

# **Station A at the ICN Business School in Nancy - A real learnlab!**

## **Station A enhances collaboration with external companies and exchange between teachers and students**

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The ICN Business School wants to develop more interdisciplinary studies allowing for a variety of perspectives and encourage collaboration between internal and external stakeholders.

“For several years, we have offered interdisciplinary studies for students from the three universities of the Nancy campus (ICN, ENSAD and École des Mines). Given the growth of our university and the opening of new campuses in Paris and Berlin, as well as the recommendation of our sponsors, we are making these interdisciplinary studies available for all our students. Our challenge is to offer common degree programmes for all ICNs, regardless of their geographical location.” – Marie-France Clerc-Girard, professor, and head of the ARTEM department, responsible for innovative pedagogy.

After the closure of the Metz campus, student numbers at Nancy have increased. The management team decided to use a new building at the end of the existing building wing in early 2020.

“The idea is to prepare students for more interdisciplinarity by confronting them with different contents. This will make it easier for them to work with different people in future. Now we have a building where we can develop new skills that meet company’s needs. Here we want to train soft skills and that’s how we came up with the idea for Station A “, says Marie-France Clerc-Girard.

### **The existing building as a basis**

The first proposal from the logistics department for the new facility was considered as too “classical”. The management team wanted to create more innovative spaces and asked Marie-France Clerc-Girard to design the project in collaboration with Steelcase in spring 2020.

**“I became familiar with Steelcase’s research and development department and their insights.**

**I understood what influence space design has on teaching and on people’s relationships and different ways of collaboration. This allowed me to have a huge impact on our space design.”**

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**MARIE-FRANCE CLERC-GIRARD** | Project Manager

We had two problems to solve: first the time pressure, as the project had to be completed by mid-September, and second the existing building: “The building was already built, all the partitions were installed,” emphasises the professor, for whom Steelcase’s support was crucial.

The project took shape during many meetings, some of them were held digitally because of the pandemic. “Together with Steelcase, we developed various solutions and even new partnerships have started with a University of Architecture and Design in Paris and Milan,” says Marie-France Clerc-Girard, “the university’s communications and marketing department was also heavily involved!”

The proximity of Steelcase dealer SDIB in Nancy also helped to speed things up. Arnaud Cour from SDIB and Raluca Chiuzbaian from the Steelcase design team were able to provide the right answers to the various requirements of the project. “Thanks to the showroom, we were able to choose the furniture and corresponding colours and materials more easily” says Marie-France Clerc-Girard.

### **Evolution of the individual office**

“Station A” is about creating spaces where students and teachers can meet and collaborate informally. “We have to leave the individual office and find spaces where teachers, students and external people from companies can exchange ideas. “We have solved this issue proposing shared offices spaces for 3 – 4 teachers with different backgrounds and areas of expertise. In addition, special rooms were created for concentration,” explains Marie-France Clerc-Girard.

Open spaces for teachers, allow concentrated work at the workstation while encouraging interaction with others through informal areas equipped with coffee tables, armchairs and interactive whiteboards. The upper floors are used for group work. Here you can find various rooms for creative work and design thinking, learning studios, information exchange, as well as a large room for board meetings or workshops with companies.

“Our goal is to bring companies to the campus and to encourage exchanges with students in new ways,” says Marie-France Clerc-Girard.

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### **Modularity and connectivity**

All furniture is on castors and can easily be reconfigured. Modularity is key. “This flexibility was possible even though the rooms were divided by fixed partitions. This is a real plus of this project.”

**“The physical posture changes the relationships between people: When you can move around and talk to students from different spots within the room, it immediately changes the way people look at things, the way of teaching and learning is different!”**

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**MARIE-FRANCE CLERC-GIRARD** | Project Manager

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**“The comfortable seating and the ability to move tables and chairs around is very pleasant, it makes it easier to work in small groups and workshops and it’s much more adapted to our daily life!”**

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**PABLO LÉVÊQUE** | Student

In addition to modularity, connectivity is very important within Station A. “The many interactive screens help to transform collaboration,” says the professor, “We work with many colleagues abroad, and this equipment will allow us to develop relationships, support meetings and run workshops with partner universities!”

Design Thinking Room

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### **The K- Hub®: An Alternative to the Media Centre**

Connectivity is one of the strengths of the K-Hub located on the ground floor of the building. It is a workspace for students with digital access to documents. ICN has already developed this concept at its various campuses since 2018. “Through the existing K-Hubs, we have already gained experience that we can use for the K-Hub in Nancy,” explains Séverine Koehl, head of the university’s documentation department.

**“We started from the students’ needs that we have observed in the media centre: They need individual and collective workspaces as well as support with their documentary research.”**

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**SÉVERINE KOEHL** | Head of the Documentation Department

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Similar to a coworking space, different work areas are located next to each other with chairs and tables on castors. In the middle of this open space, a large square shaped workspace, the “Orange Box” offers collaboration space for five students.

“We have chosen the hybridisation of documentary resources: fake books on shelves, access to e-books and a combination of virtual bookshelves and videos available on the ScholarVox platform. Students can also access the librarians’ chat room.”

The K-Hub at Station A size is 180 m<sup>2</sup>, for a maximum of 60 students. “The media centre on campus is often overcrowded because it is also used by students from the other three universities,” stresses Pablo Lévêque, “the opening of the K-Hub makes our work easier.” “As the media centre is too small for 300 students, the K-Hub allows us to highlight ICN’s own resources,” adds Séverine Koehl, “we can bring our students here to train them in documentary research. And that is very important for the thesis. Students don’t always know where to find the right sources on the internet, or how to deal with 15 different databases!”

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## **A real learnlab**

Not far from the K-Hub, on the ground floor of Station A, is the ICN shop. It is an orange retail space, with planted walls. “This space has a very nice atmosphere when you enter it. It is ideally located for us and allows the BDE to sell the university’s goodies more easily,” says a delighted Pablo Lévêque, “Overall, Station A is modern and comfortable. We enjoy learning here!”

In addition, the ICN shop offers books related to the region and the university’s themes (art, management, technology), but also publications from the teachers.

Now we need to fill this place with life, as it has hardly been used since February last year due to the pandemic.

**“We will develop new activities here. For example, we are participating in the Steelcase research group on the impact of furniture and spaces on teaching together with other higher education institutions. We want this space to be a learnlab, a place to live and to experiment.”**

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**MARIE-FRANCE CLERC-GIRARD** | Project Manager

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