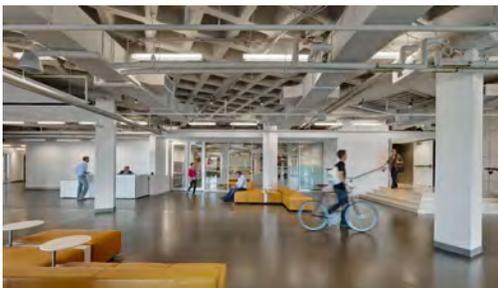
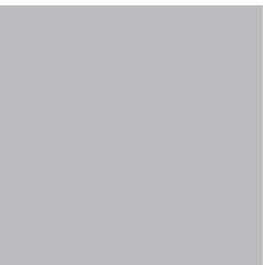


Harvard Innovation Lab

Harvard University, Boston, MA | 2011



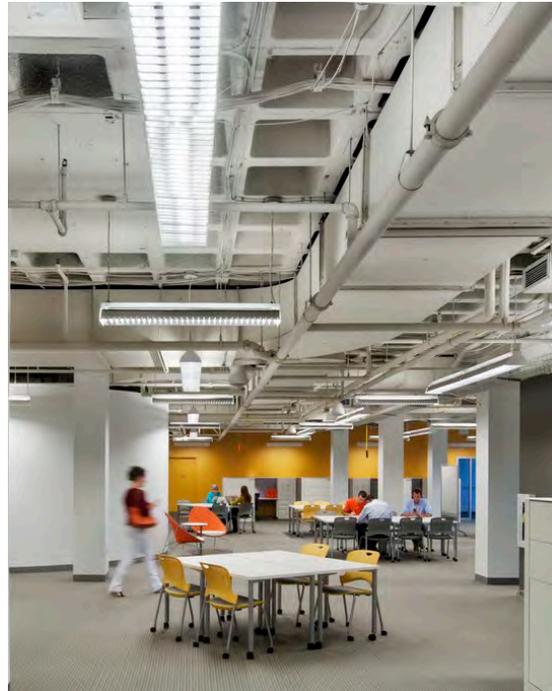
Harvard University

Harvard Innovation Lab, Boston, MA | 2011

The Harvard Innovation Lab or “i-lab” provides a new model for collaboration and entrepreneurship that crosses all disciplines, and is a magnet with a campus-wide draw. Its design catalyzes a robust culture of exploration and serves a program rich with team-based activities. Classrooms are complemented by a range of spaces that accommodate business incubators and entrepreneurs in residence while welcoming the surrounding community with social spaces and business support. The reconfigurable ‘garage-chic’ environment conveys a sense of the possible, adapts to evolving technologies and uses the range of spaces for many activities, from community meetings to collaborative project work. Shepley completed the transformation of the former WGBH television studio into the Innovation Lab on a highly expedited schedule, with just ten months from a dynamic workshop-based design process to the end of construction. The i-lab opened at the start of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Project Type: Renovation
Square Footage: 75,600
Construction Cost: \$20m

LEED Gold Certified



“The i-lab is more than physical space: it is a hub of informed discovery, a new model for testing ideas and transforming possibility into practical application.”



Key spaces

Community lobby

Open to the public and Harvard community, the lobby and adjacent cafe provides space for informal gatherings, lectures, and events with entrepreneurs and innovators.



Workspace and workshop

Rolling tables and whiteboards are easily reconfigured in this space, which accommodates up to 200. The conveniently located workshop is equipped with power tools, prototyping materials, and a 3-D printer.



Entry points and zones

There are two entries: one facing the street and one facing the HBS campus. In addition to hosting programs for the wider community, the lobby space is a shared entry for the lab workspace on this floor and HBS' innovative classroom spaces on the floors above.



Flexible classroom

The classroom, which can be entered from both the i-lab space and the community lobby, seats 90 at tables and 150 in a chairs-only arrangement.



Student social/work space

The i-lab provides an open kitchen with a gaming zone and cafe seating. The community lobby hosts a second cafe space that is open to those attending lectures and events in the space.





Design Notes

Creating a home for innovation



What's the big idea?

The charge was to create a space for a visible community of entrepreneurs that was owned by no one and welcoming to all. Creating this new intellectual space demanded a collaborative approach and buy-in from all 14 schools at Harvard from project outset. Think of it as a remarkably intense potluck dinner, where everyone had something to bring.



Brand identity and a sense of invitation

Giving the i-lab a graphic identity started by considering the essential nature of innovation. A universally recognized gesture of welcome, "Hi" has an open and honest tone, conveying a sense of discovery and a broad invitation to passersby. The 'Hi' has quickly become synonymous with innovation and the essence of the i-lab's identity - with the agility and speed of a good start-up.



Placemaking

If you build it, will they come? Creating this campus-wide innovation hub a success meant making sure it would be a destination. This meant identifying a neutral site, making it highly accessible by foot, bike, and campus shuttle; creating a warm and vivid graphic identity that conveyed a sense of welcome; and mixing in dynamic programs supported by core amenities.



Environmental stewardship

Making the i-lab a model of environmentally responsive design was a priority. The adaptive reuse of the former WGBH studios preserved 75% of the original building and brought natural light deep into the space. Outside you'll find plug-in Zipcars and bikes encouraging sustainable transportation to and from the lab. The i-lab is LEED Gold certified.



Flexibility

Often cited, frequently under-appreciated, and rarely explained, flexibility means designing a space that can adapt to evolving ways of using it. The i-lab is designed to ensure that its engineering, furniture, technology, and operational systems can shift responsively as programs, technologies, and communities change over time.



Places to see and connect

More than just a matter of physical environment, transparency embodies the mission of the i-lab. The i-lab's open layout makes group projects visible with work spaces wrapped with glass and generous use of white board surfaces that encourage students to write on the walls. In the words of one student, "If you're in there and visible, you'd better be working on something important."



Plug (or unplug) and play

The project team used core technology planning principles to help guide investments in infrastructure and equipment. The plan emphasized flexible, scalable technologies that could be added to and easily updated as required to accommodate the latest technologies. This was particularly important given the internet-focused nature of many of the i-lab's start-ups.



The impact of an incubator

The director of the i-lab estimates that the space has housed close to 300 ventures over the course of six separate 100-day terms, and that in its first two years of operation companies that have incubated there have raised more than \$50 million in venture funding.

Shepley Bulfinch

> Need more information? Email us at info@shepleybulfinch.com

