Shaping our space and organization: New design for the academic library

Crit Stuart, March 29, 2007

ACRL 13th National Conference, Baltimore
Georgia Tech Library in 2002 . . .
“big change” or die
The Library tests concepts of a proposed undergraduate learning center.

“Can the Library contribute to student retention by facilitating learning & success?”
Colleges and universities seldom provide compelling learning spaces to sustain students through complex cycles of study, reflection, absorption, academic socializing, creativity and productivity.
GT students kept telling us:

“I prefer to be in the Library to study and be productive, but you haven’t got it right.”

(summary findings of Steelcase Advanced Learning Laboratory week-long *deep dig* at Georgia Tech)
Experiment # 1: *West Commons*

“Install a learning commons in the Library in partnership with OIT. Strive for a genuine collaboration. Provide both technology and information assistance. Treat it as an experiment.”

Rich Meyer, Dean & Director of Libraries, Fall 2001
Never-ending questions for Library & OIT:

“What are student learning needs?”

“Why do students fail?”

“What technology & services benefit students?”

“Who are our logical partners?”
West Commons *prior to renovation*
West Commons floor plan
General productivity / Multimedia studio
West Commons: General Productivity
West Commons: General Productivity (opens fall 2002)
West Commons: General Productivity area at night
West Commons: **Multimedia Studio**
West Commons: *Multimedia Studio*
“Expert help 16 hours during most days”
West Commons: *Multimedia Studio*
“Environment refreshed each semester”
West Commons: *Presentation Rehearsal Studio* . . .
spawning others on campus
Collaborations with outstanding faculty

- showcase brilliance
- influence students’ curricular choices
- celebrate research
- down with silos!
Counseling Center uses nearby meeting rooms

- monthly seminars
  - study habits
  - anger management
  - stress management

- marketed by Library

- expanded this fall
Library Student Advisory Council

Students approach us in late 2004 to become involved. They like the West Commons and offer to help their “progressive library”. The Student Council is created.

- student leaders
- advocate for us
- keep us “honest”
- help develop programs & launch initiatives
Library Student Advisory Council

mission statement

Undergraduates are the preponderant users of Library spaces. They, along with graduate students, must engage in a sustained dialogue with the Library and its partners to assist with the creation of superior learning environments.

The primary focus for this Council is to assist with the evolution and renovation of Library spaces to facilitate student learning and productivity, and to revitalize "Library as indispensable place" for student success.
Library & Partners Student Advisory Council initiatives (March 2005 – December 2006)

• improve fiction collection
• influence Technology Fee, student government, etc.
• launch a “freshman book” experience
• Assist with programming the East Commons
• Library and OIT conduct focus groups w/ students and faculty.

• Desire heterogeneous, “edgy” environment.

• Findings vetted thru:
  – Student Advisory Council
  – student “town meetings”
  – student newspaper
  – campus and non-campus experts.
Experiment # 2: East Commons
Theme: refreshment for mind and body

- accommodate group work and study
- surprise the mind; nourish the body
- celebrate GT creativity and research
- bring students and faculty together in an easily manipulated series of spaces
East Commons learning spaces are . . .

• active & quiet zones
• neutral ground
• for hanging out with friends & mentors
• 24 / 7
• comfortable & pleasing
East Commons provides *refreshment for mind and body.*

- good food & drink
- easy customization
- stimulation & inspiration
- celebration of research and art
- erasure of silos
East Commons site
(prior to renovation)

Low usage
East Commons heterogeneous floor plan
Convia® infrastructure . . .
selected for exceptional versatility

• ceiling-mounted track delivers power and data
• lights configured by staff
• impromptu installation of appliances
• moveable walls divide space
• space changes with insight
East Commons refreshment for body
East Commons refreshment for mind
East Commons group computing
East Commons group study & relaxation
East Commons *new face to Circulation*
Unsolicited reaction from students:

- **Student newspaper:**
  “Planners should follow the Library’s example.”

- **Student leaders**
  “... the Library is the best example of an organization that believes in the value of incorporating student input.”

- **Student Advisory Council**
  “... a ‘Cinderella Story’ that catches one by surprise.”
Since opening the East Commons on August 19, 2006...

• Faculty select the East Commons as a laboratory for human observation:
  (College of Architecture; Honors Program)

• Students select the East Commons for projects:
  – “Redefining study habits: the Library East Commons”
  http://librarycommons.gatech.edu/about/docs/erica_hocking_reflects.pdf
  – Student documentary: “An Experiment in Modern Knowledge Spaces: the Library East Commons”
  http://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/13665
Domesticating the Library
(Not just a place for “suffering”!)

For the Library to be an essential destination for student productivity and academic success, students’ experiences must encompass more than “blood, sweat and tears”. Students tell us their cycle of learning is composed of hard work and concentration, interspersed with relaxation & fun breaks . . . “recess”! One way for students to feel at home in the Library is to have the occasional party. We welcome freshmen with a party.
Portraying the flip side of hard work . . . FUN!
Library Welcome CeLIBration
Saturday August 19 7-11pm

Free Pizza
Speed Dating
Music
DramaTech
Movies Games
Dance Dance Revolution

Georgia Tech Flyer
RATS Week CeLIBration!

Check out the GT Library's CeLIBration this Saturday 7-11pm including: DDR, Games, Ninja Tag, Live music, Improv, Food, Speed Dating, Films, and more! Click here to see all groups and all events.
# CeLIBration - marketing

![Facebook Event Page](image)

**Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Info</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Board Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagline:</td>
<td>Show off your mad scrabble or risk skill... or taboo or cranium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host:</td>
<td>RATS Week CeLIBration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>Sports - Pick-Up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time and Place**

| Date:       | Saturday, August 19, 2006 |
| Time:       | 7:00pm - 10:00pm |
| Venue:      | Georgia Tech Libraries - 1st Floor East |
| City:       | Atlanta |

**Description**

We provide the games, you provide the warm bodies. Use twister to get to know the opposite sex :)

Current list of games includes:
- Cranium
- Risk 2210 AD
- Scrabble
- Twister
- Yahtzee
- Monopoly
- Sorry
- Trivial Pursuit

Bring your own games too! We'd love to see Settlers of Catan, Operation, Card games, or other non computer games (check out our DDR or retro gaming through our group link if you're interested in electronic games)

**Other Information**

- Guests are allowed to bring friends to this event.

**Other Invites**

- 

---

*Note: The image above is a screenshot of a Facebook event page for the CeLIBration event.*
CeLIBration – Dance Dance Revolution
CeLIBration – Improv Comedy
CeLIBration – Ninja Tag
CeLIBration – Speed Dating
CeLIBration – classic board games
CeLIBration – pizza, popcorn, drinks
The Ubiquitous Librarian

For details about how GT Library hosted the celebration event (and much more!), see various entries in Brian Mathews’ blog.

http://theubiquitouslibrarian.typepad.com
GT Library guiding principles related to space & place

user-informed programming & services

logical partnerships

re-engineered positions

“experiment, assess, reflect, adjust”

24-hour environment

flexible & adaptable

showcase and inspire
A learning space of one’s own.
By mid-May 2007, the GT Library will provide a store of information generated over the past four years recounting experiments with “library as place”. A sampling of documents is listed here: http://librarycommons.gatech.edu/about/documents.php

- Library Commons Memo of Understanding
- Library Student Advisory Council Mission & Charge
- Affinity Focus Group Exercise
- East Commons Focus Group Findings - March 2005
- East Commons Questionnaire and Feedback
- West Commons Project Closeout Report
- West Commons 1st Year Report Card
- Herman Miller Case Study
- Freshman Reflects on East Commons

To arrange a visit to GT Library, contact Bob.Fox@library.gatech.edu