The Internet Archive: Tectonics of the Immaterial

KEYWORDS: Data Centers, Cloud Libraries, Material Footprint, Immaterial Tectonics, Data Infrastructure, Geology of Media

The technological shift towards connectivity — driven by automation, machine learning and the internet of things — is mostly perceived of as an immaterial phenomena, decoupled from physical dimension. However, the internet in actuality resides on a vast material footprint, which exists almost unnoticed in the suburbs of perception. This design research studio, *The Internet Archive: Tectonics of the Immaterial*, engages with the notion of the internet as an immaterial entity which has revolutionized knowledge exchange in the 21st century, but at the same time relies upon a physical footprint, comprised of architecture and infrastructure.

The brief is based on a Request for Proposals [RFP]: The present Internet Archive is a San Francisco–based nonprofit digital library with the stated mission of “universal access to all knowledge.” Because 21st century culture produces more and more artifacts in digital form, the Archive’s mission is to help preserve those artifacts and create an Internet library for researchers, historians, and scholars. In 2017, the Archive’s founder, Brewster Kahle announced that the Internet Archive was constructing a back-up library, the Internet Archive of Canada, a copy which is to be built in Toronto, Canada. In the proposal announcement, Kahle was quoted as saying:

“Throughout history, libraries have fought against terrible violations of privacy—where people have been rounded up simply for what they read. With The Internet Archive, we are fighting to protect our readers’ right to information in the digital world.”

Along with field trips and guest lectures, this research studio, *The Internet Archive: Tectonics of the Immaterial*, includes a parametric workshop with BLACKBOX, Skidmore Owens Merrill SOM at their office in Chicago.

**Studio Requirements:** All students must be familiar with Rhino software to enroll in this class – no exceptions.  