

## HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Please send completed form to: National Register and State Register Coordinator,  
State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development,  
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford CT 06103

\* Note: Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Building Name (Historic) Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
 Street Address or Location 121 Wall Street  
 Town/City New Haven Village \_\_\_\_\_ County New Haven  
 Owner(s) Yale University, PO Box 208372, New Haven, CT 06520-8372     Public     Private

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: EDUCATION: library  
 Historic Use: EDUCATION: library

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road?     Yes     No  
 Interior accessible?     Yes     No    If yes, explain during public hours  
 Style of building MODERN MOVEMENT: New Formalism    Date of Construction 1961-63

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- |  |  |                                 |                                       |  |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard             | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone            | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone  | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Granite, marble</u> ) |                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |  |

### Structural System

- Wood Frame     Post & Beam     Balloon     Load bearing masonry     Structural iron or steel  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Roof (Type)

- Gable     Flat     Mansard     Monitor     Sawtooth  
 Gambrel     Shed     Hip     Round     Other \_\_\_\_\_

### (Material)

- Wood Shingle     Roll Asphalt     Tin     Slate     Asphalt Shingle  
 Built up     Tile     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Stories: 6, 3B    Approximate Dimensions 86' x 130' above grade, 200' x 235' below grade

Structural Condition:  Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated

Exterior Condition:  Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated

Location Integrity:     On original site     Moved    When? \_\_\_\_\_

Alterations?     Yes     No    If yes, explain: Extensive restoration in 2015-16.

**FOR OFFICE USE:** Town # \_\_\_\_\_ Site # \_\_\_\_\_ UTM \_\_\_\_\_

District:     S     NR    If NR, Specify:     Actual     Potential

**PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)****Related outbuildings or landscape features:**

- Barn     Shed     Garage     Carriage House     Shop     Garden  
 Other landscape features or buildings: Paved plaza, landscape walls, sunken sculpture court, campus buildings

**Surrounding Environment:**

- Open land     Woodland     Residential     Commercial     Industrial     Rural  
 High building density     Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings: Located on the Yale University campus, at the northeast corner of Wall and High Streets. High and Walls Street in this area are within the campus and primarily pedestrian. Beinecke Library is at the southwest corner of an open plaza facing Neo-Classical-style Woodbridge Hall and the Woolsey Hall-Memorial Hall-Commons building along the north and east sides of the plaza. Granite walls containing ventilation ducts line the south and west sidewalks. Other nearby campus buildings are predominantly neo-Gothic in character, including the Law School and Sterling Library.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

See continuation sheet.

Architect Gordon Bunshaft, Skidmore Owings & Merrill    Builder George A. Fuller & Company  
 See below.

• Historical or Architectural importance:  
 Structural engineer: Paul Weidlinger. Sculpture garden: Isamu Noguchi.

See continuation sheet.

## • Sources:

Brown, Elizabeth Mills; *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1976.  
 Carley, Rachel D., *Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement* (Privately printed by the New Haven Preservation Trust, New Haven CT) June, 2008.  
 Ryan, Susan. 1980. HRI 962. *New Haven Architectural Survey*. Map/block/lot: 260/0309/00500.  
 See continuation sheet.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 6/17/2016  
 View Multiple Views    Negative on File NHPT  
 Name Charlotte Hitchcock    Date 10/31/2016  
 Organization New Haven Preservation Trust  
 Address 922 State Street, P.O. Box 8968, New Haven, CT 06532

## • Subsequent field evaluations:

Latitude, Longitude: 41.311528, -72.927183

**Threats to the building or site:**

- None known     Highways     Vandalism     Developers     Renewal     Private  
 Deterioration     Zoning     Other \_\_\_\_\_     Explanation \_\_\_\_\_

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Other notable features of building and site (*Interior and/or Exterior*):

The building visible above ground is a translucent stone box floating above the plaza surface, supported only at its corners on four pylons. The visitor slips in under the box to enter a glass-enclosed ground floor. Inside is a monumental six-story space within the center of which stands a multi-story glassed vitrine of book stacks containing a selection of the treasured holdings. Twin staircases bring the visitor up to the mezzanine level inside the box proper, where there are exhibits and comfortable seating areas. Below grade there are reading rooms for researchers and a view out to the sunken sculpture court designed by Isamu Noguchi. The main book storage is on additional below-grade levels.

The structure of the library consists of four walls, each a Vierendeel welded steel tapered-cross truss into which a grid of 1 1/4-inch-thick Vermont Montclair Danby marble panes has been fitted. The exterior of the steel is clad in granite while the interior frame is clad in precast stone and granite (Docomomo.us). The marble surfaces transmit a filtered light to the interior and allow the building to glow when lit after dark.

The Noguchi sculpture court includes three marble sculptures in the forms of a pyramid, a globe, and a cube. The building interior extends under the plaza surface. The

The building has required extensive maintenance including roof replacement in 1982 and 2008, glazing in 2004, plaza waterproofing in 2005, and an extensive restoration in 2015-16.

Historical or Architectural importance (*continued*):

By 1953, President A. Whitney Griswold (1906-1963) had been president of Yale University for two years, and had begun sponsoring Modernist architecture and also the preferred selection of alumni for the designs of new campus buildings. The 30-acre Hillhouse estate, Sachem's Wood, had been purchased and donated to the university in 1910 (Scully et al, 186), but the crest of the hill remained undeveloped until after World War II. Architect Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), an alumnus, began developing a university master plan including the layout of Science Hill. The International-style Gibbs Laboratory was among the first Modernist buildings, along with the Yale University Art Gallery, designed by Louis Kahn (1901-1974) in 1953, and the Ingalls Rink designed by Saarinen in 1957.

In the early 1960s a major building campaign by the university was ongoing (Carley, 54) and the Beinecke Library was among the new facilities. It was financed by alumni and brothers Edwin and Frederick Beinecke to house, protect, and showcase the rare book collection as well as to provide work space for researchers. Gordon Bunshaft was selected as the architect in 1959 (although not a graduate of Yale). It was planned from the start as a climate-controlled environment for protection of the collections. The cost was not revealed by the donors.

The building is significant as a departure from and severe contrast with the neo-Classical and neo-Gothic buildings that form its context, and for its dramatic symbolism as a "jewel box" containing the greatest intellectual treasures of the university – its rarest books and manuscripts. The design is in the New Formalist mode of Modernism, using a symmetrical and repeated rhythm of geometric pattern. The abstractness of the design, without windows or recognizable doors, gives it an impersonal and scaleless character that is monumental and can also be disorienting. Even the landscape walls contribute to the tricks of scale, with their thick and tall proportions that dwarf the human figure (the walls incorporate air intake for the building's mechanical systems). Over its 50 years it has become an iconic landmark of Yale, a required stop for tourists from all over the world.

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Architect:

**Gordon Bunshaft** (1909-1990) pioneered the era of Modernist skyscraper design with the 24-story Lever House in New York of 1952, which arguably established the International Style as the signature style for corporate office buildings in the mid-twentieth century.

Gordon Bunshaft was born in 1909 in Buffalo, New York to a Russian Jewish immigrant family. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning a bachelor's degree in 1933 and master's degree in 1935. Bunshaft was awarded traveling fellowships which allowed him to tour Europe from 1935 until 1937. After returning to the United States he worked briefly for Edward Durell Stone and then joined Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. During World War II he served in the Army Corps of Engineers and in 1946 he rejoined SOM, where he remained until 1979. He received numerous awards including the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1988.

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) was established in 1936 in Chicago; in 1937 their New York City office opened. Gordon Bunshaft was also the lead design partner for the Conte School (1962) in New Haven.

Sculptor:

**Isamu Noguchi** (1904-1988) was an important sculptor of the Modernist period, known for his sculpture, gardens, furniture and lighting, ceramics, and stage set designs. He was born in Los Angeles of mixed heritage. He spent his early years in Japan, then lived in Indiana and later in New York City. Noguchi traveled widely and had studios in the United States and Japan. Among his Connecticut works are the monumental sculptures and courtyard gardens at the Wilde Building, CIGNA in Bloomfield (listed on the National Register of Historic Places), and the sculpture courtyard at the Beinecke Library.

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### Sources (*continued*):

AIA Historical Directory of American Architects,

<http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/What's%20here.aspx>

Bunshaft, Gordon biography.

Archdaily.com web site accessed 10/31/2016 at <http://www.archdaily.com/65987/ad-classics-beinecke-rare-book-and-manuscript-library-skidmore-owings-merrill/>

The Pritzker Architecture Prize web site. Accessed 10/31/2016 at <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/1988-bunshaft/bio>

Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library. Docomomo\_US web site accessed 11/06/2016 at

[http://www.docomomo-us.org/news/fiche\\_architects\\_50](http://www.docomomo-us.org/news/fiche_architects_50)

Clouette, Bruce (PAST, Inc.). 2000. CIGNA Complex National Register Nomination No. 09000324. National Park Service.

Condit, Carl W. 1968. *American Building: Materials and Techniques*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fitch, James Marston. 1973. *American Building: the Historical Forces That Shaped It*, Second Edition. New York: Shoken Books.

Maps and aerial views:

Bing Maps accessed at: <https://www.bing.com/mapspreview>

Google Maps accessed at: <https://www.google.com/maps/>

Metz, Don and Yuji Noga. 1966. *New Architecture in New Haven*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

New Haven Modern web site. New Haven Preservation Trust. Accessed at: <http://newhavenmodern.org/>

Noguchi, Isamu, biography. The Noguchi Museum web site. Accessed 6/5/2016 at:

<http://www.noguchi.org/noguchi/biography>

Perez, Adelyn. 2010. “AD Classics: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library / Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill.” Accessed 6/5/2016 at: <http://www.archdaily.com/65987/ad-classics-beinecke-rare-book-and-manuscript-library-skidmore-owings-merrill>

Scully, Vincent et al. 2004. *Yale in New Haven: Architecture & Urbanism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

“SOM Designs Onyx Shelter for Yale’s Rare Books.” November 1960. *Architectural Record*. Vol. CXXVIII, No. 11. P. 44.

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper. 1981. *American Architecture: 1607-1976*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Wright, Gwendolyn. 2008. *USA: modern architectures in history*. London: Reaktion Books.

“Yale Rare Book and Manuscript Library.” February 1964. *Progressive Architecture*. Vol XLV, No. 2. pp. 130-133.

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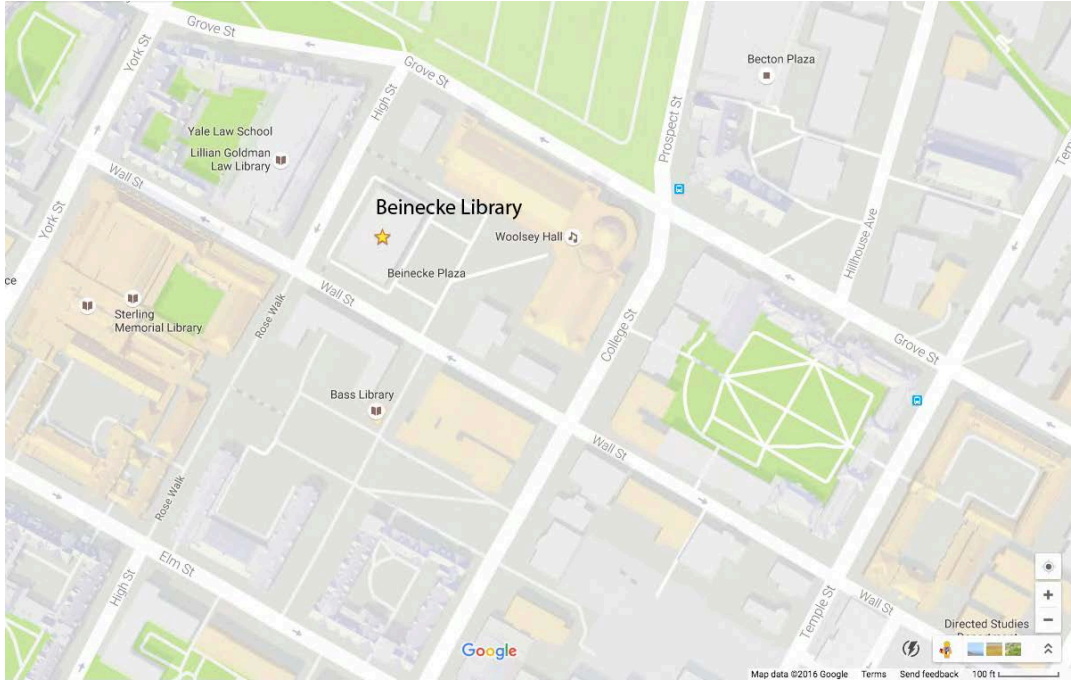


Figure 1. Location map of the Beinecke Library, 121 Wall Street. Image from Google Maps accessed 10/31/2016.

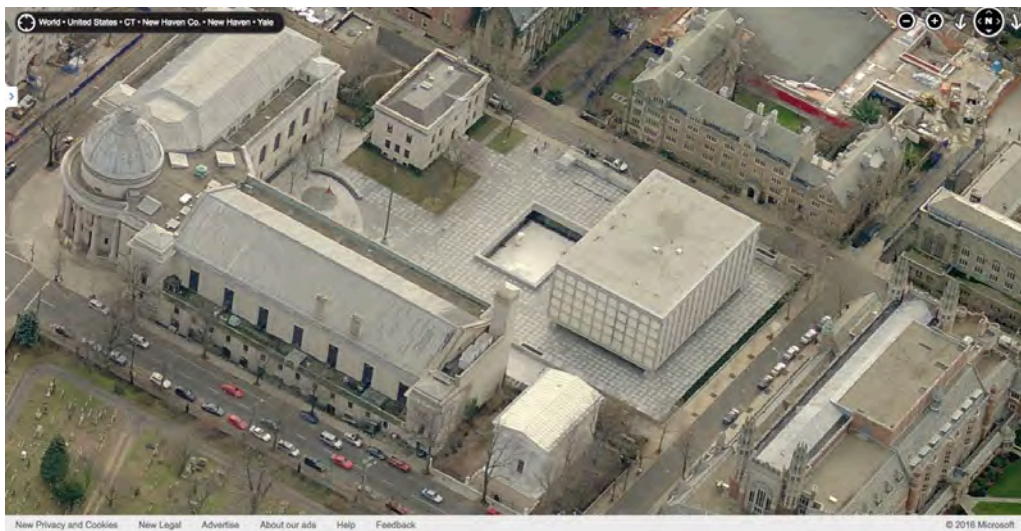


Figure 2. North aerial view of Beinecke Library, Hewitt Quadrangle (aka Beinecke Plaza). Image from Bing Maps accessed 10/31/2016.

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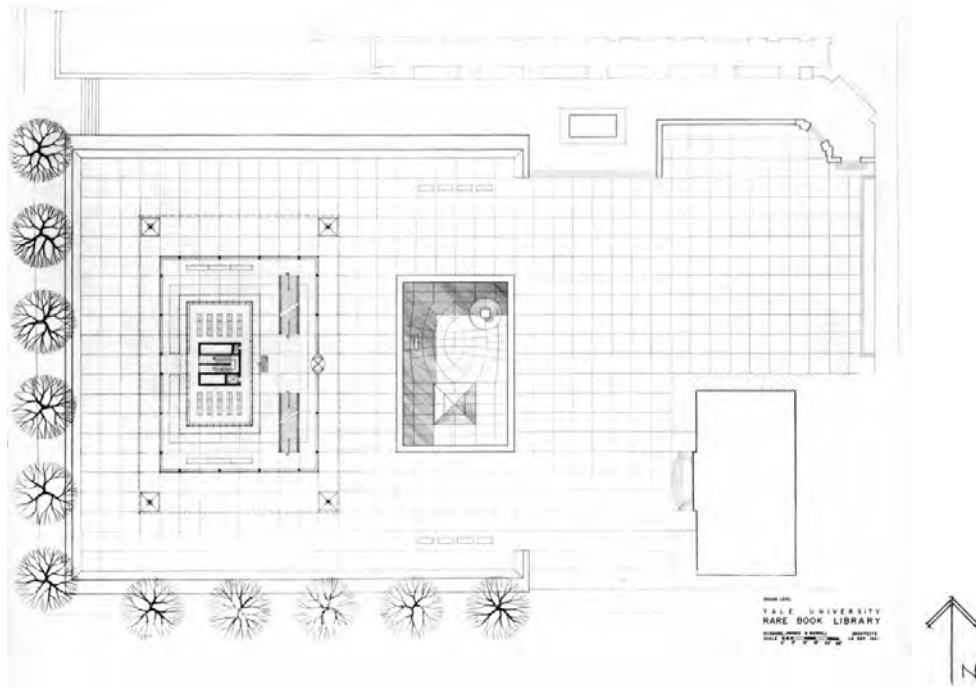


Figure 3. Plan of Beinecke Library, sculpture court, and Hewitt Quadrangle, image courtesy of Archdaily.com (Perez 2010). Project north is indicated.



Figure 4. Northwest view of Beinecke Library, camera facing southeast from an elevated walk at street level.

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Figure 5. West view of Hewitt Quadrangle (aka Beinecke Plaza) and north side of Beinecke Library, camera facing east.



Figure 6. North view of the Noguchi sculpture court; camera facing south from the plaza level.



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Figure 7. Southwest view of the Noguchi sculpture court; camera facing northeast from the plaza level.

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Figure 8. Exterior detail view of corner pylons at plaza level; camera facing west.



Figure 9. Exterior detail view of corner pylon view facing toward sculpture court and Woodbridge Hall at right rear; camera facing east at plaza level.

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Figure 10. Exterior detail view of east side and entry facing toward Commons; camera facing north.



Figure 11. East view; camera facing northwest from the plaza level.

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Figure 12. Interior view from entrance showing stair and information desk; camera facing south.

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Figure 13. Interior view at south display area of mezzanine; camera facing west.

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Figure 14. North interior view of entrance and stairs; camera facing north from the mezzanine.

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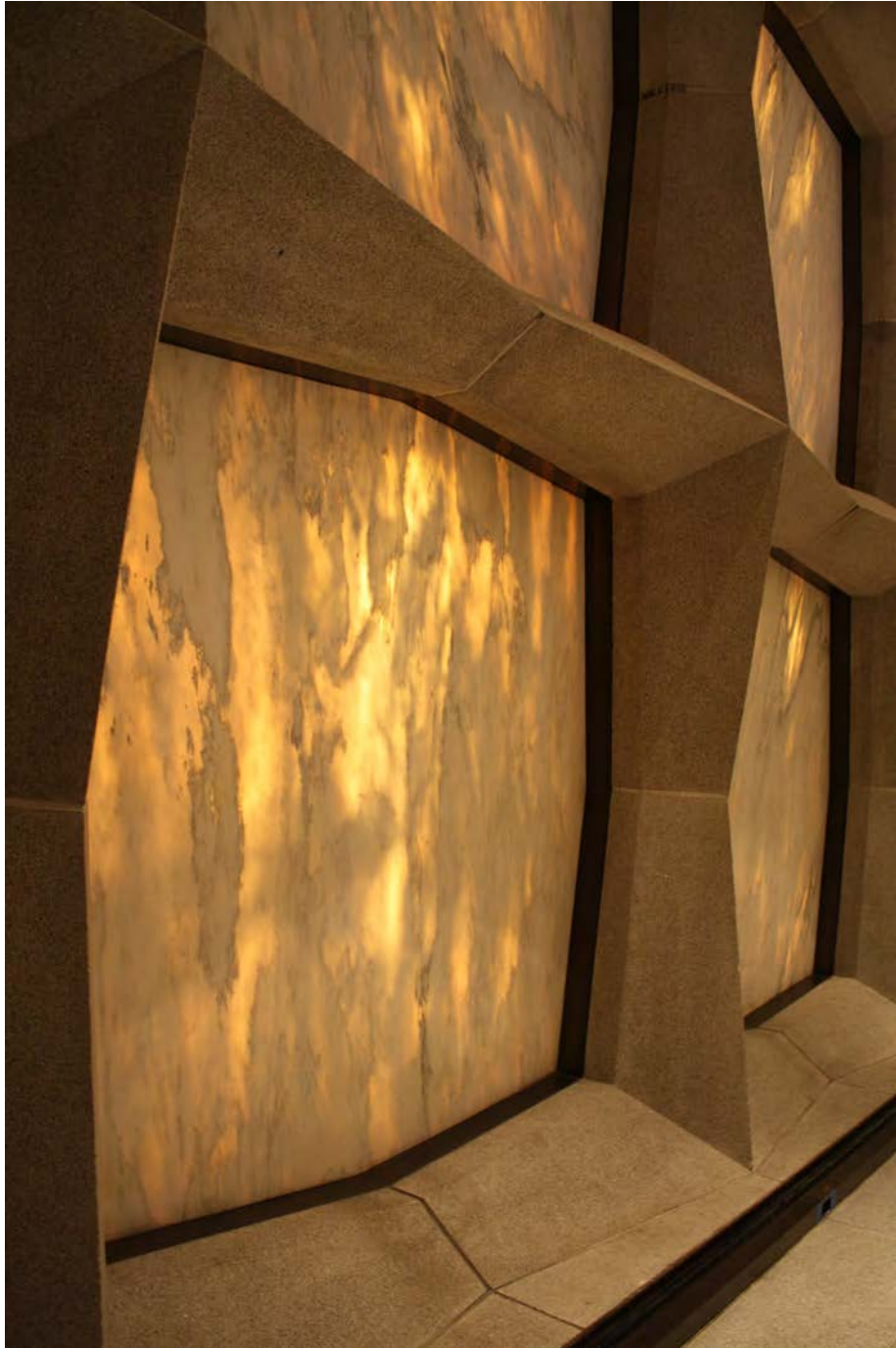


Figure 15. Interior detail view of south wall at mezzanine level; camera facing south.

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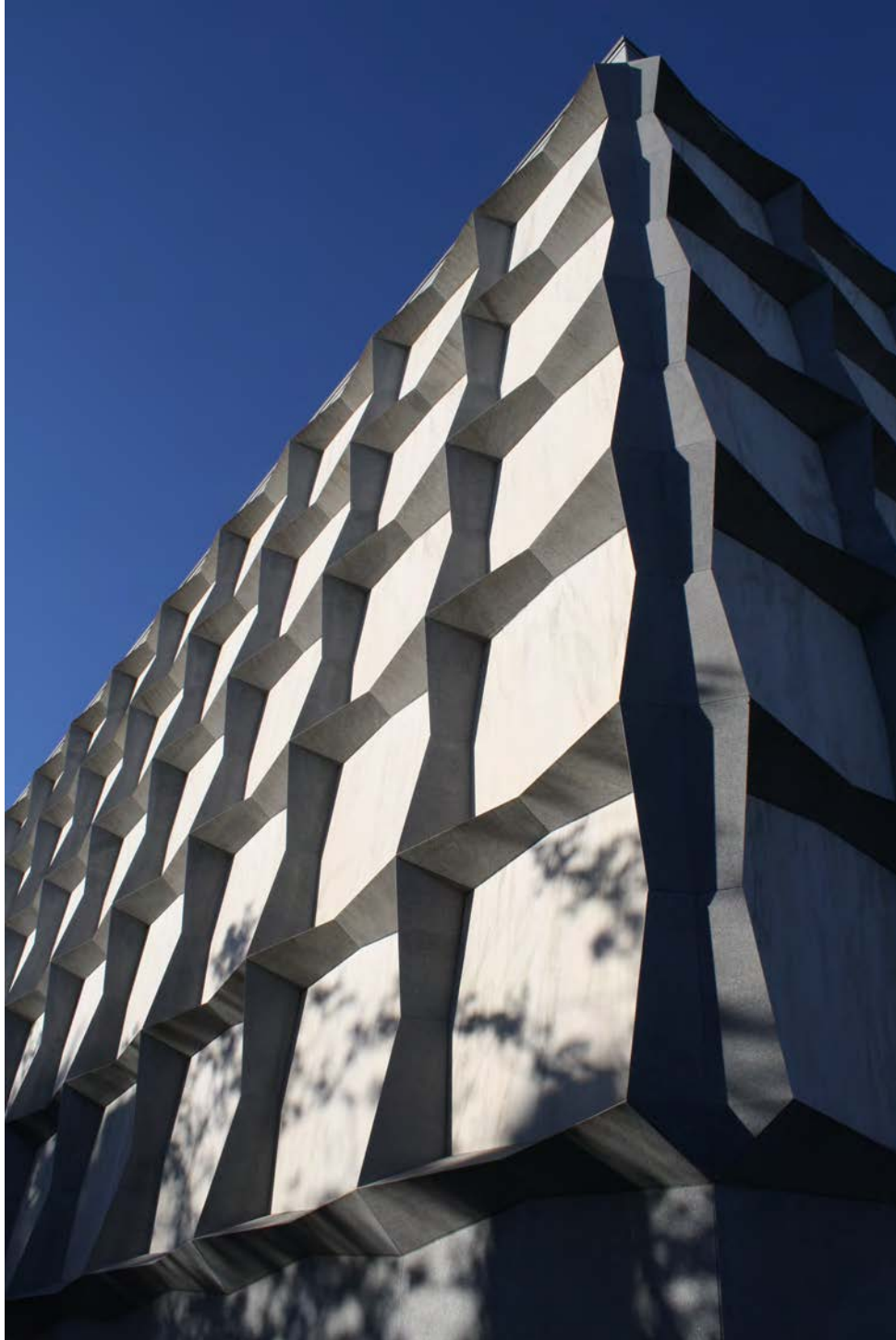


Figure 16. Detail view of exterior at southeast corner; camera facing north.



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Figure 17. Detail view of landscape feature along Wall Street. The wall incorporates mechanical ventilation intakes; camera facing east. Note that the street grade slopes gently down toward the east, with the sidewalk meeting the plaza elevation at the area west of Woodbridge Hall.



Figure 18. North context view of Book and Snake Society on Grove Street with the Beinecke Library visible beyond; camera facing south.