

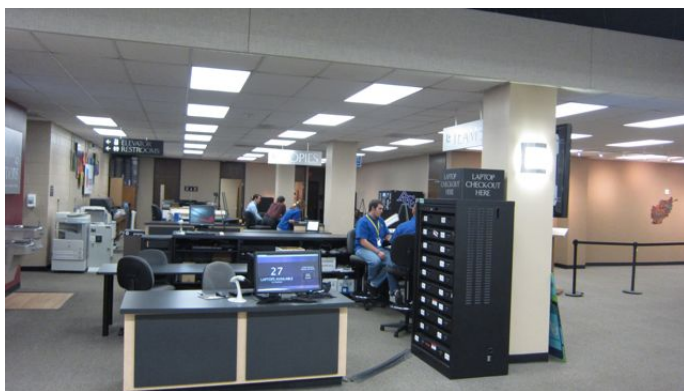
Laura Baker, Host

In 2007 (?) Abilene Christian University Library began a redesign of their library space. Laura Baker has a great presentation on the redesign at:

<http://www.slideshare.net/bakerl/learning-infused-libraries-honest-talk-about-what-it-really-takes-to-create-a-learning-commons>

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On January 20, 2012, I visited the facility to see for myself the library. As you walk in, you immediately notice the integration of a number of services beyond the traditional circulation desk to the left of the entry. Straight ahead and slightly to the right is a copy center, while straight ahead is a branch of the campus IT support desk, Team 55 (after their campus phone number). This has been a great asset to the students who, beyond anything else, can get support for a problem computer without logging off and losing work.



Picture 1: The copy center (back) and Team 55/IT Support (front). Entry is to the right of this picture

Early during the design process, there was some contention because the Library and IT were parts of different academic units.

However, there were key individuals who

were intent on seeing this happen and slowly they worked through logistics, such as who would pay for what. Another challenge was that IT saw an opportunity to build the best computer center on campus. Librarians saw an opportunity to increase information flows. Administrators saw opportunities to build a showcase for attracting top tier faculty and students. This took design a number of directions until everyone began to realize they shared the same goal of increasing learning. This helped to really focus design when conflicts arose.

The Learning Commons comprises the whole of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. Since the redesign, it has become a place for individual and collaborative work, a place to get a drink and a snack, a place where faculty sometimes hold office hours, a place for classes occasionally, a place for programs (a temporary stage with mics is setup to the right of the Research desks), and even a place where students and administration interact. It has changed student to student, student to library, student to faculty, and student to administration interactions. Laura feels a big part of that success was engaging students early on in the redesign. After initial meetings among library staff and between librarians and administration, a marketing class did a survey of students and of faculty which suggested that there was a significant need for collaborative space, that students didn't prize the traditional library space, that the furniture and lighting looked like it was castoffs from upgrades around campus (it often was) and that ultimately the library was not someplace they found comfortable but was instead a place to get in, get what they needed, and get out. Now it is a destination for students, faculty, and administrators.

Abilene Christian University Library Visit, 1/20/12



Picture 2: Looking back towards entry/circulation desk



Picture 3: Rotating clockwise from the circulation desk. The Research desk is at the very right, far back edge of this picture. Steps to the basement and second floor is to the right of the Research desk.



Picture 4: Continuing clockwise in the Learning Commons. A quieter alcove.



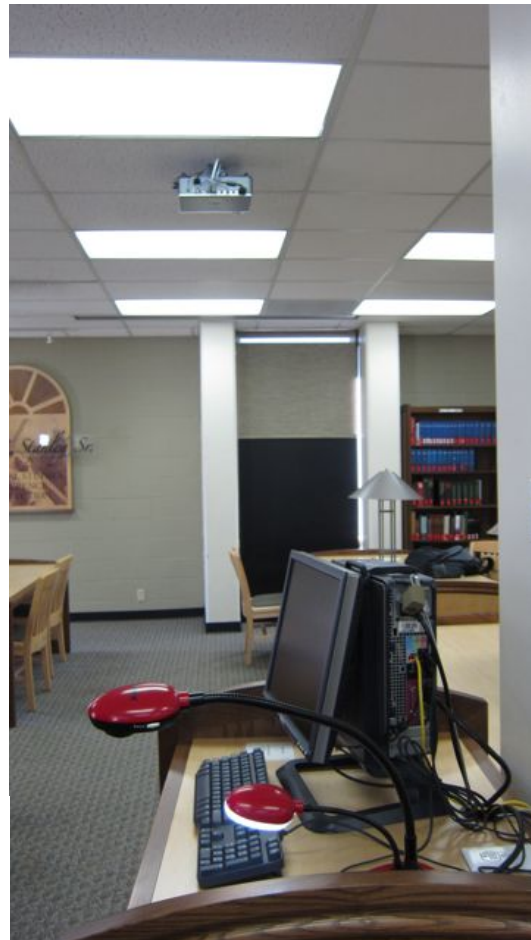
Picture 5: Looking into the heart of the Learning Commons. Further clockwise would bring us back to the Team 55 and Copy Center stations.

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Clearing the stacks from the first floor wasn't without some controversy. But ultimately it worked well. Most of the stacks were moved downstairs, which now looks like a traditional library. Those who work downstairs have been a bit frustrated that they're not working in the cool space. But slowly their improving furniture downstairs, have removed one wall, and hope to over time also improve the endcaps of shelves to create a warmer space. The nice thing is that as it is updated, it provides a place for the traditional quiet work spaces within the library. Followup surveys have indicated that many students now identify a need for individual, quiet spaces and feel this is now NOT well supported in the library. This is a new focus. Some stacks are also located upstairs. One room of special note on the second floor is the Theology reading room. This is a great example of how improved end caps and furniture can really build a more warm and professional space.



Picture 6: The lamps have power outlets for laptops. Note the end panels on the desks match the end caps of the stacks.



Picture 7: A training computer connected to the projector. The doc cam allows for projections of texts, a real advantage of having this station located right within the stacks.

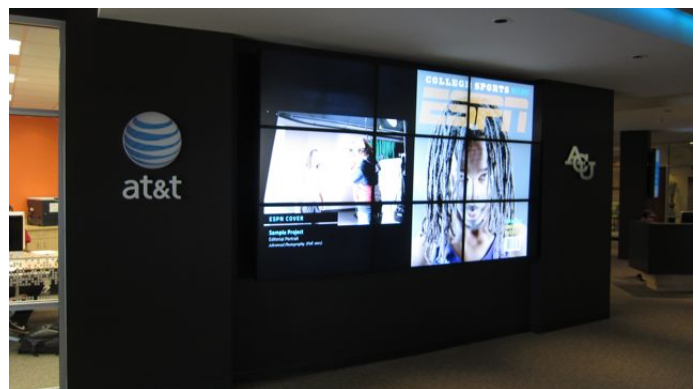
The second floor except for the Theology Reading Room is considered the Learning Studio. However, parts of it are stacks and a more hybridized seating area. It does include more moveable furniture even in this area to allow people to pull together tables or separate out tables as their needs change. Quieter alcoves are mixed in with wide isles with lots of desks.



Picture 7: Different types of Learning Studio seating. In picture on right, note the tall whiteboard panels. These are available to move throughout the second floor as needed and are sometimes used to also create a more private work space. Concerns had been raised before purchasing that markers would be stolen or that problematic text/images would be left on panels, but neither of these have proven to be a problem.



When walking up the stairs to the second floor, the first thing that's apparent is the large video wall. This is used among other things to screen student work. It's also sometimes used to collect feedback on videos. In the picture on the left, at the very left edge, you can see into the Production Studio. This is open to any students to use and a support person is always available to answer



questions about how to use photo, audio, and video editing software. While most computers in the library are dual boot Mac/Windows, the computers in the Production Studio are larger screen iMac's that only boot into Mac. They include both Final Cut Pro and Adobe Creative Suite 5.5. The desk for the digital media support person is just to the right in the picture.

Just behind the digital media support person in the Production Studio is a Recording Studio. This studio is only available by reservation (although it is free to students and faculty). A staff member must be there and is available to help setup the equipment. The support staff will also choose projects that they will help produce. For instance, I was shown a video that was created in collaboration with an art faculty. He had been reacting in class being in the field during World War I as a way to introduce the segment on artist of World War I. But it had no scenery and the



Picture 9: The view just after walking into the door.



Picture 8: Rotating counter-clockwise after walking in the door.

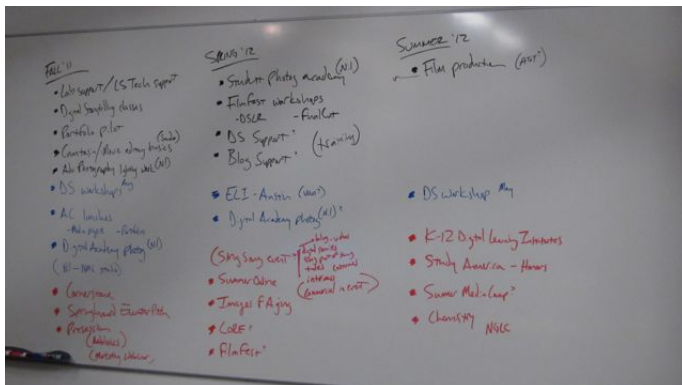
only props had been his soldier's uniform and an old gun. They shot this enactment in front of a green screen, added a World War I war scene for the background, added plan and shooting sound effects, and used After Effect to add a wiggle camera effect to look like it was hand held. The faculty wrote and enacted everything, and the support staff added the effects and created the final production. Outstanding work!



Picture 11: Continuing to rotate counter-clockwise.



Picture 10: Items available for loan to students, including Blue Yeti and Snowball mics, Canon 60d (I think) digital cameras, boom mikes for those cameras (they take great videos as well as stills), dedicated camcorders, tripods, light kits, etc. Other equipment on these shelves are not available for loan but are for studio use only.



Picture 13: Workshop Schedule. Workshops are offered throughout the semester by digital media support staff and are available for free to any University personnel. They provide introduction and basic skills training on a range of digital production, digital storytelling, and related skills.

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The Learning Studio also has a number of different types of recording and collaborative rooms. These include two recording rooms, three “Idea” rooms, a Speaker’s Room (speech students are required to use this space to practice and have critiqued one of their speeches, but it’s open for others to use as well), a screening room with 3D TV and surround sound, and a room with a Steelcase table that lets multiple laptops all connect to the VGA display and just tap a small disk to switch which laptop is currently displayed on screen. (These Steelcase tables are also located in two other spaces on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, one in an open hallway, and one in a room further down that includes two displays – the toggle disks can also be used to determine if a laptop displays to the left, the right, or across both monitors.)



**Picture 14: The little squares on the glass have proven very popular. Note the wireless keyboard and mouse on the table. They have had no problems with theft of these as expected. It does take someone going through periodically to replace batteries, though. A Mac Mini is located behind the LCD display. The other two rooms (both used at the time I visited) had little USB hubs on top of the Mac Mini to let users easily plug in a USB device. The DVD slot remains easily accessible. In some rooms they are now using the new Apple wireless keyboard/trackpad combinations seen below.**



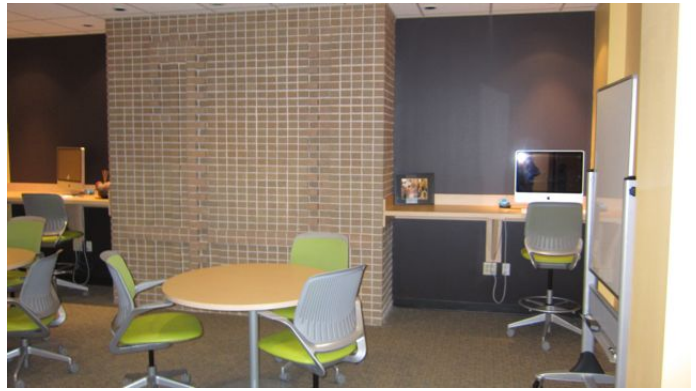


Picture 15: One of the VGA cables for the Steelcase tables. Whether single or dual monitors, the little disk in the VGA cable is what is used to select which laptop is currently displayed. These have proven very easy and extremely popular to use by students.

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Picture 16: Speaker's Room



Picture 17: Recording Room



Picture 18: Training Lab. They don't like the desks so much although it is occasionally nice to be able to lower monitors to have more workspace. It is very nice to be able to easily switch between displaying the instructor's station on all LCD's or displaying one of the "pod" workstations on it's associated display. They are glad they added whiteboards, but obstructions mean that there is very few seats that can see everything clearly - most have a bad line of site for one or the other of the whiteboards. The furniture is fixed based on location of floor electrical/network jacks. This has also been frustrating and limiting.

