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The Library as experience: Interactive components in an architecture library

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The Library as Experience:

Interactive Components in an Architecture Library

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<p>| Architecture Studies Library |
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For libraries to continue to exist they must create an experience which draws the patron back again and again -- to both their virtual spaces and physical spaces.

This presentation concentrates on the physical ways a library, specifically in this case the Architecture Studies Library at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, can create experiences which enhance interactions -- interaction between patron and materials, between patron and staff, and among patrons.

Each of the following slides illustrates the interactive library experience developed in the last couple of years in the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Architecture Studies Library.
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The plasma screen is used for announcements, highlighting upcoming events, posting reminders, displaying student work, and promoting new services and collections. It’s installed near the main entrance/exit, so patrons have to walk by it when leaving. Although passive in some ways, it does allow staff to interact with patrons in a changing, up-to-the-minute mode.
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Six boxes of tactile enjoyment devices (blocks) were placed on tables throughout the library. Patrons use them to stimulate conversation or to escape from their studies. Staff often find arrays (above) left on tables.
A dry erase board was placed on top of one of the library’s tables. Students use it for collaboration, jotting down notes, making announcements, or just drawing. The table does not get erased by library staff, in hopes that the next patron will be inspired to engage with previous notations.
New books arriving in the library are displayed near the service desk. Book jackets remain on the books for visual appeal. The students are drawn to the visual, and interact with the materials through that medium.
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Similarly, the DVD visual “Blockbuster” style draws students to check out. After starting this approach, circulation of DVDs & Videos increased 213% in the first year.
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Students and other patrons are able to interact with each other through presentations of their work. The ASL Gallery hosted the first ever student photography exhibit this spring. The exhibit showed dramatic images of buildings, landscapes, and people all over the world. Each image was accompanied by a sentence or two from the photographer to put it in context.
Students are able to interact with faculty in the library in many ways. The ASL Gallery hosts an annual faculty art show each spring, which has served to open students’ eyes to another side of their teachers. The installation above by one of the faculty was in two parts, and highlighted a selection of books in the library that had received no use.
The best student work from each semester is selected and placed on display in the library’s gallery. By displaying student work from all years and all the School’s disciplines, students get a sense of their peers’ skills and interests.
The library interacts with future students by annually hosting the AIA High School Design Awards. This year, School of Architecture students were recruited as tour guides and personal contacts for the many high school students who attended (future library users!).

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Patrons are able to collaborate with each other on projects at one of the library’s two group computer workstations. These workstations are also equipped with 11” x 17” flatbed scanners.
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Popular with study groups, the curved couches provide comfortable space for students to work together.
The library’s fountain, an art piece donated by a student in the School, contributes a unique feel to the “library as place” and fosters interaction with the art piece in this rather unusual context. It also serves to provide ambient background noise contributing to a relaxing environment.

Photo by Jason Aubin
The library has ordered mobile lounge chairs, similar to these, to provide groups with the ability to quickly and easily create comfortable lounge areas that suit their changing needs.
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Further Reading

