Thinking Outside the Box

Specialized Educational Technologies

Library Innovations: Effective Designs to Encourage Collaboration

Educause 2006, Dr. Joan Roca, Wayne Sharp, David Esping
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Minnesota State University, Mankato. Memorial Library
Innovation in this Library Computing Environment focused on creating Casual Collaborative Computer “pods.” Design goals included maximizing computer numbers in minimum floor space with numerous structural pillars, while encouraging collaborative work, comfort, & individual work space.
Before: Notice the number of patrons
After: Notice the number of patrons.
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The challenge was to be creative in developing a new collaborative computerized learning environment within this single space. Solutions included:

• Pod tables for 8 computers, wrapped around the building’s support pillars: 104 total workstations.
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Solutions included:

• Café-height tables with seating for 3-4 students.
• Soft sofa seating for groups of 2-6 students, with power in end-tables for laptops.
• A coffee shop adds to the techno-café feel.
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The work in progress, notice:

• Student labor force cut much cost
• Cable Management reduces clutter
• Open floor plan allows for large numbers of students studying
Wire Management
Plenty of Elbow Space.
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These are collaborative efforts between the Library & Information Technology Services for funding & implementation. Many libraries will have similar building constraints, needs for space efficient "PODS" & needs for more technology. We believe this is a "Best Practices" example.
Casual Collaborative Computer Lab. Seating for up to 70. Encourages group work.
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