Planning for a Learning Commons at the University of Hong Kong

Tony Ferguson
University Librarian
University of Hong Kong

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Goals of my talk

- Briefly describe the context of HKU's proposed Learning Commons

- Summarize the results of discussions held with a range of groups and the results of a survey designed to gauge student and staff support for the ideas expressed during the discussions.

- Examine questions yet to be answered

Assumption: A Learning Commons

- Is a collaborative approach to meeting the informational needs of a campus.

- Brings information providers/facilitators from across campus together in the Commons – but which groups are still independent from each other.

- Builds upon a university's large investment in electronic forms of information, student and teaching staff services.

Factors leading to the creation of a Learning Commons at HKU

- HKU is switching from a British 3 year undergraduate curriculum to a NA 4 year one.
- We will increase our student numbers by 25 to 35 percent – it is cheaper to provide more seats in an LC than in a traditional library.
- The University is moving away from an examination-based to shared learning style of education.
- Library is already short of space: storing 100,000 per year but plans are forming for a shared 8 university shared storage collection.
- University has decided they can afford a 6,000 square meter learning commons.

Process: we were asked to gather input on what members of the HKU community in "their" Learning Commons

To gather input we

- Invited members of the 10 faculties to "free lunches" to hear about what is a LC and what they wanted to see in their commons.
- Met with various student groups and potential service providers to get their ideas.
- Put up a web survey asking respondents to rank the importance of the facilities and services identified during the lunches and discussions.

Situation already at HKU

We already have
- Small group study rooms (Main, Medicine, Dental, Law)
- Leisure reading/snack area (Main only)
- 24X7small group study area (Main only)
- Terminal area with computers/software, etc. Main and all branches.
- Electronic classroom (Main only)
- Food (Main only)

We lack
- Collaborative services
- English coaching
- Media production/training
- Consultation workstations
- Teaching staff support services

Survey Findings

Preliminary campus survey: Facilities important to me (1-5)

Facilities Most Favoured in the Survey	RANK
Wireless and wired access in addition to power for laptops.	1
Computer workstations with a large range of software, e.g., word processing, spreadsheet, multi media production, statistical analysis, etc.	2
24 hour a day and 7 day a week access to this facility.	3
Consultation stations with some privacy so that teachers and/or students can meet together in this environment.	4
Small group study rooms where teachers and/or students can gather.	5

Preliminary campus survey: Facilities important to me (6-10)

Facilities Most Favoured in the Survey	RANK
A special needs facility, e.g., for the visually impaired, those with hearing problems, etc.	6
Large tables so that individuals or small groups of teachers and/or students can spread out whatever they are working on.	7
Leisure reading/talking/music listening/comfortable seating/TV area.	8
Lots of computer workstations arranged so that teachers and/or students can gather to work together at the same time.	9
Small consultation rooms where teachers can schedule time to meet with students for tutorials or just to work on something that needs additional attention.	10

Preliminary campus survey: Services important to me (1-5)

Services Most Favoured in the Survey

	RANK
Copy centre/binding services.	1
Writing tutors/coaches to help teachers and/or students when writing a paper and help with proofreading, etc.	2
Academic counselling services, e.g., to help students understand what courses to take, how to study more effectively, etc.	3
Career counselling.	4
Software specific courses to teach teachers and/or students how to use a range of software products, e.g., statistical packages, spreadsheets, database management packages, word processing, etc.	5

Preliminary campus survey: Services important to me (6-10)

Services Most Favoured in the Survey	RANK
Reference librarians to help teachers and/or students find the information they need.	6
Language teaching and learning tutors who can help students when preparing for class, e.g., English, Spanish, French, Putonghua, etc.	7
Information management courses to teach teachers and/or students how to find the information they need.	8
Laptop charging service allowing teachers and/or students to leave their laptops in a secure environment to be charged while they am doing something else.	9
Multi-media production coaches to teach teachers and/or students, e.g. how to make a movie, design a poster, develop a multimedia presentation.	10

Implications and Questions

Implications: Patrons most want

- Computer rich environment
- 24X7 Access
- Ability to work in groups
- Helpers, coaches – information skills, academic and career counseling
- Still want common things like photocopiers

- Questions: In the new electronic era is it Library + IC or IC instead of Library?
- Would today/tomorrow's students and staff be just as happy or happier with a very big IC, electronic texts, and non digitized books in a automated retrieval system?