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New Open Spaces in the Lamson Library

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As the Cluster initiative moves forward at Plymouth State University, more changes are being made to the campus. The latest effect of clusters is the new open lab/collaborative learning environment in Lamson Library.

On the main floor, instead of the shelves containing print journals, movies, music, and more, a completely open space was created. Here, students can work either individually or in a group setting. New furniture was put into the space, most of which is easily maneuverable, which allows students to configure the space into exactly what they need, unlike in the past where the tables were heavy and hard to move. In order to make room for the planned space, the resources previously located there were moved to the lower levels where compact shelving was installed. All of the resources are still accessible to students, they simply have been relocated.

PSU began planning the changes in the spring of 2017, and student input was heavily utilized. “Last year we surveyed students about our space,” said Elaine Allard, the interim Dean for Library and Academic Support Services and Associate Professor of Library and Information Sciences. “One question asked was ‘Which of the following enhancements to the Library & Learning Commons would improve your ability to study or do research?’ Some of the top selections were – more comfortable furniture, flexible work environments (ability to move furniture, etc.), more power and charging stations, writable surfaces such as whiteboards, more individual study rooms and more collaborative spaces for small groups. This new space addresses many of the enhancements students requested.”

While the student reaction to the space was mostly positive, there were some reservations. Andrea Wasgatt, an English Education major, said that she “likes the concept of the new space and how students can cluster up and have their own bubble of space or they can go and sit by themselves if need be, but the furniture is aesthetically displeasing” and that she wishes “they could have invested in more white boards or even portable dividers so that way certain clusters can have more privacy.” Overall, Wasgatt says that she thinks she will use the library more because of the changes.

Allard says that this new open space is the best possible plan for the library and the students at Plymouth State. “We went to a Learning Commons model over 10 years ago,” Allard said. “This allowed us to provide a variety of services to students in one location – library materials, research help, technology help, writing assistance. As more materials are available electronically, we are able to provide more spaces for students to work on projects surrounded by the supports they need to excel. Our Learning Commons will be a place of innovation and collaboration where students can explore and create knowledge.”