

Informal Group on Learning Spaces
September 22, 2011
23 Illini Hall
17 attendees
Notes submitted by Leslie Hammersmith

Next time: EWS labs and Newmark Addition – tour organized by Joe Zalabak

Topic: Basic Technology in the Classroom

Craig Jackson, who recently joined the UIC campus, is a huge proponent of having a resident computer in every classroom.

There is consensus that a projector is necessary.

Some debate about computer vs laptop and which is more suitable for classroom.

Laptop settings cause problems with projection (because of resolution), making them harder to support, but something we should consider putting in the classroom.

Instructors are trying to focus on instruction and the computers shouldn't be something that takes away from that.

By not providing the resident computer, you are pushing the responsibility and burden for providing technology to the departments or making individuals hook up to the network (security risk). Many times a support person has to go out in person to resolve problems since remote support has limitations.

120 computers in general assignment classrooms. Image drives (removable drives) – there are 2 images, an engineering image, and a regular image.

Normal classroom vs. lecture

Thin clients in the classrooms are a viable option (Joe Z.)

What do we mean by “all classrooms”? Classrooms with projectors?

Space utilization report recommended that ALL classrooms have technology, so we are going to that.

Quick turnaround of technology – Mary-Ann Winkelmes talking about Transformations seminar at College of Ed where they were showing a wireless connector to the projector (Apple TV hooked up to the projector). Because technology is always changing, it makes it really hard to support. How do you support the constant changes?

Because of our needed security on our network, what works at home (Apple TV wireless connection) may not work on our campus without some cooperation and coordination with the Networking professionals in CITES.

Point that instructors have already found a way to do these things, even if we can't afford to do them at any scale here. Point that there are technically advanced instructors like that and then there are also chalk-in-my-dead-hand instructors on this campus, too. Also important to get the right people in the right space (FMS).

Discipline-specific needs, room-specific, support needs

According to a Brown Bag on Wednesday 9/21, etext.illinois.edu adoption has doubled in one year, increasing from 1500 to 2700 in one year (out of a possible user base of 4000 for rhet). – illustrating a growing need for technology by curriculum-driven demands.

What do we add now to accommodate this growth?

Are there 2 tiers of classroom technology? Basic versus “advanced” or “specialized”? A point that the tiers are currently “general assignment” and “departmental” – but we need to start making the general assignment fit more of the need because our basic curriculum and educational expectations are changing.

Are we shifting the classroom to other areas? For example, if we are asking students to do more with technology, then maybe our practice of using traditional classroom spaces should change. We are building spaces for production and collaboration instead of presentation – what if we move to “blended” models, where classes for presentation meet in the traditional space, but the rest of the class gatherings are in these “other” spaces.

Reports coming out from all over the place that computer labs are being eliminated. Question: what are we replacing them with? What are we putting in these spaces? Point that labs filled a specific need when people didn't have their own technology. Now lab space is expected to fit a different need. For example, highly specialized software that needs high-end computing, access to restricted license software,

The shift from computer labs is going to be from physical to virtual (which, ironically, may cost more than the physical lab).

Joe Zalabak attended a conference in Houston. Where are the faculty in this group (our informal group)??

Doris Reeser shared that a provost committee is being established that would have faculty reps and students, in addition to support and administrators, to talk about classrooms.

Also a Chancellor committee being developed to look at all spaces across campus.

Mary-Ann Winkelmes and Robert Baird were discussing trying to get faculty exemplars to be engaged with the faculty by doing sessions in the teaching academies. How 21st century learners change teaching will be the theme for an

event in the spring for the teaching academies. See this as a way to engage faculty in these discussions.

Suggestion that working with program coordinators/faculty coordinators to learn what the specific needs are is an effective way for us to develop faculty-driven spaces.

Faculty engagement works better if we have something specific or a specific project for them to work on/learn from/focus on. (Robert Baird)

Joe's conference – looking at eInstruction clickers and how this technology changes classroom needs. On this campus we have central support for iClickers. Point that because we as a campus tend to support choice over standardization (examples, iClickers, e-text), this makes it harder for us to standardize what the basic technology in a classroom should be. We end up needing to take into consideration many variances. Leads to departments building specific spaces and departing from what is going on in the general assignment classrooms.

Talked a bit about iClicker frequency problems and mic frequency issues.

What about spaces that are used for classrooms and events, do we really need to have 2 different systems? Why have this confusing set-up for event-sharing.

Foellinger Auditorium issues – (event sharing) some of the problem comes from having multiple offices running the same space (one set for classes, another for events) and conflicts arising from that.

Smith Hall as a good example for space designed and managed for dual purpose (instruction and event). Modeled after Lincoln Hall plans for how to design dual event space.

List of Baseline Technology

Display.

Internet.

Chalk.

Whiteboard.

Wireless.

Wired.

Resident Computer.

Enough Power in floors and walls.

Evolving technology is making it necessary for classrooms to be specialized. Will standards become less and less and less because technology is requiring things to become more specialized?

Are we asking the wrong question? Should we be asking what needs to be specialized in the classroom?

Or how do we define a “general Assignment classroom”? Is there a new definition for gen assign?

Another complicating piece of this is that faculty and students don’t want to travel far to get to their classrooms.

Are there any universities that don’t have general assignment classrooms? Doris Reeser had a student gather data from many universities on how they manage and define general assignment classrooms. No evidence that any schools don’t have general assignment classrooms.

Setting room capacity.
Number of right-handed, left-handed desks. . .

In the Residence Hall multi-purpose seminar space, these are the baseline requirements:

Certain level of mobility to furniture.
Display.
Ability to project.
Writing surface (whiteboard, no chalk).

There is variance even in the baseline (i.e. brightness of the projectors) – which leads us to again ask the question about what should be “specialized” in a classroom.

Basic, bottom tier of what we need is pretty clear. And as things are added, it becomes more mobile and flexible. And we should focus on designing for that.
(Winkelmes)

Mobile. Portable. Flexible.

We want to see examples of the “tiers” – from both extremes – are there differences in discipline top tier? – Robert Baird

We will arrange to see additional spaces so that we can start to understand what “tiers” of classroom technology might look like.