

A young man with long, dark dreadlocks is seated at a desk, looking down at a white tablet computer. He is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt. In the background, another person is blurred, suggesting a classroom or study environment. The text "ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY" and "2010-11 MOBILE-LEARNING REPORT" is overlaid on the image.

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
2010-11 MOBILE-LEARNING REPORT



“The skills at the heart of the Learning Studio – creation and editing of media, collaboration and communication – are the tools today’s students need to gain a competitive edge in the 21st-century workplace.”

Dr. Lauren Lemley

*Assistant Professor of Communication and
Director of the Speaking Center*



Inventing the Future

By Dr. Kyle Dickson
Adapted from *ACU Today*
Magazine, Summer 2011

*AT&T's generosity makes new Learning Studio possible,
enables continued work in media and mobility at ACU*

Alan Kay, a computing pioneer who developed concepts for the laptop computer, the tablet and the eBook, once said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

At ACU, we believe education is at just such a decisive moment. As mobile devices continue to transform the way we think about the classroom, the textbook, communication and learning itself, the time to begin planning the future of education is now.

A pioneering gift of \$1.8 million from AT&T is enabling the next step in teaching and learning innovation at ACU. The most visible result of that gift is the new AT&T Learning Studio that provides a laboratory for continued experiments in media, mobility and the future of the academic library.

The future today

Last year marked the 40th anniversary of the Margaret and Herman Brown Library. Over that period of time, the ACU library reinvented itself as tools, technologies and the needs of the campus changed.

In 1970, a university library was measured by its holdings, so the most visible symbol of the Brown Library's new stature was its card catalog. To visitors entering the main floor, the card catalog represented the beginning and end of scholarly work. Novice researchers began here with searches by author, subject or title before journeying deeper into the archive. Seasoned scholars returned to see their work take its place in the catalog alongside that of their peers. When the new building opened, a brochure noted proudly that the card catalog had grown from 360 to 1,136 trays, one small indication of the broader ambitions of a college becoming a university.

Today, the card catalog is no longer enough. Our students have access to more content via mobile devices than we could



contain under one roof. For example, Wikipedia now hosts more than 17 million articles by more than 90,000 active authors. In May 2011, YouTube announced its users were now uploading more than 48 hours of content every minute, a 50 percent increase over 2010. Education is no longer about preparing our students to contribute to conversations after they graduate; the vital discussions of our day are already underway and our students are already producing messages for a global audience in a wide range of media.

After six months of construction, the Learning Studio opened in February 2011 on the top floor of the library. In an 8,800-square-foot facility, the Learning Studio brings together media production studios, the Speaking Center and the library's media collections to support students and faculty as they explore the way we live, learn and communicate in a digital world.

In the main computer lab, media production support is available for users at all levels. Trained media specialists help students recording audio for the first time or faculty editing video slideshows that incorporate narration and interviews. Users here have access to high-quality studios, as well as cameras and microphones they can check out to capture content in the field.

Students can make appointments with Speaking Center tutors to discuss a project, record a practice speech in one of our studios or meet to plan an upcoming group presentation. Speaking Center staff also work with seniors nearing graduation to practice interviewing skills and strategies.

Learning innovation

The seeds of the Learning Studio project were already present in 2004, when faculty first proposed the Learning Commons redesign on the ground floor of the library. That proposal began:

In recent years, the ways university students learn have changed. Responding to new technologies, new styles of communication and the changing nature of the teacher-student relationship, students now experience college life in new ways. In response to these changes, many universities have sought to equip students for independent and collaborative learning as they contribute to wider conversations on and beyond the campus. ("A Library for the Twenty-First Century," Fall 2004)

When the Learning Commons opened in 2006, gate counts to the library doubled. Students and faculty began to see the library not solely in terms of its holdings; as the stacks of books were relocated from the main floor, they also saw the importance of services provided by partners such as the Writing Center. Librarians emphasized their role as information specialists at the new Research Desk.

The years after the opening of the Learning Commons were marked by students and faculty contributing to wider conversations on and beyond our campus. This short period saw fresh thinking in projects such as mobile learning, active learning classroom redesign and the new general education curriculum.

The Learning Studio is a result of the same type of intense collaboration that sparked these other conversations. Over a period of three years, faculty and librarians from many disciplines have worked with students, technology leaders, architects, and construction and design teams to produce a one-of-a-kind studio environment. Almost every element – from the ground plan to the technology purchases, from furniture selection to graphic design – was the product of many hours of intentional planning.

Media not just for specialists

One remarkable detail in the 1970 design of Brown Library was a downstairs corner set aside for a Media Center. Students had access to "50 individual study carrels equipped with stereo cassette players, providing for leisure listening as well as supplementing classroom instruction with specially prepared materials and professional tapes and records."

Though there were exceptions, educational media in these years were directed primarily one way, from teacher to student. Just as the volumes lining the shelves of the library represented the collected wisdom of professional authors, audio-visual resources were carefully selected from national experts or campus lecturers.

The work accomplished here by generations of students, faculty and librarians was central to the university's educational mission. Here one generation found its own voice in hearing and testing the messages of a previous generation. However, students today inhabit a very different world. Publishing in the 21st century is no longer the province of professionals; citizen journalists and bloggers around the world challenge us to think deeply through the running dialogue of social media.

This has been a key finding from our experience with mobile learning. The mobile devices we carry with us on a daily basis are not simply media players, receiving official news reports or media "specially prepared" by professionals. They are communication devices with which we record, remix and publish our experience to the world.

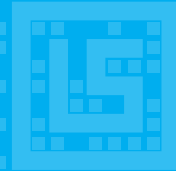
The Learning Studio provides students and faculty from





“At AT&T, we see mobile broadband transforming education, and the result is a more engaged and enjoyable learning experience for students and educators. Teaching and learning now take place not just in the classroom, but virtually anywhere. ... AT&T has a long history of working with education to enhance today’s classroom experience, and we are proud to support ACU, and look forward to continuing to collaborate with them to help shape the next generation of innovators, fueling this country’s future success.”

Xavier Williams
Senior Vice President for Public Sector
and Healthcare, AT&T



any major the opportunity to develop media creation skills in short training events that help increase their confidence and sophistication in telling digital stories.

This spring we hosted workshops in which faculty could expand their skills in digital photography or video editing. Neither was tied to creating media for a particular class; instead, these events created safe communities where teachers could learn from our trained staff and one another.

A vision with global impact

For almost a decade, the U.S. Department of Education has worked with educators at all levels to identify the skills needed to prepare our students for careers in the global economy. While technological proficiency is important, the skills essential to our students’ future success include creativity, which inspires innovation, as well as digital communication and collaboration.

The Learning Studio was designed with this combination of skills in mind. While academic libraries often have been defined in terms of individual study and critical analysis, the leaders who will shape the future are those who can listen and speak effectively, create new ideas in teams from many different disciplines, and communicate fluently in a range of media.

The AT&T gift has provided ACU more than a laboratory to explore these assumptions on campus. Through investments in teacher training and research, our students and faculty are sharing that vision with the world. For example, this summer media specialists from the Learning Studio have worked alongside faculty from teacher education, chemistry and biochemistry, and the Adams Center for Teaching and Learning to train more than 150 teachers from around the country. Groups from the AT&T K-12 Digital Learning Institute and a Gates Foundation Next Generation Learning Challenges grant developed original media content to support project-based and inquiry-based learning.

Where past and future meet

In a recent presentation to the Friends of the ACU Library, Dr. Abraham Malherbe ('54) reflected on moving from ACU to Harvard in the 1950s. While there, he learned that a library must be a place that anticipates the future while it preserves the past. So much of the work of the 21st-century university lives between these two imperatives. Throughout its first 40 years, the Brown Library and its professional staff have demonstrated a deep commitment to preserving and sharing the treasures of the past through their teaching and digitization of historic collections.

What makes the Brown Library truly exceptional is its track record for anticipating the future. The Learning Studio is only the most recent illustration of this commitment. While the future of mobile collaboration, textbooks and interactive media have yet to be mapped, we’re confident the road leads through Abilene. ■

