Mend Your Clothes or Make Over Your Curriculum at CATalyst Studios

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CATalyst Studios will hold an open house Thursday, Jan. 16, from 12-6 p.m. at the Main Library. More information [1] is available on the Libraries website.

From personal projects to curriculum planning, the newly opened CATalyst Studios in the Main Library gives University employees a space to be at their creative best.

"For a long time, public, school and university libraries have provided access to technology, like laptops and cameras," said Jennifer Nichols, director of CATalyst Studios. "Creating a space like this allows us to provide access to even higher-end technologies that are either cost-prohibitive or difficult to learn."

CATalyst Studios is the next iteration of iSpace, which had operated out of the Science-Engineering Library since 2015. It's about 10 times larger than the previous space and houses a maker studio, data studio and virtual reality studio. Construction began in December 2018 on the space, which is open to students, faculty, staff and the general public.

The Maker Studio is filled with adjustable height tables beneath high ceilings, from which hang coiled electrical cords that ensure outlets are available wherever they are needed. A wall of windows shines natural light on equipment including vinyl cutters, 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, soldering irons and microcomputers. CATalyst will offer workshops and certifications in laser cutting, 3D printing, sewing and embroidery, and vinyl cutting.

The Data Studio houses a large-scale, high-definition data visualization screen with 30 million pixels. Nichols says it will benefit researchers working with big data and offer a seminar-style learning environment for faculty.

The Terry Seligman Virtual Reality Studio features Oculus Rift, HTC Vive and Google Cardboard virtual reality viewers as well as Leap Motion virtual and augmented reality technology. It also offers Oculus Go headsets, which don't require a computer to use, meaning instructors can use them in classrooms so students can view 360-degree videos or enter virtual reality atmospheres.

CATalyst Studios is the first part of the Student Success District [2] project to open. The effort is designed to connect existing buildings near the heart of campus in order to integrate services and spaces designed to promote student success. The full project is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Nichols says her vision for CATalyst is for it to become a hub of formal and informal learning.

"People can come in to work on their own individual projects. We have people who come in
and do their mending on the sewing machines," Nichols said. "But if you're an instructor, we really hope to work with you to engage in your curriculum and figure out ways that this community, the technology and the space can be a part of what you're doing in the classroom."

She says librarians are available to talk to faculty about how they can modify assignments so students can engage with CATalyst's offerings.

The future of CATalyst, Nichols said, is up to its users.

"This is really a community before it's anything else, so people will ask for what they need," Nichols said. "The relationships we build with instructors and students will inform what the next things are that we offer."

CATalyst Studios, located in the University of Arizona Main Library, is open Sunday-Thursday from 12-8 p.m. and Fridays from 12-6 p.m.

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Links
[1] https://libcal.library.arizona.edu/calendar/catalyst/openhouse
[2] https://successdistrict.arizona.edu/