Boston, MA Acentech partnered with Perkins + Will architects on the renovation of Wentworth Institute of Technology’s (WIT) Alumni Library in Beatty Hall, a concrete Brutalist style building. The 50 year old existing library was dark, unwelcoming, and known for its noisy mechanical equipment.

The reimagined library, now called the Douglas D. Schumann Library and Learning Commons, is far more than its former iteration. The function of academic libraries has transitioned in recent years from “quiet zones” filled with books, to more active learning spaces. The design team developed a variety of spaces to accommodate group studies, maker space labs, reading rooms, a café, and open areas to encourage collaboration. Large group study rooms have been replaced with smaller rooms, and individual staff office space has shifted to an open workplace environment.
At the new Douglas D. Schumann Library and Learning Commons, the integration of micro-perforated wood panels at the walls of the atrium and lower ceiling surfaces proved successful in both the aesthetic and the acoustical performance. Acentech’s approach allowed the architect the freedom to keep most of the existing concrete waffle structure exposed, retaining part of the history of the building. Their team also worked with the mechanical engineer on the design and selection of quiet mechanical systems. They provided guidance for appropriate sound isolation by assisting the selection of wall types for the varying programmatic zones within the new library. With ample light, bright colors, and upgraded interiors and amenities, this new learning commons has quickly become one of the most popular work/study spaces at WIT.

Acentech is one of the largest and longest standing acoustical consulting firm in the U.S., serving architectural, engineering, institutional, commercial, education, and cultural clients. They are headquartered in Cambridge, Mass. and have offices in Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Charlottesville, VA. They work with clients to create environments conducive to teaching, learning, working, creating, performance, research, living, and enjoyment.