

## **New Social Science Research Commons Launches at IU Bloomington**

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The [Social Science Research Commons](#) is an innovative new space that has been planned to “stimulate, coordinate, and sustain social science research on the Bloomington campus” (SSRC, 2013) using a centrally-located, state-of-the-art renovated facility. The space is a joint creation by the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice Provost for Research, the College of Arts and Sciences and UITS, that repurposes a former Political Science departmental library while keeping some of the architectural features that make the so-called “Grand Hall” beautiful and unique. On October 7, 2013, the Social Science Research Commons (SSRC) celebrated its grand opening in Woodburn Hall 200. Below are described some of the key technologies, services, and events that will make this distinctive space essential to the increasingly collaborative and computationally-intensive world of social science research. Relevance of the Commons to librarians is also discussed.

### **Technologies**

Among the most impressive technologies are the [Bridgit conferencing software](#) and touch-screen monitors that allow collaboration between computers from within the SSRC, and also for computers connected remotely. At the October 7 launch, Director of Leveraged Resources for the College IT Office James Russell effectively demonstrated the technology, collaboratively marking up an on-screen presentation using a special stylus that seemed to allow him to write directly on the screen at the same time that Emily Meanwell, Associate Director of the SSRC, “wrote” on the same presentation on another monitor from across the room. The Commons are also home to mobile groupings of computers which can be rearranged to support joint work as well as traditional lectures in the space.

### **Services**

Researchers seeking assistance developing grant proposals for social science research can meet with the Proposal Development Services (PDS; part of the Office of the Vice Provost for Research) in the Commons. Additionally, the Commons hosts consulting services for a variety of groups on campus that help researchers—not just those in the Social Sciences—improve their research methodologies and analysis. The [Indiana Statistical Consulting Center](#), [Center for Survey Research](#) and [Research Analytics](#) (formerly the Stat/Math Center) all regularly host “office hours” in the space.

The SSRC also helps researchers with software and data acquisition and organization, as well as secure data management. In particular, the SSRC supports databases such as the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), and Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, which can be used by researchers seeking existing data in particular areas of study. Researchers seeking secure data management that is safe for human subject data can go to the SSRC for help gaining access to and using the [SPEA Restricted Access Data Remote Server](#) (SPEA-RADaRS).

## Events

The SSRC regularly hosts educational events and seminars in the space, including ICPSR Summer Courses and the popular SSRC Workshops in Methods. It is also expected that the space will make the Indiana University a competitive prospective host for future Social Science conferences. A full list of events can be found on the SSRC website, <http://ssrc.indiana.edu/seminars/>.

## Relevance to Librarians

The lessons learned across campus from the launch of the Social Science Research Commons have the potential to teach the IU Libraries-Bloomington a great deal as we undertake the implementation of our own collaborative research space, the [Scholars' Commons](#), on the first floor of the Herman B Wells Library (with an expected grand opening in Autumn 2014).

Until the Scholars' Commons opens, librarians interested in hosting workshops and leveraging group collaboration technology in the SSRC may wish to reserve the Grand Hall for their events, especially those aimed towards departments located in and around the Woodburn Hall area of the Bloomington campus. Additionally, librarians are encouraged to participate in one of the many educational events hosted at the SSRC or visit with one of the many research consulting groups that hold office hours in the space.

## References

SSRC. (2013). Social Science Research Commons [website]. Retrieved at <http://ssrc.indiana.edu/>.

Schumacher, T. (2013). "Research commons unveiled." *Indiana Daily Student*, 7 October 2013. Retrieved at <http://www.idsnews.com/news/story.aspx?id=94523>.