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Evolving Library Space: From "Information Commons" to "Collaborative Learning Commons"

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Scope/Background

As we begin to better understand our newest generation of users and their expectations of us and our facilities, a new type of library environment is envisioned. A blending of virtual convenience and physical comfort, the "Collaborative Learning Commons" brings together a wide assortment of elements to foster student learning in new and creative ways. ***It is not a static computer lab.*** Rather, it incorporates

- **the freedom of wireless communication,**
- **workspace clusters that promote interaction and collaboration as well as concentrated individualized work,** and
- **comfortable furnishings 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, and color imaging, and it becomes a one-stop shop for out-of-class assignments, writing, research, group projects, individual study, and recreational usage.

About UNC Asheville

Primarily undergraduate with an approx. **student FTE of 3200**

Designated **liberal arts university** in the 16-campus University of North Carolina system

Strong focus on **undergraduate research** and **interdisciplinary core curriculum**

2005 Carnegie Classification: Baccalaureate-Arts and Sciences (formerly BA-LA) - At least half of bachelor's degrees in the arts and sciences

Top majors/programs (as of Fall 2006):

1. Psychology
2. Literature
3. Management
4. Education
5. Environmental Studies
6. Art
7. Biology
8. History
9. Mass Communication
10. Mathematics

About the Library

57,000 sq ft addition completed in 1990, more than doubling the building's size

Renovation of existing 1964 structure completed in 1995

Renovation and expansion based on pre-1990 plans (pre-Web and pre-digital library)

Current square footage: 107,000

See [Ramsey Library Picture Gallery I](#)

Houses over 385,000 volumes, but provides access to over 2 million titles in the [Western North Carolina Library Network](#) (including Appalachian State University and Western Carolina University) Materials are delivered to campus 3 times a week through a courier service called [ABC Express](#)

Thanks to consortial agreements and a relatively small FTE (3200) the library provides access to a number of e-resources and e-journals packages available only at larger research libraries: (Elsevier's **ScienceDirect**, ISI's **Web of Knowledge**, ACS's **SciFinder Scholar**, etc.)

Wireless throughout, but not enough AC receptacles, especially in reading areas

About our Clientele

Generation M

Kaiser Family Foundation Report -
[Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds](#)

Time Cover story - "[The Multitasking Generation](#)"¹

Do-it-Yourself (DIY) spirit²

Not just downloading and consuming, but creating and participating

Web 2.0 - blogs, wikis, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube, etc.

Learning as social activity

See [Ramsey Library Picture Gallery II](#)

What We Envision

The concept of the Information Commons has been around for close to a decade now. At the University of Southern California, Indiana University, University of Arizona, Georgia Tech, and a host of other institutions the IC has allowed the library to remain relevant in the academic lives of their their undergraduate students.

Student-centered / People-centered

Are you [People Ready](#)? (Microsoft ad campaign)

<http://www.microsoft.com/business/peopleready/>

Brown (Dartmouth) and Long (MIT) stress the "human-centered" approach, which marks a shift from the "information commons" to the "learning commons"³

Design based on *learning* principals

Informal spaces that promote active and social learning

Googleplex - see [images](#)⁴

UMass Amherst - see [images](#)

Univ. of Missouri-Columbia - see [images](#)

Mount Holyoke College (MA) - see [images](#)

Univ. of Arizona - see [image](#)

Applies principles of "socioconstructivism"

As discussed by [Nancy Van Note Chism](#)


Emphasizes spaces that "convey co-learning and co-construction of knowledge," as we begin to think of the whole campus as a learning space, not just classrooms.⁵

Collaboration-fostering

student  **student** (peer learning)

faculty  **student**

faculty  **faculty** (peer learning)

staff  **faculty** (sharing knowledge across areas of expertise)

Interdisciplinary - bridging the arts and sciences

see for Studio for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon
<http://www.cmu.edu/studio/>

Intergenerational

see [NC Center for Creative Retirement](#)

Guiding Principles

1. Open

Unconfined

Glass walls - lots of light - See [images](#) of Duke's Bostock Library/von der Heyden Pavilion

Cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas - arts and sciences students working together

2. Free

"Un-tethered"

Wireless

Clusters

arranged on [raised-platform lily pads](#) to allow for electrical connections

3. Comfortable

Furnishings designed for collaboration

Traditional - warm - wood

Arts and crafts/mission style - ties to Asheville

The floor? [student pictures](#) - [Japanese Tea Room](#) - [Trey task chair](#)

4. Inspiring

See [images](#) of Duke's Bostock Library/von der Heyden Pavilion

Arts space

mobile - kinetic structures

flat screens displaying multimedia projects

5. Practical

Where real work can be done

where real learning can take place

self-help graphics

Students, student mentors, and faculty collaborating

Our Unique Process

Thinking broadly, creatively, abstractly, e.g. ergonomic design, use of color

Involving students in the design - Undergraduate Research projects

Faculty input - Space Planning Committee

Interdisciplinary approach

Those involved in planning include:

Psychology professor and research student in **Environmental Analysis and Design**

Management professor and research student in **Industrial Ergonomics and Work Design**

Art professor and research student in **Interior Design**

Go to:

[Collaborative Learning Commons - Proposal](#) for UNC Asheville

[Collaborative Learning Commons - Bibliography & Links](#)

1. Wallis, Claudia, "The Multitasking Generation" (Cover Story), **Time**, 19 March 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1174696,00.html>
2. Cyprien Lomas and Diana G. Oblinger, "Student Practices and Their Impact on Learning Spaces," in **Learning Spaces**, ed. Diana G. Oblinger (EDUCAUSE, 2006), 5.4, <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB7102e.pdf>
3. Malcolm Brown and Phillip Long, "Trends in Learning Space Design," in **Learning Spaces**, ed. Diana G. Oblinger (EDUCAUSE, 2006), 9.4, <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB7102i.pdf>
4. Jade Chang, "Behind the Glass Curtain," **Metropolis**, 19 June 2006, <http://www.metropolismag.com/cda/story.php?artid=2123>
5. Nancy Van Note Chism, "Challenging Traditional Assumptions and Rethinking Learning Spaces," in **Learning Spaces**, ed. Diana G. Oblinger (EDUCAUSE, 2006), 2.7, <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/PUB7102b.pdf>

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