

## CHAPTER 20

# Case Study: Duke University, The Ruppert Commons for Research, Technology and Collaboration (Also Known as “The Edge”)

This case study was provided in writing by Brittany Woffard, Coordinator for The Edge, Librarian for Research and Instructional Services, Bostock Library.

### 20.1 TYPE OF SPACE OFFERED

Hybrid: Data Visualization Lab and Digital Scholarship Center

### 20.2 MAIN IMPETUS FOR PROJECT

Duke University Libraries created The Edge (formally known as The Ruppert Commons for Research, Technology, and Collaboration) in 2014, to meet the growing needs of interdisciplinary, team-based, and data-driven research at Duke. Plans for this space came about through a multiyear planning process in which faculty, students, and library staff explored how Duke researchers were increasingly conducting their work in the context of interdisciplinary collaborations and digital production. In creating The Edge, the Libraries were responding to the highly interdisciplinary and innovative research environment at Duke, where academically diverse teams undertake socially and digitally engaged research projects as part of the curriculum. At the same time, the Edge provided an opportunity for showcasing this work, including the Libraries’ technology-focused services and partnerships to create new scholarship.

## 20.3 BRIEF TIMELINE OF PROJECT

### 2011

- A committee was formed in Fall 2011 to explore the establishment of a Research Commons at Duke University Libraries.

### 2012

- In August, a Visioning Workshop took place. Stakeholders, students, staff and faculty, as well as library staff met to explore emerging needs and develop a new division for the next stage of library services and facilities.

### 2013

- Project approved by Duke University Board of Trustees in October.

### 2014

- Construction begins on The Edge in May
- Construction is completed in December.

### 2015

- The Edge officially opens in January.

## 20.4 APPROXIMATE COST OF PROJECT

\$3.5 Million to renovate an existing space ([Picture 20.1](#)).



Picture 20.1 The edge common area.

## **20.5 CAMPUS PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLE**

- Duke Office of Information Technology: provides AV support and consulted during the planning stages of the project
- Duke Center for Instructional Technology: participated on the planning team
- OIT Research Computing: participated on the planning team

## **20.6 OUTSIDE PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLE**

- Shepley Bulfinch, architects
- A select group of donors provided funding for this project

## **20.7 DID YOU VISIT OR RESEARCH ANY OTHER SPACES FOR IDEAS BEFORE STARTING THE PROJECT? IF SO, WHICH ONES?**

- University of Virginia's Scholar's Lab
- Emory University's Digital Scholarship Center
- Columbia University's Digital Scholarship Centers
- Indiana University's Scholars Commons
- University of Washington's Research Commons
- New York University's Research Commons

## **20.8 DID YOU CONDUCT A NEEDS ANALYSIS OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF ANALYSIS? DID IT REVEAL ANYTHING SURPRISING?**

- During a visioning workshop in August of 2012, various stakeholders met to explore emerging needs and develop a new division for the next stage of library services and facilities. It was surprising how many people at the time were looking for high levels of support for digital research projects.
- When we surveyed project teams that met in The Edge for feedback on ways to improve their experience in The Edge, we were surprised to learn how much facilities impacted their experience. Ensuring that we could work with the fantastic staff in Housekeeping to maintain the space was very important, as was working closely with staff in IT, to ensure that monitors and AV systems were working smoothly.

- We conducted a survey of users in the Digital Studio (a lab space in The Edge) to determine how they used the space and what technology, facilities, or resources would be helpful.
- We conducted user studies on the room reservation form and process. We found that users were confused by library jargon and a complicated reservation process. As a result, we simplified the process.

## 20.9 LESSONS LEARNED DURING RESEARCH OR BUILDING PHASE

Put the needs of the user first when designing facilities and policies around them. We had to change some of our facilities (such as door locks and access) once we opened, since the space was used differently than we had envisioned during the planning process.

## 20.10 EXAMPLES OF STUDENT PROJECTS

- One Person, One Vote Project: <https://today.duke.edu/2015/03/snccwebsite>
- Reviewing Retrospective Regulatory Review: <https://bassconnections.duke.edu/project-teams/reviewing-retrospective-regulatory-review-2015-2016>

## 20.11 EXAMPLES OF FACULTY COLLABORATIONS

- Project Vox : <http://projectvox.library.duke.edu/>
- Digital Grimm: <http://blogs.library.duke.edu/blog/2016/02/19/fairy-tales-on-the-edge/> (Picture 20.2).

## 20.12 USAGE STATISTICS AND METHOD OF COLLECTION

- Occupancy in various spaces, using Suma and student assistants to collect data
- Tracking use of a touchscreen kiosk in The Edge, which allowed users to make room reservations, request assistance, and view a map of the space
- Tracking desk traffic and types of questions asked using LibAnalytics
- Tracking printer and scanner use and the hours when they received the most use



Picture 20.2 Edge workshop room.

- Tracking computer use through LabStats
- Tracking room reservations through LibCal
- Tracking events registration through events system
- Tracking type and frequency of after-hours users through data collected from ID card swipes

### **20.13 ANY OTHER TYPES OF ASSESSMENT COMPLETED**

- Tracking the amount of work non-Edge affiliated staff spend on Edge-related projects or work
- Tracking the types of events that take place in The Edge and the campus entity that sponsors them
- Tracking time spent by The Edge's coordinator on event and space management

### **20.14 LESSONS LEARNED AFTER OPENING THE SPACE**

- When planning several event spaces in The Edge, we were unprepared for how much time event management would take—and how firm we would need to be in our boundaries. As with most campuses, Duke has a huge demand for programming spaces, but it is important to our mission to accept events that align with our mission. It has also

been essential to have staff, who manage the events, provide IT support as part of their position, and not as something tacked onto their job as an afterthought.

- Assessment (with many thanks to our fantastic Assessment & User Experience Department) has been incredibly important as we continue developing programs and services. Almost as important as the assessment itself, though, is an understanding of *why* you are conducting the assessment in the first place and how you will use the information you are gathering.

## **20.15 CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS SPACE**

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