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Learning Commons Collaborations [ALA, June 2007]

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Learning Commons Collaborations

Anne C. Moore

Associate Director for User Services
IC Discussion Group, June 23, 2007
ALA Annual 2007, Washington, D.C.



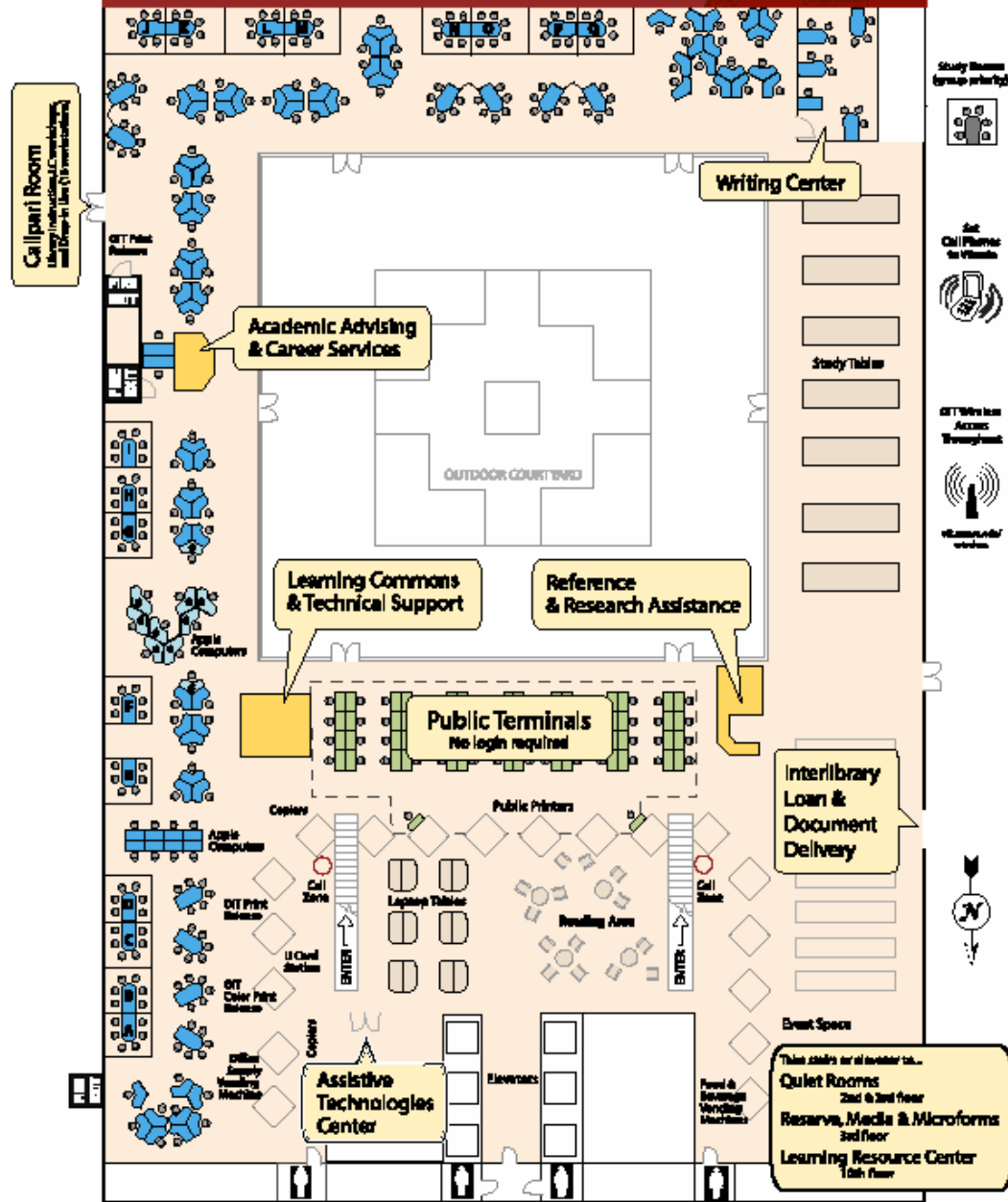
Mission Statement

As the heart of UMass Amherst, the Learning Commons (LC) provides a welcoming, flexible, and student-focused environment. Rich in services and technologies, the LC fosters community, innovation, and the creation of new knowledge. With long hours, peer support, and a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere, the LC encourages students to make the most of their educational experience. Campus service providers pool their expertise to provide convenient access to the core academic support services that enable students to succeed and excel at UMass Amherst. The LC strives to assist students to become self-directed learners and engaged adults to build a better future.

In a nutshell...

- 20,000 undergraduates; 5,000 graduate; 1,200 faculty
- 3.2 million volumes; 55 librarians; 75 staff; \$12 million annual budget
- 26 Floor W.E.B. Du Bois Library
- For \$2.5 million, renovated Lower Level in 4 months; opened Sept. 2005
- 25,000+ square feet; 300 seats; 17 glass study rooms
- Hours (24/5): Sunday 11 a.m. – Friday 9 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
- Gate count: 4,500-7,500 per day; 1 million annually
- Users are: 85% undergraduate; 50/50 gender; all majors; diverse; 35% daily users

LC The Learning Commons
Lower Level, W.E.B. Du Bois Library



Culture of Service, Collaboration, & Referral

- Provide everything they need to stay in the building until they are finished
- Consistent meetings with academic support service providers lead to mutual understanding and respect
- Sharing of information leads to:
 - Improved service and accurate referral
 - Fewer errors and frustrations for staff and users alike
 - Speedier resolution of issues
- Teamwork...

Synergistic and Symbiotic Collaborations

- Office of Information Technologies
- Writing Center
- Academic Advising
- New Student Orientation (Student Affairs)
- Auxiliary Services
- Parking Services
- Faculty

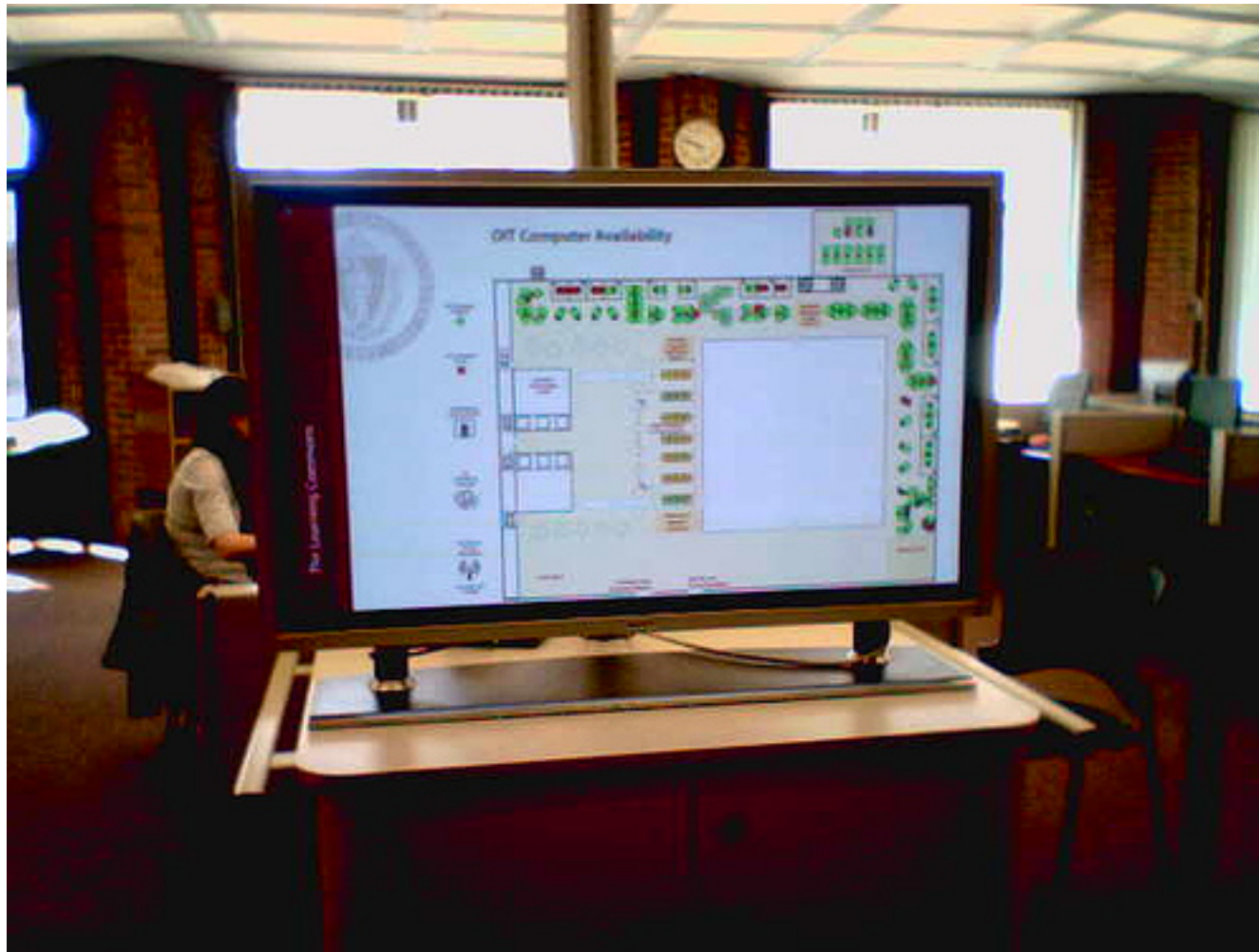
Office of Information Technologies

- Different perspectives, but came together to achieve common goals and staff a joint service desk (Learning Commons & Technical Support Desk)
- Individual managers work together through weekly meetings and on-going information sharing
- We resolve problems together and remove barriers between organizations with different values, cultures, and audiences together to meet student needs
- Others in our organizations are still intolerant of one other
- Bring up ideas and implement them: Dynamic, open workstation display; Web-based printing; U-drive; blogs; security clinic...
- Next step: Joint training of student employees

Learning Commons & Technical Support Desk



Dynamic Open Workstation Display



Writing Center

- Formerly in an isolated, difficult to find location in the English building; low traffic; low funding; poor web site; minimal advertising
- We approached them
- Collaboration between Reference and LC and Writing Center began in 2005
- Assigned a liaison librarian who worked with WC manager to develop an online guide to writing
- Library purchased non-circulating writing reference collection from list provided by WC tutors
- Offer joint programs and training
- Migration from a transient space to completely resident in the LC over the last 2 summers
- Provide constant referrals and use has skyrocketed (4X)

The Learning Commons

Main Floor, W.E.B. Du Bois Library
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Study Stations:
Full Software Suite
UMass NetID login required



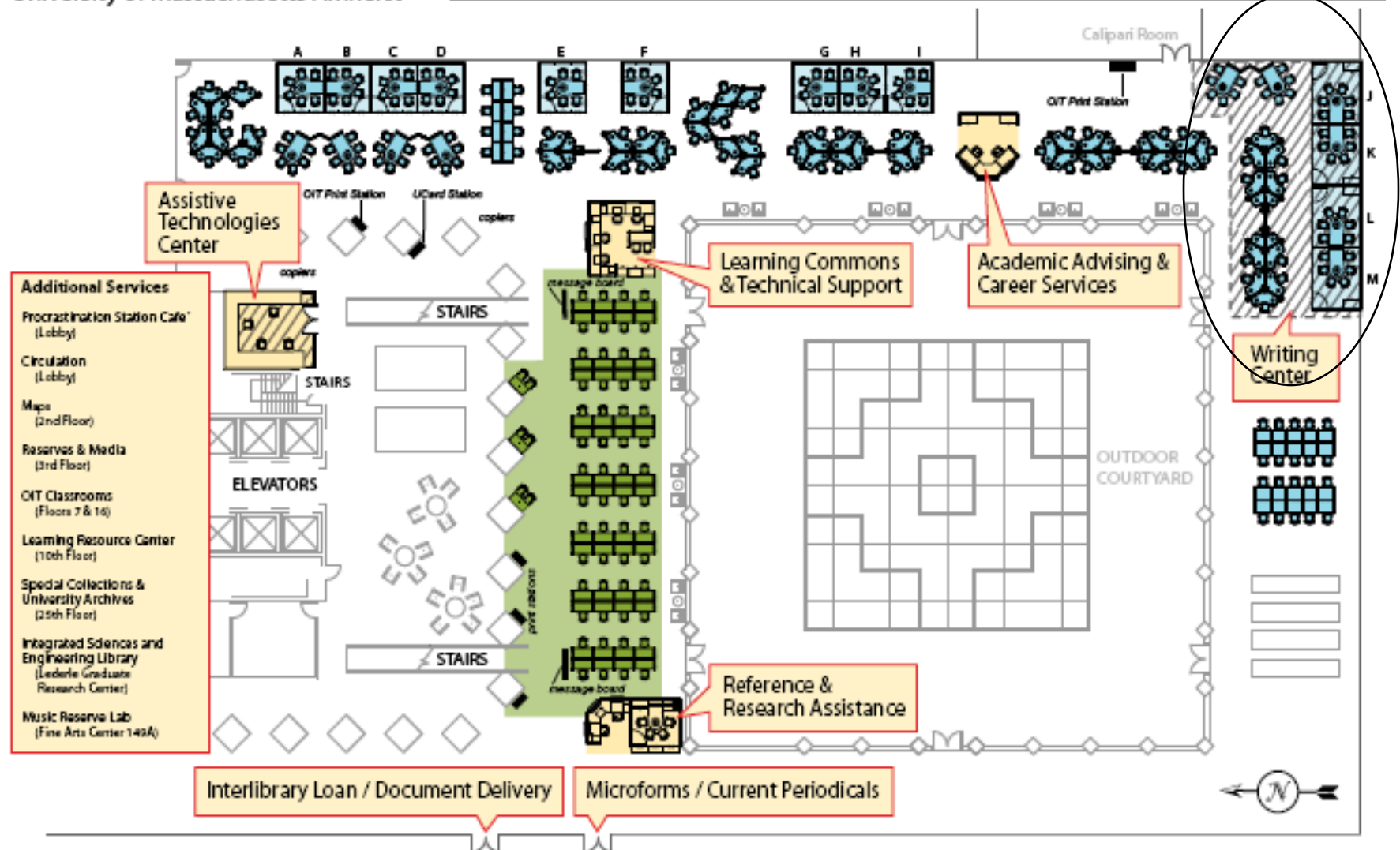
Public Stations:
Browsers & MS Office only
No login required



Services
Reserved Areas



Service Desks



Writing Center Enclosure



Writing Center inside Learning Commons



Academic Advising

- Approached us to have a presence in the LC; wanted an office and a staff person plus more...
- Provost's vision: A front end on advising to improve retention, success, and diversity
- Service point in LC is staffed by students and professional advisors during convenient hours
- Majors, gen eds, registration, degree audits
- International programs, exchanges, semester abroad
- Share service desk with Career Services
- Next step: Faculty advisors in the LC
- First year experience course in planning: Cover research process, advising, and ethics

Academic Advising Link & Career Services



Academic Advising Link & Career Services



New Student Orientation (Student Affairs)

- To spur retention, **academics** is now emphasized in NSO (4,000 freshmen and transfer students each summer)
- Contacted NSO coordinator to bring both students and parents on tours of the LC
- Work with Student Affairs, Residence Life, service providers
- LC is site for advising and course registration portion of NSO
- Library table at Resource Fair (in Campus Center) for students and parents: Provide library, technology, and tutoring information (all LC services) to parents, so they can remind students when the question emerges

Other Orientations in LC

- Transfer and international students
- New doctoral students in nursing
- New faculty

- Multiple exposures (NSO and beyond)
 - LC purpose and services reinforced in NSO program, tour, and resource fair
 - Meet service providers, participate in activities (punch card), and pick up giveaways at tables inside LC during First Week celebration (RAs bring freshmen to library)
 - All campus tours come into LC

Auxiliary Services

- Runs the Procrastination Station Café inside entrance
- 10% of proceeds go to library
- Income up 371% FY06 from FY05 (\$281,000 in FY06)
- Starbucks in Campus Center receipts down 50%
- Gradually expanded hours (3 a.m.) and choices in response to library representation of student needs
- Added food and drink vending for after hours
- Library staff listen to café staff comments and circle back to Auxiliary Services' managers to suggest improvements – support café staff

Procrastination Station Café (Auxiliary Services)



Parking Services

- Contractor cooperative to allow garage (nearby) parking ticket validation (First hour free) and \$3 total to park from 5 p.m. – 5 a.m.
- Provide statistics on use of the service: 656 used the parking validation service between April 1 and October 31, 2006



Faculty

- Faculty see new spaces for students and want to be where the action is: Why are the students are getting everything?
- Students spend lots of time in the LC and are not visiting faculty for office hours or going to the academic departments for advising
- Library recognizes faculty as the key to students: What they mention and require students to learn, is what they use
- Liaison librarians schedule office hours and consultations in academic buildings that have cafes and wireless areas
- Library provided space for a drop-in faculty writing room sponsored by Office of Faculty Development (Mellon funded)
- Events for Women in IT and IT minor held in LC
- Fall 2006: New faculty orientation held in LC
- Fall 2007: Pilot of a few faculty holding scheduled office hours at a table in the LC

Conclusion

- Promote the LC as a single entity with comprehensive academic support services in events, publicity, and at service points
- Reach out to faculty and parents
- Proactive to implement technologies used by students (Facebook, LiveJournal, IM, etc.) to reach them where and when they are
- User focus in everything; training; active referral

Conclusion (2 of 2)

- LC Coordinator:
 - Librarian who keeps all services working collaboratively to meet student needs
 - Communicates with all groups
 - Handles special requests
 - Makes suggestions and applies pressure to enhance services and facilities
- Library and librarians highly visible and respected on campus; viewed as transformative and open-minded

Contact Information

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- <http://www.umass.edu/learningcommons>
- Presentation:
<http://people.umass.edu/annem/ic062307.pdf>