, where it is safer and more contained and intimate. A picture books area meanders along, begging for exploration (while a parenting col-

lection is near at hand). For tots, there's the Play Cottage, which includes a puppet stage, dollhouse, and "kitchen." There are two more programming spaces: StoryTrove is for preschoolers and their families while The Castle provides activities, including tutoring, for the after-school set. (Its bountiful and well-designed storage space is enough to make any children's librarian envious.) Both StoryTrove and The Castle are home to many programs for children and their families each week. Small groups of kids can gather in The Cave, with its wild stalagmites and stalactites, to watch videos; a sound dome traps the noise.

Each of these environments (even each bathroom) is rich in detail that makes it special. It's important to remember that The Trove wasn't assembled from some off-the-shelf solutions. The library staff determined what they

ALL HANDS ON DECK In the Sailaway area, kids can explore the world of books with a sense of adventure.



wanted for their children and worked with a team of other professionals (architects, theatrical designers and fabricators, and lighting specialists) to get the effect (and specifics) that they wanted. The results? Pure magic. The Trove is sure to draw back children time and again, fulfilling

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ARCHITECT Lohrhop Associates Architects
THEATRICAL DESIGN Janice Davis Designs
THEATRICAL FABRICATION Center Line Studios and John Creech Design & Production (dome)