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Creating a Collaborative Space: Going from Drab to Fab

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Abstract

Over the course of nine months in 2017 the PCOM library transformed a study room that had stationary desks and little technology into a dynamic collaborative workspace that includes a 55 inch touchscreen monitor and desktop computer. The steps taken to achieve this included buying new mobile furniture, installing the touchscreen monitor and corresponding equipment, painting the room, and creating support materials including a LibGuide and kit that can be circulated.

Timeline

- June 2017: New furniture is ordered and arrives for room
- July 2017: Touchscreen monitor and equipment are installed
- December 2017: LibGuide that focuses on operation of collab equipment created
- January 2018: Collab kit available to loan to patrons interested in using equipment
- February 2018: Collab room painted to emphasize change

Room

The decision was made to paint the room in order to emphasize the change of the room. Another study area on campus contains the same colors (gray with blue accent walls) so the choice was made to be consistent with these other rooms. Working with plant operations the room was painted over spring break in February 2018.

Monitor and Computer

The monitor is a 55 inch touchscreen, that allows users to connect to it in three different ways: by logging in via the computer that is paired with the touchscreen, by using a cable to connect their laptop to the touchscreen, or by using the Solstice app to connect to the touchscreen from their laptop or mobile device.
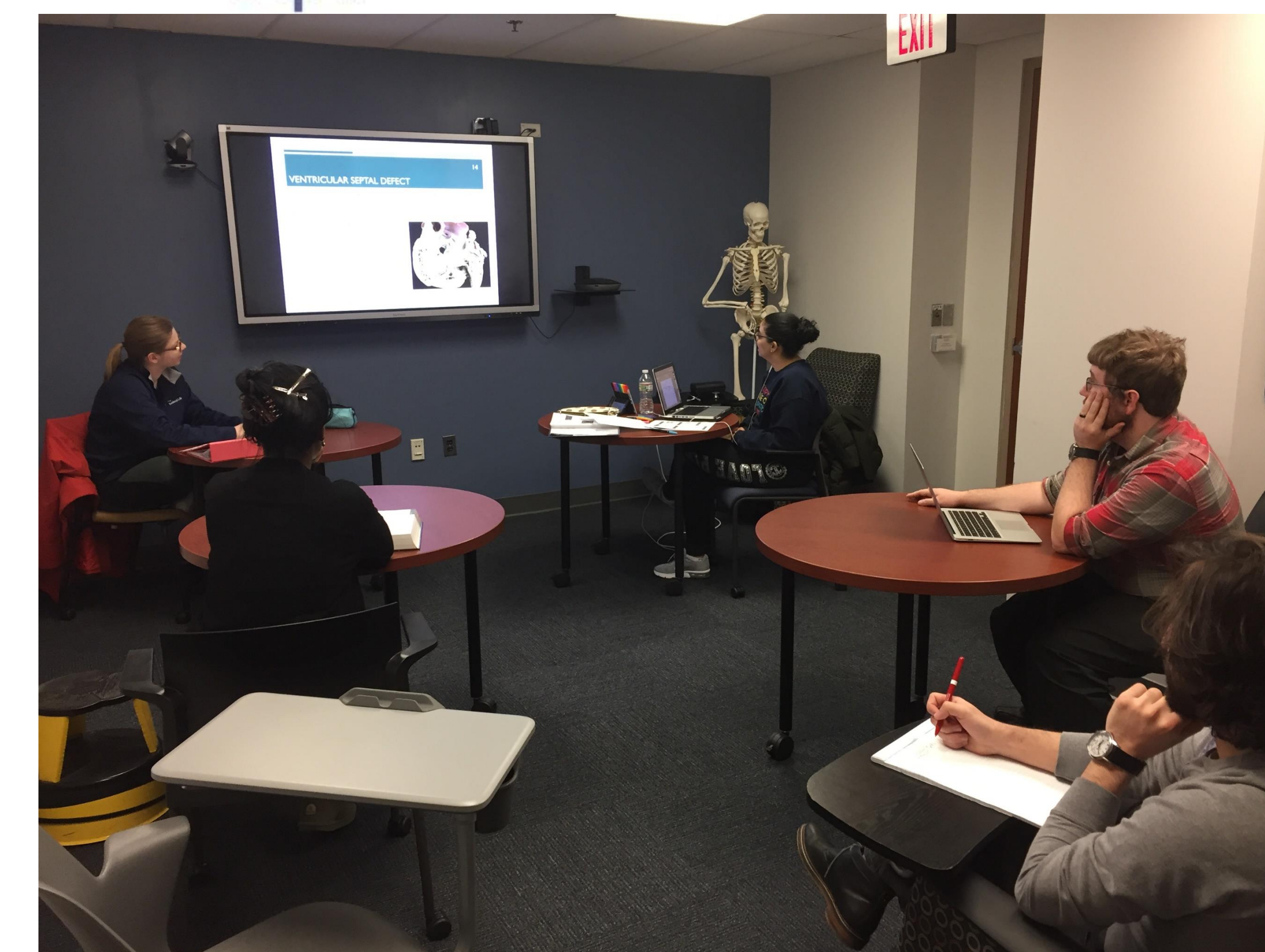

To help users interact with the equipment a kit was created that contained remotes for the equipment, a wireless keyboard for the desktop, and multiple cables for users to connect their laptops to the touchscreen. The kit can be borrowed for 4 hours at a time and it's circulation statistics help staff monitor use and popularity. A LibGuide was also created that contained written instructions as well as tutorial videos focused on using the equipment.

Furniture

New furniture was purchased in June of 2017 in order to make the space more flexible and adaptive. Smaller tables with wheels were purchased along with chairs with wheels. This new furniture replaced stationary tables and wooden chairs that could not be easily moved to fit user needs. More chairs with wheels were added from the library to give users a broader selection of seats while in the space.

The computer connected to the touchscreen includes multiple programs to encourage collaboration. The Microsoft Office Suite is included, highlighted by OneNote, which when combined with the touchscreen allows patrons to utilize the screen as a whiteboard for brainstorming session. The library also maintains a subscription to Tableau, a data visualization software that is available through the computer. Skype is also included, as there is a webcam that is mounted above the touchscreen.

Results

The benefits of the renovated room have been numerous. Students are able to study and work on group projects in a more efficient way. Librarians are also now able to give information literacy sessions in-house rather than book a classroom, and faculty and staff are able to conduct virtual meetings thanks to the installed conference software.