Sheila Bonnand and Mary Anne Hansen

Make more of these facilities!

Creating a library space to support faculty teaching innovation

If your campus is like ours, you've been witnessing this trend: while the physical library is teeming with students, fewer faculty members are seen regularly in the building. In fact, many faculty will tell you that they can't remember that last time they were in the building (unless it was to grab a cup of coffee from the library coffee bar on the way to class). This "I never go there" issue was noted by Steven J. Bell a few years ago.[1]

Access to resources online, especially journal articles, means that while faculty still use and support the library, they generally do so from their homes and offices. At the Montana State University (MSU) Library, we wanted to encourage faculty to become part of the vibrant learning community that has emerged as we revitalized our physical spaces. One successful strategy was the creation of our Innovative Learning Studio (ILS), with instructional faculty as the targeted users.

Academic libraries have been so successful in "creating a scholars' research environment that faculty can access from their desktop" that the physical library building is no longer as relevant for them.[2] However, faculty are vital to a dynamic teaching and learning space. If an academic library wants to retain its core position on campus, it needs to incorporate physical spaces and other services that support the teaching as well as the research of academics.

In response to this trend, we explored ways to attract faculty back to our building, namely in the creation of a teaching space that allows them more active-teaching and flipped-classroom opportunities as well as the ability to experiment with new educational technologies.

Prior to the creation of ILS, we were advocating for additional teaching space in our library. Our only library classroom was one equipped with rows of fixed terminals facing a front screen and podium. This setup limits our ability to experiment with new teaching methods and active learning experiences, especially those involving group work. Additionally, our library classroom has always been restricted to library instruction only, making it unavailable for other campus faculty members to use, other than for participating in library instruction sessions. When the opportunity arose to create a second teaching space, we decided early on to design a space not just for our own teaching needs, but also for faculty from across campus who were looking for opportunities to experiment with new teaching methods and access to less rigid classrooms to do so.

During 2013-2014, we (the instructional services librarian and research commons librarian) led a planning committee made up of a member of the library systems team, along with representatives from across campus, including a faculty member in instructional technology, the head of MSU's Center for Faculty Excellence, an academic technology specialist, and a student. The result is a space that has no fixed furniture or computers nor a fixed podium. Instead, it runs wirelessly using Apple TVs connected to short-throw projectors and screen monitors.

Sheila Bonnand is instructional services librarian, email: sheila.bonnand@montana.edu, and Mary Anne Hansen is research commons librarian, email: mhansen@montana.edu, at Montana State University

Wired options are also provided for those with PC devices. The five wall-mounted Extron stations can be used individually or one station can project to all five stations, a design that makes the room ideal for sharing and collaboration. To aid that collaboration, the walls are painted as whiteboards to serve as screens as well as writing surfaces. In addition, the room is equipped with 24 iPads, and we install any apps requested for a particular class. Sixteen laptops are also available. The furniture is completely flexible and reconfigurable—a combination of rectangular and half-round tables on wheels flip up for easy storage with comfortable, stackable chairs that allow for multiple room configurations. This space is also located within the busy library commons on our first floor.

So what happens when an academic library provides faculty with a flexible, technology-enhanced teaching space unlike any other on its campus? We are still finding out after opening our ILS in April 2014. Unlike other classrooms on campus, ILS cannot be reserved for an entire semester. Instead, instructional faculty reserve it for those times during the semester when they are doing activities that take advantage of the flexible space and the technology.

Since completion, ILS has been used for a wide variety of classes and some unexpected uses. Learner-centered activities were the focus of most of the class sessions. For example, a graphic design professor is in his third semester of using ILS as a team design studio to work on group projects and to meet with clients. Other classes have used the iMovie app on the iPads to create group videos and present them to the rest of the class or, in the case of dietetics interns, to make videos for use by local nonprofits. An

education class created a group Google sheets document, gathering open-access resources in support of Montana's Indian Education for All curricula. Librarians have also used the space to experiment with more active learning strategies and hands-on instruction.

Envisioned as a teaching space for bringing your own device, i.e., a wireless, flexible space for accommodating multiple types of devices, ILS still has some limitations. Wireless connections weren't reliable at first, but as campus IT has improved infrastructure, it has improved. Faculty using the space often bring their own Macs and PC laptops, but few of them use the room wirelessly with an iPad or iPhone, as we had originally envisioned would be the primary way to access the technology in this teaching space.

Great interest was expressed from faculty when ILS first opened, but we did not see as much uptake as anticipated in the first year, although librarians are using ILS regularly for library instruction

Senior graphic design students present their semester projects in the Innovative Learning Studio.

and technology workshops when it's available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the issue is time. Faculty must schedule class sessions outside of their regular class times early enough to ensure they can book the ILS. They also have to find the time to experiment with new pedagogical models and new technologies, which can be a challenge. We are finding that it takes one-on-one contact with faculty members to generate interest in the ILS because broad marketing strategies have not worked well.

The good news is that fall semester 2015 saw an increase in use and, prior to spring semester 2016, faculty members began reserving ILS for spring 2016.

We have also experienced some unexpected issues surrounding growing use of ILS.

Scheduling, meeting with faculty to ensure room priorities are being met, teaching users how to use the technology, and other management tasks involve more time than originally anticipated. Envisioned as a help-yourself and bring-your-own-device space, ILS is less intuitive than expected, and most instructors using the space for the first time need some support and instruction with the technology. We have also discovered that fewer faculty than expected are comfortable with Apple products, so they often want to use Windows-based computers, which do not take full advantage of the room's wireless capabilities. Also, many students are not familiar with iPads, and thus it often takes class time to get them comfortable with these devices. Because ILS's furniture is flexible, the space is constantly being reconfigured, meaning that set-up time for a session must be included when scheduling the space.

We also found that ongoing communication with faculty is necessary in order to help them integrate the use of ILS into their instruction. To retain the intended flexibility of ILS so that a number of academics across campus can experiment with the space, ILS cannot be scheduled for an entire semester by a specific class. Instead it is booked for specific points of need when the technology and flexible space is needed for one or more particular lessons. This scheduling format means faculty must have their class schedules set well in advance, so the room can be reserved for the specific dates of their lessons to take place in ILS, or they have be flexible enough to change the timing of an activity to fit the ILS schedule. Allowing for these scheduling complexities makes it difficult to keep the room fully booked.

Another issue we've encountered conflicts with our targeted use of ILS as a teaching space. Because it is a pleasant space in a library building that is centrally located on campus, ILS attracts those needing meeting space on campus, and meeting space is at a premium. ILS facilitators find themselves in the difficult situation of needing to fill the space to justify its existence while making sure it is used most often for its primary purpose—teaching and learning—rather than meetings.

Gathering usage statistics and evaluation data was built in from the start, and all users are sent an online feedback survey after each session. Important insights into how faculty members are using the space and the technology have been gathered using an online survey. Comments include:

"The room works very well for peer-to-peer learning in a computer based environment."

"Yes the classroom worked very well for our teaching objectives, and the library staff was extremely helpful with any questions regarding the ILS room. We will be scheduling it again next semester."

"Make more of these facilities! … All in all, that facility is pretty sweet and very, very helpful."

"The studio design worked flawlessly supporting small group breakout note taking, large group share outs, and team planning. We used the iPads and individual screens in small groups for individual and team note taking, and then all screens for whole group share outs. It was great!!"

"ILS enabled participants to arrange themselves in small working groups that fostered conversation and collaboration. Great layout within an inviting environment."

Another faculty member told us at the end of last semester, the use of ILS resulted in an unexpected improvement in student presentations.

This feedback from users has been very helpful during the first year plus of operation. However, we recognize that more substantive assessment is needed, especially as participation in the survey has been voluntary. To that end, we have embarked on a more thorough review of ILS and its use. Part of that assessment will include faculty and student interviews designed to gather more in-depth information.

ILS was not envisioned as a static environment, but one responsive to teaching and learning needs. The information gathered will inform decisions about improving the functionality of the room. For example, we already recognize

Research and tools

• **Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.** A project of the Columbia Journalism School, the Dart Center is focused on the reporting of violence and conflict, as well as providing information on the study of trauma. There are links to classroom resources and tips sheets, and articles categorized under such subjects as "Immigrant and Refugees," "Self-Care and Peer Support," and "War and Civil Conflict". The content is multimedia, with audio/video files and links to outside resources. *Access:* http://dartcenter.org.

• **Journalist's Resource.** Based at the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy at Harvard, this project aims to bring research studies to the fore for journalists. Its searchable database of academic and government research contains more than 1,500 studies from a variety of fields, including economics, government, and international developments. There are also tip sheets, data resources, and even open source syllabi. In 2013, ALA named it one of the best free reference websites. *Access:* http://journalistsresource.org.

• **Journalist's Toolbox.** Presented by the Society of Profession Journalists (mentioned earlier), this resource is exactly what it says it is. Several of the links listed on this site lead to many of the sites discussed in this article, but there is enough additional content to warrant a mention. A range of topics is covered, from video editing tools to campaign finance money trackers. These are listed by chronological entry and by discrete categories. The Toolbox's Twitter feed provides regular updates on new entries. *Access:* http://www.journaliststoolbox.org.

• **Nieman Reports.** This is the website and publication of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism. It is home to the Nieman Watchdog Project, detailing journalistic efforts to hold politicians and power brokers to account. Individual magazine issues dating back to 1947 are archived and freely available, including the most current issue. From the Nieman Reports page, users can also follow the links to the Nieman Fellowship, Lab, and Storyboard pages. *Access:* http://niemanreports.org.

Note

1. International Federation of Journalists Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, www.ifj.org/about-ifj/ifj-code-of-principles/. ✐

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the need for a universal wireless solution so that both Apple and PC devices can be accommodated.

This first 18 months with ILS has been a success in a number of ways. The library added flexible teaching space, attracted a number of faculty back to the library, and made the library a stronger player and partner in the university's teaching enterprise. It also put the library at the forefront of technological change on the MSU campus. However, because of the issues that have arisen in managing the space and because this space is experimental, the library is in the process of analyzing usage statistics and evaluation data gathered since ILS opened. When that analysis is completed, we will be exploring ways to improve the space and the technology, increase use by faculty, and make its management more sustainable. This is entirely fitting as the space was never envisioned as static but always evolving to meet faculty needs and incorporate new technologies. With initiatives like this, we have the opportunity to increase the relevance of the physical library to faculty, reversing a trend inherent in the digital age.

Notes

1. Steven J. Bell, "Bringing Back the Faculty: The Evolution of the Faculty Commons in the Library," *Library Issues: Briefings for Faculty and Administrators,* 31 (2011): 1-4.

2. Ibid. ✐