

**Learning Commons Services Committee
Final Report
February 3, 2010**

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Charge: Provide detailed recommendations for services to be offered in a Learning Commons to be located on the first floor of Pickler Memorial Library. The recommendations should be in the context of the overall goal/vision for the Learning Commons, which is: to make library and technology services more accessible and to provide more and better service more conveniently at less cost. The Committee may make recommendations with regard to other spaces and services in the Library as they relate to the Learning Commons.

Recommendations will be made to the Learning Commons Steering Committee which has oversight of the Learning Commons Services Committee and development of the Learning Commons.

Timeline: The Learning Commons Services Committee will make its final report and recommendations by January 15, 2010.

Background:

For over a decade now, many academic libraries have undergone renovation projects to address the changes in technology, delivery of content, and student learning styles. Often the information commons or learning commons is the model used to accomplish the goal of bringing together technology, content, and services that support student learning.

In January 2009 Pickler Memorial Library identified the reorganization of the first floor and collaborating with Information Technology Services (ITS) to create a combined service desk as an important goal during the Library strategic planning process. Also in the spring of 2009, the Student Technology Committee reported student support for relocating the third floor computer lab to the first floor of the Library and the creation of a learning commons as a way to reduce the "Truman shuffle" by locating many desired services all on the first floor of the Library.

The Learning Commons Services Committee was created in the fall of 2009 and charged with identifying the services that would make library and technology services more accessible and to provide more and better service more conveniently at less cost. With the Learning Commons, we hope to create an environment that greatly enhances the Truman experience and students' overall academic success.

The committee used the learning commons definition presented in chapter one of *Transforming Library Service through Information commons: Case Studies for the Digital Age* as the framework for our discussions. The authors make a significant point about the difference between an information commons and a learning commons which moves beyond just providing access to traditional library services and traditional computer lab hardware and software. A learning commons is no longer library centric but brings collaboration among different campus units to support student learning.

“[the learning commons] is *clearly and explicitly* aligned strategically with the instruction-wide vision and mission—that is, a dynamic and active partner in the broad educational enterprise, not just the library-centric enterprise.”¹

The first step in our process was a visioning/brainstorming session to get as many ideas on the table. Along with services already being provided to students via the Library & ITS, the committee discussed services located throughout campus that may be beneficial to a commons area and services that Truman may not be currently offering.

In order to manage the amount of input while prioritizing our recommendations, the committee organized the services into three main categories: Interactive Services, Stand-alone Services and Atmosphere. Broadly speaking, Interactive Services are those services that require staff interaction while Stand-Alone services generally require no or limited staff interaction for users to access. The Atmosphere category includes recommendations concerning physical space, furniture arrangement, and amenities that create the desired working environment for the students.

Within each category, the group spent time prioritizing the services. The report includes recommendations of the services we felt were essential to the Learning Commons area along with some suggestions for items that were desirable but determined to be lower priorities. This includes services the committee felt were essential but didn't believe they needed to be on the first floor. There were multiple services and atmosphere enhancements identified that the committee decided not to include in this report due to a possible duplication/conflict with services already offered by the SUB and Student Recreation Center (i.e. exercise equipment, climbing walls, game room, etc...).

Recommendations:

Interactive Services

- ❖ Circulation services
 - Library material checkout including laptops
 - Reserves
 - MOBIUS
 - Investigate the use of self check-out stations

- ❖ A combined service desk that includes the following:
 - Traditional library reference assistance
 - Traditional computer lab consultant assistance
 - IT Service Center activities including:
 - A/V Equipment Checkout and Reservations
 - Truman Wireless Configuration
 - Mobile Device support
 - Password Reset and User Account Configuration
 - Walk-in Technical Support
 - Malware removal from Student Personal Computers

Beside convenient access, an important benefit of a combined service desk would be the extension of service hours for some of the activities provided by the IT Service Center which is currently located in McClain 111. It would be desirable to have a “one

stop” desk that also included Circulation services along with Reference and IT, although issues concerning closed access shelving for Reserve material and space for pre-shelving, MOBIUS items, and staff work areas would have to be addressed. Another area of consideration would be how to integrate the different equipment checkout programs currently being offered by ITS, IDS, and the Library (laptops, video and audio recording equipment, etc...)

- ❖ The Teaching & Learning Technology Center should be incorporated into the Learning Commons area. This would allow greater access to the digital media technologies currently being offered in the lab by expanding service hours. If located near the commons service desk, access to the multimedia lab would not have to be limited to times when it is staffed by those with multimedia expertise. Users needing detailed instruction and assistance with the digital media technologies could come to the lab at designated times or by appointment. As students are increasingly required to produce more media-rich projects, access to this area will become more important.

Layout considerations for the multimedia portion of the commons should include a quiet space to perform audio recording, podcasting, etc. This lab area could also be enclosed with glass panels and doors to contain noise while remaining a visible part of the commons. Another area for consideration is the negotiation of better license agreements for Adobe Creative Suite type software so it wouldn't be limited to machines in the multimedia lab.

- ❖ The Assistive Technology Lab should receive continued technology support and remain on the first floor.
- ❖ Writing Center / Success Center tutoring outposts (especially during evening hours) should be included in the Library but not necessarily housed on the first floor.

Lower priority recommendations for this category included:

- Use of screen sharing technology or IM communication tools for remote assistance (e.g. live chat with Tech Support or Librarian)
- Providing other items for checkout to enhance collaborative work such as portable interactive whiteboards.

Stand-alone Services

- ❖ Computing

The infrastructure to support computing resources must be in place including a stable & secure network (wired and wireless) and enough electrical power to support the desired level of equipment. An increased number of power outlets are also recommended.

Students still want a high number of university computers to be available for use. This may be a combination of desktops and laptops. Standard office applications and specialized curricular software should be installed on most workstations in this area. Some laptops for checkout could have standard office applications without the student image to increase start-up speed. Also with the increase of students choosing Macintosh computers as their personal machines, providing access to Macintosh workstations or machines with dual operating systems should be a part of the Learning Commons.

Eventually the University may have to address the need to shift IT resources to support students' personal machines instead of the University continuing to purchase more computers to meet student needs.

Continue to provide access to computers for guests

❖ **Printing, Copy, & Production Services**

Establish centralized printing services including dedicated print-only stations located near the entrance to accommodate students who need a quick printout before a class. A color printer in the area is also needed. Storage space for paper, toner cartridges, etc... is required.

The committee discussed adding more services similar to those offered by commercial entities like Kinko's but determined that our priority should be to provide access to photocopiers (black & white and color) for simple copy jobs. More sophisticated academic related print jobs should be handled by Truman's Printing Services department. Limited production services such as transparencies, booklet binder and laminating should still be available.

❖ **Collections**

The committee recommends some traditional print collections be a part of the Learning Commons to support both the social and academic aspects of the commons.

- The Browsing & New Book collections should be a focal point and placed near the social areas of the Learning Commons such as the Café.
- Current Magazine & Journal Collection--where possible the Library should continue to shift from receiving physical issues to providing access to online subscriptions.
- A small Reference Book Collection. As part of the learning commons implementation the Library will need to review and reduce the size of the current print reference collection.
- Although the microforms collections contain significant resources supporting the curriculum, the committee felt that they do not have to be housed on the first floor as part of the Learning Commons. However issues on how best to provide assistance for patrons using the microform readers and scanners must be addressed before locating the collection on another floor.

❖ **Group study rooms (both with computers & without computers)**

- High priority for students according to survey data

❖ **C-Level Classroom**

Lower priority recommendations for this category included:

- Wide-format printer (poster printing) – although an important service, this may be better suited to be housed in Publications or Printing Services.
- Multipurpose conference room (with C-Level classroom technology) which could be used for meetings, teleconferencing, and presentation practice or video recording.
- Investigate the delivery of library and IT services to mobile devices

Atmosphere (Environment/Space/Amenities)

The atmosphere and environment of the first floor are vital to the success of the Learning Commons. The commons should support students' need for both academic and social learning spaces. Comfortable, flexible, and task-oriented were the recurring descriptions used as the committee discussed furniture and workstations configurations. Furniture should be a combination of soft seating, carrels, and larger tables that accommodate individual and group work. This variety of furniture configurations that can be re-arranged according to the user's need for privacy or collaboration is essential to the Learning Commons environment.

With the increase of assignments and projects requiring collaboration with classmates, group areas were found to be one of the highest priorities of students. This was determined by surveys, information gathered by the student representative on the committee, and overall knowledge of the committee. Space for group work can be achieved through the shape of the workstations, equipping stations with larger monitors, and providing enclosed study rooms. Although a few enclosed rooms would be desired in the commons area, others without computers could be located on the second and third floors.

Social spaces are also an important part of a learning commons and this would be accomplished with the addition of the Café.

Other recommendations that contribute to the overall atmosphere of the Learning Commons include good lighting, consistent and visible signage, including computer availability displays (both online and monitors in the commons area) and the inclusion of trees or plants.

Lower priority recommendations for this category included:

- Lockers
- Web cam

Acknowledgement of major issues and concerns:

While the creation of a learning commons is a great opportunity to meet student needs more efficiently through collaboration among the Library, ITS, and the instructional design staff, it doesn't come without obstacles and concerns. Before any major re-design of the first floor can happen, space for the bound periodical collection must be found. Although some of the collection can be moved to the third floor where the current computer lab is located, off-site storage will also be needed. The committee recommends the use of compact shelving where it is appropriate and structurally feasible. Another major issue is providing enough electrical power

and networking capabilities for the building and this will have to be addressed before moving forward with this project.

Because of the design of the Library with its large atrium, noise issues are a big concern. Strategies to contain noise need to be built into the renovation plan. The committee hopes that by having the Learning Commons with its more interactive services located on the first floor, it will enable us to create quiet zones in other parts of the Library.

Staffing issues will be another important area of focus in the next stage of planning for the Learning Commons. Desired levels of cross-training along with new policies and procedures will have to be determined as we combine services currently delivered by different university departments.

ⁱ Bailey, D. Russell. *Transforming Library Service Through Information Commons: Case Studies for the Digital Age*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2008)

Resources

Bailey, D. Russell. *Transforming Library Service Through Information Commons: Case Studies for the Digital Age*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 2008)

“Library Renovation Survey”, *Technology at Truman: Statistics 376 Class Project Report*. (Kirksville: Truman State University, December 2009)

Pickler Memorial Library. *Strategic Plan 2009-2011*. (Kirksville: Truman State University, January 2009)

Student Technology Improvement Committee. *A Technological Vision for Truman State University*. (Kirksville: Truman State University, Spring 2009)

“Technology Needs Survey”, *Technology at Truman: Statistics 376 Class Project Report*, (Kirksville: Truman State University, December 2009)