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# LATITUDES INTERNATIONAL DESIGN CHALLENGE 2015-16

Chennai 13° 5' 0" N  
Design Challenge  
two

**Enlighten: Adaptation  
and heritage in the  
built environment**

**Submitted by:**

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**Thematic Area:**

Adaptation Design

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# Enlighten: Adaptation and heritage in the built environment

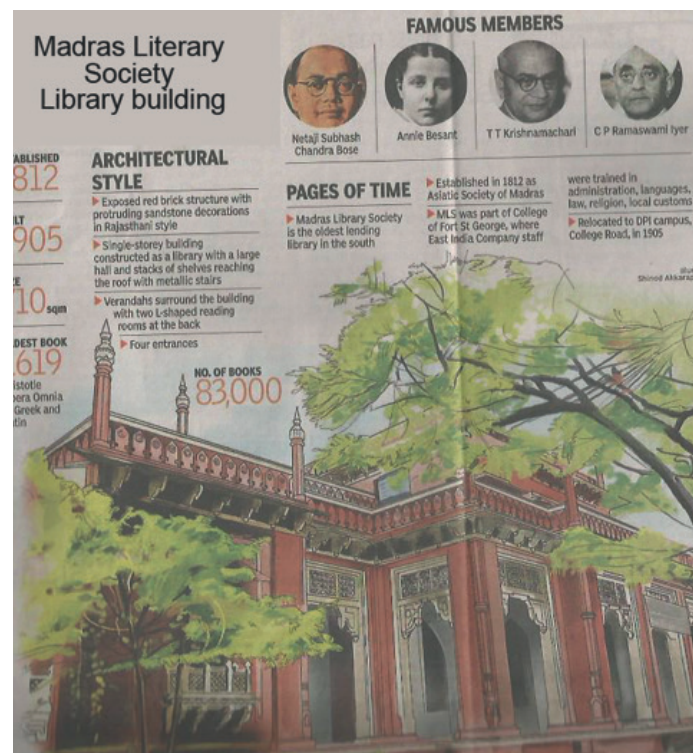
## Introduction

It is true that many of our historic buildings had green features like daylighting, natural ventilation, site orientation and other passive features. Many of them are still energy efficient to reduce energy costs, pollution, and are still comfortable inside with proper thermal comfort. But in the last few decades climate change has had a negative impact on some of them. Overcast sky conditions, increased humidity levels and airborne particles have reduced day lighting and ventilation in the interiors of many historic structures.

There is an immediate need to tackle such situations with sensitive intervention. This will ensure improved utility and increased life of the building as well as bring a new meaning into its use by the citizens. This will also reduce new construction and minimise wastes and landfills that bring in climate change.

## Context

One such structure is the MLS, i.e. Madras Literary Society Library building in Chennai 13.0827° N, 80.2707° E, in South India, which requires immediate solutions. The MLS was established in 1812 as the Asiatic Society of Madras. In 1905, the MLS was shifted to the present building in the campus of Directorate of Public Instruction. It currently houses a collection of about 55,000 titles including very rare ones. The oldest book being the Aristotle's Opera Omnia in Greek and Latin published in 1619. This 710 sq.m building, specially built to house the library, is a beautiful example of Indo-Saracenic architecture. The single-storey library building



is a red-brick structure with intricate sandstone trimmings inspired by Rajasthani architecture. Cruciform in plan, the entire structure is laid out as one large library hall of the same layout, with two small rooms at the rear for storage.

The roof of the vertical arm of the hall is lifted into a clear storey that serves to bring additional light into the central space. The ceiling of the remaining areas is also high, with Madras Terrace type construction, giving this small building a very lofty appearance.

The interior is dominated by galvanised iron multilevel stacks that touch the ceiling with access through a well-worked out system of metal stairs.



## Challenge

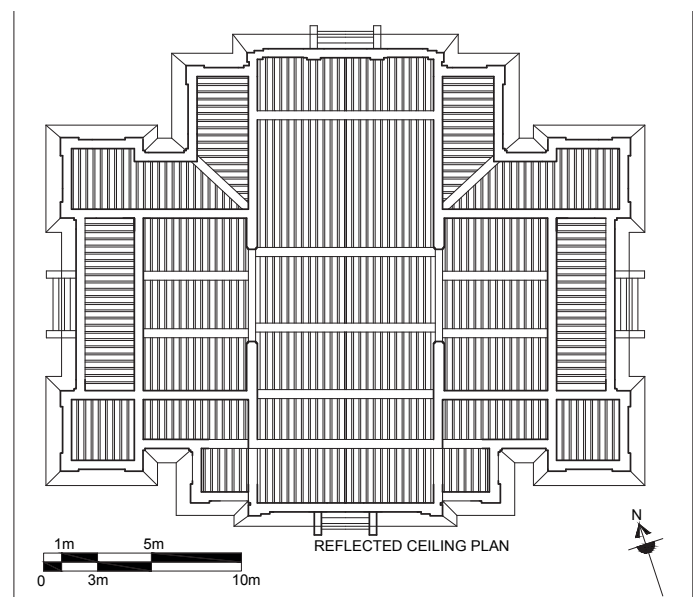
This competition invites design intervention in this 100 years old building which is in need of conservation. The library is situated on College road amidst Women's Christian College, Ethiraj College and several schools etc., The valuable treasure of books has borne the brunt of recent climate change. In the recent past, many books were transferred to the Public Library. Currently, there are 55000 titles with a rare collection of 10000 titles. The rare collections lack proper care due to humid conditions and pages have already begun to deteriorate. Poor natural lighting and ventilation, high and congested planning of stacks have worsened the situation.

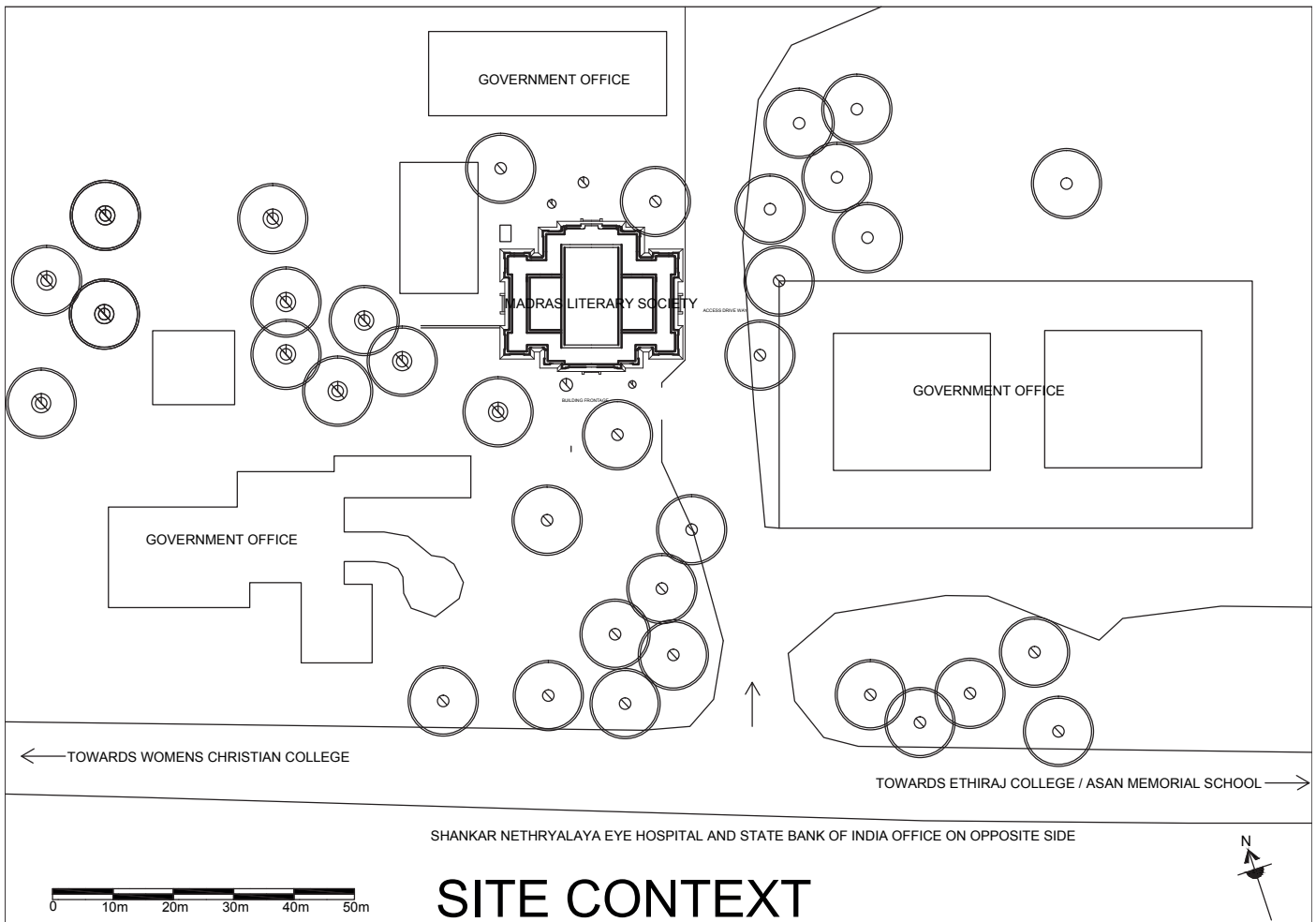
There is also a need to improve the financial status, readership and patronage to the library by defining a new meaning to the role. The library has limited itself to the role of a reading, lending and reference library and yet to see a spurt in membership to sustain itself. But, given the location, it could play a better role at neighbourhood and city level to increase membership.

Though this building is currently listed as a Grade 1 Heritage building, which therefore does not allow any alterations without the permission of the concerned authority, this competition looks forward to hypothetical solutions to show what can actually be done. It is essential that heritage buildings are not pulled down or changed beyond recognition to increase their life span to make them usable. Their active use is one way of conserving them.

## Design Guidelines

1. The proposal may be sensitive to the character and design of the heritage building.
2. The proposal may enhance the interior quality of the building which should in turn increase the life of the books, readership and use of the library.
3. In the available space within the building and the immediate site around it, the proposal may give new functions conducive to the original function of the library, which should lead to more foot falls in the library.
4. The proposal should strike a right balance between development and heritage significance.
5. Diurnal functions may be envisaged





## Resources

1. K. Kalpana and Frank Schiffer, Madras The Architectural Heritage (Chennai - INTACH Guide)
2. Drawings and maps
3. [http://wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/Roofing\\_with\\_traditional\\_madras\\_roofing\\_technique](http://wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/Roofing_with_traditional_madras_roofing_technique)
4. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/Forgotten-library-200-year-old-Madras-Literary-Society/articleshow/31979699.cms>
5. <http://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/india/indosaracenic.htm>

## Tips for submission

1. Concept
2. Site Proposal Layout 1:100
3. Basic drawings 1:50
4. Details of different modes of environment in appropriate scale

### Main point of contact:

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