

THODE LIBRARY LEARNING COMMONS, McMASTER UNIVERSITY



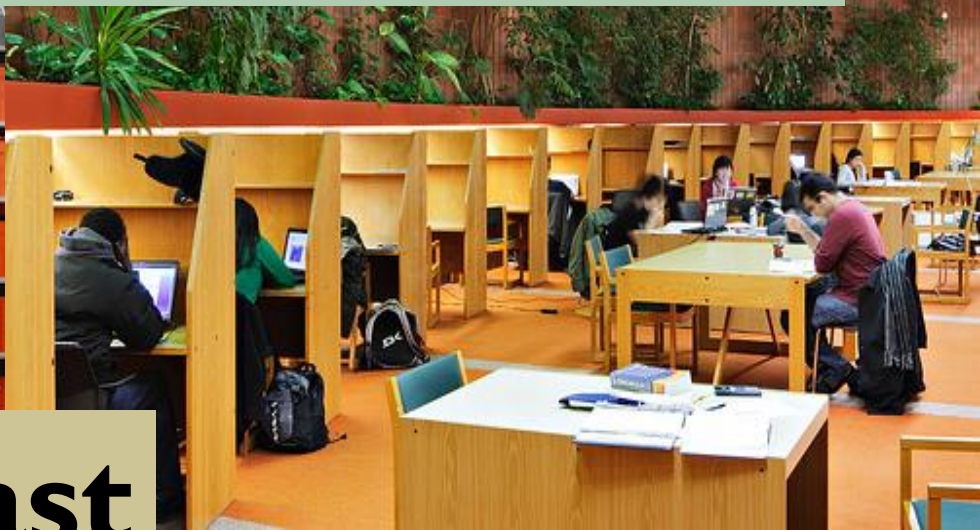
User Centred Design Site Review

OVERVIEW

- Thode Library Learning Commons
- Student & Staff Feedback
- On Site Review
- Overall Assessment
- Further Information/ References



Thode Library Learning Commons



Past



- Thode Library of Science & Engineering was built in 1978., catering to science and engineering students & faculty
- Represented a “model academic library for the print era”
 - First floor “reading room” featured ‘modern’ orange carpeting & many study carrels & book stacks
- Unlike other libraries on the McMaster campus, no new renovations occurred at Thode... until 2008
- In recent years, it received approx. 475 000 visitors annually





Renovations



- After securing funding, library held public consultation sessions in Nov. 2007 to help decide the future design of Thode
- Included:
 - focus groups
 - electronic & paper comment forms
 - a paper survey
 - discussions with various campus groups
- Approx. 600 Undergraduate & Graduate students, Faculty, & University staff participated

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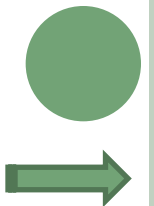
Public consultations revealed the following concerns:

- Limited ability to browse collections
- Loss of quiet study
- Insufficient enclosed group study spaces

The library responded by vowing to:

- Maintain browsable collections and seek further feedback about what to include in compact shelving units
- Maintain silent study areas on the 2nd & 3rd floors & add glass to the atrium overlooking the 1st floor
- Add more enclosed group study rooms

See next



- Renovations began May of 2008
- Marked first stage of 3-year plan to renovate entire library
- Cost of the learning commons: \$12 million
- Goal: Renovate the existing library in order to create a variety of alternative, technologically advanced, open and inviting settings where students can meet, study, & collaborate

*There's a growing recognition at McMaster, as elsewhere, that learning happens in many different kinds of environments, and that the library is really central to learning on campus. Users really want and deserve the conveniences that are there and the technology that's available. - Vivian Lewis, Associate University Librarian, as quoted in *The Hamilton Spectator* (May 1, 2008)*





Present



The Learning Commons was near completion September of 2008

○ **Features:**

- New seating for individuals & groups, inc. restaurant-style study booths
- In-house café & fireplace
- 70 “dual boot” (Windows & Mac) Macintosh computers

○ **Not completed** (funding pending):

- Portion of the floor where orange carpeting remains

○ **In progress:**

- Centralized “one-stop” service desk (circulation, reference and IT help was formally spread out over two floors)





STUDENTS & STAFF FEEDBACK

- Summary of student response post-renovations
- Summary of staff response post-renovations

SUMMARY OF STUDENT RESPONSE

Two places where students responded to changes at Thode were:

Facebook group:



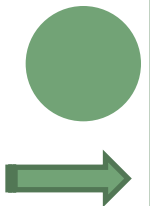
Group: **Stop the New Thode Library Renovation**
Size: 82 members
Type: Common Interest - Science

- Student initiated
- 82 members as of June 09
- Comments posted between Nov. 07 & Sept. 08

McMaster Libraries Suggestion Box:

- 13 comments posted since renovation began in May 08 that concern the new design

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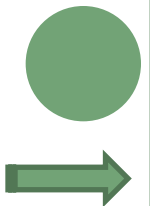
Positive Feedback

- Acknowledgement that suggestions were taken into consideration (comment not clarified further)
- Thankful many print resources still available elsewhere in library

Negative Feedback

- Too costly; renovations needed elsewhere on campus
- “It is an academic library, not a Starbucks”; noise/ smells from the café
- Noise from commons effecting quiet and silent study areas elsewhere in library; nowhere to work in peace and quiet
- Large Mac monitors unnecessary
- PCs preferred

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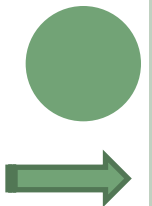


SUMMARY OF STAFF RESPONSE

No staff were present on the Facebook group against the renovation. However, staff did response to comments in the library suggestion box with the following points:

- All funds came from private donors
- Computers came with a discount; better against viruses, better for grid computing, & allow users to boot into Windows
- White noise machines installed to help with noise; glass soon to be installed to block further noise
- Silent & quiet study areas maintained in basement and on 2nd floor
- Would follow up with hospitality services about problems with the café. No further update given.

See next



ADDITIONAL STAFF RESPONSE


Contacted 2 employees and 1 library manager by email June 09.

Enquired about whether they consulted with users before renovating. (They did. See previous slides about user consultation sessions.)

Also, asked: Do you have any insight into how well the new space meets users' needs compared to Thode's first floor prior to renovations?

See next  

Staff responded to my question with the following points:

- Library has been much busier (no specific numbers given). Was, in part, quieter before renovations because few people used the library
 - Collaborative spaces have been very popular with students
 - Glad to see new computers rather than hand-me-downs from other campus libraries; fewer technical issues
 - Much less staff time now devoted to maintaining the facilities; old space had falling ceiling tiles, frayed carpets, broken furniture, etc.
 - Large monitors to be replaced with smaller ones (tentatively)
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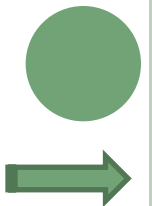
ON SITE REVIEW

- Personal use of Thode
- Positive experiences
- Negative experiences
- On site review summary

PERSONAL USE OF THODE

- Made two visits (June 17 & 27), each for 2 hours, once in the afternoon and once in the evening
- Use situation:
 - Toured the premises including the basement and second floor
 - Read and used a computer and personal laptop in the learning commons
- * Prior visits to the library as a McMaster Library co-op student working elsewhere on campus during the 2008-2009 school year provide further insight

See next



POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

○ **Furnishings:**

- Comfortable & functional, non-absorbent/ clean materials
- Lots of variety: lounge chairs, couches, booths, table & chairs, etc.

○ **Technologies:**

- Many electrical outlets for laptops and other gadgets, including extension cords suspended from ceiling over tables & lounging areas
- Many Mac computers available (+ PCs available in basement)

○ **Noise:**

- Very quiet; few people due to summer. Discovered many study carrels in the basement far from the noise for silent study



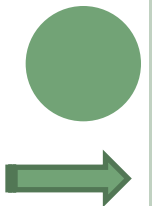
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○ **Other features:**

- Hours displayed prominently at entrance
- Staff person readily available at service desk
- Plenty of recycling and garbage cans
- Hole punch & staplers conveniently located at photocopy/ printing stations
- Self checkout machine conveniently located near exit
- New flooring no longer squeaks (as it did when first installed summer 2008)
- Suggestion wall showing people's comments and library's response with info. about the online suggestion box

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NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

○ **Furnishings:**

- No cubicles or other structures affording privacy/ independent study

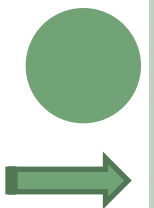
○ **Technologies:**

- Large monitors provide very minimal privacy
- Unclear how to boot into another operating system; no directions provided
- No signage indicating how to use printers/ photocopiers

○ **Noise:**

- Previous visits during school year revealed noise traveling to quiet study areas on the 2nd floor

See next



○ Other features:

- No signage as to what is located on each floor of library.
- Café closed for the summer; hours not displayed
- Back portion of learning commons not yet renovated. Torn, stained orange carpeting underlies old furniture blocked off with caution tape
- Service desk (including reference, circ & book return) located away from the entrance; difficult to locate
- Reference section located on different floor than reference desk
- No automatic doors on washrooms (accessibility issue)
- Washrooms, vending machines & designated “phone zone” located outside of library. Need to first sign out any books to access these facilities

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ON SITE REVIEW SUMMARY

○ **Learnability of the space:** *Low.*

- Minimal signage/instructions as to collections, technologies & services

○ **Efficiency of the space:** *Moderate.*

- Plenty of services available in one space
- Incomprehensive design (e.g., placement of bathrooms, service desk,, 1st floor “collaborative space” in relation to 2nd floor “quiet study”)
- Difficult to find desired collections & services
- Difficult to use some services (e.g., dual-boot computers, photocopiers)

○ **Overall impressions:**

- Very “hip,” bright, inviting design
- Great space for collaborative work
- Not great for independent research & study
- Difficult to navigate/ use the space without asking for help





ASSESSMENT

- Best practices exemplified
- Recommendations/ room for improvement

Best practices exemplified:

- Public consultation sessions prior to renovation
- Online suggestion box/ suggestion wall
- “Dual boot” computers
- Mac & PCs available in library
- Comfortable/functional furniture
- Extension cords suspended from ceiling
- “One stop” service desk
- Café (& ability to eat in library)
- Bright, open space
- Self check out machine by entrance
- Multiple printers, copiers, staplers, recycling bins, etc. available



Recommendations/ room for improvement:

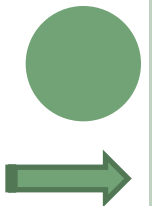
- Place signage by entrance, elevators & stairs as to services and collections located on each floor
- Ensure users are aware of PCs and silent study elsewhere in library. Many complaints stem from lack of awareness.
- Maintain PCs to meet user preference
- Provide instructions of “dual boot” process by each Mac
- Periodically conduct additional assessments of user needs accounting for differences by discipline, level, gender, age, etc.
- Clear concern for upholding collections, quiet study space. Ensure future renovations account for these concerns
- Enclose the café to account for noise & scent



FURTHER INFORMATION/ REFERENCES

- Makeover Time for Mac's Thode (Hamilton Spec May 1, 2008)
<http://www.thespec.com/article/362459>
- McMaster Libraries Suggestion Box- Thode Library
<http://library.mcmaster.ca/php/suggestionbox.php?f=browse&categoryid=ALL&library=Thode>
- Stop the New Thode Library Renovation (Facebook group)
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=21111383416>
- Their + Curran Architects INC Thode Project
<http://www.tcarch.ca/projects.php?projectID=7>

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- Thode Renovation blog

<http://thodereno.blog.lib.mcmaster.ca/>

- Thode Renovation on Flickr

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/macetg/sets/72157604100242111/>

- Update on Renovations at Thode (January 2008)

<http://library.mcmaster.ca/thode/renovation/update.htm>

