Sighs and Smiles of Remodeling Projects

presented by Jim Mancuso of Northeastern Baptist College in Bennington, Vermont
Background of the college and its library

• Northeastern Baptist College is in its third year and has been accredited by Vermont Agency of Education as a degree-granting college in the state.

• Located on a main street in Bennington.

• 60 students, majoring in theology, counseling, business, and music.

• the Hogue Library, named after the president’s in-law family, was the Paradise Inn restaurant from 1963 to 2003.

• We rented, then bought the building.

• We started work on repurposing it in April 2012.
Hogue Library as it looks today:
The rooms of the library


• Rooms still under construction
  • Music
  • Gordon Henry (a special donated collection)
  • Book sale
  • Rare book storage

• Completed rooms
  • Ballard Collection (a special donated collection)
  • MARBLE (rare books in a 1914-style room)
  • Offices and work rooms
  • Conference Room
  • Hebrews Café
Need for a new approach to library architecture

• Printed materials – yes, still relevant and useful
• Device-dependent “media” – no longer useful
  • We opened a brand new library without these media: vinyl records, microfilm, microfiche, movie reels, audio cassettes, & VHS tapes.
• Site of collaboration for learning: “meeting space”
• Need for social interaction: “café.”
• Continued need for special collections for targeted information needs.
Re-purposing existing space

• Parameters of using an existing building:
  • Sigh: constricted by what you have, often not what you need/want
  • Smile: can provide a built-in inspiration for things you may not have thought of.

• Take-Away:
  We can all look at how existing space has been utilized and reconsider it: “Is this still the best configuration for this space?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The original layout called for:</th>
<th>But we ended up with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant librarian’s office</td>
<td>A staff kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing Room had a courtyard window</td>
<td>Switched with the Conference room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Collections Room</td>
<td>Computer &amp; printer area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Collection Room</td>
<td>Lounge for families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Collection on the far wall</td>
<td>--placed on a near wall (not blocked from view)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study carrels along the front wall</td>
<td>--had to add shelving there due to growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference desk</td>
<td>Biblical language study desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study tables all in a row</td>
<td>3 tables grouped as a collaborative workspace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The central aisle—natural light, beautiful window seat, study space.
Need for collaborative workspace
“Collaboration” is broadly defined.
The *Sighs* that come with experience:

- Volunteers might lack the necessary skills.
- Work on communicating a clear vision to all involved.
- Use excellent materials the first time.
  - don’t settle for what is quick and easy.
- Survey the whole project first, and then move forward.
  - no idea that the furnaces and roof were in such poor condition
  - lay out an overarching plan for the entire project first
  - very hard to anticipate all the new needs that arise
  - lost an entire office and two large closets to furnace installation
- Color choices:
  - a matter of personal taste
  - keep it simple
  - in the end, just repainting is sometimes the best or only solution.
The Smiles that come with experience:

• New, good, better ideas come along after you start.
  • anyone involved can be the source of a good idea
• Staying flexible to new developments can bring about awesome results.
• Donation of a whole new collection can necessitate design changes for rooms that you did not anticipate.
  • NEBC changed its degree majors, which altered the library’s collection strategy, which created the need for more space for Business and Music, and less for Education.
• Don’t fight the need to switch gears, re-design and keep moving.
The *Smiles* that come with flexibility:

- “Allow yourself the pleasure of serendipitous gain.”
- Have a vision for the end result that allows leeway for new, wonderful things to come along:
  - wide central aisle allowed for natural light and study space
  - window seat with cushion and pillows
  - reference desk became biblical language study area
  - book sale room outgrew its area and evolved into a computer use room
  - used a new, reproduction Arts & Crafts style door
A brand new repro door looks just as convincing and period appropriate, but was very easy to install.
Some tips and practical advice

We are glad that we—

- kept all the original windows or doors so that the exterior maintains its original architectural integrity
- invested in being close to downtown: proximity to shops & stores, museums, pizza shops, convenience stores
- made the hallway 5 ft. wide
- have a conference room as meeting and classroom space
- created a quiet lounge area behind the Main room
- used a cool, calming color scheme in the Main room
- made good use of original features such as the fireplace and café area
- hired experts to design the interior of the café
Cool blue color scheme creates a calming effect.
Lounge area in the rear makes a safe haven for young mothers, or just a relaxing area for quiet reading.
Main Room under construction in 2013
Main Room as it looks today
A back-corner room that was set aside to house rare books, Spring 2014
Rare Books Room, one year later
Rare Books Room as it looks today:
Hebrews Café under construction
Hebrews Café as it looks today:
Let’s learn from each other—

What similar anecdotes, tips, and strategies do you all have to share?