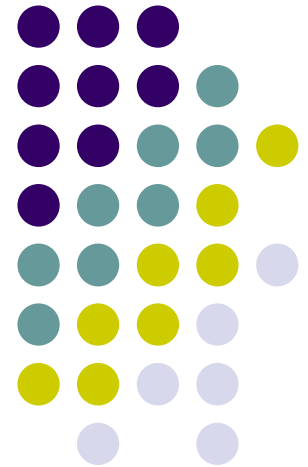# The Information Commons at the University of Calgary: Service in Transition

International Conference on Information and Learning Commons, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Dec.10, 2007

Overview

- Current operations of the Commons
- Features used to support learning and collaboration
- Lessons learned
- Transition
- Possible future models of service in the new Learning Commons

University of Calgary

- Mid-size doctoral university
- 28,000 students
- 16 faculties -80 academic programs
- 36 research institutes and centres
- Commuter campus – most live off campus
- City of 1 million people
- Relatively young and well-educated population

Libraries and Cultural Resources

- University Library, Archives and Special Collections, University Press, Nickle Arts Museum

- Prior to the Information Commons being established in 1999 a culture of convergence in the library – one single reference desk.
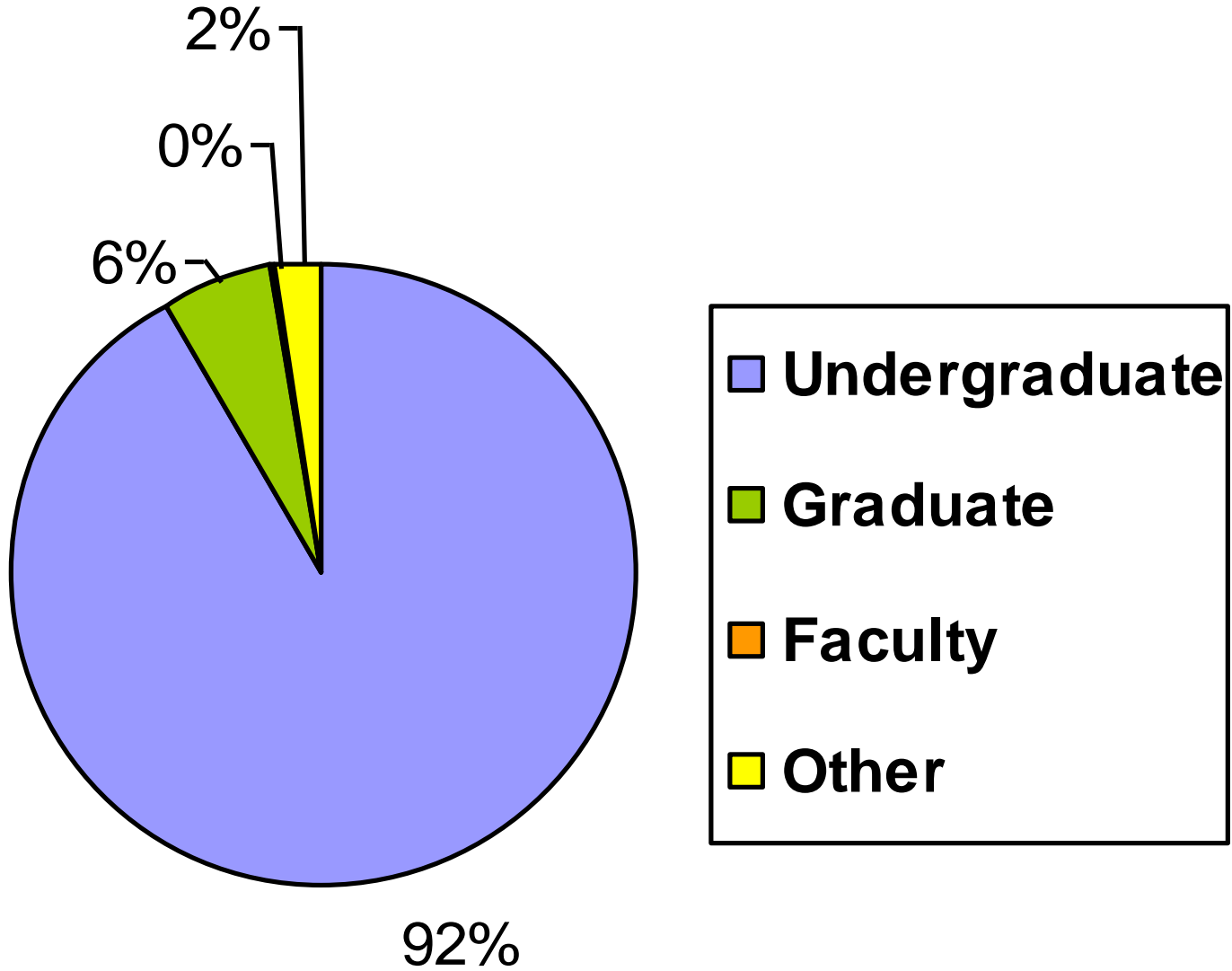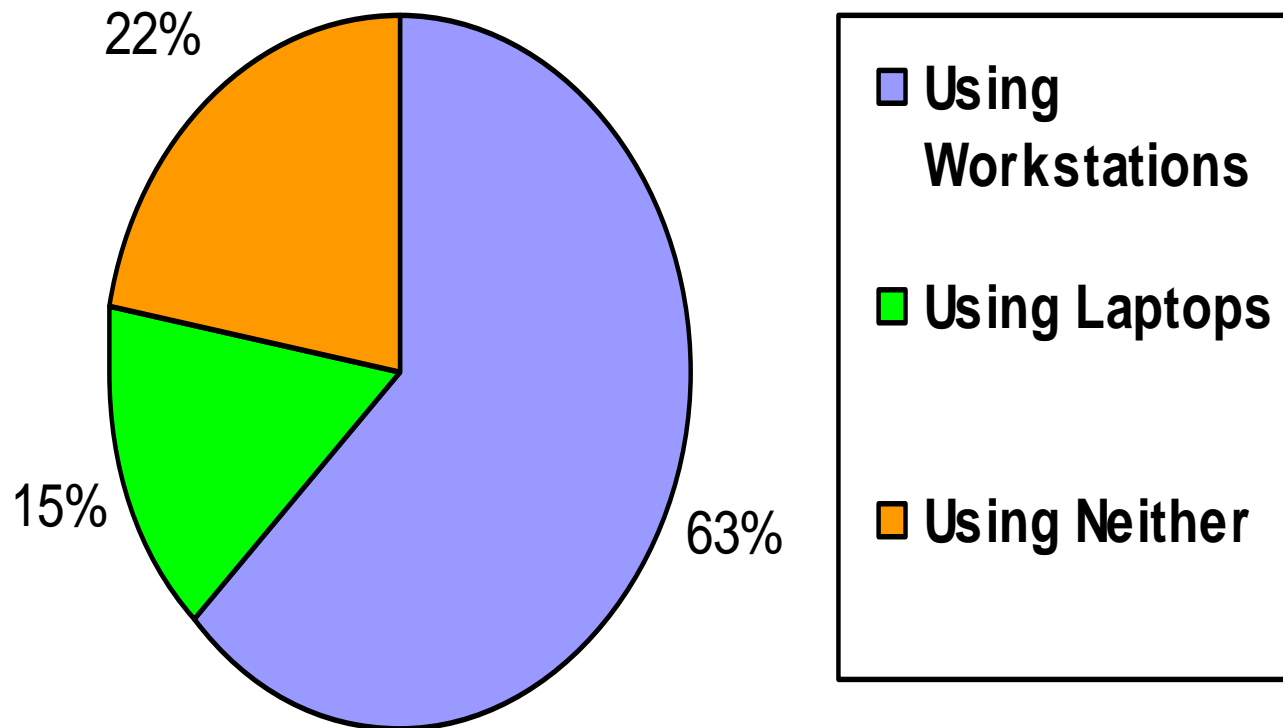
Information Commons
Key service elements

- Collaborative service model- University library and Information Technologies
- Face to face and virtual service
- Focused on user needs, appropriate staff, hours, seating, services
- Environment: comfortable, welcoming and safe
- Technology that meets the users needs – reliable, accessible, flexible, supported

Usage of Information Commons by Status

2%

0%

6%

Undergraduate

Graduate

Faculty

Other

92%

Information Commons Computer Usage

- Using Workstations — 63%
- Using Laptops — 15%
- Using Neither — 22%

Interactions of Information Commons Users

- 8%
- 3%
- 89%

Legend:
- Working Alone
- In a pair
- More than 2
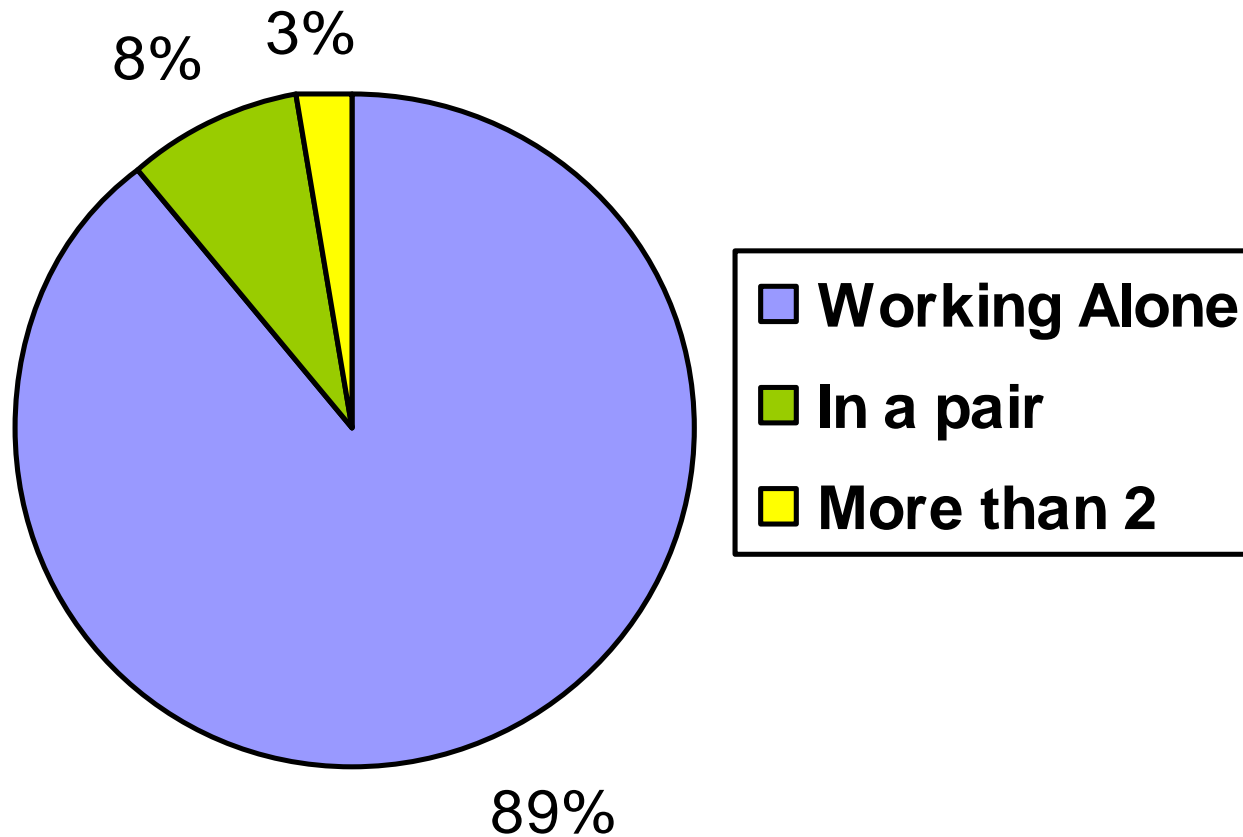
Collaborative service model

- Technical support from IT
  - 2 FTE in Commons, plus pays for half of student assistants
  - Meets the users at point of need – MSOffice, Access, laptop configuration, even digital cameras
  - Supports printing
  - Office consultations
  - Instruction – free for all

Library

- Learning Space – students need this
- Staff:
  - Reference one stop service, one step referral
    - f2f, phone, email, IM
    - Night assistants – for supervision and support overnight 24/5
- Hardware support
- Operational support
- Instruction – integrated instruction with IT experts, librarians, faculty, writing experts

Collaboration features

- Joint operational committee ICOPS
- Joint purchasing of computers in hardware refresh   (now on the third installation)
- Immediate response to printing problems
- Library and IT staff learning from each other e.g. IT had not provided customer service at point of need, library had not used students to provide support, general level of expertise has risen
- Relationships exist throughout both units

Information Commons Service Desk

Collaboration challenges

- Understanding the different cultures – how things are done
- Taking the time to build, establish and maintain
- Proximity – leads to opportunity
- Changes in leadership and priorities over time
- Communication: No MOU or Service level agreement
- Managing the grey

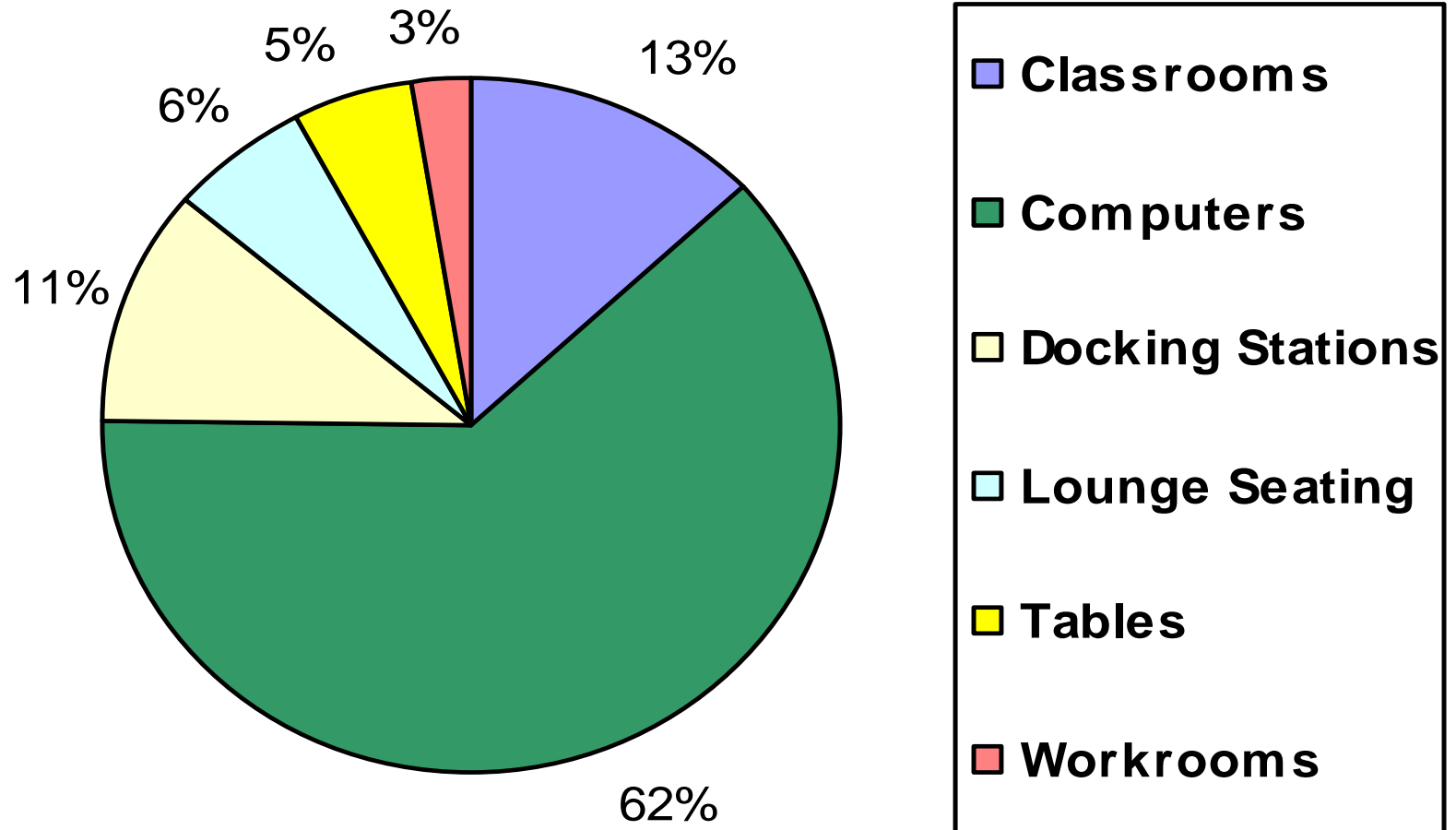# Collaborative Instructional Initiatives: a growth industry

- Integrated classroom instruction with IT, TLC
- Effective writing centre – instruction and tutors
- Faculty Techology Days – TLC, LCR, IT and new partnerships – eg MedIT, Education IT
- Expanded instruction – Endnote, RefWorks, SPSS
- Improved instructional methodology
  - Pod-casting
  - Clickers
  - Wispr – virtual model for information literacy instruction
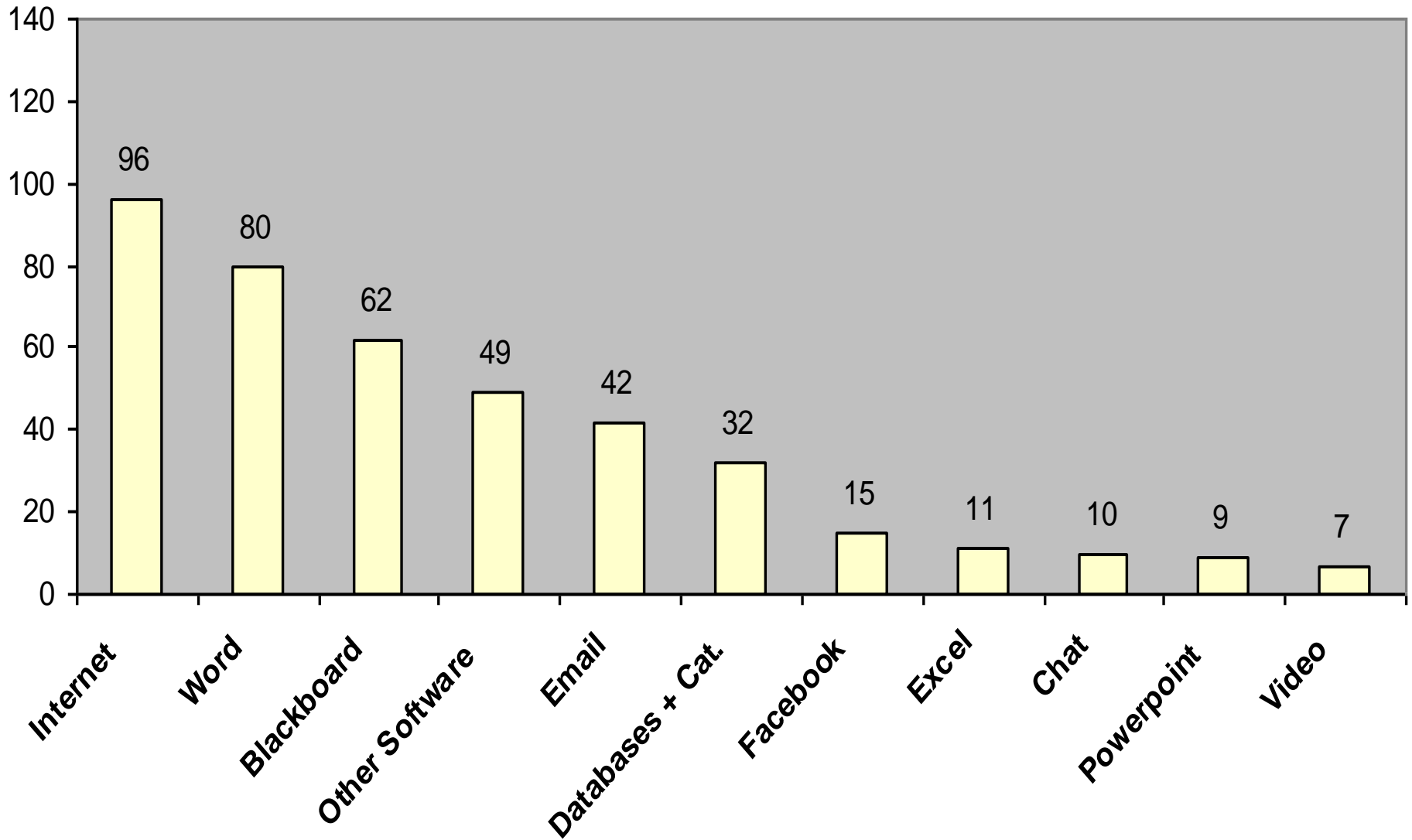 - Faculty teaching certificate

Physical features

- Workstations- spacious and ergonomic – for collaborative work and long sessions
- Laptop docking don't forget to be wired
- Workrooms – visible, bookable, comfortable, wired
- Classrooms
- Lounge seating
- Tables and chairs
- Flexible and moveable

Information Commons Usage by Location

- Classrooms — 13%
- Computers — 62%
- Docking Stations — 11%
- Lounge Seating — 6%
- Tables — 5%
- Workrooms — 3%

What Are You Using on the Computer?

Category	Value
Internet	96
Word	80
Blackboard	62
Other Software	49
Email	42
Databases + Cat.	32
Facebook	15
Excel	11
Chat	10
Powerpoint	9
Video	7

Virtual features

- High speed access to all resources of the library and the Internet
- Wireless access across campus
- Software that is available to all
- No authentication on campus – open to all
- Off-campus authentication for campus users only
- Growth of the digital resources
- Support if needed

Lessons learned in our current operations

- Know why you are there – know your mission and apply it daily

- Keep your eye on the people – users, staff, collaborators- relationships

- Keep your eye out for opportunities – do not be married to your current service model

- Technology is not the driver, but it has to work, Students operate in a very active world, time is of the essence – don't waste their time

Lessons…

- Provide a clean, comfortable environment
- Buy the best that you can because you will need it
- Find your collaborative partners and don't own the territory
- Concentrate on the learning

Current transition

- Taylor Family Digital Library
- Vision: An environment for integrated teaching, research and creative activities
- New partners co-located
  - Library, museum, archives and special collections
  - Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC)
  - Academic advising
  - Learning resources centre

Beagle – Learning Commons as transformational change
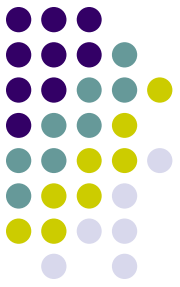
- We see functional integration across a horizontal plane, but we begin to see vertical differentiation as the former service delivery profile projected toward **students** becomes enhanced with another (or multiple) service delivery profile(s) projected at the needs of **faculty** as course authors, knowledge creators, learning coaches, and scholarly communicators. **This also involves an enriched suite of services and toolsets**.

Enriched environment

- Space/services to support learning
- Reduced "book" presence combined with High density library being built concurrently
- Increased "resource" visibility– 2 and 3 dimensional artifacts – museum and special collections and archives beside library
- Multi-media focus – production, videoconferencing, multifunctional spaces

Teaching and Learning Centre

- Focus is faculty and grad students – assisting in new technology and applications for the classroom instruction
- Opportunity – more opportunity to work with faculty in providing information literacy support
- New – Multi-media production lab for students
- What does this mean for the Commons – specialized workstations, technical support
- Higher level of technical support in the Commons – more complexity
- Build a higher level of technical skills for all

Learning Resource Centre
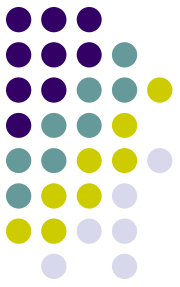
- New service –director to be hired
- Mandate: centralized hub for the delivery of learning support service for undergraduate and graduate students
- Key component of the learning commons concept
- Situated close to classrooms

MLB 212

Collaborative
Workroom
Number 14

What about the new Commons?

- Learning Commons – reflect new mission
- High visibility throughout core of multi-storey building – currently 5 of 9 floors
- To break down and provide variety of spaces on each floor
- Issue and opportunity – how to provide improved level of service and support on multiple floors with IT as main partner

| TFDL 2010 3 Learning Clusters	1 unit	Total	Information Commons 2007
Seating at tables	48	144	81
Soft seating	20	60	33
Print/scan/copy stn	3	9	6 printers, 2 copiers, 2 scanners
Standing workstations	8	24	10
Docking stations	50	150	21
Seated workstations	100	300	230
Specialized workstations	10	30	6
Collaborative workrooms	7	21	12
Presentation practice rooms	2	6	0
Exhibits/display	2	6	0
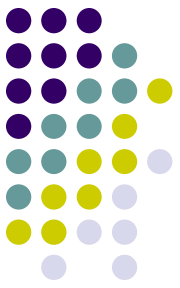
Classrooms

- Or…Computer equipped learning rooms
- 4 classrooms
- 200 seats double current capacity
- Plus flexible learning space for breakouts and small group work – with or without instructor
- Rooms will be designed to become 2 large rooms with moveable walls
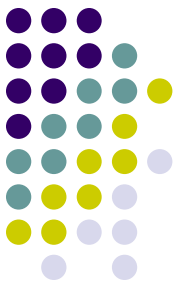
Future actions

- Know the new partners
- "the gleam in their eye" – make it happen for all
- Develop a shared mission
- Build relationships – move from co-location to collaboration – shared projects, shared service, shared expertise
- Be prepared to change everything

Predictions

- Learning support will become an even more complex service than it is now. There will be many partners.

- The Learning Commons of the future will be integral to the learning outcomes of the academy.

- In the end success will be measured not by the size of the building, nor the complexity of the technology but by the willingness of the people to participate in creating something new.

Thanks

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http://library.ucalgary.ca/services/informationcommons/

http://tfdl.ucalgary.ca/