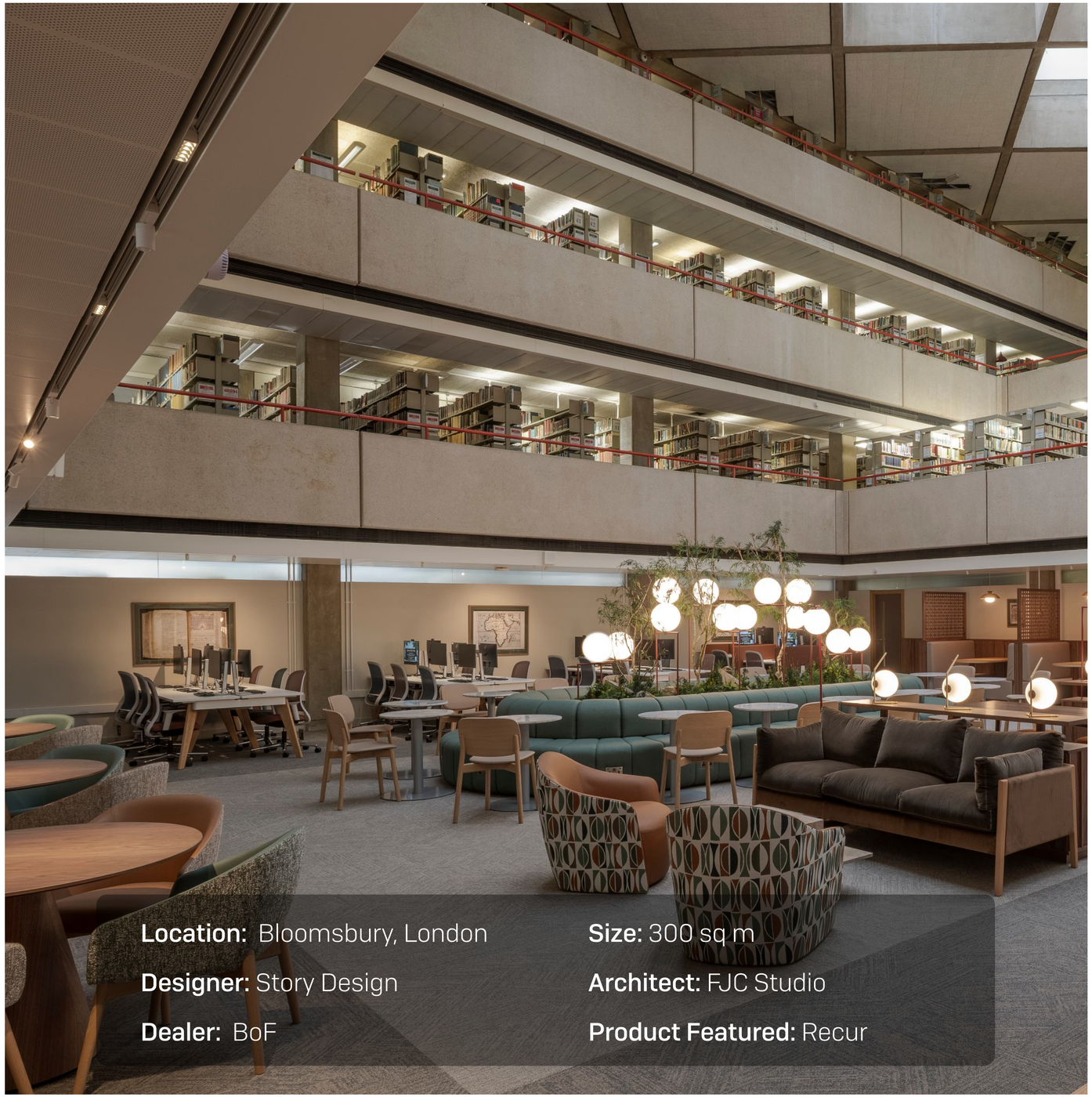
SOAS Library: Case Study

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Respecting history through modern design and local manufacturing.

Located in the heart of Bloomsbury, the SOAS University of London's library occupies a Grade II listed building designed by renowned architect Sir Denys Lasdun. To create a more attractive and inclusive study environment while preserving one of the campus's most significant architectural assets, SOAS partnered with Story Design and FJC Studio to transform part of its historic library.

Spring 2026 marked the completion of the first phase of the library's refurbishment, spanning approximately 300sq m and setting the foundation for future improvements. The ambition of this initial phase aimed to demonstrate how carefully considered design could modernise a space whilst celebrating, and beautifully integrating with, the historic features the library is famous for.



Location: Bloomsbury, London

Size: 300 sq m

Designer: Story Design

Architect: FJC Studio

Dealer: BoF

Product Featured: Recur



Working within a listed building brought unique challenges. The design team collaborated closely with the local Conservation Officer to achieve Listed Building Consent, ensuring historic features were protected and celebrated. A standout example is the original Librarian's desk, which was thoughtfully repurposed into a new student workspace complete with integrated LED lighting, blending historic craftsmanship with modern functionality.

Sustainability and local sourcing were important considerations throughout the project. To support these goals, Story Design specified Orangebox Recur task chairs, recognising their strong sustainability credentials, UK manufacturing, durability and ergonomic performance. The extensive choice of fabrics and finishes also enabled the chairs to complement the character of the historic interior while contributing to a cohesive design scheme.

Accessibility was another central design principle. The refurbished environment was developed with neurodiversity and additional user needs in mind, supporting the University's wider commitment to creating inclusive learning spaces. Recur's adaptability and ergonomic design help accommodate a broad range of users, ensuring comfort and support throughout the day.





The success of the project can be seen in the response from students and staff alike. Since opening, the space has been consistently well occupied, demonstrating its popularity and the positive impact of the refurbishment.

“We’re delighted with the outcome of the project - which was a collaborative effort between many professionals and the client team. The furniture for the project is a great part of its success and the students have responded extremely well to the scheme.”

Kenton Simons
Creative Director at Story Design


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