What is the origin of the Research Commons?

One of the strategic goals of Stellenbosch University (SU) is to leave a scientific footprint and provide hope from and to the African continent. The Research Commons forms part of SU’s HOPE Project, as does the associated Learning Commons, a contemporary and high-tech learning space for undergraduate students.

The HOPE Project is a campus-wide initiative through which the University is using its academic excellence and cutting-edge scientific research to find solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing South Africa, the rest of the African continent and the world at large. Promoting student success is a key goal of the HOPE Project. For more information, visit www.thehopeproject.co.za.

The University, recognising the potential of a highly sophisticated postgraduate research environment supporting its mission of increasing postgraduate throughput and research output, has provided more than 80% of the funding for the construction of the Research Commons.

Initial funding for the Research Commons was provided by the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), which also funds the Research Libraries Consortium in South Africa. There are three different components in the Consortium: the development of specialised facilities (the physical construction of a research commons), shared technologies and highly trained professional librarians. Each of these components is considered significant to growing a new cadre of researchers in South Africa.

The cutting-edge and stimulating environment provided by the Research Commons at SU is supported by the development of a cadre of skilled research librarians and improved access to information resources via the federated search tool, Primo.

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What is the Research Commons?

A high-level research environment intended for exclusive use by master’s and doctoral students, and researchers.

What is the aim and purpose of the Research Commons?

To contribute to postgraduate throughput and research output by providing a conducive environment for researchers, and offering services that directly support the research endeavours of postgraduate students and researchers.

Which services are available?

HIGH-LEVEL RESEARCH SUPPORT

- Personalised assistance by skilled librarians
- Continuous consultation and collaboration opportunities with cognate partners for expert research support
- Workshops and presentations to enhance academic writing and research techniques
- Research discourse activities

“Provide institutional support to sustain and grow, monitor and report research output and quality in order to improve our standing at national and international levels - the major focus is on the acquisition of resources and infrastructure.” (Strategic Plan for the Environment of the Vice-Rector Research, 2009)

“Develop the Library as a vibrant and inviting physical and virtual space that will promote collaboration, social networking, as well as private study and reflection. Continue to grow postgraduate and researcher learning spaces such as that of a state-of-the-art Research Commons that provides specialised and focused support to such user communities.” (Goal and action plan, Strategic Directions 2010-2015 of the Library and Information Service)

Which facilities are available?

The choice of location for the Research Commons was important to ensure an environment that is conducive for research exchange and production, and scholastic debate. The Commons is therefore located on the lower level of the library, offering researchers the flexibility of engaging in debate and exchange in the seminar or discussion rooms, relieve stressed minds in a comfortable lounge area or engage in rigorous studies at the designated computer work areas.

SPACES

- Seminar rooms with videoconferencing facilities, laptops and plasma screens. See details about online booking of seminar rooms on our webpage.
- Lounge area
- Printing, copying and scanning area

EQUIPMENT AND OTHER FACILITIES

- 32 carousel computer workstations
- A collection of reference works and brochures
- Plasma screens
- Wireless internet connection
- Lockers
- Coffee bar