



Making it My Street: The Bond University “Street” Area

What is it?

The Street area is the central point of the University’s main teaching building. Until recently, it was merely a transition space – people would move through it in order to get to their next class. It is a large rectangular area measuring approximately 20 by 5 metres and rising three stories high. In many ways, it resembles a classical loggia.

The new space consists of a raised, carpeted seating area. Large, comfortable couches, free-moving ottomans, and circular coffee tables are located in this space. The couches are of the highest commercial quality to guard against stains

Why is it?

One of the patterns of student behaviour observed in recent years is that students will only be on campus for particular classes or events, such as social functions or examinations. The students’ perspective of the University was that it was a place where they would visit in order to attend classes, not necessarily as a place that was essentially providing a once in a lifetime experience! Many students live in the adjacent suburb of Varsity Lakes, and can easily slip home when not required on campus. There were very few places on campus where students could spend substantial amounts of time if they chose to stay. One of these

MARCUS RANDALL, GAIL WILSON
BOND UNIVERSITY, AUSTRALIA

and potential misuse. Each of the coffee tables has four inbuilt power points for students to be able to plug in their notebook computers and other electronic devices. The entire area is also wireless. The total cost was approximately \$30,000.

Figure 1 shows the plan of the space while Figure 2 shows various photos of the Street area from several angles.

was the Library. Before the advent of the Street and the Multimedia Learning Centre (see the related case study), the Library was often at capacity throughout semester. The original design of the Library did not cater for this demand.

A strategic decision was made by University management to rectify the above. In their consideration, one of the purposes of a university, and a feature of the Bond experience in particular, is to foster a sense of community across a range of people and disciplines, and to encourage many levels of interaction – social, intellectual and collaborative. Following the 2007 Colloquium on Next Generation Learning Spaces, the rejuvenation of The Street was identified as project that could help to achieve these goals.

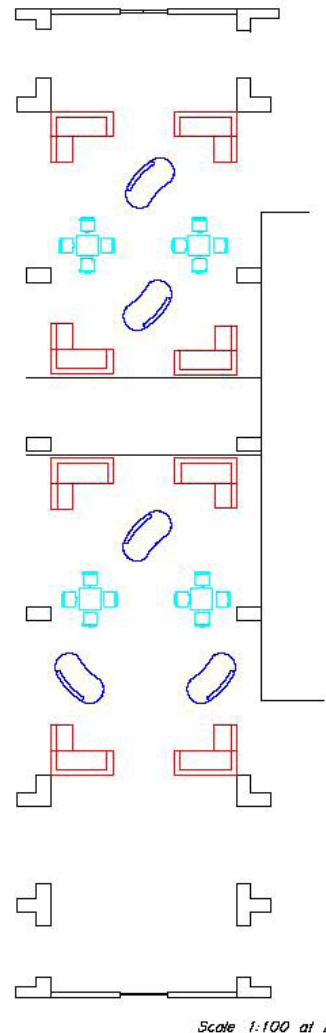


Figure 1. Architectural plan of The Street area. The diagram shows three basic elements, a) the ottomans (in blue), b) small coffee tables with power points (in aqua) and c) large lounges (in red).



Figure 2-4. The Street

The key players in the design of The Street were Marcus Randall, Cathy Murray and Senior Management Group. Marcus Randall and Cathy Murray were responsible for the original concept. Senior Management Group suggested revisions because of concerns about security (i.e., that some students may want to take some of the more movable pieces of furniture). The subsequent redesign of the space was accepted.

What happens here?

The Street was designed to be an informal area for staff and students to spend their time between classes, and as mentioned above, a place that helps to develop a sense of University community. In some ways, it is similar to the seating areas within airline lounges, as students often use it as an area that they can use to wait for a class. However, its usage goes beyond this. We have found that the different activities can be categorised as follows: a) group work, b) socialising, c) private reflection, d) interaction with academic staff, and e) access to the University's Career Development Centre. These points are discussed in detail in the next section.

The space is available during teaching time across Bond's three semesters.

How is the space used?

There are five main ways that the space is used:

1. Group work activity

One of the University's key educational strategies is to foster cooperation and collaboration amongst students on project work and assignments. In many subjects, group assignments are very important and form a large part of the final grade. However, until recently, there were very few specifically designed places on campus where students could meet to work together in groups. The Street with its "L" shaped couches facilitates these activities, and accompanying tables provide a good venue for students to meet and to work collaboratively.

Please help us to evaluate and improve the spaces on campus by taking a few minutes to complete this survey.

1. What faculty are you from? BTSD HSM HSS Law
2. Are you: Undergraduate Postgraduate
3. Have you used either The Street or the MLC? Yes No, please continue to question 14
4. How many times a week do you use this space:

MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> Never Used	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-10	<input type="checkbox"/> >10
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> Never Used	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7-10	<input type="checkbox"/> >10
5. How long did you use the space?

MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> Never Used	<input type="checkbox"/> <30mins	<input type="checkbox"/> 1hr	<input type="checkbox"/> 2hrs	<input type="checkbox"/> >2hrs
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> Never Used	<input type="checkbox"/> <30mins	<input type="checkbox"/> 1hr	<input type="checkbox"/> 2hrs	<input type="checkbox"/> >2hrs
6. What did you use the area for?

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual study	<input type="checkbox"/> Group study	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet with friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking a break
<input type="checkbox"/> Wireless Network	<input type="checkbox"/> Computers/Game Consoles	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify _____	
7. How did this space meet your requirements/expectations?

	(Not at all)	(Adequately)	(Very much)
MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5
8. Did you need assistance/or help when you used the area?

MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Please Comment _____
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Please Comment _____
9. What do you like most about either area (circle)?

MLC	The Street
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10. What would you like to see changed or added to either area (circle)?

MLC	The Street
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11. Would you recommend these areas to other students?

MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, why? _____
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, why? _____
12. Where else on campus would a 'Street' like area be useful? _____
13. Any further comments? _____
14. Why haven't you used these areas?

<input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't meet my requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Didn't know they existed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
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15. Do you plan on using these areas in the future?

MLC	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
The Street	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Thank you for participating in this survey.

Figure 5. Web-based survey on The Street and MLC spaces



Q. Have you used either The Street area or the Multimedia Learning Centre (MLC)?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	89.8%	255
No	10.2%	29
answered question		284
skipped question		0

Q. How many times a week do you use this space?

Answer Options	Never Used	1	2-4	4-6	7-10	>10	Response Count
The Street	63	86	52	18	2	1	222
answered question							244
skipped question							40

Q. How long did you use this space?

Answer Options	Never Used	<30 minutes	1hr	2hr	>2hrs	Response Count
The Street	46	74	55	13	16	204
answered question						244
skipped question						40

Q. Did this space meet your requirements/expectations?

Answer Options	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A	Average	Response Count
MLC	5	10	21	63	122	18	43	239
The Street	7	8	30	84	46	43	3.88	218
answered question								242
skipped question								42

Q. Would you recommend The Street area to other students?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.5%	172
No, Please comment	16.5%	34
answered question		206
skipped question		78

Figure 6 . Some results of the survey relevant to the Street.

The use of wireless notebook computers means that access to the Internet and a range of University information sources is assured. Additionally, no noise restrictions are imposed.

2.Socialisation

Before, between and after classes, students will come to The Street to relax and catch up with their friends. A café is in the near vicinity. Often students will bring coffee and food to the area as well.

3.Private moments

Some students simply come to The Street to relax, work or read in the large comfortable couches.

4.Interaction with staff

Sometimes it is simply not possible for students to have all their questions answered in class time. Lecturers and tutors regularly meet with students in The Street to continue their discussions.

5.Career development

Located beside the Street is Bond's Career Development Centre (CDC). This is a service that students use for post-university career advice, and gaining part-time employment during their studies. The staff of CDC use this area to consult with students as well as to display and distribute career materials.

How is technology used?

The Street was deliberately designed to have little technology. Only electrical power points and computer wireless access are provided. Our idea was to minimise the technology so that students and staff can interact in groups or simply be left alone to their own thoughts. There are many places across the campus (the Multimedia Learning Centre being a prime example) that give students access to state-of-the-art technology and the ability to communicate electronically. Areas like The Street help to keep the balance between the personal and the electronic.

Many students use the wireless support. At any given time, approximately 70 - 80 percent of the students will be working on their notebook computers. Surprisingly, there is little call for access to power. Perhaps this is because of computers' extended battery lives and the fact the students will spend only a short amount of time in The Street, or a combination of these two factors.

How was the facility evaluated?

There have been two types of evaluation of this facility conducted, informal and formal. Informal evaluation involves occasional viewing of this area by the designers. We have found that it is heavily used each day during normal teaching time. In fact, it can often be difficult for students to find a spare place on the couches or ottomans. In some cases, students have resorted to sitting on top of the backs of the couches or sitting on the carpeted floor. Our informal observations have led us to believe that it has been too popular, and that we need to extend the area and the concept of these types of area throughout the University Centre. To this end, a new project is underway for a similar area that also includes a coffee shop.

A more formal evaluation approach has taken the form of a web-based survey which combined questions on both the Street space and the new Multi-Media Learning Centre (MLC) (see related case study) on the campus. Figure 5 shows a copy of this survey.

The results of the survey showed that students enjoyed having a comfortable area that they could freely access in between classes. Additionally, the convenience of being able to wait, read email, have access to power (for mobile devices) and perhaps have a snack made the area very appealing. The major criticisms were that it was not opened 24 hours a day, that the area should be extended and the ambient noise be damped.

Figure 6 shows some of the survey results (those directly relevant to The Street). A relatively large number of students, 284, responded to the survey.

What were the main lessons learned?

Both formal and informal evaluations have indicated that students need dedicated "breakout" spaces available on campus. This sounds intuitive and reasonable, but until recently, very little of this type of space has been available. By having facilities such as The Street on campus, students are encouraged to stay between classes – leading to greater informal learning experiences and increased socialisation opportunities. Naturally, additionally spaces of this kind are being currently planned.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people and departments, without whom, the refurbished Street would not have been possible. These are (in no particular order):

- Facilities Management, in particular Cathy Murray (Director of Campus Operations)
- Information Services, in particular Mark Sutherland (Associate Director, Information Services)
- Bond University's Teaching and Learning Committee, and, in particular, the former Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professor Duncan Bentley.