Renovating a 1970’s Library One Room at a Time

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*Space 2.0: Small-Scale Library Redesign Projects*
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Dartmouth Biomedical Libraries
Lehman Social Sciences Library

• Located in the International Affairs Building - opened in 1971

• Collection:
  – Anthropology, political science, sociology, international and public affairs, environmental policy, journalism, political geography
  – US Government documents
  – Map collection
  – Electronic Data Service
Primary Users

- School of International & Public Affairs
- Academic Departments:
  - Political Science
  - Sociology
  - Anthropology
  - Economics
Lehman Physical Space

- Underground
- Poor lighting
- Uneven temperature
- Original furniture, carpet, etc.
- Old, uncomfortable chairs
- Too few electrical outlets
- No major renovation until Summer 2007
Partnering with SIPA

- Town Hall Meetings lead to opportunities to work with SIPA
  - Opportunity for us to hear the topics and issues of concern to the students (not just the library)
  - Opportunity to learn about new needs, i.e. group study, laptop support
  - Opportunity for the SIPA Dean and administrators to hear students concerns about the library, which invariably were about the physical space.
  - SIPA began to realize that the School and the Library could partner to deal with some of these issues.

- Student Petition
  - “You’re too polite”
Early Projects

• First Group Study Room
  – Small room, small budget
• First phase in West Reading Room
  – Electrical outlets and data jacks to table tops
• Inexpensive projects, very well received
• Gave our administration confidence in us
  – In understanding what students wanted / needed
  – Able to plan and carry out projects effectively and within budget
• School appreciated that we were responding to their students needs
Vision Statement

• Broad Plan for entire library
• Basic tenets for the future Lehman established
  – Collection of 160,000 volumes to be kept on-site
  – Group study
  – Spaces that support new technology
  – Expand GIS and electronic data service
  – Improve and upgrade physical plant
Developing detailed plans

• 9 projects developed – collectively cover the entire library
• 4 were developed in more detail with an architect
  – West Reading Room
  – Group Study Room
  – Digital Social Science Center (DSSC)
  – Main Lobby
• 3 have been approved and financed (so far)
Collection Use Study

- Current periodicals
- Reference materials
- Government Documents
- Microfilm / fiche
- Bound journals
Collection Use Study: results

• Significant decline in use of all these collections. Particularly
  – current periodicals
  – government documents.

• Small number of reference titles used repeatedly

• Microfilm use down. Patrons want to scan.
User Input

- Two focus groups with SIPA students
- Small group of students served as consultants.
- Observational study
- Town Hall presentation on our plans for first two projects
Students Wanted

- Electrical outlets for laptops
- Better lighting
- More comfortable chairs
- Group study space
Talking with colleagues

• Site visits to
  – University of Michigan Social Work Library
  – New York University
  – University of Pennsylvania Information Commons

• Virtual site visits via the web, in particular
  – Georgia Tech
  – North Carolina State Univ.

• Info Commons discussion group at ALA
• Info Commons listserv
Summer 2007 Projects
West Reading Room & Group Study Room

- Architect brought back
- Weekly meetings
  - Setting schedules
  - Planning for disruption
  - Making decisions: furniture, carpeting, light fixtures, etc.
  - Take notes
- Final design decisions
  - Group study room partitions
    - to bring in electricity
    - To break the space up
    - to give the space character
First Project: West Reading Room

• Removed current periodical shelves
  – Relocated collection
• Re-carpeted
  – Warmer, quieter, more welcoming
  – Removed old floor outlets
• Improved lighting
  – Added light fixtures, replaced lenses on existing fixtures
• Used the original tables; new chairs
  – Power and data outlets on table top for each seat
• Painted ceiling and columns
West Reading Room - before
West Reading Room - after
West Reading Room - after
West Reading Room

- 96 seats with power & data
- Wireless throughout
- 9 more seats at conference table
- Improved lighting
- New carpet
Second Project: Group Study Room

- Formerly the Reference Room
- Completely emptied room
- Reduced and relocated reference collection
- Removed the card catalog
- Relocated microfiche cabinets
- Removed computer workstations, index tables, everything.
Group Study Room

- Painted and carpeted space
- Cleaned and re-lamped fixtures, replaced lenses
- Electrical outlets at every table
- Data on walls, wireless throughout
- New tables and chairs
- Glass boxes down the center of the room
- LCD panels at 4 tables to use with laptops
- Blackboards
Group Study Room

• 4 LCD panels - popular
  – 5 more will be added this year
  – Mac adaptors
• 5 Blackboards - heavily used
• 19 tables, 82 seats
  – tables seat 4 – 6
  – one larger seats 6-8
Key Elements in Both Rooms

• Improved lighting
• Added power and data at tables
• Comfortable chairs
• Large tables
  • plenty of room to spread out
  • small groups can work together, or study together quietly
• Carpeted floors: warmer, quieter
Policies

• West Reading was always a quiet space for individual study either singly or with friends.
  – This continues to be the case with some self-monitoring among the students

• Group Study intended for groups working together.
  – This is how it is being used for the most part. No conflicts yet

• We are not interfering with the way students are using these spaces.
Results

• Gate count up 12% in first year
• Students vocal in praise. Want more.
• School pleased. Contributed money again this year for DSSC.
• Library Administration pleased. We will re-carpet the lobby in January.
Final Comments

• Student support is important
• Get user input
• Partner with Schools or Academic Departments.
  – Group study spaces
  – Presentation practice rooms
  – Late night study spaces
Final Comments (cont’d)

• Use an architect
  – Brings a different perspective
  – More polished, better finished spaces
  – More knowledgeable about
    • Materials
    • Structures
  – Aesthetic sensibility
Final Comments (cont’d)

• Assess
  – check / confirm assumptions
  – Assemble data to back up potentially controversial decisions