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## In Search of the Information Commons Model in Arts Libraries: A Library Travelogue and Discussion

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# In Search of the Information Commons Model in Arts Libraries: a Library Travelogue and Discussion.

New England Music Library Association, Spring Meeting. March 27, 2009

**Margaret Ericson**

Art and Music Librarian, Colby College

**Janette Blackburn**

Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbott



Schwartz, Laura. "The Fine Arts Library Renovation Project: The Secrets of Success." Austin : University of Texas at Austin, Fine Arts Library, 2007. Power Point presentation, April 27, 2007

# Bixler Art and Music Library, Colby College (designed 1991)



Photo: Margaret Ericson. c2008.

*We seek to build an "information commons" for openly sharing ideas.*

*To create commonality demands allowing for possibilities and letting in what is new, what is other.*

*The universal is open, not closed; unfinished, not fixed.*

*And the universal is inclusive; its emphasis is on what unites us rather than what sets us apart.*

Lupton, Ellen and Julia Lupton. "All Together Now." *Print*. 61:1 (January/February 2007), 28-30.

Ellen Lupton is Director of the Graphic Design MFA program at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore.

- **Information Commons 2.0**

- Exists in common physical and virtual space
- Collaborative model, partnerships between e.g.
  - Information Technology
  - Library
  - Faculty
  - Writing/Teaching Centers
  - Multimedia Technology
- Supports and also engages students in the learning process.
- Promotes self-directed and collaborative learning
- Promotes information access to physical and digital collections
- Promotes information creation: state of the art multimedia technologies, with client services and training.

# Margaret's Site Visits / Year Built

- Tufts University, Lilly Music Library (2007)
- University of Texas Austin, Doty Fine Arts Library (Art, Music, Theater) (2006)
- Binghamton University: 2 Information Commons (Main Library and Science Library) (2006-7)
- Cornell University, Sidney Cox Music Library (2001)



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- Human Centered Design
- Open concept
- Freedom of movement
- Comfort
- Unique visual features
- Design encourages learning
- Design fosters collaboration & sharing: between students, faculty, librarians
- Knowledge creation
  - Production
  - Media hardware and software to create a product
  - Practicality
  - Not limited to use of net resources
- Collaborative service model: IT and Library Staff expertise are available providing tutoring or “consulting” services



Doty Fine Arts Library, University of Texas, Austin  
Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- **Human / Learning Centered:**
- Making user data the centerpiece of redesigning technologies and spaces.
  - Assessment
  - Focus Groups
  - Surveys: Students and Faculty
  - Observational data
- Reflecting user learning needs and habits in furniture and spaces for learning



Entrance, Binghamton University Libraries  
Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Preparation: Assessment Plan of the UT Austin Fine Arts Library

Partnered with Institutional  
Research

Focus Groups

Counts

Observation

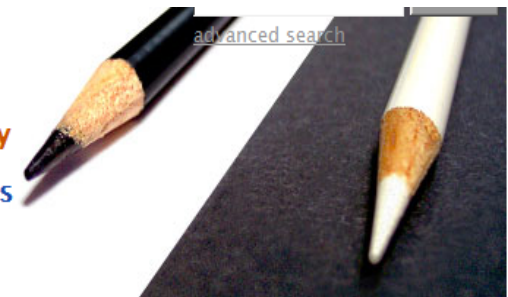
Survey of Students

Survey of Faculty

<http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/programs/plan/examples/examples-libPlan.php>



Assess students  
Assess teaching  
Assess technology  
Evaluate programs  
Conduct research



## EVALUATE PROGRAMS

### Example plan: UT Austin Fine Arts Library

#### Project purpose

The purpose of evaluating the use patterns of the Fine Arts Library (FAL) is to:

- Determine how current patrons use the FAL.
- Determine the library needs of students, faculty and staff in the College of Fine Arts (CFA).
- Develop ideas for improving the FAL facility, equipment, and services.
- Develop ideas for making the FAL facility more attractive to patrons.

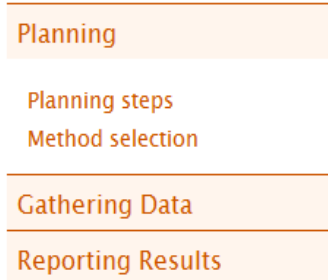
#### Project uses

The results of this project will be used to make changes to FAL facilities, equipment and services to better serve the needs of CFA students, faculty, and staff.

#### Project components

The study includes the following components:

- Conducting two **focus groups** with one group composed of undergraduate students and the other composed of graduate students.
- Conduct **systematic counts** of patrons in various areas of the FAL at regular intervals for two weeks.
- Conduct **ethnographic observations** of the FAL and its patrons using data forms, still photography and video.
- Administer a **survey of current patrons** to document whom currently uses the FAL, how they use it, and obtain feedback on potential new uses.
- Administer a **Faculty/Staff Survey** to document how Fine Arts faculty and staff currently use the FAL and obtain feedback on potential new uses.



# MIT's Lewis Music Library: Opened in October 1996 / reflects the early commons aesthetic

Lewis Music Library at MIT

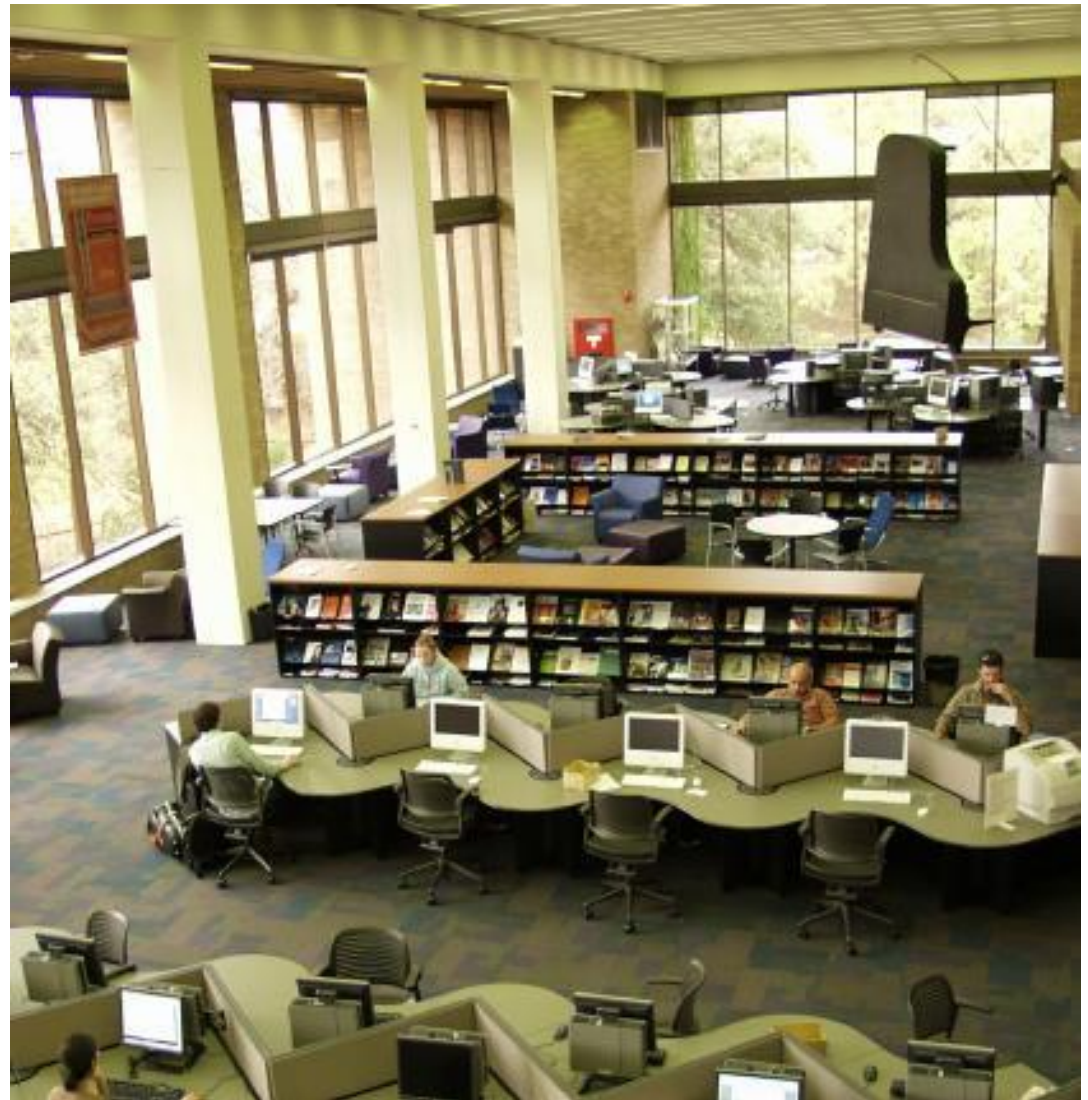
\*\* *start tour* \*\*

## ◀ 4. First Floor and Mezzanine ▶



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Open concept***
  - Unconfined nature of space



University of Texas Fine Arts Library, Main Floor, 2006



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Open concept***
  - Unconfined nature of space
  - Use of glass or transparent materials to create sound buffers, or create private spaces



Binghamton University Information Commons Entrance

Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008.

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Open concept***
  - Unconfined nature of space
  - Use of glass or transparent materials to create sound buffers
  - Modular furniture which also creates private space

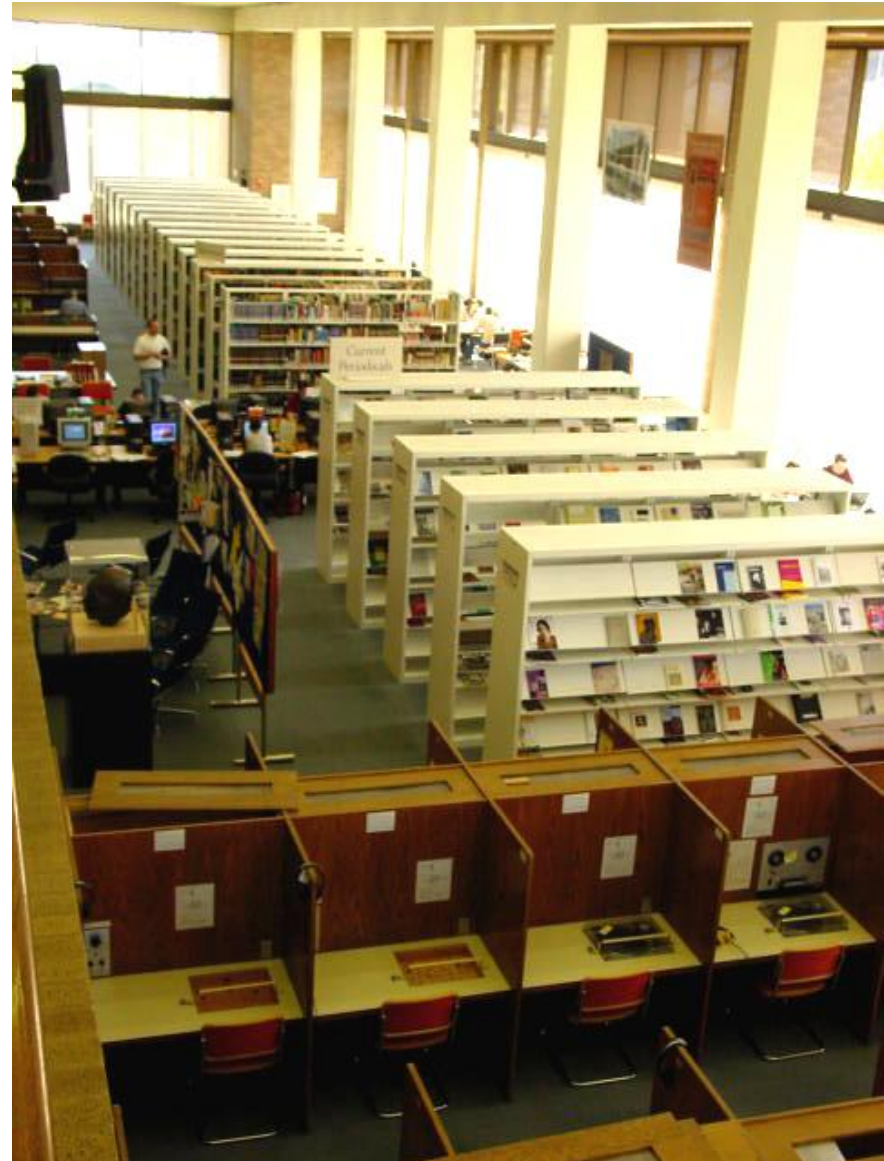


Binghamton University Information Commons.  
Hermann Miller Pods. Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Open concept***
  - Unconfined nature of space
  - Use of glass or transparent materials to create sound buffers
  - Modular furniture which also creates private space
  - Reduced collection space
    - Compact shelving
    - Weeding



BEFORE: UT Austin Fine Arts Library

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Open concept***
  - Unconfined nature of space
  - Use of glass or transparent materials to create sound buffers
  - Modular furniture which also creates private space
  - Reduce collection space
    - Compact shelving
    - Weeding



AFTER : UT Austin Fine Arts Library

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Freedom***
  - Flexible / Movable furniture
  - Untethered access to info: Wireless. Are there enough outlets for wireless laptop users?
  - Have portable devices available for checkout



University of Texas Fine Arts Library: Power strip installed around entire perimeter of building, with movable tables and chairs.  
Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Freedom***
  - Flexible / Movable furniture
  - Untethered access to info: Wireless. Are there enough outlets for wireless laptop users?
  - Have portable devices available for checkout



Lilly Music Library, Tufts University.  
Mobile AV equipment unit for various types of playback sit under most of the 22 custom built workstations . Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Comfort***
  - Design for a variety of learning styles
  - Have different types of furniture



Tufts University, Lilly Music Library, 2007. Photo Margaret Ericson, c2008.



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Unique Visual Features***
  - Signage
  - Branding
  - Unique Artwork
  - Furniture
  - Displays



Fine Arts Library, University of Texas, Austin.  
Media clusters kiosk signage, 16 workstations.

Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Signage: Binghamton University Information Commons. Map to available computers on campus in library and online.

Safari File Edit View History Bookmarks Window Help  
Bartle Library Info Commons Computer Usage  
Fri 11:23 AM

## Information Commons

### Need to find a computer?

Instead of walking around the Info Commons to look for an available computer, just check the map on the left before you go on your journey.

Grey computers are available.  
Blue computers are in use.  
Red computers are offline.  
Computers that are out-of-order have the yellow caution sign.

*This is a live map showing computer usage in real time.*

For Live Maps of our other Pods please visit:  
<http://pods.binghamton.edu/livemaps.htm>

Cluster 1  
Cluster 2  
Cluster 3  
Cluster 4  
Cluster 5  
Cluster 6  
Printers

Emergency Exit  
Color Printer  
Service Desk  
Express Printing  
Group Study/Presentation Practice Room  
BLICS Printer

\* **YOU ARE HERE**

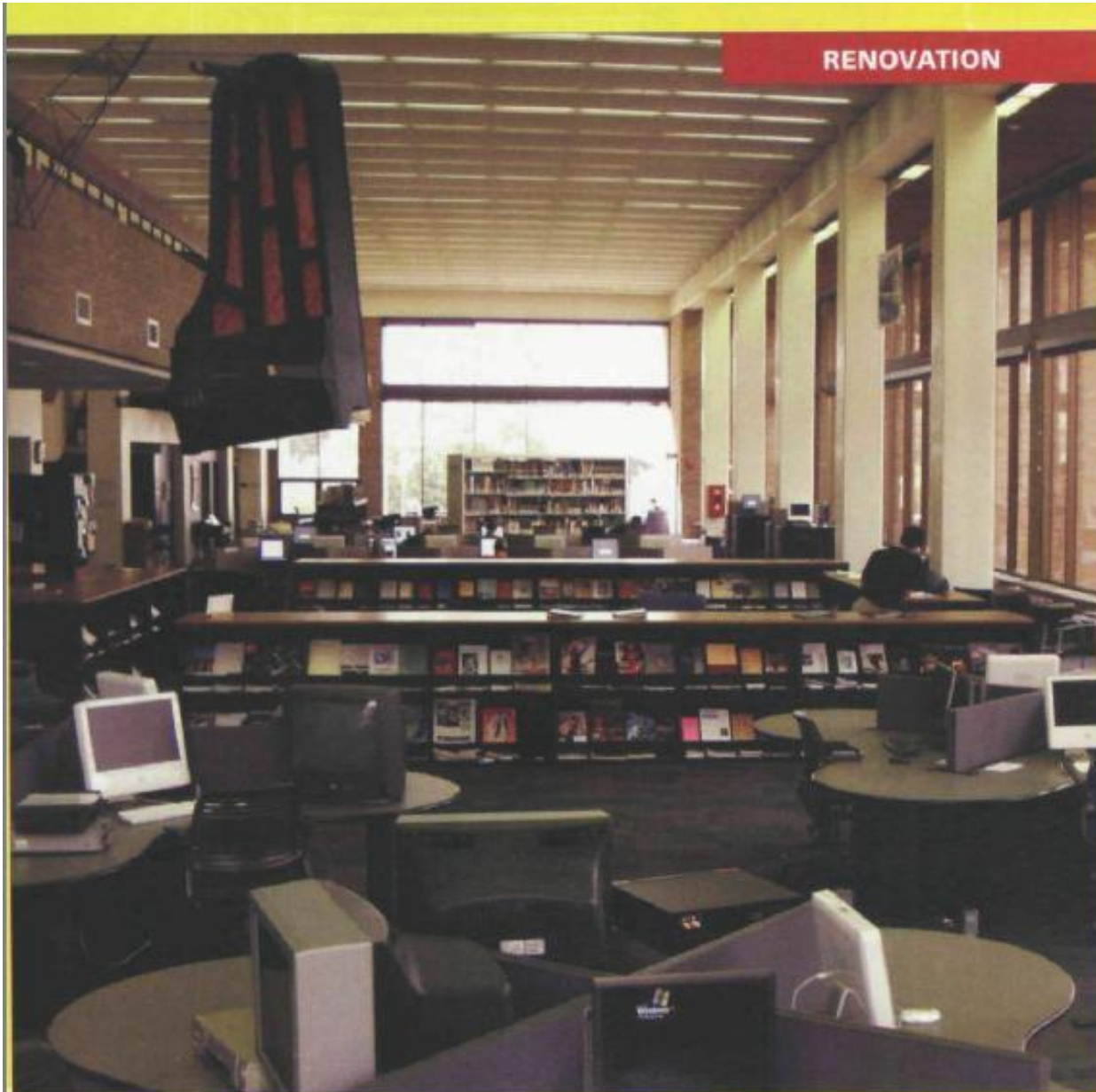
Total computers: 163 Available: 13 Offline: 1 In Use: 149 Computer has an open trouble ticket

Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Branding: American Libraries, Annual Facilities Issue, April 2006.

## “Hanging Piano” at UT Austin, Fine Arts Library



### **University of Texas Fine Arts Library Austin, Texas**

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ARCHITECTURAL  
AND ENGINEERING SERVICES  
[WWW.UTEXAS.EDU/PHYSICALPLANT/AE/](http://WWW.UTEXAS.EDU/PHYSICALPLANT/AE/)

Size: 12,000 sq. ft.  
Cost: \$300,000

The University of Texas's Fine Arts Library was transformed into a cutting-edge integrated learning and research center by adding new computing and multimedia technology, streamlining print reference collections, and generating visual interest through the display of student art and that of guest artists, along with a grand piano suspended overhead.

PHOTO BY CHARLENE ZVOLANEK

# Furniture: Binghamton University Main Library Information Commons: Hermann Miller “dogbones”



Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Lilly Music Library, Tufts University.

Basement Level, however.....

Beautifully lit, open feel, nicely appointed with artwork, views of green space.





# Space/Design Precepts of Information

## • ***Knowledge Creation***

- Arts users need the ability to create music or art or a project from start to finish in one location
- Need software to do this
- Peripherals: scanners, printers, audio/video devices, headphones, midi keyboards, etc.

## Commons



Sidney Cox Music Library, Cornell University: Music Computer lab / classroom with full suite of music creation software, large monitors, and midi keyboards. Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Space/Design Precepts of Information

## Commons

- ***Collaborative Services***
  - IT and Library “consultants” within the library
  - Services need to facilitate the practical needs of students and faculty
  - Both UT and Binghamton U. have IT staff and Library staff together in the library to provide tech and research help



Fine Arts Library, University of Texas, Austin. IT help situated by the computer clusters. Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008



# Space/Design Precepts of Information

## Commons

### • **Collaborative Services**

- IT and Library “consultants” together at the same desk or area in the library
- Services facilitate the practical needs of students and faculty
- At B.U. IT staff hired by IT, Library staff hired by Library. Extensive service training for IT staff provided by the library.



Binghamton University: Left, a Library Graduate Reference Assistant. Right, a Graduate Student Information Technology Consultant. Both at a shared service desk. Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Learning Spaces***

- Varied
- Collaborative
- Open for use by all
- Social & Individual
- Formal & Informal

## Collaborative Learning Commons

### Project Page

D. Hiden Ramsey Library, UNC Asheville | Last revised 2/3/09

*"A collaboratory for undergraduate research and learning"*



The Collaborative Learning Commons (CLC), currently being developed at UNC Asheville's Ramsey Library, brings together a variety of elements to foster student exploration and inquiry in new and creative ways. It is not a static computer lab. Rather, it incorporates the freedom of wireless communication, flexible workspace clusters that promote interaction and collaboration, and comfortable furnishings, art, and design to make users feel relaxed, encourage creativity, and support peer-learning. To this, add some specialized software, audio-video capabilities, self-help graphics services, color imaging, and production/presentation software catered to student learning and needs and it becomes a one-stop collaboratory for out-of-class assignments, writing, research, and group projects.

Sinclair, Bryan. Library Space Planning Project Page. D. Hiden Ramsey Library, UNC Asheville. <http://facstaff.unca.edu/sinclair/spaceplan/clc.html>

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Learning Spaces***
  - Varied
  - Collaborative
  - Open for use by all
  - Social & Individual
  - Formal & Informal



D. Hiden Ramsey Library. UNC Asheville. "Evolving Learning Commons Slide Show." Picasa Web Album.  
<http://picasaweb.google.com/sinclair.bryan/RamseyLibraryTheEvolvingLearningCommons#>



# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Learning Spaces***
  - Varied
  - Collaborative
  - Open for use by all
  - Social & Individual
  - Formal & Informal



Sidney Cox Music & Dance Library, Cornell University.  
Seminar Room. Photo: Margaret Ericson, c2008

# Space/Design Precepts of Information Commons

- ***Learning Spaces***
  - Varied
  - Collaborative
  - Open for use by all
  - Social & Individual
  - Formal & Informal



Fine Arts Library, University of Texas, Austin

# Lessons Learned

## Designing New Music / Arts Library Spaces



- No one “way”, prescribed model
- Prescriptive ideas out of date as technology and students’ habits change
- Music in central library, arts branches (with theater, media, dance, art), music branches, music w/ integrated media centers
- Assessment is crucial
- What modes of learning and study are unique to music/arts users?
- What can we identify as common features based on assumption of constant change?
- What features might distinguish a music / arts information commons given our “community” of users?

Photo:  
<http://www.forgotten-ny.com/SLICES/signs/signs.html>.



# Who We Are

1874 H H Richardson



Shepley Bulfinch 2009



# Our Collaborative Environment



Shepley Bulfinch Design Studio - Boston



# Expanding Breadth and Complexity

Where We Have Been....

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# Expanding Breadth and Complexity

....and Where We Are Headed...

*“Building an intellectual community and a series of interrelated places”*



# Services for Learning and Instruction

## Library Trends

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### Key Opportunities

- Library as Place ◀
- Library without walls ◀
- Information Literacy in the College ◀
- Curriculum ◀
- Instructional spaces in the Library ◀

### Variety and Engagement

- Active and Quiet ◀
- Collaborative ◀
- Events and Outreach ◀
- Focused Research ◀
- Informal Learning ◀



# New Tools and Synergies

## Library Trends



### Key Opportunities

- Portability/ Plug and Play ◀
- Desktops and Laptops ◀
- Output-intensive Activities ◀
- Immersive/ Virtual Learning Tools ◀
- Instructional spaces in the Library ◀

### Faculty / Library / IT Partnerships

- Digitization projects ◀
- Teaching in the library ◀
- Curriculum development ◀
- Collaborative work areas ◀
- Accessible staff ◀



# The Changing Face of Collections

## Library Trends



### Key Opportunities

- Varying modes of access ◀
- “Browse-able” or not ◀
- Automated Retrieval Systems ◀
- Print “On Demand” ◀
- Digitization ◀
- Consortiums ◀

### Focus on Special Collections

- Instruction ◀
- Outreach ◀

# New Strategies for Workspaces

## Access and Action

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- **Cross Training/ Evolving Skill Sets**
- **Blurring of Traditional Roles: Public and Technical Services**
- **Outsourcing/ Simplification of Materials Handling/ RFID**
- **Flexible Space**
- **Collaborative Space**
- **Visible/ Accessible**





# Columbia University (before)

Teachers College | New York, NY

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# Columbia University (after)

Teachers College | New York, NY



# Rice University (before)

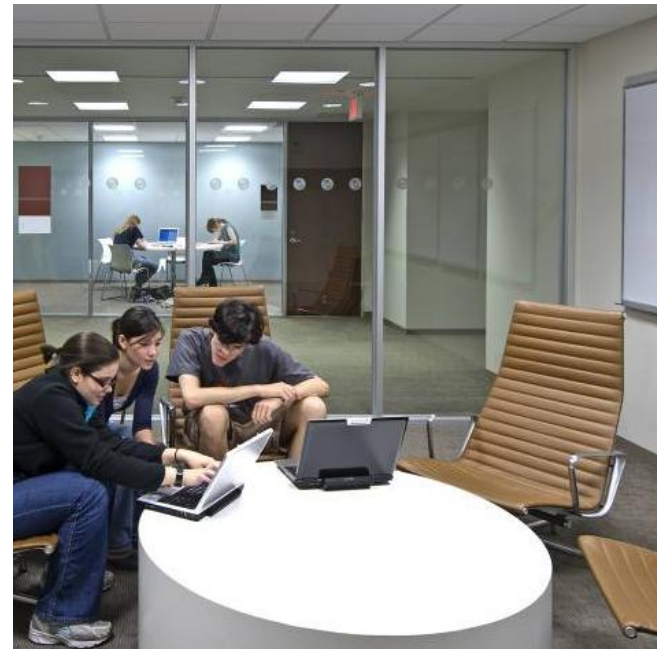
Fondren Library | Houston, Texas





# Rice University (after)

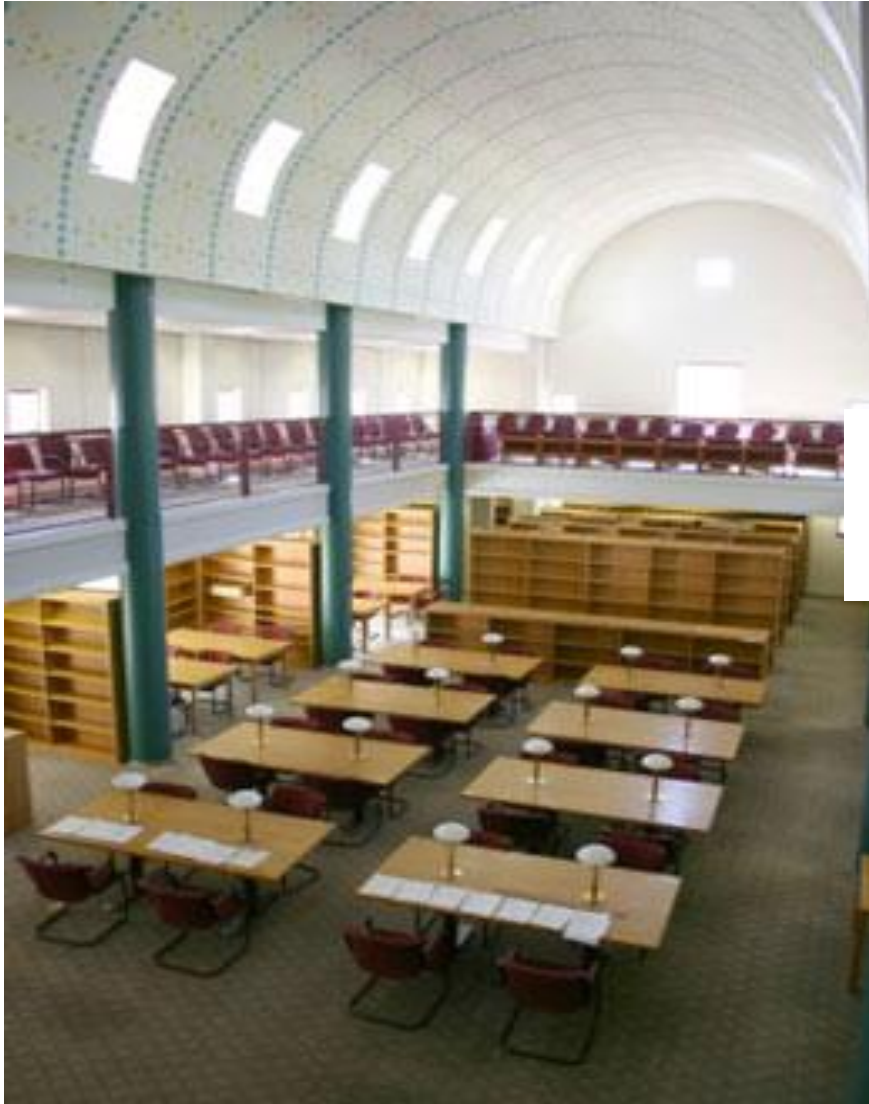
Fondren Library | Houston, Texas



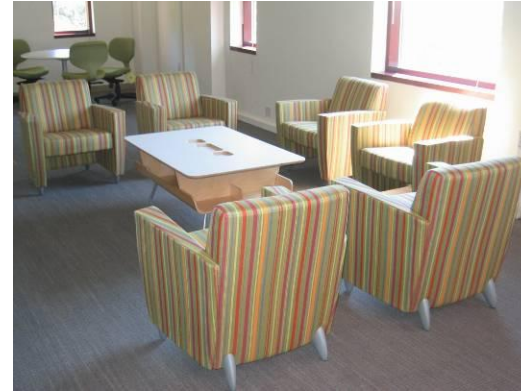


# Rice University

Electronic Resource Center



**Before**



**After**

# What about your Library?





# Special Needs of Music Libraries

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Sound and Film Collections

Books and Scores

Multiple Formats

Specialized Equipment and Software

Acoustical Control

Access to Power and Data

Rapid Pace of Change

Creating and Rehearsing





# Create Your Own Commons...

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Service Points

Flexibility and Functionality

Library and IT Partnerships

Specialized Equipment

Range of Environments

Instructional Spaces

Workspace

(listening, viewing, creating, researching,  
studying, collaborating...)

# Service Points

- Consolidation
- Consultation
- Approachability
- Changeability





# Flexibility and Functionality

- Reconfigurable
- Multi-functional
- Wireless Data
- Ubiquitous Power
- Glare-Free Lighting
- Sound Control/  
Acoustics





# Flexibility and Functionality

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# Flexibility and Functionality

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# Flexibility and Functionality





# Library and IT Partnerships

Link; Teaching and Learning Center | Duke University





# Specialized Equipment

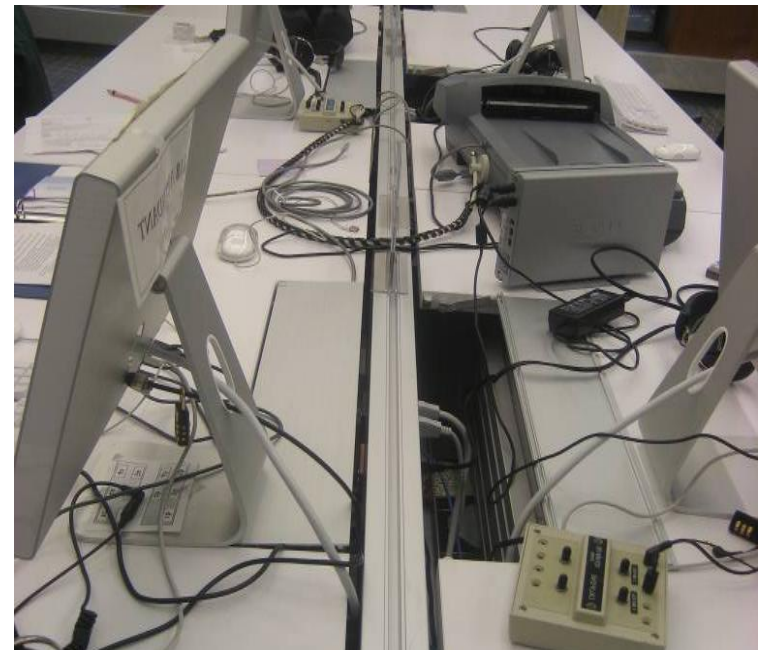




# Specialized Equipment

David B. Weigle Information Commons | University of Pennsylvania

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# Range of Environments

Link – Teaching and Learning Center – Duke University





# Range of Environments

Create, Rehearse, Perform



# Instructional Spaces

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- Flexible Configuration
- Evolving Technology
- Access to Primary Sources





# Work Spaces

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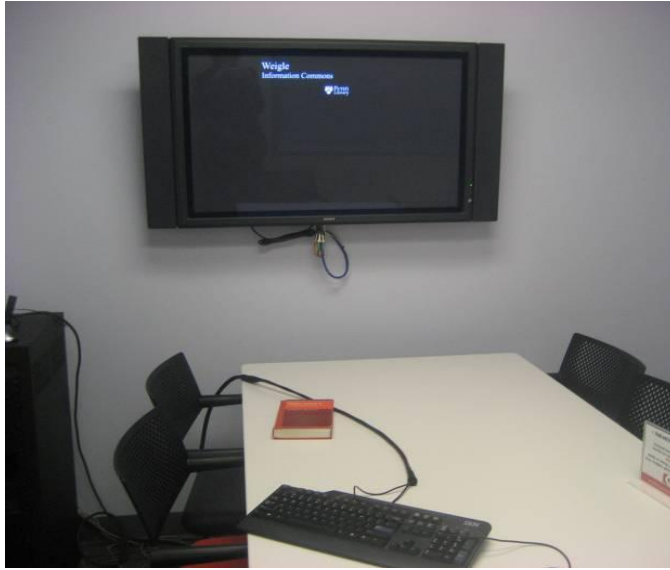
- Individual/Collaborative
- Proximity to Help
- Access and Visibility
- Multi-Use / Multi-Media
- Acoustical Control
- Evolving Technology



# Informal Learning and Collaboration

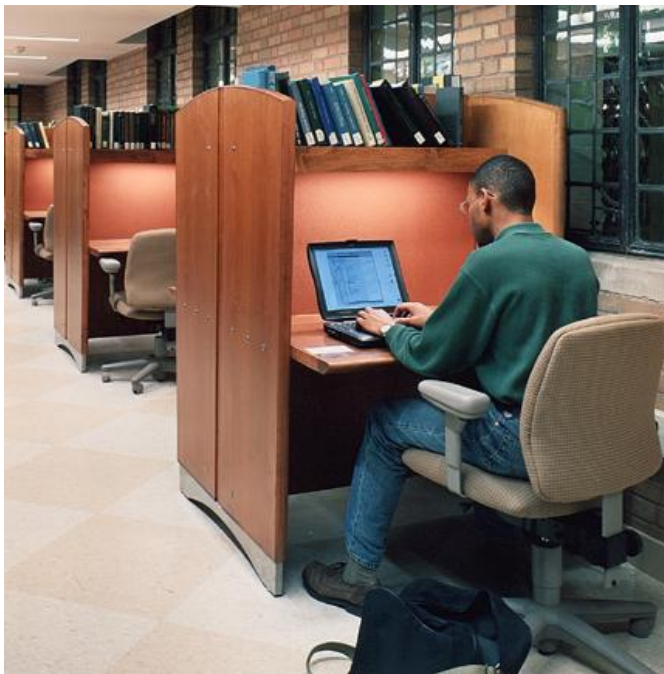
Cox Computing Center | Emory University

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# Focused Research





# Comfort and Variety

