POWELL’S 2020

University of Oregon . Department of Architecture

Covering an entire city block on the edge of the Pearl District and downtown Portland, Powell’s City of Books is the world’s largest used and new bookstore and offers more than a million books on its shelves. It is not only one of the world’s great Mecca’s for book lovers, but it is also a microcosm of Portland that is cherished by tourists and locals alike. Powell’s 2020 studio will re-envision this landmark from the urban, architectural, programmatic, digital and branding perspectives. Powell’s City of Books is more than an amazing bookstore: it is a miniature city dedicated to the exchange of information. **In this studio, we will push the limits of what it means to be a community centered media hub by trying to position Powell’s for the year 2020.**

The re-design of Powell’s city block is rich with opportunity for conceptual speculation and architectural innovation at a variety of scales. In an effort to infuse studio projects with Portland’s entrepreneurial spirit, we will seek out expertise from U of O’s School of Business to identify branding, business accelerator and other support functions that can capitalize on the site’s strategic location.

Understanding how interactive digital media is changing the publishing industry is essential to the re-design of Powell’s City of Books. Students will be encouraged to think about the role these new technologies should play in their designs. (Powell’s already has an app that helps you navigate the stores and find titles you want.) Students will have the opportunity to collaborate with the Digital Arts Department when deciding if, when and how to integrate digital media into their projects.

Approximately 80,000 book lovers browse the City’s shelves every day in Portland and via the Internet. What will the world’s largest used and new bookstore look like in the future?