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Wired for Wireless

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Wired for Wireless

ORONO, Maine - Shibles Hall may look typical 1950's from the outside, but there's nothing dated about the technology it now sports on all four floors. Due to innovative use of a donor's gift, Shibles is a prototype for the University of Maine campus in wireless technology. The building is now 100 percent wired for wireless, with a power hub system capable of handling up to 100 portable computers at a time.

The flexibility to instantly create a technologically rich environment in any classroom and the implications for teaching and learning are tremendous and just beginning to be tapped. Faculty, students and visitors to Shibles no longer have to be concerned with finding appropriately wired classrooms, stringing and connecting wires, tripping over power cords or dismantling all the connections at the end of class.

"Wireless technology allows our faculty and students to concentrate on teaching and learning with technology, not on circuits and cables," says Dean Robert Cobb.

Access points installed during the past year provide building-wide access to the Internet and other networks for any properly configured portable computer. The College's 26 portable computers are already configured, and College technologists can quickly register and reset configurations on other laptops to allow network access while in the building.

The College's portable computers were purchased as part of the Professionals Fluent in Technology (PROFIT) Pilot Program and the PREP-Bank Program, and 18 are designated as mobile labs for use in our professional development partnership schools. The mobile labs include their own portable hubs that travel with faculty to work in public schools with teacher interns, practicing teachers and K-12 students.

The infrastructure for the new wireless technology at Shibles was made possible by an initial $5,000 gift from Marion Rich Waterman Meyer. A 1951 graduate of UMaine, career educator and a former assistant dean at the Syracuse University School of Management, Meyer has provided funding over the years for awards and activities to encourage educational research and innovative practice.

Through collaboration with UNET (University of Maine System Network for Education and Technology Services) Wayne Garthwait, College educational technology specialist, was able to determine and procure the most robust wireless system. As a test site for future wireless infrastructure on campus, Shibles is outfitted with a high-quality product that will be in line as

the technology expands at UMaine. While other UMaine facilities have some wireless capacity and services, Shibles Hall is the first major campus building to have total coverage.

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