

# **The UPLB University Library Information Common (ULiCOM): Revolutionizing Library Services in the Age of Technology**

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**Abstract.** This paper focuses on the renovation project of a library space at the UPLB Library designed to provide cost-effective, convenient, easy access, and high quality service to students and faculty in support of their information needs. The renovated space offers the following services: chaise lounge, reference desk, group training lab, multimedia station, student coaching services, group study rooms, library workstations, quiet study area for faculty, researchers, and students, and a mini theater.

*Keywords:* Information Common, learning space, learning environment, academic libraries, policies

## **Background Information**

The advent of the World Wide Web has changed the nature and structure of society, and how it affects people's lives, may it be personal, social, professional and academic. Rapid changes in information technology are affecting universities and colleges in various ways. Students and faculty increasingly relied on information technology for study and research as academic libraries increasingly added electronic resources to their collections.

Beagle (1999) states that the "Information Commons, as a conceptual, physical, and instructional space, involves an organizational realignment from print to the digital environment." He envisions an ideal environment that allows library users, accompanied by dedicated, knowledgeable consultants, to walk through the entire process of identification, retrieval, processing and presentation of needed information in whatever format exists. He also notes that the information commons create "a synergy between the user support skills of computer staff, the information skills of reference staff, and the productivity skills of media staff."

The Information commons support the important relationship between information technology and academic scholarship by providing areas in libraries that provide a full-range of library resources and productivity software. At present the information commons of the UPLB Library is at the basement. This paper will present the activities undertaken to plan for the new information commons.

## **Rationale**

The UPLB University Library provides materials and services to meet the instructional, research and extension needs of the various constituents of the University. In the advent of the application of the Information Communication Technology in the library services, the University Library tried its best to cope with the demands of the time. In the past, the library's emphasis is more on preservation. Today, the library must conform to the need of its users as collaborative, innovative and digital native learners.

It is in this endeavor that the UPLB University Library committed to redesign space and collaborate efforts to respond to its mission guided by the needs of its users.

This paper will report on the renovation project that provided information and learning facility to the students.

## **The Stakeholder Analysis**

To determine user needs, a Stakeholder analysis was conducted in 3 ways: 1) Face to face interview, 2) Computer Usage Tracking System report of use and 3) Observations.

Result of the face to face interview indicated the characteristics, Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP), current source of information, interest and information needs, values, beliefs and norms of the stakeholders. The generated report from the Computer Usage Tracking System showed that more than 400 students per day logged-in to the Computer Services Section to use the workstations for Internet, find e-journal, ebooks, do their writing assignments and edit movie/video or audio clips for their class. Data from the observations showed that students work in groups, share or crowd in one computer just to make their projects, listen to music, watch movie reviews, browse their social network accounts, use iPads to read books, browse the internet, play intellectual games, participate in group discussions while eating, etc.

The data suggest the need for a venue or a learning space (information commons) for this kind of activities for the UPLB students (stakeholders) at the UPLB University Library.

## **Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives for the Information Commons**

**VISION.** ULiCOM will be an innovative, information and communication technology facility that will engage in revolutionizing library service delivery for social and collaborative research learning among students, faculty, and staff at UPLB.

**MISSION.** ULiCOM is committed to provide cost-effective, convenient, easy access, and high quality service that supports intellectual and career development needs of students, faculty and staff and empowers them to use information to effectively respond to evolving societal and technological changes.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Goal #1:** Promote study and learning by providing an inviting space that honor study and encourage students to study longer and the ability to draw students more to the library.

**Objectives:**

1. To encourage at least 80% of the students population to use the facility instead of them going to internet/coffee shops to study. With the crime happened to UPLB students outside the campus recently become an eye opener that these students should be encouraged to stay inside the campus. Thus, providing them a place to stay during their late night study.

2. To provide an inviting space for students, faculty and staff for research and study that offers extended library hours up to nine in the evening at the implementation of this project and will be extended up to twelve midnight during examination period.

3. To provide a facility that provides equipment and assistance for audio and video editing and other multimedia projects for students.

4. To provide students with a place for quiet study where they can be on their own, especially those that needs focus and concentration in working on their research papers.

**Goal #2:** Support group study sessions and socialization that promotes congenial conversations that share knowledge gained in class.

**Objectives:**

1. To provide a group study room for students that encourages sharing knowledge and promoting collaborative learning.

2. To provide a space that student, faculty and staff can freely express their ideas and thoughts without being “shoo” outside the library or being warned to be silent.

**Goal #3:** Foster sense of community among students, allowing them to strengthened camaraderie among themselves by providing them a space for fun, recreation and interesting intellectual puzzles and games during their study break.

Objectives:

1. To create a memorable experience for students, where they can have a feel of ownership of the library or providing the “feel at home” environment where they can have fun together during their study breaks.
2. To provide a flexible, comfortable space in the library where they can be allowed to bring their own food/drink to enjoy the company of their friends and colleagues.

Goal #4: Provide a place for faculty to conduct “Classroom-Based Teaching and Learning” for easy access to library materials where students can freely move into the shelves/stacks for any group assignments or group activities or search all types of materials.

Objectives:

1. To provide a lecture/training room for faculty to conduct their class in the library that needs easy access to all types of materials.
2. To establish good relationship to faculty, to collaborate and support each other for the academic goal of the community.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The library is the only centralized location where new and emerging information technologies can be combined with traditional knowledge resources in a user-focused, service-rich environment that supports today’s social and educational patterns of learning, teaching, and research. The main priority of the ULiCOM in terms of services is the student. Thus the following illustrations which were adapted from Loertscher, et al. (2011) on *Personal Learning Environments in the Learning Commons* (See Figure 1) show the structure how these students learn in a Digital Personal Environment in which the ULiCOM will offer.

The framework illustrates that in learning in a personal digital environment, the learner/student begins by building the PORTAL, wherein one needs to teach, and learn to create their own “filters” while realizing that no wall is foolproof. Intruders are blocked for the most part as the skill in information management grows to meet their changing needs and interests. The PORTAL leads them to the construction of the PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK which while doing their work, connecting, producing, and creating both as an individual and in collaborative groups, finally create the private and public PORTFOLIO, which whether in formal or informal information learning, sharing their work to develop a bank of their own personal and collaborative expertise is an essential part of the current connected world. Then through this it EMPOWERS THE LEARNER, which enables learners to build their own strengths and experiences. Thus, through the services that the ULiCOM will offer, this process will be involved and will bring outstanding benefits to the ULiCOM users and empowers them as an individual and live a meaningful life.

## **Methodology**

Before beginning the design of a learning space for the ULiCOM, several types of analysis including stakeholder analysis and information about implementing the Information Commons were gathered. This range from choosing which place should the information common will be located and giving emphasis on the availability of the space in the UPLB University Library.

### **EXTERNAL BENCHMARKING**

Visiting local libraries, colleges and universities outside UPLB provided ideas about learning space. Visiting and experiencing other information commons personally, like the Information Common of Ateneo de Manila University Library and the UP College of Science Library, as well

# PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

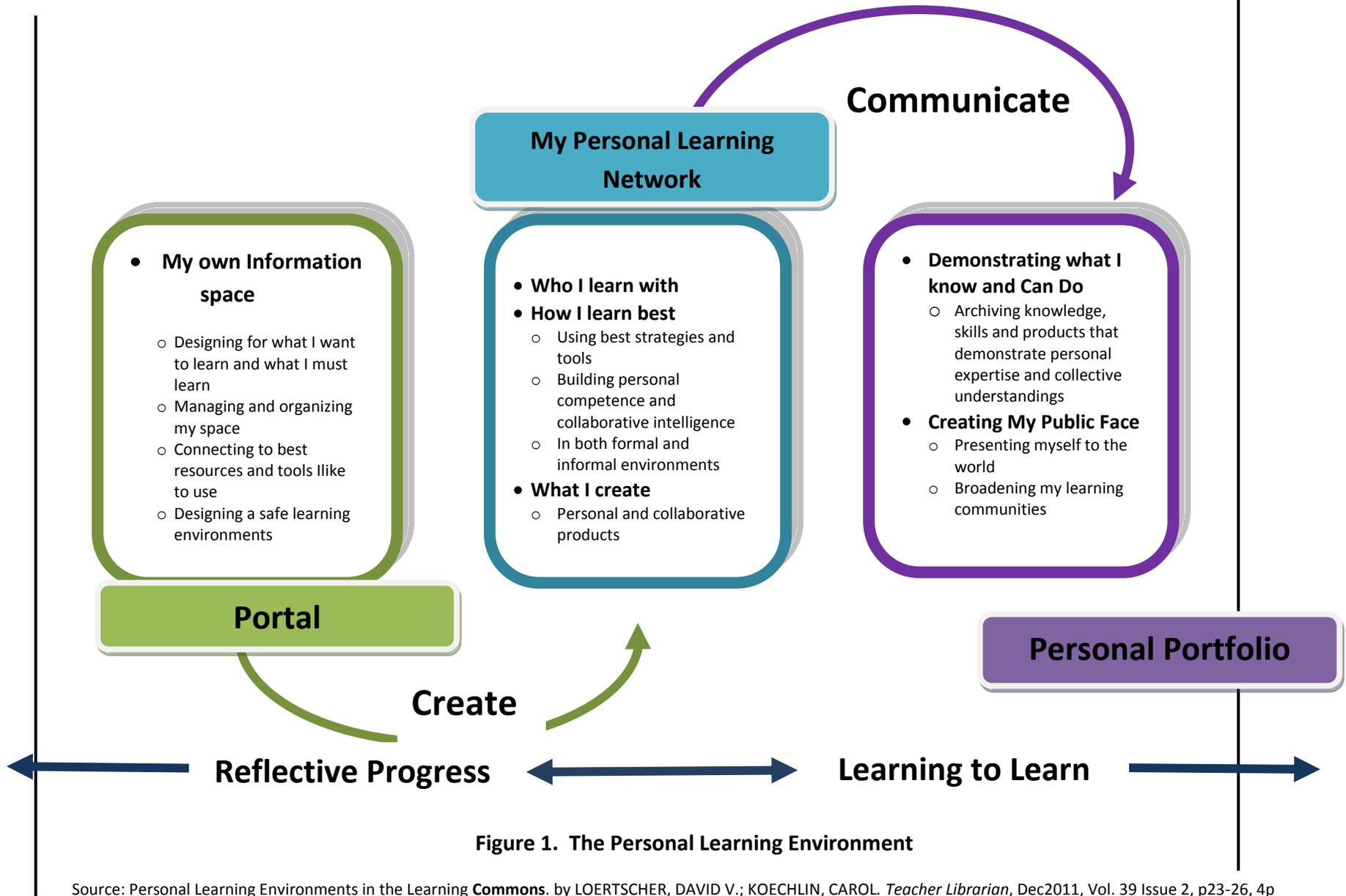


Figure 1. The Personal Learning Environment

Source: Personal Learning Environments in the Learning Commons. by LOERTSCHER, DAVID V.; KOEHLIN, CAROL. *Teacher Librarian*, Dec2011, Vol. 39 Issue 2, p23-26, 4p

as gathering related literature of information common from libraries abroad were useful steps in the design process.

## **Services**

Since, ULiCOM will promote learning, it is critical to know the different services and activities to offer. The following are the services to be offered by the ULiCOM:

1. Chaise lounge – provide students with comfortable seating area to relax, study and meet friends.
2. Reference Desk –Customized assistance is available from this service desk for nearly 78 to 96 hours per week (8am – 9pm, Monday to Saturday during normal library service hours and from 8am-12 midnight during examination period).
3. Group Training Lab – instructional lab with 13 student workstations and a teacher’s workstation with projection capability to allow faculty members to conduct their class in the ULiCOM for easy access to information sources. This will also serve as venue for the library to conduct the Information Literacy Programs for students.
4. Multimedia Station - workstations are equipped with scanners and specialty software to enable users to begin multimedia projects.
5. Student Coaching Services – during various hours students can receive personalize assistance for Academic Advising Q&A, Math Tutoring (which will be coordinated with OSA - Student Support Programs), Writing Tutorial (coordinate with Eng2 Instructors) and Research Assistance (Librarians).
6. Group Study Rooms – to be use for group work and discussion. Available on a first come first served basis.
7. Library Workstations – workstations available for doing research using both the library and free web resources.
8. Quiet Study Area for Faculty, Researchers and Students – area includes tables, computers and casual seating, electric sockets are also available for laptops. This is a cell phone free-zone.
9. Mini Theater – this area is located at the first floor of the Main Library near the lobby. This will provide facility on group viewing of documentary films/video, class instruction and other activities that requires high definition and surround audio-video presentations.

## **ACTIVITIES**

The following but not limited to these activities are expected to be done in the ULiCOM.

1. Library staff assistance during all open hours;
2. Use of library catalogs, online databases (e-journals, e-books) and internet access;
3. Electronic file management – download to disk, file transfers and file compression;
4. Public printing on a pay-for-print basis;
5. Campus email access
6. Remote access user assistance
7. WebCT access to instructor-designed tutorials, exams, and coursework;

8. Multimedia capabilities including image scanning and the manipulation of Web-based sound and graphic files; Documentary film/video viewing and instructions;
9. Library services including inter-UP System Library Loan and electronic access of non-subscribed e-journals
10. Video editing and recordings
11. Personal software loading available at various standalone workstations and CD-ROM databases
12. Word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation applications software

## **The Information Common System Design**

### SCOPE OF SERVICE/OPERATION

The UPLB University Library Information Common (ULiCOM) is a revolutionizing service of the library that offers students, faculty, and staff an area that supports learning and research through the use of ICT, where this leverages the value of the available content, hardware, software and physical setting that the UPLB Library has right now to support learning and academic programs of the users.

ULiCOM will offer reinforcement for social aspects of learning where millennial library users (the new generation of library users more often called digital native) often do their homework or academic work either with or around their friends or classmates. They make ample use of technology and they “power browse” all the way through digital content. As Palfrey and Gasser (2008) relates that “they are joined by a set of common practice including the amount of time they spend using the digital technologies, their tendency to multitask, to express themselves and relate to one another in ways mediated by digital technologies, and their patterns of using technologies to access and use of information and create a new knowledge and art forms.”

ULiCOM will provide and accommodate several students or users in sharing a common computer and provide large tables where they can use their laptops while working together. This will also provide comfortable seating areas to encourage informal meetings, cafés with food and drink can also be allowed in a group study rooms so students can work together efficiently and encourage collaborative learning and increased emphasis on teamwork. This will also include multimedia production capabilities like video/movie editing projects of students.

To have staff or have a cross-trained staff who can answer basic questions in areas, like writing, IT applications that can help the students in their research and write their papers. This can be a collaborative effort with the faculty who can be the writing tutor for the students.

Faculty and Researchers will benefit from having high-end computers and software available in one area for them in the ULiCOM to help them prepare their lessons and for their research. E-resources can be accessible online for easy retrieval.

ULiCOM, can exhibit student products developed as a result of work in the common. From this effort students will experience a “feel at home” or sense of ownership of the library.

Faculty can conduct “Classroom Based Teaching and Learning” as scheduled. They can use technology-enabled classrooms to strengthen the learning process. The information commons staff can also make a special effort to develop tools and services for the courses held in their facility.

ULiCOM will also offer wireless-fidelity (WiFi) network for convenience of the students particularly those who have their own laptops or mobile devices. In addition, power outlets are ubiquitous so that students can plug in their multiple devices for free use of electricity.

## ORGANIZATIONAL SETUP

The organizational setup of ULiCOM follows a hierarchical system, where certain rules and procedures are uniformly and impersonally applied to exert control over members of the staff. The staff works as a team to provide efficient and effective services to all the users.

Administrators must sensitively handle the resistance of some staff regarding these new services. Training is an important factor to make the staff feel comfortable with the new responsibilities and is able to provide solid assistance in this very technological and rapidly changing environment. The importance of ensuring staff participation from initial planning through implementation is crucial. Thus, open discussion is encouraged to input of ideas at every stage to successfully implement the ULiCOM.

### Human Resources Requirements

The ULiCOM will need a head librarian who will oversee operations, a college librarian who is a subject specialist, a systems administrator and admin assistants.

## THE FACILITIES

The Proposed Location of the Information Common is at the Basement of the UPLB University Library and this will be renovated to accommodate the project and implement the new services that the ULiCOM will offer to its library users (stakeholders).

# The Proposed Area for the ULiCOM



Figure 2. The Proposed Area for the University Library Information Common (ULiCOM)

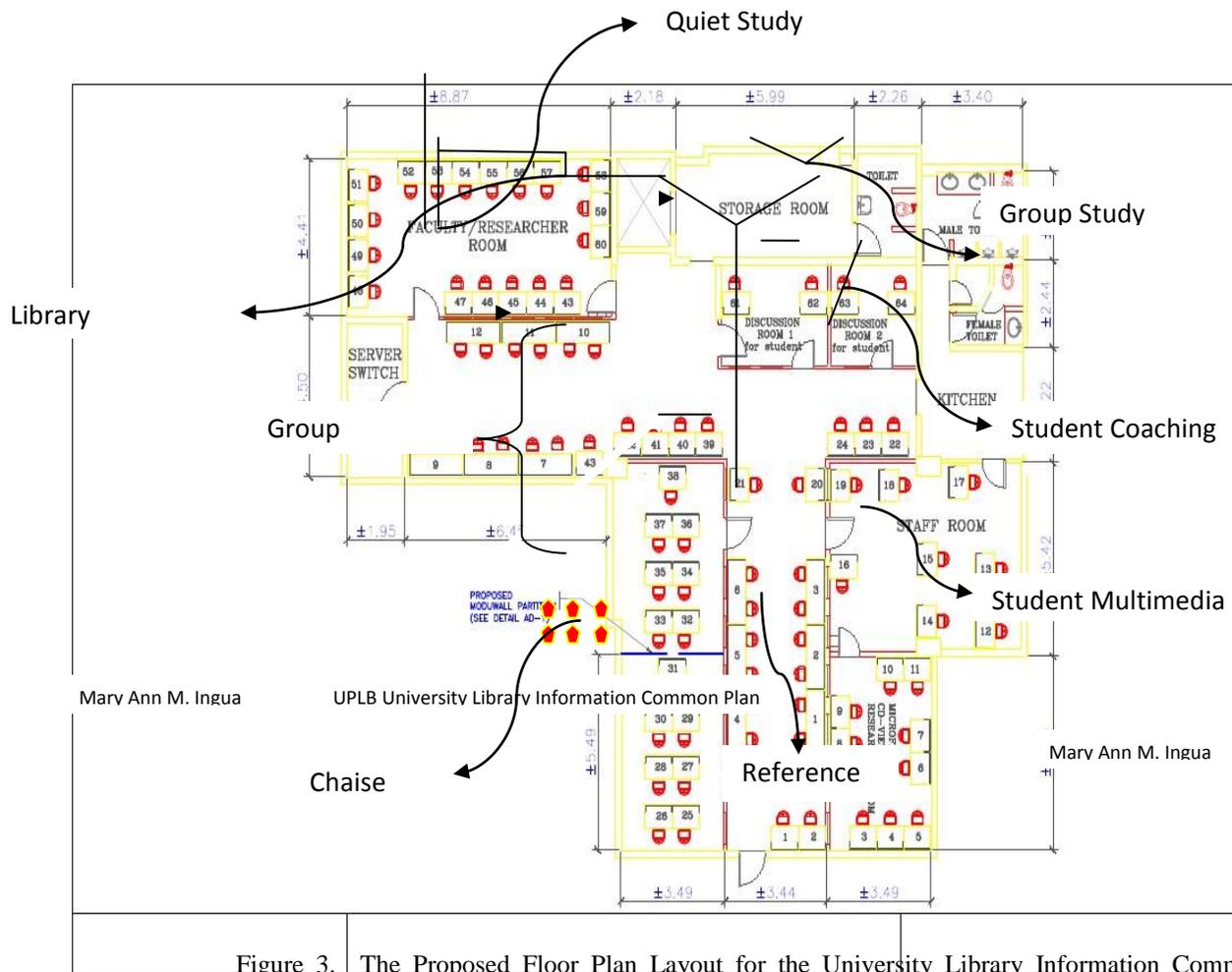


Figure 3. The Proposed Floor Plan Layout for the University Library Information Common (ULiCOM)

### Implementation

The project was implemented in January 2012 and will be launched in 2013. Development will continue until 2017 when the information commons will have moved to its new location. Policies on the use of the information commons were adapted from the University of Auckland Library, New Zealand with permission. The policies were revised based on the need of the UPLB library users (stakeholders).

### Evaluation Strategies

Assessment represents the structured study of the effectiveness of new or redesigned learning environments. The goal is to identify problems and implement needed changes. Ongoing assessment of information spaces results in iterative design and continuous improvement.

Here are some suggested evaluation or assessment tools that may be used in the implementation of the UPLB ULiCOM:

Assessment may include the observation of students and faculty in the space, interviews, or focus groups. For example, it can consider studying student patterns of room use over time or asking students to rate the overall impact of the facility in the ULiCOM on their learning.

Important questions to ask include whether the facility contributes to:

- Improvements in teaching and student learning, pedagogy, and course structures
- Greater interaction among students and faculty
- A cohesive campus community
- Conduct research on new innovations on Information Commons to keep up with the time.
- Conduct Survey on Student perceptions of staff in the **ULiCOM** to improve staff performance and improve support services - this survey aims to discover how students perceived staff in the ULiCOM and whether their perceptions of staff attitudes and skills influenced their use of library resources.
- Conduct study on evaluating group use of the ULiCOM, to assess whether the purpose for which it was planned were being fulfilled. Measuring the groups who used the ULiCOM over the period of six months.

### **Future Plan for the ULiCOM**

The ULiCOM at present is located at the basement of the UPLB University Library will soon be expanded to a bigger area which will occupy a three-storey building to accommodate the growing demands of the library users.

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