

The Slover Library is composed of three buildings: the historic Seaboard (left) and Selden Arcade (not in frame) on the edges, with the modern New Tower and its atrium connecting the two.



Photos: Steve Lerum

Something **Old**,

Something **New**

In Norfolk, VA, a library renovation marries historic elegance with contemporary chic

BY LEONORA DESAR

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How do you visually unite classic architecture with a contemporary, glass-enclosed aesthetic? And what's more, how do you do this with limited tools?

These were the challenges facing the designers at Patrick B. Quigley & Associates (PBQA), Torrance, CA, who created the lighting scheme for the Slover Library in Norfolk, VA. The library embodies both a historic and modern design, and includes three buildings: the historic Seaboard and Selden Arcade on the edges, with a glass-enclosed New Tower and its atrium connecting the two. The lighting team, in creating the design, had to respect the individual architectural identities of all three structures, while at the same time developing a cohesive whole.

To complicate matters, the design team began the project in 2011, when LEDs were costly and limited fixture options were available. "This was right at the turning point for LEDs," says Patrick B. Quigley, principal at PBQA. "LEDs had been around for quite a while, but it was still at a time when there were issues of inconsistent color quality and performance."

But there were also benefits, including longer life expectancy and easier maintenance, not to mention the allure of linking clients with the cutting edge of technology. "Adventurous clients



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1. A custom pendant with LED G-lamps emulates the library's original fixtures, but without being too elaborate.

2. In the Seaboard building, a decorative pendant containing a CFL casts a soft, flattering glow.

3. Ornamentation on the atrium's ceiling draws its inspiration from the Seaboard's botanic-themed plaster bas-relief, tying the atrium and Seaboard together.

wanted an association with LED because the world saw it as the next big thing," Quigley says.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

The loss of the Seaboard building's original fixtures led PBQA to design a family of five custom fixtures with Newman Architects and in conjunction with Rambusch Lighting, who manufactured the fixtures. The family uses a combination of fluorescent and LED sources, and aims to marry the historical architecture of the Seaboard with the modern spirit of the New Tower. "We were actively trying to bind the old and the new," says Quigley. "We used visual cues of the historic structure in developing these pieces, but they were reeled back from the highly expressive, highly decorative motif of the Seaboard building. We greatly simplified the lines to make them more empathetic with the New Tower architecture."

The custom family was inspired by the Seaboard's original historic fixtures. In the arcade around the Seaboard reading room, a decorative pendant reveals the detail of the ceiling and casts a soft, flattering glow. The fluted element of the pendant conjures the vocabulary of the original fixtures, while the stem and canopy are clean, plain and contemporary.

One's eye is drawn to the fixture's globe, which contains a compact fluorescent lamp. "At the time, there was really no LED source we could use that was omnidirectional and produced enough lumens to make that whole globe look like it was glowing, and that would produce the light levels that we needed," Quigley says. "They just weren't available."

On the other hand, LED G-lamps were ideal as small, decorative globes in a separate custom pendant. "There were no CFL globes that were small enough to suit this piece," Quigley says. "What this tells you is that the scale and lumen output that we needed sometimes dictated which light source was chosen." The fixture also

In the New Tower, a tic-tac-toe board of T8 fluorescent fixtures (a-light) is suspended from each ceiling. The consistency of the lighting creates a lantern effect, allowing one to see the exoskeleton of the building.



emulates the fluted elements of the original historic fixtures, while not taking it too far with decorative embellishment. “We wanted to minimize and streamline it to reflect the New Tower’s more contemporary persona. This is another fixture that’s trying to have it both ways.”

PBQA was also faced with color-matching the LED and fluorescent light sources, a challenge epitomized by a pendant that uses both lamp types. To find the right color match, the team performed numerous mock-ups of different lamps, but even so, the final product wasn’t perfect in Quigley’s eyes. “You would not want to necessarily mix these different light sources if you could help it,” Quigley says. “Now you wouldn’t have to—there are plenty of LEDs available that could replace the CFLs.”

In the atrium, LEDs are used to create a warm environment that flatters skin tone. At the information desk, a receptionist is bathed in both downlight from above and LEDs hidden within the desk itself. “It’s about making the receptionist look great,” Quigley says. “Downlight alone is not typically all that flattering—it can create shadow pockets at your eyes. The bounced light off of the tabletop of the desk helps fill that in and soften lines.”

The fixtures throughout the project have a color temperature of 3000K, which also adds warmth and sets people off to their best advantage. “It’s a good color for human complexions and therefore good for social interaction,” Quigley says. “We were also able to come up with better blending of LED and fluorescent sources in that particular Kelvin temperature range.”

A CIVIC CENTERPIECE

The façade of the library is central for marrying the classic with the contemporary. The historic Seaboard building and Selden Arcade, which flank the modern atrium and New Tower, are both washed in a pale coral using LED/RGB uplights. The uplights are coupled, so that they always dim and go on and off together, as well as register the same color. “What dawned on us was that we could use the Arcade and Seaboard buildings to, in essence, ‘hold’ the New Tower, almost like hands cupping a hot cup of coffee,” says Quigley. “They are lit the same to emphasize the idea that the New Tower is being warmly held between them.”

The uplighting is also intended to monumentalize the Seaboard, to make it feel bigger and more solid, and to reinforce its masculine stance. “When you uplight, the illumination is stronger at the bottom, and slowly falls off as the building rises,” Quigley says. “This visually emphasizes the height of the building. Uplighting also dramatizes [the Seaboard’s] decorative ornamentation; you get accent light on the bottom of that ornamentation and deep shadows above it. That serves, again, to monumentalize [the Seaboard], to make it look deeper and more imposing.”

The uplighting of the Seaboard façade serves multiple purposes by illuminating the adjacent atrium’s ceiling with reflected light. The illumination creates a “lantern effect,” which, at night, creates more brightness within the building than without and renders the glass skin of the atrium transparent. The illumination of the façade can also change color for parties and events, lending both the atrium and Seaboard a festive nighttime presence. “Lighting these days really has to fulfill multiple roles,” Quigley says. “The energy constrictions are so tight that you really can’t afford to dedicate equipment and energy to a single use. We’re always trying to make more than one thing happen, to make every fixture provide as much value to the lit environment as we possibly can.”

The reflected façade lighting also acts to accentuate the metal ornamentation on the atrium’s ceiling, pulling it into the overall composition. Designed by sculptor Kent Bloomer, the ornamentation draws its inspiration from the Seaboard’s botanic-themed plaster bas-relief, and further ties the atrium and Seaboard together.

In the New Tower, meanwhile, a lantern effect is achieved through a tic-tac-toe board of T8 fluorescent fixtures (a-light) suspended from each ceiling within the seven-story building. At the time, the team could not find a fixture that provided both up and downlight using a single lamp profile, and using a two-lamp configuration was too costly and energy-consuming. The solution was to use linear downlights and have the tops of the fixtures slotted, allowing light to spill upwards as well. “It seemed obvious to us, but there were no fixtures at the time that were made that way,” Quigley says. The consistency of the lighting on each ceiling plane allows one to see the exoskeleton of the building, and reveals the architecture in silhouette against the lit interior. The tic-tac-toe board also emulates the module of the ceiling coffers within the historic Seaboard building, further uniting the old and new.

Overall, the effect is a marriage of two worlds and a design that provides Norfolk with an iconic centerpiece. “Blending historic and contemporary architecture in a manner that respects each is one of the most difficult and delicate design problems that a team can face,” Quigley says. “Here, the lighting has allowed each of the buildings to differentiate themselves, while at the time binding the elements together.” □

THE DESIGNER



Patrick B. Quigley, IALD, Member IES (1981), is principal at Patrick B. Quigley & Associates. His work has been recognized with numerous awards from the American Institute of Architects, the IES and the IALD.

FAST FACTS

- The project began in 2011, when color quality was still an issue with LEDs.
- The New Tower and atrium achieve a lantern effect.
- Façade uplighting, botanic ornamentation and repeated ceiling modules unify the classic and modern structures of the library.