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*The Ethereal Library: Thinking Creatively When You Have No Space To Think*



2014 Charleston Conference Shotgun Session  
Corey Seeman – Kresge Library Services  
(University of Michigan)

## The Two Spaces of the Library

- In Library as Space Program in 2013 (Michigan Library Association) – I shared the notion that the Library had two spaces:
  - ~ A physical space
  - ~ An ethereal space
- Print collections might be 2% of the usage – but 50% of the perception of the library

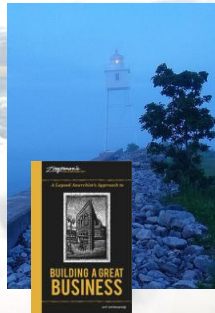


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## Ethereal Space

- This is where we connect with users.
- This is where we connect with our community.
- This is where we provide clarity to the information universe.
- This is our “Value-Add.”
- This is where we SHINE!



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## Kresge Business Administration Library

- Two years ago – we would say about Kresge...
- 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 Library Services

- Post Construction
- We are open regular office hours.
- No student seating.
- Moved to the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of Kresge
- We have a collection of over 200 volumes in Ann Arbor.
- We lost the physical space – all we have left is the ethereal one!



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## Establishing Priorities

- Corey's planning priorities:
  1. Staff
  2. Services
  3. Stuff (*and spend*)
  4. Space
- Build services based on what you **have**, not what you **had**.
- We have to LET IT GO...



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## 6P Approach: Philosophical

- This is an opportunity to also be freed from what worked and did not work from the past.
- With less space – do not try to recapture everything you did – it will not work.
- Don't be bound by the past – “Forget the Alamo” – Lone Star (John Sayles – 1996)
- Systems Lesson - Seeman, C. (2002). *Invisible fences: A shocking theory for re-examining work flow. Computers in Libraries*, 22(7), 24-30.



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## 6P Approach: Patient

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' Five Stages
  - ~ Denial
  - ~ Anger
  - ~ Bargaining
  - ~ Depression
  - ~ Acceptance
- Everyone is moving through this at their own pace – Important for this level of change.
- Every time someone says “Change is Hard” – it becomes harder...
- A “born digital” library is **much easier** to build than a “becoming digital” library.



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## 6P Approach: Positive

- It is very easy to be mired in self-doubt with this type of contraction.
- The image of loss cannot be your brand or how you are seen.
- Important to not dwell on decisions that do not benefit you in these projects.
- How can we continue to meet the needs of the school and the number of communities we serve?



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## 6P Approach: Proactive

- The biggest issue is that we will be out of sight.
- We need to be more proactive about doing outreach and connecting with faculty and students.
- We use all virtual reference systems (chat & email) – need to push them more.
- **Being visible is our biggest need right now.**
- We are going to experiment with different options.



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## 6P Approach: Perform

- In this change, there was never an issue about Kresge Library as a service point.
- That was what **kept us going**.
- That has to be what **keeps us going**.
- Experiment and change are critical elements



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## 6P Approach: Ms. Pirkola's Rules

- Flexibility!
- It has to work in all directions.
- We also need to be flexible with staff as they learn to work with these new confines.
- Balance is critical - Empathy for patrons and staff need to be balanced against each other.

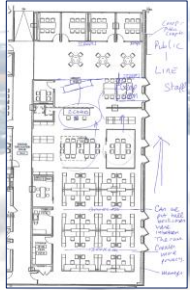


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## What Does It Look Like?

- Its way smaller
- Brain-storming about creating service points – real and virtual.
- Failure is an option – it allows us to be entrepreneurial and try things out.
- Allows us to change the vision for the new staff space.
- Build as you go!
- No longer Format Agnostic – This is huge (Print Divide)



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## The Big Changes – Existing Programs

- Embedded Librarian program for MAP and Action-Learning continues at Kresge.
- New embedded librarians for entry core class for all BBA Sophomores (500). Librarians are assigned to every section (14) to support their research on a company & response to a social issue. (MERGE)
- Faculty Research Service
- Continue to support other student research (coursework, clubs, careers, case competitions & curiosity)

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## The Big Changes – Existing Programs

- Coursepack & Curriculum Support – Moved to Study.net with Kresge Support. Was a print solution – we had no distribution point – so this direction was taken.
- Community and Alumni assistance (without walk-in access)
- Move remaining print holdings to electronic access

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## The Big Changes – New Programs

- Exam/Assignment Program
  - ~ Many faculty do not want to hand back assignments in class.
  - ~ Some faculty also do not let students keep completed exams.
  - ~ This service ran as a pilot in Winter Term and will go to the Library in the Fall.
- Modular Office Welcome Desk
- Pickup Location for ILL and Other Deliveries from University Library



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## Big Win on Staffing

- The premise with this reduction has been space and space alone.
- We have been able to move forward with redeployed staff
- Temporary Staff counts way down (no need for full evening staff).



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## What's in a Name?

- Changing our name to Kresge Library Services
- We are no longer a “destination” or a library in the traditional sense.
- The print holdings were 2% of our use, but 50% of our perception.
- Even though “Kresge” will belong to the building – “Kresge Library” has great brand recognition at Ross.



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## The Canary in the Coal Mine

- Are departmental/branch libraries the “canary in the coal mine?”
- Is the canary just sleeping?
- Our space contraction appears to be the future of libraries everywhere – we just had it happen all at once.
- We were saved by service!
- Should we just be happy with what we have left...like a squirrel with a churro.



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## Thank You

**Remember...  
FLEXIBILITY!**



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