The shimmering pavilion sits not far from the edge of Lake Talbert. Moats and waterways bring the water up to its base; sparkling fountains throw their images on its golden walls.

Inside, the senses are bombarded by color, light, texture, activity. Plants and stairways flourish in profusion. Sculpture, paintings and macramé compete with brightly colored tiles, planters and carpets to attract the eye. Video tapes are running in one corner; children lounge on the floor listening to a story hour; a teenager heads downstairs with his musical instrument. The splashing of numerous fountains lays a rustling blanket overall.

Can this be a library? Yes ... and no. The Huntington Beach Library Information and Cultural Resource Center is a library, and more.

"There are so many more ways people get their information now that libraries have to be more than libraries if they're to survive," says Walter Johnson, director of the Huntington Beach center. "Books will be around for a long time," says Johnson, "but people learn most from visual experience and through hearing. We have to think of other media."

Hence the name, Huntington Beach Library, Information and Cultural Resources Center. It's a mouthful, but it accurately encompasses the sweeping concept the Huntington Beach city fathers and library people dreamed about in designing the $5-million, 74,000-square-foot library complex opened this year.

"'Information' (in the name) implies dissemination of information," comments Johnson. "We're more than just a warehouse.

"We wanted to be more than a staid library. We started from scratch, tried to forget what we know and concentrated on what a library should be. We encourage activity, dialogue, participation, involvement."

The result is magnificent. The building, simply as a building, is a work of art. Los Angeles architect John Neutra has combined a variety of materials—wood, volcanic rock, stone, glass, water, cement, carpet, tile and plants—with an abundance of light, color and space to produce a building that is both utilitarian and aesthetically satisfying.

Within the building Neutra's skillful design breaks up space, patterns and levels so that no two views are alike. The design promotes a feeling of spaciousness, an atmosphere that is at once comfortable and stimulating.

Says Neutra of his design concept, "We have by all technical means at our disposal allowed the park (Huntington Beach's 250-acre Central Park, developed at the same time as the library) to penetrate and flow through the new library structure with the greatest possible 'contact with nature.'

"Quite contrary to the limitations imposed by most urban surroundings, this library site was originally chosen with a conviction that views, both near and far, should dictate the conceptual approach."

But as unique as the building is, what's going on inside of it is truly unusual. This is a "library" where people can go not just to get something, but to do something. This is a "library" which can truly be a resource and activity center for the community; a "library" not only where learning is stored, but where it takes place.

Recognizing the revolutionary impact of the electronic media on learning, Johnson and the Library Board, the Public Facilities Corporation, the Huntington Beach City Council and others who had a hand in the planning wanted a center that would fully incorporate the latest equipment. In the same vein, library planners wanted to include the performing arts, exhibitions and participatory activities that are all part of the total cultural learning experience.

The result of their thinking is a library which offers a range of activities from the most passive to active participation. No longer does going to the library mean just sitting in a chair reading a book. At the Huntington Beach Library one can view an art or science exhibit, rent a work of art, attend a local meeting or lecture, screen a film, practice singing, listen to the radio, attend a poetry reading, help with the children's annual Winnie-the-Pooh party, check out a microscope, find a job on the job board or even (someday soon) play ping pong or pool.

Something for everyone? Well, just about.

An important facet of the Huntington Beach philosophy has been the thought that the library center should not only serve but appeal to every age level. It is not just a place for students. Its efforts are not just geared to the dissemination of facts, but to "the enrichment of every life."

Enrichment is a key word for the library center because it implies the
diversity of activity the center is designed
to contain and promote. Not only are
there the usual library services (supple-
mented by extended borrowing privi-
leges through the Santiago Library Sys-
tem and the Libraries of Orange County
Network and the reference department’s
access to the state-funded reference
center, Southern California Answering
Network), but Huntington Beach offers
a number of special services.

For example, the Orange County
Genealogical Society houses its collection
in the Huntington Beach center. A
Community Resource file contains the
names of local specialists who can aid
the library in searching for information
in their specialties. A paperback ex-
change operates with the three smaller
branches of the Huntington Beach li-
brary. A bookstore run by the Friends
of the Library offers bestsellers and art
reproductions for rent.

The library’s involvement with the
community extends even further. The
job board offers patrons a limited em-
ployment service. In addition, plans are
being made for a community referral
service to aid people in contacting the
agencies and finding the services they
need to help with personal or family
problems.

In terms of equipment, the center
has quite a range available for public
use: duplicating and stencil machines,
typewriters and microfilm readers. On
micro-fiche readers, including one which
may be taken home, some 23,000 vol-
umes are available.

On the more sophisticated elec-
tronic level, films, tapes, FM radio,
cable TV and records are available. The
media center within the library handles
check-out of these items.

The entire library has been wired for
video reception and FM stereo listening
posts are located on all reading levels. A
preview room is available for pre-
screening films and motorized screens
in larger rooms are open for group view-
ing. The film library, originally only 100
UND proof practice rooms provide space for group discussions, individual music sessions, viewing films or just about any activity that is less than "library quiet."

COLOR-coded book return bins pre-sort books according to an ingenious system: books are coded to the color of the carpet on the floor on which they are shelved.

A MULTITUDE of materials—rock, tile, carpets, foliage—contribute to the wealth of textures and colors enriching the interior. "Patio" furniture as well as comfortable "living room" chairs add to the relaxed environment.

CHILDREN are made especially welcome with a variety of educational/recreational activities. Conversation pit is open to video viewing, group story-telling, etc.
films, has been expanded to 3000
through an agreement combining the
film resources of the library and Hun-
tington Beach schools, with the library
serving as central depository.

Beyond even this equipment, the
library has an ultra-modern light-pen
computer check-out: a pen-like device
run over the computer coded label on
each book records the pertinent check-
out information. The computer also
handles overdue notices and picks out
reserved books when they are returned.

For the future, Director Johnson
hopes to see a telephonics or tape
library system installed. Through this
system a patron can call in to listen to
coded tapes on a wide variety of sub-
jects. Even more remote perhaps, but
also a possibility, is the eventual use of
data banks which will provide, on de-
mand, computer print-outs of informa-
tion on any number of topics.

The concept of enrichment is fur-
ther applied, beyond the electronic and
special resources, by special programs
and facilities. The children's resource
center, for example, is designed to pro-
vide a conducive and stimulating learn-
ing environment, one which will encour-
ge the child to explore his own inter-
est as well as participating in group
activities.

The conversation pit is designed for
story-telling and the Balboa Room is
available for pre-school and elementary
groups. One outside patio has been re-
served for the children's use and plans
are being laid for a "tot lot" in front
of the library building.

The individual child will have access
to books, educational toys and multi-
media materials aimed at self-directed
exploration and discovery. Non-restrict-
tive loan policies encourage the children
to take home learning and recreational
materials such as microscopes. On the
other side of the coin, the children's
resource center boasts a special collec-
tion for parents on "How To Parent,"
including materials on child-rearing,
adoption, sibling rivalry, and more.

For older youth, the Youth Activi-
ties Room, as yet unfinished, will
provide space for a variety of activities
from movies to dances, ping pong to
pool. Refreshment facilities, a sound
system (the room is sound-proofed)
and a youth oriented wall mural will
all add to the atmosphere and uses of
this special room.

JOHNSON envisions the Youth Activi-
ties Room as a haven for older high
school and possibly beginning college
students, "depending on what works
out." Open to both recreational and
educational group activities, it is hoped
this room will draw young people to the
library as well as giving them a place to break during study periods.

Other areas in the building are also set aside for special uses. The Pacific Room, with a capacity of 280, is a multi-purpose room equipped with a motorized screen, cable TV capabilities, a kitchenette and room dividers. A clever design feature allows this room to be closed off from the main library with access from the outside, thus making it available for group use on Sundays when the library is closed.

Sound-proof practice rooms, a staff lounge and patio, administrative offices and a lower patio open for receptions and similar events are other features of this highly versatile building.

With all these special facilities and so much sophisticated equipment one is likely to forget the backbone of the library: books. Neutra's design has indeed made books, or rather the stacks, the core or spine of the library building.

The two main library floors open on four floors of stacks, eight feet apart. This compact centralized arrangement saves approximately 30 per cent of the floor space that would otherwise be required. Each stack, with a capacity of 70,000 volumes, has books color-coded for quick filing in an ingenious fashion. Books are labeled with a colored marker matching the color on that level. Similarly, book bins for book return are color-coded to aid librarians by roughly pre-sorting the books.

Director Johnson reports that the library now holds about 90,000 volumes, a figure he expects will rise to 120,000 by year end. The 41,000 card carriers (55 Huntington Beach cards; though the library is available to holders of a 35 Orange County library card) keep about 30,000 volumes in circulation—a figure Johnson feels is very healthy.

As much as the equipment and books serve the information and basic library functions, so the cultural aspects have not been ignored. For the time being, cultural activities are somewhat limited. Funds permitting, they will be greatly expanded in the future.

On any given day, open spaces in the library will be given over to art or science exhibits. Paintings adorn the walls, macrame hangs from the ceiling, sculpture stands both inside and outside the building. Currently (through November 29), the prestigious IBM Isaac Newton exhibit enhances the upper level lounge. Prior to this showing, this special exhibit had been shown only in museums and galleries. (Also running this month—November 7-21—will be a children's literature book fair, assembled in conjunction with Cal State Fullerton.)