

## A LIVING LIBRARY

IS A VISION AND SHOWS A WAY TO TURN  
SUNKEN MEADOWS AND BROWNFIELDS,  
URBAN SPRAWL AND DESOLATION, PUBLIC  
PARKS AND PLAZAS, CONCRETE AND  
ASPHALT SCHOOLYARDS INTO VIBRANT  
AND RELEVANT COMMUNITY LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS.

A LIVING LIBRARY IS A CONTENT-RICH  
LANDSCAPE WITH COMMUNITY PROGRAMS  
AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY LEARNING.

A LIVING LIBRARY DEMONSTRATES THAT  
CULTURE, ECOLOGY & TECHNOLOGY ARE  
LINKED AND ALL PART OF NATURE.

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# A LIVING LIBRARY®

[www.alivinglibrary.org](http://www.alivinglibrary.org)





### Human Progress

Kindergartens were a progressive 19th century innovation to nurture children. Their success validated the new ideal that all children flourish with proper care, cultivation and conditions. These "children's gardens" grew with the simultaneous shift to democracy, dismantling of slavery, and universal free education.

The Rise of Public Libraries has marked leaps in all fields of human understanding - science, business, arts & technology - since clay tablets were gathered and later destroyed in Mesopotamia. In the 19th century, industrialist, Andrew Carnegie, financed free public libraries all over America and farm schools were developed in Mid-Western communities to teach students through the lens of agriculture as they worked on the land with their families.

The Rise of Environmentalism indicates the recognition of the fragility of our natural endowment that inspired Teddy Roosevelt to establish the National Park System.

Growing A LIVING LIBRARY is an evolution of these movements to create nurturing, stimulating, ecological & sustainable resources. A LIVING LIBRARY encourages understanding of the natural world and the dynamic developments created by people.

## GROWTH OF THE GREEN

**THE PARK IS A FLOWER CHILDHOOD**  
 From the garden and school, the child learns to love the earth, to understand the beauty of the natural world, and to appreciate the value of the things that grow from it.

**THE PARK IS AN OASIS**  
 The park is a place of peace, beauty, and joy. It is a place where people can escape the stresses of daily life and find a sense of calm and relaxation.

**THE PARK IS AN ACQUA**  
 The park is a place of water, life, and growth. It is a place where people can learn about the importance of water and the role it plays in our lives.

**THE FLOWER IMPROVING THE BEATING HEARTS**  
 The flower is a symbol of life, love, and hope. It is a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always a glimmer of light.

**THE PARK IS A FLORAL SCULPTURE**  
 The park is a work of art, a masterpiece of nature and human design. It is a place where beauty and harmony reign supreme.

**CULTURE AS A PART OF NATURE**  
 Nature is a part of culture, and culture is a part of nature. They are intertwined and inseparable.

**THE NEW AMERICAN GREEN**  
 The new American green is a symbol of progress, innovation, and sustainability. It is a green that grows from the heart of the nation.

**THE PARK IS A LEARNING LABORATORY**  
 The park is a place where people can learn about the natural world and the role it plays in our lives. It is a place where curiosity is encouraged and discovery is rewarded.

**THE PARK IS A SELF-HEALING LEARNING CENTER**  
 The park is a place where people can learn about the importance of self-care and the role it plays in our lives. It is a place where healing and growth go hand in hand.

**THE PARK IS A LIVE THEATER**  
 The park is a stage where nature performs its most beautiful plays. It is a place where the sun, the wind, and the trees are the actors, and the audience is the people who come to watch.

**THE UNFOLDING PLAYERS IN A THEATER OF NATURE**  
 The unfolding players in a theater of nature are the sun, the wind, the rain, and the earth. They are the forces that shape our world and give it life.

**ALL ARE WELCOME !!**  
 The park is a place where everyone is welcome. It is a place where people of all ages, races, and backgrounds can come together and enjoy the beauty of nature.

**FRINDS OF THE NEW AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE GREEN**  
 The friends of the new American sustainable green are the people who care about the future of our planet. They are the ones who work to protect and preserve the natural world for generations to come.

**THE PARK AND THE REALM OF SUPPORT GROW !!**  
 The park and the realm of support grow together. They are a symbiotic relationship that creates a healthy and thriving community.

**AGREEMENTS - CULTURE**  
 Agreements are the foundation of culture. They are the rules that govern our behavior and the values that guide our lives.

**200 YEARS**

# FRUITS & FLOWERS



Now is the time to transform our derelict parks, schools, communities and cities into healthy and vibrant environments.

A LIVING LIBRARY creates site & culturally-sensitive community learning environments. Each LIVING LIBRARY is established through public participation and incorporates the local resources - human, ecological, economic, historic, technological and aesthetic. The transformative process becomes part of the curricula of the school day, builds community and contributes to the renewal of resources, relationships and wildlife habitat. Each Branch LIVING LIBRARY will function as a public magnet for the local community.



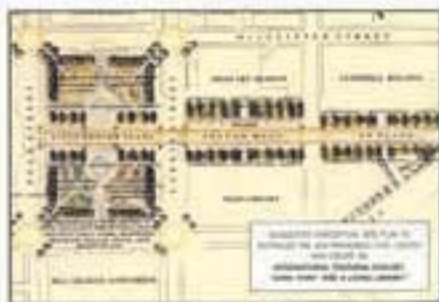
TREAT - The Raw Egg Animal Theater, The Farm, 1976

# FARMS & LIBRARIES





A LIVING LIBRARY  
is a hands-on learning  
connection to the  
cycle of life  
investigating and respecting  
natural systems,  
A LIVING LIBRARY  
empowers growing ideas,  
changing assumptions,  
developing new practices,  
re-invigorating the  
imagination  
& transforming  
the environment.



Schematic View through Multimedia Digital Gateway into one of many Multicultural Gardens proposed to revitalize the Civic Center of San Francisco. The Assyrian Garden displays the Mesopotamian culture - past, present & future with art, horticulture & new media. The Gateway with flat panel display is designed to incorporate live feed, archival & interactive programs. The statue honors King Ashurbanipol, founder of the first library, holding a clay tablet written in Cuneiform language. This Garden is filled with symbolic plantings such as reeds used to write onto wet clay tablets, lotus blossoms representing "eternity", palms and pomegranates signifying "the tree of life." This garden is conceived as a project-based learning environment - a living classroom open to all.

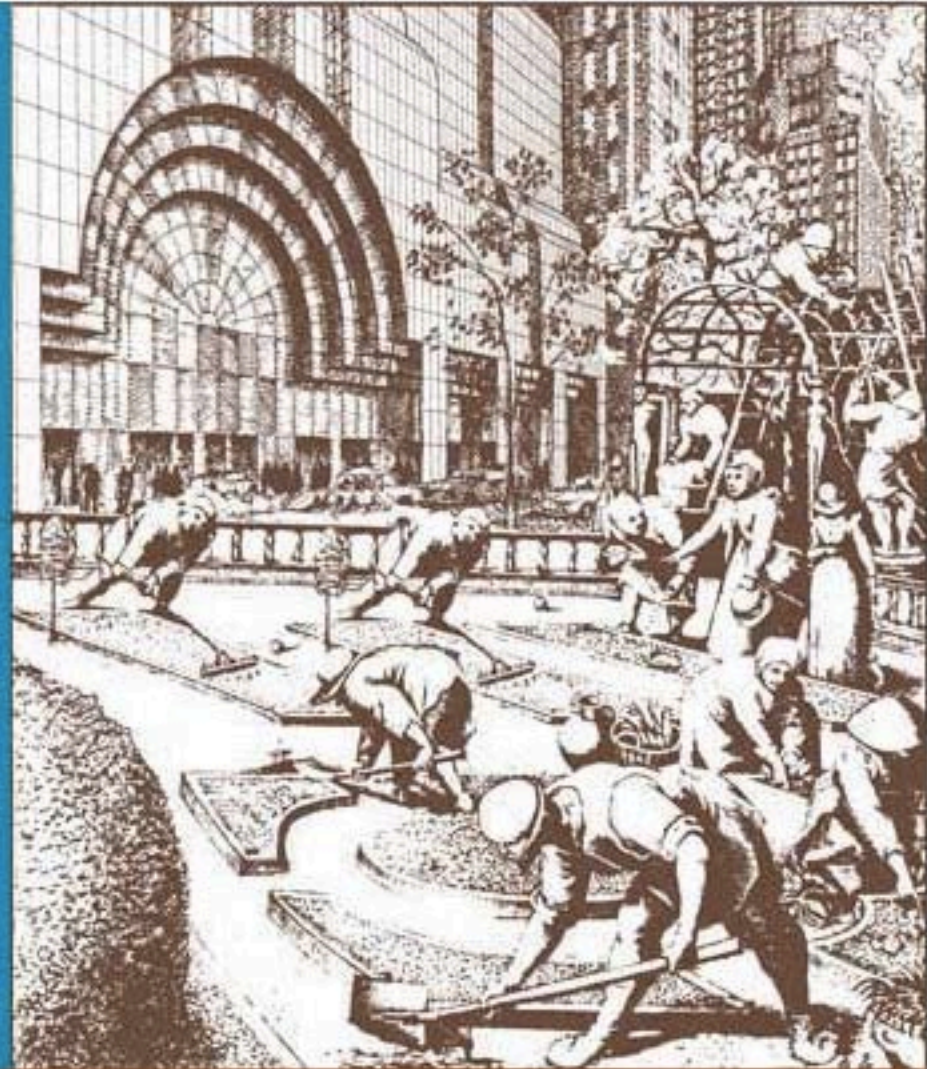
# GARDENS & PLAZAS





A LIVING LIBRARY harmonizes natural systems with advanced communications technologies. Establishing Branch Living Libraries in diverse locales and linking them electronically engages people in an ongoing process of local environmental and cultural stewardship and transformation. A LIVING LIBRARY promotes greater understanding between different places, people and ecologies.

Bonnie Ora Sherk, Founder of A LIVING LIBRARY, has been praised by Artweek "for her successful history of transforming physically / visually dead spaces into animated environments." She is the founder of *The Farm*, a pioneering community environmental, education and arts center beneath a network of freeway overpasses in San Francisco. She has been honored extensively for her work as a environmental architect, artist and educator, by media, civic leaders and foundations.



# RIVERS & ROCKS





Re-envisioning Our Urban Ecology  
*Bonnie Sherk's Rural Enclaves*  
 "Sherk's poetic and visionary performance-based work concerning our relationships with the natural world form the material and conceptual essence of her art. Consistently working with and framing these alliances as metaphors for human intelligence, knowledge and transformation, Sherk's evolution has grown from early staged living tableaux to a model that is both grass roots and monumental. Her early works inserted a unique, environmentally sensitive voice into the socially aware avant-garde and formed the core of her vision of A LIVING LIBRARY global network". Artweek

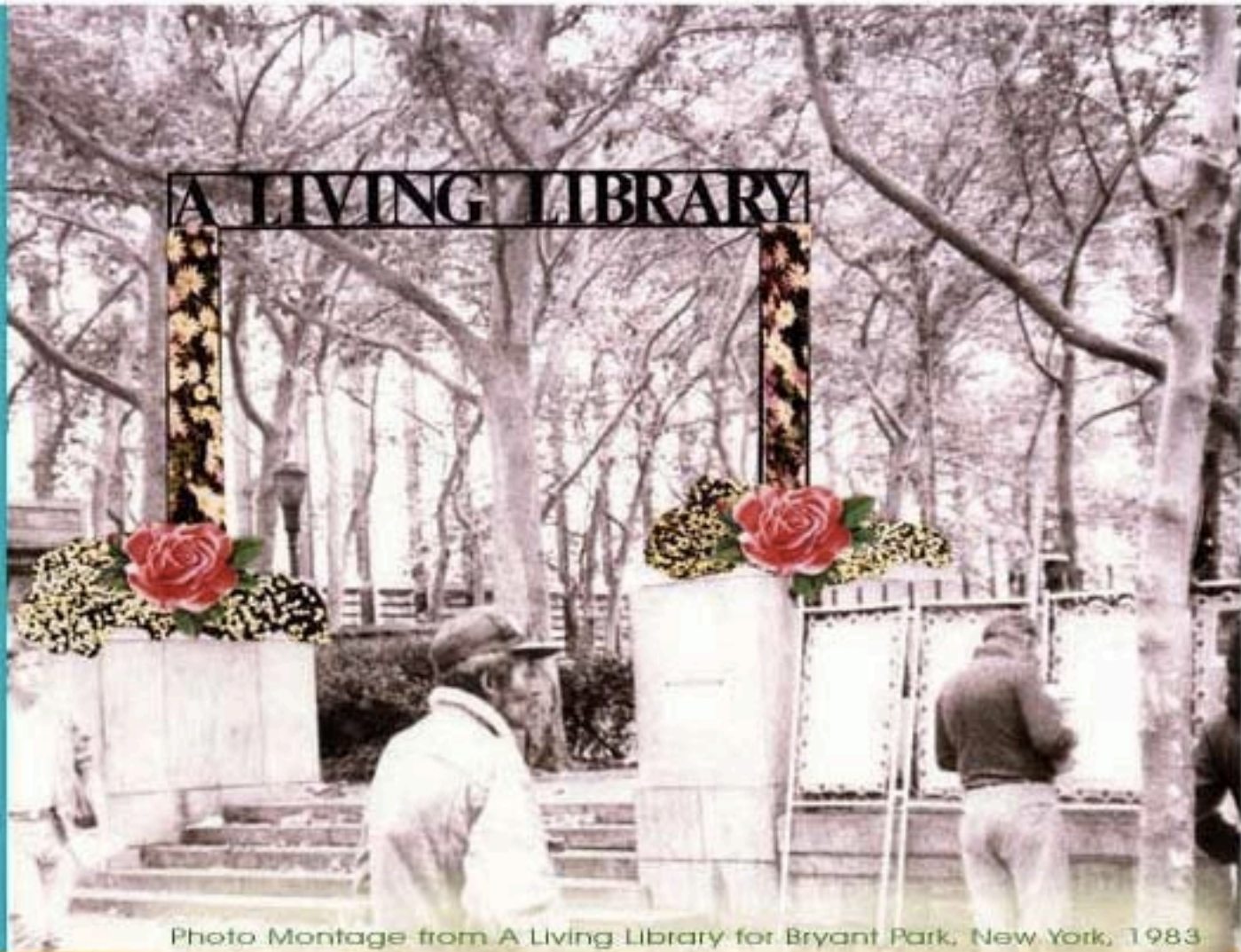


Photo Montage from A Living Library for Bryant Park, New York, 1983

# SEEDS & STORIES





Pilot Project  
 San Francisco, California  
 OMI/ EXCELSIOR  
 LIVING LIBRARY & THINK PARK  
 Bonnie Ora Sherk, launched an environmental transformation and educational program at three adjacent San Francisco Public Schools (pre K - 12), situated on about 9 acres of asphalt and concrete. The LIVING LIBRARY offers a fresh opportunity for teaching math, science, language skills, history, art, and community building. Drills, shovels, maps, seeds, culverted creeks, books, computers and imagination are the tools used for this urban educational revitalization.

LIVING LIBRARY STREETSCAPE TRANSFORMATION  
 Creates an outdoor learning environment of native plants



Before



During



After

# INSECTS & PEOPLE





OMI/ Excelsior LIVING LIBRARY proves that schools in a bleak urban setting can accomplish an inspiring change of place and spirit.

*"A LIVING LIBRARY is one of the most exciting and meaningful education initiatives in San Francisco. This program integrates multiple ways of learning while enriching the environment. Teachers and curriculum developers benefit enormously from participating in this effort. This project should be a high priority for everyone dedicated to evolving cross-disciplinary education."*

Jill Wynns, President,  
San Francisco Board of Education

SPUR 6:01

## UNPAVING SCHOOLYARDS

Communities around the country are organizing to improve the barren conditions of their schoolyards. By unpaving and redesigning these asphalt lots, residents are creating outdoor classrooms that serve to beautify the neighborhoods, improve the condition of local natural systems and promote involvement in schools. By changing the consumption patterns of a school, saving or creating energy, reducing and treating wastes on site, and opening up the ground to absorb rainwater, we can teach children real skills for living lightly on the earth. In Balboa Park, A Living Library is coordinating a planning process to reconnect the redesign of the schoolyard to the neighborhood and its natural and cultural history.

San Francisco Chronicle

SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2001

### Lessons learned from getting their hands dirty

Living Library kids transform school yard, neighborhood



Chronicle/Lacey Albert



Lisa Laferri, a volunteer from InterBrand Co. (at left), and Bella Wuu brightened the fence of Donnan Middle School with students' art.

### Adult mentor helps kids bring life to urban school grounds

Bonnie Ora Sherk has spent a lifetime transforming ugly and dead concrete spaces into areas that are colorful, lively and green. In 1976, she created small parks in unused corners of the Central Freeway and the Mission and Van Ness corridors and went on to create an urban farm near Army Street. She also created a series of garden areas based on the Dewey district system in New York's Bryant Park.

She likes to create what she calls "control-rich environments" where many different, but inter-related learning activities can happen. "It's all in the doing that

learning occurs," she said. With a background in teaching, art and landscape architecture, she's found a niche in organization, Life Frames Inc., to put together the Living Library and Think Park projects at James Donnan Middle School, Balboa High School and San Miguel Child Development Center.

The three schools are next door to one another on one acre in the Castro Mission which Sherk and the school's administrators would like to see change from its atmosphere of a block top, then into a place for something more inviting.

"I am very concerned about the predicament of the urban school yard," said John Ignacio, Donnan's principal. "It looks like a big mess. I really want to change the feeling of the campus."

Sherk's notion of planning "learning zones" around the three schools where students can tackle problems while learning about the natural, social and architectural environment is slowly catching on with teachers.

"Teachers are taking the almost concept that Bonnie has put forth and are making these more concrete," Ignacio said.

A city grant of \$30,000 will enable a steering committee of students, teachers, administrators and neighbors to come up with a master plan over the next year.

No project is too ambitious, apparently. Sherk wants to see the flooding problem at the Balboa High School cafeteria as a "learning zone" where students can figure out how to drain off the water and perhaps see it in irrigate crops.

"That's part of the dream," Ignacio said. "It's slow. We take very little ground that we need and build from there."

- Laura Thomas

# BUILDINGS & CARS

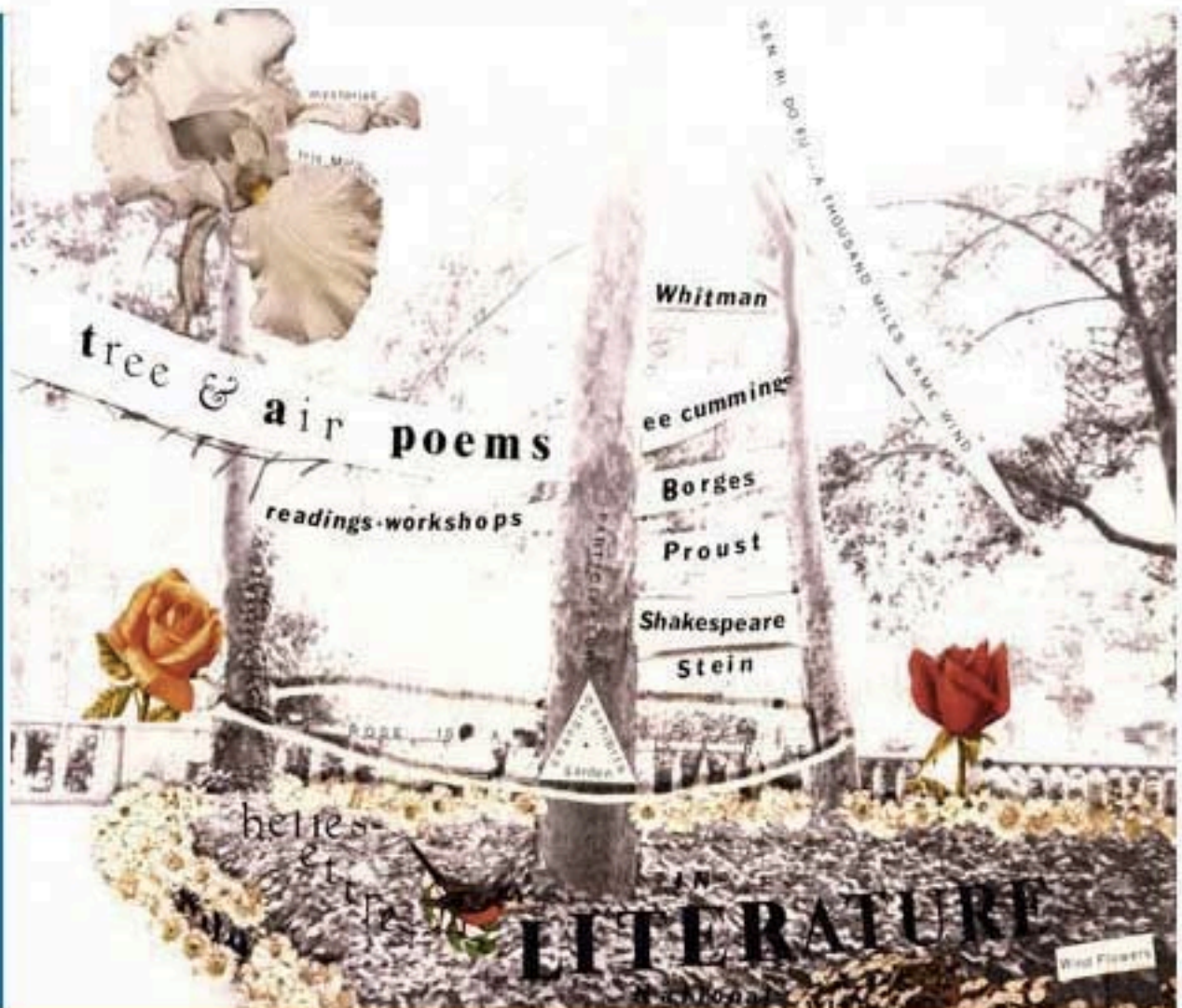




A LIVING LIBRARY was first conceived for Bryant Park, a beautiful public space behind the New York Public Library, that had fallen into neglect. Bonnie Sherk proposed extending the values of the Library into *Gardens of Knowledge* arranged according to the Dewey Decimal System - ten in all. Her vision included a *Philosophy Garden*, *Language Garden*, *Geography Garden*- each with symbolic plantings, art, public programs, lectures, interactive digital technologies- corresponding to the different subjects.

Many of the concepts proposed in A LIVING LIBRARY have been incorporated in the revitalization of Bryant Park including very popular film screenings, fashion shows & cultural events.

*Literature Garden from A Living Library for Bryant Park  
New York, 1983. Photo Montage*

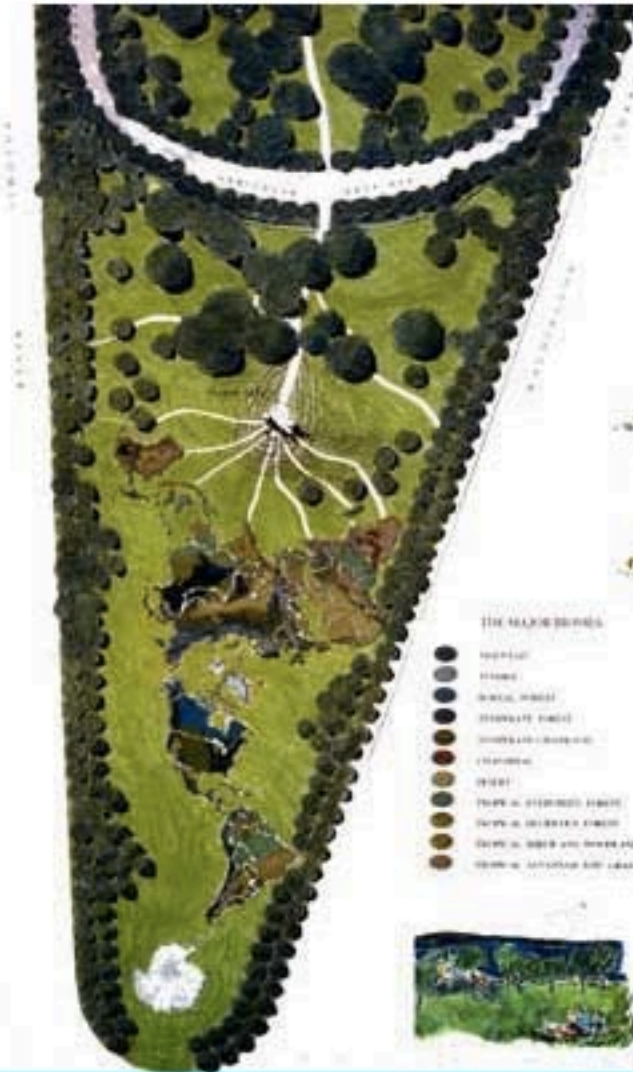


# TREES & MEADOWS





Bonnie Sherk's World Peace Garden Proposal for Washington, D.C. was conceived to be approached through the Earth Gate, linked on-line to a NASA satellite monitoring the earth. The Earth Gate relays visual and textual information about the planet's health. As people pass through the Earth Gate the world literally unfolds, based on Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion map. The map is planted with vegetation corresponding to the major world biomes, culturally programmed, and linked electronically to the corresponding part of the globe. As Fuller proclaimed with a vision of global peace, the world is "one world island in one world ocean".



# BIRDS & AIR





The LIVING LIBRARY Master Plan for Roseville, California features themed gardens linked electronically with intergrated community programs and local schools. All elements relate to the many resources of the area. The proposal is designed to address issues of traffic, pedestrian circulation, creating an ecological and sustainable park, community and cultural revitalization. The site-sensitive features include a *History Garden* exploring the city's importance as a railroad center, the *Riparian-Ecology Garden*, *Law & Justice Garden* and other content-rich learning landscapes.

# CREEKS & COMPUTERS





"We are all part of a LIVING LIBRARY of Diversity - people, birds, trees, air, water and all the things we create - parks, buildings, art, computers and communities. A LIVING LIBRARY links culture and technology as part of nature and expands our world view. A Living Library makes our experience of life more complete, harmonious and joyous."

Bonnie Ora Sherk



# POETRY & PHYSICS





A LIVING LIBRARY SKETCH OF INTERACTIVE LOCALES

"The human potential for learning, creating, communicating and experiencing is enormous. Using nature as a model, with the spirit of sharing, caring, and openness, we can experience inspiration and synchronicity.  
...Bonnie Sherk

"Bonnie Sherk's visionary projects are tangible manifestations that art has capacity to enter public life. Her vision consistently has been evolutionary for her time reinforcing her conviction that art is the most powerful transformational activity"  
... Artweek

Bonnie Sherk and A LIVING LIBRARY were nominated for a Smithsonian Award and are featured on the Smithsonian Innovations <http://innovate.si.edu>. Bonnie Sherk was Named "Most Outstanding Healing Artist" by the Arts & Healing Network, 2001



## **A LIVING LIBRARY®**

project of  
LIFE FRAMES®, INC., 501 c3 corp.

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### **SUPPORTERS (partial list)**

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*Smithsonian Computerworld Laureate, 2000, "Environment, Energy, & Agriculture"*  
*"Most Outstanding Healing Artist, 2001," Arts & Healing Network*

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