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An Interior Design Study of the General Reading Room at the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service Based on the Third Place Concept

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Abstract

The formal spatial atmosphere of public libraries can constrain their social functions in supporting education and community engagement, particularly when users require flexible and adaptive environments for academic work, social interaction, discussion, and relaxation. This study aimed to analyze the potential application of the Third Place concept in creating a comfortable, educational, and community-responsive public space at the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service. A design thinking approach was employed to evaluate existing spatial conditions and formulate interior design recommendations based on users' activities and needs. The findings indicate that physical and visual comfort, spatial functionality, and facilities supporting the library's role as a Third Place have not been fully optimized. Accordingly, this study proposes a spatial suitability concept for the General Reading Room comprising lounge, quiet, and discussion zones, complemented by administrative and transitional areas. The proposed arrangement accommodates diverse activities, including casual reading, academic and professional work based on a work-from-anywhere approach, informal interaction, and group

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discussion. The study concludes that a Third Place-based interior design can strengthen the library's function as an inclusive and adaptable public space by integrating functional zoning with a more engaging and socially supportive atmosphere. This study contributes practical design recommendations for developing public libraries that encourage natural interaction, repeated use, and the formation of a community of regular visitors.

Keywords: Design Thinking; Interior Design; Public Library; Spatial Zoning; Third Place

INTRODUCTION

According to Larasati & Juvitasari (2022), a library is a building used to store library materials to meet people's needs for information and knowledge. These materials are not only stored and managed but also disseminated to the public as library users. As an institution responsible for managing constantly evolving information, a library is required to provide effective and satisfactory services. Along with societal development, people increasingly expect libraries to become more modern. Libraries perceived as outdated in the twenty-first century may significantly affect public interest in visiting them. One way to increase visitation interest is by paying attention to interior design. Many libraries, including the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service, are still perceived as formal and rigid spaces associated with an overly quiet and monotonous atmosphere. This view is supported by Khoeron (2023), who stated that attractive interior design can serve as a solution to the prevailing public perception of libraries as boring, rigid, and formal places.

A formal spatial atmosphere not only affects user comfort but also influences the library's social function in the context of education and community engagement. Reading spaces that lack flexibility and are dominated by individual activities often hinder social interaction, creativity, and collaborative learning. At the same time, the public demand for flexible and adaptive public spaces that accommodate the dynamics of academic activities continues to increase. Libraries therefore need to redefine their role as places or environments for learning. In addition to reading the collections available, library users should be able to engage in discussions, study, complete assignments, access information through the internet, or simply watch YouTube videos in the library (Utami, 2023).

Preliminary observations conducted in the General Reading Room of the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service indicate that the space has not fully met basic physical standards. Several issues were identified, including inadequate lighting, a lack of colour harmony between spaces, insufficient distances between bookshelves, limited circulation space, and an inadequate number of electrical outlets. Furthermore, most aspects of the space do not yet support the Third Place concept. As proposed by Oldenburg (1999) in *The Great Good Place*, a Third Place is an informal social space outside the home, or the first place, and the workplace, or the second place, where people can gather, converse, relax, and engage in natural social interaction. The eight characteristics of a Third Place—neutral ground, social equality, conversation as the primary activity, accessibility, simplicity, a playful atmosphere, the presence of regular users, and a home-like feeling—have not been fully reflected in the library's existing conditions. This indicates a gap between the library's current function and the potential that could be realised through the implementation of the Third Place concept.

Considering the existing conditions, changing user needs, and previous studies, the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service has the potential to undergo an interior design transformation into a comfortable and educational Third Place-based library. It may function as an alternative public space that not only supports literacy activities but also provides an environment conducive to informal learning, discussion, social interaction, and personal reflection. Afrina et al. (2023) stated that interior design is the first aspect noticed by users when visiting a library. Interior design therefore plays an important role in determining visitor comfort. In addition to aesthetic qualities, the functional value of the space must also be considered. A well-designed interior should accommodate the needs and intended functions of each area. Libraries should begin improving and developing their interior designs, as such improvements are expected to revive public interest in visiting libraries. Khoeron (2023) also emphasised the importance of communicative and responsive interior design, although most libraries have not yet directed their development towards strengthening their social functions.

This Third Place-based interior design study is expected to provide useful insights and recommendations for various stakeholders. Users, including school students, university students, literacy communities, and the general public, may benefit from a conceptual reference for comfortable and freely accessible spaces for learning and socialising. The library management may receive evaluative input to improve service quality and increase visitor

appeal, while the local government may gain additional value through a conceptual framework for enhancing the city's image, strengthening its literacy culture, and optimising the function of public spaces. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for transforming the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service into a comfortable, educational, and relevant Third Place that responds to the needs of contemporary society.

International research positions the library as a civic meeting place rather than merely a container for collections. Audunson (2005) explains that public libraries support low-intensive encounters among people who may not otherwise interact. Aabø et al. (2010) similarly demonstrate that libraries accommodate several forms of meeting, while Aabø & Audunson, (2012) show that the same interior can support individual, collective, and social uses. Behavioural mapping by Given & Leckie (2003) confirms that library users continually reinterpret formal settings through everyday social activities. Observations in major central libraries also indicate that spatial openness, seating choice, and visible public activity strengthen the library as a public place (Leckie & Hopkins, 2002). Elmborg (2011) therefore characterises libraries as important third spaces located between institutional learning and daily social life. For younger users, an engaging library can also become a relevant and socially meaningful place even when it does not reproduce every characteristic of Oldenburg's ideal model (Lin et al., 2015). These findings establish a strong theoretical basis for examining how interior design can transform the General Reading Room into a more inclusive, comfortable, and socially active Third Place.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method using a design thinking approach. This approach was applied to identify and analyse design-related problems from a user-centred perspective. Field data were collected through observation and documentation of the library's existing conditions and subsequently analysed based on relevant literature, including National Library Regulation No. 2 of 2024 (PERPUSNAS, 2024) , the Third Place theory (Oldenburg, 1999), anthropometric standards from *Human Dimension and Interior Space* (Panero & Zelnik, 1979), *Architects' Data* (Neufert, 1996), and related technical standards, namely SNI 03-6572-2001, SNI 03-6575-2001, and SNI 03-1746-2000.

A comparative analysis between the existing conditions and the literature-based standards was conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and spatial potential of the library. The design thinking approach was implemented through five stages—empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test—to formulate an interior design concept and provide spatial arrangement recommendations that respond to the needs of library users. The data used in this study, along with their functions and sources, are presented in Table 1.

The assessment framework also reflects established studies of user behaviour in library environments. Bryant et al. (2009) show that contemporary library space must accommodate both social learning and focused individual activity. Applegate (2009) identifies study preferences as an important basis for providing varied seating and work settings, while Montgomery (2014) demonstrates the value of observing actual learning behaviours before changing a library interior. Cha & Kim (2015) further indicate that spatial attributes influence whether users choose and continue to use physical library space. Bailin (2011) documents how spatial renovation can strengthen the library as a welcoming place to study and congregate. Multi-site observation and systematic space-use assessment also provide evidence for matching layouts with real patterns of occupancy and engagement (May & Swabey, 2015; Webb et al., 2008). Accordingly, this study combines direct observation, visual documentation, standards-based evaluation, and design thinking to link measured spatial limitations with practical design responses.

Table 1. Types, Functions, and Sources of Research Data

No.	Data	Function	Source
1	Existing spatial conditions	To identify the actual physical condition, layout, circulation, furniture arrangement, lighting, colour harmony, electrical outlets, and supporting facilities in the General Reading Room.	Field observation at the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service
2	Visual documentation	To record and support the analysis of the existing interior conditions through photographs and other visual evidence.	Field documentation
3	Public library standards	To evaluate the suitability of library facilities, infrastructure, services, and spatial functions according to national library standards.	National Library Regulation No. 2 of 2024
4	Third Place characteristics	To assess the suitability of the reading room as an informal social space that is accessible, inclusive, comfortable, and supportive of social interaction.	Oldenburg (1999), The Great Good Place
5	Anthropometric standards	To evaluate the dimensions of furniture, circulation spaces, seating areas, and spatial clearances based on users' physical needs.	Panero and Zelnik (1979), Human Dimension and Interior Space

No.	Data	Function	Source
6	Architectural and spatial standards	To assess spatial dimensions, furniture arrangements, accessibility, and other architectural requirements.	Neufert (1996), Architects' Data
7	Natural and artificial lighting standards	To evaluate the quality and adequacy of lighting within the General Reading Room.	SNI 03-6575-2001
8	Ventilation and air-conditioning standards	To assess air circulation, ventilation, and thermal comfort within the reading room.	SNI 03-6572-2001
9	Emergency access and evacuation standards	To evaluate circulation routes, emergency access, and evacuation safety within the library.	SNI 03-1746-2000
10	Library users' spatial needs	To formulate zoning and interior arrangement recommendations that accommodate reading, studying, relaxing, working, and discussion activities.	Results of field observations and analysis using the design thinking approach

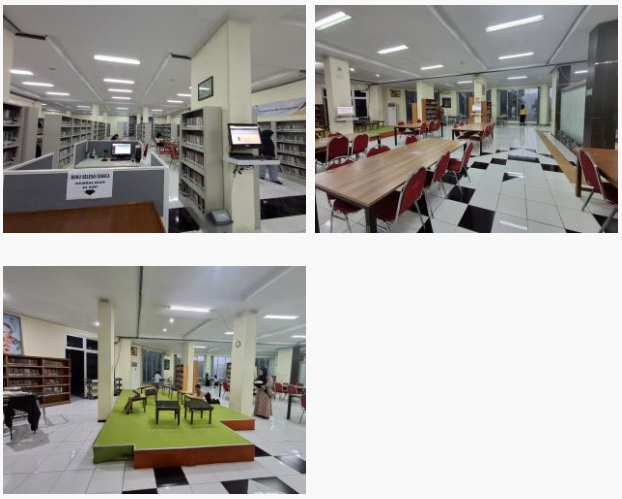
RESULTS

The existing interior conditions of the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service were observed to identify spatial potentials and problems that could serve as a basis for developing an interior design based on the Third Place concept. The observation was limited to the interior of the General Reading Room on the second floor of the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service, located at Jalan Besar Ijen No. 30A, Oro-oro Dowo, Klojen District, Malang City, East Java. A more detailed description of the observation findings is presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Existing Interior Conditions of the General Reading Room at the Malang City Public Library and Regional Archives Service

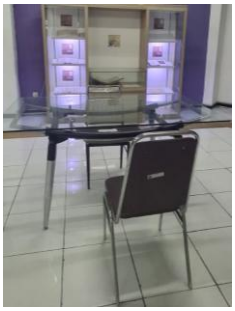
No.	Area	Photograph
1	Entrance	
2	History book collection and reading area	

No.	Area	Photograph
3	BI Corner collection area	
4	Kitab Kuning collection area	
5	Braille room	
6	General reading room	
7	Bawaslu collection area	

No.	Area	Photograph
8	Book collection area	
9	Administration and reading desk area	
10	Exit	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 3. Existing Furniture in the General Reading Room

No.	Furniture Item	Photograph
1	Book collection shelving	
2	Table and chairs (capacity: 2 users)	
3	Sofa	
4	Discussion table (capacity: 8–10 users)	
5	Individual desk (capacity: 1 user per desk)	
6	Communal table and chairs (capacity: 4–8 users)	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 2 documents ten principal areas in the existing General Reading Room, including the entrance, specialised collections, the main reading area, the book stacks, the administration desk, and the exit. The photographs in Table 2 show that the room already has diverse functions, but its colour schemes, circulation widths, and furniture arrangements are visually and spatially fragmented. Table 3 records six major furniture types, ranging from collection shelving and individual desks to sofas, communal tables, and discussion furniture. The furniture evidence in Table 3 indicates that seating capacity is available, although several pieces are fixed, oversized, or insufficiently differentiated according to activity. The close relationship between shelves and tables creates potential conflicts between browsing, circulation, and prolonged study. The two tables also demonstrate that the existing room possesses reusable assets that can be retained or modified rather than replaced entirely. Consequently, Tables 2 and 3 provide the visual and functional baseline for the subsequent comfort assessment and zoning proposal.

The observation results based on general assessment criteria are presented in Tables 4–8.

Table 4. Physical Comfort Assessment Indicators

Physical Comfort						
Parameter	Indicator	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total
Lighting (lux)	Target: 300 lux	<150 lux	150–299 lux	300–450 lux	>450 lux	2.4 Not met
Noise (dB)	Target: 40–50 dB	>65 dB	56–65 dB	40–55 dB	<40 dB	
Room temperature	Target: 24–27°C	>30°C or <20°C	28–30°C	26–27°C	24–25°C	
Humidity	Target: 55–60%	<40% or >70%	61–70%	55–60%	50–54%	
Ventilation/air circulation	Airflow	None	Limited	Adequate	Very good	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 5. Physical Condition Assessment Indicators

Physical Condition						
Parameter	Indicator	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total
Floor	Wear/cracking	Severe damage	Minor damage	Serviceable	Excellent	3.0 Partly met
Walls	Paint/cracks/damp	Major defects	Minor cracks	Slight defects	Excellent	
Ceiling	Leakage	Leaking	Stained	Serviceable	Very good	
Cleanliness	Overall cleanliness	Dirty	Fairly clean	Clean	Very clean	

Physical Condition						
Furniture	Condition	Severe damage	Some damage	Serviceable	Excellent	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 6. Spatial Functionality Assessment Indicators

Spatial Functionality						
Parameter	Indicator	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total
Functional suitability	Activity support	Unsuitable	Limited support	Suitable	Highly suitable	2.2 Not met
Accessibility	Wheelchair access/circulation	Poor	Limited	Adequate	Very good	
Electrical outlets	Availability/spacing	Very limited	Limited	Adequate	Numerous/evenly spaced	
Spatial capacity	User density	High density	Moderately crowded	Ideal	Spacious	
Flexibility	Ease of reconfiguration	Inflexible	Low	Moderate	Highly flexible	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 7. Aesthetic and Visual Comfort Assessment Indicators

Aesthetics and Visual Comfort					
Parameter	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total
Colour harmony	Incompatible	Less harmonious	Harmonious	Highly aesthetic	1.67 Strongly unmet
Layout	Disorganized	Poorly organized	Organized	Highly organized	
Lighting quality	Glare/darkness	Potential glare	Comfortable	Very comfortable	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 8. Safety and Security Assessment Indicators

Safety and Security					
Parameter	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Total
Evacuation route	Unavailable	Obstructed	Available, unclear	Clear and safe	3.3 Met
Fire extinguisher	Unavailable	Damaged/expired	Available/functional	Complete/accessible	
CCTV/surveillance	Unavailable	Limited	Adequate	Highly adequate	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 4 records a physical-comfort score of 2.4, indicating that lighting and air circulation require improvement even though noise, temperature, and humidity are comparatively more acceptable. Table 5 gives the physical condition a score of 3.0, showing that the floor, walls, ceiling, cleanliness, and furniture remain serviceable but are not uniformly optimal. Table 6 produces a spatial-functionality score of 2.2 because wheelchair circulation, power-outlet distribution, activity support, spatial capacity, and furniture flexibility remain limited. Table 7 presents the lowest general score, 1.67, confirming serious weaknesses in colour harmony, layout organisation, and lighting quality. By contrast, Table

8 gives safety and security a score of 3.3 because evacuation access, fire-extinguisher provision, and surveillance are generally available. The contrast among Tables 4-8 shows that the room is basically usable and relatively safe, but it is not yet visually inviting or functionally adaptive. This pattern supports the need to prioritise lighting, circulation, accessibility, flexible furniture, and visual coherence in the proposed redesign.

The observation results based on the eight characteristics of a Third Place are presented in Tables 9–16.

Table 9. Third Place Assessment: On Neutral Ground

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
The public area is easily accessible	☐	☑	☐	☐	3.33 (meets criteria)
Visitors are free to use the space	☑	☐	☐	☐	
There is no formal pressure on users	☐	☑	☐	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 10. Third Place Assessment: A Leveler

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
The space is inclusive for all age groups	☑	☐	☐	☐	3.67 (meets criteria)
Access for users with disabilities is adequate	☐	☑	☐	☐	
No restrictive spatial hierarchy is present	☑	☐	☐	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 11. Third Place Assessment: Conversation as the Main Activity

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
A discussion area is available	☐	☐	☑	☐	1.33 (strongly does not meet criteria)
The acoustics support communication	☐	☐	☐	☑	
Furniture can be easily reconfigured for interaction	☐	☐	☐	☑	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 12. Third Place Assessment: Accessibility and Accommodation

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
Operating hours are user-friendly	☐	☐	☑	☐	2.5 (does not meet criteria)
Transportation access is convenient	☐	☑	☐	☐	
Supporting facilities are available	☐	☐	☑	☐	
The location is easily accessible	☐	☑	☐	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 13. Third Place Assessment: The Regulars

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
Users visit regularly	☐	☐	☑	☐	2.0 (does not meet criteria)
A user community is present	☐	☐	☐	☑	
The space supports recurring activities	☐	☐	☑	☐	
Users experience familiarity with one another	☐	☑	☐	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 14. Third Place Assessment: Low Profile

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
The design is not excessively luxurious or formal	☐	☐	☐	☑	1.33 (strongly does not meet criteria)
The interior has a welcoming appearance	☐	☐	☐	☑	
The space is non-intimidating	☐	☐	☑	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 15. Third Place Assessment: Playful Mood

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
The atmosphere is relaxed	☐	☐	☐	☑	1.25 (strongly does not meet criteria)
The space is not excessively quiet like an examination room	☐	☐	☑	☐	
A recreational or joyful-learning area is available	☐	☐	☐	☑	
Furniture supports flexible activities	☐	☐	☐	☑	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 16. Third Place Assessment: A Home Away from Home

Indicator	Meets (4)	Partially meets (3)	Does not meet (2)	Strongly does not meet (1)	Total
Visual and thermal comfort are adequate	☐	☑	☐	☐	2.0 (does not meet criteria)
A relaxation area is available	☐	☐	☐	☑	
Users develop an emotional connection	☐	☐	☑	☐	
Users feel comfortable staying for extended periods	☐	☐	☑	☐	

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 9 shows that neutral access is generally achieved, with a score of 3.33, because the public can enter and use the reading room without strong formal pressure. Table 10 gives the leveler characteristic the highest score of 3.67, indicating that the space is broadly inclusive and does not visibly separate users by social status. Table 11 records only 1.33 for conversation as the main activity because the room lacks a clearly supported discussion setting, suitable acoustics, and easily reconfigurable furniture. Table 12 scores accessibility and accommodation at 2.5, reflecting uneven support facilities and limitations in circulation and service convenience. Table 13 records 2.0 for the regulars, while Table 14 records 1.33 for a low profile, showing that the formal image of the room does not yet encourage routine, informal use. Table 15 gives the playful mood characteristic the lowest score of 1.25 because recreational learning, relaxed interaction, and flexible activity settings are largely absent. Table 16 also scores only 2.0 for a home away from home, confirming that users have limited opportunities for relaxation, emotional attachment, and extended comfortable stays. Together, Tables 9-16 demonstrate that institutional openness is already present, but the social atmosphere and spatial supports required for a comprehensive Third Place remain underdeveloped.

The assessment identified problems related to physical comfort, spatial functionality, visual comfort, the limited availability of interactive areas for discussion and casual reading, and the inadequate facilities supporting the library's role as a Third Place. These limitations and the corresponding development potential formed the basis for the interior-design proposal, as summarized in Table 17.

Table 17. Spatial Limitations and Development Potential

No.	Spatial Limitations	Development Potential
1.	BI reading corner • The dark-purple walls make the space appear narrow and may cause visual fatigue. • The table-and-chair layout obstructs circulation to the next area. • The distance between bookshelves is inadequate for users with disabilities. • The highly formal, silent atmosphere may make new users feel that the space is not intended for them, conflicting with the Third Place characteristics of a home away from home, a playful mood, and conversation as the main activity.	Lounge zone
2.	General book collection and communal reading table • Users at the communal table tend to use it as individual workstations because the table is oversized and individual reading areas are limited.	Quiet zone
3.	Individual and communal reading desks • Two different activity types are placed within the same zone, resulting in potential disturbance and unclear functional separation.	Discussion zone

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 17 converts the assessment findings into three spatial development priorities. The existing BI Corner is directed toward a lounge zone because its location near the entrance is suitable for orientation, casual reading, and an informal first impression. The general collection and oversized communal table are directed toward a quiet zone so that individual reading and work can occur with fewer visual and acoustic disturbances. The existing individual and communal desks are directed toward a discussion zone to create a clear setting for collaborative activity. This transformation separates incompatible activities without eliminating visual continuity across the reading room. Table 17 therefore acts as the analytical bridge between the problem diagnosis and the zoning, circulation, furniture, and material proposals that follow.

After the physical condition and spatial comfort had been evaluated, the spatial concept was formulated by considering room organisation, user concentration, and noise generated by different activities. The analysis applied the sequence-of-spaces and circulation principles described by Ching & Binggeli (2018). Figure 1 shows that the quiet zone requires the highest user concentration, the lounge zone accommodates moderate concentration, and the discussion zone supports the lowest concentration level. Figure 2 presents the inverse acoustic relationship, with the discussion zone generating the highest noise and the quiet zone requiring the lowest noise. Reading Figures 1 and 2 together clarifies why activities cannot be distributed randomly across the floor plan. The diagrams provide the behavioural

basis for separating focused work, informal transition, and collaborative discussion while retaining a coherent movement sequence.

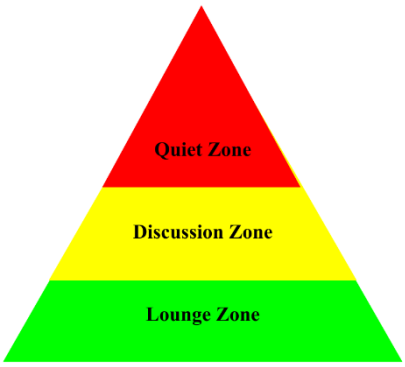


Figure 1. User Concentration Levels
Source: Authors (2026)

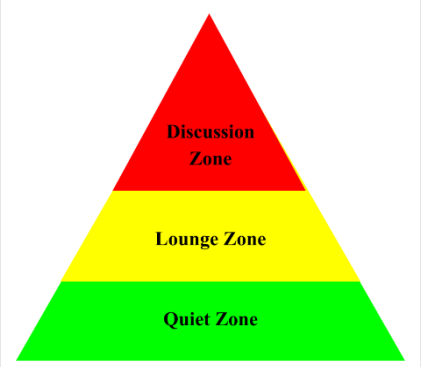


Figure 2. Noise Levels by Spatial Function
Source: Authors (2026)

The reading room was consequently divided into lounge, quiet, and discussion zones. As shown in Figure 3, the lounge zone is positioned immediately after the entrance, followed by the existing Braille System and Kitab Kuning area, before circulation branches toward the quiet zone, transition area, and discussion zone. This sequence gives users time to orient themselves before moving to areas with more specific behavioural expectations. The lounge zone is suitable for initial, informal, and lower-pressure activities without disturbing spaces that require greater concentration. The transition area connects the principal zones and reduces abrupt changes between quiet and interactive activities. Figure 3 therefore establishes a clear functional hierarchy while preserving access to existing specialised collections.

The quiet zone accommodates activities requiring the highest level of concentration while producing minimal noise. It is positioned away from the main circulation route and separated by organized book shelving, thereby improving privacy and supporting focused reading, study, and individual work.

The discussion zone produces the highest noise level because it accommodates collaborative activities. It is positioned near the exit so that discussions can occur in a stable and controlled setting without intersecting the main circulation flow. The proposed spatial organization is presented in Figure 3.

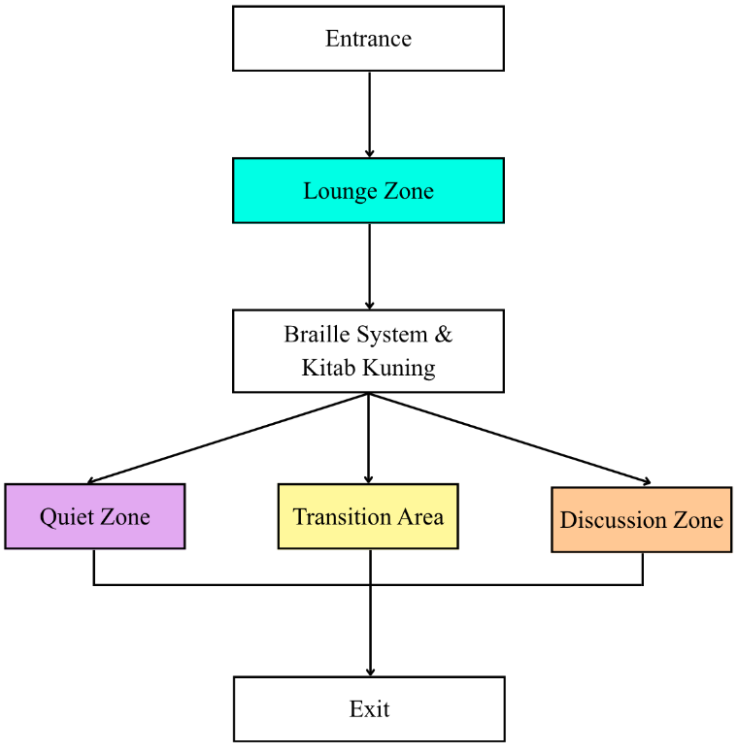


Figure 3. Proposed Spatial Organization Diagram

Source: Authors (2026)

Figure 3 emphasises that the proposed organisation is not merely a division by furniture type, but a sequence based on behaviour and environmental demand. The entrance and lounge zone form the most public and socially permissive part of the interior. The quiet zone is protected from the busiest route, whereas the discussion zone is located closer to the exit to contain collaborative noise. The transition area maintains visual and circulation continuity between these contrasting settings. Existing Braille and Kitab Kuning services remain connected to the principal movement route so that the redesign does not isolate specialised users. This arrangement supports accessibility, legibility, and gradual changes in concentration and noise across the room.

Figure 4 translates the organisational sequence into the actual zoning and circulation plan derived from the thesis draft. The turquoise lounge zone occupies the entrance side, while the purple quiet zone is placed in the largest area away from the most direct movement path. The orange discussion zone is positioned toward the exit side, allowing group activities to occur without requiring users to cross the quiet area repeatedly. The yellow transition area marks the spatial hinge between zones with different behavioural and acoustic requirements. Blue arrows indicate the proposed circulation network, connecting the entrance, specialised collection areas, principal zones, and exit. Figure 5 also retains the existing toilet and private

office areas, demonstrating that the proposed intervention responds to the actual building configuration rather than an abstract plan.

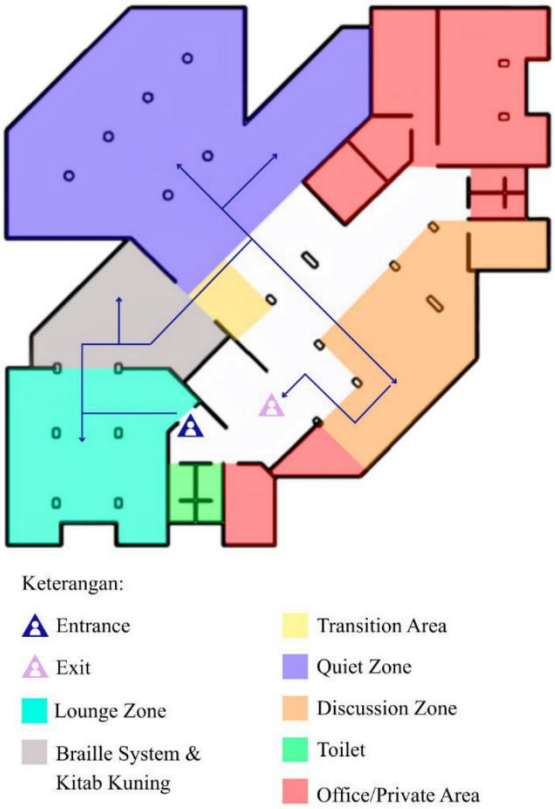


Figure 4. Proposed Zoning and Circulation Concept
Source: Adapted from the thesis draft by the authors (2026)

Figure 5 presents the proposed warm-earthy colour palette using the 60-30-10 proportion: 60% dominant cream and oak-wood tones, 30% secondary gray-olive and muted-olive tones, and 10% terracotta accents. The palette is intended to replace the fragmented and highly formal visual impression identified in Table 7. Cream and oak create a calm background, while olive tones introduce a natural and understated character. Terracotta operates as a limited accent that adds warmth and supports a more sociable atmosphere without overwhelming reading activities. Research on indoor environments shows that lighting and colour conditions can influence mood, cognition, visual preference, and comfort (Knez, 1995; Veitch & Newsham, 2000). Figure 4 therefore links aesthetic consistency with the Third Place qualities of simplicity, playfulness, and a home-like atmosphere.

Cream (#F2E9DE), classified as a warm neutral, forms the primary background and creates a calm and comfortable setting for casual reading, studying, and working. Oak wood

(#C8A47A) adds a natural quality that reinforces spatial warmth and a home-like atmosphere. These dominant tones are proposed for walls, floors, tables, and bookshelves.

Gray olive (#99A058) and muted olive (#7C8363) are used as secondary colours. Their calm, fresh, and understated character is intended to support relaxation, emotional balance, and concentration. These tones are proposed for chairs, cushions, and selected columns.

Terracotta (#A63D00) functions as a visual accent that prevents monotony and introduces warmth, friendliness, and energy. The colour is proposed for selected cushions and furniture details to encourage social interaction. Figure 4 presents the proposed colour palette.

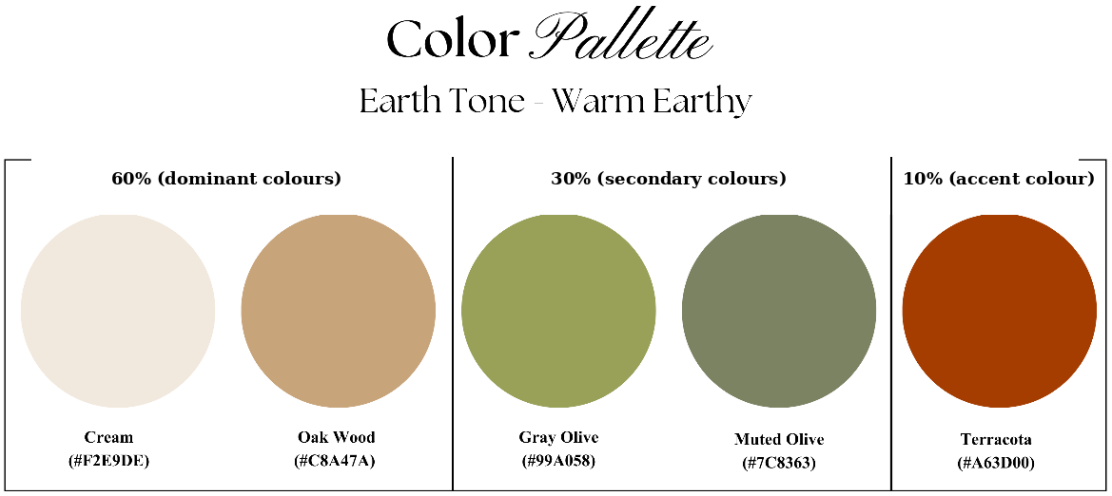


Figure 5. Proposed Warm-Earthy Colour Palette

Source: Authors (2026)

Figure 5 should be interpreted together with the lighting and material recommendations rather than as a decorative colour scheme alone. Warm-neutral surfaces are expected to reduce the rigid institutional character of the current white ceramic floor and contrasting wall colours. Oak-patterned materials introduce visual warmth and a recognisable natural texture, while muted olive tones support quieter areas without producing strong visual stimulation. Terracotta accents help users identify social or interactive elements within the room. The restrained palette also makes signage, collections, and circulation markers easier to distinguish. As a result, the colour proposal supports orientation, visual comfort, spatial identity, and the emotional accessibility associated with a Third Place.

The assessment also indicated the need to modify the existing floor, wall finishes, bookshelves, chairs, and discussion furniture and to introduce additional elements that

improve comfort and reinforce the Third Place concept. The proposed changes and additions are summarized in Tables 18 and 19.

Table 18. Proposed Changes to Existing Materials and Furniture

No.	Existing Material/Furniture	Rationale	Proposed Material/Furniture
1.	Glossy white ceramic flooring	The reflective surface produces excessive glare and reinforces a rigid, formal impression rather than a warm atmosphere.	Oak-wood-pattern vinyl flooring
2.	Purple, orange, white, and yellow painted walls	The existing colours do not create a coherent warm atmosphere. Dominant dark purple may cause visual fatigue, while bright orange and yellow can distract users and reduce concentration.	Cream as the dominant wall colour; terracotta columns in the lounge zone; gray-olive columns in the quiet zone; and muted-olive columns in the discussion zone.
3.	Gray aluminium bookshelves	The numerous gray shelves create a dominant minimalist-industrial appearance that is inconsistent with the proposed warm and home-like Third Place character.	Repainted cream aluminium bookshelves with oak-wood-pattern finishes.
4	Red fabric and maroon synthetic-leather reading chairs	The chairs are uncomfortable for extended use, visually inconsistent with the palette, and difficult to move.	Muted-olive linen-upholstered chairs with metal frames and casters.
5.	Circular orange and yellow synthetic-leather sofa	The outward-facing circular seating does not support discussion because users have different focal directions. Inward-facing single-seat sofas enable shared visual focus and more effective interaction.	Muted-olive single-seat leather sofas arranged inward.
6.	Rectangular discussion table	The rectangular form appears rigid and directs attention toward users seated at the ends. A racetrack form supports more balanced interaction and coordinates with other curved furniture. Power outlets and reading lights are added to support quiet-zone work.	Racetrack-oval discussion table with a satin clear-coat finish; existing rectangular tables fitted with central power outlets and reading lights.

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 19. Proposed Additional Furniture and Material Concepts

No.	Furniture Concept	Rationale
1.	Muted-olive polyester-canvas bean bags filled with polystyrene beads	The bean bags adapt to different postures and user preferences, are movable, require relatively simple maintenance, and provide an economical option for public-facility furniture.

No.	Furniture Concept	Rationale
2.	Terracotta ottomans combined with gray-olive and muted-olive seating, circular low tables, and a cream book-themed rug	An area previously occupied by closely spaced shelves is transformed into a quiet reading area with wider circulation, improving comfort, accessibility, and user experience.
3.	Curved floating sign for the quiet zone; rectangular floating signs for the exit and evacuation route	The signs provide clear wayfinding and remain visible from multiple directions.
4.	Multiplex-wood bookshelf with a multifunctional tiered platform, fitted cushions, and low tables for books or laptops	The former BI reading corner is redesigned with arched shelving, seating niches, and tiered seating to create a relaxed first impression and enable comfortable long-duration reading without an overly serious atmosphere.
5.	Indoor planting: areca palm, snake plant, Philodendron Xanadu, Aglaonema, and Zamioculcas zamiifolia (ZZ plant)	Areca palms reinforce a welcoming lounge atmosphere; snake plants support the orderly and calm character of the quiet zone; Philodendron Xanadu introduces a dynamic quality to the discussion zone; Aglaonema guides movement through transition areas; and ZZ plants add low-maintenance greenery to the administration area.

Source: Authors (2026)

Table 18 specifies how existing materials and furniture can be modified rather than indiscriminately discarded. The table recommends oak-patterned vinyl flooring, warmer wall treatments, improved shelving, ergonomically appropriate seating, and discussion furniture fitted with power access and reading lights. These changes respond directly to glare, visual formality, limited flexibility, and insufficient support for prolonged study. Table 19 identifies additional elements, including movable bean bags, ottomans, low tables, clearer wayfinding signs, multifunctional shelving, tiered seating, and selected indoor plants. The additions are assigned to specific zones so that every item supports a defined reading, working, relaxing, transition, or discussion activity. The flexible furniture reflects evidence that users value choice and adaptability in library study settings (Applegate, 2009; Cha & Kim, 2015). Together, Tables 18 and 19 translate the conceptual Third Place principles into tangible and incrementally implementable interior components.

The completed proposal was evaluated by two expert validators representing professional practice and academia. The original thesis validation instrument examined spatial planning, materials and sensory quality, colour and lighting, and conformity with the Third Place concept. Table 20 summarises the validation percentages for each aspect and the overall result. Spatial planning received 87.50%, materials and sensory quality received 96.00%, colour and lighting received 92.00%, and Third Place conformity received 92.19%. The combined score was 139 of a possible 152 points, equivalent to 91.45%. All assessment categories were interpreted as very feasible, although the validators' comments were still used to refine the proposal. Table 20 therefore provides expert-based confirmation that the design concept is coherent and suitable for further development and implementation.

Table 20. Expert Validation Results for the Interior Design Proposal

No.	Validation Aspect	Percentage	Interpretation
1	Spatial planning	87.50%	Very feasible
2	Materials and sensory quality	96.00%	Very feasible
3	Colour and lighting	92.00%	Very feasible
4	Conformity with the Third Place concept	92.19%	Very feasible
5	Overall validation result	91.45%	Very feasible

Source: Adapted from the authors' expert-validation results (2026)

DISCUSSION

The assessment demonstrates that the existing reading room is institutionally accessible but not yet socially or spatially supportive enough to operate as a comprehensive Third Place. The physical-condition score and safety indicators show that the room remains usable, whereas the lower spatial-functionality and visual-comfort scores indicate that basic usability alone does not produce an inviting social-learning environment. Studies of public and academic libraries consistently show that the value of library space depends on the interaction between physical settings, patterns of use, and opportunities for individual and collective activity (Aabø & Audunson, 2012; Bryant et al., 2009; Montgomery, 2014). The particularly low results for conversation, low profile, playful mood, and a home-away-from-home quality explain why users may experience the room primarily as a formal place for individual reading. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that interior quality influences comfort, study behaviour, and willingness to use library facilities (Afrina et al., 2023; Larasati & Juvitasari, 2022). It also confirms that the physical library remains important when its spaces are welcoming, legible, and responsive to changing user practices (Bailin, 2011; Webb et al., 2008).

The social findings reinforce Oldenburg's proposition that a Third Place requires more than open access; it depends on informal interaction, recurring use, and a sense of belonging. Public-library research has identified meeting, observation, participation, and low-intensity contact as important civic functions of library space (Aabø et al., 2010; Audunson, 2005; Given & Leckie, 2003). Elmborg (2011) similarly argues that the library can operate as a third space between institutional and everyday life, while Lin et al. (2015) demonstrate its relevance for young people. Research beyond libraries also shows that accessible Third Places contribute to community quality of life and the social life of streets (Jeffres et al., 2009; Mehta & Bosson, 2010). Place attachment is strengthened when a setting provides social support, familiarity, and opportunities for repeated informal encounters (Rosenbaum et al., 2007; Waxman, 2006). The proposed lounge, quiet, and discussion zones therefore address both spatial performance and the social mechanisms through which users may develop comfort, familiarity, and regular patterns of use. Comparable Indonesian design studies also support the use of Third Place principles to expand the educational and social functions of libraries and public learning environments (Haristiyanto & Yuono, 2020; Huann & Sutanto, 2020; Shelo & Liauw, 2020).

The proposed zoning responds to these findings by separating activities according to concentration and noise while maintaining a coherent sequence of spaces. Locating the lounge zone near the entrance supports orientation and informal use, protecting the quiet zone from primary circulation supports concentration, and positioning the discussion zone near the exit helps contain collaborative noise. This arrangement is compatible with observational studies showing that library users require differentiated settings for solitary work, group learning, and short or extended stays (Applegate, 2009; May & Swabey, 2015). The material, colour, furniture, lighting, and planting proposals translate social principles into practical interior components. Indoor-environment research indicates that thermal, air-quality, acoustic, lighting, and visual factors collectively influence comfort and performance rather than operating as isolated variables (Al Horr et al., 2016; Frontczak & Wargocki, 2011). Lighting and colour choices can affect mood and cognition, while holistic environmental design has measurable implications for learning outcomes (Barrett et al., 2015; Knez, 1995; Veitch & Newsham, 2000). The proposal should therefore be implemented as an integrated spatial system rather than as a collection of unrelated decorative changes.

This study is limited to one reading room and relies primarily on observation, documentation, expert validation, and standards-based comparison. It does not include a

large user survey, long-term behavioural mapping, post-occupancy evaluation, or direct testing of the completed interior prototype. Consequently, the proposed design should be understood as an evidence-informed and expert-validated recommendation rather than a final measure of user satisfaction. Future research should compare environmental measurements with user-perception data before and after implementation. Repeated observation would also help determine whether the lounge and discussion settings produce the expected patterns of informal interaction and regular use. A post-occupancy study could evaluate whether the 91.45% expert-validation result is supported by actual comfort, accessibility, and activity outcomes. Such evaluation would strengthen the relationship between design intent, real behaviour, and the long-term development of the library as a Third Place.

CONCLUSION

The General Reading Room meets several basic criteria, particularly those related to general physical condition, safety, neutral access, and social equality. Nevertheless, lighting, air circulation, ceiling condition, accessibility, electrical-outlet provision, furniture flexibility, spatial arrangement, and visual harmony require substantial improvement. Among the eight Third Place characteristics, only on neutral ground and a leveler were adequately achieved, demonstrating a clear gap between the existing library environment and its potential social role.

The proposed concept addresses this gap through flexible and movable furniture, non-exclusive spatial organization, non-intimidating circulation, natural materials, warm lighting, improved acoustic zoning, recognizable visual elements, and areas for recurring and informal activities. The reading room is organized into lounge, quiet, and discussion zones supported by administration and transition areas. This arrangement is expected to accommodate casual reading, study, work-from-anywhere activities, and discussion while fostering a playful mood and encouraging the natural development of regular users. Future studies should evaluate the proposal through user interviews, post-occupancy measurements, and prototype testing to assess its effectiveness after implementation.

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