

The signs throughout town read “Welcome to Historic Ossining”—emphasis on *historic*. Located on the Hudson River about 30 miles outside of Manhattan, Ossining dates back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when a Mohegan Indian Tribe named “Sint Sinck” inhabited the area. Today, downtown Ossining, not surprisingly, is populated by older brick and granite buildings, but much to the town’s chagrin, the most promi-

nent public facility since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century has been Sing Sing prison. So when the town announced plans to build a new public library in 2003, the community expected a civic showpiece.

Indeed, the term “showpiece” should be taken quite literally. Built on a hill, the library is strikingly visible to motorists traveling south on Route 9—the main thoroughfare in town. To capitalize on this visibility,

# AT HOME ON THE HUDSON

A delicate design touch creates a cozy atmosphere at the Ossining, NY, Public Library

BY PAUL TARRICONE



An illuminated hearth and fireplace turn the main reading room into something resembling a living room.

Photos: Naomi Castillo, 90 Degree Photo, Inc.



The back of the library acts as a beacon for drivers heading south on the town’s main thoroughfare.

town planners wanted “a glowing beacon that would create a feeling of home and warmth—a place to go to,” explains Bonny Whitehouse, of Whitehouse Lighting Design, Mahopac, NY, who collaborated with architect Beatty, Harvey & Associates on the project. In essence, the town “wanted to draw people in, and have them ask, ‘what is that building?’”

Once lured inside the library, visitors are greeted by what Whitehouse calls an “indirect and soft” lighting scheme that extends the idea of hominess, largely through the use of fluorescent coves and pendants, metal halide downlights and incandescent table lamps.

Built on the site of its predecessor, the new Ossining Public Library measures 44,000 sq ft, more than twice the size of the previous building constructed in 1968. The \$16 million facility opened in 2007 and now boasts more than 50 Internet terminals, a 250-seat theater, an art gallery, a café, a teen room and—proving that home is where the hearth is—a working fireplace in the main reading room. LEED-certified in December 2007, the project earned 27 LEED points, including two for “Daylight and Views.”

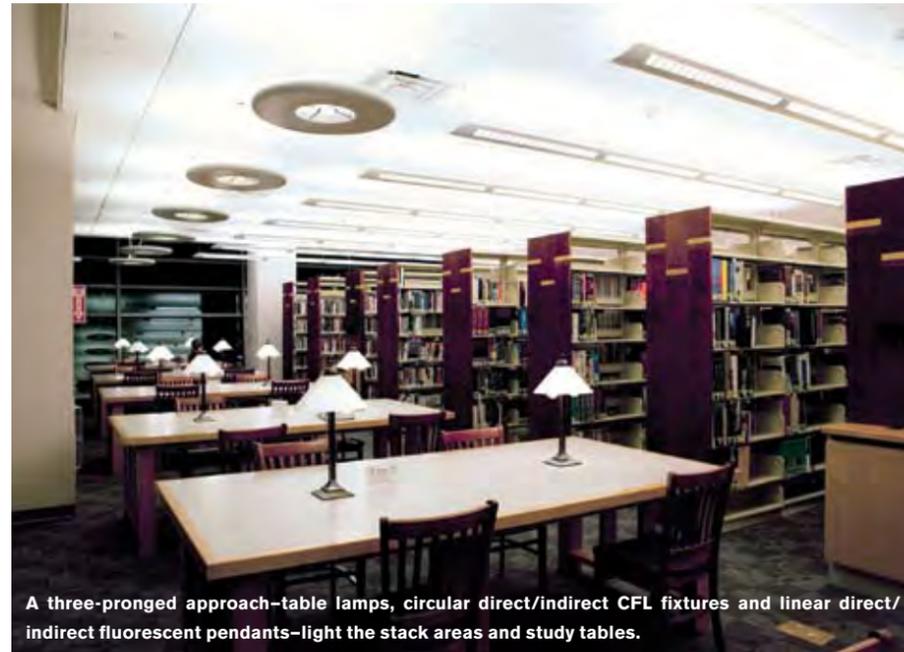
## NIGHT LIGHT

The building was expected to glow from dusk to dawn without creating light trespass. This lantern effect was created by fluorescent coves that uplight the ceilings.

The uplighting (both T8 32-W linear fluorescents and curved CFL channels) is built into ceiling coves that are set back 3 ft from the expansive windows, which prevents “light from leaking out of the building,” says Whitehouse. Indirect ceiling lighting also contributes to the internal glow. The effect is particularly stunning at the rear of the building where there is a three-story clerestory façade that offers a sweeping view of the Hudson River.

Discreet façade and street lighting also mitigate light trespass. At the front of the building, the library’s canopy is uplighted by 39-W T6 metal halide fixtures mounted to stone columns to graze the façade. The façade had to be lighted subtly due to the houses next door and apartments directly across the street from the library. The street is lined with antique-style black poles with Type V fixtures each housing a 150-W high-pressure sodium lamp. Reminiscent of turn-of-the-century gas lights, these streetlights—the town standard—are also used in the new parking lot completed several months after the building opened.

The light trespass issue was successfully addressed, says Whitehouse, yet the project did not receive the LEED point for “Light Pollution Reduction” because Ossining’s customized standard streetlight did not comply with the LEED requirement. And while ample natural light pours into the building through the clerestory, the



A three-pronged approach—table lamps, circular direct/indirect CFL fixtures and linear direct/indirect fluorescent pendants—light the stack areas and study tables.

owner chose not to invest in a daylighting control system, forsaking other possible LEED points.

**PULL UP A CHAIR**

As visitors enter, the library immediately conjures up coziness with a fireplace in the main reading room (the John Cheever Reading Room, named for the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and one-time Ossining resident). PAR20 metal halide downlights on a sloped ceiling make the stone hearth glow. This concentrated lighting over the hearth draws visitors to the fireplace. To each side of the fireplace is a reading area illuminated by 59-W PAR20 recessed metal halide downlights in the high ceilings, along with table lamps. Nearby in the computer center, the walls behind the terminals are gently washed with fluorescent luminaires—“but not over-lighted,” says Whitehouse—to allow computer users of any size (with differing eye levels) to view the screen or read paper documents without glare.

In the stack areas, the workhorse fixture is a linear direct/indirect two-lamp T8 32-W fluorescent pendant. These pendants are complemented by circular direct/indirect CFL fixtures above the study tables. Each table has two, two-lamp incandescent task lights with two switches. Other tables benefit from dual metal halide downlights in rectangular ceiling cutouts.



The fluorescent coves in the Children's Room were instrumental in creating the nocturnal glow through the large windows, while circular faux skylights provide ambient light.

Faux sunlight—generated by recessed circular fluorescent luminaires that resemble skylights—permeates the Children's Room. These fixtures are scattered throughout the room and vary in diameter from 2 to 3 to 4 ft. The curved CFL cove lights and the direct/indirect pendants (the same as those used in the stack areas) comprise the other lighting in the Children's Room.

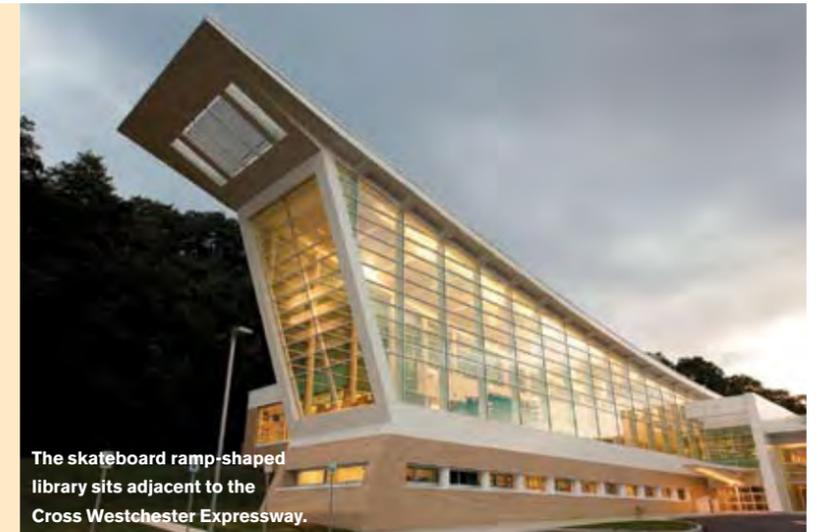
Finally, an art gallery in the library's basement hosts rotating exhibitions. In an unusual design quirk, the artwork is hooked into vertical tracks and mounted flush to the walls. Consequently, Whitehouse was able

to evenly wash the walls using linear fluorescent fixtures, without having to worry about creating shadows behind the paintings. Metal halide downlights supplement the wall washers.

In all corners of the building, inside and out, the lighting is delicate but distinctive. “The thread that ties it together is that the lighting is indirect and soft, no matter what room you're in,” says Whitehouse. “There's no harsh light, but an individual can have harsh light if he or she wants it. For example, the last time I visited the library there was an older woman sitting near the hearth, reading the newspaper and sitting directly un-

**One More for the Road**

A few miles south of Ossining is yet another library that acts as a lantern. But while the Ossining library is visible from local roads, the Greenburgh Public Library causes heads to turn on the busy Cross Westchester Expressway (I-287). When illuminated, the building—which is shaped like a giant skateboard ramp—gives the extreme sports enthusiast visions of the ultimate flight of fancy.



The skateboard ramp-shaped library sits adjacent to the Cross Westchester Expressway.

The unusual configuration is partly due to the fact that the old building has been physically incorporated within the new library, doubling the square footage from 22,500 to 45,000. Stone columns, for example, that were part of the exterior of the old building are now part of the interior of the new building. These columns were outfitted with fluorescent wall-grazers.

Old vs. new is just one of the dichotomies at the Greenburgh Library. First, there's the “cold” building materials (lots of metal and concrete) juxtaposed against warm light. “We used warm, 3,000K light because it would create a nice glow,” says Bonny Whitehouse of Whitehouse Lighting Design. Fluorescent cove lighting was used in combination with metal halide uplights. In addition, fluorescent lightboxes within an outdoor canopy add to the glow. Lightboxes were also carried over to the interior.

The dichotomy continues in the selection of light sources within the library. Two sources (fluorescent and metal halide) were used for the project. Fluorescent dominates the old space which has lower ceilings. In the children's area, for example, indirect CFL lighting of a floating ceiling creates the illusion of a higher space. The new space, where the ceilings are higher, required metal halide uplighting and downlighting, as well as the fluorescent coves. Most prominent in the heart of the new space is a long fluorescent cove that uplights a wood ceiling.

The Greenburgh Public Library won a “Best of 2009” Award of Merit from *New York Construction* magazine. The building, designed by architect Beatty, Harvey & Associates, was the only project recognized in the government category.

— Paul Tarricone



The heart of the new space features a long fluorescent cove that uplights a wood ceiling.

der a metal halide downlight. That's where she wanted to be. The design can accommodate any desire.”  
Just like home. 🏡

**METRICS THAT MATTER**

**Ossining Public Library**

Watts per sq ft: 1.3

Illuminance Levels: stacks = 45 fc (vertical average); gallery walls = 32 fc; floor = 46 fc

Lamp Types: 8

Fixture Types: 21



**About the Designers:** Bonny Whitehouse, LC, Member IES (1998), is the principal of Whitehouse Lighting Design, LLC. She received her undergraduate degree at Hunter College while taking supplemental course at Brooklyn College in theatrical design. While attending NYU for her Master's of Fine Arts, she worked on various off-Broadway and off off-Broadway productions. Ms. Whitehouse is a past-president of the IES New York City Section and the former chair of the Section's Education Committee. Currently, she is chair of the Liaison Committee, which works with the mayor's office in New York City on sustainability issues.



Sal Coco, LEED AP, is a partner with Beatty, Harvey, Coco, LLP, one of the nation's oldest architectural firms specializing in libraries, hospitality and residential projects. Over his 25-year career he has been the recipient of several design awards and directs the firm's LEED efforts.