

## **11-5-14 New Approaches to Existing Spaces Q&A Log** **Questions from Live Demco Webinar as answered by Dan Meehan & Janet Nelson**

### **Lighting/Brightening Spaces**

**Q: So do you have any suggestions for brightening libraries that have a lot of wood features that can't be painted? We have very nice window areas and we have turned the shelving but it still seems dark.**

A: There are a lot of factors that could come into play here including effectiveness of light sources. There have been a lot of innovations and developments with lighting. Also wall, ceiling, and carpet colors, and height of the space relative to the height of your shelves are important considerations. Is there an opportunity for inserting a light monitor into the center of the space?

**Q: Not all libraries have windows. We are in the middle of a high school building...no windows. I'm really trying to figure out how to bring in color and lighting to compensate.**

A: Color selections can have a big impact but strong colors need to be carefully used. Strong colors focus attention and used properly can pull you into a space, but they can also close off a space. There are also great photo murals out there that you can create and have printed to cover a portion of a wall. This can create outdoor scenes or the feel of a window if you like. You can make it part of an art program in school to create changing art by creating a mural on a wall. It can change monthly or less frequently to draw interest. This creates a focus and while you're not able to have a changing view of the outside, the space can still be dynamic and changing inside. You can also use color to define focal points and create attention within the space.

**Q: If you're going to start rotating your shelves, be sure that the light rotates with them. We realized too late that our permanent shelves were perpendicular to the light source.**

A: This is a good thing to keep in mind. Sometimes there are other types of lights that can be put into a space if you encounter this problem.

### **Power issues/Technology**

**Q: Can you tell me more about retrofitting tables with power? Are there kits for retrofitting tables? How does one retrofit a table?**

A: We typically specify the type of power module and wire management we want from a manufacturer. One example is Doug Mockett. A cabinet contractor can do the retrofit work including fabricating a hollow, center "leg" with an access panel built in that covers the floor box. Some furniture dealers also have people that can do the retrofit work as well.

**Q: We would like to retrofit our tables for power but we cannot bring power up through the floors. Any ideas on how to add power other than installing unsightly power poles?**

A: Great question that is commonly asked. There is not just one answer because it depends on your space. Columns, exterior or interior walls are the easiest ways to handle this because it is relatively easy to pull power through these spaces. Another way is to create a decorative feature to wrap power around a space. Plug bars can be integrated in as part of a design feature to accomplish this. If you are in a two story space and have an accessible ceiling below you can core drill to bring power into the space.

Another option is to channel concrete which is a very loud, dirty undertaking that needs to be done very precisely because it can't be moved a few inches if it is not in the right place. Under carpet wiring can be used under carpet tiles to bring power in. The thin floor system that was discussed earlier in the presentation is not an inexpensive option but if

you are trying to create a technology zone it is a good option that can raise the floor 1½” to bring the wiring in. In other cases, power poles and drops can be brought down from the ceiling and creatively integrated in a visually pleasing way.

**Q: Where do I find ideas for reconfiguring internet station groupings?**

A: Start out by looking at photos and develop an idea of the style and layout you are looking for. You could also hire a professional to help you out with this. They can also help you figure out what type of configuration will be best for your needs. If you are working on a space renovation project, Demco Interiors has space planning services that can help with furniture layout and design when you are adding new furniture options to an area.

**Display/Retail Approaches**

**Q: Any suggestions for finding a space for pamphlets and the signage of upcoming events?**

A: This depends on the space – you want to be careful not have a negative impact on your entry experience. This is something that tends to work well in a vending /café space or near/incorporated into your service points. The key is to make it visible to your library visitors but not the only thing they see when entering your building.

**Q: What are the benefits of a bookstore model vs. a traditional model? Have you had success with a bookstore model?**

A: Feedback that we have had from librarians is that the bookstore model of presenting materials increases circulation. The challenge can be to keep the display filled and organized, but if that happens you are successful. The more traditional warehouse model keeps a lot of resources available and accessible. The role that your electronic resources play will factor into this as well so it generally depends on your philosophy of service and the needs of your community as to which model is appropriate.

**Q: Do you have any advice for how to go about changing over our collection model to a bookstore model?**

A: You could start slow by using available space or dive in a do a total reorganization. This would require developing display opportunities and phasing the conversion. You will want to start with an analysis of your collection to understand what your highest demand materials are. From there you can begin to determine what would be most appropriate from a furniture standpoint. You can also take into account what other successful libraries have done when they have transitioned to this model. Anythink Libraries have some [helpful guidelines](#) to help with organizing and merchandising your collection as well as staffing your space when using the bookstore model.

**Products**

**Q: Are there any companies you could recommend that produce portable/moveable walls and dividers?**

A: Assuming that the question is about demountable partition walls: There are a lot of manufacturers; below are a few to consider.

- DIRTT – “Do It Right This Time”
- KI - “Lightline” and “Genius Wall” Lines
- Teknion – “Altos” and “Optos” Lines

Otherwise if you are looking for less permanent structures, you might think about products from ABF Works, Screenflex, Best Rite and Ghent.

**Q: How heavily can I utilize mobile shelving? My library isn't large, and isn't likely to get larger, but I'd like to make the space more modular, but how much would be too much?**

A: There is no formula for this as each library is different. You may want to switch to mobile shelving incrementally to find the mix that will be right for you. As long as you have adequate room to maneuver the shelving when you would like to move it, and visitors have enough clearance to move around the shelving when browsing you could go with what you feel comfortable with. Shorter runs of mobile shelving would also help you create a more flexible modular environment that will be easy to reconfigure.

**Q: I like the idea of lower shelves, but I think I prefer more open space in our small public library. I kind of want to reduce some of our smaller shelves and replace with fewer (but taller) shelves so as to have more open space...thoughts?**

A: This could be a good strategy, using taller shelves to create/define spaces while still incorporating face-out display. Another option could be using tall shelving around the perimeter of your space and leaving the more central area of your space open for mobile shelving, tables or soft seating. You may also want to consider other ways to gain square footage within your building. Think about spaces that can have shared functions or spaces that might sit empty/unused for the majority of a day. Examples are meeting rooms, board rooms, or even teen areas during school hours. Thinking of ways to have these spaces serve more than one purpose affords you extra square footage. The other thing to consider before raising your stacks is trying out different methods of display and featuring different parts of your collection to increase circulation and reduce the need for more shelving. Many libraries with limited space also use heavy weeding policies to keep materials circulating instead of collecting dust. Other libraries have taken parts of their collections that “every library should have” which were sitting on their shelves for years and created a feature display to get them circulating.

**Q: If limited in space, do you have ideas for how you lower shelves yet still have needed items? (Small special academic setting)**

A: You can expand your shelf space by using lower shelving to create a display opportunities on the top and end panels of the shelving, using the materials from the low shelves to re-stock the display on top. Weed old reference materials and use online resources instead to free up additional space.

**Q: How do you compensate for the smaller space that is available with low shelving replacing tall shelving if there is no more footprint available?**

A: We try to create a balance between using tall perimeter shelving combined with lower free-standing shelves to open up the space. Again, really monitor your collection to be sure that you have the right collection. If your collection is circulating well you actually don't need as much shelving.

**Q: In your experience how successful is changing existing shelving to mobile shelving? Safety issues? Who is expert on weight capacity if changed?**

A: If you have questions about safety and structural capacity, you should consider bringing in a professional to evaluate your space. Some steel shelving can be converted to mobile shelving if it is below 60”H and you are not trying to connect more than 1 starter and 1 adder unit. It is generally not recommended to try to retrofit wood shelving with casters as you are likely to have structural issues in doing so. Your local furniture dealer or a shelving manufacturer can help you determine whether it is safe to retrofit your shelving.

## **School Libraries**

**Q: From a public school view point with little or no funding...What is the one thing that has the greatest impact visually in a space?**

A: Visually it is probably color—though that is a hard question. It is probably best to think about developing some interesting arrangements or neat spaces that create places to hang out or do projects, and then use color to draw people in.

**Q: My school serves nursery through 8th grade all in one library room. What are some solutions that maximize the potential of smaller spaces?**

A: Zoning is one of the most important things that you can do when you are trying to serve different age groups. This will allow you to appropriately segment your collection and provide furniture that meets the needs of each age. You can use display and mobile shelving to define zones and reconfigure the space as your needs and user groups change

**Q: Most of these spaces are public libraries. Do you have info on creating spaces in the school?**

A: Over the past several years, school, public and academic libraries have become much more similar in appearance and functionality. The starting point should be developing an understanding of what role your library plays in the school and

what types of activities need to be supported. Schools have a narrower customer group to think about so focus on opportunities that promote student and staff use. Creating the types of spaces and amenities that they want and need draws them into the library and makes it a valuable resource for the entire school. Also think about whether the space is likely to be used for before and after school activities or to meet other community needs.

### **College/Academic Libraries**

**Q: Do you have an example of a good, low budget refresh for an academic library?**

A: Please check out [the story and renderings](#) about the Southern Illinois University project on our website. It is currently under construction so we will have some photos of the completed renovation up around mid to late January.

**Q: Are there any square footage guidelines for college libraries based on number of students?**

A: Some of the progressive academic libraries we are working with don't find these types of guidelines to be particularly relevant. A lot is changing in academic libraries so guidelines that were developed years ago may not apply to future goals and ideas for your library. Again, determine what activities need to happen in your library and plan your space around those needs

### **Church Libraries**

**Q: Do you do free onsite consulting for church libraries?**

A: Demco Interiors offers needs assessment and space planning as complementary services when you are making a furniture purchase. On site consulting is available depending upon the size and scope of the project. Our professional staff has successfully completed numerous projects over the phone if on site consulting is not an option.

**Q: Do you have a webinar on changing space for existing church libraries**

A: Demco doesn't have a specific webinar that focuses on church libraries but we do have numerous space planning [webinars](#) that focus on different aspects of the library space that can be found on our Ideas + Inspirations site. Focus on the needs of your parishioners and the types of activities that are likely to take place in your space to determine which webinars would be the most helpful. Though some of these webinars may show examples of other types of sizes of libraries, there are scalable ideas that can be carried to many different types of spaces.

### **Special Libraries**

**Q: Do you have any specific suggestions for a community hospital medical library? We will be relocated within 24 months, so am working with a blank pallet; however still waiting to hear about level of support we will be given.**

A: We have worked with medical libraries at HBM and are members of MLA (Medical Library Association). Each situation is different and we would be happy to talk with you further. We have also worked with many libraries to help develop opportunities for support.

### **Teen Spaces**

**Q: I have a small (8' x 14') room we use as a teen space - I want to add a gaming area, while still allowing access to 2 PCs, study tables, and the collection. Any suggestions?**

A: Keep everything very flexible. You may want to consider a flat panel screen mounted to a wall with furniture that is easy to move/rearrange so you can flex the furniture in a small space as needed. You can also consider a mobile screen that can be used throughout your library and remember to consider analog games as well as digital games.

**Q: What are ideas for a way to share teen/children's area so teens don't feel like they are part of the small kid's area?**

A: Zoning the area by age is a good start and other approaches could include a total change in interiors. (Carpeting, wall colors, furniture style, technology, etc.) Creating a separate entrance will also help to make the Teen space feel special and uniquely for teens which is important to the space being well used. Also the service point could be used as a dividing

element. Sometimes we will also install flexible glass partition walls to create more of a feeling of separation in addition to a defined entry point and the ability to better manage sound.

**Q: Thoughts on teen area - enclosed or open?**

A: This depends on several factors including how active the teens are in your library and the location of your Teen Area within the building. Is it adjacent to quieter functions like research areas, quiet reading areas, or is it located adjacent to more social spaces like a café/vending area, A/V collection or technology area? If you are enclosing your teen area we would recommend considering glass for easy visibility into the space for staff oversight. If you are using your Teen Area for gaming events and movie nights, a partially glass-enclosed space might be the way to go to help with sound management while not sacrificing visibility.

**Makerspaces**

**Q: Do you have some examples of successful Makerspaces in High School Libraries?**

A: This is something that we are seeing more school libraries experiment with and are currently testing and trying this out ourselves. This has really been advancing so quickly that school examples have not yet begun to surface but give it 6 months and I am sure that there will be a lot of examples. In the meantime, since public libraries are readily embracing this concept, especially for their teen populations, they can provide some good ideas. If you are thinking about this for your library, start with understanding what the needs of your student community are and be sure that you are taking those needs into consideration as you develop your space.

**Q: How do you feel about Makerspaces?**

A: I think that they are exciting and keep changing. They are different for each community and should be created with a focus on customer needs. In some cases, they provide opportunities to experiment with new ideas and others provide cutting edge software and production equipment. Libraries are exploring different types of spaces and staffing needs. I am curious to see how this trend evolves as it is very popular right now. Since every community has a different focus and need, this is an exciting way to connect to the community. Some libraries have been and will probably be wildly successful while with others, it just may not make sense. Some communities are considering mobile makerspaces that can be moved around within the system/district which can make a lot of sense.

In the HBM office we currently have a 3-D printer and use it frequently to print building models and explore ideas. 3-D printers are still in their infancy and we are eager for them to print bigger and faster.

**Design/Architecture**

**Q: Is there software one can buy to remap spaces?**

A: Remapping spaces can be a fun roll up your sleeves exercise. We typically start out the process with a roll of tracing paper and a pile of markers. Once we come up with a scheme we like we will typically use Adobe Photoshop to formalize it before getting into AutoCad or Revit for the design process. If you are interested in modeling your building, we also use Sketch Up which is a free software for designing in 3D.

**Q: Is there a suggested square footage per patron?**

A: There are a variety of formulas that some library planners will use for calculating this number. Often a library's size is constrained by budget or site parameters. We have found it more effective to plan spaces based on user needs and experience, programmatic goals, and adjacencies.

**Q: There are architectural/safety considerations a library staff wouldn't know. Do you, as an architect, have a starter checklist you could share with them?**

A: There are building codes and regulations that architects work with for every project. That is one of many reasons for hiring a professional. Since these codes and regulations vary by each locale, there really isn't a checklist to start with.

**Q: Is there a way to sound proof a ceiling? I am under a gym and have a LOT of noise from above. ANY info I can get on how to minimize sound would be great.**

A: You should consider bringing in a professional to review your specific existing floor and ceiling construction, develop options and budgets for your consideration, and help advise you.

**Q: In the before/after of the upstairs space it looks like the after, though more attractive, lost a lot of stack space. Was that just perception?**

A: That was just perception because of the different arrangement of stacks into shorter runs and more varied configurations. Because of the high windows in the space, we were able to also put shelves along the exterior walls without obstructing views or natural light.

**Q: Is there an app to use to create a model of a new space so I can move the space around and see how it all fits?**

A: Sketch Up is a free software that can be downloaded for space modeling

**Q: As more collaboration areas are being designed and created from older spaces, how were the spaces modified for noise/acoustical differences?**

A: The answer for this is specific to each library space. We typically see a combination of how the space is organized and zoned for sound with the integration of sound-absorbing surfaces and moveable partitions.

**Q: Storage ideas? I work in a university library and we are very limited on space...we have a lot of extras and I'm wondering if you have any creative storage ideas?**

A: Yes, this depends on what you are storing and how it needs to be accessed.

## **Funding**

**Q: You mentioned building a case for support, having donors sponsor an area of the library; can you speak more about that?**

A: When we develop materials to assist our clients with fundraising we often create a brochure that breaks down the proposed floor plan into smaller areas that have donor potential. This brochure should also highlight the new features of the library and how they will benefit the community. The size and contribution associated with each space varies based on the size/scope of the project and the demographics of each community.

Demco has many [other resources](#) available on their Ideas + Inspiration site that focus on grant writing and fund raising. These resources can be accessed at your convenience. In addition, you can access potential Grant opportunities through a [grant database](#) found on the demco.com website.

## **Other**

**Q: Would love examples and pictures of small and one room libraries.**

A: Please check out the Doylestown Library on our website. We can also provide additional project examples that are not currently displayed on our website. In addition, the [Portfolio](#) on demcointeriors.com can provide additional ideas.

**Q: Will there be a recommended reading materials list?**

A: There is a resource list that is available with the other materials that are related to this webinar.

**Q: Where is Dan's firm located?**

A: We are based in Cleveland, Ohio and work with libraries across the country.

**Q: Will we be getting some specifics on a handout or a print out of things to consider as we make plans for the renovation?**

A: Consultant Kimberly Bolan Cullin has a [checklist](#) that is a good starting point and is available as a PDF along with the other resources for this webinar.

**Q: I'm looking at making this jump into renovating my school library. Is there a checklist of things to consider when I get started?**

A: Thinking about working with staff and active users to make your own checklist is probably the best idea. Focus on things such as what works well, what could be used better, what students are looking for in the library and what the role of the library is. The checklist is something that you can generate with a professional or a small committee including staff and users/students as well as those who can bring a new perspective. Think about how you would visualize a successful library? What is the role in the school now and in the future? Prioritize—what is easily achievable and makes a great impact, what are very important and you might want to do at the cost of other things, what might be costly and difficult to achieve. There are some things to think about that can be seen on page 8 of the presentation. We suggest developing a checklist that responds to your specific needs. Think about where students go next? What school do you move onto and how can you promote the transition from one school to the next.

A lot of schools are shy of creation spaces which can enhance experience. Need places to share and collaborate.

**Q: I'm curious how you ""test and experiment"" with the public without actually making the changes.**

A: One approach is to take one area in a refresh and intentionally make it highly flexible and changeable. You can try different things to see what works and start to use those ideas that work more often throughout your spaces. You may see that certain changes are working and should be more permanent. See what piques the interest and gets a reaction from your users.

Another way is done over a longer period of time; take one area and set some things up and test to see how they are received. Consider results as the rest of the refresh is undertaken and roll those ideas that work into future portions of your plans. For example try more face-out display and see what the response is. Over time, Circulation statistics and customer feedback—positive or negative can provide direction.