



TORONTO CIRCULARITY NETWORK PRESENTS

EARTH DAY MATERIALS LIBRARY SPRING CLEAN OUT

APRIL 22,
2024

ON EARTH DAY (APRIL 22), 2024,

the Toronto Circularity Network hosted a Materials Library Spring Cleanout. This event brought together a few architecture firms from around the city, to discuss how we might deal with the overwhelming amount of materials that exist in architectural sample libraries around the city, across the country, and around the world. Typically, these samples sit on shelves in architectural offices for months or years, before being thrown in the garbage.

**IS THERE A WAY TO
TRANSITION AWAY FROM
THIS LINEAR SYSTEM?**

This is what TCN, along with MJMA, KPMB, and Circular Partners, set out to discover

OBJECTIVES

WE SET OUT WITH THREE QUESTIONS

1. What can we do with all of these samples here in front of us today?
2. What does the future of an architectural sample library look like?
3. If designers want to specify these products in their buildings, what strategies can they harness to make those materials easier to remove, reuse, and recycle?

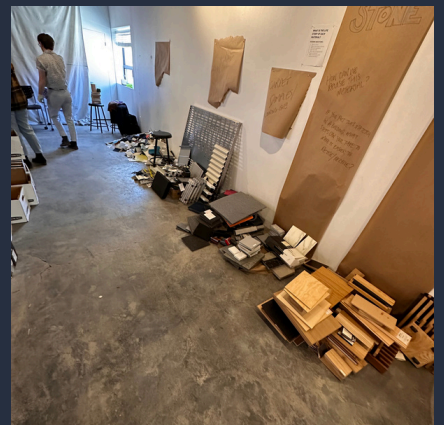
GATHERING THE SAMPLES

TCN set out with a van to collect samples from around the city. Just 1/5th of KPMBs library, and 3/4 of MJMAs library resulting in 3 cube van loads of samples, weighing thousands of pounds and requiring an immense team effort!



SORTING THE SAMPLES

TCN, MJMA, and KPBM spent the afternoon sorting the architectural samples into a number of piles, by separating what we hoped might see some reuse potential (wood, stone, tile, fabric, carpet) and what clearly had none (sample IGU units, situational mockups, tile booklets).



OBSERVATIONS

Volume and Variety: We encountered a significantly larger volume and wider variety of materials than initially anticipated, highlighting the extensive accumulation in architectural sample libraries.

Manufacturer Responsibility: We observed significant challenges in getting manufacturers to take back their samples, which are often small items. This raises a critical question: if it's difficult to get manufacturers to reclaim these samples, (But we were lucky that one of those manufacturers - Hi Interface! - joined the conversation!) how can we expect them to take responsibility for entire buildings' worth of materials? This underscores the need for stronger commitments from manufacturers to support circular practices on a larger scale.

DISCUSSION

Kelly from **Circular Partners** presented their solution to the linear materials flow problem: the **SampleLibrary**, which encourages all manufacturers to adopt a more sustainable solution for material reuse.

This centrally located library allows architects to request samples for design purposes, and then return them. Quality samples are restocked for future use, while those that don't meet standards are reused or recycled. This approach reimagines the traditional linear model of resource use into a circular process, preventing items from entering the landfill.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

AND ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE!

- Specify products wisely and request samples only when necessary.
- Push suppliers to take back their samples and ask about end-of-life solutions.
- Support extended producer responsibility legislation.
- Specify materials that are easier to reuse and recycle.
- Consider Design for Disassembly (DfD) principles.
- Engage with centralized sample libraries to reduce the volume of materials entering the landfill.
- Join the [AIA Materials Pledge!](#)

*thanks

A huge thanks goes out to MJMA and KPMB, and TAS for sponsoring this event. KPMB and MJMA sent their materials, and their teams, to investigate and discuss possible alternatives to the current system. Thanks to **Circular Partners** for sharing their solutions, and thanks to TAS for donating the space for us to gather.