INNOVATIVE SPACES IN ARL LIBRARIES:
RESULTS OF A 2008 STUDY

SUBTOPIC: USER-CENTERED PROGRAMMING OF SPACES

The Innovative Spaces survey produced 98 instances of special or noteworthy projects being supported in ARL libraries. A comprehensive PDF file of these projects can be found at http://www.arl.org/bm-doc/innovative-spaces-2009.pdf, arranged alphabetically by institution.

In order to assist readers with focused interests, 17 “subtopics” have been assigned that group only those survey responses that relate in whole or in part to that topic. This report contains survey responses that touch on the subtopic that is identified above.

For readers who would extract information not covered by the subtopics, key word searching can be applied to the comprehensive list.

Subtopics:
- Branch & Subject Libraries
- Café / Refreshment
- Classrooms, Workshops, Instruction
- Collaboration
- Digital Centers
- Faculty Development
- Faculty / Graduate Student Spaces
- Flexible, Malleable Spaces
- Galleries, Art, Exhibits, Performances, Events
- Literacy Instruction
- Multimedia
- Presentation Practice
- Technology Support
- Tutoring & Peer Support
- User-centered Programming of Spaces
- Videoconferencing
- Writing Support

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http://www.arl.org/rtl/space/2008study/
Award-winning Student Study Center transforms basement into vibrant study destination; advisory board manages on-going improvements.

The Friedman Study Center in the 14-story Sciences Library comprises 27,000 square feet on the ground floor and mezzanine, as well as "Level A," a sprawling football field-size subterranean level with four outdoor atriums that supply daylight. The subterranean level is the heart of our vibrant new study center. The target audience is students and all new policies and services reflect this. Last fall alone, the gate count for the Sciences Library reached just shy of a quarter million, with an average of 3,000 visitors per day during reading period and finals. Overall the facility saw a 50% increase in traffic during 2007 when compared to the last several years of pre-renovation statistics. There is an official campus student group called FAB (Friedman Advisory Board) that ensures ongoing student input into decisions relating to the study center. The group has contributed to several enhancements to the Friedman Study Center and most new policies and added services directly reflect the desires of the students. Staff resources and services include a single service point where high-level support staff are available over 100 hours weekly to provide a broad range of library services. Student computing consultants are also found there about 90 hours weekly. The students work for Brown's Computing and Information Services Department, which also supplied all the technology in the Friedman Center. There are also "after midnight" Circulation student workers at the desk 10 hours weekly. Elsewhere there is an on-site evening multimedia consultant 20 hours weekly and students can get assistance with multimedia equipment during the day via email. There is a café in the Lobby that is open about 100 hours weekly. When Dining Services staff lock up, there are vending machines as well. Study resources include two projector-equipped rooms that fit 8-12. The rooms have a large whiteboard wall. These two rooms can be booked in advance by students. There are six smaller collaborative study rooms, five of which have "whiteboard" glass walls. There is an assistive technology room for students with special needs. There are over 70 workstations, five printers and three copiers. Various types of soft seating permeate Level A and the Mezzanine level, including areas for quiet study, moderately quiet study, and lively group study. Recent innovations include the introduction of a small entertainment DVD collection that is for students only. This is the result of a joint initiative between the Library and the Office of Student Life. 20 newly released (or relatively recently released) titles are leased from Baker & Taylor monthly and the collection will peak at 260, when we start sending back or buying 20 for every 20 we order. Students can check out the DVDs for 24 hours and there are no late fines. This has been very well received on campus. We are also about to unveil in spring 2008 an area for student-run exhibits of student art. Increasingly university departments and student groups who want to engage the student body are booking space in the Lobby for temporary high-visibility displays or information booths that must not impede traffic or impinge on the student’s usual gathering places. One year since opening, there are still not many rules and guidelines for users of the new study center, and those that are posted are the result of student input. All of our long-
held library fears about allowing food and drink have not been realized. No equipment has been ruined and there has been virtually no vandalism. Late night there is card-swipe access only, with an entry guard and a roving guard to ensure safety. Students have been known to sleep over, but starting this year we are asking those who come fully equipped for "camping out" to go home to their dorms. Friedman has won two interior design awards and one construction/renovation award.  
http://dl.lib.brown.edu/libweb/about/friedman.php

Indicators of success:

• dramatic increase in use - 3-fold
• continued demand for additional computing and study space
• additional services requested

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO, SUNY, LIBRARIES

“Cybraries“ on campus will upgrade with student suggestions in mind, improving both quiet and collaborative zones.

The University Libraries are currently collaborating with Computing & Information Technology (CIT) to envision new learning spaces for the campus. CIT & the Libraries began their collaborations in the late 1990s, with the creation of "Cybrary" areas in the Libraries. The Cybraries feature individual and group computing spaces, and help desks. The latest work involves re-envisioning the public spaces to incorporate the learning and research needs of a new generation of users. Individual and group spaces are included, as are spaces with and without technology. The spaces respond to a number of requests from students for more and better collaborative areas, and quieter study spaces. The spaces are currently in the discussion stage, and we are working to prioritize projects and attain funding. For more information on cybraries at Rochester, see http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/helpAZ/cybrary.html

Indicators of success:

• Positive user feedback
• Streamlining of the help process as indicated from observation and feedback
• Increased productivity, less waiting time
Faculty and graduate research center services informed by user population.

The Scholars Commons is a renovation of the ground floor of Strozier Library providing a collaborative teaching, learning and research space for FSU faculty and students. It opened in Fall 2008. The target audience is FSU faculty and graduate students, and available for undergraduates seeking primary sources and quiet research space. The Center is primarily a lab for faculty in the humanities, facilitating interaction with primary source materials and for the libraries to engage all users in the value of primary sources. The Center includes research consultation spaces, a reading room, a classroom, conference rooms, presentation practice rooms, a large presentation space, multimedia equipment and support, and primary source collections. Our most significant innovation in this space is that after making many decisions for collections, services and staffing based on what we thought users would want...we took the time to visit every academic department on campus to gather qualitative data on the collections and services they wanted in the spaces. As our insight and understanding increases over time, accommodations will be made to service programming.

Indicators of success:

- Results of ongoing assessment so the space is in a continuous improvement cycle
- Positive feedback from faculty graduate students that this space is meeting their needs
- Usage statistics

User-centered assessment techniques render a vision for undergraduate commons.

We are renovating the first floor of Strozier Library to create a high-energy, experience-rich space for students and faculty. The space may include multimedia computing, research stations, classroom, exhibit spaces, meeting spaces, individual study spaces, information stations, popular video and book collections, writing and computing assistance, subject tutoring, assistance for patrons with special needs, programming, circulation services and more. We have also established this space as 24/5. Inspired by Rochester’s and Minnesota’s qualitative research, we embarked on an ambitious agenda of information gathering that provided programming answers for the heart of this space. We have committed to create a user-designed space -- no matter how comfortable or uncomfortable the data may make us. That is how we are innovating. Our space, services, staffing will all be shaped by what users tell us--not by what we assume...
or by what we want to give users. In this way, we will never be finished building this space, it will be a dynamic, (r)evolutionary space.

**Indicators of success:**

- Results of ongoing assessment so the space is in a continuous improvement cycle
- Increased retention
- Usage statistics

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**GEORGIA TECH LIBRARY**

**Learning Commons delivers popular productivity environment.**

The Library West Commons is a renovation of a light-suffused space that had become underutilized in recent years. It is located adjacent to the consolidated reference desk, and offers 115 computer workstations, twenty-five of which have high-end multimedia software. All run a robust selection of applications supporting coursework. Technology infrastructure is provided by the campus computer center. Walk-up user support for information and technology assistance draws on experts from the library and the computer center. A presentation practice space completes this facility. Lessons learned in the West Commons informed programming for the East Commons.

http://librarycommons.gatech.edu/lwc/index.php

**Indicators of success:**

- Increased door count by 65%
- ACRL award winning
- Improvements to student productivity and multimedia skill sets garnering faculty praise

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**GEORGIA TECH LIBRARY**

**Second-phase learning commons informed by massive student input.**

This renovated area complements the West Commons as a team-based support facility. Programming was derived from a multitude of user-centered discovery exercises, with considerable contributions and oversight from a student advisory council. The heterogeneous environment includes 40 workstations set up for collaborative work; study spaces that transform into lecture / performance areas; micro-exhibits and student art; and power cords hanging from ceilings. All furniture is on wheels so students may contrive personalized configurations for collaboration as needed. The East Commons was mentioned as a key factor in the library winning the ARCL University Library of Excellence award in 2007.

http://librarycommons.gatech.edu/lec
Indicators of success:

- Increased door count 25%
- ACRL award winning
- Student documentaries and newspaper editorials extolling the space

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**McGill University Library**

Comprehensive renovation triples library attendance.

With refurbishment of the Macdonald Campus Library, a tired, old-fashioned library was upgraded. The entrance was altered. A new combined lending and information service point was opened. The entry door is combined with a display panel. Attractive colours and new furniture were acquired. An e-zone for a training room was installed, with glass walls and doors so that people could see right through the library. New lighting was acquired, including task and ambient lighting. Sustainable approaches were taken to carpet selection and other fittings. An advisory committee involved students as well as faculty. Spaces were differentiated with quiet individual study, specialist lockable desks for graduate students, group study, and tables so that students could spread themselves and their work. It has been extremely successful with use trebling since its re-opening. [http://www.mcgill.ca/macdonald-library/](http://www.mcgill.ca/macdonald-library/) [http://www.mcgill.ca/files/library-about/LibraryInFocus.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/library-about/LibraryInFocus.pdf)

Indicators of success:

- Use has trebled
- Positive user feedback from students
- Viewed by the Dean and faculty as a major success providing a significant and competitive marketing edge to the Faculty in attracting students at undergraduate and graduate levels.

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**McMaster University Libraries**

Incremental improvements to science and engineering library driven by customer feedback.

The renovated Thode Library of Science and Engineering (Learning Commons @ Thode) will be a hi-tech/hi-touch facility that is attractive to students and faculty alike. It will be a changed space that changes attitudes, practice and outcomes. [http://library.mcmaster.ca/thode/renovation/consult.htm](http://library.mcmaster.ca/thode/renovation/consult.htm)

Indicators of success:

NA
Weigle Commons tied to faculty instruction needs and student learning outcomes.

David B. Weigle Information Commons Sponsored jointly by the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, School of Arts and Sciences, and Office of the Provost, the Commons provides an integrated array of services to support student work and helps to meet the demand for campus spaces that are conducive to group learning. This 6,600 square foot facility is located in the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center—the main humanities and social sciences library on the Penn campus—that has traditionally served as a communal hub for students in the School of Arts and Sciences. The Commons reports directly to the Libraries and is open to the entire Penn community, though School of Arts and Sciences’ students comprise the majority of users. The Information Commons was conceived as a space that would provide:

- centrally located academic support services that otherwise can be difficult to negotiate on a large decentralized campus
- work spaces that facilitate collaboration
- hardware, software, and technical expertise to support the use of digital media
- tools to aid faculty with the integration of new technologies into the classroom

Central to the Commons’ mission are its support services provided by the “Program Partners,” a group of administratively disparate services that have joined forces to collaboratively support undergraduate education. Together the partners develop services, design workshops, and plan events geared to undergraduate students. Full-time staff and peer tutors offer walk-in and appointment-based one-on-one assistance as well as group workshops.

Within Commons students can find help with:

- research provided by subject-expert librarians
- project management, reading, and study skills provided by the Weingarten Learning Resources Center
- writing skills provided by the Writing Center
- public speaking skills provided by CWiC – Communication Within the Curriculum
- digital media production provided by media consultants. Students can focus on developing individual skills but can also approach the experience of producing a paper or project in a more comprehensive way through participation in workshops scheduled both individually and in series, such as “From Assignment to Endnotes.” In this series each session focuses on a single aspect of the creative process, including project management, research, writing, plagiarism and citation styles, poster production, and oral presentation skills.

In addition to providing direct support to students, the Commons offers faculty the resources and tools necessary to experiment with new technologies that can be incorporated into the classroom. Staff work with faculty interested in creating assignments that explore the potentials of
media, and then assist students in the execution of their projects. These partnerships help to build collaborations in ways that directly benefit the student learning process. http://wic.library.upenn.edu/

**Indicators of success:**

- The space is typically filled to capacity
- Positive user feedback
- Requests for additional support, in terms of both technology and training workshops

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**Pennsylvania State University Library**

**Vision for knowledge commons will address student suggestions.**

Planning is underway to create a knowledge commons on the 1st floor of the main library building. This is not only a response to national trends, but to student assessment that told us that our seven-year old building is cold, unwelcoming, too beige, and lacks action. A five-person Steering Team is sponsoring four teams: Concierge Team; Collaborative Spaces and Workstations; Services Points and Provisions; and Academic Services. We have begun working with University Partners on projects such as relocating the University Computing helpdesk into the Libraries. We have hired an architectural firm to work with us on a vision and feasibility study; a day-long workshop is scheduled for this coming week. The Knowledge Commons will be a priority in the upcoming University Campaign. Our challenge will be to retrofit an existing facility that was designed around collections to incorporate the newest technologies and learning spaces.

**Indicators of success:**

NA

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**University of Rochester Libraries**

**Gleason Library learning spaces benefit from exceptional user-centered discovery.**

The learning commons space in Gleason Library is designed specifically for undergraduate students to support collaborative learning. No service desk occupies the space—rather it is a self-regulated environment. Furniture is quite light so that the students can rearrange the space to fit their needs. Lots of whiteboards; no private rooms, but 8 areas that give some sense of privacy for a group to work in. The commons space includes a popular "quieter" study area. Located near a cafe and just above the main campus computing center. http://docushare.lib.rochester.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-27280/chapter_four.pdf
Indicators of success:

• consistently in high use
• positive comments on "feedback" flip charts
• positive editorials in the student paper

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN LIBRARIES

Student Learning Commons renovation features malleable furnishings and multi-purpose spaces.

The new Student Learning Commons is a newly renovated space made possible by a generous gift from the University Federal Credit Union. We renovated a large space on the entry floor of the Perry-Castaneda Library, including new ergonomic, flexible (and movable) tables and chairs, new carpet, new wall and window treatments, and new lighting. We installed several modular group study pods that have proven to be an extremely popular way to increase group study space without building walls. The pods are wired for electricity and have dry erase boards built into the fabric walls. We also added new study tables wired for electricity, as well as adding dozens of additional outlets around the room. The entire space is covered by our wireless network. The room is also equipped with a retractable projection system and screen and can be reserved by student groups for events. The Libraries can also use the space for events as needed. This space is targeted at undergraduate students and is hugely popular as a study facility. It was designed to promote collaborative study, but interestingly students have claimed it as a quiet study space (except for the group study pods).

We’ve also included a small (200 - 250 titles) popular magazine and journal collection in this space. [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/pcl/commons/index.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/pcl/commons/index.html)

Indicators of success:

• Massively increased usage
• Positive feedback from students including pressure to renovate more library spaces in this manner
• Positive coverage in the student press

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UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA LIBRARY

Health sciences library responds to students’ requests for collaborative and quiet study areas across 24 hours. (Health Sciences Library)

A collaborative room and expanded quiet study areas, both with 24-hour access, were added to the Library in 2007. The innovation in this area, which was an expansion of existing 24-hour study space, was the attempt to designate different areas for different purposes through furniture and layout rather than signage. The collaborative room has brighter lighting, group tables, and mobile
whiteboards in a room with doors that can be closed. Initially, computers were also included in the collaborative room, but they were at individual workstations rather than at the group tables. The computers were moved at students' request recently, since they were being used for quiet, individual work that was easily disrupted by the group activities at tables elsewhere in the room. The computers were moved into the larger, quiet study area of the space.


Indicators of success:

- increased usage
- requests from users for changes

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**York University Libraries**

**Renovation informed by user-centered programming.**

We are planning a "Learning Commons" that will bring together in the Library not only research help but also computing, writing and general learning skills assistance. Considerable user-centered discovery is informing the emerging shape of spaces, services, and resources that will be offered. Aside from the individual and group spaces we now have, we anticipate some small windowed consultation rooms, some group rooms set up for practicing of presentations, and perhaps a lower-light area for digital multimedia editing.
Indicators of success:

- strong usage of partner services (e.g. writing and learning skills assistance)
- strong usage of the area or facilities
- positive comments from users

York University Libraries

Study spaces incrementally improved.

We currently provide a variety of spaces for individual study and group discussion, ranging from quiet carrels to group study rooms. We have also set up, in response to student demand, a graduate student reading room and a silent study hall (the SSH!). We have also opened an in-library instruction room for student drop-in use of the computers (with student computer assistants). We have recently renovated some study areas, and have done this with the advice of student focus groups. We have, on their recommendation, included student art pieces as decorative elements.

Indicators of success:

- strong usage of spaces
- positive comments by users
- a lower noise level in study areas