Less is More...Likely: Lessons from Departmental Libraries in the Decreasing World of Library Space
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Economics of Campus Real Estate
• On campus real estate is very valuable.
• University libraries have traditionally been in the center of campuses – making their property all the more desired.
• Departmental libraries co-habit program or school space – which makes it an easier target.
• As schools grow or try new programs, new homes are needed.

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Campus Library Consolidations
• Consolidation provides three clear benefits to the University Library
  • Allows the school to staff fewer access/service points.
  • Allows the school to reduce staff or redeploy them to other operations.
  • Allows the school to repurpose space used for ‘storage’
• Departmental Benefit – library space goes from ‘storage’ to program space.

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Campus Library Consolidations

- Libraries can effectively manage a centralized collection with electronic resources available where the students are.
- Shift in focus for subject specialists to teach more that provide reference assistance creates opportunities to centralize that service.

Medical Libraries (pre 2010)

- In 2010, the Journal of the Medical Library Association dedicated a special issue to managing through contraction of space with medical libraries.
- Focused on leading libraries repurposing space used originally for print and making them student & program areas.
- The need for space and availability of electronic resources allowed people to revisit space allocations for the medical libraries.

Medical Libraries (pre 2010)

- In 2015, the Taubman Health Sciences Library at the University of Michigan went through a change that saw 90% of print removed from central campus.
- Remote storage of 400K volumes enabled the school to create more student spaces.
- Very popular virtual cadaver...
Business Libraries

- Academic Business Libraries are contracting quickly.
- Academic Business Library Directors (ABLD) reports focus on just about every library (except Harvard) regularly losing space.
- As the resources for students became primarily online, the justification for space became difficult.
- None of these contractions had a “catastrophic impact” on the library’s ability to serve the community.

Business Libraries

- The function of business titles ebbs over time.
- Resources start off as a business resource, but then (as they age) shift to business history, history, economics and other social sciences.
- The value is not as great for business schools.

Being a Good Citizen

- Amid a realization that on-site print is less critical*, libraries have the flexibility to invite others into their space.
- Rick Anderson’s Library Journal columns encourage us to say yes! The Battle over Library Spaces. Part 1: Saying Yes and Saying No (March 24, 2014) The Battle over Library Spaces. Pt. 2: Being a Host with the Most (May 1, 2014)
So...About Kresge Library

- Independent library supporting the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.
- Big donation to the school (September 2013) led to big construction project.
- In the design of the new building, we effectively lost our space.

- A full library (think students, not stuff) is not a slam-dunk reason to keep the library.
- Kresge had 700 seats and needed 100 more during the Fall and Winter Terms.
- From student surveys, both first and second year MBAs missed the space a great deal.

Gertrude Stein Quote

- Comes from her “Everybody’s Autobiography” 1937.
- She was referring to her hometown in Oakland.
- With the changes that took place, her home was not recognizable – there was “no there there.”
- Are our libraries recognizable to people who grew up in 60 years ago?
Where can I sit?

- At Ross – the real value of the library to students are places to congregate while at school.
- Places to work, charge electronics, use the wi-fi, find quiet study.
- Flipping departmental libraries for this purpose is noble and virtuous!

MBA 1s:
- What Kresge library?
- The hours of Kresge are ridiculous. Why isn’t it open on weekends?
- I would like an actual library with books and tables and quiet space and all

MBA 2s:
- I’d still love an actual library where I can study on the Ross campus.
- Comfortable place to study.
- I thought it was awful that the school took away the library without warning and still found it reasonable to increase our tuition going into the second year.

Stages of the Kresge project

-Outlined how we went through the project in this new article
- Four distinct stages of a library construction project.
Moving to an eLibrary

• Right now there are not many examples of e-only libraries:
  - Florida Polytechnic
  - Cushing Academy (prep school)
  - BiblioTech (San Antonio)
• The path that departmental libraries took might be the same as the one that full libraries will take down the road.

The New Work of the Library

• Look closely at what you no longer need to do.
• Balance the savings or "space dividend" with the potential of new services.
• Look for opportunities based on what is needed at the school/community vs. what other people are doing.
• There has already been a shift in work over the last 20 years — this will continue.

Providing Value With New Constraints

• Library space provides a great deal of an organization’s identity.
• But like with football injuries are not an excuse, but a reality.
• If you cannot do something you used to be able to do – then accept it and move on.
Forget the Past

- Do not bemoan what was lost – it’s not likely coming back.
- Shift attention and figure out how to work with the new constraints.
- Experiment often
- Fail better (Samuel Beckett)
- “Forget the Alamo” – John Sayles (Lone Star, 1986)

Thank you

Please send questions or comments to

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