Place, presence and possibility: what makes a good Library classroom?

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“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us”. Winston Churchill.

Webster Library, Concordia University
Webster Library renovation: 2013 - 2017

Project phases:
- Masterplan: June 2011
- Program & Concept Design: March 2013
- Preliminary Plans: November 2013
- Final Plans & Specifications: June 2014
- Approvals: October 2014
- Construction in phases starting in January 2015
- Completion – August 2017
Classrooms

3 new classrooms:
- 2 x 30 students
- 1 x 60 students
Teachers, learners & the classroom…

♣ What do we want learners in the 21st century to become?
♣ What teaching & learning experiences affect these expectations?
♣ How does space influence these expectations?
♣ What is the role of the instructor or teacher?
♣ Technology – the future?
♣ What is the relationship between teaching, learning, technology & space?
“For the first time we are preparing students for a future we cannot clearly describe.” David Warlick
Learning spaces – the current situation
Learning spaces – the current situation
Learning spaces – the current situation
Learners…

♣ Independent and inquisitive learners
♣ Creative thinkers and problem solvers
♣ Active cross-disciplinary researchers
♣ Engaged citizens and experiential learners
♣ Empathetic and collaborative
♣ Risk-takers, ‘blue-sky’ thinkers…

♣ What experiences affect these expectations?
Teaching, learning & space...
Focus group consultations

- 3 focus group consultations - January 2014:
  - 2 with faculty
  - 1 with librarians

- Total number of participants:
  - Faculty: 13. An additional 6 responses were received via email.
    - Representation form disciplines
      - Fine Arts
      - Science & Engineering
      - Arts & humanities
      - Social Sciences & Business
  - Librarians: 7
Themes

- Defining your teaching style
- Visualising and defining an optimal, ‘ideal’ classroom
- Technology and media use in teaching
- The significance of these teaching spaces in the University Library.
"Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand." Confucius, 450 BC
Teaching styles
The ‘ideal’ classroom
- clean sight lines
- control
- bright
Dynamic
Personal

Exciting
- Not ruined
- Visibility
- Wireless "teacher connection to screen"

Project both what is on tablet & what I write on "blackboard" Teacher part of
participatory flexible low-tech

windows sunlight

plants

sunlight

door

shelving for casual tables/chairs

plants
THE IDEAL CLASSROOM

ENVIRONMENT
- Plants
- Big windows
- Indoor vs. Outdoor
- Lighting
  - Illumination

DESIGN
- Simple
- Open Design
- Groups
  - Multiple boards
  - Visibility

Technology
- WiFi
- 2 plugs to project
- Walls to project
- Avoid cables!

Sound

Cost
- Coat hangers
- Camp chairs

Flexible (Mobile)
- Tor corner (Mobile)

High quality
- Nice to the eyes

Note: The image contains a mind map with various elements related to the ideal classroom, including environment, design, and technology.
In their own words…

♣ “I want to be able to **change activities** within the class relatively easily and move from group to individual to small group activities fairly **quickly**”

♣ “I am less ‘sage on the stage’ and more **facilitator of learning**”

♣ “Robust, seamless technology & wifi is key”

♣ “Make the classroom **bright, natural, inspiring**…a shop-front to the wider community”

♣ “Need to develop the **potential of all learners**”

♣ “We need **high-tech and low-tech solutions - and everything in-between**.”
Planning goals

♣ Furniture:
  o flexible, light, comfortable, easy to move.

♣ Walls, floors & other fittings:
  o flexible, ample power & data ports, sound-proof

♣ Technology:
  o flexible, high quality, robust, easy to use, functioning

♣ Environment:
  o natural, lighting, clear, bright, inspiring.

“Learning from the space, not just in the space”
Faculty:
“If you design a beautiful classroom we will use it”.

“Coming out of the classroom into the Library does create a different intangible perspective for students in possibly focusing their minds on ‘why they are there’ [at university]”.

Librarians:
“These classrooms represent the Libraries increasing contribution to the teaching & learning priorities of the University”
Initial Definition of Models

Identification of 2 classroom typologies:

**Model 1:**
- Highly Collaborative, Flexible Computer Classroom with 30 seats

**Model 2:**
- Large Flexible Classroom with 60 seats
Initial Definition of Models

For each classroom model, identify:

- Teaching pedagogies
- User needs & user experience
- Furniture configuration and layout
- Activities performed
- Technologies and audio visual equipment
- Lighting and electrical
- Windows, doors, walls, ceilings, storage
- Furniture and other fittings
Initial Definition of Models: Examples
Initial Definition of Models: Examples
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Initial Definition of Models: Examples
Review of Initial Definition

Review initial definition of models with internal resources and “experts”:

- Against University Classrooms « Standards »
- To validate feasibility of technology solutions
- To ensure solutions are practical and workable
- Prioritize when necessary
- Clarify « Vision »
Verify possibilities of space

classroom 203 | lecture mode option 1

student seats: 32

plan view

application includes
- Verb table 24"x66"
- Node seating
- Cobi seating
- Eno board,
- Huddle board
- Verb whiteboard
Verify possibilities of space

classroom 203 | discussion mode option 2

student seats: 22

plan view

application includes
- Verb table 24”x72”
- Node seating
- Cobi seating
- Eno board,
- Huddle board
- Verb whiteboard
Verify possibilities of space

classroom 203 | learn lab mode option 1

student seats: 32

application includes
- Verb table 24”x60”
- Node seating
- Cobi seating
- Media:scape mobile
- Eno board,
- Huddle board
- Verb whiteboard
Verify possibilities of space

classroom 203 | learn lab mode option 2

student seats: 36

plan view

application includes
- Cobi seating
- Media:scape table 60”x72”
- Verb teacher table
Individual Rooms Specifications

- **G**: Fiche du projecteur, si nécessaire. Cordon de projection est habituellement situé à une distance du mur de projection d'environ 1,8 x la largeur de l'écran centré dans la pièce sur un BX de 1500mm.
- **A**: 6" x 6" Fixation Horizontale à une hauteur de 18" du plancher fini. Pour l'installation de Filer ACL.
- **B**: 6" x 6" Fixation Horizontale à une hauteur de 18" du plancher fini. Pour l'installation de la plaque de branchement AV.
- **D**: Power, Network, and AV.
- **E**: Options de plancher
  - Conduit électrique
  - Conduit 50mm
  - Monument plancher-mur
  - Power, Network, and AV
- **C**: Mur de Visionnement
  - Si un monument de plancher est nécessaire, une connexion aux boîtes de jonction (mur avant) est nécessaire via un perçage supplémentaire dans le plancher sous une des boîtes (si possible) de jonction, comme illustré. Le concept est de lier le monument de la plancher au boîtes murales pour qu'ou y puissent passer du filage d’un bout à l’autre. Voir les Options.
- **F**: Conduit 50mm
- **L**: L’entre plafond de l’étage en sous
- **Option #1**: Perçage dalle
- **Option #2**: Perçage dalle
- **Option #3**: Perçage dalle si il y a un obstacle sous la dalle de plancher ou les autres JB sont situés.

**Note**: Les options #1, #2, et #3 dépendent du cas de figure et des contraintes liées au projet.
Individual Rooms Specifications

- Audio visual systems
- Electrical & network requirements
- Teaching equipment
- Furniture
- Lighting
- Acoustics
How will we know?

Post-completion data is key (both formal & informal)

♦ High levels of student & instructor satisfaction with space
♦ Increased critical thinking in student projects
♦ Increased student engagement & enthusiasm in-class
♦ The space is always full with students working, teaching, and learning. Demand for use exceeds supply!
♦ Students are clearly committed to learning and inspired to support/mentor each other
♦ Improvements in retention within the class
♦ Librarians & faculty inspired to explore multimedia use in pedagogy, new types of assignments and course materials.

Closing remarks

- Find and engage the enthusiastic ‘blue-sky thinkers’ as well as the skeptics
- Taking a free-hand, blank-slate approach to gathering input was helpful
- Communicate & share the plans
- Remember that the end-users will need to own the space & help promote its value to their colleagues.
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Thank You!

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