

Title: Library spaces – new theatres of learning: a case study

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Libraries used to be designed for librarians – keeps of the knowledge. The interior and exterior design was collection centric. To access the information you had to enter a fortress like building and normally seek assistance from library staff behind high desks.

Some library spaces have changed dramatically over the last 10 years. They have moved from what has been called generation 1 spaces (storehouses of information) to generation 4 libraries (connected learning spaces). Library spaces are becoming transformed to cater for both the social and learning needs of users. Libraries now include cafés, a mix of individual, group and casual seating; have wireless access, computer zones, interactive display areas, multimedia booths, laptop powered lockers.... The list goes on.

Different personality types are also catered for – as is the different learning styles. There are secluded places for the introvert, visually connected spaces for the voyeur and open performance places for the extrovert. These spaces support theatres for the increasing diverse needs of users.

The University of Queensland Library has embarked on a journey to transform all of its 14 branches into supportive learning environments. The recent refurbishment of the Biological Sciences Library involved taking a building that was fortress like in its appearance (exterior and interior) and opening it up to provide a state-of-the-art learning space catering for both different learning styles and personality types. The refurbished library saw a huge increase in usage which prompted the Library to undertake a detailed survey of not only who was using the but how the building was used but what students liked and didn't like about the new facility.

This paper will report on the findings of the building usage surveys, the results of a customer survey and the Library's responses. It will also touch on some of the new services that the University Library has implemented that embrace Web 2.0 technology that parallel the physical changes. These include customized webpages, real-time displays of computer availability, online room bookings and use of 'clicker' technology that generates instant feedback in training classes.