Johansen's Orlando library: compatible colony of varied forms
Although each of the diverse elements of this strongly stated building has been clearly emphasized, a handsome over-all unity has been achieved by framing the loose assembly of enclosed spaces with a dominant, overhanging cornice supported by bold service towers. In John Johansen's words, "the library, a composition in monolithic concrete, may be called an accretion of forms, as colonies of shelled animals assemble or grow together. It suggests the continuing process of growth, a most valid concept and expression, since expansion is so important a part of the program."

In view of the program requirements that the building be capable of expansion to three times its present size, in several future stages of construction, the design concept of gathering a variety of expressive forms into a compatible colony seems a very valid one. And at this initial stage, at least, it has resulted in a quite harmonious building. The general use of rough concrete surfaces, with carefully
controlled textures left by removal of wooden formwork, is, of course, another major unifying factor. The other visible materials (glass areas, bronzed aluminum trim, interior carpeting for sound control) are treated in a quiet, subsidiary manner.

This first unit of the library provides two main floors for public use, with open stack areas and reading rooms closely related. The basement is devoted to closed stacks, processing and bookmobile service. The top or third floor is given to the auditorium and staff offices. While most of the plan is open and unobstructed, all service elements, such as workrooms, toilets, stairs, elevators, and the like are arranged as closed elements on the periphery. A central open well is three stories in height to serve as a unifying space, topped by a clerestory and the huge air-conditioning housing; light filters in on all sides from the bands of windows at the top of the well.

The building occupies one-third of a city block, with set-backs for planting and quiet. The remainder of the block is being purchased by the city in stages for future expansion.

The program for the new Orlando Public Library was written by a library specialist, Dr. Frank Sosa, director of the Miami Library, and established the following departments for the new building: children, young adults, adult circulation and reference, browsing and popular reading, history and genealogy, fine arts, business and technology, stack areas, a small auditorium, and staff offices.

Downlighting is used by consultant Shemitz to define such use areas as central desk and lounge. Stacks are lighted by direct-indirect troffers.
Even the smaller details of the Orlando Public Library have been designed with the same gusto as the major parts of the building. The "roofscape" (top), which is a disastrous happening in all too many buildings: the service stairs (center, left); the sidewalk book drop and the roof terrace, with its built-in benches and planters (left).

As can be noticed in many of the preceding photos, provision for good lighting (note downlights to exit stair and wall washers), quiet, and comfort is well-thought-out all through the building.