

Managing Spaces

Discussion began with the topic of creating collaborative and quiet spaces in the library. The questions were raised: Do students need more group study areas than in the past? And how much quiet space do they need? One librarian mentioned his library offered a quiet area with 125 seats and it was frequently full. Another mentioned using furniture to encourage quiet study, by making all seats individual desks or carrels. Another said their quiet area was self policed: students would ask others who were not quiet to leave. Another pointed out that quiet areas were useful because patrons could be referred to the quiet room if they did not like the noise in other spaces of the library.

The discussion turned to sharing spaces with other university services. One person mentioned that in their college library the University was taking over space for offices that had nothing to do with the library. Another said that public spaces in the library are evolving into a student union type atmosphere. Even as collections have been reduced, attendance in many libraries has increased, as students like to use it as a study space. Someone mentioned that partnering with IT services to create an IT help desk in the library like the University of Chicago's [Techb@r](#) would be a good idea. Someone else mentioned tailoring specific spaces for graduate students and faculty: Some schools have computer clusters for grad students only. Florida State has a [Scholars Commons](#), a space for faculty and grad students only, with card swipe access.

Someone mentioned there is a need to designate spaces clearly so policing isn't necessary. This then led to a discussion of managing study rooms and the difficulties of scheduling group study rooms and trusting students to lock them afterwards. Card swipe access would be preferred, if a system worked well and was affordable. Web room reservation systems are nice but expensive. Some schools have a display at the entrance showing what group study rooms are available in real time, which is useful.

The discussion turned to collaborations with other services on campus. At some schools IT services can work as tech help within library and manage computers in the library. At Rutgers they collaborated with IT so students' cards could work on both library and IT computers.

There was some discussion about focusing on staff space and designing them for collaboration. Generally libraries focus on user space, not staff areas and don't consider the need for quiet space in group staff areas.

The discussion turned to redesigning spaces without much or any money. Someone mentioned that they made a quiet reading room by taking the printers and copiers out. The [Zone](#) system at the University of Chicago was discussed, as a way to communicate that different areas have different purposes. They put table tents up late in quarter about the zone policy to update students who have not visited the library until then.

The issue of security cameras in the library was the next topic of discussion. A few people pointed out that students don't complain about them and they are useful in group study room. Also they help with theft issues.

A few final topics were then brought up: the popularity of Mac adapters, the lack of power plugs in many libraries, media spaces in libraries. Someone mentioned their media area was used mostly for just email and other general use, not for the media software.

The last topic covered was food. Undergrads expect a comfortable library environment and expect to be able to eat in the library. They don't always understand the food policy, especially since many libraries have host cafes inside them. Also food policies are often selectively enforced. However, many students will complain about anyone else eating in the library. They don't like it. Solutions to this issue include encouraging people to eat before they come in and to locate the cafe in front of the library, not inside it.