EPIC Architecture: Building technology into library space redesign to support student access, collaboration, and innovation

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Overview

Discuss the technology-rich library spaces that support the collaborative curriculum at Wentworth Institute.

- Background
- Building a Program
- Assessment & Planning
- Decision-Making and Advocacy
- Making things work in the new space
- Next steps
Background

2012 NEASC Reaccreditation Report: “the physical plant aspects of the Library have been insufficient for some time”

- Renovation planning began in earnest in February 2015
- Very circumscribed timeframe: 18 months (Feb.2015-Aug.2016) for full program, feedback, design process, approvals, moving & construction
- Bennett’s “First Questions” article provided a flexible, non-prescriptive framework that helped us develop and maintain a vision of what the new Library should be:

Building a Program

**Q1:** What is it about the Learning that will Happen in this Space that Compels us to Build a Bricks and Mortar Learning Space, rather than Rely on a Virtual One?

**Q2:** How Might this Space be Designed to Encourage Students to Spend More Time Studying and Studying More Productively?

**Q4:** How Will Claims to Authority Over Knowledge be Managed by the Design of this Space? What will this Space Affirm About the Nature of Knowledge?
Assessment & Planning

Overall Program Goals:

● Add more seats; all seats must be “usable”;
● reduce the footprint of collections;
● create more collaborative and flexible spaces;
● improve wayfinding; create easily distinguishable zones;
● provide easy, “democratized” access to technology and technological infrastructure
Assessment & Planning

Methods of Getting Feedback about Goals:

- Surveys; Focus Groups; Space Usage Observation;
- Library Renovation Academic Committee; Public + Community Meetings; Consultation with Student Government;
- Social Media Engagement; Furniture Fair; Other Student/Faculty Engagement
Decision-making

- Review assessments, statistics (books, gatecounts, surveys)
- Read literature - especially architecture literature, different perspective on library and theory around building spaces
- What is a library? What is the library at Wentworth, specifically? What should it be? How will it change in the coming years and how can we try to anticipate changes in new design?
Decision-making

- Provide access to technology for all majors - not all students have access to tech labs across campus
- EPIC Learning - Externally collaborative, Project-based, Interdisciplinary, Culture
- Classroom space, study space, collaborative space, social space
- But also sound management, quiet spaces, noise absorption
- Let the students have ownership of the space
Decision-making
Making things work in the new space

- Tech expertise in library - staff, students, department help
- Peer to peer learning
- Practical: Access to power, network capacity, flexibility - make so things can be changed in 10 years (raised floor), making space for collaboration
- Tech lending, library of things, gallery space, events, faculty use
- Students own the space. Not signs or rules everywhere, policies on website, not taped to doors.
Making things work in the space
Next steps

- Continue to work at the curricular level (co-ops and capstone projects)
- Collect data & study the impact of library usage at WIT
- Better integration of Info Lit & Library Instruction with general studies courses
- Distance education support
- Expand community engagement

VIDEO: https://youtu.be/TI4aXTI3-MM
EPIC Architecture Bibliography


