Revamping Bissell Library: refurbishing spaces to satisfy students' needs

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Colleges and universities are examining their physical spaces to meet their users’ information seeking needs.

Two years ago the Bissell Library began the refurbishment of its physical spaces in order to transform them into more interactive learning areas and adjust the kind of services offered to adapt to the students’ changing needs. The qualitative feedback received by users was taken into account for the revamping of spaces.

The former “Magazines Area” was transformed into a “Social Zone” at which users can read, socialize, watch the news on a TV screen and even eat or sleep. Technical equipment and new wooden panels were bought in order to be used for hosting smaller and more informal presentations or events. Moreover, a specific area of the upper floor was isolated to become a “Quiet Study Zone”. The addition of TV screens in three study rooms was also part of the refurbishment. The purchase of new conference chairs, a big screen and two big banners on each side of the stage were part of the redesign plan to host bigger and more formal events in the events space. Images of the areas before and after will be displayed and the users’ survey shared.

Summary: As the digital environment continues to affect almost all aspects of our lives, academic libraries need to adapt accordingly and revamp their physical spaces to ensure that the services offered remain relevant to the students’ needs. Images of the areas before and after the refurbishment and the findings of the users’ survey will be shared.
Challenges and Needs

Challenges

• Separation of the library’s undifferentiated space into separate zones (Social Zone, Group Study Zone, Quiet Room Zone)
• Hosting of educational and cultural events
• Feedback received by students

Needs

• To provide a friendlier and more inviting environment for our patrons
• To accommodate the changing learning needs of students, faculty, staff, community members
• To add three new subject categories in our books collection (Wellbeing Collection, Library Staff Development Collection, Study Skills Collection)
New Designated Zones

1. Social Zone
   Allows the students to work and socialize while enjoying their coffee. It also gives us the option of hosting small workshops, painting exhibitions or even departmental meetings.

2. Group Study Zone
   The presence of reading tables in one area allows groups of students to collaborate and work together on assignments and projects.

3. Quiet Study Area
   The purchase and installation of a glass wall isolated the specific area allowing privacy and quiet study without disturbance.

4. Events Area
   Refurbishment of the events space with a stage, a podium, side banners, an audio unit and new conference chairs, all of which allow for the hosting of bigger and more formal events, conferences and workshops.

5. Archives room
   The former magazines room is now used as the Archives Room housing a collection of invaluable documents and photos relating to the long history of Anatolia College.

6. Exterior Area: Garden
   The purchase of new wooden benches has transformed the outside space into a more student friendly environment.
Involving the Student Body

We identified the priorities based on feedback received from students

Action:
The Fiction Collection was enriched with many recent awarded titles

The feedback received included the wish for a distinct reading area, which inspired us to create the “Quiet Study Zone”
Magazine area turned into a “Social Zone”
Metamorphosis

After

The same space is now also used for hosting exhibitions. A TV screen plays the BBC World Service News.

Social Zone use for multiple purposes
Group Study Zone
Quiet Study Zone

Due to our hosting of many events there was a need to separate a space for quiet study. The installation of a sound-proof glass wall allows privacy and quiet study.

Before

After
Event Space

The space as it previously existed did not allow for the hosting of big conferences and other events/lectures

Before

The area was originally designed as a study space. Therefore, there was a lack of conference chairs, a stage, podium, screen, projector, sound unit. The organizing and hosting of conferences was previously difficult.
Event Space

After

AMICAL 2017 Conference opening
Archives

The Magazine Room has been transformed into an Archives Room
We thought that not only the interior needed transforming but also the outside area in order to provide better services and accommodate the study habits of our students.
Funding

Funding and consultation were an integral part of the project

• The organizing and hosting of the 2017 AMICAL conference was a good incentive

• Consultation with architects, graphic designers, carpenters, furniture and construction vendors proved essential

• Approval of budgets and designs by senior management
Expanded services

- Bissell Library Events
- Coffee
- New Book Collections
  - Wellbeing Collection, Librarians’ Collection, Study Skills Collection
- Enrichment of Fiction Collection
- New Magazine/Newspaper titles
Marketing the new spaces and services

- Verbally at the Library Hub
- Via Bissell Library Events
- On Facebook page
- Posters
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Lessons learned

• **Ongoing project**
Continuous development of the spaces as well as the services provided is recommended in order to accommodate the new ways in which students study and learn

• **It takes a hundred steps**
  
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  Thank you!

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