Learning Space

Learning Space: What difference does it make?
- How does learning space impact on the learning behaviour of its users?
- How do students use our spaces?
- What does this mean for the staff who support them?

A history of learning space research
Research concentrates on technical and physical issues, NOT learning behaviour.

What’s the difference with our research?
We have focused on:
- Learning spaces, specifically in the library, and how students relate to it
- Staff feedback on the impact of space on their work and support

Where is the research on space impacting on learning behaviour?

How we gathered data
- Reflective logs and quantitative monitoring of desk enquiries (staff)
- Surveys, learning logs, monitoring space occupancy, and interviews (students)

Discoveries - how students view spaces
- Study goals are simplistic, to finish what they are working on.
- They do know that they like particular types of library space for specific reasons.
- Frequently these are practical e.g. near resources, silent or group studying.
- Students find the library spaces conducive to learning, but don’t know why, beyond it being “the place to get work done.”

Discoveries - student/space interaction
There have been several cases of environmental press or habitual use in some places.
- Why have students unplugged computers and moved equipment to use their own laptops when laptop tables with power points are available in the same area?
- Why are students using some kinds of furniture and not others?

Discoveries - impact on staff support
Staff have experienced an increase in enquiries since refurbishment, and primarily deal with IT queries. There are several possible reasons for the increase...
- Behaviour and noise: does behaviour stem from the way the space is designed, students’ educational history, or should we totally re-think the way our learning space operates?

Project recommendations
- Re-evaluate what student needs are for support
- Encourage independent learning
- Revise staffing and modify the subject team format
- Play with our spaces more! Experiment with furniture configuration
- Reconsider our own expectations of spaces

Plans for the future
We want to:
- Conduct more research into whether our data matches other universities in this country
- Embed our research methods into the curriculum to discover more habits across a wider variety of space types
- Continue evaluation of our learning spaces

"What does this mean for the staff who support them?"