Space assessment: a venue for defining the academic library

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Danuta A. Nitecki, Dean of Libraries & Professor, College of Information Science & Technology Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
Observations to consider today

- We don’t assess library spaces like we use to
- Assessment feels like research
- Paths to assess library space look different depending where you start
1. We don’t assess library spaces like we use to…

Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven CT

Biblioteca Geral University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal
Changes in library paradigms

George Peabody Library, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Saxon State Library, Dresden, Germany
[underground reading room]

Mills Learning Commons, McMaster U, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Core functions defining the library

1. Accumulator

2. Service provider

3. Facilitator
Changing focus of space assessment

ASSESS
[formative research]

EVALUATE
[summative research]
Space as cultural expression

Mobile library, Jakarta, Indonesian

Bodleian Library, Oxford
2. Assessment feels like research

1. Problem statement
2. Literature review
3. Research questions
4. Methodologies
5. Findings
6. Discussion
7. Conclusions
Summative side of research

• Outputs and outcomes?
  – Punch lists for contractual deliverables and contractor performance

• Impacts?
  – Reinforce library’s centrality?
  – Provide comfort, health, safety and security?
  – Address changing library needs over time?
3. Paths to assessment look different

...depending on the perspective of the library’s purpose,
...identified through the assessment elements of:

- problem
- literature and observed practice
- questions to address
- procedures and methodologies
Space for accumulation

Sterling Memorial Library,
Yale University, New Haven, CT
Assessment of space for accumulation

Library Shelving Facility
Yale University

Drexel University Library Archives
Assessment of space for services
Marketing queries

• Does this place meet your expectations for what a library should look like?
• How comfortable are you in it? Do you like it? What does it do for you?
• How many students use the …services?
• What resources are accessed from the commons?
• What happens in the space?
Library “Web space”

• How many come to the websites and from where?

• What do they use?

• Are they satisfied?
Gauging market penetration
Assessment of space for learning
Methods to assess information commons

- Statistics on service transactions or users: 14
- Informal feedback from users: 12
- Formal paper-based evaluation survey: 8
- Computer-based survey: 7
- Focus group [interview]: 2
- Point of use computer pop-up survey: 1
- Other [observations, staff feedback, one day paper-based survey]: 3
Assessment of learning

• How does the library as a place affect student capacity to learn?

• How does it affect the creation of new knowledge?

• There is very little formal assessment of learning that happens in learning commons or other library spaces.
Assessment of space impact on learning activities

For example:

– Provide experience with multiple perspectives
– Emphasize student centeredness
– Embed learning in social experiences
– Encourage use of multiple modes of representation
Assessment of alignment between design and values/mission

Scott Bennett’s questions [sample]

• Why brick over virtual learning space?
• How to design space to encourage spending more time on studying?
• How will claims to authority over knowledge be managed by design of space?
Formative assessment of learning environments

- Ethnographic studies at Rochester [Foster and Gibbons]

- Co-design process at San Jose State University and Cal Polytechnic State University [Somerville]
Library space beyond the library

Nancy Roderer, Director
Welch Medical Library,
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Assessment of space contribution to library mission

• To accumulate and house materials

• To provide services, especially access to information

• To facilitate knowledge creation
Librarian for the future
To continue the conversation. . .

Come see the evolving “Library Learning Terrace” and learning hubs at Drexel University to open spring, 2011

Contact:
Danuta A. Nitecki
danuta.nitecki@drexel.edu
215- 895-2750