Additional Comments:  Business Librarians – Serving the Public at Large

2012 MLA Small Business, Big Returns
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Here are some additional thoughts from my presentation that supplement the slides presented at the meeting.

Librarians often use terms such as Information Literacy or Information Fluency when describing the interaction between the research and resources.  However in business, the term that might be the most important is **Information Reality.**  Information Reality is the notion and the concept that the resources that you need to build a business plan, understand competitors, look at an industry or market might (just might) not be freely available.  More realistically, the material is not freely available and business researchers will soon realize that basic Google searches will yield lots of possibilities – but little real articles and data.  This is one of the biggest areas where libraries can shine by enabling patrons to use the resources that connect the user with the articles, reports and data that they are seeking – without having to pay extra for it.

The issue of ROI (Return on Investment) for business research is often a very difficult process to determine.  It is very possible that the information we provide business patrons might not result into a profitable new business for a few years.  It is also very possible that the information we provide gives them a reality-check and actually shows that the market they are interested in does not have the opportunities that they believed. I think it is just as useful for business researchers to find out that their idea is not as strong as they think.  If we can provide them with data, articles and reports that save them from moving into an unprofitable space, then we might have actually prevented a business failure.  It is very difficult to measure this.  But in the information economy, access to information is very critical for the success or failure of these entities.

Supporting entrepreneurship may be difficult given the very specific focus that these patrons might be seeking.  It might be in areas that have not been written about previously.  The focus for our research for these new areas is often news searches (ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, and Factiva for starters).  When working with community members, we will try to focus on the resources that they have available and make an educated guess if coming to the library would be useful.

The academic business libraries in Michigan are EXCELLENT resources for all the libraries and businesses in the state.  Both the **Kresge Business Administration Library (University of Michigan**) and **the Gast Business Library (Michigan State University)** are very welcoming to support Michigan businesses.  We also work closely with other libraries in the state and will happily take referrals from public librarians who are faced with a tough business question.  At Kresge, we are happy to work with

patrons as best we can.  There are times during the year when it is more difficult to assist and our students/faculty is always the top priority.  We even get referrals from the main library at the University of Michigan when it comes to business topics.  Sometimes people like working with us because we are "business library" and patrons do not have to worry about explaining the business concepts that they are looking for.

But most of all, the one thing that all business researchers must exercise is patience. While we live in a world where many information needs can be obtained in a very speedy manner – many business information needs are not as easy to find.  This increases as the topics become more entrepreneurial and technical in nature.  Some of these requests take time to collect.  Additionally, the narrow field that a patron might be interested in constitutes a sentence and paragraph in a larger article and report – which then requires the researcher to compile the data.  While easy questions often have easy answers – many business questions are more complicated and require effort to compile and interpret the data.  This is the key to a successful business plan.

**Links from Kresge Library Wiki:**

**Business Information for Michigan Residents**
[http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/KresgeLibrary/index.php/Business_Information_for_Michigan_Residents](http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/KresgeLibrary/index.php/Business_Information_for_Michigan_Residents)
NOTE: Includes links to MEL resources and libraries that provide business resources to walk-in users.  This page is a continual work in progress and grows as we capture different information of use to local businesses.

**Freely Available Business Resources**
[http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/KresgeLibrary/index.php/Category:Freely_Available_Business_Resources](http://webservices.itcs.umich.edu/mediawiki/KresgeLibrary/index.php/Category:Freely_Available_Business_Resources)