

First Floor East Renovation

Focus Group Findings

March 2005

Our team convened six focus groups over two weeks in late February and early March 2005. The groups were composed as follows:

- undergrad and grad students (27)
- GT undergrad support staff (8)
- faculty (3)
- Library / OIT staff (10)
- ➔ total number of participants: 48

Linda Cabot and Crit Stuart managed the groups, assisted on several occasions by Paul Supawanich, Library Student Advisory Council member, who supplied all student subjects for the sessions and sat in on the discovery exercises. The focus group exercise engaged participants to imagine all possible characteristics of the space. These ideas were sorted by the groups into *affinities*. The last steps in the exercise were to describe each affinity group using both standard language and metaphor. Approximately 20 pages of suggestions were generated by the six focus groups. This report summarizes those findings.

Linda, Paul and Crit are struck by the great similarities in ideas across all groups. Many of their notions for the space parallel our early ideas, thus providing reinforcement and encouragement for the work ahead. It appears that we are very much in sync with our customer base.

In this document, we consolidate the mass of ideas into elements that we want to incorporate into the space programming. The themes / categories we have used to describe the spaces are:

- Aesthetics / décor / ambiance
- Furnishings and space delineations
- Media / technology / productivity tools
- Celebration / recognition of GT creativity
- Fun / games / relaxation / distraction
- Awareness / communication / connectedness
- Ability of space to change / morph

Summary of services / qualities / themes

- Circulation department
- print station for computers on floor; photocopy machines; zone for stapling, hole-punching, etc.
- café / coffee house (Jazzman's) with tables & chairs
- installed computers w/ full suite of software; quick use computers for fast print jobs, etc.
- comfortable furnishings / tables / chairs for individuals and groups to gather
- well trained, helpful, friendly staff
- reading areas and casual reading material
- areas that are quiet to balance those that are more robust / active
- display / exhibit capacity for GT and outsider art and outstanding projects
- lots of art and great aesthetics
- ability to stay informed / connected with critical events at GT
- just-in-time "performance capacity" (guest speakers / performers) with screen, speakers and projector
- refurbished restrooms with improved ventilation
- experiment with modest number of group study spaces / "group furniture" to inform renovation of 2nd floor West (?)

Ideas with merit that cannot be incorporated

- group study rooms
- "dark" room for naps / taking breaks
- presentation rehearsal room
- craft area for building models
- space for faculty and TAs to meet with students (esp. if faculty don't have offices, or do have, but not conveniently located)
- areas for club meetings
- writing center / clinic (experiment that may move to another area if successful, and if space can be located; late afternoon, evening and weekend hours)
- lockers for temporary storage of items

Aesthetics / décor / ambiance

- decorate with GT student and faculty art
- decorate with computer graphic art; other art
- art is refreshed rather than remaining static
- install large LCD screens for computer graphic art and other creations (related to both class-created art and other artistic expressions) NOTE: see good example at Burdell's and in Bookstore.
- get art on loan from College of Architecture exhibits
- decorate with pictures and objects that illustrate the history of GT
- display cases and "interior" vertical surfaces for art
- popular reading materials (fiction, magazines, newspapers, culturally diverse materials)
- various counter height display cases for reading materials
- DVD / VHS containers to advertise Library-owned movies
- beautiful colors; no more drab walls
- attractive fabrics and other interesting materials
- fresh ceiling
- great lighting, perhaps adjustable
- mirrors to refract light and provide "openness"
- attractive floor coverings
- use of decorative elements to divide up space, and to create noise buffers
- not too contemporary / modern (especially if it would create a "cold" feeling); more like a home "library"; let it be library-like
- not cluttered
- use a variety of floor surfaces or patterns to delineate spaces
- esthetically clean and pleasing to the eye
- make the floor layout easy for approaching individuals to "interpret"
- light and airy
- as much access as possible to outside views

- noise dampening elements to reduce cacophony
- comfortable, sustained temperatures
- water sounds
- music in some areas
- fireplace or other elements to evoke cozy feeling
- flowers, plants and small trees (bonsai)
- adequate, attractive trash receptacles and recycle bins

Ideas with merit that cannot be incorporated

- lots of new windows to connect inside to outside / sunlight into the floor
 - permit direct access to outside via fire doors on west wall
 - deck / patio for outside for eating
 - significant art shows
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Furnishings and space delineations

- rich mix of seating: couches, single-seat chairs, club chairs
 - bean bag chairs and pillows for getting closer to the floor
 - chairs that envelope one for privacy
 - foot rests
 - ample number of chairs for groups to gather at one spot
 - rich mix of tables: pub-like tables the café area, but perhaps no tables that are taller than standard height; counter-height tables don't appear to be as appealing
 - coffee tables
 - round and square tables
 - round tables for installed computer systems rather than long, boring rows of computers
 - mix of conversation areas without tables; other spaces set up with tables
 - sprinkling of solo-chairs for individuals who want to be alone
 - spaces that are defined by moveable / easy-to-shift vertical space dividers (can be composed of various materials and degrees of opacity)
 - space delineated with display devices and exhibit cases
 - mix the furniture solution for computers
 - distinct separation of café area from remainder of floor (though not with solid, opaque walls); and with attention paid to noise abatement
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Media / technology / productivity tools

- white boards; smart white boards
- surfaces that can be written on without staining
- dependable wireless
- convenience data and tons of power connections
- large flat screens for displaying messages, art, TV, movies (NOTE: check with Ty Walker at Student Center for information on how they feed weekly content to the large screen there . . . a mix of news and student generated content.)
- installed computer systems (35)
- a few computers that are "quick use" / walk-up
- printing capability
- area (with trained assistance) for printing posters and other over-sized things
- wireless listening stations / headphones / "airport style" furnishings with technology embedded for music listening and video capacity
- ability to direct music to some areas
- speakers in ceiling
- projectors in ceiling for guest presentations, projecting announcements, etc.
- projection screen(s) that raise out of sight when not needed
- laptops, tablets, various cameras (still and camcorders) available for loan from Circulation desk
- photocopiers
- ability for virtual conference / netmeeting

- sound-proof zone for phone conversations
- white noise to mask unwanted sound
- excellent human assistance and simple instructions for using technology embedded across the floor

Ideas with merit that cannot be incorporated

- recharging stations for iPods (possible?)
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Celebration / recognition of GT creativity

- display of award winning projects / research
 - memorabilia / objects evoking GT's past
 - art and movies created by GT students and faculty
 - book club (possibly other GT clubs that "qualify" to be in the space)
 - "Tuesday Talks" with famous faculty / guest lectures
 - celebration of holidays and special GT events
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Fun / games / relaxation / distraction

- game boards built into or depicted on table tops (perhaps confined to Jazzman's)
- casual reading materials
- TV access (?) playing GT sports, news, etc.

Ideas with merit that cannot be incorporated

- Karaoke late at night
 - Movies late at night
 - Massage chairs
 - iPods & Shuffles for check out
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Awareness / communication / connectedness

- large screen displays of GT upcoming events; library services
 - means to post flyers / announcements / posters (but attractive)
 - kiosk for looking up useful information
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Ability to change / morph

- furniture must be easy to move about
- large, open spaces can be separated with little effort
- speaker forum can easily emerge from center section of south side
- lights / projectors / and other technology is easy to move about (not easily stolen)
- ideally students will be able to do some customization of spaces
- exhibits and art should not be static; some aesthetic elements should periodically be refreshed
- "rooms" are easily configured into the space, with similar ease at opening up vistas across the floor
- lighting may be easily adjusted, as well as music, white noise, etc.
- temperature should be easily adjusted for sustained comfort