INNOVATIVE SPACES IN ARL LIBRARIES:
RESULTS OF A 2008 STUDY

SUBTOPIC: WRITING SUPPORT

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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Association of Research Libraries
June 2009

http://www.arl.org/rtl/space/2008study/
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA LIBRARY

Immense learning complex serves both university and province.

The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia Library: 200,000 square feet of new space and more than 46,000 square feet of renovated space. Phase 2 opened in winter 2008. The complex includes:

- innovative learning spaces, including a 157-seat theatre - new technologies, flexible furniture to support large and small space work;
- breakout rooms;
- new spaces for the rare books collections;
- an array of seminar/study rooms and classrooms, for groups ranging from 6 to 110 people
- support for onsite webcasting and video-conferencing capabilities
- simulation and gaming technologies for learning support
- office and study spaces for Arts One, Science One and Coordinated Arts Programs
- labs and offices for UBC's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies
- offices and other facilities for the university's Centre for Teaching and Academic Group (TAG)
- media commons -learning commons -many different study corners (beautiful spaces).
- Chapman Learning Commons offering learning support, services, and programs for writing & research, study skills, multimedia software, and tutoring support. [http://www.library.ubc.ca/clc/](http://www.library.ubc.ca/clc/)
- [http://www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca](http://www.ikebarberlearningcentre.ubc.ca)

Indicators of success:

- space filled with people since day 1
- the Chapman Learning Commons was filled as soon as it opened.

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT LIBRARIES

Learning commons a collaboration to support undergraduate students.

The University of Connecticut Learning Commons offers a suite of services, technologies, and study spaces to help students successfully complete academic assignments and attain proficiency in the five General Education competencies required by the University: computer technology, information literacy, writing, quantitative skills, and second language. Integrating the five General Education competencies into the structure of the Learning Commons affirms these skills as fundamental to the education of every undergraduate student. The Learning Commons will serve as a physical manifestation of the university’s commitment to the principles of general education and visibly underscore the value of each individual skill set in the context of all the others. [http://learningcommons.uconn.edu/](http://learningcommons.uconn.edu/)
**Indicators of success:**

- Increased usage of the services based on user statistics
- Positive feedback from faculty and students

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**Dartmouth College Library**

Library collaborates with other units to support undergraduate group work, writing, and research needs.

We relocated our Document Delivery services and repurposed existing space on our main service floor of Baker-Berry Library to be a shared collaborative space. This room has video projection, a variety of group workspaces, the ability to share information on multiple laptops, converts to a practice presentation space, and for approximately 30 hours / week is the space for our student peer tutoring center. This is a collaborative effort with the Writing Program, Library, and Academic Computing, which is called the Research, Writing, and Information Technology Center [RWIT]. [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit/index.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~rwit/index.html)

**Indicators of success:**

- RWIT Center is fully scheduled most available timeslots, including beginning parts of the term
- Other campus partners are interested in joining and supporting this collaboration [Career Services, for instance]

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**Florida State University Libraries**

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

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH LIBRARY

Learning commons’ peer helper programs provide wide-ranging support for student endeavors.

The McLaughlin Library (building) has a very active Learning Commons, which integrates support for student learning by bringing together staff expertise in library research, learning and writing assistance, IT support, and support services for students with disabilities. The Learning Commons offers a wide range of peer helper programs, with students helping students through writing assistance, study workshops, supported learning group sessions (modeled on the University of Missouri - Kansas City Supplemental Instruction program) and one-on-one teaching of IT skills. Modest renovations were made to the Library’s first floor to create the Learning Commons in 1999. Annual renovations to the Library’s main floor over the past eight years have expanded and enhanced the Learning Commons. Service desks for research and computing help, learning and writing services, the Library Centre for Students with Disabilities, a resource area, staff offices, and consultation rooms are located in close proximity to each other. Like other libraries, Guelph recognized the importance of social study space. Therefore, renovations have transformed the first floor of the Library, incorporating a snack and beverage service, group study space, and soft seating for socializing. Computer labs and larger rooms required for workshops and supplemental instruction are located throughout the Library as well as on the main floor. The following steps were taken to enable the transformation of the first floor:

1. compact shelving was installed in the basement level to reduce the footprint of the collection of government publications located there, allowing us to move our map collection from the first floor to the basement;
2. a large area of the second floor was reclaimed by removing print journals held electronically and reducing the amount of growth space for the declining number of journal titles we were still acquiring on paper;
3. the area reclaimed on the second floor allowed us to move several collections from the first floor, including our collection of AV materials and the equipment to use them.

Indicators of success:

- The cafe opened on February 20, 2008, so we have not yet had the opportunity to assess its impact. However, demand so far has been high.
- Positive user feedback
Innovative Spaces in ARL Libraries: Writing Support

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign Library

Learning commons creates new opportunities for community interaction.

The Undergraduate Library has adopted a "Learning Commons" service that builds on its earlier success as the central hub of undergraduate research and learning on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Undergraduate Library learning commons encourages engagement with information in its various forms, reinforces the value of collaborative inquiry, creates new opportunities for community interaction, and serves as a hub for campus collaboration in support of undergraduate student success through the delivery of programs and services provided in collaboration with Campus Information Technology and Educational Services (CITES), the Campus Center for Advising and Academic Services, Writer's Workshop, and others. The Undergraduate Library learning commons provides access to an array of information technology tools, including mobile technology circulated through the Undergraduate Library, including: USB drives, graphing calculators, digital cameras, and laptops. Also available for loan are a number of gaming consoles that support the University Library Gaming Initiative (http://www.library.uiuc.edu/gaming/).

http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/lc/

Indicators of success:

- Increased usage of facility
- Increased usage of library materials

Kent State University Libraries

Information Commons combines information and high-end media services, along with tutoring support in writing and math.

Goals include providing ready access to traditional reference services (desk, by appointment); support for creating multimedia and teleproductions; express multimedia workstations; Student Multimedia Studio; adaptive technologies; GIS workstation; Student Success Services (math and writing tutoring); quiet study and group study spaces; group instruction lab; open computer lab.

http://www.library.kent.edu/page/10736
http://www.library.kent.edu/sms

Indicators of success:

- increased usage for all services
- positive feedback from other campus partners that provide tutoring
- overall increased activity in the building
Retool of new library delivers commons facility for multimedia and general productivity.

The University of Kentucky Libraries opened our information commons, the Hub, in March 2007. The target audience is undergraduate students. One of our noteworthy elements is our "video windows"—six projectors that display student art and other exhibits that rotate on a monthly basis. I've written more about the "video windows" here: [http://staceygreenwell.blogspot.com/2007/11/windows-in-basement.html](http://staceygreenwell.blogspot.com/2007/11/windows-in-basement.html)

Here is a general description of the Hub: Located in the basement of William T. Young Library, the Hub @ WT's provides library research assistance and IT help in one convenient location. The Hub features over 200 Windows computers as well as a Mac lab for student use. Mac video editing suites with Final Cut Pro are now available, and two presentation practice rooms will be completed in spring 2008. The Hub offers flexible, comfortable furniture for students to arrange to meet their group study needs, including rolling cubicle walls and whiteboards. In addition, the Hub features snack and beverage machines in the lounge area. [http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/Hub](http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/Hub)

**Indicators of success:**

- Positive user feedback
- Positive user feedback
- Increased usage of the basement

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**University of Louisville Libraries**

Learning commons provides full suite of undergraduate services.

The Learning Commons is a newly dedicated space in the Ekstrom Library combining library and other campus units for teaching and learning activities. It includes media services, several computer areas, faculty services, the writing center and the Digital Media Suite. The Kersey Reading Room is a newly remodeled suite for periodicals featuring tables with lamps and comfortable seating.

**Indicators of success:**

- increased usage
- positive user feedback
- reading room always filled with students
McMaster University Libraries

Learning commons for humanities and social sciences is campus collaboration. The Mills Learning Commons is an integrated learning facility located in our humanities and social sciences library. The Commons includes a large concentration of desktops (about 120) for both collaborative and individual productivity, research and IT assistance, a writing clinic, the integration of traditional and emerging scholarly resources, instruction, services for students with disabilities, and workshop space (for academic skills counseling, etc.). The facility was built in collaboration with our campus IT unit, the Centre for Student Development and the Centre for Leadership in Learning.

http://library.mcmaster.ca/mills/learningcommons/about.htm

Indicators of success:

• Increased usage
• Positive user feedback

University of Minnesota Libraries

Collaboration produces SMART Learning Commons (Wilson Library and Magrath Library): support for gateway courses and basic skills.

There is also a SLC in Klaeber Court, situated with the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence (not a Libraries facility). The SMART Learning Commons is a true partnership between the Vice-Provost for Undergraduate Education, the University Libraries, the MCAE, several academic departments, and several other campus units. (Following is an overview description of the SMART program.) Consultants offer one-on-one assistance for help in gateway courses and skills such as mathematics, sciences, statistics, economics, writing, and library research. Additional courses may be supported, based on the backgrounds of our Peer Learning Consultant staff in any given semester. SMART is home to the Peer-Assisted Learning program, which pairs experienced undergraduates (PAL Facilitators) with specific course sections to facilitate group learning experiences. See the PAL pages for more details. Individual and group study spaces are available in SMART centers for self-directed study on a first come, first served basis. The SMART also hosts short introductory workshops in Excel, PowerPoint, academic services and skill development, and library resources. http://smart.umn.edu/

Indicators of success:

• Spaces are heavily used
• We receive positive user feedback
• Other campus partners have joined SMART
OHIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Collaborative commons offers various flavors of assistance to undergrads.

The Learning Commons, a collaborative endeavor with Academic Technology, University College and Dining Services, provides the following services in a technology-enriched environment:

• Up-to-date technology: computers (both Mac and Windows), scanners, printers (including color), photocopiers, production tools, loan of laptop computers
• Library Services: reference librarians who can help you find information for your research
• Technology Services: technology assistants who can help you with software
• Writing assistance: the Student Writing Center can help with the writing process
• Media: a large collection of videos in Instructional Media
• A café, student lockers, new books display, and much else...

http://www.library.ohiou.edu/serv/lc/index.html

Indicators of Success:

• Increased gate count
• Stable reference statistics (in an era when most libraries are reporting a decline of reference statistics)
• Pressure to expand the hours of the rest of the building because of overcrowding in the Learning Commons

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA LIBRARY

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/](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
“Mother of all learning commons” continues to evolve.

Leavey Library was conceived of as USC’s “teaching library” and also housed the nation’s first Information Commons when it opened in 1994. 12 years later we have renewed the concept of a full service information commons for students by incorporating additional service points within the commons including: the addition of instructional technologists at an integrated customer services desk, providing a podcasting studio as well as video conferencing facilities.

- Research and Computing Consultation: Leavey librarians, staff, student navigation assistants (SNAs) and Information Technology specialist are available at one service desk to assist patrons with research using a combination of print, electronic and Internet resources. They can also assist with computing questions regarding productivity software and E-mail.

- Customer Support Center: The ITS Customer Support Center walk-in area is located in Leavey Library’s Lower Commons at the Reference and Computer Consultation Desk. This new location allows ITS and the USC Libraries to offer the university community a common point of contact for IT and reference help. ITS walk-in services such as account assistance, software support, and statistical software distribution, which were previously available in the Jefferson building, room 150, are now available in this new location between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, please see the CSC site: www.usc.edu/its/csc/

- Computing Facilities: Leavey Library still supports a full range of computing facilities. The Lower Commons, located on the lower level of Leavey, has 39 Macintosh and 71 PC computers. The Dorothy Leavey Memorial Commons, or Upper Commons, is located on the second floor and has 70 PC computers and 40 study carrels with network connections for laptop computers. All computers in both Commons have USB ports and CD/DVD drives. In the Lower Commons, Express Stations, marked with signs, are available for a maximum of 5 minutes to send print jobs or for short computing sessions (such as checking E-mail). Public access stations, which have Internet access but no productivity software, are also available on the first and second levels of Leavey as well as in the Lower Commons. To facilitate research, the commons is also equipped with a color photocopier.

- Reference Collection: Leavey has a wide variety of print and electronic reference resources that are available to aid your research. The reference collection is located in the Lower Commons in bookcases along the perimeter of the room and behind the reference desk. Leavey also has two special collections located behind the reference desk to aid you in your research.
• **Computer collection:** We also provide help books in the Information Commons on Leavey’s major productivity tools, such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint, statistical programs and graphics software. Issues collection. Additionally, we have an "Issues" collection which focuses on current events and "hot topics." for introductory English writing papers. The issues collection includes the serials Current Biography, CQ Research and The Reference Shelf. This collection helps users become familiar with an issue’s key points and people, as well as providing an overall perspective on the issue.

• **Collaborative Workrooms:** Both information commons on the upper and lower floor have rooms available for group study. The Lower Commons has 19 rooms, designed for groups of 5-12 people. The Upper Commons has 13 rooms, designed for three to four people. All workrooms provide a white board, dry erase markers and network connections for laptops. Workrooms 3K through 3X in the Lower Commons have PC computers. Reservations may be made in advance at the reference desks in the Upper and Lower Commons. You must make reservations in person; reservations are not taken over the phone. You will need to show your USCard while using the room. Other important information on reserving and using collaborative workrooms is on the Collaborative Workrooms page.

• **Writing Consultation:** In cooperation with the Writing Center, writing consultants are available Monday through Thursday from 7-9 p.m. in room 3Z (lower level, northwest corner) during the fall and spring semesters.

• **Adaptive Technologies Room:** The adaptive technologies room is located in room 3AA in the Lower Commons. Leavey and the Center for Academic Support and Disability Services and Programs work together to provide users with disabilities equal access to computing resources through a variety of adaptive technologies.

• **Video Conference Rooms:** The videoconference rooms are located in Collaborative Workrooms 3B and 3V. Faculty, staff and students may reserve these rooms for single or group point to point video conference use up to three (3) times each semester subject to availability. [http://www.usc.edu/libraries/locations/leavey/ic/](http://www.usc.edu/libraries/locations/leavey/ic/)

**Indicators of success:**

• IM logs that track the number of reference questions asked at the 'full service' information commons desk
• Larger numbers of questions asked at Information Commons desk and categorized as IT questions logged
Richly comprised learning commons reflects advantages of collaborating with logical campus partners.

In the library’s commons, the targeted audiences are undergraduates and those who work with undergraduates. More specifically it is designed to accommodate both groups and individuals in a 24-hour space. Ours is an equal partnership (administratively and fiscally) between the University Libraries and the campus Office of Information Technology. Units offering services in the space include Reference, Circulation, Media Center, and Studio employees from the Libraries; and Lab Services, Help Desk, Innovative Technology Center from the Office of Information Technology; and various academic service units that offer instruction or tutoring such as the Writing Center and the Stat Lab. The Student Success Center on campus also sets up informal tutoring sessions. Instructors often hold study group sessions in the Commons as well. We offer reference, circulation, media production services, paging services when the stacks are closed, a media collection, media reservations, and group media presentation rooms that may be reserved for classes by faculty. We check out laptops, scanners, disk drives, head phones, etc. We have about 150 desktop computers (PC and Mac) loaded with the same software offered in computer labs and we have about 50 laptops for circulation. The Help Desk offers assistance with wireless registration (the wireless network is available throughout the libraries), operating system and computer repair, password assistance, etc. The ITC supports the two practice presentation spaces available with Smart Symposiums and Smart Boards for reservation and provides assistance to faculty who are setting up Black board pages etc. We also offer digitizing services for instructors in support of teaching. Furnishings are geared to be flexible and the newly renovated space is divided in "pods" or zones to help with noise control (not all that successfully when the space is full at night). There are both mobile and fixed white boards, group rooms, and one enclosed room designated as quiet between the hours of midnight and 7:30. That same room acts as a faculty lounge and reception area during the day. There is a 24-hour Starbucks with an adjacent study lounge and there is a small store that sells supplies, food, and drink. 

http://commons.utk.edu/

Indicators of success:
NA
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