

**Don't Get Married to the Results:  
Managing Library Change in the Age of Metrics**



*Charleston Conference 2015  
Corey Seeman – Kresge Library Services  
University of Michigan  
link*

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Program Overview

- Opening Thoughts on Assessment...
- ...but...Some Problems with Numbers
- Library Change and YOU!
- About Kresge Library and Ross Construction
- Telling Your Story (Planning and Rebuilding)



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Opening Thoughts on Assessment...

- I have an iconoclastic approach...
- ...but with some clarifications:
  - Every function, service, product needs an assessment program.
  - Maybe formal or informal
  - Can be periodic or continual
  - Predetermined measures of success are insane

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Opening Thoughts on Assessment...

- Design Thinking is key for continual improvement.
- Excellent conference at GVSU focused on this for building and service design
- Re-think it: Libraries for a New Age - <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/rethinkit/>
- Empathy of our users is critical.



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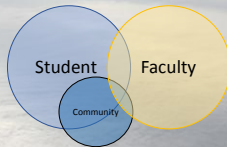
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Opening Thoughts on Assessment...

- Library challenge is that we have multiple stakeholders and they have different needs.
- Faculty needs – scholarly journals, articles, books , datasets
- Student needs – articles, company & industry information, market reports
- Community – Mostly similar to student needs



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Opening Thoughts on Assessment...

- Academic libraries are on-campus **monopolies**.
- We are the primary information purchasers on campus.
- Without competition - is there a real push for assessing and improving?



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Some Problem with Numbers

- Political Season – Stupidity with Numbers
- Kohl's Pricing
- John Oliver's Great piece on School Testing (May 3, 2015) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6lyURyVz7k>
- Halloween – How much candy do you really need?



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Some Problems with Numbers - Big Data

- Big Data appears to be the answer to all our problems.
- Just as mobile might or might have been the panacea that people have thought it might be – with library resources – the same might be true of Big Data.
- Data can answer some questions and we can use those numbers to indicate usage and direction – but at the end of the day – does it matter?
- Is the answer in having more stats?



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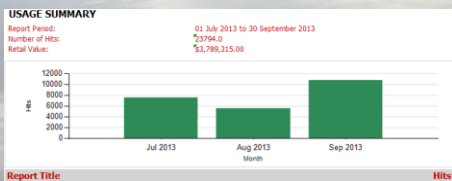
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Some Problems with Numbers – Retail Pricing

- One of the common dynamics of usage reports is the notion of retail costs vs. our costs (especially with business resources)
- No one at U of M (even Coach Harbaugh) can stretch around \$5k to \$3.7M... GO BLUE!



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Retail Pricing

- Cost per use is helpful information, but it does not really capture its value.
- Moves to connect usage with 'value' might be overly complicated and not tell your story any better.
- With the variety of data types (articles, data, books, videos, etc) we are not comparing apples to apples.



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Tiny Values

- Incremental changes are very small and might not provide a context for what is happening
- People do not see the change – they are likely to be less concerned (think climate change)
- Most library changes are under the "Just notable difference" threshold (Weber).
- The smaller changes – over years – can lead to bigger issues.



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Low ROI

- Economist Blog shared on Monday – Treating flyers well is bad for airlines' business
- Commercial success does not correlate to passenger satisfaction (IATA Report)
- How does that factor in to a library?
- <http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2015/11/price-being-nice>



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Change Happens



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### Some Problems with Numbers

- Drowning by Numbers: The State of Baseball History (Pittsburgh History 76:2, Summer 1996)
- Available: <https://journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/4382>
- "It would be gratifying to see the emphasis on the baseball *contest* replaced with baseball's *context*."
- Are the answers only in the numbers?
- What other stories are there to tell?



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### Some Problems with Numbers

- When we think of Library statistics – we think of things we can count:
  - Items
  - Access
  - Usage
  - Head-count
- Many people want to see a greater emphasis on outcomes – not output.
- These library statistics help track what we are doing and what type of environment we have for our community.



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Oversimplify

- Everyone LOVES dashboard indicators!
- We live in a society where people are obsessed with dashboard indicators.
- Give me a simplified version of what is going on in your library – like an executive summary.
- And while your indicators might be fine – it might not reveal the threats that are all about you.



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### Some Problems with Numbers – Going Deep\*

- Dana Muir WSJ Piece (September 21, 2015) - 6 investing lessons learned from growing up on a farm:
  - The most important work isn't the most glamorous.
  - Seeds, seeds, seeds.
  - It's not all about yield.
  - Know when it is time to plow under the crops.
  - Growing season isn't the only time to work.
- Don't fool yourself...a tornado will hit someday.  
<http://blogs.wsj.com/experts/2015/09/21/six-investing-lessons-i-learned-growing-up-on-a-farm/>



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### Library Change and You

- Change is a very personal experience.
- As we say in Michigan, your mileage may vary.
- We see change from our point of view.
- It may be dramatic or small, but still have an impact.
- Certainly there has been huge change over the last 30 years.
- However, I believe we are the tip of the iceberg for real systemic change.



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### Library Change and You

- We can see changes in the general reduction in departmental libraries (especially in medicine, sciences and business).
- We can see this in the changing use of space on campus – and the continual need for more (by outside entities).



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### Library Change and You

- Steven Bell Library Journal Column
- <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2015/10/opinion/steven-bell/factors-beyond-our-control-from-the-bell-tower/>
- Focus is on catastrophic problems at the College Level (such as Sweet Briar College closing or LaSalle University dealing with dramatic decreases in tuition dollars).
- These external factors will have a huge impact on the library.
- Our Virtue is NOT our Salvation - me



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### Kresge Business Administration Library

- Built in mid 1980s to serve the research and curricular needs of the Ross School of Business
- We are open 108 hours during the Fall and Winter Terms.
- Seating for nearly 700 students.
- Very visible, located in the center of the Ross Complex (27K square feet).
- We have a collection of over 140,000 volumes in Ann Arbor and Flint (where they are stored at the University of Michigan-Flint)
- Constant state of "Library Erosion"



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### Kresge Business Administration Library




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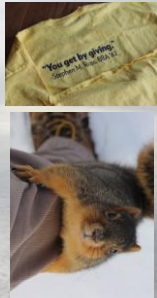
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### Ross Construction Project

- Summer 2013 – Scope of plans shared\*
- September 2013 – Gift announced
- Early 2014 – Plans developed
- End of Winter Term – Started vacating the building
- June 2014 – Moved to MObtown
- July 2014 – Print moved out




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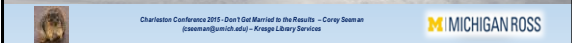
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### Ross Construction Project

- Fall 2014 – Rebuilding Kresge Library Services
- Winter 2015 – Kresge Value Proposition Meetings Started
- Summer/Fall 2016 – Expected completion and move in to the new space




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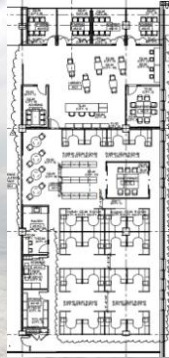
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### Ross Construction Project

- We are moving from a full independent library to a service center.
- These are the designs for our new home.
- Original desire was to try to maximize public space – that was changed.
- Failure is an option – it allows us to be entrepreneurial and try things out.



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### Ross Construction Project

- Project moved very quickly
- Discussion with the Leadership Team
- Brought up the following issues:
  - Academic Nature of the Collection (including the fact that estimated 90% **did not** have a digital counterpart)
  - Some redundancy with main library – but some purchasing for market demand at Ross.
  - Current Circulation of Ross Materials at Kresge Library (over 10K a year for a collection of 60-140K)
  - Inability to collect additional print material (could no longer be format agnostic)



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### Ross Construction Project

- In the end – we still lost our space.
- Shifting from library as place to library as service.
- Many academic libraries are shifting librarian roles from being bibliographers to educators already.
- Library Closed? Not really – We lost our lease.



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### Ross Construction Project

- What now?
- Kresge had a tradition of being entrepreneurial and service oriented.
- Entrepreneurial Thinking involves
  - New approach to a new (or old) problem
  - New market opportunity
  - Creative thinking
  - Empathetic focus (Design Thinking)
  - Willing to fail
  - One other big thing...an exit strategy



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### Telling Your Story

- How do we really assess our function at Kresge with the new confines?
  - No print volumes (save for 200 reference books)
  - No head count
  - We DO have reference numbers
  - ARL stats are pretty easy (win!)
- Used our budget requests to reframe the library and how we will support the mission of the school.
- Your story will be different.



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### Telling Your Story

- Change of library as a place to library as a service.
- Gertude Stein quote describing Oakland of her youth – “there is no there there”
- Dramatic change makes things unrecognizable.
- This is true of our community and our staff.
- Loss of an established identity.
- Time to establish a new one.



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### Telling Your Story

- Some of these aspects are influenced by my dad (New Jersey retailer).
- One of the first discount retailers in New Jersey
- Retail focus can help reframe your approach to this work and the task at hand.
- Thinking both short-term and long-term (more on the former)



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### Telling Your Story

- Balance of managing for the present and for the future.
- Academic librarians collect not only for today – but for generations to come.
- This might be too big a mix to handle for an electronic only library.
- Can you build a perfect research collection in e-only? Probably not.



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### Telling Your Story

- Libraries are hard-coded for thinking about the future of scholarship. This is a GOOD THING.
- It is not something that we can easily do right now.



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### Telling Your Story

- Ross School's mission has four pillars (Action, Analytic, Boundryless & Positive)
- Kresge – we do not have our own specific mission
- We support the school's vision:  
<http://kresgeguides.bus.umich.edu/kresgelibraryservices/Ross>
- We still can control how we support the mission.



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### Telling Your Story

- Connect with stakeholders (faculty, students, staff, community members, alumni).
- Use this as a clean slate to figure out what is desired by THEM vs. what is desired by us.
- Use that as the 'North Star'
- Ross Community Conversations



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### Telling Your Story

- Amid changes – we were able to increase action-learning support at Ross.
- Embedded Librarian program that fits the core mission of the school.
- Expanded role with all incoming Sophomores (BA 200)
- Reference Numbers are steady



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### Telling Your Story

- Always strive for the High Class Problem (vs. the Low Class Problem).
- What does the school need vs. what is cool to have (we do not have a 3D Printer)
- What we did was take on a service the school wanted. Immediate win for Kresge (we needed quicker wins)
- We took over a service that faculty wanted.



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### Telling Your Story

- From MBA Student Exit Survey...good:
  - Kresge librarians are amazing! One of the best things at Ross.
  - D was a great help for my projects!
  - Shout out to Sally, who was beyond phenomenal during our MAP project.
  - The ability to instant message Kresge staff is fantastic. The staff is very helpful.
  - The Kresge team might be one of the best at the school.



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### Telling Your Story

- From MBA Student Exit Survey...bad:
  - Kresge being closed in 2nd year was a big loss.
  - Most of this has to do with not having an actual library and having no idea where to go to speak to a person. The ask the librarian feature is amazing but it only goes so far. Why not staff someone in a room that you can ask for help?
  - Kresge was closed this year, so I didn't even really consider them a resource for this year.
  - It will get better with the new building?
- Many students equated Kresge as a space, not a service.



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### Telling Your Story

- Time horizon of our work also changes. Even though there are perpetual use models for e-resources – we are looking more for what is needed today than down the road.
- This is what might be called the **'short tail'**



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### Telling Your Story

- Accomplishments must resonate with your stakeholders – not with the profession & not with tradition.
- From our budget request – we shared ways we managed in these spaces:
  - Kresge Print Collection Final Processing
  - Change to Kresge Library Services
  - Closing of catalog to a new service
  - Electronic course material (Study.net)
  - Exam & Assignment Service
  - Reference location & after-hours help
  - Embedded librarians supporting action-learning
  - Meeting with community members



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### Telling Your Story

- When going through dramatic library change – there is the tendency to wish to go back to the way things were.
- You need to shift your services & assessment tools to view the library as it is, not as what it was.
- Consider services your purchase to see if they are meeting your needs in the new world order.
- Give staff flexibility to choose their path forward – but they must move in that direction.



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### Telling Your Story

#### Don't Get Married to the Results!

- Something my father always said – he was a proponent of the importance of failure and risk-taking.
- Do not start with predetermined measures of success.
- Having the appearance of success does not mean you actually have it.
- Attaining metrics might come at the expense of other important elements.
- Do not let yourself be judged by what we did not accomplish – that is for the “customers”



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### One Closing Thought

- Sometimes it does not matter what your dashboard shows....



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### Thank You



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