

Balancing Technology, Longevity, and Functionality in modern Learning Spaces

Geoff Lambert, Western Sydney University

Abstract:

The rapid advancement of technology brings new opportunity to Learning Spaces, but also challenges to their operational life span. The characteristics that make a campus or learning facility new and innovative, are often the same characteristics that will most quickly reveal its age. In an environment where words like 'flexibility' and 'technology' are often used in the same aspirational sentence, but once implemented become opposing forces, how can we design spaces that will still be contemporary 5 years later?

Western Sydney University, confronted this question in designing its Active Learning Studios for the new Parramatta CBD flagship campus opened in 2017. Along the way it challenged much of the contemporary thinking about the mix of IT and audio visual delivery, its relationship to space and furniture design, what could be flexible & what couldn't be based on the technology of the day. Whilst achieving many goals, it failed others, but for every failure provided a hundred lessons along the way.

Is it possible to create a space that can truly support a variety of pedagogies, be rich in functionality, be student centric, infused with technology, and still offer a lifespan that should outlast the initial choices of AV?

Bio:

Geoff Lambert is a program manager, assigned the task to lead the technology design & implementation of key aspects of Western Sydney University's newest and most innovative campuses. Described by his colleagues as the 'Innovations Man', Zoom consultant and part time restaurant owner, he loves to creatively approach new challenges, with a passion for user experiences that 'just work'. His work at Western Sydney University includes the design of the much reviewed collaborative Learning Studios in the new Parramatta and Liverpool City campuses, along with the technology infused meeting and social learning spaces that surround these studios. Geoff has a Science degree with Honours, and 25 years of IT experience in both educational and international scale commercial industry.