

<https://www.garethrees.co.uk/2024/01/06/building-beauty-the-programmers-workshop-pattern-language/>

Building Beauty: The Programmer's Workshop Draft Pattern Language

A project pattern language “distills and describes the essence and character” of a specific building project (Neis et al., 1994). It describes the project's details at multiple levels of scale, along with the connection to its wider context, with a sequence of statements that are clear enough to visualise, but leave enough ambiguity for the implementation to adapt to local conditions during an integrated process of design and construction.

This project language was written during Building Beauty Online 2020 – 2021 [/building-beauty] to guide the design and construction of my individual project. It is an attempt at re-balancing the small home workspace of a remote knowledge worker away from the monotony of a typical desk setup towards a more varied workspace akin to the workshop of a craftsman of previous generations. It is tailored to me as an individual, but guided by background research and several interviews with colleagues and fellow students.

I've meant to get this finished off, but until then here's where I got to for posterity.

Some slides make reference to APL – A Pattern Language [<https://uk.bookshop.org/a/5361/9780195019193>] – and a corresponding pattern number.

The Programmer's Workshop

A home office with life

Cabinets; cars; buildings; guitars; while nature is the best designer, occasionally we humans make something beautiful too. Even a small workspace belonging to a craftsman is full of life. There'll be different tools for different jobs and different spaces as a project moves from drafting to making to finishing. By contrast, a "knowledge worker" spends most of their time sat at the same desk using the same tool – a computer.

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The Programmer's Workshop

1. Remote Work

- 1.1 Commute to anywhere in the world
- 1.2 Roots in your local community
- 1.3 Solitary, but not alone

2. The character of a home office

- 2.1 A sovereign space
- 2.2 Away from family areas
- 2.3 Mix of formal and cozy
- 2.4 Rooms within a room

3. The inspiration to go to work

- 3.1 Gateway to mastery
- 3.2 Showcase of success
- 3.3 Silent supporters

4. The connection to the people you admire

- 4.1 Separate communications computer
- 4.2 Standing social chat
- 4.3 Trinkets from travels and events

5. The tools to get organised

- 5.1 Captain's log to record your adventures
- 5.2 Private pinboard for slow thinking
- 5.3 Storage for stationery

6. The endless journey of knowledge

- 6.1 Books of all genres
- 6.2 Reading in a scholar's chair
- 6.3 Printouts of your digital work

The Programmer's Workshop

7. The focus to do your best work

- 7.1 Concentration cocoon
- 7.2 A desk fixed in place
- 7.3 A serious chair for serious work
- 7.4 Sanctuary from distraction

8. The space to disconnect & reflect

- 8.1 Wilderness for the mind
- 8.2 Frequent glances at nature throughout the day
- 8.3 A plant on or near the desk

9. The little things in life

- 9.1 Proper speakers
- 9.2 Reed diffuser or scented candle
- 9.3 Mechanical keyboard
- 9.4 Nice cup & coasters

1. Remote work

1.1. Commute to anywhere in the world

Commuting is a relatively modern invention [1] that, like any technology, has brought opportunities and benefits, but also brought the corresponding disadvantage of creating separation between workplace and place of residence for the first time in human history. We're forced to move from place to place – often to lifeless commuter towns – to follow our work.

Remote work, enabled by new technology, brings the benefits of long-distance commuting to our own homes, allowing the growth of ROOTS IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY (1.2) with few limits on work opportunity.



[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commuting#History>

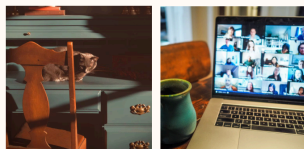
1.2. Roots in your local community

Working remotely allows us to build a deeper connection to the place we live – both our home and our surroundings. We can take more time to appreciate what is near, with local lunches and evening walks.



1.3. Solitary, but not alone

Even though other humans are not present in a home office, you can be more connected than ever. The Internet allows you to connect to colleagues and communities from far and wide.



2. The character of a home office

2.1. A sovereign space

A workspace at home puts you in control of your time and environment, not someone else's idea of what makes a space that's right for you. There are no banal motivational posters or snipes about the temperature. There's a certain comfort to being in your own space. The more it becomes yours the more it connects you to the work you do there, and so more of you flows into the things that you make.



APL141 - A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

2.2. Away from family areas

The home office is away from the family areas of the house. When you're working, you're focused on work. When you're not in work, it's distant and out of mind.

APL127 - INTIMACY GRADIENT

2.3. Mix of formal and cozy

A home office is a balance between formal and cozy, with blurred boundaries between personal and work. It's not as sterile as a colocated office filled with contract furniture, but it's not as plush as a bedroom. It feels like home when you're outside the office, and feels like work when you're inside.

2.4. Rooms within a room

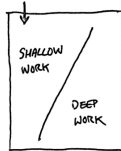
David Dewane's "Eudaimonia Machine" [1] is a small pattern language for a co-located office to avoid the common frustrations of modern open-plan offices and help its occupants fulfil our human desire for self-actualisation [2].

When we work remotely from our own home, we're likely to at best have only a single, small room for our home office. It's not healthy to allow work to take over your entire home (AT THE EDGE AWAY FROM INFORMAL AREAS (2.2)), but it is possible to organise a single room into the different zones of the Eudaimonia Machine. At a minimum, divide the room in two – one side for "Shallow Work", the other for "Deep Work" [3].

[1] <https://www.workfront.com/blog/eudaimonia-machine-blueprint-virtual-workplace>

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs

[3] <https://www.calnewport.com/books/deep-work/>

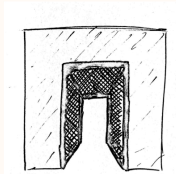


3. The inspiration to go to work



3.1. Gateway to mastery

Every day at work is an opportunity to learn. The entrance to the office is a physical and mental transition from personal space to work space, inspiring you to take another small step on the endless road to mastery.



APL110 - MAIN ENTRANCE

APL130 - ENTRANCE ROOM

3.2 Showcase of success

It can be easy to forget when most of our memories are digital.

Periodically display mementos from your favourite achievements and experiences to bring them back to life.

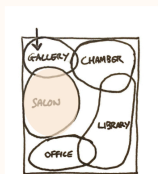


APL253 - THINGS FROM YOUR LIFE

3.3. Silent supporters

Good work is inspiring, but *people* are too. Things that remind you of your heroes, friends and family inspire you to be a better person as well as do better work.

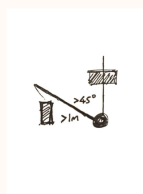
4. The connection to the people you admire



4.1. Separate communications computer

As simple as a tablet on a shelf to a full computer setup, a separate device for video calls and instant messaging keeps the most distracting computer work out of your eye-line when you're deep in concentration.

This computer should be a minimum of 1 metre away from and at a 45° or greater angle to the main desk of the CONCENTRATION COCOON (7.1).



APL152 - HALF-PRIVATE OFFICE

4.2 Standing social chat

Social chat should be jovial and full of chance and enthusiasm like in a café or bar. A standing desk for the SEPARATE COMMUNICATIONS COMPUTER (4.1) lifts your energy and adds variation to your day.



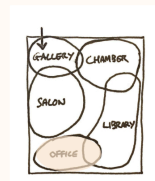
4.3. Trinkets from travels and events

TODO



APL253 - THINGS FROM YOUR LIFE

5. The tools to get organised



5.1. Captain's log to record your adventures

A physical notebook between the keyboard and monitor is your short-term memory. Adding to paper has fewer limitations than a computer text and doesn't interrupt your flow by moving windows around on your screen. Over time your notebooks build up a chronological story of metadata about the work you've done and won't get lost in the depths of your filesystem.

TODO (this isn't about free-form journaling)



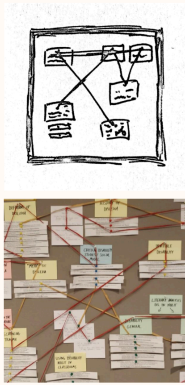
5.2. Private pinboard for slow thinking

TODO (core idea is here, but improve phrasing)

Ideas are like seedlings; fragile until they've developed.

A private pinboard is a space to slowly grow your ideas protected from the criticism that tramples all over them.

Arranging and linking spatially helps connect the dots of the narrative without needing the fully-formed words.



<https://fersacambridge.com/2021/05/10/an-ode-to-the-pinboard/>

5.3. Storage for stationery

Stationery is one of the few analogue tools in a knowledge worker's office.

Opening a drawer or cupboard for some paper or pens should feel like stepping in to an art shop that's lost in time. Neatly organised, colourful but calm, with multiples of frequently used things.



6. The endless journey of knowledge



6.1. Books of all genres

Keep books you've read – and are yet to read – on show to remind you of the knowledge you've built. Mix in fictional and personal interest books as well as reference material. New and interesting connections come from everywhere.



6.2. Reading in a scholar's chair

A comfy chair away from the screen allows you to be fully absorbed in building your knowledge from the teachers of your library.

APL251 – DIFFERENT CHAIRS

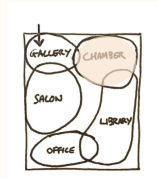


6.3. Printouts of your digital work

Make your of digital work visible by creating physical copies and create your own personal archives as you produce more and more each year.

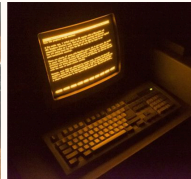
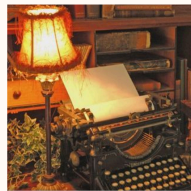


7. The focus to do your best work



7.1. Concentration cocoon

A soft glow and muted colours draw you to your creative space as you tune out the world and become one with your tools and your work.



APL252 - POOLS OF LIGHT

7.2. A desk fixed in place

A quality desk, sturdy and heavy, perhaps fitted to the wall, is where you craft your best work. Stationary peripherals – an external monitor, keyboard and mouse – anchor you until the job is done.

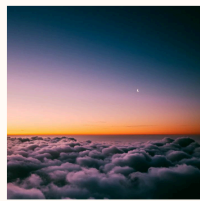
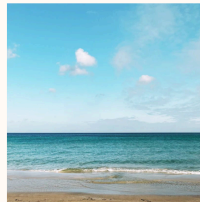
7.3. A serious chair for serious work **TODO**

A cheap mass-produced chair won't inspire you to sit for long stretches of uninterrupted concentration. Introduce some coziness here though. Quietly patterned fabric, or warming materials like velvet, make the office feel more homely and less sterile.

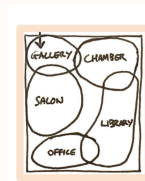
APL251 - DIFFERENT CHAIRS

7.4. Sanctuary from distraction

Serious work demands your full attention. Notifications are disabled. "Attention economy" websites are blocked. A simple, uncluttered desktop background clears your mind when you sit down to work.



8. The space to disconnect & reflect



8.1. Wilderness for the mind

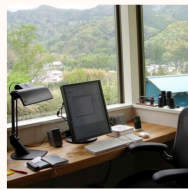
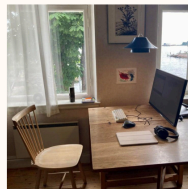
The mind needs space to wander and freedom to think. Pictures of nature and far-away places remind you to take time to think about distant ideas for future journeys.



APL134 - ZEN VIEW **TODO (makes sense here?)**

8.2 Frequent glances at nature throughout the day

Long stretches of deep concentration and collaboration can be just as exhausting and draining as physical work. Soothe your eyes and mind by taking a few seconds to gaze into the distance as you stop to reflect.

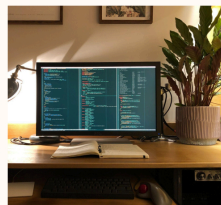


APL134 - ZEN VIEW

APL192 - WINDOWS OVERLOOKING LIFE

8.3 A plant on or near the desk

Counteracts the relative deadness of current computer interfaces.





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