Bootstrapping a Library Ideation Space: Creating a Low-Tech Student Collaboration Room

Genifer Snipes and Erin Passehl Stoddart

University of Oregon Libraries

It Began with Students...

Drawings of the UIF's Initial Proposal

OPEN

Research Findings

Focus Group Participants

- 8 total participants (5 male identifying, 3 female identifying)
- 6 undergraduates (third or fourth year), 1 graduate student, and 1 staff from Lundquist Center for Entrepreneurship
- Mostly majors from Lundquist College of Business, also

OPEN

The Process

OPEN

Lessons Learned

Facilities and construction are a key consideration.

- Campus facilities department took approximately 20% for building permits, fees, and contingency due to increases in construction
- Timelines involving construction or space design will always take longer than expected. Understand how much control you have over the timeline before assuming your project will be ready by a specific date or event.

Educate, Educate, Educate

- The idea of a space devoted to informal thinking and idea creation was unfamiliar to many and required a certain level of education in order to work effectively with institutional stakeholders. Discussions about policy, furnishings, and supplies all required creating a common understanding of how an ideation space differs from a classroom or traditional study

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Ideation & Other Theory

The Design Thinking Process

The concept of **ideation space** as a collaborative space separate from traditional group study spaces is

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Launching the IDEA Space

Room Layout

This 3-D rendering of the IDEA Space was provided after consultations with Campus Facilities. Left: view of the room when entering from the doorway with sliding wall in back; Right: view of the room looking towards the doorway.

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PRESENTED AT:

IT BEGAN WITH STUDENTS...

Drawings of the UIF's Initial Proposal

In Spring 2018, members of the University of Oregon's branch (https://innovate.uoregon.edu/university-innovation-fellows/) of the global University Innovation Fellows (https://universityinnovationfellows.org) student group approached Dean Adriene Lim with the proposal that the UO Library house the campus's first collaboration/ideation space.

Their reasons for connecting with the library included:

- **Discipline Neutrality.** Students who might be deterred from using a space in a disciplinary building (i.e. the Business School or Design building) outside their major would not find the Library as intimidating.
- **Thinking Space.** Ideation spaces and activities are intrinsically thinking and problem-solving focused, connecting them to core library values of inquiry, critical thinking, and creativity.
- **Low-Tech Focus.** The UIF group identified other "innovation" spaces on campus; however, all were tech-heavy makerspaces focused on prototyping/manufacturing, leaving a gap in the campus innovation ecosystem for the pre-creation phase where whiteboards & post-its are more useful than 3-D printers.
- **Meeting Space.** When the UIF students went looking, there was no other location on campus where large or multiple groups could have free access to workspace on a walk-in basis.

The Available Space

Late that year, due to a fortunate combination of space repurposing and the availability of one-time project funds, Dean Lim was able to offer a 820 sq. ft. space on the main floor of the Knight Library that has previously been used for course reserve storage, some limited space retrofitting, and new furniture to support the UIF request.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

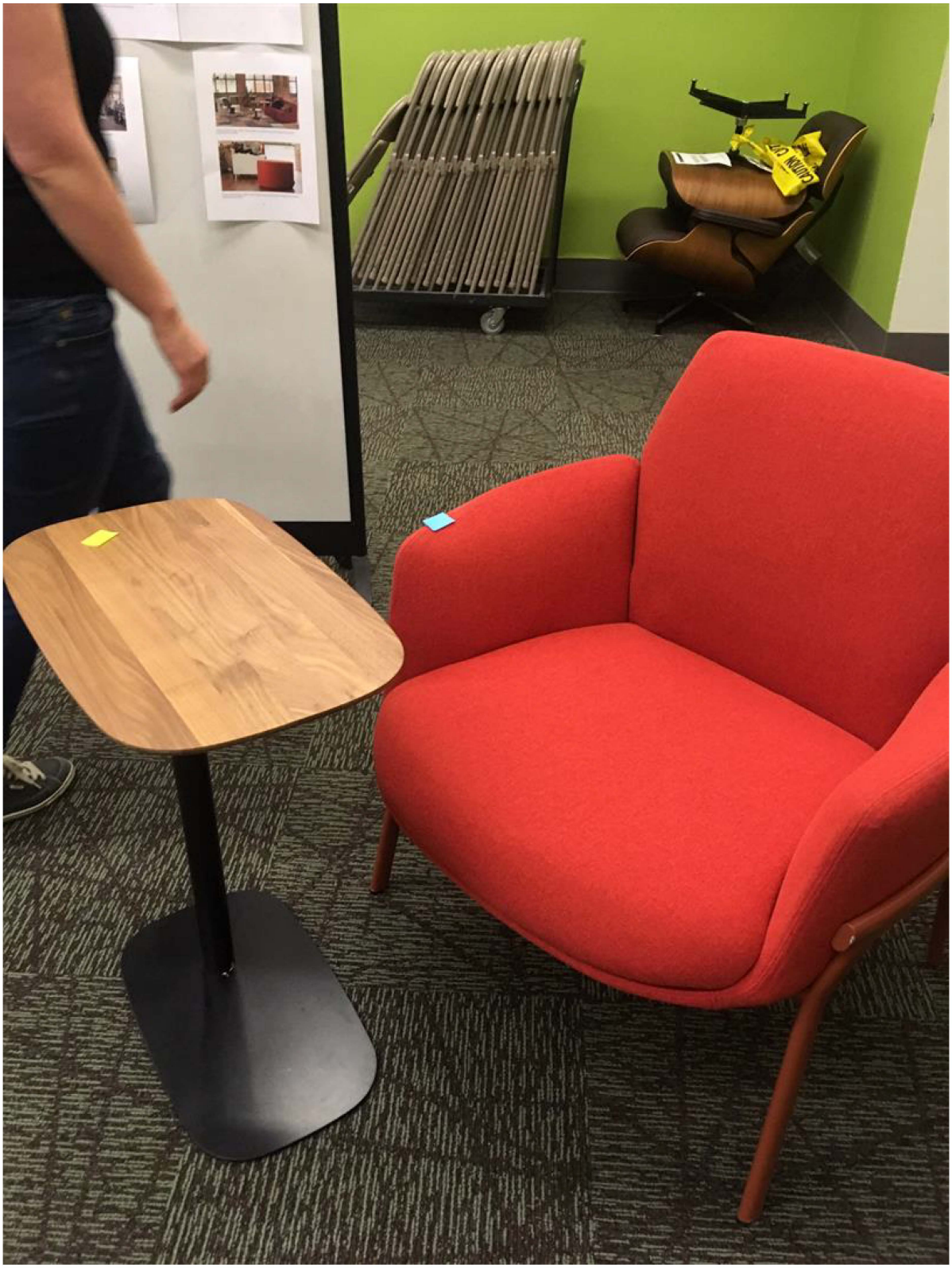
Focus Group Participants

- 8 total participants (5 male identifying, 3 female identifying)
- 6 undergraduates (third or fourth year), 1 graduate student, and 1 staff from Lundquist Center for Entrepreneurship
- Mostly majors from Lundquist College of Business, also College of Arts and Sciences
- Experience with concepts ranged from no awareness or experience with design thinking (3), some awareness of design thinking (2), to full understanding including having visited the Stanford Design School (3).

Activity: Furniture Voting

Furniture voting exercise: participants voted on physical furniture samples that were available to test out in the room and voted on furniture samples represented through photographs printed out that were unavailable in-person to test out.

Samples included ottomans, different types of chairs (with and without attached tables), and tables. Photographs included examples of moveable types of furniture taken from both inside libraries and companies.



Each participant received 10 stickers to vote and could utilize votes any way they wanted (for example, could place all 10 stickers on one item).

Aspirational vs. Attainable

Attainable verses aspirational goals: feedback from participants included both types of goals. It became apparent that participants didn't understand some of the constraints facing institutional policies and procedures. We emphasized that all feedback was welcome, but that many things that were discussed were aspirational and would have to be considered in future iterations of the space.

Aspirational	Attainable
Change out ceiling lighting from fluorescent to LED daylighting with dimmers	Augment existing fluorescent lighting with floor or task lighting, preferably with day or natural lightbulbs
Prefer room with natural light or daylighting	Room that is available for conversion that has no natural light and overhead fluorescent lighting, can add floor lighting or task lighting to tables
Want more visibility of the room; consider knocking down wall next to hallway and making it glass so people can see in	Leave walls in place; swap out solid wood door to a full glass door
All tables should be height adjusting	Due to cost, provide non-adjusting sitting and standing table options in the room.
Install projector and screen in the room.	Due to cost, purchase mobile projector and project onto the blank wall.
Incorporate creative tools such as mini-golf course, small water fountain	Provide small makerspace cart with office supplies and creative tools such as stress balls
Provide media cart or TV monitor with laptop, chargers for laptops, phones, tablets, etc.	Provide flyer that lists items that can be checked out by students inside the library
Mobile glass board to move around, write on	Purchase standard mobile whiteboards as well as smaller tablet size

Overall Recommendations

- **Physical space**: To offset the fluorescent lighting, purchase alternative floor or task lighting. Colorful baffling may be used for both sound mitigation and visual aesthetics.
- **Furniture**: Purchase adaptable, lightweight, moveable furniture with an emphasis on different height tables and comfortable seating, multiple writing surfaces including on the wall, and a maker cart/cabinet with office supplies and creative tools.
- **Technology**: Purchase small mobile protector that can be circulated that projects onto wall. Purchase power strips for access to outlets throughout the room. Create technology resource flyer to advertise what technology is available for check-out and software provided on public computers
- **Access**: room should be non-reservable, available on a first-come, first serve basis, open to UO students, faculty, and staff, with an emphasis on the undergraduate population.

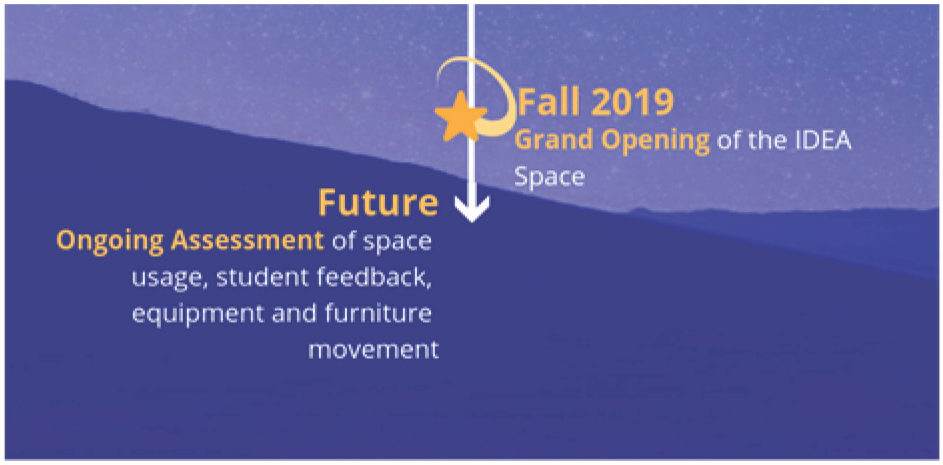
New Name

Task Force came up with an acronym to describe and name the room, based on a similar new space in Knight Library:

IDEA Space (Innovate, Design, Educate, Aspire)

THE PROCESS


CREATING THE
IDEA
Space
May 2018
Members of the University Innovation Fellows approached the UO Libraries about housing an Ideation Space
September
The Dean of Libraries convened the Collaborative Space Task Force
October
UIF student member invited to serve as ex officio task force member
November
IRB Approval received
3 cross-campus Focus Groups held to discuss stakeholder goals
December
The task force submits its final report including construction needs, furniture, and access policy recommendations
January 2019
Proposal Approved
March
Space design finalized & furniture purchased by CPFM
April
Tentative start of Construction of whiteboard wall, installation of doors to employee spaces
May
Tentative project completion and Soft Opening



Task Force:

Charge, Scope, Collaborations

Charge: Explore and identify operational changes and policies that should be considered in space design and to conduct focus groups with students to understand their space needs. Challenges with room remaining an adjacent shared space with library staff with open ceiling plan.

Budget: $50,000 (one-time money)

Deliverables: Final report with floor plans, recommendations, and budget using focus groups to collect and understand student space needs

Members: Library Administration, Research & Instructional Services, Facilities & Business Services, Library Technology Services, Access Services

Collaborations: Facilities and Business Services on space planning and liaise with campus facilities; Campus Planning and Facilities Management on permits, construction, and furniture ordering; Access Services on room policy and circulation questions; Research & Instructional Services on potential impact on library services; and the Library Evaluation, Assessment, and User Experience (EAUX) Team on proposed methodology for the focus groups and future assessment of space.

Focus Groups

Goals: to learn about targeted participants experiences with creative spaces; gauge interest for this new space; and to gather feedback about desired features and furniture.

Due to human subject participation and likelihood of future scholarship on topic, task force members completed IRB training and proposal

Recruitment: research population gathered from student organizations and academic departments involved with innovation and design thinking on campus. **Existing campus networks were also utilized for recruitment due to a tight timeline and scheduling of focus groups.** Participants were invited to participate using an email survey. Those recruited were allowed to share invitation with others interested in design thinking on campus.

Sessions: Three one-hour, in-person sessions were conducted with 2-4 participants per session. Sessions included 1 moderator, 1 note taker, and 1 student assistant from UIF as the sessions were not recorded.

Format: Sessions consisted of six open-ended questions in group discussions to elicit insights and expectations of new ideation room. Participants voted on furniture samples in the room and samples in photographs.

LESSONS LEARNED

Facilities and construction are a key consideration.

- Campus facilities department took approximately 20% for building permits, fees, and contingency due to increases in construction
- Timelines involving construction or space design will always take longer than expected. Understand how much control you have over the timeline before assuming your project will be ready by a specific date or event.

Educate, Educate, Educate

- The idea of a space devoted to informal thinking and idea creation was unfamiliar to many and required a certain level of education in order to work effectively with institutional stakeholders. Discussions about policy, furnishings, and supplies all required creating a common understanding of how an ideation space differs from a classroom or traditional study space. For example, the initial plan that Campus Facilities proposed included non-moveable furniture and lack of whiteboard space -- no mutual understanding of how this space differs from a group study room.

"No-technology" did not mean what we thought it did

- The Task Force understood the initial request from the UIF for a no-technology collaboration space to be void of any technology, literally. However, focus groups uncovered that stakeholders' understanding of "no-tech" was quite different than our perspective: students did not consider things such as projectors and printers to be "tech" because they've reached a point where students assume their ubiquity.

Set the scope early

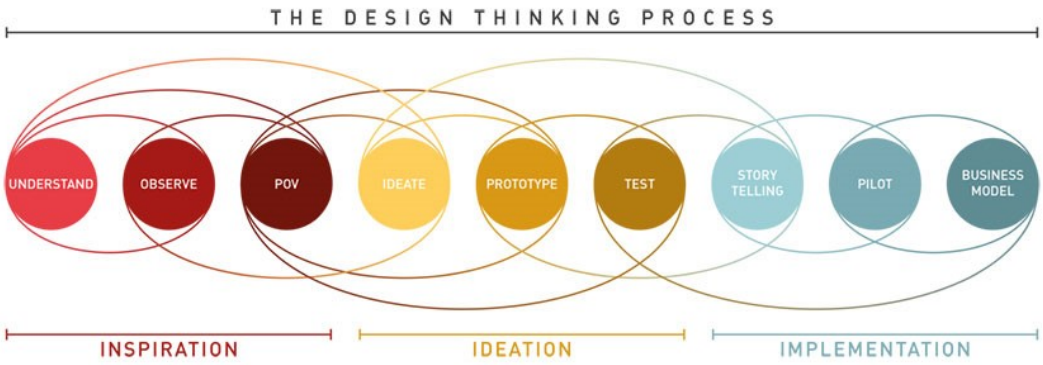
- Important to manage and address expectations as soon as possible (for example, students think we can purchase furniture from anywhere)
- The clear scope laid out in the task force charge was a valuable tool in guiding conversations and keeping the work focused.

Work towards overall goodness, not perfection

- Iteration as design
- Initial design doesn't have everything mentioned in the focus groups
- The space isn't perfect. Work within limits and address what is possible (in this case, the lack of natural light and poor lighting needed to be set aside for now).
- We don't know how the space will actually be used which is why we're doing intensive space observations.

IDEATION & OTHER THEORY

The Design Thinking Process



The concept of **ideation space** as a collaborative space separate from traditional group study spaces is rooted in **Design Thinking** (https://www.ideou.com/blogs/inspiration/what-is-design-thinking), a creative thinking approach common in innovation and design, and popularized by Stanford's d.School (https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources-collections/a-virtual-crash-course-in-design-thinking) and the IDEO (https://www.ideo.com/) design consultancy.

Design thinking is a **constructivist** design and problem-solving "process that encourages organizations to focus on the people they're creating for and leads to human-centered products, services, and internal processes…It's about simple mindset shifts or ways of asking questions differently—a new way to look at problems" (IDEO, 2018; Razzouk, R., & Shute, V., 2012.).

Design thinking has three essential elements: **inspiration, ideation,** and **implementation** (IDEO, 2015). The plans for the IDEA Space are based on the *ideation* phase "where designers generate ideas in sessions. Participants gather with open minds to produce as many ideas as they can to address a problem statement in a facilitated, judgment-free environment." (Interaction Design Foundation, n.d.)

For the UO Libraries, this suggests a space that encourages collaboration, creativity, and informal learning with a focus on **idea development** rather than the product creation focus common to makerspaces and design labs.

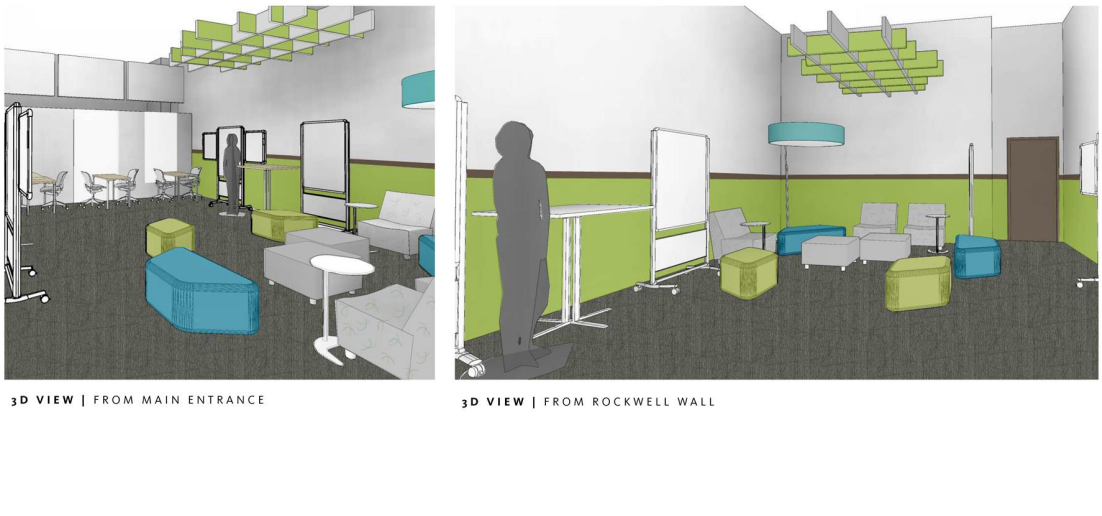
The book *Make Space: how to set the stage for creative collaboration* (http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/839307581) by Scott Doorley & Scott Witthoft lays out many of the principles of design thinking spaces used in this project, offering "strategies for changing surroundings specifically to enhance the ways in which teams and individuals communicate, work, play--and innovate."

Image from Dam & Siang, 2019.

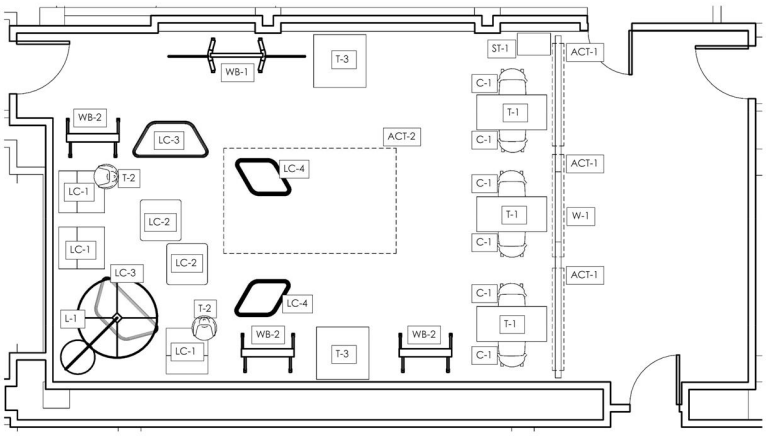
LAUNCHING THE IDEA SPACE

Room Layout

This 3-D rendering of the IDEA Space was provided after consultations with Campus Facilities. Left: view of the room when entering from the doorway with sliding wall in back; Right: view of the room looking towards the doorway.



Below is the furniture layout as specified by Campus Facilities. Small areas are defined by types of seating and tables, with groups of sofa-like seating near the large floor lamp and mobile tables near the sliding wall. However, the room can be easily configured to fit the needs of the users due to the mobility of the furniture.



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON | Design and Construction

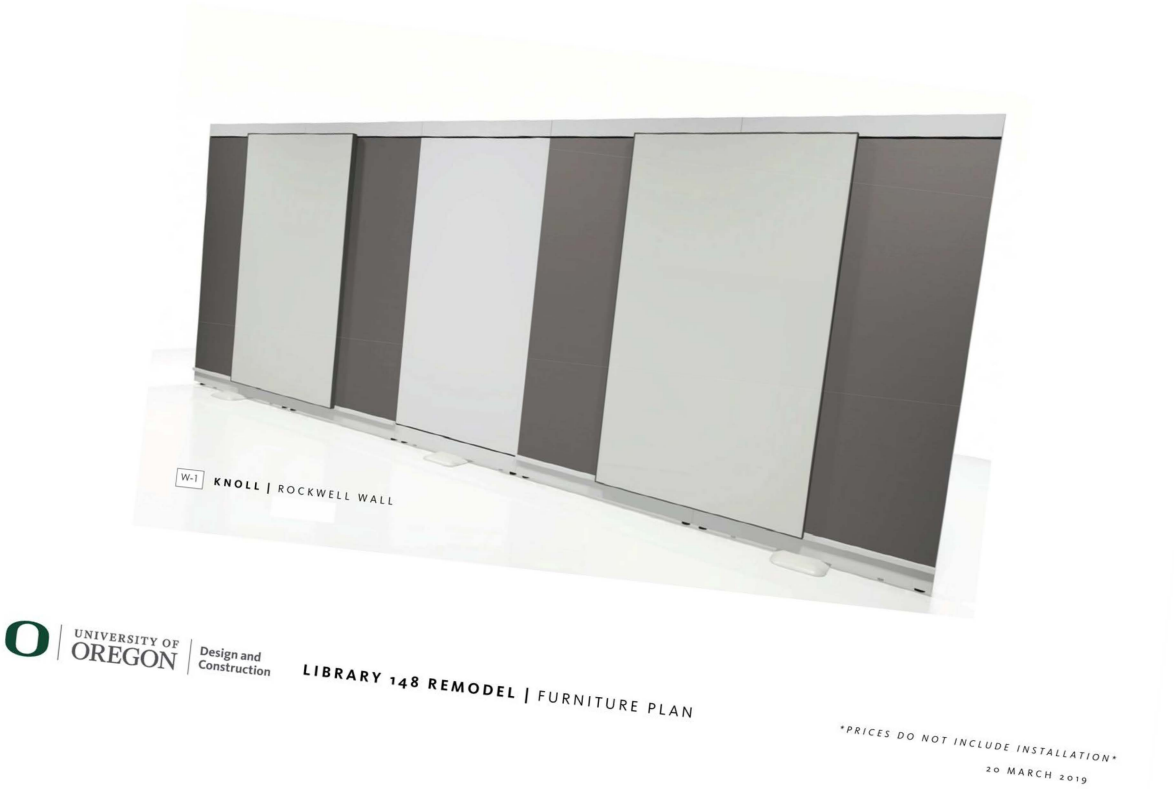
LIBRARY 148 REMODEL | FURNITURE PLAN

20 MARCH 2019

Construction

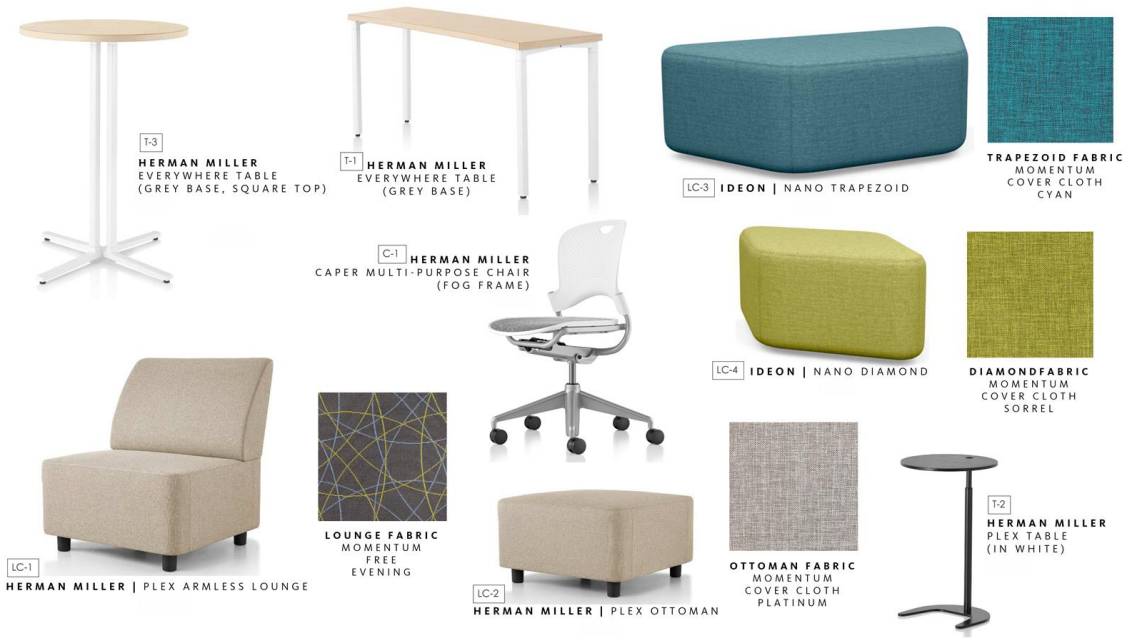
The redesign will require three construction projects to be completed in April-May 2019:

- Replace front door with full glass door to allow people to see into the space.
- Addition of a door jamb and new door in the staff egress area to assist with sound mitigation
- Construction of a non-permanent partial height wall along the backside of the room. The new wall will include sliding whiteboards which will allow multiple groups to collaborate at one time.

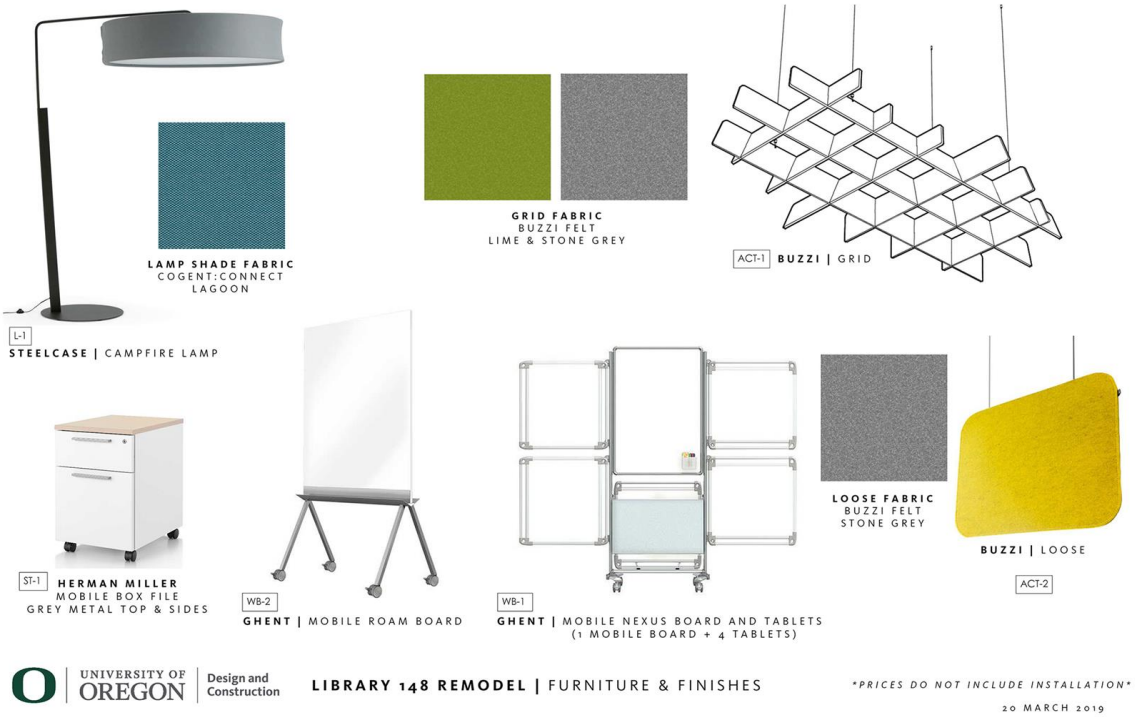


Furnishing

Final furniture decisions include sitting and standing table options with wheels so they can be easily configured; sofa-like seating options that can be pushed together for larger groups or apart; and ottomans of different sizes and shapes that can act as chairs or tables. During consultation meetings with Campus Facilities, alternative choices were provided as more economical options due to vendor relationships through the university.



One large floor lamp was purchased to assist with lighting as well as act as a focal point in the room; mobile whiteboards in two sizes, both standing and handheld to provide multiple writing surfaces; a small makercart; and the addition of colorful baffling from the ceiling and along the backside of the wall to add an artful, visual effect to the room. Colors and textiles were chosen to complement existing themes in Knight Library.



Technology

After meeting with library department heads about the best way to utilize technology in the new space, we decided to first try out a portable mini projector, which users can check-out from the circulation desk. The projector allows users to connect to a device (laptop, phone, tablet, etc.) and project onto the wall. Reference librarians are already utilizing this equipment and confirmed that it should perform the tasks needed by users. This idea will be cost-effective to install and try out for a few terms.

Room Opening

The IDEA Space is currently scheduled to have a soft opening in summer 2019, due to construction setbacks. The Libraries will coordinate a grand opening of the room at the beginning of the fall term.

Assessment

The Task Force recommended three metrics to assess space utilization in the IDEA Space:

- Room usage: Access Services student assistants to take a headcount of patrons using the space at different times of the day, including on the weekend and evenings, for 1-2 terms.
- Furniture use: Library Facilities can take photographs of how the room is configured during existing morning sweep of the building. This is a good time to assess how the room was used the night before. Photographs could be compared to see which pieces are used most heavily, how students collaborate, and how the room is utilized, for 1-2 terms.
- Feedback: the Libraries can provide both physical feedback forms in the room as well as an electronic way to gather feedback from both users and library staff.

Thanks to:

Adriene Lim, Susan Breakenridge, Amy Lake, Sam Villalobos, Kate Smith, Katherine Harmon, University Innovation Fellows: Nick Capaldini, David Freiburger, Corina Pigg, Adam Faris, & Elliot Lofts; Evaluation, Assessment, and User Experience (EAUX) Team; and UO Facilities and Business Services

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Recommended Readings

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