

Don't Get Married to the Results: Managing Library Change in the Age of Metrics



**ABLD-EBSLG-APBSLG Joint Meeting 2016
Singapore Management University**

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<http://tinyurl.com/ABLD16Corey>**

Assessment & Problems with Numbers

- I have an iconoclastic approach to metrics and numbers...
- ...but with some clarifications:
 - Every function, service, product needs an assessment program.
 - Maybe formal or informal
 - Can be periodic or continual
 - Predetermined measures of success are insane

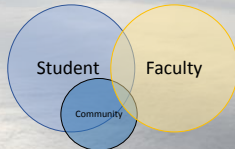


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Assessment & Problems with Numbers

- Library challenge is that we have multiple stakeholders and they have different needs.
- Faculty needs – scholarly journals, articles, books, datasets
- Student needs – articles, company & industry information, market reports
- Community – Mostly similar to student needs



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Assessment & Problems with Numbers

- Academic libraries are on-campus **monopolies**.
- We are the primary information purchasers on campus.
- Without competition - is there a real push for assessing and improving?



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Assessment & Problems with Numbers

- Treating flyers is bad for airlines' business & has low ROI.
- Passenger satisfaction does not necessarily correlate to financial success (IATA Report).
- "In other words, airlines can do all they want to pamper travellers—provide friendlier service, roomier seats, more movie options, better food, greater punctuality—and none of it is likely to lead to higher profits."
- <http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2015/11/price-being-nice>



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Assessment & Problems with Numbers

- Everyone LOVES dashboard indicators!
- We live in a society where people are obsessed with dashboard indicators.
- Numbers have no intrinsic value – they can show just about anything you want.
- And while your indicators might be fine – it might not reveal the threats that are all about you.



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Library Change and You

- Libraries have seen large change over the last 30 years.
- However, I believe we are the tip of the iceberg for real systemic change.
- We can see changes in the general reduction in departmental libraries (especially in medicine, sciences and business).
- We can see this in the changing use of space on campus – and the continual need for more (by outside entities).



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Library Change and You

- Kresge Business Administration Library
- Built in mid 1980s to serve the research and curricular needs of the Ross School of Business
- Open 108 hours per week
- Seating for nearly 700 students.
- Very visible, located in the center of the Ross Complex (27K square feet).

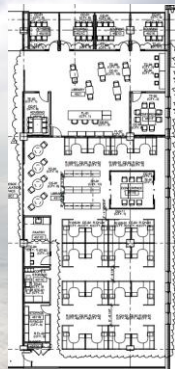


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Library Change and You

- Two short years – went from THAT – to THIS.
- We are moving from a full independent library to a service center.
- Original desire was to try to maximize public space – that was changed.
- Failure is an option – it allows us to be entrepreneurial and try things out.



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Library Change and You

- Shifting from library as place to library as service.
- Creating an “ethereal library”
- Entrepreneurial Thinking involves
 - New approach to a new (or old) problem
 - New market opportunity
 - Creative thinking
 - Empathetic focus (Design Thinking)
 - Willingness to fail
- Entrepreneurial Libraries do not have an exit strategy!



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Telling Your Story

- How do we really assess our function at Kresge with the new confines?
 - No print volumes (save for 200 reference books)
 - No head count
 - We DO have reference numbers
 - ARL stats are pretty easy (win!)
- Your story will be different.



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Telling Your Story

- Change of library as a place to library as a service.
- Gertrude Stein quote describing Oakland of her youth – “there is no there there”
- Dramatic change makes things unrecognizable.
- This is true of our community and our staff.
- Loss of an established identity.
- Time to establish a new one.



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Telling Your Story

- Ross School's mission has four pillars (Action, Analytic, Boundryless & Positive)
- Kresge – we do not have our own specific mission
- We support the school's vision:
<http://kresgeguides.bus.umich.edu/kresgelibraryservices/Ross>
- We still can control how we support the mission.



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Telling Your Story

- Connect with stakeholders (faculty, students, staff, community members, alumni).
- Use this change as a mandate for a clean slate. Figure out what is desired by your patrons vs. what is desired by the library.
- Use that as the 'North Star' reference.
- Meet with your community (Ross Community Conversations)



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Telling Your Story

- Amid changes – we were able to increase action-learning support at Ross.
- Embedded Librarian program that fits the core mission of the school.
- Expanded role with all incoming Sophomores (BA 200) & BBA Capstone projects
- Reference Numbers are steady over the construction years.



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Telling Your Story

- Always strive for the High Class Problem (vs. the Low Class Problem).
- What does the school need vs. what is cool to have (we do not have a 3D Printer)
- What we did was take on a service the school wanted. Immediate win for Kresge (we needed quicker wins)
- Accomplishments must resonate with your stakeholders – not with the profession & not with tradition.



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Telling Your Story

- From MBA Student Exit Survey...good:
 - Kresge librarians are amazing! One of the best things at Ross.
 - D was a great help for my projects!
 - Shout out to Sally, who was beyond phenomenal during our MAP project.
 - The ability to instant message Kresge staff is fantastic. The staff is very helpful.
 - The Kresge team might be one of the best at the school.



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Telling Your Story

- From MBA Student Exit Survey...bad:
 - Kresge being closed in 2nd year was a big loss.
 - Most of this has to do with not having an actual library and having no idea where to go to speak to a person. The ask the librarian feature is amazing but it only goes so far. Why not staff someone in a room that you can ask for help?
 - Kresge was closed this year, so I didn't even really consider them a resource for this year.
 - It will get better with the new building?
- Many students equated Kresge as a space, not a service.



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Telling Your Story

- Do not start with predetermined measures of success.
- Do not let yourself be judged by what was not accomplished.
- Do not wish to go back to the way things were (not likely to happen).
- Create services based on what the library as it is, not what it was.
- Consider services you provide to see if they are meeting your patrons' needs in the new world order.
- Give staff flexibility to choose their path forward – but they must move in that direction.



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One Closing Thought

- Sometimes it does not matter what your dashboard shows....



**Thank you -
Corey Seeman**

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