

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



MLA Academic Libraries 2015  
May 29, 2015 – Bay City, Michigan  
Corey Seeman – Kresge Library Services  
(University of Michigan)

## Program Overview

- Two Spaces of the Library
- About Kresge and Ross Construction
- Planning and Rebuilding
- Parameters of the Ethereal Library (6P Approach)
- The Big Changes
- Providing Value With New Constraints
- Closing Thoughts & Questions



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## 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*
- They provide distinct functions and benefits to the communities we serve.
- Both can be critical for the members of the library's communities.

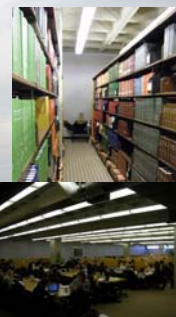


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## Physical Space

- Physical space is used for:
  - Study
  - Print Materials
  - Interaction Spaces
  - Walk-in Access
- For many functions - a physical space can be managed just as well by others.
- Print collections might be 2% of the usage – but 50% of the perception of the library

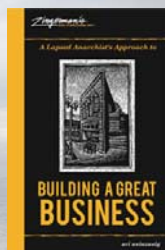


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## Ethereal Space

- This is where we **connect** with our community.
- This is where we **provide clarity** to a complicated information universe.
- This is where we **contribute** as a "Value-Add."
- This is where we SHINE!



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## Ethereal Space

- With nearly 98% of our usage from electronic resources\* – librarians and library staff can operate from *almost* anywhere
  - As Gershwin said well – with ethereal space – “*They Can't Take That Away from Me*”
- \* *The Business Library Experience*




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### If You Could Have Only One Space?

- Would you elect to save your physical or ethereal space?
- What if the decision was made for you? (Internal vs. external decisions on space).
- Space is a luxury on academic campuses – and with that – we lost ours.
- Some engagement, but no open discussion with the community.
- With a large construction project, we lost both student and collection space...




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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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### 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
- Fall 2014 – Rebuilding Kresge Library Services



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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
- January 2017 – Expected opening of the new building to the school




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### Losing Your Physical Space

- You have to come to grips with what this means
- We are not a student destination any longer for study
- We cannot be format agnostic in collecting
- You cannot dwell on the past – you have to...well...




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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 had no choice but to build an Ethereal Library!



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...And Building for the New

- Parameters of the Ethereal Library – or the 6P Approach
  - Philosophical
  - Patient
  - Positive
  - Proactive
  - Perform
  - Ms. Pirkola's Rules




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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.*

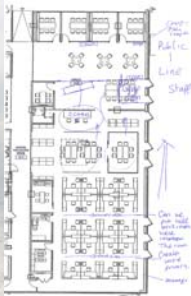


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6P Approach: Philosophical

- This is the time to think about what our value is and how to continue with the new constraints.
- 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!




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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...




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6P Approach: Patient

- Don't expect to have everything mapped out on day 1, or day 100 for that matter!
- Things cannot change overnight.
- A “born digital” library is **much easier** to build than a “becoming digital” library.




*Quick Change at Toledo Mud Hens – September 2009*

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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.




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6P Approach: Positive

- There are also some actual positives about not having a public space.
- No longer have to worry about evenings and weekends in bad Michigan weather...

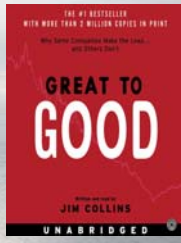


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6P Approach: Positive

- Positive approach to a situation is about making the best of it – *this takes a while to get to.*
- How can we continue to meet the needs of the school and the number of communities we serve?
- Our work is reflective of us more than our situation.
- Despite everything - rather be happy than angry.




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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.**




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6P Approach: Proactive

- I have been a strong proponent of the Reference Desk – even as many libraries are moving away from that.
- We experimented with a reference service point at Tozzi Center, but it was not ideal.
- We were given the front desk in the Ross Modular Offices – flipped it from Welcome Desk to Reference Desk.
- Having visible staff is important – but they need a good place to work from!




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6P Approach: Proactive

- Print Coursepack (TEXTPAK) pickup at "Kresge Library Annex" – Legal Research 102 (short walk).
- We are using this time to fundamentally change how we operate.
- Working on communication with the Ross Community.

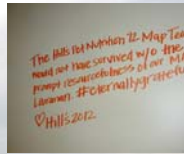




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6P Approach: Perform

- 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.*

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### 6P Approach: Perform

- Kresge Library has been the Service 'champs' at Ross.
- Great source of internal pride and motivation.
- This is the reason why our work (and staff) are separated out from the space.

	2010	2011	2012	2013
BBA Kresge	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.2*
BBA Other Services	5.68	5.68	5.66	5.77
MBA Kresge	6.2	6.4	6.3	6.4
MBA Other Services	5.12	5.44	5.48	5.55

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### 6P Approach: Perform

- Since we have lost our space – it is all about service.
- We need to be creative in how we deliver services to our community.
- Pay close attention to what they need.
- 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.
- New Service points need time to develop.




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

- Balance is critical
- Empathy for patrons and staff need to be balanced against each other.
  - The more we provide for patrons, the more we lean on staff.
  - The more we provide for the staff, the less we provide for patrons.




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### The Big Changes

*Managing associated changes to services for the Ross Community*




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### The Big Changes – Existing Programs

- Assess what you can do with your new space.
- Give up traditional services if you cannot manage or run them effectively.
- You are playing with house money with these contractions – take risks & be entrepreneurial.




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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.
- Previously a print solution – but we did not have a large enough distribution point during construction.
- 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 went to the Library in the Fall 2014.
  - Will Continue with Kresge into the new building.



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### The Big Changes – New Programs

- Modular Office Welcome Desk → became Kresge Reference Desk.
- Pickup Location for ILL and Other Deliveries from University Library
- Added Global MBA to our course materials operation
- Evening/Weekend Remote Reference
- Exploring options with Executive Education – The “spaceless dividend”



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### The Big Changes

*Most things (even those that moved) eventually bloom again!*



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- Great deal of discussion about the “value” of the academic library.
- The need for this discussion could be an indication that we've reached a “tipping point.”



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- There is the appearance of endless information availability from wherever you are – this we know is not truly accurate
- If we think about the changes to other industries (automotives, pharmaceuticals, journalism, etc.), few are operating as they'd like.



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- Our “old” value proposition:
  - Space for students to study
  - Space for physical collections (in all formats)
  - Strong historical collection
  - Strong electronic collections



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- Our “new” value proposition must:
  - Live within the restrictions of virtually no collection space.
  - Figure out new collaboration mechanisms to serve our community.
  - Move away from the model where we provided student study space.
  - Focus on what we can do vs. what we have done.



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- Our “new” value proposition remains:
  - Using the resources at our disposal, we will support the curricular and research needs of the Ross Community.
  - We will acquire resources only where we have the means to store or manage them.
  - Seek out new opportunities to provide services for the school & campus.
  - Embrace our new reality.



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### Providing Value With New Constraints

- “Kresge Value Proposition” Meetings
- Winter 2015 – with Faculty, Students and Staff
- Will continue moving forward
- New ideas to come from these meetings:
  - New subject and journal alerting services
  - Need to bring back course reserves to Kresge
  - Managing communication with Ross communities (faculty, staff, students, alumni)
  - Grow the exam and assignment program
  - Explore opportunities with Exec Education & other departments



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### Closing Thoughts & Questions

- Big Win on Staffing
- What does the future hold?
- Where is the Long Tail?
- What's in a Name?
- Are we the Canary in the coal Mine?




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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
- No full-time staff losses related to this move.
- Temporary Staff counts way down (no need for full evening staff).




New article - "No One Gets Left Behind:" Managing Library Human Resources During Dramatic Shifts in Academic Libraries in *Advances in Library Administration and Organization* (Volume 33, 2015)

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### What does the future hold?

- Fewer certainties for academic libraries now and especially 20 years in the future.
- I believe that most libraries will continue to lose space until it is mostly gone.
- We need to be nimble and flexible to meet the needs of the school – this secures the future of the library.
- We need to be focused on the end-user of the library resources.




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### Where is the Long Tail?

- Print collections are built on needs both now and down the road.
- Many items are used in 10 or 20 years – but will libraries have space to see that materialize?
- Long-term ROI appears to contract in an electronic-only Information environment.




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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



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