

Expanding the Vision of a Library

Posted on [August 16, 2019](#)

<https://faulibrarydean.wordpress.com/2019/08/16/expanding-the-vision-of-a-library/>

As I said in my recent [welcome message](#) for 2019-2020, the vision of the FAU Libraries may be quite different from what many people expect. In addition to providing access to print and electronic books and journals and having people on hand to help students and faculty find what they need and make effective use of information, we strive to be a meeting place for people from all backgrounds and experiences. We are a crossroads, a bridge between disciplines (anti-disciplinary, if you will), a hub of intellectual activity, a bustling hive of activity and conversation, and a safe physical and virtual space for exploring the world and creating something brand new. More and more, we embrace the newest technologies, along with the tried-and-true, centuries-old technology of the printed book and hand-written manuscripts.

We bring this vision to life through many partnerships. One of the most exciting new partnerships for the FAU Libraries also has the potential of revolutionizing higher education. Through a partnership with the College of Science's [Machine Perception & Cognitive Robotics \(MPCR\) Laboratory](#), and thanks to the generosity of donors Rubin and Cindy Gruber, we are developing the [Gruber Sandbox](#) within the Wimberly Library to expand the MPCR Lab's reach. A 3400 square-foot space that was previously used for staff work space is in the process of being transformed into a state-of-the-art artificial intelligence lab.

Renovation of the space started in the summer of 2019 and is expected to continue into the spring of 2020.

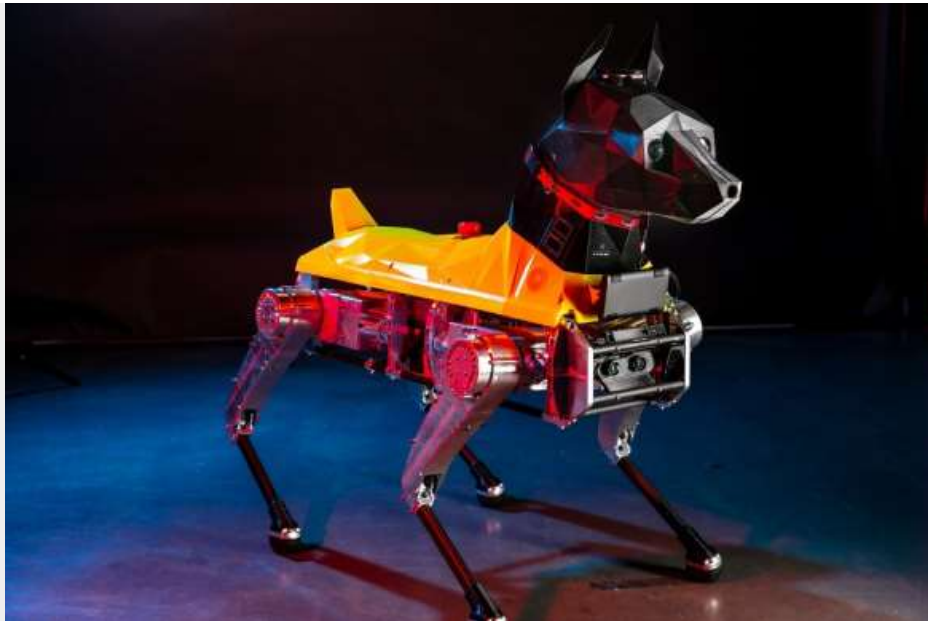


When it opens, it will be a collaborative, experimental space – a sandbox – for students of all levels, from all disciplines, to come together and shape the world with their research and their projects. With the guidance of

faculty mentors, high school students will be working side-by-side with undergraduates and graduate students. The space is being designed to be flexible and to evolve as student needs evolve.



Even now, the students and faculty working in the existing MPCR Lab are shaking up the world. A [recent article appearing in the Daily Mail](#) from the UK about one of their signature projects, Astro the RoboDog, has sparked intense interest globally. As the article notes, “Instead of being programmed in advance, Astro will learn just like a real puppy, with his simulated brain — a so-called deep neural network — being training by thousands of different experiences so he can perform various useful, human-like tasks.”



(Photo by Alex Dolce)

Astro is just one of many examples of the uses to which this technology can be put. He will be on hand to greet students at my opening Doughnuts with the Dean event on August 29 at 10 a.m. in the lobby of the Wimberly Library.

In anticipation of the opening of the new Gruber Sandbox, the Libraries have worked with the faculty of the MPCR Lab to open a small virtual reality lab just across the hall from the Media Center on the first floor of the Wimberly Library, adjacent to the computer lab in the Alumni Alcove. Called The Portal, this space is being set up to introduce students to some of the tools and platforms that will be available in the larger Sandbox. The Portal will open its doors to the public for the first time on August 19.



Stay tuned for updates on the Gruber Sandbox and other exciting collaborations and partnerships throughout the year.