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# Undergraduate Learning in Libraries: Space Design for Academic Course Transformation and Re-Thinking Campus Culture

Ilana Stonebraker  
*Purdue University*

Tomalee Doan  
*Purdue University*

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# Undergraduate Learning in Libraries: Space Design for Academic Course Transformation and Re-Thinking Campus Culture

Ilana Stonebraker  
Business Information Specialist, Assistant Professor of Library Science  
Purdue University Libraries

Tomalee Doan  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Associate Professor of Library Science  
Purdue University Libraries

At Purdue University, the Libraries participate in a provost-initiated, campus-wide course redesign program for student success called Instruction Matters: Purdue Academic Course Transformation (IMPACT). As part of the campus strategic plan, this program aims to bring active learning to foundational courses traditionally taught through lectures.

[Our recent presentation](#) on this subject focused on several key questions:

- Why should academic libraries adopt an education-focused framework (versus a service-focused framework) for their spaces?
- How do libraries fit into the campus conversation about learning spaces?
- How do library spaces fit into active learning?

Our talk presented two perspectives from Purdue Libraries. First, our administrator and space designer addressed how ethnographic assessment (Fried Foster et al, 2013) and research informed decision-making for the upcoming Active Learning Center, which will combine six science libraries and add twenty-six active learning classroom spaces, to be completed with a

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\$79 million dollar budget by Fall 2017. Secondly, an IMPACT participant and instructor who taught in a redesigned space discussed how these new classrooms enriched the student learning experience and were conducive to flipped, team-based pedagogies previously unattainable in traditional classrooms across campus.

This presentation described the renovation process of three prototype classrooms of varying sizes and technologies in the Hicks Undergraduate Library, a project implemented when Purdue identified a need for dedicated active learning spaces on campus. Purdue librarians recognized the IMPACT program as one way to enter the conversations burgeoning on campus about the nature of learning, curriculum design, and how space design impacts potential learning. At a broader level, our librarians recognized a need to move from a collection-centric to an engagement-centric model, and then to an institution-centric model. This meant thinking more like educators and less like service providers, which in turn spurred creativity and conversation about the importance of our role in the future of active learning.

The first classroom came together as a quick, low-cost solution to the needs of first cohort IMPACT participants, which led to further financial support from the Office of the Provost for two additional prototype classrooms. Through this collaboration, Purdue Libraries had the opportunity to re-think the connections between classroom space, library space, curriculum redesign, and student success. While each university and college boasts its own cadre of great teachers, new challenges arise with campus-wide course redesign initiatives. Only a handful of universities have, thus far, embraced this opportunity, and most campus course redesign projects focus solely on individual courses or departments. Purdue's IMPACT initiative encompasses the

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entire University. We have implemented 170 course redesigns touching 25,000 undergraduates since 2012, with thirty active learning classrooms in use and a projected seventy-four more by 2017. Examples of the types of the currents and new spaces are available in a recent IMPACT report (IMPACT 2015).

For the instructor, choosing an active learning space reflected the needs and focus of their redesigned curriculum. Teaching in an active learning space provided flexibility for teamwork, discussion, and embedded technology, allowing them to flip the classroom in meaningful ways. MGMT 175 used the redesigned library spaces in many different ways. For example the new space was well adapted for collaboration (versus a traditional space). A team-based classroom space made in-class competitions in class competitions easier to implement. The impact of this innovative approach was reflected in positive feedback from students.

Returning to our three core questions, academic libraries should adopt an education-focused framework to better serve the evolving needs of higher education. Libraries need to work with campus administrators to further innovate. Library spaces act as vital testing grounds, blending formal and informal learning. As advocates of student-centered learning, libraries can rediscover their place as centers of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and pedagogy.

### References

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### Biographies

Ilana Stonebraker

Ilana Stonebraker is Assistant Professor of Library Science and Business Information Specialist at Purdue University. As part of her duties, she teaches a for-credit information literacy course, MGMT 175, which is required for all students in the Krannert School of Management. For her work she received the 2015 Purdue Libraries Excellence in Teaching Award. Her scholarship focuses on business information literacy and crowdsourcing.

Tomalee Doan

Tomalee Doan is Associate Professor and Head Librarian for Humanities, Social Science, Education and Business Division, Purdue University. She received the 2013 Special Libraries Association Center of Excellence Award. In 2010, she received the Dean's Award for Significant Advancement of a Libraries Strategic Initiative. Her scholarship focuses on higher education learning spaces.