

# Integrated design – the nexus between curriculum and space at La Trobe University Library

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2009 the Library at La Trobe University embarked on a major Library refurbishment project. The design of the new learning commons involved the addition of 845 seats to the existing Library seating capacity and moving 18 km of print material out of the Library building.

The Library refurbishment coincided with a University-wide review of the curriculum in order to develop an integrated and coherent undergraduate learning experience. The University's recommendations for curriculum review and renewal are outlined in Design for Learning: Curriculum Review and Renewal at La Trobe University [1].

## DESIGN FOR LEARNING

The principles of Design for Learning highlight the need for a systemic and University-wide approach to curriculum design with emphasis on graduate capabilities and giving all students opportunities for learning success. The six broad graduate capabilities include writing, speaking, critical thinking, creative problem solving, team work and inquiry/research. Design for Learning also stresses how important appropriate learning spaces are to student satisfaction and learning success. It makes clear that design of space needs to align with Design for Learning principles.

Design for Learning provided the opportunity to consider how existing physical Library spaces might be re-invented to embody the philosophy of collaborative enquiry-based learning. It provided the imperative for rethinking the gap between pedagogy, space, and technology and the Library redesign project provided the opportunity for reducing that gap.

## LEARNING COMMONS DESIGN

The new learning commons makes a major contribution to building the infrastructure needed to sustain the University's curriculum redesign. In response to the curriculum changes and trends in learning space design [2] the Library developed a detailed set of guiding principles that needed to be reflected in the design:

- Hybrid library - resources and services
- Integrated technology
- Equitable service standards across all campuses
- Self service
- Safe environment
- Variety of learning and research spaces
  - group study
  - individual study
- Zoned noisy – quiet areas
- Dedicated postgraduate research and study space
- Information literacy / flexible learning teaching areas
- Research and scholarly environment and collections
- Dedicated academic study space
- Centre of a knowledge-based organisation that values scholarship and independent learning
- Exhibition space
- Iconic, inviting entrance, welcoming, dynamic
- 24 hour access
- Café facilities
- Energy efficient

The redesign of the Library has transformed the space in a way that goes far beyond simply storing the low-use collections elsewhere and adding contemporary collaborative learning spaces. It actively reflects the redesign and transformation of the undergraduate curriculum.

The learning commons integrates technology into the group and open spaces in a way that makes use intuitive and easily accessible. In a very short time the new space has become the embodiment of the "curriculum in action" rather than primarily a place to borrow a book, use a computer or just study in a modern environment. In the light-filled learning commons student learning is on display and the dramatic increase in teamwork, meeting, exploring, communication and knowledge creation is clearly visible.

## CONCLUSION

The redesigned library at La Trobe University is an example of how pedagogic and physical space can come together successfully. This paper focuses on curriculum changes working in parallel with the Library re-design, resulting in a pedagogically different learning experience. It highlights lessons learned and the transformation that has occurred in the way students are now using the Library building. The new La Trobe University Library design has created an environment that reflects the University's strategic intent in relation to teaching and learning, and which will play an ongoing role in the success of Design for Learning.

## REFERENCES

1. *Design for Learning: Curriculum review and renewal at La Trobe University* (Melbourne: La Trobe University, 2009) Available from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/ctlc/assets/downloads/dfi/DFL-booklet.pdf> accessed 25 November 2010.
2. Diana Oblinger (ed), *Learning Spaces* (Educause, 2006) Available from <http://educause.edu/LearningSpaces/10569>, accessed 16 September 2008.

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