



Laboratory for Computer Science

M. L. Dertouzos, Director

(formerly Project MAC)
545 Technology Square
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139
(617) 253- 6012

J. Moses, Associate Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: M.L. Dertouzos
J. Moses
G. Wallace

FROM: K.T. Pograd *KTP*

DATE: March 18, 1976

SUBJECT: Conference Room Improvements

Joel recently asked me to make some definite suggestions for improvements to the fifth floor conference room, assuming that we had about \$2,000 available for changes to the room itself. I thought I would begin by describing the changes I feel would be desirable, ignoring the question of which of these could be done for \$2,000.

The individual improvements in my list below are arranged approximately by order of increasing "complexity". They are each discussed individually. The assumption is made that we begin with the conference room as it is today, except that the unused "projection room" has been dismantled.

Conference Room Improvements

1. Paint
2. Carpeting
3. New chairs
4. Audio-visual improvements
5. Terminal Facilities
6. Lighting and lighting controls
7. Video facilities
8. Storage for equipment
9. Lectern, elevated platform
10. Air Conditioning
11. Kitchenette for refreshment preparation
12. Expansion

Item-by-item Discussion

1. Paint

Certainly, if any modification is to be made to the conference room (such as tearing down the projection booth) the room should be painted, preferably in a warm shade rather than a cool shade. We should see if it is possible to paint the ceiling without destroying the sound-absorbing qualities of the acoustical tile.

2. Carpeting

Carpeting would improve the acoustics as well as the appearance of the conference room. In my opinion, the main LCS conference room should be a place at least as prestigious and "nice" as the Reading Room or the AI Playroom, both of which are carpeted.

3. New Chairs

The present chairs are uncomfortable to sit in for long periods. Comfortable folding chairs, which go well with the paint and carpeting, would be an asset.

4. Audio-Visual Improvements

These are "small potatoes": The movie screen can be relocated slightly to make setup of the overhead projector simpler. A new overhead projector which is not lopsided would help. A small sound system would be a help when we have a soft-spoken guest lecturer and a large crowd. Also, it could be used to advantage for movie and television sound.

In addition, we could provide a floor outlet at a location appropriate for a movie or slide projector. The outlet could provide both AC power and connections to the sound system and, perhaps, the lighting control system (see number 6 below).

5. Terminal Facilities

Currently the conference room has data phone jacks and a coil of wire which provides a connection to one of the PDP-10's. It should have neat connection points for data phone, TIP, PDP-10, and Delphi. In addition, some provision should be made for the eventual connection of a sophisticated color CRT display terminal to the proposed Advent color TV.

6. Lighting and Lighting Controls

The intensity of the lighting in the conference room is certainly adequate; however, the lighting controls leave something to be desired. There are light switches on opposite sides of the room which turn all of the lights on and off. This gives a lecturer using the overhead projector two choices: He can leave the lights on, which can make his slides difficult

to see, or he can ask that they be turned off, putting half his audience to sleep. A good solution to this problem would be two-fold: First, the front row of lights in the conference room could be controlled separately from the rest of the lights. Secondly, the controls for both sets of lights could be made accessible to the speaker. If we ever decide to install a permanent lectern in the conference room, these light switches could be located in the lectern. Alternatively, the light switches could be mounted on the wall nearby.

Another possibility would be to replace the front row of fluorescent lights with incandescent lights on a dimmer, also accessible to the speaker.

7. Video Facilities

"Video Facilities" for the conference room include two things: First, the proposed sophisticated color demonstration video terminal system, incorporating an Advent color TV. This system will not be discussed here. Second, facilities for use with the M.I.T. Cable TV system and the laboratory's video tape recorder. Of course, these need not be totally separated; the Advent TV could be used for all three.

The fifth floor conference room is the most likely location within the laboratory from which we might want to originate a TV program for broadcast via the M.I.T. Cable TV system. Thus, the renovated conference room should include facilities for the originating television programs. In addition, the fifth floor conference room is the most likely location for large groups of people to congregate to watch TV programs on the M.I.T. Cable system. Therefore, we should provide good facilities for viewing television programs as well.

Very little in the way of permanently mounted equipment is required for program origination. Camera, additional lighting, microphones, etc., can all be brought in when needed. What is needed on a permanent basis is a location for the equipment which will serve to connect television programs originating in our conference room to the M.I.T. Cable TV system and which will also distribute incoming signals from the M.I.T. Cable TV system throughout the laboratory. The conference room is located approximately at the vertical midpoint of the building, and would be a good location for the Cable TV distribution equipment. If the projection booth currently in the rear of the conference room were to remain, it would make a fine location for this equipment, and also for a person operating it during television program origination. If the booth is to be removed, then perhaps a small closet could be provided for this equipment.

Equipment for viewing television is somewhat simpler. If we are to have an Advent color TV, it can serve as the primary means of viewing M.I.T. Cable TV programs. We can build a small electronic box to switch the Advent TV from the M.I.T. Cable TV system to the demonstration terminal system as needed. If we are not going to get an Advent color TV, then the purchase of one or two color receiver-monitors is in order. A receiver-monitor could be used both for viewing M.I.T. Cable TV programs and for viewing locally originated programs and video tapes, as they contain both a VHF tuner and a video input jack. They cost about \$400 to \$500. One would be nice, but two would be better, just as we presently have two Conrac black and white moni-

tors. Ideally, these receiver-monitors could be permanently hung from the ceiling, making them much easier to use than the present Conrac monitors, which must be wheeled into position and cabled up when they are needed.

Another issue is the purchase of a new television camera and video tape recorder. Our present video tape recorder is obsolete, and the camera is not of the best quality. A better video tape recorder -- perhaps a Sony video cassette recorder -- would be a welcome addition to the laboratory's facilities, and might result in increased usage of video tape within the laboratory.

8. Storage for Equipment

The most prevalent use of the current projection booth is for the storage of equipment such as the Conrac TV monitors and, occasionally, soft drinks and other conference and party supplies. If the projection booth is to be eliminated, then an alternate storage location for this equipment must be found. A small closet built at the rear of the conference room would be suitable. Something nearby is needed, however; storage of the monitors and other equipment in the basement would be extremely inconvenient.

9. Lecturn and Elevated Platform

Presently the conference room has a very large table at the front which really isn't necessary. When the CSR Division held its annual review in January, the large table was moved out and replaced by a smaller table on which the speaker could place his notes, slides, etc., along with the overhead projector. Even a standard size table isn't the best thing for the conference room. What is needed is some sort of lecturn or podium on which a speaker could place his papers, and which could serve as an ideal resting place for the overhead projector when it is in use. This lecturn, which could be either permanently mounted or removable, could include the light switches and microphone as mentioned in previous paragraphs.

If the large table is removed it would be a good idea to obtain several standard size folding tables which could be brought out when needed for serving refreshments at parties, etc.

Another idea which would improve the visibility of the speaker in the conference room would be to install a raised platform at the front of the room. A height one step above the floor would be adequate. This platform should be carpeted, even if the rest of the room is not. The podium or lecturn mentioned above could then be mounted on this platform.

10. Air Conditioning

Apparently, the space presently occupied by the conference room was not originally intended to be a conference room, as the air conditioning isn't really adequate. In the summer the room is cool enough when there aren't too many people in it; however, when the conference room is filled it can become unbearably warm. We should determine whether a rearrangement of the ducts will improve the air conditioning in the conference room,

or whether additional air conditioning capacity would be required. If a rearrangement of ducts is all that is needed it might be relatively inexpensive and very worthwhile. If the conference room is enlarged to accommodate more people, auxiliary air conditioning might very well be required.

11. Kitchenette for Refreshment Preparation

Presently, preparation of refreshments for conferences is done on a sort of catch as catch can basis, with frequent trips to the janitor's closet in the elevator lobby. A small kitchenette in the back corner of the conference room containing a counter, cabinet space, sink, tiny stove and a small under-the-counter refrigerator would be a worthwhile addition. The back wall of the conference room is separated from the women's room only by duct space, so the cost for plumbing should not be too high.

12. Expansion

Should the laboratory have a larger conference room which could accommodate more people? I have several ideas for enlarging the conference room involving minimal loss of office space on the fifth floor. The simplest idea is to eliminate the back corridor between Rooms 516 and 520, making Room 518 an internal office accessible only from Room 517. The six feet of space thus gained can be added to the front of the conference room, possibly used as the raised speaker's platform mentioned earlier. The present front of the conference room then becomes available for additional seating.

This additional seating space would become available without removing the projection booth. The equipment closet and the kitchenette mentioned above could both be added across the back of the room. With this extra room, it might be possible to remove the unsightly coat racks, and construct a sliding door coat closet or, if you prefer, a sliding door coat rack.

A somewhat more ambitious plan would involve adding quite a bit more space to the conference room by relocating a portion of one of the side corridors and reducing the size of several offices. This, of course, constitutes a much more major remodeling of the conference room and will not be discussed further here. I will gladly supply the details of this plan upon request.

xc: J.H. Saltzer