The library is the academic heart of a campus, yet its role is changing dramatically. Students can put their hands on information from virtually anywhere, so housing books is no longer a library’s main purpose. However, the library remains the one place on campus where traditional and new knowledge resources, the latest information technology, and skilled instructors and students converge in an ongoing process of learning, teaching and research.

To better understand the trends, Steelcase Education Solutions initiated a major study of libraries at 13 public and private colleges and universities across the U.S. The research revealed that the library is becoming a key location outside the classroom where constructivist pedagogy plays out as students learn to analyze information and create new information, often working in groups. This change represents a great shift for the library from a reading and storage site to a center of interactive learning.

As a multi-dimensional, multi-use space, the library’s evolution is underway, although it hasn’t been easy. For example, growing computer use led many libraries to install computer stations in any available space. However, this solution left people with their backs to busy corridors and screens open for all to view. Group work areas were often placed without intention next to individual study areas. This left quiet-seeking students frustrated and student teams searching for the right space and tools for effective collaboration.

Intentional design, adjacency planning and understanding intended behaviors through research result in a better approach. There is a rhythm to an individual’s learning process and to pedagogical needs such as team projects.

Libraries demand a range of settings, progressing from individual needs to team solutions. Additionally, our research showed that students tend to work in groups more in the evenings (outside class and work time) and individually or with one other person during mornings and afternoons.

Spaces that work for solo tasks work best early in the day and then have to be flexible for other needs later on.

“The library is the academic heart of a campus, yet its role is changing dramatically. Students can put their hands on information from virtually anywhere, so housing books is no longer a library’s main purpose. However, the library remains the one place on campus where traditional and new knowledge resources, the latest information technology, and skilled instructors and students converge in an ongoing process of learning, teaching and research.”

Library

What we observed

Libraries are becoming the academic heart of the campus, supporting social connections, collaborative needs and team projects, along with event areas for campus and community activities.

The central role of computer hardware and software has resulted in a demand for more library computer labs.

Anywhere/anytime information access has lessened the need to refer to books, so book stacks are being reduced and moved to less prominent locations.

Librarians’ roles are changing; they’re instructors, technology advisors, research assistants and collaborators with students and faculty.

What we heard

“We have to look at our information in the library and rethink the ways we provide it to people.”

Librarian

“It’s really hard to focus when you’re in an enormous room that has noise going all over the place and you’re trying to read things on a screen. Our library has a ‘state-of-the-art computer area,’ but the entire floor is open. Everyone who’s walking to the other end of the library has to come through.”

Student

Learn more at www.steelcase.com/educationsolutions
tips for a new library ecosystem

Most existing libraries were designed and built for finding books and checking them out. As today’s library transcends that limited role, four zones have emerged, each with multiple and different types of activities. Across these zones, new library spaces must support collaboration and group work, private study space, computing equipment and content-creation tools. Each quadrant represents a set of behaviors that should be intentionally planned.

Whether in a new space or a renovation, adjacencies are crucial, including planning for technology in practically every setting from team, collaborative spaces to social areas to individual study spaces. Visual and acoustical privacy requires careful consideration.

PRIVATE/ALONE

Individual spaces support focused work but don’t consider appropriate scale for an individual, their wellbeing or the security and accommodation of work tools.

1. Provide enclosed space for visual privacy.
2. Support the need for extreme focus and concentration by blocking all distractions.
3. Allow temporary ownership of space.
4. Support a range of short- and long-term ownership of space and privacy with assigned, secure spaces.

PUBLIC/ALONE

Individuals want to work in the company of others to stay socially connected while working alone in various open settings.

1. Support the need for co-existing of focused work and social interactions; allow settings to switch from individual to dyads and triads.
2. Offer highly flexible and self-customizable furnishings and tools.
4. Enable quick, targeted access to computers, online services, printers, etc.
6. Provide access to dedicated computer workstations, specialized technologies and software.

PRIVATE/TOGETHER

Reference areas should capitalize on librarians’ expertise in mentoring and learning. The increased use of technology requires just-in-time technical support. The increased use for events requires multi-purpose, adaptable gathering places.

1. Accommodate impromptu teaching and collaborative activities.
2. Remove barriers between students and staff.
3. Provide accessible dedicated spaces for technical services.
4. Create multi-purpose, adaptable spaces to host large functions.

PUBLIC/TOGETHER

Library classrooms should accommodate active learning, computing and distance learning with fluid transitions. Team spaces should support multiple meeting modes and student project teams. Students often do group work in open areas to stay connected to others, requiring flexibility to meet their changing needs.

1. Support a fluid switch between activities.
2. Provide a range of blended learning and teaching environments, including online, webinars, etc.
3. Support multiple meeting modes – inform, evaluate and co-create – for small to large groups.
4. Provide tools for visual display, collaborative technology, information and acoustical privacy.
5. Provide highly flexible, customizable furniture to meet collaborative, privacy and ergonomic needs.

media:scape merges furniture and technology to help students collaborate, co-create and share ideas more effectively. media:scape boosts collaboration across the table or around the globe – by transforming classrooms, libraries or social spaces connecting students and allowing them to share information seamlessly.

 informal learning spaces/library
Consider the entire library floorplan when retrofitting any settings, designing with adjacencies in mind. When planning, be sure to support each quadrant independently and holistically within the entire floor space.

PRIVATE/ALONE
Individually dedicated spaces support a range of focus and concentration areas and should consider appropriate human scale for an individual and their wellbeing. Plan for short- and long-term security of personal items and the accommodation of new work tools.

PUBLIC/ALONE
Individuals want to study in the company of others to stay socially connected while working alone in a variety of open settings. Support the need for co-existing focused work and social interactions, allowing settings to switch from individual to dyads and triads. Offer highly flexible and self-customizable furnishings and tools while supporting postural changes for short- and long-term use.

PUBLIC/TOGETHER
Support the demand for large, scheduled functions with multi-purpose, highly adaptable gathering places. Accommodate impromptu teaching and collaborative activities by removing barriers between students and staff. Recognize the increased need for just-in-time technical support for questions, support and maintenance.

PRIVATE/TOGETHER
Technology-rich library classrooms should accommodate multiple uses such as active learning, computing and distance learning with fluid transitions. Support multiple meeting modes – inform, evaluate and co-create – for small to large groups.
Study cave

Private study is still very much the library. Allow students to block distractions and settle in for long periods of study with panels and plenty of worksurface space.

- High panels provide privacy and block distractions while still allowing light through the glass.
- Panels with glass panes imply privacy while still providing access to natural light and surroundings.
- Adjustable height tables allow users to change position over time.
- Stool-height seating supports new postures for improved wellbeing.
- Strategic open panels allow light to penetrate and offer security.
- Ergonomic seating supports focused work over an extended period of time.
- A large worksurface allows students to spread out materials, both analog and digital.

Learning pod

Spaces for individual work should provide options for short- and long-term stays. Support these with options for posture change and temporary storage for belongings.

- Universal ............................................. 129
- Think .................................................. 113
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- Montage

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- cobi ...................................................... 107
- EE6
- Answer

Featured products

informal learning spaces/library

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Learning bench

Even when focused work is required, students often prefer to study in the presence of others.

**Task lighting** gives individuals control over their personal setting.

**Soft seating** supports a longer stay.

The FrameOne bench provides students with their own workspace while available visually to others.

Nest

Students seek flexible spaces to support individual work when they need to focus as well as social interactions to stay connected with others.

**Portable whiteboards** allow spaces to transition from individual to group spaces in an instant.

**Lounge seating** supports a range of seated positions while a worksurface provides space for digital and analog tools.

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**Featured products**

- **cobi** .......................................................... 107
- **SOTO LED task light**
- **FrameOne**

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**Featured products**

- **Groupwork** .................................................. 126
- **Sidewalk mobile** .......................................... 119
- **Answer EE6**
Mentor pod

Relationships between library staffing and students are evolving into mentorship and guidance. Remove barriers so these connections can happen anywhere.

Event forum

Multi-purpose, adaptable spaces are needed to serve a wide variety of functions that may depend on day, week or term. These spaces allow for a rhythm of learning to happen all within one space.

Low screens help remove barriers between staff and students while still providing visual privacy.

Stool-height counters allow staff and students to share and discuss information.

Multi-use workspace allows staff to easily switch from individual work to work with students.

A range of settings allow students to engage in multiple activities in one period.

Swivel chairs give control to seated students to orient themselves to activities.

Multiple settings allow for digital and analog co-creation.

Featured products

Informal learning spaces/library

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Informal learning spaces/library

**Immersive work studio**
Groups often meet to complete assignments in libraries. Provide them with privacy from others and tools to collaborate.

- Whiteboard surfaces allow learners to brainstorm and collaborate.
- Easily movable and low furniture allows students to make the space their own.
- Room scheduling systems allow groups to reserve a space in advance, avoiding a search for open project space.

**Campsite**
Students often need ample space to spread out and work together. Provide them with choice and control in an inviting setting to collaborate, co-create and discuss.

- Mounted display of digital information makes it easy for everyone to see and contribute.
- Ample space allows students to spread out in their own space while still able to easily collaborate.
- Multiple seating choices allow students comfort and choice.

**Featured products**
- RoomWizard............. 136
- Sidewalk .................... 119
- Post and Beam Duo
- Alight stools

- cobi ......................... 107
- Blvd
Grand Valley State University (GVSU) is building the Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons, a whole new approach to the college library. "We planned an enriched environment where students can continue the work started in the classroom and add a dimension to learning that a classroom doesn’t always offer," says Lee Van Orsdel, dean of university libraries at GVSU.

As part of the planning process, Steelcase partnered with GVSU and design firm SHW to design, prototype and study spaces designed to support students working individually and in small groups: one with group work tools (e.g., portable whiteboards, mobile tables and chairs, wall-mounted storage shelves, access to power and defined team areas), and another with a mediascape setting where people can plug in laptops and simply press a "puck" to show information on two integrated flat screens, along with similar group work tools as in the first space.

"The study was invaluable to the library planning team, and the most important thing we learned is that there are daily rhythms to the way students work alone or in groups and seasonal rhythms based on how they complete assignments over the course of a semester. Flexible furniture really isn’t an option – it’s a requirement if we want to optimize use of the building,” says Van Orsdel.

Similarly, a team-space prototype with mobile tables, mobile chairs and other tools was popular for individual and teamwork by students using laptops and an array of digital and analog materials. The lead designer for the library, Tod Stevens, partner of SHW Group, an architecture and engineering firm specializing in educational environments, says, "When the library put workspaces near the windows and in other attractive spaces that used to be taken up by shelves of books, the gate count went up." He notes that team spaces are a key reason students come to libraries: “It’s where they can find resources, get help and work together on projects.”

Steelcase researchers prototyped a 120-degree workstation that accommodated varying numbers of people throughout the day. In fact, individuals often shared the work setting with pairs, as in the photo (left) of two students working together in one corner while individuals work alone at other places in the same setting.

“Environment matters to students. Many don’t have a place to study, so they come to the library.”

LEE VAN ORSDEL, DEAN OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

"Environment matters to students. Many don’t have a place to study, so they come to the library.

As libraries offer more services and space for students, it’s important to them clearly communicate these resources. "Libraries have not made their services seamless. We’ve compartmentalized them into pedagogical areas where they’re taught: English, writing, research, technology, speech, etc.,” says Van Orsdel. “The defining or central construct of the new GVSU library is a knowledge market that puts together in one place, right in the path of the students, the resources to build all the skills employers tell us are critical in the workplace: writing, speaking, presenting and research. Students manage their own learning, choosing the type of help they need when they need it.”

Books are not going away, however. The library will hold 150,000 books in open stacks and another 600,000 in an onsite automated storage and retrieval system when it opens in 2013.

“Environment matters to students. Many don’t have a place to study, so they come to the library. In the past life was more formal, society wasn’t as noisy. Now there are so many distractions that the library is often the only place where you can find a distraction-free environment,” says Van Orsdel.