InfoCommons Renovations

This document provides current and detailed information about the renovations to the Infocommons (IC) public computing area in the Main Library starting in February 2019. It will be updated as the project progresses. Please see the STEAM Spaces document on the Library STEAM Portal for a higher-level overview of how these renovations fit into the library's larger strategy for supporting STEAM education in the City. Please see our Public Meetings page for notes and slides from the public meetings in which the Library shared and refined its plans based on public input.

The Learning Lab

In late February, the Computer Classroom will be closed for approximately four weeks in order to allow installation of classroom-scale web conferencing, flexible furniture and laptop computer storage systems. When the room comes back online in March, it will be a state-of-the-art "Learning Lab," suitable for a far greater variety of educational programs and events than ever before, and as was originally imagined for this space. It will no longer serve as an overflow public computing space (note that we will continue to provide desktop computers in the main IC area).

While the classroom is being renovated, and until the new "Tech Bar" comes online this summer, additional laptop computers will be made available for checkout from a charging cart immediately outside the classroom. Over time, the Library will deploy multiple laptops for every classroom computer that is no longer available for general purpose public computing, greatly increasing total public computing capacity and allowing patrons freedom to use devices throughout the library.
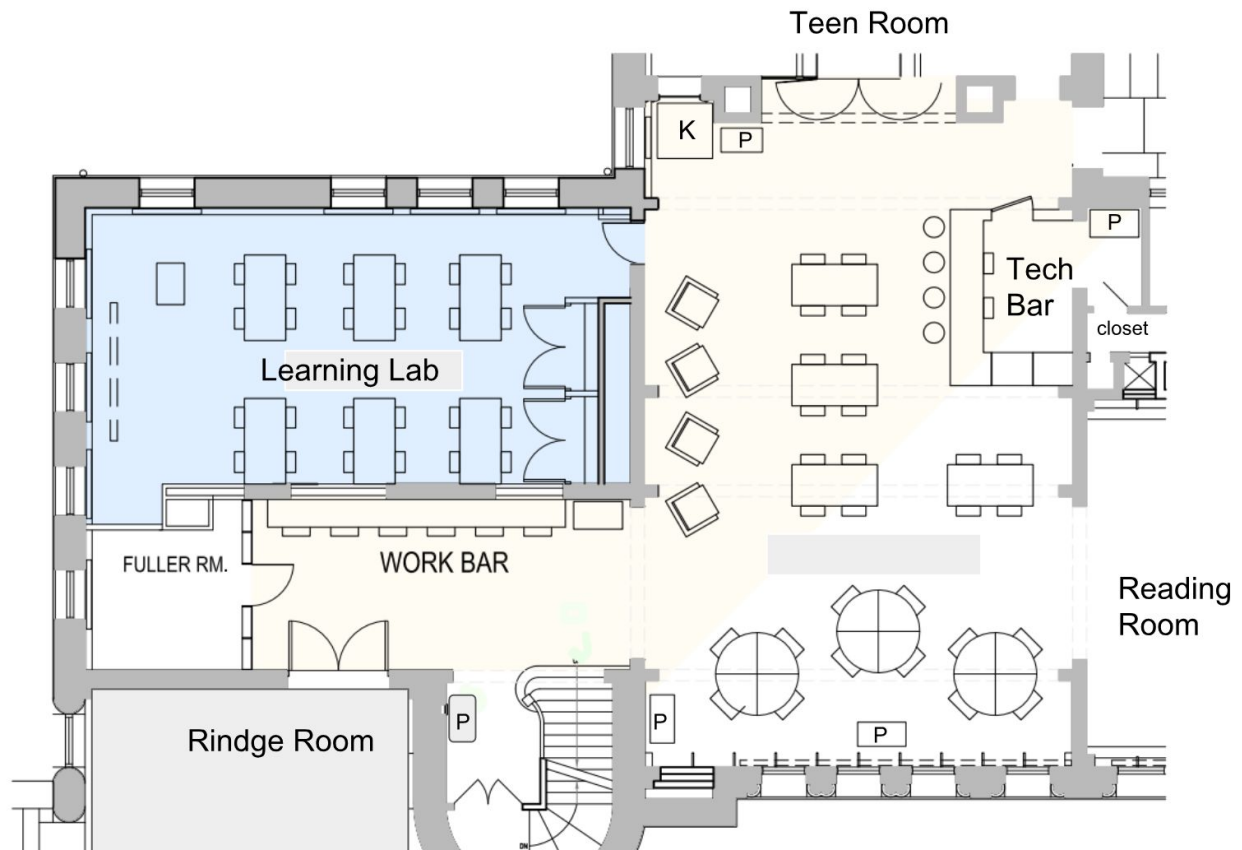
Laptop Kiosk

At around the same time as the Learning Lab renovation, we will be converting our laptop kiosk to dispense new Asus Flip Chrome OS devices instead of its current mix of Macbooks and Dell Windows laptops. The superior battery life of these Chrome OS devices, combined with their ease of use and greater speed of availability, will address issues that have been reported by patrons around battery life and device complexity. The laptops currently in the kiosk will still be available via manual checkout from the IC desk for those who prefer them. By making this switch, we will make it easier for patrons to check out the devices that are most likely to provide them with a satisfactory computing experience, while retaining the option to check out other devices.

Tech Bar

In late spring 2019, the entire Information Commons area will be closed for approximately two months for the construction of the Tech Bar, an enhanced service desk for device checkout and patron support, and furniture changes to better support portable computing. Digital menus will be installed above the Tech Bar service desk to give (almost) real-time updates of device availability. The old IC desk will be removed. Four carrels with desktop computers will be replaced with coffee-bar inspired tables and comfortable seating. An elegant workbar will be installed in the hall outside the Rindge Room for patron seating. Three carrels with desktop computers will be preserved for patrons who prefer them. Public printers will be moved to dedicated mini-tables.

The Tech Bar service desk will be stocked with a continuously refreshed variety of laptops, tablets, STEAM kits and other devices such as mobile Wifi Hotspots, some for use in the library, and others available for "take out." The digital menus will clearly communicate item availability and loan terms.

Below is a floorplan of what the new Tech Bar public computing area and Learning Lab will look like when renovations are complete. Printers are denoted with the letter *p*, the laptop kiosk with a *k*. Note that some details of furniture and equipment placement may change.

While the IC is under construction and inaccessible, laptops will be available for checkout from another public service desk. As soon as we determine which desk, we will update this document with that information.

The Teen Room, Fuller Room, and Rindge Room will be unavailable for a portion of the construction period -- details forthcoming.

We plan to reopen the IC as the Tech Bar by late Summer 2019. We are confident it will vastly improve patron experience, providing easy access to a larger number and greater variety of devices, for longer periods of time, within and beyond the Library.

Thank you for your patience during this transition period!

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