

Introduction

Special Issue on Physical Spaces

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JD Walker's foreword to this special issue sets the context for the need for studies like those in this volume that explore innovative ways to integrate technology in physical learning spaces. We issued the call for abstracts for this special issue in September 2018 and expected a variety of different article types including empirical research, case studies, reflective essays, and critiques. We received 36 abstracts and it was interesting to me that the overwhelming majority were case studies. I didn't know why. After all, much has now been written about the importance of active learning and the classrooms and informal learning spaces that support active learning. But as we began the review process, the reason became clear. The research on the use of technology in physical classrooms is still relatively new and we appear to be in a time of active exploration of creative and collaborative use of technologies in physical learning spaces.

The eight case studies that make up this special issue contribute in a meaningful way to our conversation about how technology plays a key role in the experiences of students and faculty in a physical classroom. All of the case studies emphasize the importance of collaborative learning and student engagement first with technology playing a supporting, but key role.

I was also struck by how many of the studies focus on creating environments that promote diversity and inclusion. For example, Asojo, Kartoshkina, Amole, and Jaiyeoba used web conferencing technologies to connect students at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria with students at the University of Minnesota who were enrolled in a lighting design course. Gibau, Kissel, and Labode examined the experience of incoming IUPUI freshman in a learning community organized around the theme of "The Human Story." And to help promote the University of Virginia's College of Arts & Science's goal to "prepare undergraduate students to be global citizens and participate in a connected, globalizing society," Giering and Fitzgerald describe the creation of a new Language Commons that replaced an aging, traditional language lab.

The importance of the physical learning environment was explored in several studies. Counselman-Carpenter and Redcay examined the impact of a flipped classroom design on Columbia University social work students' development of advanced clinical skills. What makes this study different from many flipped classroom studies is that it not only discusses the pedagogical benefits of a flipped classroom approach, but also the importance of the physical space. Ramsay, Robert, and Sparrow describe the Penn State University Blue Box learning space and the framework for supporting pedagogical agility. The authors make a compelling case for the importance of a cyclical process of research, instructional technologies, instructional design, and faculty development. Summers and Beers from San Francisco State University address equitable access to "learning-ready classrooms" designed using universal design principles to create classrooms that support diversity and inclusion--at scale.

Two studies that consider writing instruction connect the use of digital technologies with the physical environment. Buchenot and Roman describe an approach to teaching writing at IUPUI in a way that intentionally connects paper-based student writing activities with a range of digital technologies available in an active learning classroom. And Perkins examines how students in an advanced fiction writing course at Indiana University East moved story, character, and setting between physical spaces and virtual worlds to support collaboration and creativity.

The case studies in this issue explore new horizons in our understanding of creative and collaborative uses of technologies in physical learning spaces. The authors share with us a variety of important considerations around design of learning spaces. They not only exemplify innovative pedagogical approaches, but also the commitment to study these approaches. And through their efforts to capitalize on and explore the potential of bringing together technology and learning spaces, they demonstrate new ways for higher education to take on timely issues confronting universities such as promoting diversity and inclusion, deeper learning, and student engagement.

I appreciated the invitation by the journal's editorial team to serve as guest editor of this special issue. I am grateful to all of the authors in this special issue for their excellent contributions—it was an honor to work with all of them. I also owe deep thanks to the reviewers who provided substantive comments on earlier drafts that contributed to the quality of the papers in the issue. Finally, I thank Karissa Rector in the FACET office and copy editor, Anita Todd, for their assistance as we prepared the issue for publication.