

Digital Curation Research Center: Project Work Area

Proposal for re-deployment of the current SCC Datacenter



Premise

Over the 10 years that the Scholarly Communication Center (SCC) has been in operation, usage patterns for parts of the facility have changed, mostly in step with usage patterns with similar facilities within the Libraries. Originally the Datacenter, conceived of as a 10-seat computer lab, was strictly reserved for access to data sets and CD-ROM based materials housed at the SCC. However, since the original opening, materials access has largely shifted from disc-based to online services over the internet, and usage demands have shifted to new media formats. The end result of this shift is that we have begun to see wide disparities in how the SCC facilities are used, that deviate from the original design model. While videoconferencing and distance-based media usage has increased sharply over the past two years, access to specialty resources for which the Datacenter lab was designed have fallen to near-niche use.

As a result, usage of the Datacenter has declined precipitously in recent years. Of the usage we do get, the vast majority is for generalized web access, very little of which is specifically related to research or digital reference work. Further, our usage trends point to the Datacenter and SCC in general being used heavily for study space *only* during reading periods and final exams. During these periods, the halls and lab are overcrowded, while conference facilities may go unbooked during the same period, resulting in complaints when students are denied access to these quiet, empty, but locked rooms.

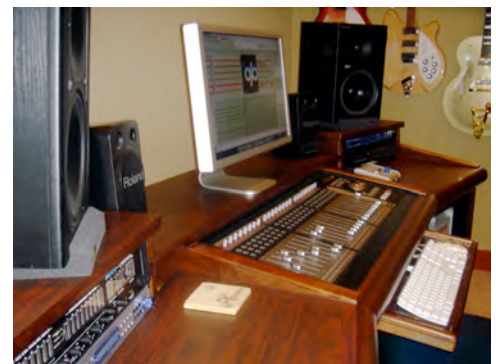
Further, the staff that work within the SCC are increasingly called upon to carry out digitization and digital curation projects for audio, photographic, monographic and video objects within the Libraries' collections. The increase in work is welcomed and collaboration is emphasized, but current workspaces challenge our abilities to deliver in a timely manner.

A Potential Long-Term, Sustainable Solution

In order to address these challenges, we propose a re-deployment of the space currently known as the SCC Datacenter. This re-deployment will convert the existing space from an underutilized public computer lab to an open, engaging digital curation work area from which the libraries' varied departments as well as the university community can collaborate and learn about our digital operations.

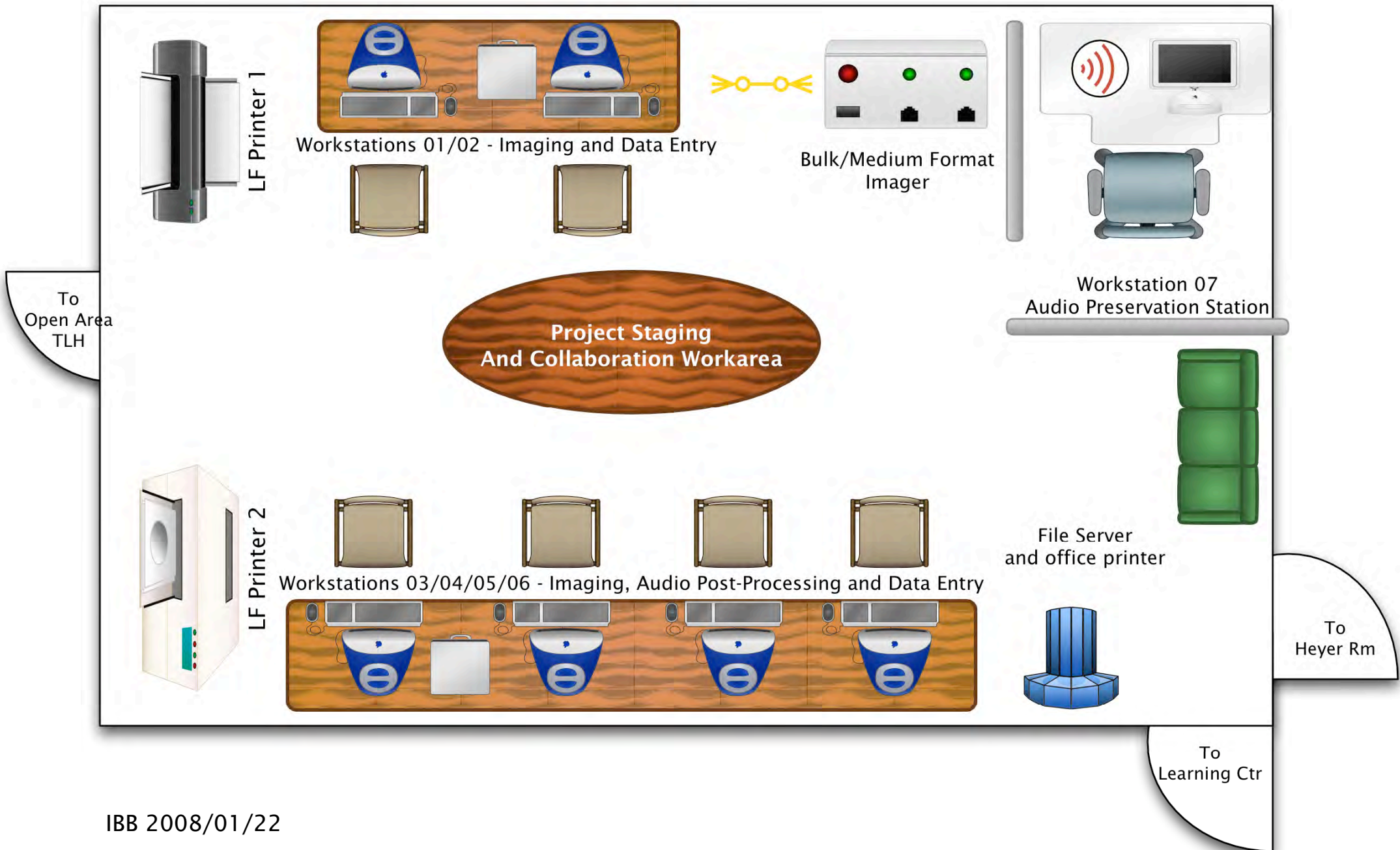
This digital curation work area, combined with an adjacent learning center to train students and staff, will make up a redesigned center which could be named the RUL Digital Curation Research Center (DCRC).

The proposed floor plan for the DCRC work area, shown on the next page, illustrates how the existing space can be utilized to maximum benefit for digital curation work.



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DCRC Project Work Area - Proposed Floorplan



Basic Design Concepts

Open Space for Efficient Collaboration

The DCRC Workarea is a departure from the current room layouts prevalent at the SCC, where discrete rooms compartmentalize multiple aisles of computers. While powerful computer workstations are needed, they are placed at the periphery of the workspace, permitting project staff to easily flow to each location. The work area focuses in the center of the room, where a project staging table will be accessible to all staff. This same project staging area can be used for brief, periodic meetings by project managers to interact with the staff, issue assignments, and address any pertinent needs. An audio formats preservation area will be the only sequestered location in the facility, as a quiet, acoustically-shielded space is essential to working with sound objects. Additionally, the Large Format Imaging workstation will stay in its current location, due to size, electrical, and technical constraints that prohibit its relocation to this work area.



Open Viewing for Learning

The glass-enclosed nature of the existing room allows for a unique opportunity to adequately protect materials from unauthorized access and handling, while permitting interested parties to observe the digital curation process in action. Members of the Rutgers community outside of the libraries have yet to truly grasp what role RUL plays in a digital-focused world. Providing a visibly-open space for real digital curation work to proceed will give students, staff and faculty the opportunity to see for themselves how the libraries are preparing valuable works for easy access well into the future.

The ability to “see what we do” will be further promoted with the placement of our large format printer in plain sight of observers, to demonstrate our abilities to reproduce large maps, oversized photographs and print poster materials.

The learning and observation process can be further enhanced by working with SCILS and other departments to schedule tours of the facility. The open-space layout of the workarea will make facilitating these tours less cumbersome and difficult than existing project spaces.



Opportunities for Resource Sharing

The level of openness afforded to us by the proposed workspace will undoubtedly open up lines of communication between the DCRC and other departments within RUL. Collaborations between the DCRC and Imaging Services, the MLIS program at SCILS, the Fordham Center at Douglass Library, the Institute for Jazz Studies at Newark, and Preservation Services would be welcomed and encouraged. The space could be used a collaborative working lab for interdepartmental projects, and our cooperation could extend beyond RUL and into the wider university community, as well as the public at large.

Basic Technical Concepts

Computer Workstations

Recently, developmental tools for archiving and digital curation have required the use of what were once viewed as alternative operating systems. The rise of open source development in this field has intensified the need for digital curators to be increasingly fluent in new technologies and multiple computing environments. We are also bound by historical precedents, which peg non-Microsoft based systems for graphic design, photographic, audio and video work. The Fordham Lab at the Douglass Library is an example of these new demands spearheading more advanced computer platforms.

To that end, we propose the use of Mac-based workstations for the DCRC. These workstations will be configured to “dual-boot” both Apple and Microsoft-based operating systems, ensuring compatibility with the existing library network. The availability of Mac OS X will also easily permit the use of Unix-based applications and open-source tools, where needed.

Most importantly, each workstation will be configured so that it can adaptively work for the job at hand. Each station will be equally capable of performing digital curation tasks for photographic materials, books, maps, documents, and sound. Additionally, each workstation should be compatible with the Matrox Encoder at Newark Dana Library, to permit some minor post-processing work to be performed on video objects. It may also be possible to interface with work materials and files from the workstations at the Fordham Center.

Digitization Equipment

The DCRC lab should be equipped with an array of digitizing equipment to handle needed tasks.

- Multipage scanning systems
 - The SCC currently has 1 such unit
- Medium-format scanning workstations
- Flatbed scanners for each workstation
 - The SCC currently has 1 such unit
- At least 1 slide scanner (or, slide/negative scanning capability on the flatbeds)
- 1 solid state audio recording/editing system (for the sound station)
 - Can be used to help support audio recording in the TLH.
- 1 preservation-grade SLR digital cameras, CMOS sensor (at least 8 Megapixel resolution) and supporting accessories
 - The SCC currently has 1 such camera
- 3 Digital Video camcorders
 - The SCC currently has 2 such units, 1 HDTV-capable
 - Cameras can be used to support the TLH for videoconference/recording operations

All workstations at the DCRC will have the necessary software installed to support this equipment, permitting easy interchangeability and quick adaptations to workflow. Additionally, the DCRC can operate in a revenue-generating fashion by allowing other university departments and the public to “hire” us for digitization projects for their materials. **Example:** Professors in the Art History Department could contract with the DCRC to convert their slide presentations (for a reasonable fee) into high-resolution images and Powerpoint-based presentations, so that their work can live on even as the availability of slide projectors is in decline.

Study Space Compensation Plan

We recognize that the SCC facilities receive a dramatic upsurge in use by students during reading days and exam periods at the end of each semester. Simultaneously, a great deal of open space is left unused as Bibliographic Instructions and training have ended for the semester. Additionally, the seminar room (406/407) is a space that student frequently request during this time but are turned away, even though the room sits idle.

Considering that demand for study space at the SCC only seems to occur during this limited window, we recommend the seminar rooms be scheduled in advance as a “study center” during the reading and exam periods. Additionally, extra tables and chairs will be made available in the open area around the Teleconference Lecture Hall for students to study. During those days, signs posted at the 4th floor entrance and at each room will direct students to these rooms for quiet study, as well as the hours that they will be open. This will require some collaboration with Access Services, and we may also post some project staff on the floor to periodically monitor the rooms.

Additional Services provided to the Public

The SCC has made a tradition of being good neighbor to the university community and the general public at large by providing some value-added services, such as large format printing, large-format imaging, and recording support for the teleconference lecture hall. With the creation of the DCRC, a complete suite of digital curation and authoring services can be provided to these groups on an appointment-scheduled basis. Services could be offered to the public for a nominal fee, and university departments outside of RUL could take advantage at heavily discounted rates, or as part of an approved research collaboration that is directly aligned with RUL’s mission statement and goals. DCRC-offered services could include:

- Audio recording digitization/restoration services
 - Audio and Video recording for the Teleconference Lecture Hall*
 - DVD Authoring
 - Still Image film/slide digitization/restoration
 - Large Format Printing*
 - Large Format Imaging*
 - Assistance with GIS Software and plotter output*
- (* Indicates an existing service that could be improved with the DCRC offerings)

In instances where fees would be charged, the proceeds of the fees for offering such services will help fund DCRC operating costs for equipment maintenance, consumables such as tapes and media and periodic repairs and upgrades that are inherent with IT and recording equipment. The use of nominal fees as a cost-recovery method should help reduce the need for ongoing funding that may otherwise be requested of RUL.