UWF Libraries Learning/Information Commons White Paper

Preliminary Budget Estimate (1.2M), Narrative Brief

(Prepared For Higher University and Library Administration, Stakeholders)
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Library Information Commons enhance learning, provide a technologically advanced environment for patrons and foster a sense of local and global community through new technological possibility for a campus. Library Information/Learning commons require a focused commitment of campus resources to develop and maintain. With careful planning, an information/learning commons reorients an entire campuses possibilities toward new services with regards to learning and academic research and production capabilities.

Library Learning Information Commons are places to access, use, and create knowledge transforming the old library reference desk and linear rows of computers to provide an array of new 21st century technologically advanced user services (web design, digital literacy, new media possibilities). An Information Commons links directly to the wider campus strategic mission of learning for the 21st century. Developing the needed new requisite services and physical environments justifies the investment to create a popular, technologically advanced mission-critical space for a university. Library Learning/Information Commons provide faculty and students with a seamless environment and new set of services so that they may access, manage, and produce information for the 21st century.

Information and Learning Spaces – Renovation/Reconstruction (250k)

In an Information Commons, the traditional library first floor space is creatively reconfigured for the 21st century to enable technologically advanced learning, new media and computing spaces. The architectural redesign reflects students and faculty desire for collaborative and innovative learning and being technologically enabled through the combination of social interaction, technology possibilities and research. The term 'collaboratory' is key here. Information commons involve innovative architectural spaces for new technology and furniture redesign built to accommodate groups sharing a common computer or varying sets of new technologies. Information commons include

technologically advanced booths, study spaces for small groups, media centers housing and highlighting libraries collection of media resources for viewing and takeout (i.e. DVD's, audio books) and advanced digital areas for faculty and students who wish to take full advantage of the library's information and digital literacy capabilities. All is seamlessly and innovatively integrated with the traditional/classic library environment.

Software and Hardware - Specialized Expansion (250k)

The technology in an Academic Library Information Commons is intentionally pervasive and more advanced than in most old school academic libraries. Information Commons have clusters of higher end multimedia computers enabled with rich focused digital application suites as well as advanced spaces for laptops, mobile technologies, group computing, podcasting and various forward thinking learning technologies. The software on the patrons computers is much more extensive than that available in typical libraries and specifically geared to expand and capitalize on the libraries traditional electronic information sources (Vendor Databases) with a new set of services to enable students and faculty with the possibilities of 'digital literacy'(i.e. Web page creation, podcasting, academic multimedia projects). In addition, selective workstations possess higher end statistical packages, geographic information systems (GIS) software and advanced multimedia/digital studio sections.

New Patron Library Learning/Information Service Zones (250k)

Specialized personnel provide various new service points and open space zones to assist patrons in digital literacy efforts and new technological possibilities, including information research needs and integrating these into the realm of the digital. Information commons usually include multimedia production service areas to provide support for new possibilities of allowing students and faculty to 'create' and author traditional academic based work in a wider media spectrum of possibilities incorporating images, video, datasets and enhanced communication through the internet and social computing possibilities. Personnel support faculty, student and community efforts to enhance knowledge creation taking advantage of the new capabilities of digital media integrated with the library's extensive online database and e-resources collections.

Collaborative Learning Environments (250k)

Students writing papers, preparing presentations or other course assignments need to access and organize information (library functions), learn to use relevant software and equipment (traditional IT functions), and write the paper or project (writing center functions). The library, computer center, and writing center combine successes through an information commons. The writing center, faculty teaching, learning and academic technology centers are partners and collaborators in the long term service points and spaces within an information commons. Having staff from all units enabled in carefully designed narratively grouped spaces empowers students, faculty and community patrons to research and produce. Students and faculty can easier succeed in a central place where the larger university community can seamlessly research, innovate and produce technologically enhanced academic products with librarians, writing tutors, and technologists.

New Library Technological Services/Staff (200 k recurring)

While the planning of an information commons frequently begins with the development of an innovative new architectural floor plan, new hardware/software equipment and furniture redesign, the range of innovative new activities users will engage in also needs to be supported by new service facilitators and staff. This has implications for redesigning campus budget allocations involved in the facility of technological resource specialists to be integrated with traditional library staff and librarians. The need to create academic multimedia websites and digital products has implications for hardware, software, network infrastructure, furniture, staff expertise and functions. An increasing number of institutions also draw on the talents of students to deliver new services through the library information commons. Information technologists and librarians liaise closely with teaching and learning center staff housed in an information commons. The opportunity for enhancing university curriculum through the combined efforts of these groups is enormous.

Broadband Multidisciplinary Collaboratory (250k)

A forward looking information commons should also have an extensive broadband information visualization lab where broadband data streams are able to be utilized by academic researchers and students to synthesize and create new knowledge products in a shared global arena. Having a dedicated and transparently shared institutional broadband resource in the library increases successes for the university and creates new synergies from interdisciplinary sharing. In the past these types of facilities were usually hidden away in an R&D section of a graduate computer science department. Information Visualization and broadband possibilities are now centrally important across all of the sciences as well the majority of business and the humanities. Through these multidisciplinary collaboratories, larger communities of practice gain awareness to be involved in such endeavors in a widely accessible facility.

Next Level Paths for Operationalizing an Information/Learning Commons

Develop Budgetary subgoals and timelines.
Design budgetary assessment plans.
Determine appropriate partners, gain future budgetary commitments
Define present resources.
Determine specific locations with architects for preliminary mock-ups.
Define services offered tied with Human resource needs and recurring funding.
Factor in present staff training needs.
Pay for a floor plan and new models from architectural mockups.
Budget technology and long term upgrade costs (network, hardware, software).
Choose and budget innovative furniture and interior design.
Forecast Future hardware, software configurations needed.
Define larger staff changes to occur from previous work

Further Academic Library Best Practice Models

Leveraging Technology (Stanford and University of Washington Models
Groupspace, technology, large screen displays
http://depts.washington.edu/sacg/facilities/advtech/
(http://academiccomputing.stanford.edu/groupspace/teamspot.html,
University of Tennessee Libraries, Subject Specific Weblogs)
http://www.lib.utk.edu/news/biology
Spatial Redesign Models Emory Cox Hall
(http://www.cet.emory.edu/cox/index.cfm)