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Reference Area Redesign: Do It Yourself on a Budget

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REFERENCE AREA REDESIGN:
DO IT YOURSELF ON A BUDGET

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Monique Andrews, Mike Hawthorne, & Rhonda McGinnis

Purdy/Kresge Library Building

- Two buildings connected on first floor
- Both built in the early 1950's
- Each with an open floor plan
- **Lots** of large pillars
- Building at or near the top of University's capital projects list frequently over the previous 10-15 years
- Passed over because full renovation too costly
- Wireless Internet available throughout 1st floor

Purdy Reference Area When New

Vintage Kresge Reading Area
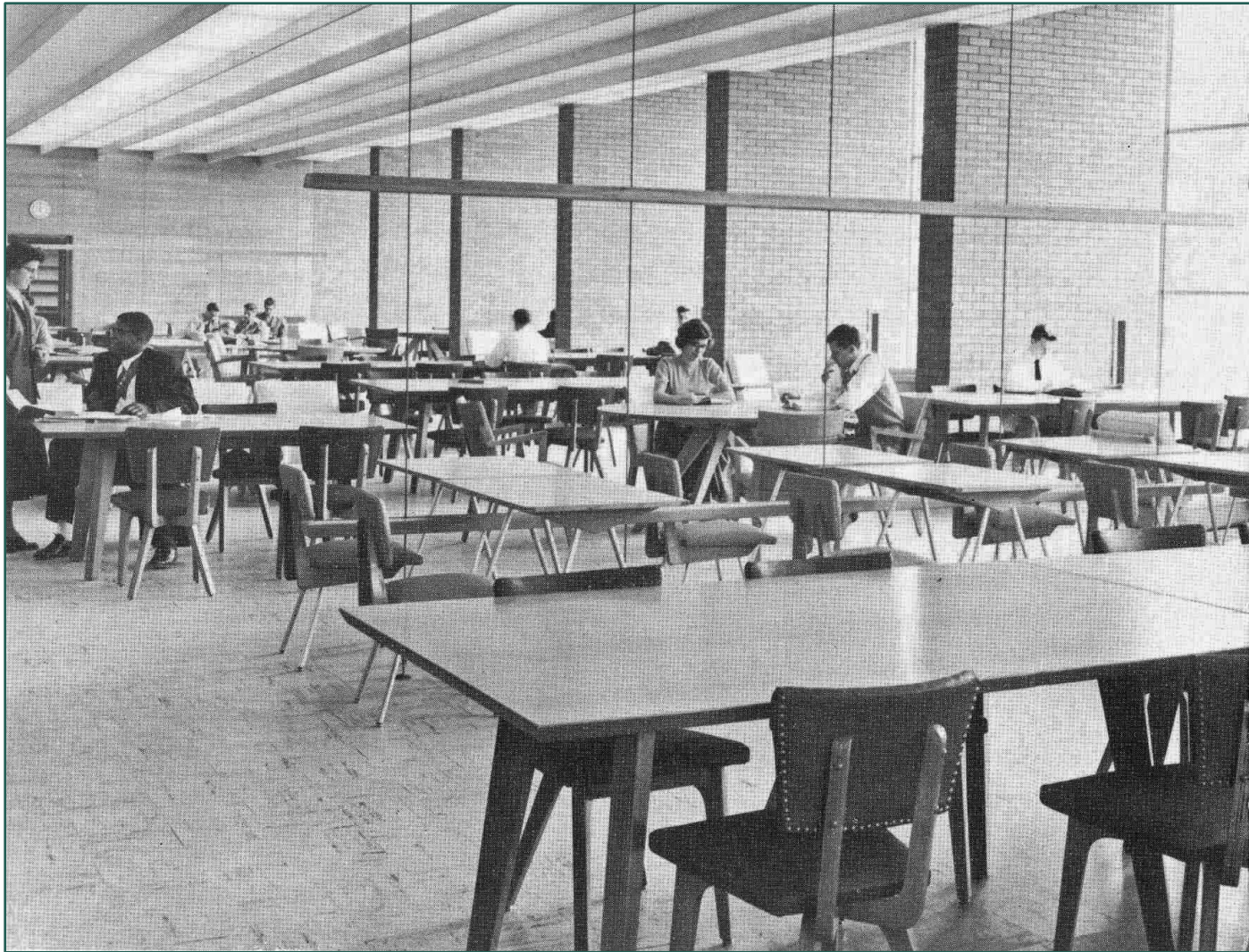
Project Background

University allocated money to replace carpet on 1st floor of both buildings.

Project budget would cover:

- ☐ Carpet
- ☐ Installation (& asbestos remediation)
- ☐ Moving contents out and back in
- ☐ Removal & replacement of power & data lines located on floor

Project Goals

- Redesign space to improve library service
  - Periodicals
  - Microforms
  - Reference Desk
- Retain or increase number of workstations
- Create additional study & laptop space
- Improve the overall ambiance of the space

Getting Our Bang for the $

- Doing ~~much~~ all of the moving "in house"

- Reusing furniture & fittings w/in System

- Student learned *Autodesk Inventor* software to create 3-D models of the space and proposed configurations.

- Planned in flexibility & scalability

Collections & Services Affected

❑ Newspapers

❑ Current Periodicals

❑ Bound Periodicals

❑ Microforms and Readers

❑ Map Collection

❑ Reference Collection

❑ Reference Desk

❑ 56 Computer Carrels

❑ Study & laptop space

It is…

…What It was

Microfilm—Don't want to live with it; Can't live without it

- Moved ½ of microform collection to locked basement
  - Moved the ERIC documents and many newspaper collections
  - Moved what could easily be paged by circulation staff
- Moved ½ of it into the new reference area
- Purchased several newspaper historical backfiles & online collections
  - Improve Access
  - Reduce cabinets in Reference Area
- Microfilm is NOT going away→Seeking better Readers

…As Far as the Eye Can See

Some of the cabinets In the Kresge Library before they were moved

Half moved to a room in the basement of Purdy

The other half moved to the Reference Area of Purdy

Reference Area Plans

- Librarians initially had few requests for the Desk
  - Felt the current location was fine
  - Wanted to stop snagging clothes & kicking cords
  - Requested new Plexiglas covers?
- Dean Yee established team specifically to investigate changes to the Reference Area & Desk
  - Wanted more thorough examination of issue
  - Had additional information from recent LIS Project
  - Included a tech-savvy LIS Graduate Student Assistant
  - <u>Might</u> be able to get additional funds if needed

LIS Class Project

Findings on Reference Desk & Its Flow

- Hard to find desk from some directions
- Crowded too close to computers so hard to queue
- Pillars create difficulties in giving directions
- Many computers blocked from view
- Does not promote roving
- Uncomfortable & awkward to use

# Applying Technology to the Project

Tech-savvy Graduate Student had:

❑ Inexpensive access to Autodesk Inventor, 3-D modeling software

❑ Taught herself to use it.

- Initially over a long weekend
- Continued to learn its features over course of project

❑ Practiced with software by creating schematic of Reference Area and its original layout based on internal "blueprints"

Original P/K Reference Area Layout

Diagram A:
Current Reference
Configuration

56 Student Computers +
8 Community User Terminals
in high sided carrels

Printer Stations and New
Location for Microform
Readers

Main Entrance

Circulation Desk

Reference Desk
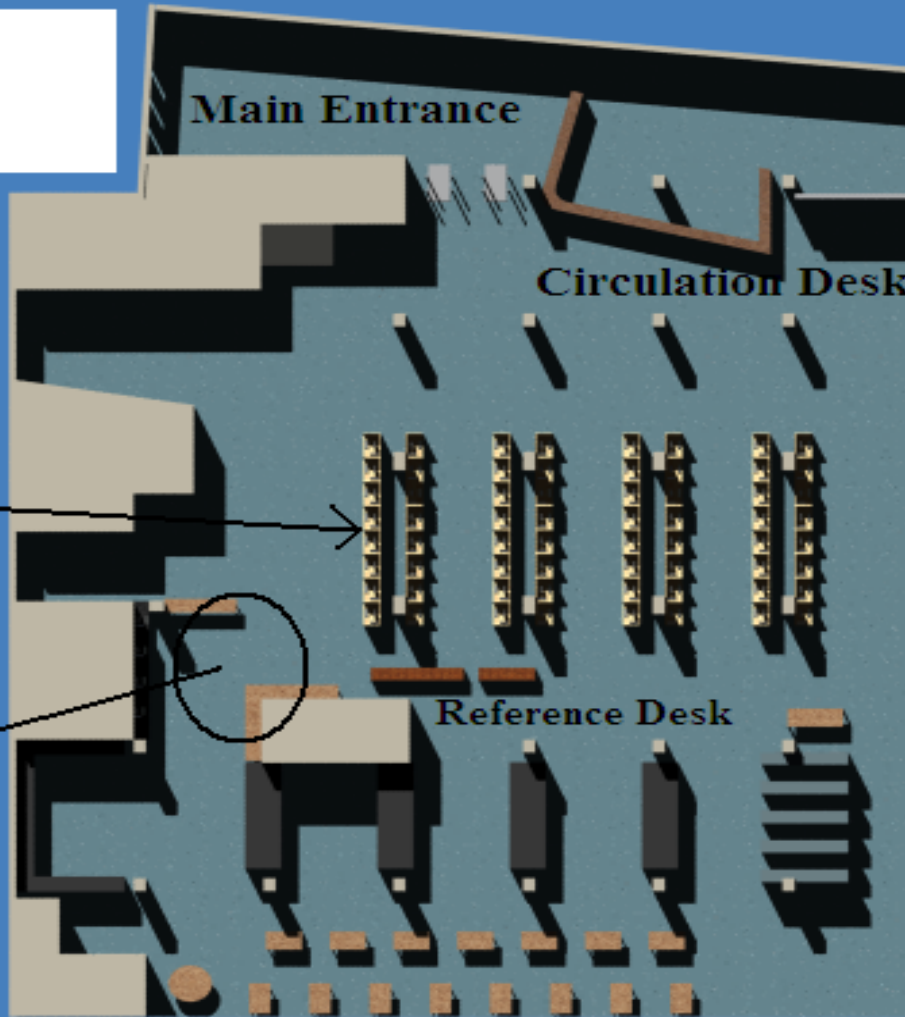
The Starting Point—The Desk

The Starting Point—The Area

Initial Librarian Focus Group

Identified the following issues:

- ☐ Need increased visibility of Desk from both entrances
- ☐ Need improved sightlines to "hotspots" & Circ Desk
- ☐ Need improved access to computer users
- ☐ Need (at least) the same number of Student Computers
- ☐ Desks--Tired, out-of-date, & too low for patron comfort
- ☐ Desk area needed to be more self-contained to discourage patrons from:
  - ▪ Walking through to reach study tables
  - ▪ Accessing the Ready Reference Collection on their own

Developed & Critiqued Alternatives

Used software to try out some potential layouts and then showed the best ones to the librarians to get their comments
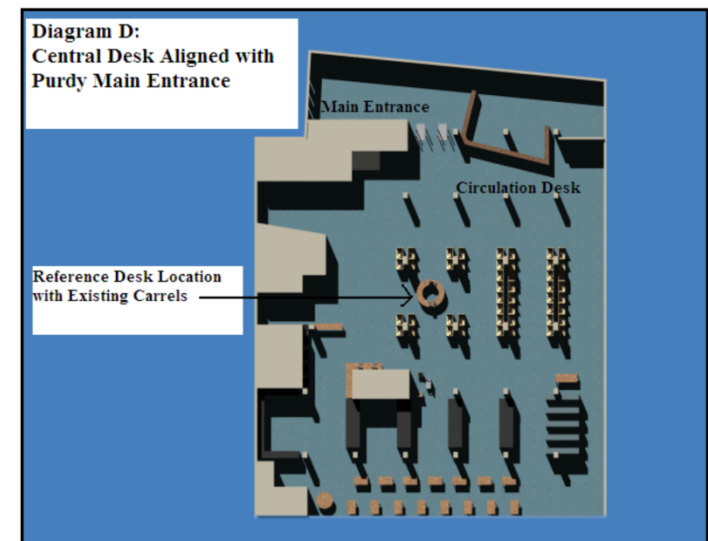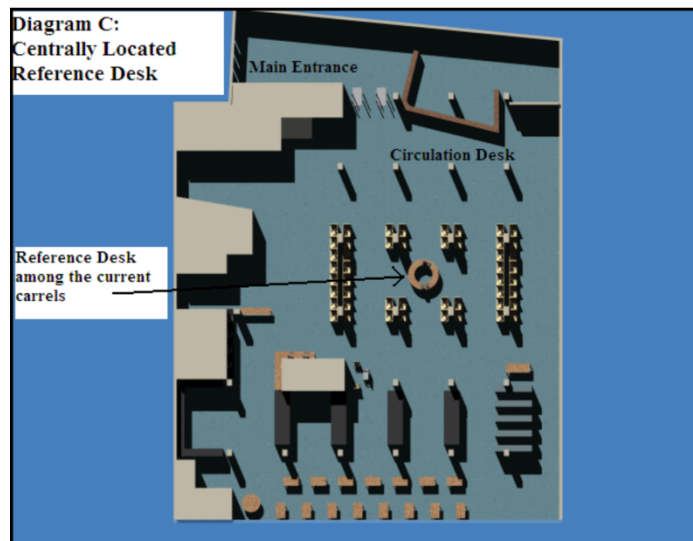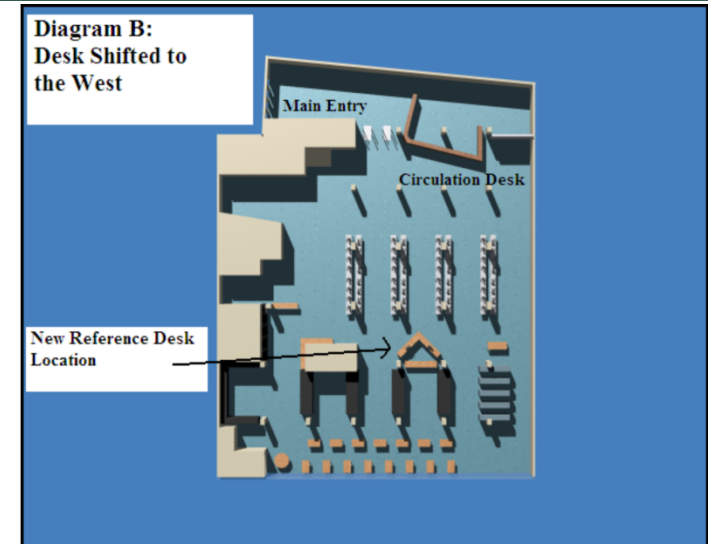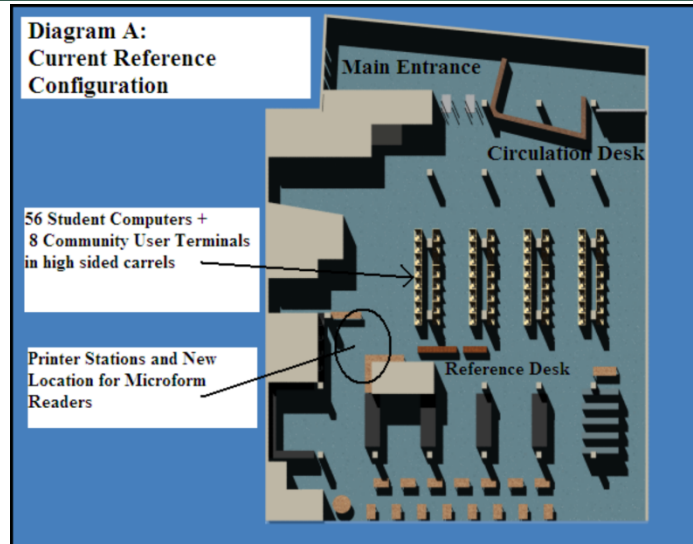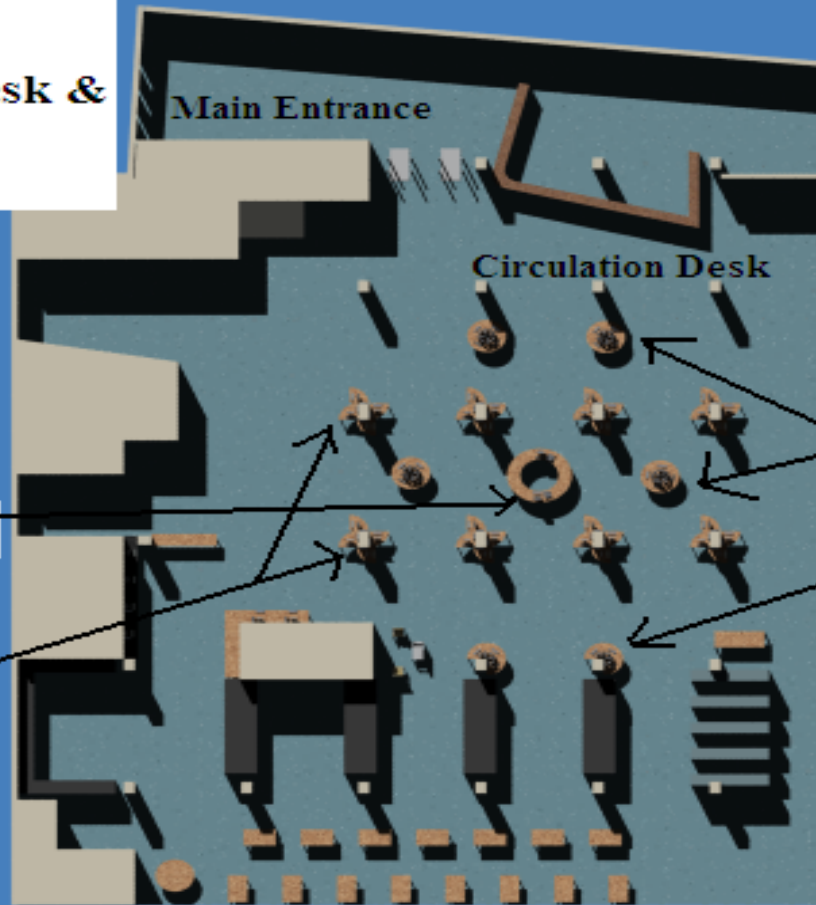
Final Recommended Layout

Diagram E:
Final Recommended
Layout for Reference Desk &
Student Computers

Main Entrance

Circulation Desk

Round Tables (or four quarter-round sections) with 3-4 computers on each

Reference Desk

Four small computer desks "pinwheeled" around each of the central pillars

Preparing the Proposal

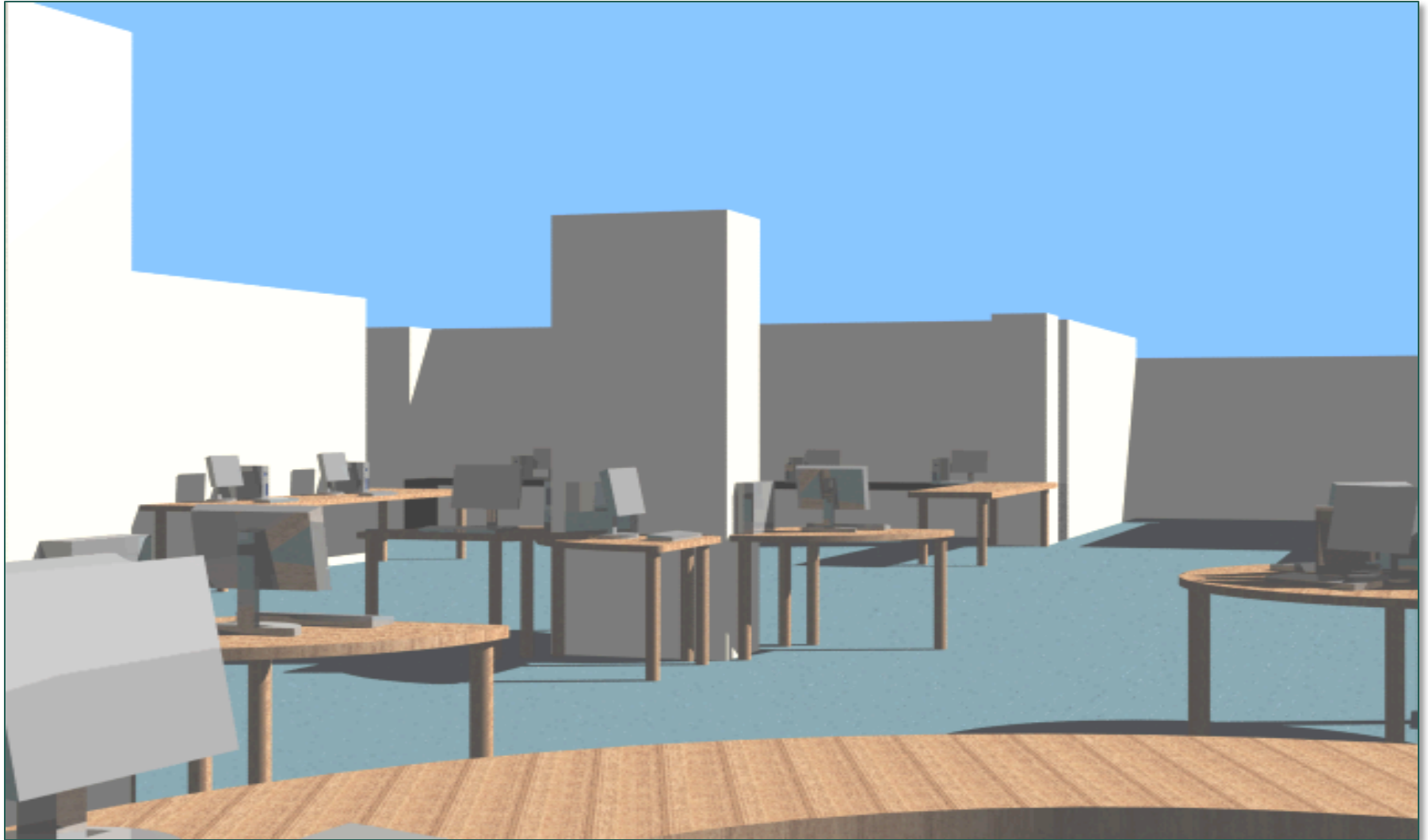- Prepared both a text document and a multimedia PowerPoint for the proposal

- Included several layouts:
  - Original showing points of issue
  - Several alternatives that were considered
  - Final Recommended Layout
  - Scaled back version

- Eye level views of a couple of critical areas

- Before & after "fly through" videos

Eye Level View from Desk with Carrels
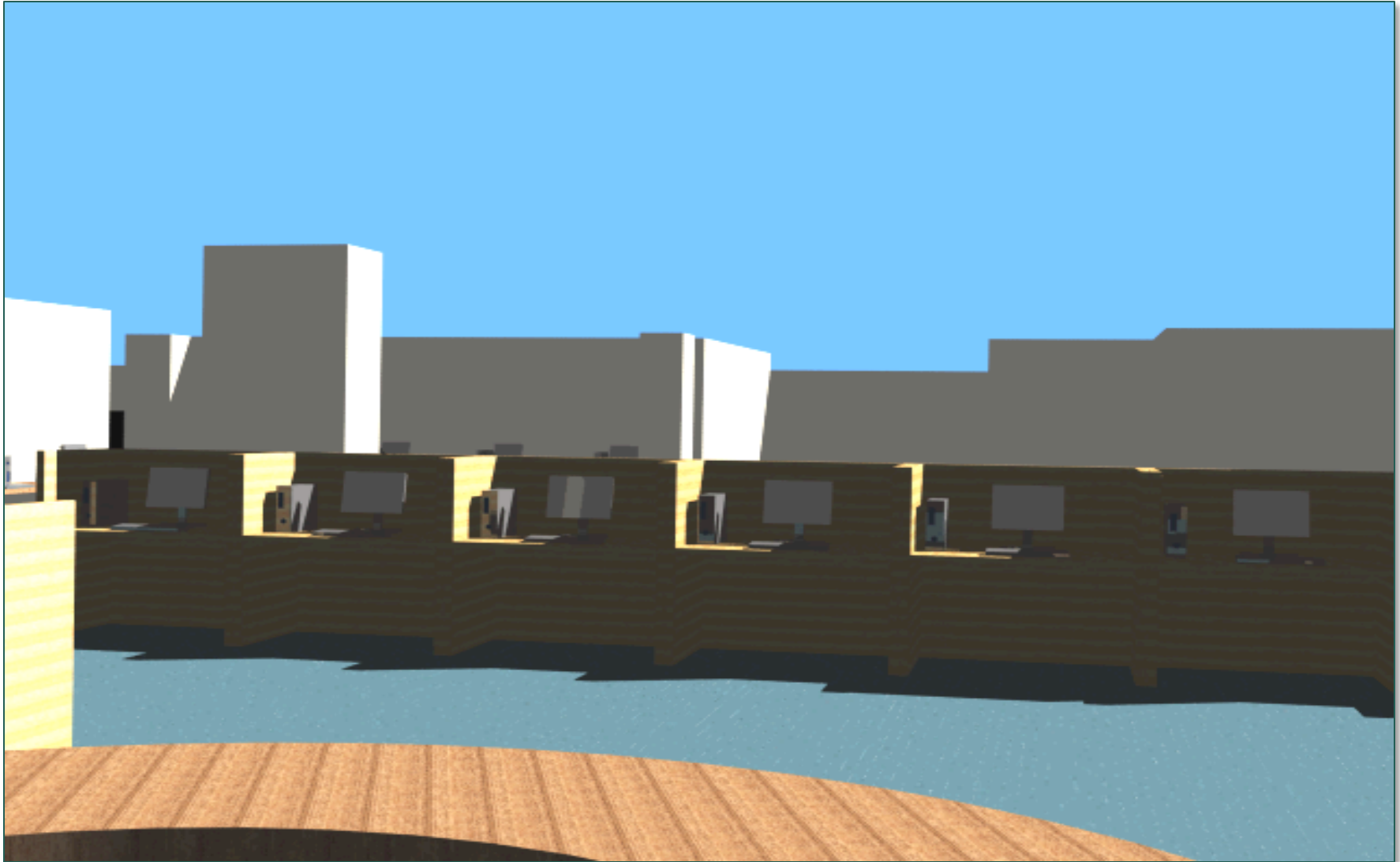
Eye Level View from Desk with Tables

View in Real Life

Scaled-Down Plan for Reference Area

Diagram F:
Scaled Down
Reference Desk &
Computer Layout

Main Entrance

Circulation Desk

Central Reference
Desk

Long Computer
Tables out from End
Pillars

Computer
"Pinwheels"
around the four
Central Pillars

Only 48 Student
Computers
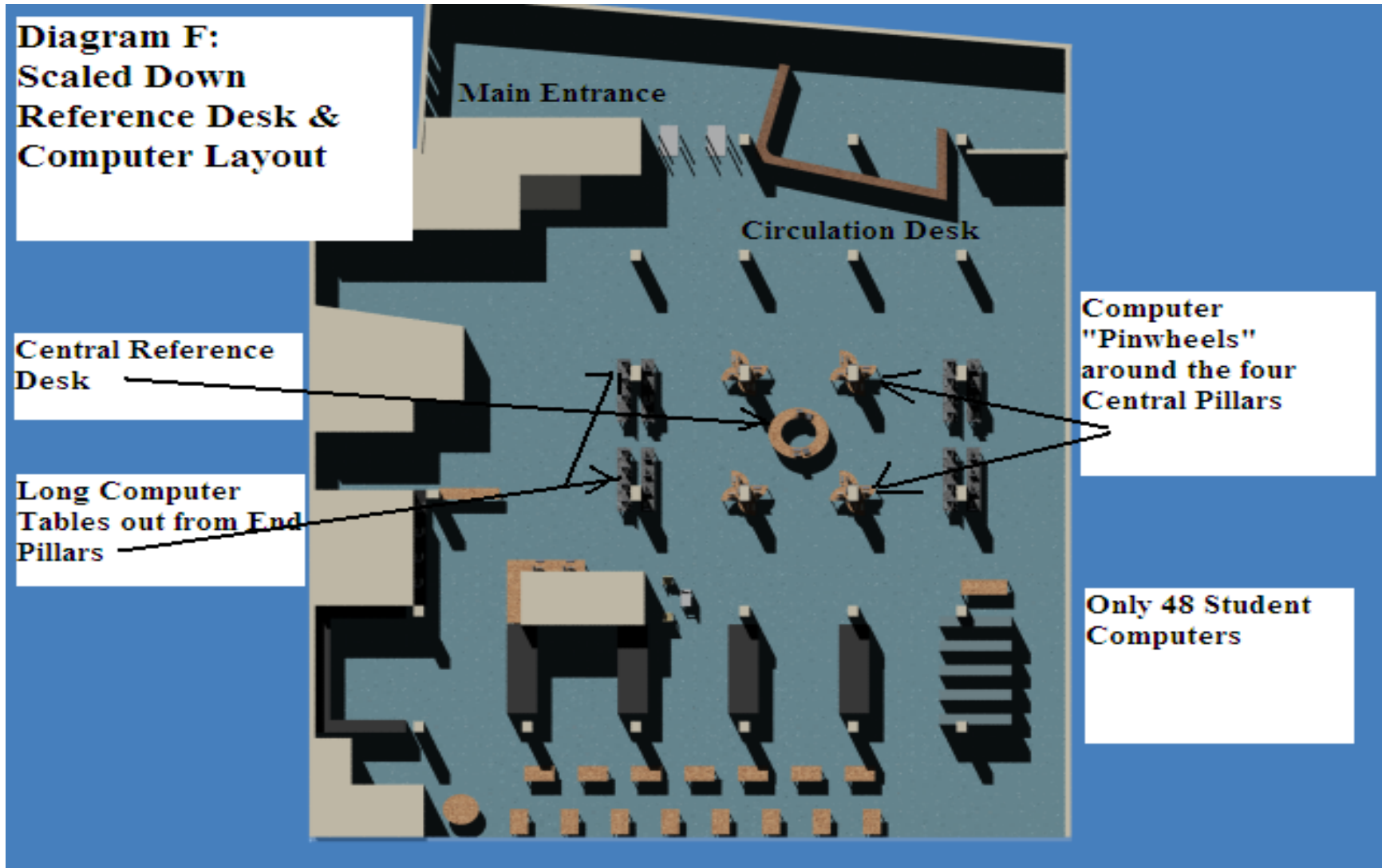
Preferred Design Fly-Through
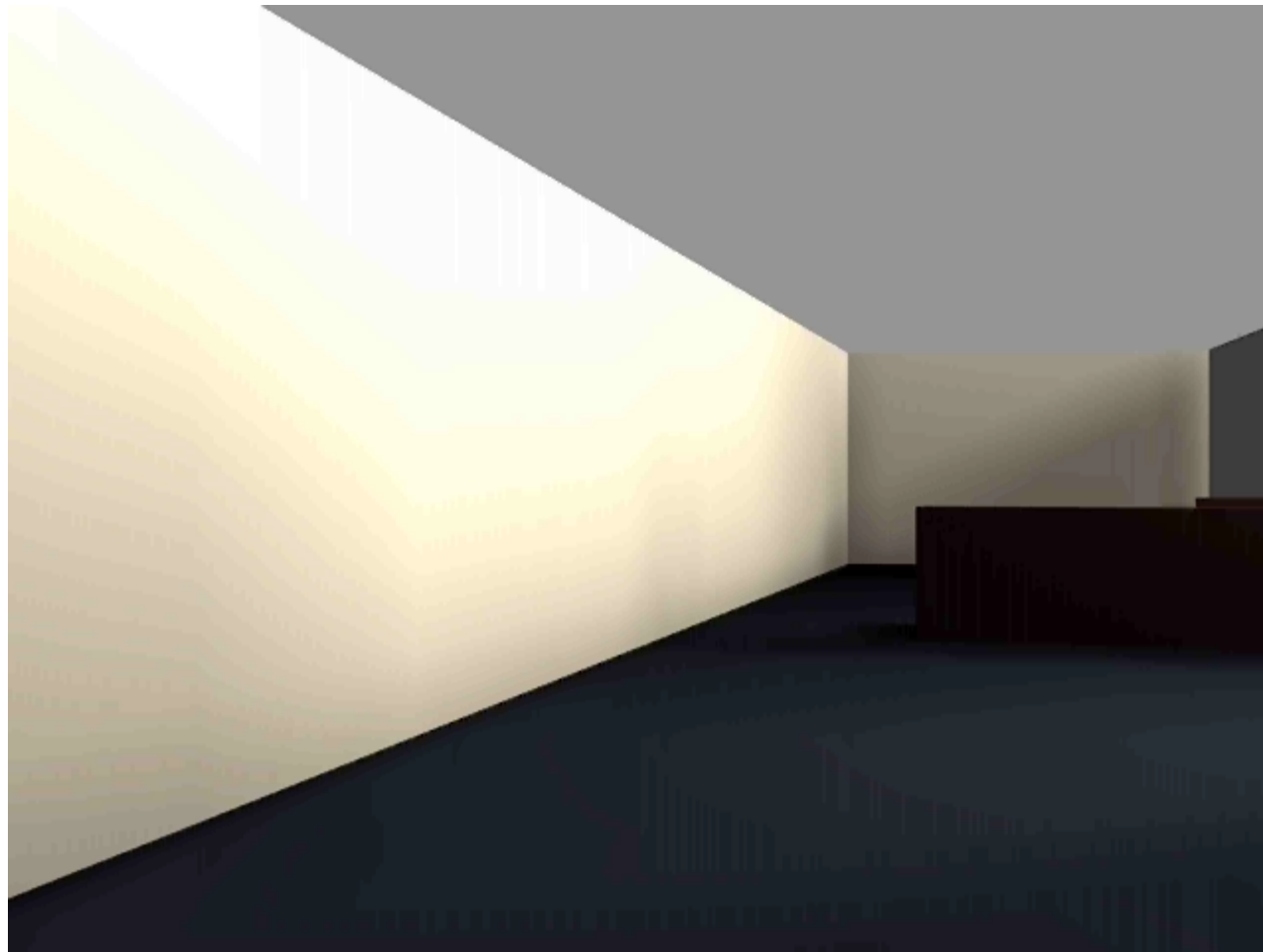
Where the Software Really Mattered

- Multimedia PowerPoint helped sell the project at various levels throughout the Libraries & University

- Shown to:
  - Libraries' Facilities Manager
  - Dean and Libraries Management Team
  - University Library Committee
  - Provost
  - Furniture Vendor

- The graphics made it "real", exciting, & fundable

Reference Redesign Outcomes

- Dean Yee, et. al. excited by proposal
  - Separated Reference Project from Carpet Project
  - Sought additional funding to implement the full Reference Redesign proposal
  - Brought in vendor and their designer to help with new furniture (much of it custom made)
- Year delay in final implementation
- At end of original Carpet project, Reference Area was TEMPORARILY returned to its original layout

Carpet Installation Service Issues

Temporary Headquarters

What We Needed to Survive

- ☐ Coin and copy card operated copiers
- ☐ Microfilm reader
- ☐ Microcard reader
- ☐ Small ready reference collection
- ☐ One reference computer and printer
- ☐ 20 student terminals
- ☐ Phone

Reference Collection:
Time for a Fresh Outlook

A Good Old-Fashioned Weeding

- Initial goal of reducing the collection "footprint" by 25%
- The collection lacked focus, put together by various selectors
- No dedicated fund → feast or famine purchases
- Sorely out of date
- Had been weeded from time to time with mixed success

Here, There, & Everywhere

- ❑ Realized the collection could easily be weeded by 50%
- ❑ The location choices
  - ▪ Move to circulating collection (better access for patrons and ILL)
  - ▪ Move to stacks yet restrict access (mostly for multivolume sets)
  - ▪ Move to storage
  - ▪ Discard

New Rules to Weed Reference Collections

- ❑ If the country no longer exists it's books are NOT reference material

- ❑ It doesn't matter if it's the latest edition we've got if the information is so old it reeks!!!

- ❑ You can lead a patron to a print index but you can't make them search it

- ❑ If it hasn't been used in the last ten years, what makes you think it will get used in the next 10?

Reference Weeding Continued

- If one is good, 2 (or 3 or 4….or 10) is NOT better
- If we own in E, why print?
- One collection, one language (moved out the foreign language encyclopedias)
- In Reference or on the street?
- Who's Who, who cares?

Shelving Options Shrink

- Repurposed furniture, less than expected
- Cutting deeper required a re-envisioning of the collection and it's purpose
- Vision of a reference collection not a research collection

An 81% Decrease!!

# A 21ˢᵗ Century Reference Collection

Installation--The Realities Set In

Installation Realities

- Pillars are rectangular not perfectly square
- Anchoring new light weight furniture
- Installing data and electrical supply in solid concrete floor and pillars
- Computer cords are really unattractive in real life
- Adjusted for breathing room at reference desk
- Created additional "pods" to maximize computers

Original Pinwheel Design

Close-Up of Desk and Computer Layout from Diagram E
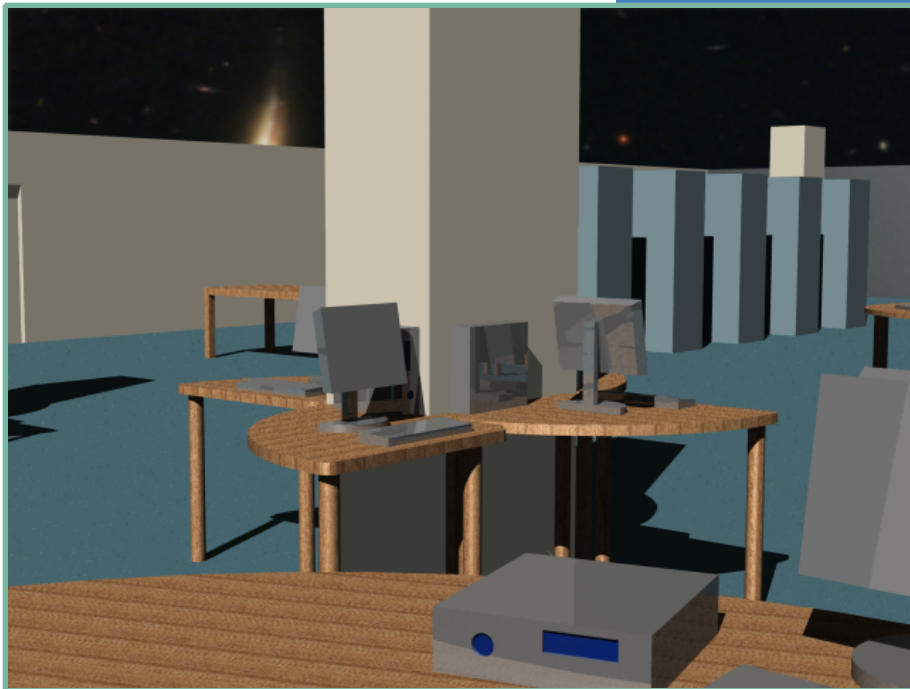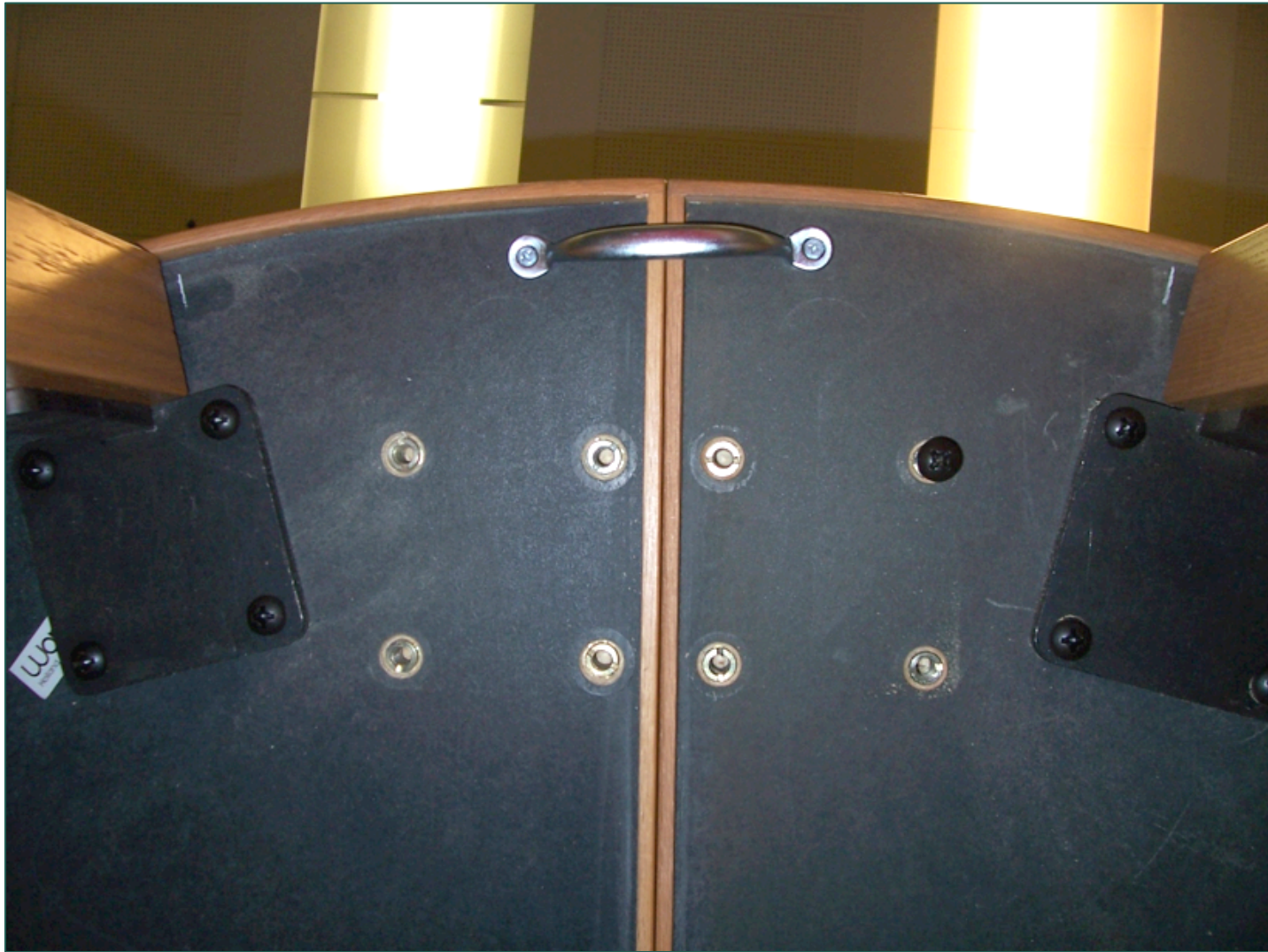
We've Got Legs—Sort of

So, We Talk Amongst Ourselves…

From Pinwheels to Half Moons

Creative Solutions

Rewards of the Project

Remains of Ready Reference

Project Completed!!!!

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Micro Collection: The last Refugees