

# designing for thousands

## LIBRARIES LEND HIGHER LEARNING CURVE

In a good relationship between dealer and manufacturer, the dealer's client buys the manufacturer's furniture, it performs well (is hopefully installed on time) and everyone is happy. In a great relationship, the manufacturer helps the dealer meet a specific need and the client is thrilled.

Santa Clara University built a new library in 2007-08. The call went out for furniture that complemented the design, would withstand the rigors of an 8,000-plus student body, and meet the demands for size and technological specifications. One Workplace, a Milpitas, California office furniture dealer had a tall order to fill, not to mention a tight turnaround time.

"The client had some very specific needs," said Melissa Mehta, account manager at One Workplace. "This job required custom pieces to meet size and unique power requirements. Santa Clara desired extra large work stations for students to spread out materials as well as patron power access at every work station throughout the library.



To design a library well, dealers must address the multiple uses of the space.

Mehta found a partner in AGATI Furniture. "The owner of the company came out to meet with us and we were impressed," said Mehta. "AGATI had done quite a lot of libraries in the area, but we were even more enamored when we learned they could do custom work to accommodate our tweaks."



Comfortable seating and multi-purpose working solutions allows students to work alone or combine units to work in large groups.



AGATI's specialty in library furnishings, and in dealing with library – and university library – clients was a major deciding factor. "The process of working with a university is very, very different than working with corporate clients," explained Mehta. "Corporate clients usually have one or a few decision makers and are typically able to move quickly, whereas in the university setting there are many more constituencies who are involved in the decision making process. Frequently, one of these key constituencies is a donor, and there is an urgency to ensure that the donor's money is utilized properly."

Libraries, and university libraries, require differences on the practical side as well. Space planning is very different with so many users who may each use the same chair and table differently. Durability of the furniture is especially important



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when considering there may be 15,000-20,000 users per week in Santa Clara's library.

AGATI provided panel back chairs from its Curtis collection, and tables customized from the Boalt collection for the main spaces. The St. Claire room, a multi-purpose space, is furnished with Frye tables, lounge chairs and occasional tables. The Frye tables are designed to be ganged together or separated for special occasions.

The furnishings were installed in less than four months. "Lead time is an eye-opener when purchasing custom product," said Laura Gilliland, sales manager for AGATI. "We build to suit for every job, so we're used to meeting a tight deadline."

"The library looks phenomenal and has received so many accolades," added Mehta. "And the client was thrilled." 