

# University of Missouri, Technology Lounge



Education/Learning/Library; Columbia, Missouri

## Workplace Issues:

- Flexibility/Ease of Change
- New Ways of Learning
- Technology/Infrastructure

## Applications:

- Collaboration/Team
- Computer Lab
- Conference
- Internet/Electronic Access

**Project Scope:** 60+ occupants; 30 workstations; 1,740 square feet

**Year Completed:** 2006



The students at the University of Missouri--Columbia probably have no idea how much thought went into creating their new Technology Lounge. All they know is they've got a really cool place on campus where they can study, go online, do research, meet with each other, or just kick back and relax.

A relatively new concept for colleges, this community study space offers lots of individual workstations, Internet access, computers, and other needed technology, plus conferencing areas for gathering and smaller tables where two or three people can pull up and meet, much like an office in today's corporate world.

Back in the planning stages, however, the university's senior designer, Kenna Weber, faced some tough challenges. Because this was going to be a brand new space in a brand new section of the campus, it needed, first of all, to be attractive to students. "It not only had to be functional, it had to have a good aesthetic, one that was very dynamic and interesting enough to draw them to the space," she says.

At NeoCon in 2006, Ms. Weber had seen Herman Miller alliance partner Bretford's Free and Liquid furniture lines and loved them. "They looked very fun and seemed ideal for what we required."



When it came time to design the space itself, Ms. Weber made a wise decision: She invited one of the college's pre-architectural interior design students, Melissa Huff, to take on the project under her guidance. "I thought it would be a good opportunity for her to learn about things like dealing with budgets and selling ideas to clients [in this case, the university's IT department]. Plus, as a student, she was very much in tune with their wants and needs."

And who better to plan a space that would appeal to students than a student?

Ms. Huff, who has since graduated, worked closely with Bretford Sales Representative John Guillory to find all the right solutions for what they required.

In addition to being contemporary and eye appealing, the furniture also had to be flexible enough to be reconfigured easily, "but not so flimsy that moving it around would make it



hazardous," says Guillory. This was tricky because of voice/power/data distribution and also because of security: The Lounge was going to be open 24/7 without any instructors around, so they had to make sure everything stayed put.

Those concerns, too, were easily handled with Free and Liquid furniture, explains Guillory. "Power cords and data cables are literally in a plug-and-play environment and connect directly into the Liquid channels and/or substations. Tables and workstations are on slide pods so all people have to do is unplug the powered monitors and CPUs and move them. They can be grouped together, pulled apart, and rearranged quickly and easily on the fly.

"The full-size and flat-screen monitors and CPUs [provided by the university] are secured to the workstations with aircraft cable," he continues. "So a station can move about, but the technology stays secured to it."

The curvilinear workstations have a triangular shape with a "body pocket" where the user sits, so it provides a large reach radius. "Plus, there's enough room so that two or three others can pull up their chairs when necessary," adds Guillory.

"This space is strictly about students," he emphasizes. "They can meet anywhere, but there aren't a lot of places on campus that have computers, scanners, printers, and other things they need for research and studying. It's not the library and it's not their dorm room. And it's great for those who live off campus, too. They can bring in their own laptops or use the computers that are there and work alone or with others. So it's the best of all worlds."

And as for the students, "they love it!" says Ms. Weber. "It does absolutely everything we wanted it to. It's a very popular place. We're all really excited about it."