University of Arkansas Libraries

Extreme Makeover Task Force
Meeting Summary
March 15, 2010
3 p.m., Rm. 486

Present: Alberta Bailey, Donnie Blagg, Molly Boyd, Allon Callahan, Anne Marie Candido, Todd Cantrell, Ben Carter, Donna Daniels, Elaine Dong, Sheri Gallaher, Tess Gibson, Lynaire Hartsell, Roy Hatcher, Jimmy Jackson, Necia Parker-Gibson, Jeremy Smith, Sarah Spiegel, Juana Young (chair), Tim Zou

Agenda: To review questions selected by Task Force voting. These questions, and subsets that clarify the same topic of discussion, are:

1) What is our prime purpose? What are we trying to encourage most—to be a Learning Commons vs. just another lab in the library?
   a) What kind of environment and experience do we want to create for the users of the space on level two?
   b) How many new computers need to be added? How will these computers, along with additional wireless coverage and network drops, affect the users' experience? Is our network infrastructure sufficient to accommodate this increased load?
   c) Is there a desire to see an increased social aspect to the library?
   d) How flexible do we want the space to be? How moveable? How rigid?
   e) How many computer workstations do we anticipate putting in? Will this meet the need for more than a year or two?
   f) What should library service look like to users? Should it mirror Wal-Mart, Zapos, Google, Amazon??

2) What are the patterns of use do we see currently (use of the GACL, reference activity, circulation activity, use of ref collection, need for study tables, browsing of periodicals, reading of newspapers and popular magazines, just gathering)? How can we accommodate students best given those patterns? Will these patterns likely change given the fairly dramatic increase in enrollment next year?

3) What are the primary needs for each service area that must be accommodated, i.e. access services, reference, and Information Technology?
   a) Where can we best place the lab ops so that students can recognize where they are and so that the lab ops can best be alert to things happening in the GACL? Sight lines will be important. Also, how much of the lab areas should be for individual and how much for group study? Factor in greater use of laptops. Maybe just more tables where people can study with their laptops?
   b) Are there services we are providing that we should not provide, or are there services that we need but are not providing?
   c) What changes to staffing and/or duty assignments might be considered or even desired?
   d) Thoughts on One-stop support v.s. mobility/flexibility?
The suggestion was made to deal with the first question as a group, then break the other questions into sub-groups within the task force to move more quickly through the exploration phase of the project.

Though it was suggested that some questions be collected and refined for a student survey, it was decided that the same information was obtained from the architectural survey and an ASG survey, which can be reviewed on Sharepoint for insight into self-described student needs.

**Discussion of question 1:** What is our prime purpose? What are we trying to encourage most—to be a Learning Commons vs. just another lab in the library?

First, a definition of “Learning Commons”: an environment that enhances social interaction and cross disciplinary learning outside the classroom, a place in which technology and support services merge to assist in the entire research to production process.

The GACL in Mullins Library is already a Learning Commons by virtue of the resources on site; we may need to utilize those resources better, but we are a Learning Commons. The pride, drive, and motivation of library staff and faculty make it a Learning Commons, as each focuses on individual job integrity. It is desirable to make the fuller transition to a Learning Commons now rather than wait for the building renovation as that would leave us farther behind the curve.

Agreed and approved by vote in the Task Force: Mullins Library GACL space is already a Learning Commons. An immediate improvement of the space would be to designate quiet from non-quiet spaces, including computing, and to streamline the customer service options.

Immediate problem: we need space for approximately 45 additional desk top computers and more space for wireless access to accommodate more laptop users, which would in turn reduce the demand for desktop computers.

Desired items:
- maintain traditional aspects of computer lab while adding more flexible space to accommodate varied user needs.
- Create group study areas; collaborative computing space.
- Designate quiet from non-quiet areas throughout the lobby level and other floors. The majority of the existing computer lab should be designated non-quiet, as it would be virtually impossible to control sound in a large open space. The tutoring space and the central walkway through the space both create noise; both are fixed items in the lobby level space. A suggestion is to put the more noisy collaborative or group computing areas adjacent to the central walkway to decrease noise conflict within the zones. Use color-coded signs or furniture, or different types of furniture, and clearly designate on signs and maps to easily distinguish quiet from non-quiet areas.
- The north end of the lobby level, which is currently occupied by Reference stacks, could become a more flexible space for collaborative study or lounge-type seating, due to the open space and abundant natural light (if the Reference volumes and stacks were relocated). Ideal for furniture that can be readjusted by the student to fit existing needs.
• Retrofit the Walton Reading Room and Periodicals Reading Room with wiring for data and electrical to accommodate lap top computing in both spaces, but continue to designate both as quiet study spaces. Note: The wireless upgrade paid for by the student technology fee is scheduled at the beginning of the summer semester. This will improve wireless access throughout the building.

• Campus IT networking is working on the ability to send print jobs from wireless laptops to lab printers.

Question 3: What are the primary needs for each service area that must be accommodated, i.e. access services, reference, and Information Technology?

IT needs: Rezoning of printers, traffic patterns. Ease and efficiency of support with smallest possible staff size. Line of sight to all computer users desirable but not necessary, especially if “raised hand” software and technology is implemented, by which users can notify lab operators of their need for assistance through the computer. Need a lab op desk that is visually obvious and prominent—separate from computer lab—to which users may readily identify as help desk. Recognition is a big question for the IT lab op station; visibility is not as big an issue as distance from the users. IT staff should be more prominent—by color, signs, location; needs to be a visually identified help desk location. IT may consider the possibility of combining with other staff at unified, single help desk; however, cross training of lab ops to assist with other library questions is not cost effective or feasible.

Reference needs: Integrated, cohesive staff. Readily identifiable when users need us, invisible when they don’t. Mobile computing capability would take service from behind the desk to meet the user wherever they may need assistance. The physical desk needs to be more approachable by the user, in other words, not so tall or crowded, for collaborative work on a computer. Need space to create a learning moment for user solutions. The high counter is a barrier to access. Need to accommodate GIS services and CD Rom access and assistance. Need an ADA compliant space. Need a separate, more private space for in depth reference consultations that can accommodate two or three persons. Need referrals from IT and Circulation for Tier 2 level questions. Need a chat feature or a real time who’s online feature to help on desk faculty identify who is available to assist research questions as they arise. Move from physical reference materials to online reference materials; barrier is funding.

Students do not care who assists them, as long as help is easy to obtain and service is friendly. “True” reference questions are few at the service desk. A survey of questions asked was taken this semester, which indicated that a large percentage of questions could be answered by any staff. Ongoing cross training of all staff is desirable to establish clear levels at which questions should be turned over to specialists for resolution. Most questions are “Tier 1” questions, which can be answered by any faculty or staff manning the desk. A few questions are “Tier 2” questions, which should be handled by specialists according to subject area or department. Need a uniform recognition of those distinctions. May explore the possibility of using “raised hand” technology for service questions (in addition to IT questions), in which library staff or faculty would come to the user to answer questions rather than have them relocate to the service desk for questions.
Circulation needs: less clutter on desk, including cords and printers, which need to be tucked or hidden under the desk to provide more counter space for users. Would like return to fixed maps and other guides on the top of the desk under glass for ease of pointing users to answers to frequently asked questions. Equipment needs include bar code scanner, iPad, desensitizer for magnetic strips. Possible streamlining of department by removing course reserves and sending material checkouts to self-service stations. Laptops, media, keys for study rooms, cords for monitors cannot be self-checked. IT is considering taking over the laptop check out; barrier is funding for staff. Consider change of department name to Customer Service or some such, as Circulation is no longer obvious to users.

Additional points to consider:
- The changes suggested by this Task Force are intended to be a stop gap measure for approximately 2 years, until the next computer lab overhaul is expected.
- No need to change dramatically the reasons students come to the library—traffic levels and populations show we are currently meeting most needs.

ACTION ITEM:

Next meeting, Thursday, March 18 at 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Discuss the feasibility and logistics of new computer placement; in particular, determine what are our minimum space needs, then from there determine additional possibilities for creative space. Consult floor plans; identify spaces that can be cleared; brainstorm on possible layouts. Roy will create a “clean” floor plan of lobby level and post on Sharepoint. Task Force members may print the floor plan and sketch ideas for furniture and technology before Thursday’s discussion. Will also discuss question 42, are there services we are providing that we should not provide, or are there services that we need but are not providing?