

Being 'In The Room Where It Happens:' Supporting Information Needs of Students in Experiential Learning Programs

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Slides: tinyurl.com/LEPE2016Library



Presentation Overview

- Introductions
- Information Needs of Business Students (Case Method vs. Experiential Learning Method)
- Library Support for Experiential Learning
- Working with teams (for librarians)
- Administrative Issues (for the library)
- Collection Issues
- Closing Thoughts



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About the title

- Song from the Musical *Hamilton* by Lin-Manuel Miranda.
- Song references the Dinner Table Bargain (June 1790) – attended by Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.



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About the title

- Jefferson and Madison received assurances that Hamilton would support the move of the nation's capitol to what is now Washington, D.C.
- Hamilton received support for his assumption plan to have the federal government assume state debt.
- Only Thomas Jefferson wrote about the dinner - so no one else every shared what actually happened at that meeting.
- "The room" is where things take place and importance & value are revealed.



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About the title

- Aaron Burr laments being on the outside:
The immigrant emerges with unprecedented financial power
A system he can shape however he wants
The Virginians emerge with the nation's capital
And here's the pièce de résistance:
No one else was in the room where it happened
- Repeated in the song *Your Obedient Servant*
 - *You've kept me from the room where it happens*
 - *For the last time*



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Introductions

- Angela K. Horne
- Head, Rosenfeld Management Library (since 2013, previously at Cornell)
- Anderson School of Management (UCLA)
- ahorne@library.ucla.edu



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Introductions

- Corey Seeman
- Director, Kresge Library Services (since 2006)
- Stephen M. Ross School of Business (Michigan)
- cseeman@umich.edu
- Kresge Library is part of Ross, though we work collaboratively with the main library at Michigan.



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Introductions

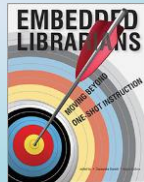
- Both Michigan and UCLA are members of ABLD (Academic Business Library Directors) – abld.org.
- Both are “embedded” within the Business School – this leads to “active” engagement with business students.
- Not all ABLD libraries have a physical presence in the business school.



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Introductions

- Embedded librarianship is a big push among academic libraries.
- It is more than just physically being in the room – it is about meeting the information needs of the ‘customers.’
- It is about engagement.
- It can be about service.



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Even When Talking About Experiential Learning...

- We still get to work on cases.
- Four mini-cases to frame the discussion and get people thinking about information needs.
- Spend around a minute or two to read the case and discuss options with a few people near you.
- Then we'll share out thoughts.
- You will NOT be graded for this.



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Information Needs of Business Students

MINICASE #1 – Business Cases

Students in the Strategy class are working through a case study on change management at an automotive supplier. The students read through the 20 page case over and over again to ensure that they could survive the dreaded ‘cold call’ during the discussion. As they read through the case, they find background information on the company, biographical information on the key personnel, a clear articulation of the problem that the company is facing, and the what are the issues that they would be facing moving forward. The class comes and goes with the majority of students capturing the ‘right’ answer for the best way this supplier should move forward.

Shortly thereafter, these students are working on a project involving a seed supplier in the Agribusiness supply chain going through a similar change. **Two questions. First, does the lesson of the case apply to the situation with the seed supplier? Second, without having access to the information in a nice clean format presented in the case, how can the students better understand what the company is potentially facing?**



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Information Needs of Business Students

- Now more than ever, we are told we operate in an ‘information economy.’
- Understanding the complexity and availability of business information is critical for the success of a future corporate leader.
- Currently, there is a strong perception of an infinite amount of data available on a laptop, desktop, tablet or phone.
- This is especially true of Big Data and its ability to answer ALL questions.



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Information Needs of Business Students

Recent comments by President David Barnard (University of Manitoba)

- When he was a student, everything was stacked on shelves, and if he needed a book not available, he'd have to wait for an inter-library transfer.
- **Now, "It's possible for a student sitting with a laptop" to access almost instantly information which no longer requires the assistance and expertise of a librarian.**

– *U of M, Union Disagree Strongly on Library Staff Cuts* (June 10, 2016) – *Winnipeg Free Press* - <https://shar.es/1Jeqji>



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Information Needs of Business Students

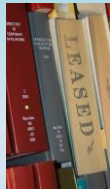
- Perception vs. Reality in business information availability.
- Many items are readily available online.
- Think about Wikipedia, IMDB, Baseball-Reference.com, Yahoo Finance, etc.
- These are freely available resources anyone can use to answer tons of questions.



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Information Needs of Business Students

- With business information needs, things get more challenging.
- Information may not be available for a variety of reasons
 - It may be private
 - It may be expensive
 - It may not be compiled
- The reason why faculty have access to so much content on your laptop on campus is because of large (and expensive) licensing deals from your library.



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Information Needs of Business Students

- Roles of primary and secondary research and sources for business research.
- **Primary research** (surveys, focus groups) are critically important, especially when moving into new areas or assessing existing structures.
- **Secondary research** is where the library plays a key role. Focusing on published or vetted information.
- Both are critical for understanding the business problem in experiential learning.



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Information Needs of Business Students

- Two types of secondary information skills librarians can help with:
- **Acquisition** of information. This is typically not covered in the curriculum of business schools. Its also not a learning outcome.
- **Understanding and use** of information. This is covered through cases and texts as students interpret the situation with data that is shared. It IS a learning outcome for students.



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Information Needs of Business Students

- Different for **case studies**.
- Students typically have all the information they need to solve the case.
- The information provided in the case is carefully assembled to provide everything the student needs!



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Information Needs of Business Students

- Cases have a narrow learning outcome, so the information is geared toward this purpose.
- Case studies have teaching notes - and an "answer."
- These are generally controlled situations from an information POV.



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Library Support for Experiential Learning

- So what about Experiential Learning Programs?
- Information needs move from *passive* (cases) to *active* (experiential learning).
- The information needs also change during the course of many projects.
- The information needs to adequately support a project are a combination of primary and secondary resources.



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Library Support for Experiential Learning

MINICASE #2 (Solving the Puzzle)

A student team is working on a project involving internal communication for a hospital system in Uganda. The problem involves how the remote clinics communicate with the central hospital to ensure that patients are better cared for. If a patient at the remote clinic is directed to visit the central hospital for treatment, transportation there could take 5+ hours - often on foot. There is no guarantee that the central hospital will be open when they complete the long journey. As the team starts working through the problem for the hospital system, they find no articles or reports that directly address this issue. They have been given the names of people at the hospital and clinic to speak with, but not much insofar as best practices or even goals beyond the need to improve communications.

With little information to start with beyond the problem, how might you direct the students to start their research?



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Information Needs of Business Students

- What about Experiential Learning Information needs?
- Great variance in the information needs that students have.
- Some of the information comes from the company (this is especially true if they are looking at their existing processes or markets).
- Some of the information comes from primary research (customer surveys).
- Some of the information has to come from secondary sources .



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Library Support for Experiential Learning

- Supporting experiential learning programs vary a great deal among libraries.
- Different business libraries are differently able to support these programs.
- The number of teams and projects can be intimidating for many (if not most) libraries!
- Some of the schools here at LEPE are supported by a single business librarian – makes this work tricky.



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Library Support for Experiential Learning

- Program information at UCLA
 - Work with all student teams across all MBA programs (MBA, EMBA, FEMBA, GEMBA)
 - 3 librarians work with all teams
 - Online scheduling (automated e-mails) tool
 - Remote sessions more in-demand (via Zoom)
 - Typically one-hour with followups
 - Attend final presentations / judge!



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Library Support for Experiential Learning

- Program information at Michigan
 - Support over 300 teams a year across all programs (MBA, ExecMBA, Global MBA, Weekend MBA, & BBA)
 - Staff Size: 19 (including 9 librarians – 7 support experiential learning teams)
 - Process varies by program and their schedule constraints.



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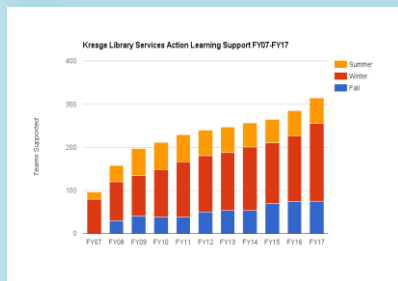
Library Support for Experiential Learning

- Program information at Michigan
 - Fall Term (Fall 2016)
 - ExecMBA MAP (25 teams)
 - BA 200 (30-40 sections)
 - Winter Term (Winter 2017)
 - MAP (Daytime MBA) (80-85 teams)
 - WMBA MAP (20-25 teams)
 - WMBA Capstone (18 teams)
 - STRAT 659 (8 teams)
 - **BA 453 (50-60 teams) – New in Winter 2017**
 - Spring/Summer (Summer 2017)
 - Global MBA (10 teams)
 - Tauber Projects (30-33 teams)
 - PT-MBA MAP (7 teams)



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Library Support for Experiential Learning



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Working with Teams

MINICASE #3 (Information Ambiguity)

A student team is working on a project involving the market entry strategy for a pharmaceutical company. They have a product that will minimize the potential effects of mosquito-carried diseases like Malaria or Zika. In developing their business plan, the team determined that they need to know how many people are currently infected by Zika and how many people will potentially be impacted by this disease in the coming years. The librarian assigned to the team has looked for hours and hours and did not find these exact numbers. However, she found a great number of articles and reports, but the students complain that they are too "medical literature-y" for their needs. Also, given the current nature of the Zika outbreak, the statistics about the disease are not well known.

Given that their potential solution is based on data that is not available, what is a good next step for the team? Do they re-evaluate their solution in hopes of finding a something that can be supported by the 'numbers'? How do they propose a solution when there are many unknowns?



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Working with Teams

- Information ambiguity is a common issue in most experiential learning projects we support.
- The information needs shift as students move through the projects.
- The focus may shift when the research shows that they might be heading down the wrong path. This can bring the team right back to the beginning... 😞



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Working with Teams

- Michigan moved away from a general **instruction** session to an **introduction** session.
- Very little that the projects have in common (company or type of project).



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Working with Teams

- UCLA – strive for more in-person touchpoints (new goal – educate advisors) + better publicity
- Most libraries want to have a single session to cover all needs. That never will work – even with few teams.



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Working with Teams

- Also a critical element in the opening kickoff for students:

Week 1: Get off to a Good Start



"We are going to meet our sponsor for the first time. We don't know much about the company and the industry. How should we prepare for the first meeting?"

MICHIGAN ROSS

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Working with Teams

- With the Daytime MBA program, we received 30 minute meetings with all teams this year.
- Initial contact and meetings with teams allowed us to share what we do and how to connect with us. Also it allows us to know a bit more about the project.
- Without an initial meeting – we do this with a welcome email to the team.



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Working with Teams

- Information needs change with time
 - Initial requests are typically about the company, industry, economy initially central to the project.
 - As the team meets with the sponsor and the project comes in focus, the information requests get more narrow and difficult to find.
- What do the questions look like?



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Working with Teams

- We were wondering if you could help us find a few articles about the supply chain for livestock (e.g., cows, goats, chickens, etc.) in India or other developing countries, and better yet, anything related women's roles in livestock.



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Working with Teams

We are thinking of researching on the below topic.

1. Clean water solutions
2. Distribution and direct price solutions in Base of the pyramid scenarios
3. Information on microfinance
4. Examples of companies using both profit and non-profit branches/divisions to operate



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Working with Teams

- However, we have a new ask and I wanted to ask if you could help us conduct research on the benchmarking of cruise company embarkation and disembarkation process data. For example, we wanted to find whether there are any studies out there for Disney, Royal Caribbean, or Carnival cruise lines that state how quickly passengers can expect to get on the ship after arriving at the ports. Similarly, are there any data points/studies that show how long any of those competitor ships stay in the ports (thereby allowing us to deduce the time they take to disembark/embark passengers).



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Working with Teams

- Sample Questions:
 - The Good:
 - “Which states/utilities utilize smart metering technology in U.S., which do not?”
 - “What data is there about the effectiveness of different in-store techniques: end-caps, displays, instant coupons, in-store flyers?”
 - The Less Good:
 - None!



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Working with Teams

- Information needs change with time
 - Sometimes, the project shifts mid-stream, bringing the team and the librarian back to the starting point!
 - The value of the librarian to the overall success of the project and a business situation is demonstrated by these changes.
 - This is where the value of “being in the room where it happens” is great for both librarian and students.



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Working with Teams

- Communication is key
- At Michigan & UCLA, teams receive email introductions (from the librarian) letting them know who will be supporting them.
- Copy all team members (and faculty if needed) to keep everyone on the same page.
- At UCLA, librarian liaison manages any “problems”.



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Working with Teams

- Research Problems:
 - **Laundry List research** - especially if the sponsor does not have a great sense of the direction. Like a movie that starts with a car driving around - it does not know where it wants to go.
 - **Fishing expedition** - some teams and sponsors want it all.
 - **“Mind the Gap”** in research. Sometimes students build bridges both ways and start looking for data to fill in the gaps. Not a good approach.
 - **Backwards research** - jump to conclusions before they start their research.
 - Finding **nothing** IS an answer - that might be an opportunity if no one is talking about it in the business press.



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Working with Teams

- Expectations & Realities
 - Students may expect to find all of the information that they may think is out there.
 - Faculty may expect students to get access to internal documents.
 - Librarians may not like the feeling of not being able to find anything.
 - Some students don't understand the librarian is a shadow member of the team. One with mad skills!



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Working with Teams

- Survey results (Michigan 2016)
 - We made a lot of difficult requests of Dee, and she was fantastic.
 - Celia is the best. We wouldn't have been able to do this project without her.
 - [Joel was] extremely responsive, and was willing to spend a lot of time on our requests. A surprisingly valuable resource.
 - Halley was amazing! She was so quick and responsive to our requests. She was invaluable to our team.



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Working with Teams

- Survey results (UCLA, 2016)
 - “Great filtering of resources. Really appreciate Michael’s hard work in resourcing all the databases he did.”
 - “Monica and the team are amazing!!”
 - “I wouldn’t change a thing.”
 - “Clear, concise instruction, valuable suggestions and for the first time I felt like someone was actually listening to us.”



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Administrative Issues (for the library)

MINICASE #4 (Parting Gifts)

A healthtech company is seeking to solidify their position in the cardiovascular medical devices field by looking for acquisition opportunities. In their research, the student team worked with the librarians to find numerous reports on the cardiovascular medical devices market as well as more general works as well. In their final report, the student team wowed the company and gave them a great path forward. After the presentation, the CEO pulled aside one of the student members and asked him if they could send over the reports that they found. After telling the CEO “no sweat,” the student wondered if he should hand over the reports to the company.

Are there any issues that you know of that would prevent the student from handing over the reports that they used in their research, especially since their findings were cited in the final report?



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Administrative Issues (for the library)

- Collection Issues
 - Collection needs that might be unique to support Experiential Learning
 - Use of academic-licensed resources for real world applications
 - Can items be shared with sponsors?
 - Share what you learned - not what you found.
 - Some advisors expect Library to have anything and everything



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Administrative Issues (for the library)

- Personnel Issues
 - Load balancing work among librarians
 - Balancing work from the school (students in Experiential Learning programs vs. students with basic needs)
 - At Michigan, we have 440 students in MAP (out of around 3000), but they take up the majority of time.
 - At UCLA, some teams really do take us up on the offer of a “6th” member



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Administrative Issues (for the library)

- More Expectations & Realities
 - Librarians may not like the feeling of not being able to find anything.
 - This can be un-nerving for many librarians who want to find an answer for all questions.
 - Some Michigan colleagues have wanted librarians to vet a project to ensure that we could support them. With project change – this is not really possible.



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Administrative Issues (for the library)

- More Expectations & Realities
 - The numbers of projects can be very intimidating for librarians.
 - The more projects each librarian has to cover, the more difficult it is to provide each with excellent support.
 - Michigan had reference librarians support between 12 and 18 MAP teams.



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Closing Thoughts

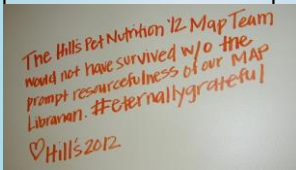
- The library has the ability to connect with students at the point of real need and value.
- Librarians have the ability to more quickly find resources than students. This applies even if students have had good training.
- This allows students to focus on the problems proposed by the sponsor.
- In turn, this allows students to produce better products.



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Closing Thoughts

- Librarians always want to figure out how their work connects with students.
- This is the room where it happens - and is the best way to demonstrate and provide value to the enterprise.



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Questions & Thank You

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