

**SOCIETY OF  
ARCHITECTURAL  
HISTORIANS**

3 May 2023

Mr. David Nirenberg, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Institute for Advanced Study  
1 Einstein Drive  
Princeton, NJ  
08540 USA

Re: Opposition to the proposed alterations to the Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ.

Dear Dr. Nirenberg:

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), the oldest and largest scholarly organization devoted to studying the history of the built environment, strongly opposes the proposed alterations to the Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, NJ.

The Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library, completed in 1965, was designed by architect Wallace K. Harrison. Harrison, best known for his role in planning Rockefeller Center, the United Nations, Lincoln Center, and the 1939 World's Fair, was renowned not only for his design prowess, but for his ability to collaborate with others, including his clients. The Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library was the result of a collaboration between Harrison and physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, who invited Harrison to design the building. The result is a remarkable essay in modern design that reflects a deep understanding of how Oppenheimer and other IAS staff understood the library to be at the core of the institution. A marvel of modern minimalism, the library boasts elegant and restrained interiors as well as an inventive roof structure which infuses the reading rooms with warm, overhead lighting, and was designed to be an inviting space that inspired creative thought.

While the building faces repair challenges, the proposed solution -- an additional floor which will envelop the existing roof structure -- goes far beyond the limited technical challenges presented by roof leaks and reinvents the building in an unattractive and uninviting way. Where the existing building is delicate and discrete, the proposed addition would transform it from a remarkable Princeton landmark to something bulky, awkward, and banal.

When previously faced with architectural challenges, the IAS has successfully turned to architects including Marcel Breuer, Robert Geddes, and Cesar Pelli. These talented individuals were able to design interventions that worked with the library in ways that were creative, inventive, and technically sound while addressing the changing needs of the Institute. This current proposal does not embrace the IAS' previous standards of architectural creativity. While it might address the immediate problem of a leaking roof, the proposed addition presents a solution that greatly diminishes, if not outright destroys, the building's architectural integrity.

We write in opposition to the implementation of the proposed rooftop addition. The proposed addition to the Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library at the Institute for Advanced Study will significantly

degrade the architectural integrity of the library, the building that Harrison and Oppenheimer envisioned at the core of IAS. If executed, this addition will irreparably damage this architectural treasure. SAH believes that every effort should be made to protect the Historical Studies and Social Sciences Library and seek an alternative solution that embraces the architectural character of the library, addressing its specific technical challenges without obscuring the very qualities that make the library a landmark of modern American architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B C G' followed by a horizontal line.

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C  
SAH Preservation Officer and Chair, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Ms. Janine Purcaro, IAS Chief Operating Officer & Associate Director for Finance and Administration; Ms. Nancy Peretsman, Ms. Nancy Macmillan, Mr. Bernard Harcourt, Mr. Charles Simonyi, and Ms. Shirley Tilghman, IAS Trustees; Mr. Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Ms. Mary B. Brush, FAIA; Mr. James Buckley, Ph.D.; Mr. Jeffrey Cody, Ph.D.; Mr. Anthony Cohn, AIA; Mr. David Fixler, FAIA; Ms. Priya Jain, AIA; Ms. Patricia Morton, Ph.D.; Mr. Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D., FAIA,; Ms. Deborah Slaton; Mr. Ben Thomas, Ph.D.; Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee.