

Steelcase



**TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**  
STEELCASE EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

**“It’s about students  
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group members may be.”**

Justin Daniel, Systems Librarian  
Texas Tech University Libraries

## **GROUP LEARNING MADE EASY**

A new group work area in the main library at Texas Tech University (TTU) takes a decidedly nontraditional approach to library space, and as a result has become one of the most popular places on campus. Students hold animated conversations and collaborate in front of flat screens, laptops, and web cams, with furniture in 11 media:scape collaborative work settings, a space specifically designed to make information sharing and group work easier than ever.

The GroupWorks space, as this liberal arts college in west Texas calls it, represents new thinking in higher education. Housing books is no longer the library’s main purpose. Instead, libraries and other college spaces on campuses across North America are being reinvented to support new ways of teaching and learning. Group projects are the norm, and classroom study is migrating to the library, a resource for both traditional and new knowledge resources. The library is becoming the primary place outside of the classroom for collaborative learning, and the TTU library’s dramatic media:scape area uniquely supports group work.

Students have definitely taken notice. “The idea is to provide an environment for the way students work now, and it’s all about group work. It’s about students working together, from on campus, across campus, across the state—wherever the group members may be,” says Justin Daniel, systems librarian, who hatched the idea for the GroupWorks area.

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"It's also about them being able to come in and sit down, three, four, five, eight at a time and work together as a group to accomplish whatever task they have."

Daniel envisioned different spaces where students could plug in laptops, show their work on large displays, and work better together. When he saw media:scape, "It was exactly what we wanted."

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The GroupWorks space occupies 3,200 square feet of the library's first floor, an area that once housed reference materials, periodicals, encyclopedias. The materials were moved to the quieter, upper floor stacks, and eleven media:scape settings, each accommodating up to eight students at a time, plus lounge and collaborative chairs, were installed.

TTU produced a few instructional videos on how to use media:scape, but they needn't have bothered. Before they could even officially open the space, students were drawn to it like a free lunch buffet.

"The first day we set them up, there were no chairs. None. I walked out at five o'clock and students had just sort of gravitated to the area. They grabbed chairs from other parts of the library, pulled them over to a media:scape, and started using them. Half of them weren't even connected yet," says Daniel.

"After three or four days, it was like the media:scapes had been here forever," says David Chapa, interior designer for the university.

"We're open 24 hours a day. Anytime you go out there, there are people using them, and in different ways, too. Groups and individuals use them. Sometimes they multitask to the point I can hardly believe. They'll have a video on one monitor, a Word document on another monitor, and they're listening to something with their earbuds," Daniel says.

With several of the media:scapes equipped with Polycom videoconferencing, "students don't have to be here to meet with their group. If John's home with a sick child and he has a laptop with a camera, he can still be at the meeting."

Students regularly thank the librarians for providing the GroupWorks space. Professors ask how they can integrate collaborative learning into their course

work. New students get exposed to media:scape early on. "Orientation tours come through now, too," says Daniel. "This is a definite destination."

#### WATCH:

TTU Library video on the GroupWorks space

An instructional video on media:scape produced by TTU

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