From Common to Commons:

Repurposing a Traditional Reading Room at the UNT Science and Technology Library

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I. Why repurpose?
   - LibQual results indicate widespread demand for group study space
   - Provide facility for project collaboration
   - Support creation of multimedia presentations
   - Show the UNT administration what we can create with $180,000 (actual final cost was $365,000)

II. Condition of Harris Reading Room in the Science and Technology Library
   - Styles and colors from renovation in the 1970s
   - Traditional reading room with study tables, carrels and bank of computers
   - Not enough infrastructure to add more computers (had 11)
   - No rooms for group study or instruction
   - No soundproofing measures

III. Features of Collaboration and Learning Commons in the Eagle Commons Library
   - Color! Wall paint, privacy panels, furniture, and floor
   - Modules created with privacy panels
   - Comfortable, portable furniture
   - Whiteboards and Hitachi StarBoards
   - Two instruction/study rooms with videorecording capability
   - PC and Macs; dual monitor workstations; 24 computers total
IV. Campus response

- Popular with students – positive response on surveys and suggestions, in Spring 2011 semester reached computer capacity at least twice a week.
- Chemistry and biology students love the whiteboards for drawing chemical reactions and biological cycles.
- Popular with faculty – enthusiasm from faculty who have toured or taken workshops.
- StarBoards and instruction rooms get frequent use. 300 StarBoard checkouts since February, and 1674 people used instruction rooms between March and end of May.
- UNT administration has decided to include learning commons in at least two new buildings on campus.

V. Lessons learned

- Students loved the makeover and quickly spread the word to others.
- Takes more marketing to make faculty aware of CLC – e-newsletters to depts, individual invitations for tours, flyers in dept mailboxes.
- The TV monitors are used infrequently; students seem to prefer large projection on StarBoards or screens in instruction rooms.
- Students like to create group study “nooks” with telescoping panels.
- Bargain technology – portable whiteboards.
- Dry markers disappear over time (use about 10 per month), but not to a degree requiring checkout.

For more information about the Eagle Commons Library, visit our webpage at http://www.library.unt.edu/eagle-commons. Today’s presentation is located at http://www.library.unt.edu/eagle-commons/from-common-to-commons.