**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

---

**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!

---

**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”

---

**Kresge Library Services**

- Post Construction
- We are open regular office hours.
- No student seating.
- Moved to the 4th 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!

---

**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…
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).

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 that a “becoming digital” library.

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?

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.

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.

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.
What Does It Look Like?

- It's 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)

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)

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

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).

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.
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.

Thank You

Remember... FLEXIBILITY!

Corey Seeman cseeman@umich.edu