Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?

February 28, 2012
Corey Seeman
Kresge Business Administration Library
Ross School of Business (University of Michigan)

Presentation Overview

• The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries
• The Self-Service Mindset
• General Thoughts on Hospitality
• What Does Hospitality Look Like at Kresge Library
• Challenges of a Hospitable Library
• What Does it all mean (Assessment and Beyond)?
The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

- Redefining the Academic Library: Managing the Migration to Digital Information Services (2011, Education Advisory Board)
  - Brad Eden Talked about this at Charleston 2011 in the closing Plenary Session

Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?
Corey Seeman – Michigan Library Association – 2012

The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

- Some Highlights (or lowlights) from the report
  - “Writing Our Own Obituary” - by 2015:
    ~ Patrons go elsewhere for information
    ~ No need for traditional librarians
    ~ Library will need to be a space for more than just books

Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?
Corey Seeman – Michigan Library Association – 2012
The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

• “Size Doesn’t Matter”
  ~ We need to change traditional metrics (such as collection size to measure the scope and impact of libraries)
  ~ Local Physical Distribution Models Displaced by Remote and Fully Digital Approaches

• The “Lonely Reference Librarian”
  ~ From ACRL Stats 1998 vs. 2008
  ~ Circulation Down between 12-34%
  ~ Reference Requests Down between 13-71%
• Changing from “just-in-case” to “just-in-time” purchasing/collection development.
The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

- Libraries are the most valuable space on campus & the majority is devoted to a ‘legacy’ print collection.
- “Repurposing the Warehouse”
- “Coming Out from Behind the Desk”
  ~ Barriers include hesitance from librarians/library staff and reluctance from faculty who might question their need.

The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

- Ending Points:
- Sustainable Collection Management
  ~ Rightsizing the print collection
  ~ Aligning Purchasing with Demand
  ~ Reducing Scholarly Pub. Costs
- Redeploying Library Staff
  ~ Outsourcing Lower-value activity
  ~ Embedding High-Value Service
The Big Question: Future of Academic Libraries

- Is it all bad news?
- Definitely a “Chicken Little” feel to the report – but it is how our Provosts probably feel about us.
- They view us as underutilized real estate.
- Library – Service = Storage

But remember that while focus groups are Important – but they are just groups….

From the 2012 OSCAR broadcast:

Self-Service Mindset

• With the advent of electronic resources and discovery layers – we have worked very hard to make the library mostly self-service.
  ~ That is great when people know what they want.
  ~ This is not so great when people don’t know what they need.
• This is when we have a problem OR an Opportunity.

Self-Service - Adios Middle Man

• Along with the Self-Service mentality, we have sought to remove the middle-man.
• This includes removing the reference desk and encouraging email contact with the library.
• While most want to work independently, they also want to easily get help when they need it.
Self-Service - Independent Users

- Discovery layers work great when people know what they want.
- Discovery layers might not work so well when people are not sure what they are looking for (driven by the scope of the question – not the intelligence of the user)
- We need to be understanding of users in their point of need.
- **Is this a teachable moment?**

Self-Service - Independent Users

- As we move from physical and discrete collections in libraries to electronic and more ethereal, people might need us MORE THAN EVER!
- Not everything is an easy “look up” question – this will bring students and faculty to the library for help.
- Not all questions are the same!
General Thoughts on Hospitality

• Hospitality, n. The virtue which induces us to feed and lodge certain persons who are not in need of food and lodging.
  ~Humorist Ambrose Bierce, 1911
• Hospitality is making your guests feel at home, even though you wish they were.
  ~Unknown
• Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
  ~Romans 12:13

General Thoughts on Hospitality

• Not very well found in the Library Literature.
• While librarians are often highly service oriented, this has a different and almost pandering connotation.
• Librarians are amazing at providing service.
• In many academic settings, the libraries are the element that people are most fond of in reviews and surveys.
### What is Hospitality at Disney?

**Disney Model**

- Excellent customer service.
- Excellent attention to detail.
- Things just run beautifully smooth.
- You really feel like they care about every person.
- You really feel that they care about YOU!

---

### What is Hospitality at Disney?

**Disney Model**

- They are bending over backwards for people who have already “purchased” a vacation or experience.
- Working for repeat business and our ability to spread the word to others.
What is Hospitality at Nordstrom?

- Employee Handbook is one card.
- “Our number one goal is to provide outstanding customer service.”
- Our only rule: “Use good judgment in all situations.”

What is Hospitality Over HOF Weekend?

- Hall of Fame Hospitality Desk.
- Over Hall of Fame Weekend, the “Hospitality Desk” manages all events.
- Used to be called Information Desk.
- Name was changed to the Hospitality Desk and Crew instill a culture of taking care of people.
- Not just guests, but also co-workers.
- The goal is to make things right.
What is Hospitality at Your House?

- We often associate hospitality with travel, dining and high cost activities
- But what about guests at your house?
  ~ You still offer them drinks
  ~ You consider what they need when they are over
- Mi casa es su casa
- Sports References aside – The Library is MY HOUSE!

About Kresge Library

- Kresge Library: Independent Library at University of Michigan - Ross School of Business (3700 FTE)
- Staff of 21 FT people (8 librarians, 13 staff) with 4.5 FTE of temporary staff
- Open 108 service hours a week
- http://tinyurl.com/KresgeLibrary
What is Our Library?

• Books and Journal storage?
• Are we welcoming to people who are unfamiliar with our operations, services and facility? – Strangers?
• What do we do to welcome people to the University early on – then what do we do down the road

What does Hospitality Look like at Kresge?

• Joined the library in 2005 and became the director in 2006
• My goal as director has been to create the library I would want to use
• Hospitality and Empathy are KEY TERMS!
• I am more concerned about what our students and faculty need than what libraries are doing elsewhere
What does Hospitality Look like at Kresge?

• We are a very different academic library
• Very strong proponent of the Nordstom Way
• Always encourage staff to take care of the problem as best we can and sort out details later
• We want to be the service champions at the Ross School

Embedded Librarians for MAP

• This is not one of my ideas – but it grew as the school developed
• Action-based Learning programs like MAP involve student groups working with corporate, governmental and nonprofit organizations
• They often need very specialized research assistance
• We assign librarians to each group to make it easier for the teams.
Strat 502

- Core class for MBA students in their first term.
- Assignment to look at one industry and two companies.
- While we provide research tools – we are quick to encourage people to come in for specialized assistance.
- “Walk you down the aisle” vs. pointing.

Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?
Corey Seeman – Michigan Library Association – 2012

Needs Supplies?

- Similar to many hotels that provide toothbrushes, etc. to travels who forget items.
- We provide office supplies (name tents, envelopes, paper (for case interviews), pens, earplugs).
- We used to charge (cost recovery) – but it was more work to track the money.

Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?
Corey Seeman – Michigan Library Association – 2012
Supporting Recruiting at Ross

- Recruiters have interviews in our building
- They need all sorts of services:
  - Unlocking offices
  - Providing a calculator for students for case interview
  - Printing items
  - Power cord for a recruiter’s Blackberry

The %^&%^&%^ Fax Machine

- We traditionally had a fax machine (or two) at Kresge Library for students to use.
- When it no longer worked, it was not be replaced – but the need existed.
- We ended up doing the faxes – but we “blinked” and bought a new machine – to be installed this week.
What did not work?

• Some things were tried and discontinued
• Maybe they were not popular…or too popular to support.
• Being entrepreneurial means trying things out and seeing what is received well by the school.

What did not work? Late Night Copying

• We had faculty who wanted a service that would be available into the evening for last minute copies – typically for class.
• Since we were open the latest of any unit, we took this on.
• Established guidelines that we could support, but we misread the market
• Almost no request came in. Still “on the books”
What did not work? Coat Check

• Students were hesitant to take jackets and book bags to the Interview waiting area.
• They left them in the library while they went on their interview and we noticed an increase in thefts.
• We created a coat check at the Circ Desk.
• It became too big a distraction and we ended up cancelling the program.

What does Hospitality Mean at Kresge?

• It means serving the students, faculty and other staff the best we can.
• It means listening to their needs without considering what other libraries are doing.
• It means not being bogged down with what other departments are doing.
• It also means that we cannot take on everything (coat check & printing support).
What does Hospitality Mean at Kresge?

- **Being hospitable and flexible with staff.**
- Corey’s theory
  - *If I am flexible with you, please be flexible with our patrons.*
  - *If I am not flexible with you, then you will not be expected to be flexible with our patrons.*
- Nothing can happen without that.
- Ties to Positive Organizational Scholarship

What does Hospitality Mean at Kresge?

- It means that no one will EVER get in trouble helping our community.
- It means that the customer is always our first → “I am Third”
- It also means that we cannot do all things for all people.
- “Do we provide a 4 star service when a 3 star service will do?” – Former dean at Ross School of Business.
Challenges of a Hospitable Library

- We might ask ‘why are we doing this?’
- Especially true for ‘non-traditional’ services
  ~ Are we doing things for our colleagues or our customers? This is the million dollar question.
  ~ Also, what other are doing is important, but not to be replicated. It might not be what our patrons want and/or need.

Challenges of a Hospitable Library

- We need to instill Confidence in our staff
- We need to be OK that we will not always be right OR always be able to get the patron exactly what they want.
- It comes from knowing that you did your best and that (either way) you explained what is happening to the patron.
- Failure is part of the learning curve.
Challenges of a Hospitable Library

- Where does a library ‘draw the line?’
  - This is a huge challenge in libraries.
  - When we work in traditional roles, we do not question the value of that work.
  - When we venture into new patron-driven services, then we find ourselves doing all sorts of things.
  - Our success will breed additional requests – this is actually a good thing!

Measuring & Assessment

- This is really tricky when looking at cultural changes.
- Focus on cultivation – do not look for immediate rewards
- **Reward intent, not results**
- Be nimble and seek out ways to help
- The Ultimate question – What is your overall numbers of referrals.
Measuring & Assessment

• Consider each question that comes in tells you much about the way that you are used in reality and seen from the outside.
• Are questions coming from both regular users and new users.
• People ask you non-library questions – it is really because they are not getting help elsewhere.

Measuring & Assessment

• We tend to look at what other people are doing.
• We should be solely focused on how we can support our patrons in the way that they need.
• Academic libraries are similar – but there are fundamental differences (like Movies)
Measuring & Assessment

• Look at Outcomes – not outputs
• Do not dwell on “metrics” and “dashboard Indicators” – They can not reflect the true value of what you are doing.
• You may not see immediate results!
Measuring & Assessment

Where is the Hospitality in Your Library?
Corey Seeman – Michigan Library Association – 2012

Some Readings

Thank You

Thank You

Questions?

Corey Seeman
cseeman@umich.edu