

British Library

project	British Library (in association with Colin St. John Wilson)
location	St Pancras, London
client	The British Library, Department of National Heritage
dates	1975-1997
cost	£500million
area	120,000m ²

The British Library was voted one of the six most popular buildings of the millennium in a popular poll, and it was short listed for the Stirling Prize.

Included in the accommodation are extensive exhibition galleries (fitted out by the architects), two restaurants, a café, a catering kitchen, and education rooms.

The building is remarkable for its attention to detail. People who use it comment on the pleasure it gives to the sense of touch with its carefully shaped natural materials: wood, stone, brass, and leather. It has been called the last “handmade” public building in Britain.

It is also unusual for the ease with which its geography can be comprehended by the visitor. In spite of its size, most of the building’s public destinations are visible from its point of entry, and little use has to be made of orientation plans. The routes through the building are natural and inviting.

M.J. Long was a partner of Colin St. John Wilson & Partners, and was the co-designer of the building. She was the author of the overall building plan, and took particular responsibility for the client’s brief and the natural and artificial light which are so important to the character of the building interiors.

Rolfe Kentish was the associate responsible for organizing the design team to produce the entire set of construction documents for the final stage of construction.

