



SPEC Kit 342

Next-Gen Learning Spaces
September 2014

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ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES®

Series Editor: Lee Anne George

SPEC Kits are published by the

Association of Research Libraries

21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036-1118

P (202) 296-2296 F (202) 872-0884

<http://www.arl.org/publications-resources>
pubs@arl.org

ISSN 0160 3582

ISBN 1-59407-925-0 / 978-1-59407-925-2 print

ISBN 1-59407-926-9 / 978-1-59407-926-9 online

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SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Our research focuses on how libraries today are utilizing their learning spaces and what activities define these spaces. By looking at the evolution and development of library learning spaces over time, we hope to identify important trends within libraries that are acting as catalysts for civic and academic engagement. This survey looks at current and future trends in Next-Gen library learning spaces and then breaks this general concept down further into the instruction, programming, and collaborative endeavors within these spaces and ultimately, the means of assessment for these spaces. This survey was distributed to the 125 ARL member libraries in April 2014. Seventy-two libraries (58%) responded by the May 14 deadline. The survey findings reflect how academic libraries are adapting to the changing educational landscape and where libraries fit within the academic ecosystem.

Current Climate and Trends

Based on the survey data, dedicated learning spaces within research libraries can range from 5% of the total library square footage to nearly 80%. With the average learning space footprint in the responding libraries close to 30% of total library space, it's no wonder they are constantly rethinking how these spaces should be utilized, managed, promoted, and assessed. Space for physical collections is on the decline and is being replaced with studios, labs, innovative classrooms, serendipitous communities, and interactive scholarly environments through which librarians are finding opportunities to contribute in new ways to higher education.

Trends in the findings from the 72 responding institutions indicate learning spaces in libraries are

evolving from open and self-directed spaces to guided spaces. This is not to say all space for independent study is being eliminated, but survey data indicates the way libraries program learning spaces is being restructured to guide users through the learning life cycle from start to finish.

Types of Learning Spaces

Over 88% of respondents reported the current use of events space, exhibit space, classrooms with fixed stations, and various open study spaces within their libraries. These more commonly used spaces are now making way for new, tailored labs and specialized educational environments. Some of the newer, yet less common, learning spaces now in use are visualization labs (9 responses, or 13%), makerspaces (13%), faculty commons (8, or 11%), gaming labs (6, or 8%), and hackerspaces (1%). These spaces often foster external collaborations with community and campus entities, inviting the creation of new labs, centers, instruction, programs, or events. For example, visualization labs simultaneously act as an educational tool and a showcase for academic research and student work, thus becoming a Next-Gen exhibit hall. Makerspaces can give all students, regardless of academic discipline or focus, the opportunity to work in an area such as a technology sandbox, a creative artistic studio, or a tactile learning environment. Additionally, tailored learning spaces often give libraries a way to address accessibility and special needs issues. In all of these learning spaces and examples, librarians have the opportunity to interact with users through much of the learning life cycle while contributing specialized expertise.

All but one of the respondents stated that the physical configuration of their library has changed over

time. The survey asked what the drivers or motivating factors were for these spatial changes, and 58 (83%) responded that feedback, both internal and external to the library, factored into the decision-making process for library reconfiguration. A funding opportunity was cited by 41 of the libraries (59%) as a reason for physical changes. It's also important to note that several institutions indicated their organizational structure factored heavily into these decisions. For example, libraries with multiple branches may approach the physical changes of each branch location differently and for varying reasons.

When asking for examples of what libraries consider Next-Gen learning activities, it may not be surprising to hear the most commonly used descriptive term in our responses was *collaboration* or a variation of such (25 times). Librarians are natural “connectors” between users and the information or resources they need. Librarians are also good at connecting people from diverse disciplines and working collaboratively with them. Collaboration is at the center of Next-Gen learning spaces, and collaborative spaces come in many forms, not just high-energy activity centered space, but also quiet space for users to reflect, research, and share ideas and information. Next-Gen space goes beyond “renting out library space” to campus organizations or users. Through Next-Gen spaces, the library is a full partner in the creation and use of the space. Librarians help create the content, introduce new technologies, and design new instructional methods or programs. From Multimedia Design Centers and specialized classrooms to Digital Scholarship centers, librarians are finding ways to enhance their users’ experience through the library and partner with academic researchers. These spaces encourage cross-disciplinary activities and are designed with new pedagogies in mind. Librarians can also help with the development and preservation of scholarly output.

Services, Staff, Collections, and Transactions

Next-Gen learning spaces are not only enhancing the users’ experience, but they are also encouraging professional growth in librarianship. New positions are being created and librarians are experiencing changing responsibilities. Survey results indicate that 86%

of the respondents have added services as a result of development in learning spaces. The data also indicates librarians are learning new skills and adapting to new roles in these learning spaces. Traditional reference services are often being restructured, combined, or in some cases eliminated, while librarians specialize in new research technologies. Examples of new services include developing visualization services in a Digital Scholarship Lab, hosting technology & research-centered conferences, teaching 3D modeling, or integrating with academic writing centers.

Learning spaces and collections are directly connected. In many cases, the new services and programs in learning spaces have resulted in significant changes to traditional library collections. Approximately 89% of 70 survey respondents stated their collection was moved within the library as a result of learning space development, 71% reported their collection was moved to an off-site facility as a result of changes in learning spaces, 86% weeded their collection, 57% were influenced to make some transition from print to electronic resources, and 21% began collecting in new areas as a result of their learning spaces. Some libraries indicated that the changes in collections were also influencing decisions related to the discovery mechanisms for their library resources.

In general, it seems library traffic and transactions have increased as a result of learning spaces. Survey data reflects that 75% of the responding libraries (53 of 71) experienced an increase in library gate counts and 35% experienced an increase in web traffic related to learning spaces. Of these respondents, however, most indicated that circulation transactions were about the same (19) or had decreased (16), and reference transactions had decreased (19) or also stayed about the same (18). Most respondents stated that library hours had increased. Linking causality between learning spaces and traffic/transactions may be difficult in some cases since data collection methods for some institutions changed over time or had not been collected long enough for consistent measurable results. Additionally, it was interesting to note that while reference transactions appeared to be decreasing, some institutions indicated that related services such as e-resources and library instruction requests were increasing substantially.

As we move well into the digital age, resources that libraries are responsible for are defined now not only as simple print collections, but also as a collection of services and programming. Librarians are curators of collaboration, partners in specialized research, and innovators in pedagogy and instruction. How we organize and deliver these Next-Gen resources will strongly influence the future of libraries and librarianship.

Library Instruction

As learning spaces evolve and new programs develop, accompanying instructional methods and educational partnerships are growing rapidly. New pedagogies are being developed for these innovative spaces. These library learning spaces provide an appropriate venue for testing new educational technologies as well.

At 68 of the responding libraries, the most commonly reported technologies in the classroom are microphone and voice projection tools (85%), screen sharing software (65%), document cameras (60%), recording and broadcasting technologies (60%), clickers (57%), and SMART Boards (52%). Also mentioned were mobile technologies, media:scape units, 3D printers, video conferencing technology, and specialized software.

There are many types of library instruction; most respondents stated that classrooms with fixed technology are where most of their classes are held. Sixty-four of the 70 responding libraries hold *formal instruction* in classrooms with fixed computers, 51 indicated that traditional classrooms with no technology are used for formal instruction, and 27 respondents indicated they use event space for formal classes. The survey data indicates that *informal instruction* takes place mainly in open computer labs (30) or multimedia labs with specialized software (28). Open group study spaces (20) and exhibit spaces (18) are also used for informal instruction. In many cases, it appears that respondents use spaces for a blend of both purposes.

Most of the 71 responding libraries indicated that software training is the most commonly provided *walk-in instruction* (49). Other frequent walk-in offerings include research skills (46) and information literacy instruction (42). Less frequently offered are design principles (14) and design practice (8). This trend

is similar for the type and number of *pre-registered library classes*.

Information literacy (68) and research skills (61) were the most commonly reported *course-integrated instruction*, followed by software training (29). Again, design principles (9) and practice (5) are not offered widely.

In general, library *for-credit classes* are not offered widely across the board, but for those libraries that do, information literacy (17) and research skills (14) are the most commonly offered, followed by presentation skills (4).

Recognition of library class session completion is not currently widespread. Survey results indicated that the majority of respondents (55, or 77%) have nothing in place that certifies class or series completion for the students. Of the 23% that do have something in place, in most cases this is a certificate of some kind.

Instruction in libraries is primarily delivered by librarians (69), archivists (55), and other library staff (54). Campus partners also provide instruction at 46 libraries.

Instruction in libraries is growing and rapidly becoming a vehicle for collaboration and outreach with library users. Instruction is one of the ways libraries continue to stay relevant on academic campuses. New instructional programs present opportunities to experiment with the curriculum and new methods of content delivery. Librarians are equal partners in course development with campus and community. The survey findings reflect how library instruction is becoming more formalized; librarians are finding ways to go beyond one-shot optional classes and offer a wide variety of instructional programs that are packaged as a series, integrated into academic courses, or tailored for specialized needs. Some libraries are finding ways to offer for-credit classes and certificates. Although less commonly offered through libraries at present, topics related to design principles and practice is one of the newer concepts being explored. Traditionally, libraries have only stayed within certain boundaries of instruction. However, these findings show that library instruction includes not only teaching users how to use virtual tools such as databases and software, but also encouraging users to

go beyond the virtual and realize their ideas through hands-on training, building, and tactile learning. Finally, librarians are encouraging students to think about the life cycle of their research, from the conception of an idea through collaboration or individual study, to presentation and publication of original content. Libraries are also offering students the opportunity to learn important presentation skills in order to communicate their ideas to the academic community.

Programming

Next-Gen learning spaces are platforms for many types of programming that can enhance learning, inspire patrons, and create social or academic connections. Programming and instruction overlap, including events presenting coursework and library classrooms hosting events. The Next-Gen learning space can accommodate many modes of scholarly communication and instruction while also creating an open, social atmosphere.

Almost all of the libraries responding to the survey indicated they held lectures (97%) and exhibits (93%) in their spaces, along with presentations of student work (89%), workshops (89%), social and networking events (87%), and author talks (85%). Every type of learning space identified in this survey was a programming space in at least one responding library, including quiet study space (28 of 69 responses) and classrooms with fixed computers (49 of 68 responses).

Of the 70 libraries that identified who develops or provides programming, 69 rely on librarians, 62 involve other library staff, and 56 rely on archivists. Only 21 libraries have a full-time position dedicated to programming. Libraries also host programming provided by campus partners (48), other academic institutions (31), and external partners (23).

Collaboration

One of the primary characteristics of Next-Gen learning spaces that distinguish them from information commons is collaboration with partners outside the library, who provide staff, technology, programming, new services, designs for shared spaces, media resources, and even funding. All but 10 of 70 responding libraries have created or modified their spaces in collaboration with campus/parent institution partners or

external partners. Writing centers, information technology departments, learning and teaching development departments, colleges and schools, and administrative support (such as the Office of the Provost) were most prevalent in these collaborations. Of the responding libraries, 50 collaborated with partners from outside the library on instructional activities, especially tutoring and writing instruction, and 44 collaborated with partners outside the library on programming. External partners include research and development companies, professional organizations, non-profits, academic institutes, and state governments. The myriad educational uses of the spaces are complemented by social, legal, and health outreach (e.g., therapy dogs or a polling location).

Assessment

Most of the responding libraries (59, or 84%) are assessing the success and effectiveness of their learning spaces through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Informal feedback is the most common assessment method for instructional activities and programming (42), and for assessing the overall purpose of the space (44). For instruction, surveys (40) are almost as important as informal feedback. When considering overall success, libraries rely on gate counts (42) and field observations (41) to supplement informal feedback.

In 24 of the responding libraries (36%), assessment led to ending services, programs, or specific uses of spaces, including removing reference desks, creating integrated service desks, and removing physical collections.

Sixty-two of the responding libraries (87%) have used a Classroom Assessment Technique as part of their instructional activities. The most commonly used technique is feedback forms (60, or 97%).

Only 26 libraries (37%) are gathering metrics to link library instruction or programming to student success. Those metrics are varied and include engaging outside partners for long-term assessment projects, consulting with faculty, and scoring rubrics. All of the responding libraries collect data on the number of classes and number of participants engaged in instructional activities. Assessing the Next-Gen learning spaces' effects on student success and retention is

an area of experimentation and libraries use a variety of established assessment strategies.

The Future of Library Learning Spaces

Most responding libraries (60, or 84%) have plans to make significant changes to at least one of their learning spaces in the near future, including adding classrooms, labs, collaborative study spaces, and maker-spaces, along with removing collections. Other, more rarified expansions include digital studios, visualization labs, and other support for particular student learning and productivity strategies specific to disciplines or curriculum changes. There were few mentions of print collections other than removing them from the library; even the repurposing of a Special Collections reference room involving historical presses would focus on demonstrations and lectures.

Information technology, interdisciplinary collaborative learning, community, and support for new

pedagogical strategies were common responses when survey respondents were asked to envision the role of Next-Gen learning spaces in the future of research libraries.

Conclusion

The Next-Gen learning space is a resource and forum for the whole campus, providing the space and tools for instruction, scholarly communication, and pedagogical experimentation by students, faculty, and staff. Libraries continue to experiment in these spaces, inspired by their own observations of library use and by the aspirations of library partners, as new jobs are created to respond to pedagogical changes and emerging multidisciplinary curriculum needs, new spaces are created to accommodate new tools and work styles, and libraries strive to “model the behavior of the scholar in the digital age.”

