



**Penn  
Libraries**

## **Branding the Commons**

Connecting to Libraries, Faculty, and Students

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### **Staffing**

Who should staff your library commons? Consider that the hours may extend far beyond standard staff hours, and the location may be distant from your main library. Are students, interns, or professionals the correct choice?

- Library school interns allow you to bring additional professionalism and library skills to your desk and services. Interns from other programs may not bring these specific skills. What else might they bring though?
- Students must be well trained to represent the library; what services should you allow them to run directly versus supervised?

### **Target Audience**

Who should be our primary audience for a given commons space? Undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty will all vie for ownership. Should we focus on our natural audiences based on location and staff expertise, or attempt to expand and bring in all segments of the college/university community?

- Students will bring word of mouth, telling others about the space. It's important to make sure they understand the commons as a library. Materials, outreach efforts, and social media should all reflect the library brand.
- Faculty can bring people into the space for the first time, using teaching spaces to advertise the more traditional library services.
- Mirror your main library's mission to the greatest extent possible; undergraduate versus faculty focus there?

### **Working with Administrators**

What sorts of things will show library administrators that the commons is effective and populated? How will college administrators know about the commons and its connection to the library when making decisions about the university as a whole?

- Faculty partnerships; faculty are often the strongest representatives to both the library and the university at large. The more invested they are in your space, the more allies you will have. But, make sure they understand it's a library when they discuss it.
- Early and consistent messaging about the priorities and mission of the space.

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## Creating Services

What services are most useful to your patrons while also being library-specific services? With a decrease in physical reference, how can we best serve students' information needs while showing that we are a library space?

- Commons as physical spaces for group study and collaboration, within the library as a neutral space on campus.
- Commons as technology spaces, where students can receive help with hardware/software, digital projects, coursework.
- Commons offers course technology assistance, adding an instruction element that other tech support centers on campus do not.

## The Commons within the Library

What is the relationship of the commons to the rest of the library? How do we work with other library departments and librarians to best serve our constituents?

- Librarians from main and departmental libraries collaborate with commons staff to offer programming, allowing patrons to recognize the commons as a library space.
- Commons take targeted services from other libraries or departments on campus and generalize them so that all patrons can participate.
- Commons participate in overall library strategic planning and offer services to align with these goals.



Weigle Information Commons



Education Commons



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[commons.library.upenn.edu](http://commons.library.upenn.edu)

