



Assessing a major Media Center renovation

Matariki Network of Universities Library Benchmarking Project

Dartmouth College Library

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Introduction

Central research question: *If we enable and support the academic endeavor how do we measure our effectiveness?*

Thematic focus: This second Matariki Library Benchmarking Survey will focus on the provision of library spaces that supports the student experience. Each partner is being invited to choose a specific innovation or project on which to share information. The survey questions are designed to allow for the sharing of information about assessment activities undertaken in each Library. This process will provide more data to support the development of a Library assessment capability maturity model and contribute directly to the project aim of considering how we measure effectiveness.

Survey

1. Describe the project you have chosen to report on. Outline the scope of the project; include the features and the resources involved.

Background

Dartmouth College Library's [Jones Media Center](#) (JMC) is a 10,000 square foot facility on the second floor of the main Baker-Berry Library complex. It currently has a full-time staff of eight, and employs several dozen students in technical and service capacities. Opened in 2001 when the Berry Library was completed, the JMC supports the instruction and research needs of Dartmouth's faculty, students, staff and alumni. It provides the facilities, collections and expertise the Dartmouth community needs to research, view, and produce a wide range of media.

The Center's media collection comprises more than 15,000 DVDs and 5,500 videotapes, as well as audiotapes, CDs, and CD-ROMs. The Jones Media Center provides equipment and expertise for producing video for classroom and extracurricular projects. Digital cameras, camcorders and audio recorders are available for loan at no cost. Multimedia stations are available for editing audio and video, scanning and manipulating images, and creating presentations. Workshops offered during the term provide instruction on multimedia hardware and software.

The original design of the Center had a central block containing offices, [media storage](#), and [digital conversion labs](#). This was flanked to the left by media editing stations, and to the right by media viewing stations and the 400,000 item microforms collection (the green areas above are classroom spaces, and not part of the Center). Through a multi-year planning process, informed by various usage statistics and the trends they reveal, we now have a fully reimagined physical space constructed December 2014-May 2015 with new and expanded studio, collaboration, and equipment spaces.

Project Scope

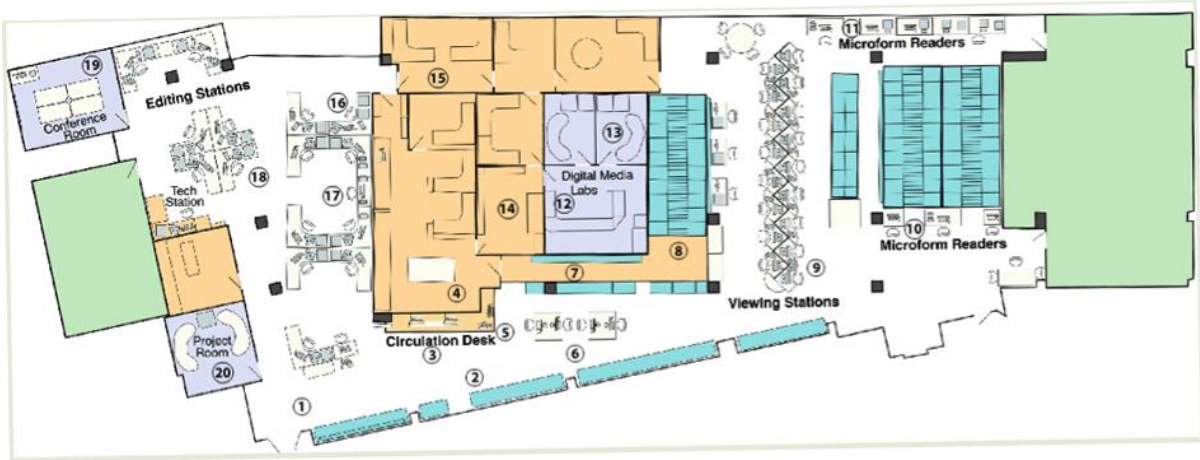
The [\\$1.7 million renovation](#) began on 1 December 2014 and will be largely finished by the middle of spring term (May 2015) at which time we expect to reopen. Services have continued during the winter term in temporary locations adjacent to the JMC. The renovated Jones Media Center will feature:

- nearly twice the amount of seating;
- more areas for collaborative multimedia project work;
- casual seating areas;
- semi-private viewing and project rooms;
- standing height workstations;
- new carpet, paint colors, and furniture throughout;
- a multi-purpose, reconfigurable teaching, learning, and production facility with a video wall.

This re-imagining of the Center responds to current needs and strategic opportunities to provide high-end collaborative media spaces, and to enhance experiential learning. The renovation falls into three areas:

- I. **Innovation Studio:** A 610 square foot cube with foldable [glass walls](#) on three sides, and a back wall of eight 55" flat-screen monitors (a "media wall"). This iStudio can be configured as a small classroom, opened up to be a presentation space, or used as a high-end studio. The space for this central feature of the redesign has been freed up by moving out the microfilm collection, making much more strategic use of prime floor space in a media center. The microforms that have been retained are now in the new Dartmouth Library Depository (DLD), a nearby off-site storage facility.
- II. **Student/Faculty Areas:** Re-equipped and re-furnished floor spaces that allow for more flexible, collaborative workspaces. Includes two enclosed voiceover studios, and two collaboration rooms. A Tech Bar is being built opposite the circulation desk to showcase equipment for loan and to offer hands-on training. The JMC main door is being moved to improve traffic flow significantly. Combined seating capacity will increase from 48 to 88 seats to accommodate the increased usage we are experiencing.
- III. **Collections/Staff Areas:** staff offices are being relocated to new glass-fronted offices to make staff members more visible; the DVD collection shelving is being moved to a much more central position behind the service desk to speed up service and enhance collections security; a new, larger service desk provides better lines of sight (includes removal of existing wall); new lookup stations for users to search collections; and six new screens throughout the Center for showcasing programs, collections, training opportunities, and for providing digital signage.

The Jones Media Center as it was 2001-2014



Jones Media Center May 2014

[Click here](#) for an animated “fly-through” of the new Jones Media Center.

[Click here](#) for a set of post-renovation photographs.

And [click here](#) for a “mouse eyes view” of the new spaces.

[All from the [Jones Media Center Facebook](#) page]

Key drivers and objectives.

Drivers

- Conversations with staff indicated that the space was not keeping up with current faculty and student needs. Students request both more collaborative space and better quiet spaces for voiceover work.
- Year-on-year output measures showed a steady increase in the use of, and support for, equipment and computer hardware and software for producing multimedia projects for courses. For example, there were 3,437 equipment checkouts in FY14 (a 14% increase over FY13), with pro equipment seeing 67% more loans (1,291), driven by a rising sophistication of student media work.
- The closure of the Arts and Humanities Resource Center (a facility managed by Dartmouth Information Technology Services) also increased the demand for the delivery of course content, such as video and audio, directly to students or to the classroom.

Objectives

- Support the ongoing growth in the volume and sophistication of media creation for curricular and research activities.
- Provide a physical plant that keeps pace with current use, opportunities, programming, and ambitions.
- Facilitate broader use, more sophisticated needs, and much more collaborative working patterns.
- Sustain the highstandards of service that faculty and students require.
- Retain Jones Media Center's role as the campus media hub.
- Provide better facilities for our highly skilled JMC staff and student employees: innovative people need innovative spaces.
- Promote experiential learning and support forthcoming online education opportunities.

Policy framework.

Dartmouth College does not have a formal, multi-year, strategic plan laid out by the faculty or college administration to which we can align our activities. However, in the Fall of 2013, President Hanlon outlined an [Academic Vision](#) for the College. He outlined five tactics to advance Dartmouth, and the first two directly relate to the Jones Media Center Project.

1. Emphasize Experiential Learning: "experiential, or action-based learning, offers students the chance to develop the skills they need to operate effectively through active, rather than passive, learning."
2. Lead in the Use of Learning Technologies.

We have been careful to articulate the JMC renovation using terminology that shows us in alignment with these presidential goals. In Spring 2015 we published a [Dartmouth College Library: Strategic Thinking 2015-2020](#) document that lays out our strategic direction. The Jones Media Center renovations serve this current strategic direction.

The JMC renovation is also in line with the Dartmouth College Library [mission, vision, and goals](#), and the “Jones Media Center Innovation Spaces” is one of our FY15 Strategic Initiatives.

How does the project support the student experience?

Students are the largest single user community for JMC services and spaces, and we expect them to be the largest beneficiaries of the renovation. The Jones Media Center is an integral part of many of their classes: in 2013, JMC staff worked directly with faculty and students in 35 courses that required multimedia/multimodal assignments -- a 150% increase over the previous year (14 courses), and involved more than 600 students enrolled in those courses. Course support includes instructional design as well as training for creating media projects. In the same year, Jones staff taught 130 attendees how to use multimedia software and instructed on the techniques of good media production.

Every year, Jones hires a recent Dartmouth graduate as a media intern – a full-time salaried position. Interns are given the opportunity to work on a special project, and present about that project at a national conference, while also gaining real world experience in multimedia and multimedia production. The renovations will make us a more attractive place for a Dartmouth grad to work.

The Jones Media Center staff also undertakes innovative programming that celebrates the undergraduate experience. Each year, JMC staff members record video interviews with selected first year undergraduates in their first week at Dartmouth – see [Voices of Dartmouth Class of 2017](#). Four years later we [interview the same students again](#), highlighting the growth that takes place while at Dartmouth. We expect the new spaces to allow more of this sort of work.

2. Detail the processes that were used to gather data that were used to inform the development of this project.

The Jones renovation is informed by long-term planning and data gathering. David Seaman (Associate Librarian for Information Management) led the JMC staff through a brainstorming exercise during the interregnum between the June 2010 retirement of Michael Beahan as JMC Director, and the March 2011 hiring of Anthony Helm to lead the Center as Head of Digital Media and Library Technologies. We looked at changing patterns of use, such as the steady rise in the [numbers of courses incorporating media](#), increased amounts of equipment loaned, and demand for more collaborative workspaces. For example:

- In 2004, 800 physical items were available on reserve for courses in the Jones Media Center; by 2014, the Jones Media Center was supporting 450 courses annually with reserves, amounting to over 2,500 physical items, in addition to over 2,100 films streamed online.
- In 2004, the Jones Media Center had 54 items of loanable equipment for students to use to create and complete media projects, by 2014 we have more than 300 digital video cameras, digital still cameras, hard drives, digital audio recorders, microphones, and other professional equipment that circulate to patrons.
- In 2004 our DVD collections numbered 1,300 titles and filled 2.5 storage cabinets; by 2014 we have over 17,000 titles (23,000 discs) across 44 storage cabinets, with over 20,000 DVD checkouts to students, faculty, and staff.

Informed by this growth, and by the current state of media technology, we examined assumptions built into the original layout, such as the separation of “consuming media” and “creating media” activities on different sides of the Center; we tried to predict new uses; and we articulated problems in traffic flow and service points. This was a fun and revealing process: we mentally stripped the space back to the bare walls and rebuilt it as we would do today.

Anthony Helm took over leadership of this re-imagining of our spaces and services when he arrived, and the staff presented their initial findings at the [New Media Consortium](#) conference in summer 2011. In 2012 JMC staff contacted peers for information about their experiences with media center renovations and/or reconfigurations, and conducted some site visits to see other recent renovations. Planning continued during 2012 and 2013 with the Library’s hiring of [Jones Architects](#), who first provided conceptual design expertise and then worked with the College’s [Offices of Planning and Design and Project Management](#) to develop a full budget for the emerging vision of a new Jones Media Center, which included the following desires:

- increased seating overall
- more flexible collaborative workspaces
- studio spaces for audio, video, and gaming
- a multipurpose “sandbox” area – a flexible studio and teaching space
- relocation of the video collection to be nearer the circulation desk
- relocated staff offices to make staff more visible to users

JMC keeps good statistics each year measuring collection use, equipment loans, classes supported, training sessions taught, and (recently) gate count. These revealed an increased use of equipment to produce multimedia projects for courses, and an increased diversity of courses incorporating media

into the curriculum. This is in keeping with national trends: see "[Multimedia Assignments: Not Just for Film Majors Anymore](#)" (Chronicle of Higher Education, 21 April 2014).

Convinced of the service impact of this renovation, Library leadership proposed the plan as a capital project to the College Administration for the FY15 budget year, and it was accepted. As part of this work the Library also agreed to the removal of the microfilm and microfiche collections from the Jones Media Center, which freed up space for what became the single most striking aspect of the new space: a glass cube "Innovation Studio" with a video wall.

3. Detail the performance measures used to evaluate the success of this project.

Performance measures include metrics on usage, to compare with pre-renovation figures, and use of new services.

Inputs

- Number of staff positions
- Number of student worker hours
- Annual operating budget
- Capital Renovation budget
- Annual collections budgets

There is no change to the number of staff and students, or the operating and media collections budgets, as a result of the renovations.

Outputs

- Distance/time to retrieve DVD/VHS media
- Number of screens in Center for signage and marketing purposes
- Number of seats in Center
- Quiet space available (seats)
- Collaborative space available (seats)
- Social space available (lounge seating)
- Services available (training, equipment loan, educational design, etc)
- Door count by month
- Circulation statistics: equipment number and type
- Circulation statistics: collections

For these output performance measures we have one or more years of pre-renovation data for comparison's sake. A summary of some of these can be seen in the *JMC Annual Report* (Appendix 1).

Outcomes

Input and output measures represent much of our pre-renovation metrics; however, we are committed to finding some outcome performance measures to allow us to address the impact of our work on teaching, learning, and creativity. Potential outcome measures include:

Staff interviews:

- Quality of work life
- What can you do now that you could not?

Student assessment:

- We plan to use Ipads in kiosk mode for brief exit surveys as they leave the Center and as they return loaner equipment.

Faculty interviews or focus groups:

Focus groups or guided interviews with faculty to see if we can get to impact of renovation on teaching and learning.

We opened in May 2015 and have begun to gather post-renovation data. The Jones staff are thinking through how best to execute the outcome assessments.

Reporting

Findings will be reported in the Annual Report of the Jones Media Center, which goes to Dartmouth College Library Leadership; to our Matariki colleagues; and to the Library Assessment Committee. Selected findings will be used strategically in various other promotional and outreach publications. A post-renovation report will be provided to the College Administration, to underscore the impact that this capital investment had made.

4. Outline the plans you have for the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the projects outcomes.

The Library keeps careful statistics of service point use and includes the Jones Media Center services in its triennial general survey. Additional assessments are being planned for the newly renovated JMC space. For example, we plan to evaluate the use of the new spaces by a combination of head count methodologies. One will be a tally of where users are sitting and what they are doing by a staff member walking arounds at regular intervals for a defined period of time; another will be the analysis of the output from time-lapse cameras to see how space is being used. We are using a Brinno Construction Cam (<http://brinno.com/>) to record the building of the Innovation Studio (for promotional purposes) and expect to install several of these throughout the Center.

5. Outline the key lessons learnt from undertaking this project.

Constraints

Our media services cannot be shut down for the 5-month period of demolition and construction, and at first we planned a partial use of the Center during the renovation, with other services located elsewhere in the building. The challenges of working in a [building zone](#) and of having staff scattered across multiple floors became more evident the more we tried to plan it. Quite late in the process we hit upon the idea of moving out entirely and occupying the [clerestory landing](#) outside the Center and the adjoining Evans Map Room. Rolling shelving was bought to house loaner equipment and the course reserve DVDs and VHS tapes; student workstations were set up, and some staff quarters established. This is proving to be a successful if cramped arrangement, with staff going in and out of the building site to retrieve DVDs and access their offices.

The renovation is going on in our main library, with offices, classrooms, and public library areas above, below, and to one side. Noise and disruption to the work that goes on in the building is a major concern. The contractors are sensitive to this situation, and were able to do much of the most noisy demolition and concrete drilling during the period between terms (December 1 to January 5), or before the building opens at 8am.

Lessons

The removal of the microform collections, which will not be located in the renovated Jones Media Center, has had a rippling effect across the various departments and staff throughout the library that was not clearly foreseen. While the collection is not heavily used, decisions about what to keep and discard, and how to provide service for the remaining collection, had to be coordinated among many people. Long-term issues around the displacement of these collections have not been resolved at this time and should be noted in the final assessment.