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

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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

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.

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

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!

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
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...

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”

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 MOWtown
• July 2014 – Print moved out
• Fall 2014 – Rebuilding Kresge Library Services

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• 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

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...

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!
...And Building for the New

- Parameters of the Ethereal Approach
  - Philosophical
  - Patient
  - Positive
  - Proactive
  - Perform
  - Ms. Pirkola’s Rules

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

- 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!

6P Approach: Positive

- 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 that a “becoming digital” library.

Quick Change at Toledo Mud Hens – September 2009
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...

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.

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.**

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!

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.

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.
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.

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- 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.

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.

- 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.

The Big Changes

Managing associated changes to services for the Ross Community

- 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.
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 went to the Library in the Fall 2014.
  • Will Continue with Kresge into the new building.

The Big Changes

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

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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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”
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.

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

Providing Value With New Constraints

• Our “new” value proposition:
  • 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.

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.

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

Providing Value With New Constraints

• 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?

Closing Thoughts & Questions
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).

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.

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