

April 2014

## THE LONDON LIBRARY IS SHORTLISTED FOR THE 2014 RIBA AWARD

The London Library is delighted to announce that it has been shortlisted for a prestigious RIBA Award. The nomination is recognition for the completed first stage of The London Library's £19m capital project, designed by Haworth Tompkins. The project commissioned in 2004 represents the completion of Stage 1, which was built in three distinct, self-contained phases and completed in 2013.

The London Library was founded in 1841 and is one of the largest independent lending libraries in the world. The Capital project was born out of a need to improve the ageing Grade II listed building and provide 21<sup>st</sup> century facilities for its members. Haworth Tompkins were tasked with facilitating these improvements while carefully respecting the original fabric of The London Library, an institution which has played a significant role in Britain's literary and cultural landscape during its 173 year history.

The Library's acquisition of the building which has become T.S Eliot House (thanks to a generous donation from Valerie Eliot, widow of T.S Eliot, who was President of The London Library from 1952-1965), was a key factor in the project's development and success. The purchase enabled the Library to make significant improvements to existing spaces, improve navigation and extend the Library's footprint to accommodate the growing collection of over one million books. The first two phases were completed by summer 2010 and accounted for £10.75m of the total projected construction budget of £19m. The work was met with critical acclaim and the sensitive yet ambitious work by Haworth Tompkins secured an American Institute of Architects Design Excellence Award for phase 2.

The completed works included:

- A custom built conservation studio for in-house book conservators
- 6.5km of new shelving
- A bespoke home for the Library's archive of *The Times*
- Creation of a magnificent Lightwell Reading Room
- Restoration and extension of the Library's Art Room
- New and much-needed staff offices
- Refurbishment of the Issue Hall
- A new member entrance with wheelchair access
- Members' cycle store
- Linking the re-worked T.S. Eliot House in Mason's Yard with the original St James's Square building on five levels

The final element of Stage 1 of the project was completed in 2013 with the refurbishment of the Library's historic reading rooms to create three distinct and characterful work spaces for members and readers.

The London Library plans to complete the Capital project with 2 further phases. The refurbishment of the historic, Grade II-listed 1890s stacks and the introduction of three new levels of books stacks – the Courtyard Stacks – will further secure the preservation of the Library's unique collection. The centrepiece of the final phase will be the Andrew Devonshire Reading Room, a modern complement to its Victorian counterpart on the first floor providing additional accommodation for readers and writers. Directly beneath the new reading room, a new Members' Room will lead on to a Roof Garden and this phase will also incorporate the construction of a purpose-built vault to house part of the Library's Rare Books collection.

Inez Lynn, CEO and Librarian said *"We are delighted that the elegant and ingenious solutions found by Haworth Tompkins to meet our many needs have been recognised with this nomination. The on-going expansion and refurbishment of The London Library has been and continues to be a significant undertaking but it is enabling us to fit a much-loved building for the future and provide vital improvements to facilities and services for the benefit of our members."*

Graham Haworth of Haworth Tompkins said *"We are pleased that The London Library project has been acknowledged by the RIBA jury. Working with the Library, an organisation of huge literary significance, has been an exciting opportunity and we have been delighted to have been given the opportunity to play a role in providing an improved and secure building in which the Library's collections will be safeguarded for the future."*

The RIBA London Awards Ceremony will take place on the evening of the Tuesday 6 May 2014. Regional winners will also be considered for a RIBA National Award in recognition of their architectural excellence, which will be announced at a London event in June.

## ENDS

### Editor notes:

The London Library is based in St James's Square in Piccadilly and was founded in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle. It houses a unique humanities-based collection of over one million books ranging from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Members can freely browse and borrow books spanning 2,000 subjects and in over 50 languages on 15 miles of open access shelves.

The Library has 7,100 members. Past and present members include Charles Darwin, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Bruce Chatwin, Sebastian Faulks, Jeremy Paxman, Antonia Fraser and current president Sir Tom Stoppard. Membership of the London Library is open to all. Annual membership is £475 a year, with a range of institutional and discounted memberships available. The London Library is a registered charity and is entirely self-funded, raising income through membership fees, donations, bequests and fundraising initiatives.

[www.londonlibrary.co.uk](http://www.londonlibrary.co.uk)

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*Images and architectural plans are available on request*