Learning spaces and library places

Andrea Twiss-Brooks, Co-Director, Science Libraries
University of Chicago Library
237th American Chemical Society National Meeting
Salt Lake City, UT, March 22-26, 2009
Overview

- Background
- Guiding principles
- Lessons learned
Background

“Library space transformation is exploding across colleges and universities today.”*

Drivers for this transformation:
- Demographic
  Includes digital natives, multitaskers
- Technological
  More digital content, multimedia content common, technology embedded in learning experience
- Pedagogical
  Group learning, more collaborative, more informal learning

Guiding Principles

• Gather information and data
• Develop a programmatic framework
• Design space to support programmatic needs
• Build partnerships
• Flexibility
• Assessment
Guiding Principles

• Gather information and data
  – Learn from others
    • EDUCAUSE*
  – Analyze existing data for your institution
    • LibQUAL+
  – Determine user needs
    • Focus groups
    • Observation
    • Surveys

* http://www.educause.edu/resources/16011
Guiding Principles

• Develop a programmatic framework
  – Align with institutional mission
  – Determine how space changes will support the library mission
  – How should the physical and virtual learning environments support each other

Libraries need a shared sense of purpose with other campus units and with their larger organizations
Guiding Principles

• Design space to support programmatic needs
  – Presentation practice areas
  – Technology equipped collaborative learning areas
  – Classroom style settings
  – Quiet individual study areas

One way to approach this matching of programmatic needs to space design is to think in “zones” of activity
Guiding Principles

• Design with flexibility in mind
  – Environment of constant change
  – Responsive to different users needs
    • Learning by reflection
    • Learning by doing
    • Learning through conversation
  – Reduces cost of future changes
An example of a vendor offering options who provides an option to reconfigure walls without demolition and traditional construction.
Guiding Principles

• Build partnerships
  – Which organizations on campus have missions similar to the library or support learning in similar ways?
    IT, courseware managers, deans of students, student life organizations, etc.
  – Who are the stakeholders?
    Instructors, students, librarians, facilities managers, etc.
  – What partners would bring needed expertise?
Space planning at the John Crerar Library within a collaborative partnership

• “Little Group That Thinks Big” or “Little Think Big” (composed of library staff and campus academic learning technologies staff)

“Here's the lists of users, areas, and services that we agreed to use as part of Monday's conceptual programming discussion.
Later, Chad

USERS
Campus Users, Public Users, Specialty Users

PROGRAM AREAS
Individual study, Group study, Carrel study, Collaborative workspace, Individual workspace, Carrel workspace, Lounge workspace, Lounge reading, Laptop reading, Quiet reading

SERVICES
Printing, Scanning, Reference, Technology Help Desk, Application Help Desk, Food, Off-Hours Retail, Mobile Collaborative Technology, Circulation, Copying, Microforms, Training, Visualization, Digital Media”
Crerar USITE Cybercafe (team included library staff, architects, campus IT)

http://www.educause.edu/learningspacesch40/11938
Guiding Principles

• Assessment
  – Effective learning space design is an iterative process
  – Link to institutional learning outcomes if possible
  – Use a variety of methods to do assessment, both quantitative and qualitative

Tip: Statistics and numbers are important, but a quote from a student or faculty member can be priceless!
“Family Room” area in reference resulting in part from comments received in LibQUAL+ surveys: “Crerar could use ... armchairs for reading”
New Skills Needed

• Project management
• Space planning
• Conflict resolution
• Negotiation and influencing
• Expertise in assessment methodologies
BEFORE: Microforms reading room – prime real estate which was unattractive and underused
AFTER:

Kathleen A. Zar Room

Comfortable, flexible space for collaborative learning, library meetings, training – mobile large screen display, whiteboards, large format 3-D compatible screen, comfortable chairs, laptop fleet, moveable furniture
Lessons Learned

• Don’t underestimate the importance of creature comforts
• Be proactive in reimagining your spaces – if you don’t rethink your space, someone else at your organization will do it for you!
• Partner for expertise and other advantages
• Leverage the “neutrality” of library space to your advantage
• Design for experimentation and flexibility
• Build in as much extra infrastructure capacity as possible for scalability and sustainability
• Share what you learn!
Small-Scale, High-Impact Renovations: Redesigning Library Spaces on a Budget

INAUGURAL KATHLEEN A. ZAR SYMPOSIUM -- FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2009
THE JOHN CRERAR LIBRARY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Registration Information / Program Information / Hotel Information / Parking, Maps and Directions

About the Symposium
Small-scale or modular renovations of existing library spaces are becoming increasingly common. Are you thinking about creating new group study space in your library? Reconfigured stacks areas for new purposes? Do you want to learn from colleagues how to collaborate with other units on your campus to pool resources to create small but effective teaching and learning areas in your library? Or, to use patron input to guide your small-scale changes? Do you want to add interesting technology to your spaces at a moderate cost? How can you reimagine your library on a shoestring budget? Join us for a one day symposium featuring a mix of oral presentations, question and answer sessions, and networking opportunities. The symposium will be held in the Kathleen A. Zar Room at the University of Chicago's John Crerar Library. The room itself is a local example of a small-scale library renovation project.
Readings about learning spaces and libraries


“Little Think Big” and Kathleen A. Zar Room design group:

Barbara Kern
Cheryl Rusnak
James Vaughan
David Farley

Chad Kainz
Emily Baker
Roberto Marques

Mark Cheng
Jonathan Estanislao

Bill Casica
Denise Davis

Howard Zar
Patricia Swanson
Thank you!

atbrooks@uchicago.edu