

## **From Information Commons to Learning Commons**

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The 1999 article "Conceptualizing an Information Commons" offered a framework that has proven useful for many institutions not only in describing the original path of IC development, but also for subsequent evolution and elaboration of the IC into the "Learning Commons" (LC) model.

It utilized concepts of *institutional alignment*, *strategic fit*, and *functional integration* that seem to have fairly effectively described the change dynamics and service priorities that continue to push the IC/LC evolution forward.

What do we mean by change dynamics? The American Council of Education has produced a primer for change that includes a typology, or matrix, of change initiatives. I find this matrix helpful in characterizing the evolution from Information Commons to Learning Commons:

- 1) adjustment;
- 2) isolated change;
- 3) far-reaching change;
- 4) transformation.

A.) IC as adjustment: described as a computer lab on the first floor of the library with a suite of productivity software (MSOffice) combined with access to electronic resources. Focus broadens from print to integration and coordination of information and technology resources for students.

B.) IC as isolated change: described as the same lab but with media authoring tools also included, and with coordinated in-library staff support designed to carry the user through a continuum of service from resource identification and retrieval on through data processing and format conversion to the desired end state of presentation, packaging, or publication. Here, the library has altered its pattern of service delivery to better align itself with changing campus-wide priorities, and has done so by integrating functions formerly carried out by separate units within the library to project a new service profile. This level portrays an IC model that is still library-centric, however. While it better *aligns* the library with other campus priorities, it is still not intrinsically collaborative with other campus initiatives.

----- *This marks the threshold I am proposing between IC and LC*-----

C.) LC as far-reaching change: described as the above plus coordination with other unit(s) such as a faculty development center or center for teaching and learning, as well as the frequent inclusion of a campus-wide course management system meaningfully linked to and integrated with library electronic resources and virtual reference services. Here, the library has further altered its pattern of service delivery to better align itself

with changing campus-wide priorities, and has done so by integrating those functions formerly carried out *within* the library with others formerly carried out *beyond* the library's purview. The service profile is no longer library centric, and becomes essentially collaborative.

D.) LC as transformational change: the above carried out with reference to (or within a framework of) campus-wide schema and/or faculty innovation such as core curriculum revision, writing/authoring across the curriculum, cognitive immersion learning paradigms such as the "classroom flip," and "learning object"/IMS implementation, such as D-Space. At this level, we continue to see functional integration across a horizontal plane, but we begin to see vertical differentiation as the former service delivery profile projected toward students becomes enhanced with another (or multiple) service delivery profile(s) projected at the needs of faculty as course authors, knowledge creators, learning coaches, and scholarly communicators. This also involves an enriched suite of services and toolsets.