Managing a Library Renovation Project: A Team Approach

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Managing a Library Renovation Project: A Team Approach
The Lamar Soutter Library, University of Massachusetts Medical School

Overview
By the mid-nineties The Lamar Soutter Library was in desperate need of beautification and updating to accommodate the current advances in technology. In 1998, the first team was formed to look at the condition of the Library and recommend both short and long term improvements. Four years and five teams later, the Library has undergone a complete renovation with new furniture, paint, carpet, computer instruction area, audiovisual viewing room, and an improved layout that better serves the electronic access needs of Library patrons and creates a better working environment for Library staff.

Facts and Figures
The Lamar Soutter Library is a mid-size academic health science library that houses 280,000 volumes. The Library occupies 41,000 square feet within the medical school and employs 52 full time employees. The renovated Library has 115 public access workstations and a wireless network with 25 laptops available for checkout. There are two public service points in the Library, a Circulation Desk and a Reference Desk which accommodate approximately 400,000 visitors a year. The Library has been using a team-based approach to operational problem solving since 1998.

Team
A group of people collaborating in their professional work, or in some enterprise or assignment to achieve a common goal or outcome.

Facilities Team 1998 - 1999
Identified facility issues for remodel.
Composition of Library Staff

Space Study Team 1999 - 2000
Evaluated options for Library growth and modernization.
Composition of: School Administration

Remodel Planning Team 2000-2001
Designed new layout and aesthetics
Composition of: Architects, Library staff and facilities

Remodel Implementation Team 2001-2002
Executed plan for Library’s new design
Composition of: Library staff, facilities

Remodel Follow Up Team 2002-2003
Identify unresolved issues and determine solutions
Composition of: Library Staff

Conclusion
The renovation improved the Library’s physical space by providing patrons with more seating options, better lighting and increased accessibility to the Library’s collection and resources. The renovation provided staff with work areas that are centralized by department and a more open work environment that is conducive to collaboration.

The renovation was also successful because the team-based approach to its management made faculty, staff and students feel like they were included in the decision making process throughout the project. Having staff members from every department involved in all of the various teams allowed each department’s specific needs to be considered during each step of the project. Involving Library staff in the decision making process resulted in staff buy in to the project and has given staff a sense of ownership for the “new” Library. This sense of ownership is reflected in the new sense of pride in the Library and interest in its upkeep shown by all faculty staff and students.

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