Bringing Money Smart Week to an Academic Library in Colorado

After two years of team work, five librarians share their processes and results.

Money Smart Week (MSW) was initiated by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago in 2002 to bring awareness to financial literacy. In 2010, the American Library Association (ALA) teamed with the Federal Reserve Bank to encourage libraries to participate in programming during the week.

All types of libraries participate in the week and the numbers grow each year with more than 700 in 2014. That year, five librarians at Colorado State University (CSU) Libraries decided to participate and offer programming, although on a small scale of six presentations. In 2015, the CSU Libraries team has partnered with CSU’s Student Financial Services office and are offering 19 sessions during the week, focusing our programming on students.

Colorado State University Libraries is comprised of a main library (Morgan Library) and the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital branch library. CSU is a public land-grant institution located in Fort Collins, Colorado. The library has twenty faculty librarians. In the 2014-2015 academic year, 27,086 students are enrolled on campus, and 71 percent are undergraduates. In the spring of 2015, more than 6,000 of the campus students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) are 24 years of age or older.
April 2014 Money Smart Week

In 2014, more than 4,000 Money Smart Week events were held in 48 states with 1,500 program partners from across the country, and CSU Libraries participated for the first time that year. The CSU Libraries topics ranged from learning credit basics to honing negotiation skills. We also created a book display and provided online financial literacy resources via a web page created for the event. By the numbers, five planning team members participated and we provided six presentations with ten speakers from six different organizations. In all, 119 attendees participated, and we had nearly 1,000 web page views during the year.

The business librarian at CSU had heard of Money Smart Week (MSW) during ALA Midwinter in early 2014 and looked into what academic libraries were doing. She brought together five librarians to form a team with this mantra: doing something during the week was better than doing nothing.

Our team brainstormed ideas, came up with a list of possible activities, assigned those activities among the group (marketing, LibGuide, speakers, book displays, refreshments), and created a timeline with deadlines.

Team members contacted various individuals on and off campus to see if they would provide a program. We contacted First National Bank, which had a branch temporarily housed in our library; CSU Extension; the Poudre River Public Library District; and faculty involved with financial literacy. Some contacts put us in touch with others in the community. We capped the number of programs to six due to planning time constraints.

We hosted the programs in Morgan Library’s Event Hall in the main CSU Libraries building. The Event Hall is centrally located in the library, which in turn, is centrally located on campus. The room is equipped with rearrange-able tables and chairs, large screen projectors, and an A/V system. It easily accommodates 75 people in a theater style arrangement. We provided cookies as a possible enticement to students.

MSW provides Consumer Survey forms, and we used them to receive attendee feedback. The 20-25 attendees per session were primarily students, with many reporting that they had been told by their professor to attend. Most respondents indicated that they would be interested in additional programming in the future. Other attendees were university staff and faculty (see Figures 1 and 2).

April 2014 Publicity/Promotion

The marketing strategy for the first year included legal and letter size flyers, a LibGuide, a press release to local and campus newspapers, inclusion on the university online calendar, a book display, bookmarks, e-mail lists, and posted flyers in the library building’s restroom stalls. Marketing began four weeks before the programs and no registration was required.

During the week prior to the events, we had slides on a Jumbotron at the front door of Morgan Library advertising the programs. During Money Smart Week, we displayed a slide with the day’s event on the screen and had several portable dry erase boards leading to and near the Event Hall. We had a small budget of $300, which we used for the cookies and for providing water at the events (we used only $200 of our allocation). We printed flyers on our departmental color printer.

Financial Literacy LibGuide

In 2014 the team developed a website using LibGuides to host information about the MSW programs and to provide a resource so attendees could follow-up and find more information. The MSW program is featured on the main part of the page, which is the page all of our promotional materials point to: http://libguides.colostate.edu/FinancialLiteracy. The tab format
of the LibGuide divided the rest of the site into information on books, personal finance blogs, career resources, and contact information for the committee. The presentation slides of some of the presenters were also located on this guide.

The book section had hand-picked books featuring their colorful book jackets and catchy titles. Links point directly to the catalog and many of the titles were featured in the book display. These books circulated with regularity during the 2014 event.

A Career Resources guide featured a link to a worksheet, which helped people explore their interests and provided tips for finding career guidance online and through local media outlets. CSU Campus Resources, such as the Career Center and various departmental Career Services offices, were features on this part of the guide. There was a link out to a Pinterest board featuring Personal Finance Blogs that come highly recommended by national media.

OUTCOMES
The CSU MSW team debriefed after the week to discuss what went well, what did not, and what we would do differently in 2015. We determined that starting earlier and spending more time marketing was essential to increase attendance. We were surprised that our attendees were primarily students and decided to focus on them in 2015. Another surprise was the number of people interested in providing free financial literacy education and the number of contacts we made in the community in just a short time both on and off campus. These contacts included CSU Student Financial Services who contacted us when they found out about our programs and enthusiastically expressed interest in being involved in 2015. Others included the Poudre River Library District, MakeChange NoCo, Colorado State University Extension, the Public Services Credit Union, and First National Bank.

Additionally, the business librarian was asked to join a business information group in Northern Colorado that discusses financial literacy. The Colorado Money Smart Week group arranged a luncheon in Denver for organizers of MSW events in the state. Two of our team members attended this networking event that assembled financial literacy educators from institutions around the state, including schools, universities, public libraries, nonprofits, banks, and credit unions.

PLANNING/PROMOTION 2015
While we felt we’d had successful events in 2014, with more than a respectable number of attendees, the short planning timeframe meant we were not able to do the kind of promotion that we would have liked to do. So planning for 2015 began in December 2014, with the intent that all events would be scheduled (topics and titles, presenters, and short descriptions) a week before the start of the spring semester, or mid-January 2015. That way, we had the potential to be included on course syllabi (it is unknown if we made it on any).

We did not quite reach that goal, but we did have everything except the short descriptions for a few programs shortly after January. The 2015 team leader loaded the earliest nine finalized events into the Money Smart Week website first, and other events were added as they were completed.

We will have meetings in April to take care of finalizing details. Presenters will be reminded the week and day before their sessions (something that we learned was needed last year).

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In addition to the 2014 publicity plan, we have added large posters (24” x 36”) to mount on the walls in the computer classrooms and outside the library coffee shop. We will also advertise through digital signs available in the student center and throughout the campus. We also plan to provide a display in the student center.
COSPONOR
When Student Financial Services (SFS) learned that the Morgan Library was creating events and promoting financial literacy on campus through Money Smart Week, it was a no-brainer that SFS wanted to get involved. As the office responsible for not only managing scholarships, setting tuition classification, and administering Federal Title IV aid, SFS also answers billing questions.

It is Student Financial Services’ goal to provide CSU students with the tools to understand the costs of higher education, provide options to meet those costs, and above all, to educate students on the best way to financially address what to most is the biggest financial event in their lives so far. SFS wants to do everything possible to provide students with the correct and best information before they get their first bill.

Money Smart Week offered a great opportunity to meet students on their own time to present detailed information to those student SFS might have been missed on the first go round.

The number of students at CSU, and at all major universities, who require some form of financial aid is 100 percent. That figure may sound high, and it is much higher than the 84 percent that actually receive some form of financial aid from Colorado State University. Financial aid comes in many forms, however. Parent footing the bill? That’s financial aid. Paying for a portion of schooling with scholarships? That’s financial aid. Therefore, learning about ways to help pay for education clearly fits Money Smart Week’s goals.

2015 TOPIC SELECTION
Considering that CSU is a university and we want to reach the widest population possible, we chose to target students as our primary audience in 2015. Furthermore, we felt that by targeting undergraduate and graduate students—as opposed to faculty and staff—we could contribute and be more aligned to the university’s commitment to retain students. Finances are a major concern for many students and we hope to reach non-traditional undergraduate students, such as adult learners and veterans.

Once the primary audience was determined, the MSW team brainstormed what topics would be of interest. A new team member from Student Financial Services brought a welcome perspective regarding the kinds of topics that would be useful to students.

It was easy to decide that a session on financial aid would be valuable. “Financial Aid: It’s Not that Scary” is being repeated during three sessions at different times of the day with the hope that students taking a course during the time slot for two of the days would be available for the third (or first or second) session. We also hope students who attend one of the first sessions will spread the word to their friends and classmates about later ones on the topic.

In addition, our new team member was familiar with other financially-related topics of deep interest to students seeking to make college more affordable, so a “Residency Orientation” session will discuss rules for establishing residency in Colorado only, because rules vary from state to state.

Becoming familiar with places around the globe is another area of interest, but it too can be costly. So “Funding an Education Abroad: Scholarships, Financial Aid, and Creative Funding ideas” will, we hope, encourage those with smaller budgets to explore study abroad opportunities. Another topic generated was on “Work Study and How to Get a Job” to help pay expenses.

Charge cards have the potential to sink more than students, so the well-received session in 2014 “Be in Charge of What You Charge” will be delivered by the same speaker twice, again attempting to reach more students at different times of day.

The popular presentation on “Negotiation Skills” will also be repeated. Based on last year’s experience, the presenters will spend over an hour (all other presentations are 50 minutes) so that the participatory exercises and content will not be rushed.

The campus-located bank’s two sessions in 2014 were successful, and its staff was happy to return for a second year to discuss “Saving and Budgeting” and “Identity Theft.” In addition they did their own brainstorming and are doing a new session, “Understanding Credit and How to Buy a Home.”

A number of parents purchase a home for their students while they are at the university, so we felt that more than one presentation that addresses home buying would not go amiss. A member of the team thought that a realtor would give a useful perspective, so a local realtor will be describing “Home Buying 101: The How and Why of Investing in Real Estate.” Having two related sessions should give some valuable insight from the different perspectives of the banker and the realtor when students are considering a house purchase.

Last year after our schedule was set, we learned that a local credit union had an extensive outreach program, and its staff was very interested in giving presentations during our Money Smart Week. Contacted once we began working on our schedule, they quickly volunteered to give presentations on “Money Personalities and Basic Budgeting,” “7 Tactics to Raise Your Credit Score,” and “Car Buying 101.” These topics should be a very good fit with our audience, especially as one of the speakers is a Gen Y Engagement Specialist.

Some of our presenters were interested in what was already planned and created their topics to mesh with others. A speaker from the previous year looked over this year’s topics and decided to discuss “Financing an Entrepreneurial Venture.” This topic supports a recently added emphasis at the university on encouraging entrepreneurial inclinations in students.

All of the previous year’s speakers who were invited to speak this year were happy to return. Customized thank you letters sent shortly after the 2014 MSW may have
contributed to this success, because the speaker efforts were much appreciated and recognized in a tangible way.

Lastly, the 2015 team leader thought it would be good to have a wrap-up session, where attendees of earlier programs could meet and discuss what they had learned. It can be frustrating to learn something new and exciting and not have anyone to share it with, so a time and venue for attendee interaction seems like a good idea. The presenters leading the wrap-up session are MSW team members. If no one else shows up, we’ll use the time as our first post-events meeting.

Team members scheduled presenters’ first time choices whenever possible. Not only could these times overlap, but also one of our team members is in another building. To help with the organization, a real-time spreadsheet was created in Google Docs and all team members given editing privileges. That way, if presenters were busy with other tasks before booking a session time, they would know immediately if a time slot had been taken.

INFORMATION FOR FED SITE
For libraries officially participating in Money Smart Week, filling out the event form on the Federal Reserve Board website is pretty straightforward. Repeated presentations can be entered once, with a place for multiple dates and times. The categories for 2015 are type of event, location/date, contact/sponsors, RSVP information, if required; and additional information. The entered information generates the page that is seen by potential attendees on the Money Smart Week website; it includes a map.

KICKOFF IN EARLY FEBRUARY
When brainstorming, some topics came up that apply to Money Smart Week, but talking about them in late April would not be useful if they were depending on timing. Specifically, taxes are due in mid-April, and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is due in waves, but may be required to be finished much sooner than late April.

So the team leader decided that a “Kick Off! Money Smart Week” in early February would take care of covering those topics while the information was still usable and serve as an early promotional effort for the late April activities. The team agreed that this was a good idea, and while our Student Financial Services member was ideal for the FAFSA presentation, we needed an outside expert to talk about taxes.

One of our team members knew about Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), which keeps in the spirit of not promoting paid services in a presentation but would provide an expert who knows about taxes (the service is only provided to people who “generally make $53,000 or less, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and limited English speaking taxpayers” according to the IRS website http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Free-Tax-Return-Preparation-for-You-by-Volunteers).

The local credit union that is generously providing three presentations in April knew who to ask and we were introduced to a local VITA volunteer—a CSU Masters student in Accountancy!

The team leader met with him briefly and determined that he would be able to do what we had in mind. He even attended one of our meetings to give an overview of his talk and show his draft presentation slides. Everyone attending the meeting that day learned something new, so we were pleased that he was available for the Kick Off. We let him choose the exact date in the preferred week and our SFS team member presented immediately afterwards. (See Figure 3).

KICK OFF FEEDBACK
We received useful feedback from the 2014 presentations and thought it would be a good idea to get feedback from the Kick Off as well. One team member suggested that we do not-so-subtle promotion of the April
events when asking for comments.

So along with asking about how our attendees learned about the Kick Off and what were the most useful things learned, we asked if they were planning on attending Money Smart Week events and if they were going to tell their friends about it. All said they would attend if it fit their schedules. If they follow through, we have seven volunteer promoters and an additional four who will tell friends they think would be interested!

While our 2014 overall attendance numbers were on the low side, attendees were very engaged. What we learned was that the advertising that brought in the highest number of attendees was signs in the restrooms so we are definitely planning on doing those for the 2015 Money Smart Week. Signs in the building itself drew in the next highest number of attendees. Emails from various sources brought in others, and one person saw the link on the Libraries’ Home Page (which was up for a very limited time). We’ll probably do the Kick Off again next year—but even earlier.

PLANNED PROGRAMS IN APRIL
The scheduled events for Colorado State University Libraries’ 2015 Money Smart Week are listed on the Financial Literacy LibGuide, http://libguides.colostate.edu/FinancialLiteracy. After last year’s experiences, we decided that while we will offer cookies (same total number of cookies for just more than triple the number of sessions), but we will forgo providing water. Very few attendees availed themselves from the water cooler, so it was not a good use of our funds. (See Figure 4).

JOINING MONEY SMART WEEK
CSU acknowledges that finances are a major concern for students. The libraries want to be an active partner in the retention and persistence of our students. The aims of Money Smart Week fit these closely, and libraries have materials on hand to support financial well-being, whether it is learning how to budget, paying for college, starting a business, paying for major expenses, or making investments.

Libraries of all types can gain a lot by participating in Money Smart Week. When adding this event to the library’s calendar, plan well ahead if at all possible. But, as we embraced in 2014 as our mantra, doing something on short notice is better than doing nothing.

Co-sponsorships can increase the number of ideas—and contacts—for presentations, take advantage of freebie materials for handouts—and advertise, promote, and publicize!

Do join us!

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RESOURCES:
Materials on the Chicago FED Site
The Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago established a central website, http://www.moneysmartweek.org, to host information about Money Smart Week events taking place across the country and provide general information and resources about financial literacy. The site features a page that goes into depth about how students can learn to pay for college. It has short, embedded YouTube videos with high production value that provide foundational information about starting the process, getting grants and scholarships, and understanding student loans.
The events that take place during Money Smart Week can be found by clicking on your state on a map of the United States, and the list of Money Smart Week partners is expansive. There’s also a blog, an FAQ page, and links to their social media accounts. The site is a rich resource for the general public and those planning events for MSW.

The Resources section of the site includes sections on Credit & Debt, Spending & Saving, and Life Stages, such as getting married, buying a home, and retirement planning. There’s a Kids section as well, which highlights places to start children off with financial education through linked curriculum modules and financial games. There is even a competition page where children can find regional contests and win prizes such as scholarships and certificates of deposit.

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MATERIALS ON THE ALA SITE
The American Library Association hosts a Money Smart Week section on its site at: http://www.ala.org/offices/money-smart-week. This site provides resources to help libraries participate in Money Smart Week, since ALA has been partnering with this national program for the past five years.

The ALA MSW site provides ideas for programs for academic and public libraries, and links to several Money Smart Week Pinterest boards provided by various libraries. Librarians can sign up for the official e-list for Money Smart Week, and find a link to the 35-page “Financial Literacy Education in Libraries: Guidelines and Best Practices for Service” document. These guidelines were developed by RUSA-BRASS in 2014. (http://www.ala.org/rsa/sites/ala.org.rusa/files/content/FLEGuidelines_Final_Sep\_2014.pdf)

FREEBIES AND ITEMS FOR PURCHASE
The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has free materials that libraries can order in increments of 100, 300, 600, or 1000 copies. See http://promotions.usa.gov/cfpblibraries.html. They offer bookmarks, standing displays, posters, and other materials. Many of the financial education materials are in English and Spanish. Items are available online in PDF format so if time is short there is no need to wait.

We requested the “Savings Fitness: A Guide to Your Money and Your Financial Future,” “Building a Better Credit Report,” and “Make a Budget—Worksheet” to hand out during Money Smart Week. “Savings Fitness,” which we acquired in English and Spanish, is a 44-page booklet packed with practical information. It also includes helpful worksheets, so people can calculate how long it will take to reach specific financial goals, asset calculation, retirement savings, budgeting/spending plans, and more. The Resources section lists websites with calculators and resources that assist in getting out of debt, saving, and retirement. We provided these lists and the “Building a Better Credit Report” to our Kick Off attendees. They proved to be popular, with attendees picking up extras for friends and relatives.

Other free materials from CFPB cover topics related to car title loans, reverse mortgages, submitting complaints, identity theft, mutual funds, payday loans, sending money abroad, and more.

The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) has some downloadable and purchasable items (see http://www.finra.org/Investors/Order/P125791). While topics emphasize investment and include investor alerts for annuities, insurance, bonds, frauds, and scams, they also address money management and coping after a job loss. Materials are available in English with select topics also in Spanish. On http://74.121.201.86/Finra/items.asp, there are free investor publications, including two DVDs as of late February 2015. Up to 25 copies may be ordered for free (if more are desired there is an email contact).
Reflections from a New Public Library Trustee

» What role should the library play in building a community of engaged citizens?

BY MARTIN WOLSKE

I’m sure there are some who become a public library trustee in the same way a person becomes a librarian—through a conscious decision to pursue a path. But that altruistic calling was not how it happened for me.

For almost 20 years, I have been educating future librarians in community, information technology, and engagement at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), University of Illinois. Further, as part of the Center for Digital Inclusion at GSLIS, I have facilitated collaborations and shepherded engagement projects that included university students, faculty, staff, and community partners to foster community through infrastructure and program development at anchor institutions such as libraries, schools, churches, and community centers.

MY PATH TO TRUSTEE

At times, my partnerships have been with library directors, or have had me closely coordinating with library directors as I work with their librarians and technology staff. But I have never worked with the library’s board of trustees. Indeed, the only times I’ve thought much about the trustees has been when I’ve brainstormed with alums and librarian partners on how to move forward with new programming when their visions for the future of libraries didn’t fully resonate with those of the library director, the trustees, or the community.

How could new paths for dialogue be opened that allowed for an integration and alignment across these stakeholders to move beyond an either-or compromise and allow for new ideas and values to emerge in response to changing community contexts? Similar questions have even led to some work by the Center for Digital Inclusion, considering how we might create executive education not only for librarians but also for boards and communities.

But it wasn’t this work that led to my becoming a trustee of the Champaign (IL) Public Library in my hometown, though it certainly will help inform my role on the board. I was first approached by the mayor of Champaign, not through my work at GSLIS, but instead because he provided key support to a group who worked to champion a change in city policy disallowing backyard chickens.

When the policy was changed, my wife and I were one of the first to build our chicken coops. And it was during a visit to our backyard that the mayor and I digressed into discussions about libraries fostering community and his suggestion that I would be a good library trustee. At another coop grand opening several months later, I told the mayor that I would be willing to serve on the library’s board of trustees.
The Champaign Public Library’s Mission and Values Statements

OUR MISSION
The Champaign Public Library connects our community with the power of knowledge, the world of culture and ideas, and the joy of reading.

We support the essential role of reading for success in life and work, the need for easy and equal access to lifelong learning, and the value of enriching and inspiring experiences.

OUR VALUES
• Exceptional service
• Customer convenience
• Responsible stewardship
• Ongoing innovation
• Fostering community

THE COMMUNITY’S SOCIAL ECOLOGY
In a city manager form of government, the mayor is a member of the city council; beyond that position, much of his or her work is ceremonial. But by appointing unpaid seats on the city’s commissions and boards, the mayor exerts important influence on how several key institutions, including the library, contribute to the city.

In Champaign, the mayor appoints individuals to the library’s board of trustees, who then are approved by the city council. Each of the nine members serves a staggered three-year term. As a body, we are charged with primary fiscal and policy oversight for the library. One key aspect of that role includes the appointment and annual performance evaluation of the library director who serves as the chief executive officer of the library.

The board member who has served the longest was appointed in 1993, and three other trustees have served two or more terms. The previous three-term mayor, or his predecessor, appointed these trustees. The other five of us were appointed by the new mayor after he took office in 2011.

Because of the high turnover in trustees, the library director has much less certainty in setting an appropriate direction. As an incoming board member, I’m rapidly coming to find that understanding the existing policies and vision of the library requires a broader understanding of how those policies are shaped.

For example, citizens shape the community through their election of the mayor and city council who subsequently shape the community through direct governance. But the mayor and the council also significantly shape the community by appointing persons to seats on the commissions and boards that are charged with the oversight of key city services. This top-down shaping of the community is complemented by a more grassroots shaping that occurs as chief executives, such as the library director, work to build programming in collaboration with staff and patrons. Over time, these interdependent parts set in motion a trajectory for the community—a social ecology—that is difficult to trace back to a single agent or agency.

Such insights have help me appreciate, in a new and rich way, the challenges of affecting change even when stakeholders are aligned and enthusiastically support a given direction. It is even more challenging when such alignment hasn’t been considered and the interdependent parts of the social ecology do not work in unison.

UPDATING THE LIBRARY’S VISION
I attended my first board meeting as a trustee in November 2014. One of the agenda items centered on how to proceed with developing a new strategic plan (the last planning process occurred in 2009, see sidebar above) given we didn’t have funds to work with a consultant. A number of questions were raised during the discussion. Was such a planning process even necessary? Could we do something more limited—for instance, work to clarify aspirations to guide the updating of the library’s service roles and goals? But, given the financial challenges currently facing the library, would working on more esoteric projects such as aspirations end up as a distraction for the board? Couldn’t it be argued that aspirations fit more within the domain of the director than the board?

The bylaws for the board of trustees state that the library’s mission statement is to be adopted and reviewed by the board on a periodic basis. While engaging in a strategic planning process can be helpful in reviewing the mission statement and establishing goals for programming, it isn’t specifically required in the bylaws. But updating our aspirations could be valuable, especially given the significant change in trustees since the 2009 strategic planning process.

Because of reduced library staffing and a willingness by the board to share the burden of work as part of its policy oversight responsibilities, the trustees decided to create a new “Envisioning 2020” committee, which I will chair. The initial plan is for the committee and library director to hold stakeholder dialogs and community conversations to develop aspirations for the library for the next five years that align with the aspirations of the community. These aspirations, in combination with statistics about the library and models from other libraries, can then be used to develop the knowledge needed to guide the review of the library’s mission statement and service roles and goals. As a by-product, we hope the process
FOSTERING COMMUNITY

As I assess the library’s mission and values as chair of the Envisioning 2020 committee, I am drawn to consider the last point first. Community has come to mean many things, with the global community at its most extreme. But even when we speak of a geographic community, such as a city, the term has little meaning beyond physical boundaries. What, then, is meant when we include fostering community in our values?

My takeaway from a range of literature on the topic is that fostering community includes fostering a sense of belonging. For instance, think of how we identify ourselves: by family, school, or faith communities, or a mix of all these sectors. Fostering community also raises an awareness of and builds on a mutual interdependence that exists through interconnected and overlapping roles. When these roles work well together, they create a stronger unit of support—the community—than if individuals stood apart.

Fostering community is also a process that requires regular energy and thought. A community doesn’t just happen any more than a strong mind and body just happens for individuals unless we intentionally make it a priority. Finally, fostering community isn’t a process that a leader or an organization does for others; it’s a process in which each citizen has a leadership role.

The goal for the library, then, is to be an integral and valued part of fostering community. Valuing ongoing innovation, responsible stewardship, customer convenience, and exceptional service are more immediate outcomes that lead toward that goal, as does our mission of reading, lifelong learning, and enriching and inspiring experiences. Convenient access to information, guidance in the effective practice of information literacy, and support in the filtering and winnowing of information to create knowledge are all key roles the library can play in support of ongoing innovation.

By delivering the goals in its mission and value statements, the library is contributing to one aspect of social change—the addressing of immediate local issues and opportunities. But if done strategically, the library can also contribute to a second form of social change—citizens advancing their skills to seek relevant and credible information, to use that information to create knowledge, and to turn that knowledge into action. The ultimate goal, then, is to empowering citizens to ask better questions, acquire better information, create better knowledge, and foster actions that build community power (see Figure 1).

The model of citizen empowerment to foster community as identified in the knowledge power cycle applies equally to a homeless person seeking new housing and employment, a first-time parent trying to understand what’s happening with their newborn, a coach trying to help his team perform at a higher level, an entrepreneur trying to start or strengthen her business, a person learning a new hobby, a health provider working to help a patient, and a teacher working to adjust to a new curriculum or new crop of students. Indeed, it applies equally to a new library board and the library director as they work to lead the library forward through a process of stakeholder dialog and community conversations.

As we find ourselves firmly entrenched in an information- and knowledge-centered society, the library, as a community anchor for lifelong learning, has an even more central role to play. It requires professionals versed in print, digital, information, news, and computer literacies as well as skills to engage patrons across different ways of learning and different knowledge bases. Healthy communities need a people’s university—a strong public library—to support information seeking and knowledge creation if it is to affect change in an ever-changing social, economic, and climate environment. For example, a recent article in Library Journal focused on how Scott Bonner, director of the Ferguson Public Library, made sure the library was available when needed by school teachers and others in the community during the chaos after the shooting of Michael Brown and subsequent grand jury verdict.

Going beyond information acquisition and knowledge creation, our public libraries may sometimes be the best space for knowledge to be put into action. As such, we may identify additional value in the library hosting digital innovation and manufacturing facilities like Fab Labs, Makerspaces, and digital media labs as a one-stop place that supports information, knowledge, and action through digital creation. Certainly, a library that values ongoing innovation and
enriching and inspiring experiences can benefit from such programming because of their edge and appeal.

But if the library’s priority is fostering community, what the library delivers must be redefined. Digital innovation spaces aren’t an end unto themselves. Instead, they should be assessed for their contributions in facilitating information acquisition and knowledge creation within the broader social ecology of the community. As a library, we need to be an active part of assuring equity of access to resources for all citizens if we are to fully reach our potential to foster community that builds on difference as a resource.

LIBRARY ENGAGEMENT

As a new library trustee, I bring with me the belief that the library is an essential community anchor that can help to transform communities. Achieving this goal requires not only serving the community, but also engaging with the community as a social ecology with many interconnected and overlapping stakeholders who benefit by strategically aligning their efforts. The full ethos of the library should center on engagement and the power of information and knowledge, which are only developed through transformative action within the community.

But in the end, libraries are just buildings. Rather, it is the people who make up the library—librarians, other staff, volunteers, trustees, friends of the library, and the patrons themselves—who do the engagement. Indeed, I would argue that research into what is needed to create a truly engaged university could be applied equally to public libraries.

As illustrated in Figure 2, everyone has an important leadership role to play as a boundary spanner if the public library is to live up to a mission centered on engagement. Those on the front lines of library programs can’t build and transform communities if the technical personnel in the library aren’t consistently delivering an infrastructure consistent with strong social change programming. But engagement is also difficult or impossible unless library directors and library boards are championing engagement among other community anchor institutions and the electorate at large by putting in place the vision, policies, budget, and staff needed to build capacity for engagement. Trustees play a critical part in building the library as a central hub for engagement and fostering of community.

I love bumping into former students and hearing about their successes and challenges as librarians. I love sessions in which we brainstorm on how to further achieve success and what to do about the challenges. Some of those former students work at the library where I am now a trustee. And every once in a while I have the opportunity to hear from them what they love about being a librarian at the Champaign Public Library and also what has been frustrating as they work to build new programming.

I hear, too, from neighbors and friends about what they love about our wonderful, award-winning library and what they wish were different. This has been the case for much of the 20 years I’ve lived in Champaign. But this past November those conversations took on a whole new meaning as I stepped into my new role as one of nine trustees responsible for the fiscal and policy oversight of the library.

I hope I’ve retained even a fraction of what I learned from my former students during our conversations. I also look forward to learning from the community, fellow trustees, and the library administration to position that knowledge within the unique social ecology that is Champaign today—and what we aspire for it to be tomorrow.

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FOOTNOTES:


2. More on the Library Transforming Communities initiative can be found at: http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/libraries-transforming-communities

3. I highly recommend Randy Stoecker’s recent paper, “What if?” (http://ojis.aiste.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/166/277), as a resource to learn more about knowledge power, and Carol Kuhlthau’s paper on guided inquiry for 21st century school libraries (http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~kuhlthau/docs/GI-School-Librarians-in-the-21-Century.pdf) for more information on the information search process that I believe is essential if we are to support citizens’ creation of knowledge from the strategic acquisition of information.


When the Richland Library opened its Teen Center for 12- to 18-year-olds in the summer of 2013, the librarians envisioned a variety of programs, from arts and crafts to 3D printing, audio/visual production, book clubs, and videogames.

As the Teen Center staff got to know its regular audience, however, they realized the teens had a substantial interest in comic books. Comics fans would come in wanting to flap their arms in excitement over a new Deadpool story or discuss the changes in continuity between arcs of Wonder Woman. The anime club usually dealt with all things manga, and Free Comic Book Day was always a fun and natural opportunity to host graphic novel programming.

But, instead of focusing on where to begin in comics and catering to new readers (always a good idea, to be fair), what if a program rewarded experienced readers and longtime fans?

This was the logic behind the creation of Superhero Showdown, a pilot program for teens that applied debate-style tactics to the various cast members of DC and Marvel comics. The program was little more than a formalized “Who Would Win One-on-One?” argument with some assists from staff and reference sources.

The who-would-win scenario is nothing new to pop culture, with Epic Rap Battles of History videos regularly racking up tens of millions of views on YouTube, multiple crossover events in DC and Marvel histories, and videogames like Injustice: Gods Among Us and Marvel vs Capcom. Even fan-made videos such as Alex Luthor’s “Marvel vs DC Epic Trailer” earned a standing ovation from a teen audience.

Summer 2015 will see massive crossovers from DC and Marvel in the form of Convergence and Secret Wars events, respectively. Will upcoming super-rivalry films like Captain America: Civil War and Batman vs Superman: Dawn of Justice stoke fans’ flames or lead to super-burnout? Only time will tell, but until then, why not have some fun?

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

The concept for the matchups used Comic Vine’s “Battle of the Week” feature as a template, with its rules of engagement between fictional combatants (see Figure 1). The feature’s emphasis on using arguments and data to back up votes was too tempting to not try out in a physical space.

I built the first bracket of 16 potential combatants with an eye toward balance and interesting matchups—Superman and Thor, for example, were left out, as were anyone with “God-level” abilities. Essentially, anyone who could tear the Earth apart was
exempted from the bracket. Characters could not all be marquee headliners, but they could not be too obscure, either.

The Teen Center’s manager, Jennifer Naimzadeh, a comics fan in her own right, was consulted, and we compared breakdowns of how we would determine winners. The resulting disagreements and wiki searches to discredit each other’s views were a bona fide success and proved that our concept had merit. Matt Gossett, a librarian formerly employed at a comics shop, was also consulted.

The early bracket was also shown to a few teenage comics enthusiasts to gauge their familiarity with the material. Character diversity and relevance were also factors in choosing our cast. (Another library’s bracket might end up looking different from ours.) We tweaked the original bracket and rules, and came up with the following matchups:

**First Round Superhero Matchups:**
- Captain America vs Batman
- Green Arrow vs Hawkeye
- Deathstroke vs Deadpool
- Mr. Fantastic vs Iron Man
- Wolverine vs She-Hulk
- Raven vs Flash
- Storm vs Wonder Woman
- Hawkgirl vs Spider-Man

Each program took place in the Teen Center, where we had enough seats and space for up to 20 teens (we never hosted more than a dozen each time). Each first matchup was chosen specifically to invite debate over two characters with similar backgrounds and power sets. For example, Captain America versus Batman set the tone for the rest of the Superhero Showdown very well, getting the audience used to the format before stranger combinations emerged.

To start the debate, Power Point slides were displayed on the Teen Center’s 60-inch HDTV, listing the basic background and abilities of each character as well as showing a picture for basic reference, which I provided. These slides came in handy for reconciling multiple versions of characters and what they would bring to each match. For example, Flash’s speed powers were...
tempered down and he was prohibited from time travel.

Teens were generally respectful of the debate format and welcomed challenges to their points of view, though Jennifer and I would sometimes have to remind the group to respond to specific arguments instead of simply denying them. “Describe ‘how’ in addition to ‘what’” was a common piece of advice given to our would-be rhetoricians.

The graphic novel collection was nearby for participants to pull out stories and find examples, although some brought their favorite comics with them—at one point, we had to somewhat discredit Deadpool Kills The Marvel Universe as evidence that the character is utterly unstoppable. Some teens in the space were reluctant to participate until the opening arguments started and they realized anyone could chime in or say something to support their favorite character.

No registration was required. During the final debate, after a few teens’ parents showed up and took them out early, a group of sisters arrived and had no idea what was going on. I invited them to debate superheroes with us and their faces lit up as they realized anyone could participate until the opening arguments started and they realized anyone could.

FIGURE 2: TEENS DEBATE HOW THEIR CHARACTERS MATCH UP

SUPERHEROES:
Deathstroke (Slade Wilson) vs Deadpool (Wade Wilson)
Two mercenaries for hire, both specially trained, equipped, and skilled with an array of guns and blades, and extensively experienced with fighting superpowered foes. Deadpool (Wade Wilson) defeated most of the Marvel universe in his own book, and Deathstroke (Slade Wilson) disabled the Justice League in another. Deathstroke has superior mental ability, and Deadpool is mentally unhinged. In addition, both opponents are the least like superheroes on this bracket, and are more like ruthless anti-heroes. This is a total draw, right? Except Deadpool has a healing factor where Deathstroke’s repeated losses to him would eventually bleed out, and Deathstroke’s repeated losses to the Teen Titans did not help his reputation with teens.

SUPervillains:
Kingpin (Wilson Fisk) vs Ra’s al Ghul (*The Demons Head*)
As a couple of the biggest and most serious threats in their respective universes, Wilson and Ra’s went back and forth in the debates. Each was allowed to bring an army of henchmen, but their henchmen’s similar abilities were judged to nullify each other, leaving the fight still mano-a-mano. Kingpin was underestimated at first. “Kingpin’s tough, he’s beaten Spider-Man before” was met with “Anyone can beat Spider-Man!” (Ouch.) The Marvel Encyclopedia was consulted, and Kingpin’s 450 pounds of pure muscle gave him a strict advantage. The teens seemed decided that his New York background gave him a home field advantage, but “Ra’s is worldwide. Don’t matter what city he’s in.” The Hand and The League of Shadows were both determined to be international organizations. The vote was split 5-3 in Kingpin’s favor, coming down to Ra’s ninja agility versus the 450 pounds. “Ra’s would lose by KO, he might be good with a sword, but he can’t take a punch.” A final cry in Ra’s defense went unheeded: “Ra’s is Batman but bad, people!”

COMBINED MATCH-UPS:
Iron Man (Tony Stark) vs Wonder Woman (Diana Prince) (Setting: Death Valley) (Final Round)
We’ve got a number of opposites in this battle, haven’t we? Science versus magic, man versus woman, Marvel versus DC, self-determined capitalist versus holy princess of an island tribe.

Death Valley was drawn again for this fight, meaning a low, open, hot, rocky environment. With each opponent aware of the other, they both know to end the fight as quickly as possible. For Iron Man, this means unleashing his full garrison of beams, bombs, and bullets to create as destructive a force as possible to knock out Wonder Woman. While she’s near-invulnerable, she is not beyond injury, and her shield only provides so much cover from explosive fire. On the other hand, she could get the drop on Iron Man from the word “go” with one quick lasso over his head or shoulders. Over the shoulders, she can easily restrain him and pull him close to rip open his armor with her bare hands. Over the head... well, that becomes a suit of armor without a helmet, to put it lightly.

Say Iron Man starts with his jets and flies up out of Wonder Woman’s range, though. Would she super-jump at him? Throw her sword? Pull a Captain America and ricochet her shield around his field of view? She has beaten a fair number of DC powerhouses in her time, including Power Girl, Deathstroke, and universal bracket buster Batman. Meanwhile, Iron Man is not without countermeasures, having fought the likes of Thor, Hulk, and Spider-Man (err, except Wonder Woman once wielded Thor’s hammer in a brief crossover).

Does this fight take place in the air or stay rooted to the earth? Who has the faster reflexes? Who can attack and block with greater strength, or out-think their opponent to find a clever advantage? These are the questions of every super-powered debate like this, and in the end, they are answered by our impressions of these characters. You had better believe I am preparing to cop out and declare this one a tie, because the only satisfying answer is going to take place in your imagination. Neither side gave ground on this fight, with an equal number of attendees firmly planted in both characters’ camps.

First Round Supervillain Matchups:
• Sandman vs Clayface
• Joker vs Green Goblin
• Sabertooth vs Venom
• Lex Luthor vs Doctor Doom
• Poison Ivy vs Namor
• Brainiac vs Master Mold
• Magneto vs Sinestro
• Kingpin vs Ra’s al Ghul

With healthy attendance and the fun of assembling the bracket behind us, the Teen Center scheduled another debate, this time a Supervillain Showdown. Two rules were changed for this version of the bracket: villains were allowed access to their henchmen, and each villain was given a day’s preparation before the match. (Heroes are required to respond to danger at a moment’s notice, whereas villains are schemers.)
How about the arguments themselves? Jennifer and I made sure to keep the respective DC and Marvel Encyclopedias on hand for specific questions, which in these debates concerned height, weight, limits of characters’ equipment and powers, and personal durability. Arguments were recorded on a notepad to share later via the Richland Library’s blog. Figure 2 includes some case studies in the (il)logic and methods used by teens in each debate, as recorded on the blog. These posts led to some amusing reactions from customers in the building. Teens who were unable to attend the events followed up on the results and would often re-enact certain moments in the debates.

For the final event, I used all of the characters who won their first rounds in previous brackets, thereby maintaining a 16-character bracket that teens would recognize and challenge. In addition, locations from around the world, both real and fictional, were drawn from a hat to add an element of random chance. The locations included the Florida Everglades; Columbia, South Carolina; an aircraft carrier; the Amazon rain forest; a New York City subway station; an active volcano; the Grand Canyon; Mt. Everest; a S.H.I.E.L.D. Helicarrier; the Sahara Desert; Death Valley; the African Savannah; an underground mine; and the International Space Station.

Superheroes & Villains First Round Combined Matchups
- Deadpool v Joker (Everglades)
- Lex Luthor v Iron Man (Columbia, SC)
- Spider-Man v Poison Ivy (Aircraft Carrier)
- Green Arrow v Kingpin (Amazon)
- Clayface v She-Hulk (Subway Station)
- Wonder Woman v Magneto (Volcano)
- Flash v Brainiac (Grand Canyon)
- Batman v Sabertooth (Mt. Everest)

Prizes at each debate were awarded on the basis of participation and persuasive arguments. Cookies were distributed to everyone who contributed an argument. At the Supervillain Showdown, a Joker statue was awarded to the most active and persuasive participant. At the Superheroes & Villains Showdown, a Batman Beyond snapback hat was the main prize.

NEW VIEWPOINTS
During Free Comic Book Day last year, comics creators hosted in the library were invited to give their input on the Superhero Showdown bracket, butting heads with teens in the room who felt differently. Among them, Severin Piehl, Cassandra Wedeking, Chris Sims, and Chad Bowers drew from a deeper well of comics history and author citation than the teens, representing a whole different angle on several characters.

For example, teens considered Deadpool an automatic win against Mr. Fantastic (Deadpool is wacky and uses guns; Mr. Fantastic is a super-stretchy scientist caught off guard and functions better as leader of the Fantastic Four than as a solo fighter). At that point in the bracket, Chris Sims provided his take: “I can sum up why Mr. Fantastic wins in one sentence: Mr. Fantastic was created by Jack Kirby, semicolon, Deadpool was created by Rob Liefeld.” Teens called him out for simplifying the argument, but since this was a speculative extra take on the bracket, the rules were relaxed. This is one example of how the bracket’s life was extended into the library’s other programs and guest appearances.

NEXT VERSION
With these debates behind us, the Teen Center will focus on a more open-ended and less combative fictional competition in 2015 with a program tentatively titled Superhero 911. This follow-up program was designed in the wake of the brackets’ clearest weaknesses, relying on franchise knowledge and violence.

The setup is simple: participants will write/draw characters on blank cards to be assembled into a shuffled deck. The characters can be well-known or completely original, as long as their abilities are clearly defined.

Another deck will be constructed from written/drawn scenarios of varying intensity, from “Cat stuck in tree” to “Imminent asteroid collision.” Players draw five character cards each, then place five scenario cards face down on the playing area. Each scenario is revealed one at a time and players assign each one a character from their hands. The tension of the game comes from hoping each character is being assigned to the right emergency, with inevitable mismatches like “Batman will take care of this grease fire” or “Sailor Moon will stop the dam from bursting…somehow…”

If you are looking for an inexpensive, highly social program to capitalize on seasoned comics readers, I hope that you liked some of the ideas shared here and will implement (and improve!) them in your system. Your comics-reading customers (and staff) will have a blast.

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Better Bracket Maker - http://betterbrack- etmaker.com/ (helps to keep track of who goes where)
Marvel vs DC Epic Trailer - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KxiHVGch8I
Epic Rap Battles of History - http://www.epicrapbattlesofhistory.com/
Today’s libraries are at an unprecedented juncture in their ability to connect with their users/members. To stay relevant in the coming decade, libraries will need to examine how they view themselves and how their users perceive their value. Those with a clear mission statement and strategic plan that defines how they will add value to their users’ lives will lead the way within the librarianship profession.

As a beginning, it’s time to define a new brand for libraries, and let’s make sure it leaves people soaring, not snoring. I’ve always studied other professional fields as a mean to try and understand the profession of librarianship and the future of the field. In particular, I’m particularly interested in looking at points in the history of other professions and reviewing where mistakes have been made from which we might learn valuable lessons.

You undoubtedly already know some of the most famous examples: railroads that didn’t understand they were in the transportation business; Hollywood studios that thought they were in the movie business instead of the entertainment business; and Polaroid and Kodak thinking they were in the film/camera business rather than the photography business.

Today, as I listen and read about our profession of librarianship, I have a gnawing feeling when it comes to the issue of branding. All too often I find parallels between the examples just mentioned and what I see librarians doing in shaping our users’ perceptions of librarianship. The result could have a major effect on the future of our profession. It’s important to remember that, for most of those professions that don’t truly understand where they added value for their customers, there was not a happy ending.

So, what’s the point? Some librarians continue to believe in and accept “books” as their brand. I would argue that the context in which libraries operate today has already changed dramatically and certainly will continue to do so in the future. Some reports suggest that there is “shifting needs, shifting brands.” That statement gives us the keys to redefining our brand.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS
In redefining a brand, it’s important to understand where you provide differentiation for the end-user. A brand of “books” doesn’t offer much differentiation. Yet, differentiators that match user needs and relevance can, in part, be determined by perceptions, which are something we can and should define to be something other than books.

In doing that, I think we need to ask some very important questions of our users. For instance:

- What are they working on?
- What are they trying to accomplish? How?
- Where in that process can we add new, differentiating value?

If we can do that in a number of ways, then we need to think about a phrase or words that encapsulate that value and express it in a descriptive and memorable manner. However, it’s simply not going to happen in the word, “books.” It’s simply lacking in today’s environment.

This point was underscored for me when Library Journal printed a column after Amazon announced its new Lending Library. “The massive amount of press attention is not only discussing new services…but, more importantly, they rarely mention libraries and what they offer,” wrote Gary Price, editor of LJ’s infoDOCKET. “So, it’s as much [a point of concern] about mindshare and relevance as it is about a new Amazon service.”

Let’s understand, though, that this question of mindshare and relevance is as much our fault as librarians as it is anyone’s. Historically, we simply have not actively defined the perception or the brand to be about anything but printed books. We use books in our advertisements. If our discovery tools have a browse function, we use a visual representation of a book’s spine or cover. Why? Why not instead use audio clips from the authors or photography to give a portrayal of what a work is about? Why do we lock ourselves into the “book” brand?

A Library’s Brand Should Lead to Knowledge Creation

» For libraries to remain relevant, they should clearly articulate their value and embrace innovation.*
Let me be clear: I love books, and I deeply believe in them as a medium. However, I realize that they are not the only medium for creating and conveying knowledge. Nor are libraries, or books, any longer the only places where information can be obtained, another reality to consider in our branding exercise.

A point most everyone, including librarians, agrees on is that today, information is easily accessible and truly ubiquitous. We can retrieve information by tapping or talking into our mobile devices, use normal conversation to form inquiries, and receive answers in mere moments. It’s fast, it’s easy.

So who needs a library or a librarian? This is why librarians need to excel in articulating where they add value and how it’s captured in their branding.

FINDING VALUE
While information is ubiquitous today, so is so-called “expertise.” Social media, blogs, podcasts, and TV media all permit, promote, and foster the creation of so-called experts. The use of research and facts to support positions, particularly research and facts that have passed through tests normally applied to scholarship, have become totally secondary, if required at all.

Thoughts have become messages limited to 140 characters (Twitter) or videos that need to be limited to three minutes (YouTube), fifteen seconds (Instagram), or six seconds (Vine.co). Facebook and Google use profiling to place us in silos to increase ad sales. However, those silos also result in people no longer thoughtfully exploring ideas or positions, particularly those that might conflict with their points-of-view. As a result, we end up with a society, community, or campus where we only read what we agree with and count on Tweets or friends to tell us what we think we need to know. Simplicity triumphs over sophistication.

What do these trends have to do with libraries and librarians? This environment gives librarians the opportunity to create new, real, sustaining value…and to embrace change.

Yet today, all too often, in a rush to keep up, we have simply tried to adopt and emulate new information tools (“Look at our new search tool…it’s just like Google!”). We did not take the time to make clear the differentiating values librarianship provides in doing that: deep Web searching, alternate points of view, appropriateness, authoritativeness, and authenticity. With remote access devices and without the face-to-face interaction with users, librarians became one with their technology, which is why so many of us have ended up in painful discussions about the profession and its future.

We need to realize these new realities when defining a new brand for our profession. Our new brand must reach out and extend across all the mediums and all the devices libraries use to conveying existing knowledge. Furthermore, we need to embrace all people across all societies to expose them to a branding that captures and conveys the updated value of librarianship. Let’s next discuss how we can determine that and what the brand might be.

MISSION STATEMENTS SHOULD DEFINE US. BRANDING SHOULD MAKE US MEMORABLE
In his work, The Atlas of New Librarianship,” David Lankes provides this mission statement for librarians: “The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities.”

This simple, clear, and compelling statement creates a firm foundation for us to use in creating a new brand. My take on Lankes’ mission statement is that we, as librarians, must take it as our duty and our responsibility to help people produce knowledge through the investigation and use of facts, truths, and principles.

As noted above, our brand is critically important to our future. We also need to remember that when changing a brand, marketing experts often talk about the need to ensure that it aligns with the way the organization actually operates. The users/members of your library want to see that you and your organization “walk the talk” which, given the knowledge creation approach, is totally consistent with what we see actually happening in many of the leading libraries today. Collaborative learning areas, maker spaces, innovation hubs, and visualization tools are all examples of a new dimension of knowledge creation that goes well beyond reading books.

REDEFINING THE FUTURE
These examples are now offering solid support for consideration in creation of a new brand. It gives librarianship the opportunity to reposition expertise as something that must be earned and measured by established academic criteria and not just creative marketing.

If we look at the recently built Hunt Library at North Carolina State, the newly announced, planned library at Temple University, or the transformation of existing facilities at the University of Oklahoma Libraries, you can see these recurring themes emerging with the use of phrases such as collaborative workspaces, intellectual commons/crossroads, knowledge creation, innovation, and entrepreneurial centers.

In other words, they are places where ideas come together, intersect, are examined, analyzed, and improved. This exploration is done under the guidance of people who have earned the title “expert” through the normal channels of academic rigor and peer review, using investments in technology to support this exchange. As a result, librarians are increasingly able to be where their users are located and add new and demonstrable value to the knowledge creation and supply chain.

What branding phrase encapsulates those themes? I’ll offer some possibilities:

• Libraries: A time to know, a time to grow.
• We feed hungry minds at the Library.
• Growing requires knowing.
• The world’s best brain food: Libraries.
• Creating knowledge? The Library has what you need.
• Your Library. Come grow your mind.

These suggestions at least focus on the result (knowledge) and not the process (read). By clearly understanding where librarianship offers new, differentiated value to our end-users, encapsulating it in forward-thinking and memorable branding, and tying it to the demonstration of knowledge creation through innovative use of space and resources, we can ensure the value of librarianship is both well understood and as ubiquitous as information today.

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Library Instruction Design: Learning from Google and Apple

» The philosophies and principles of successful businesses can inspire today’s library instructors.*

BY DI SU

Library instruction is commonly encountered in academic libraries, where it is part of a librarian’s job to educate library users. The term “library instruction” may cover or represent many other terms, such as library orientation, library tours, library sessions, library courses, bibliographic instruction, user education, research consultation, reference service, and information literacy teaching.

Library instruction programs are created and organized to fulfill the mission of supporting users in the use of library facilities and information resources, which are ever-changing in the digital age. The contents of a library instruction program may range from simply how to locate books on the shelf to the syllabus of a semester-long, credit-bearing course in library and information science. Instructors may be a library staff member, an instructional librarian, a library school faculty member, or a college professor of an academic discipline other than library science.

In designing a library instruction program, some popular philosophical goals espoused are “to help all library users,” “to teach students the skills needed to complete their assignments,” and “to support the universities’ academic programs, to create life-long learners.” Traditional teaching methods are enhanced by the Internet via virtual tutorials, distance learning, online course management software, web tools, webinars, and massive open online courses (MOOCs).

Within the field of library instruction, some believe that academic librarians deserve faculty status while others believe that they are more like technical trainers. One of the tasks librarians perform is to categorize and organize information resources for easier and more efficient use by patrons. Maybe it’s time for us to use library instruction activities according to their styles.

In addition to personal teaching styles, we may divide library instruction into two broader styles: yin and yang.4 we might call them. Design philosophies from the business world can aid our design of library instruction programs. We admire the stunning achievements of both Google and Apple. Their success is global and their influence is well beyond the business world. There must be something we can learn from them.

Google and Apple have some important characteristics in common: innovation, simplicity, and user-friendliness are the most noticeable. They win customer’s heart by applying these principles to their products. However, the two companies have adopted rather different philosophies in product design. Google’s approach is from the bottom up, while Apple’s approach is top down. Surprisingly, both are successful. Library instruction program designers may learn from these differing but complementary approaches to better meet various teaching objectives. In library instruction program design:

• A Google-style approach provides what the learner wants to learn.
• An Apple-style approach introduces what the instructor believes the learner needs to learn and will want to learn.

Because there are various teaching objectives serving different purposes, these two design philosophies should be able to coexist.

The Google Style

The World Wide Web impacts people’s lives in an unprecedented way. Google rules the web. Google’s mission is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” While others were rushing to become portals, web directories, or metasearch engines, Google followed its mission religiously, sticking with its original home page design. Web users have become so used to seeing this familiar interface as a default search “place to go” that “just google it” has become a much-heard recommendation. By the end of 2012, Google had
The late Steve Jobs was a dictator, a benevolent one. He cofounded the company in 1976, was forced out in 1985, and returned in 1997. In 1998, aiming at the unlimited potential of the Internet, the iMac—"I for the Internet," Jobs explained—was introduced.

86.3 percent of the search engine market share in the United States.6

The so-called “Google effect” is a phenomenon in information-seeking behavior. Instead of remembering where they found a piece of information before, or where Google took them for that information, people try to remember how they found the information via Google. When researchers remember where information is stored rather than the information itself, the nature of their research itself might change.6

The super speed of Google search also develops an impatient 3-click limitation, by which anything beyond three clicks is just too many. Whether this habit is good or bad in terms of human behavioral development remains to be seen.

THE GOOGLE PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES
User first is the centerpiece of Google’s philosophy and the first thing stated on the company’s philosophy web page: Ten Things We Know to be True: Focus on the user and all else will follow.7 In other words, if the user company’s philosophy web page: Ten Things philosophy and the first thing stated on the User first is the centerpiece of Google’s remains to be seen.

Google Calendar. Other parts of the Google philosophy include the following:

Simplicity makes Google more attractive and more visible to users.

Innovative is the key adjective in Google’s culture. The company allots employees 20 percent of their total time at work to pursue their own innovative projects (such as Google Car).

Integrity earns trust. Google never manipulates ranking to put its business partners higher in search results, and no one can buy high PageRank.

Do what you are good at. Concentration and focus on the signature products makes Google the leader in its core business: Internet search technology.

Openness helps develop and improve products. Google believes that more brains are better than one.8 Democracy on the web works. Its open-source strategy makes many programmers all over the world powerful sources for software development.9

Speed is critical in doing business in the information age, especially in the Internet search business. The Google search engine helps you complete a sentence as you type, suggest alternatives when you make a typo, tells you how many hits they found and how long it has spent on the search, and copies your search term to a new search function when you switch, typically within a fraction of a second.

Bottom-up. A bottom-up approach begins with details and works up to the highest conceptual level, relying on consumer data and user feedback. Decisions are data-driven, and “more data is better data,” is a popular maxim among Google’s engineers.10

The infinity of information. Indexed web pages, or the Surface Web, represent only a fraction of the whole web world. The Deep Web, or Invisible Web, is growing rapidly. This means that the potential of the search engine business is huge.

It can always be better. Being great is just a starting point, not an end point. Perfectionism is in Google’s genes, and there is always room for improvement.

THE APPLE STYLE
It is amazing to see how loyal, or more accurately, obsessed, Apple users are. The iPhone 5 was so desired that Apple sold two million units in the first 24 hours.

The late Steve Jobs was a dictator, a benevolent one. He cofounded the company in 1976, was forced out in 1985, and returned in 1997. In 1998, aiming at the unlimited potential of the Internet, the iMac—"I for the Internet," Jobs explained—was introduced. After a sensational success of the iPod in 2001, Apple introduced a stream of consumer electronics that dramatically changed people’s lifestyles. The core business of Apple, Inc., now includes personal computers, software, hardware, consumer electronics and services, making it an unparalleled business ecosystem.

APPLY PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES
When one looks at an Apple product, the inevitable impression is “elegance.” Adhering to its core philosophy, aesthetics above all, Apple cares about how products look and feel. Jobs was a perfectionist and his sense of aesthetic was total. Apple’s philosophy also includes the following:

User-friendly. Apple knows that what people want is not only a pleasing look and feel, but also ease of use. Many of today’s common features, such as the graphical user interface (GUI), the computer mouse, the click wheel, and touch-sensitive glass screen were introduced and popularized by Apple and have become industry standards.

Simplicity. Simple design actually requires more time, concentration, skill, details, and above all, a deeper understanding of the product. Apple’s advantage is that it has done software and hardware design since its birth. The integration of the two segments in the design process not only improves efficiently but also makes it easier to follow and implement Apple’s consistent design principle: “simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.”

Top-down. When it comes to product design, Apple is famously secretive and closed. It pays little attention to market research. According to Jobs, it is Apple’s job to offer what the consumers need, to know what they want…"People don’t know what they want until you show it to them."11 Apple’s products guide consumers to enjoy using them, with the likelihood of pleasant surprises. Consumers are given the opportunity to find out what they will want, things beyond their expectation and imagination.

Think different. This theme of a 1997 commercial advertisement focused on the spirit of creativity and innovation. It’s about thinking outside of the box, having a visionary take on creating great products.

CORPORATE COMPARISONS
As two of the most successful technology companies in the world, Google and
Apple are similar in their characteristics, philosophies, and principles, but different in many ways.

**Similarities:**

*Ambition* is the source of motivation. Google’s original mission was modest. “To make it easier to find high-quality information on the web.” That changed to a seemingly impossible one: “To organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” The key change is the word “organize,” which raises the bar much higher and requires more work. Google Maps, Google Books, and Google Scholar are all built in the furtherance of this grand mission.

For anything that Apple makes and will make, be it hardware, software, or a service, the company strives to make great products and influence the future for the better. Apple wants to make “some significant contributions to the society at large.”

*Innovation.* Google was not the first search engine. It finally stands out from the crowd because of its innovative way of thinking. A lot of Apple’s great products are not inventions but innovations, superseding existing products or ideas.

*Simplicity.* The Google search engine’s page design has become a de facto imprint of the Internet because of its simplicity. Apple’s product design shows no unnecessary parts...less is more.

*User-Friendliness.* Google’s products are thoughtfully designed for convenience, accuracy, and efficiency. When establishing Apple, Jobs’ original idea was to make computers personal, approachable by ordinary people with no professional background. His philosophy was that high-tech machines could be as friendly as household appliances, thus appearing to novice consumers.

**Differences:**

*Background.* A product of the Internet, Google is young, and its business is mainly in software and Internet services. Apple has a long company history in both hardware and software.

*Culture.* Google hires educated people with the highest-level academic degrees possible. There were 40 PhDs among the company’s first hundred engineers. Known for its openness, the company is managed by a team of leaders. Apple is one of the most secretive companies in the world and was ruled by one person for decades.

*Product Design.* Google sees what consumers want by gathering data, and constantly modifies its products to serve people better. Its product design features data-driven decision-making, a bottom up style. Apple looks for what consumers will want and spends as much as 20 percent of its industrial-design time on concepts. Its approach in product design features full control by a small group of designers, a top down style.

**WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE SUCCESS OF GOOGLE AND APPLE?**

Although, as academics, we live in a different world, there must be something in Google and Apple worth our learning, things that we can borrow to make our library instruction programs better. What we intend to borrow from Google and Apple are philosophizes, beliefs, ways of thinking, strategies, and principals. Consider the following:

*Designs have goals and purposes.* A product or a program is created to serve the mission of the company or institution. In academia, the mission of the college or university is to educate people. The design purpose of its library instruction program is to serve students and faculty well, and its goal is to meet the educational needs of the learning community.

*Designs have objects and an audience.* A product or a program is designed for a target user group. We design library instruction programs for students, faculty, and library users in general.

*Designs are guided by philosophy and principles.* A designer’s philosophy dictates the style of the product or the program, the presentation, the direction, and ultimately the outcomes from the user.

**FROM BUSINESS TO EDUCATION**

In a recent faculty focus group, one professor suggested that the library adopt a more “Google-style” approach to library databases, including the library catalog. While representing a typical view of Google’s product design style, the comment connects a commercial product to educational products. We can suppose that the suggestion was a result of positive user experiences in Google searching, and it is only natural that people would like to have a Google-style library database.

If you ask an Apple user why he or she uses a Mac instead of a Windows PC, the answer would probably be because it is user-friendly.

**Table 1** is an attempt to link practice in the business world and activities in the educational field.

**FROM CONSUMER PRODUCT DESIGN TO ACADEMIC PROGRAM DESIGN**

In implementing the task of designing library instruction programs, we are guided by established guidelines, and there are many in existence. But we can use a different approach in library instruction program design by learning from Google and Apple. Using product design philosophies for educational program design in the hope of improving library instruction.

Based on the purposes of these programs, we may divide library instruction into two categories, the Google-style and the Apple style, as illustrated in **Table 2**.

Now, let’s discuss each philosophy or principle in application to library instruction.

*User-friendliness.* In an educational setting we may call it “learner-friendliness.” The use of jargon is not considerate, especially when teaching a beginner’s class. It is fine to use jargon in a more advanced class after the concept has been introduced and explained. Plain English is preferred, especially when the learner’s first language is other than English. Adjust the speed of talking by observing learner’s responses and reactions. Different audiences (older or younger) may appreciate different talking speeds to digest information fully. Use common sense when introducing online tutorial and information literacy web page design, which should make navigation easy and intuitive.

*Simplicity.* Less is more. Too much information is nearly as bad as no information. In designing an IL web page, avoid using overly fancy layout, unnecessary plug-ins, and...
unusual background colors. Online learners may not get the same results when accessing your website from different locations, via different computers or devices. PowerPoint slides are meant to be read by audience from a distance.

**Innovation.** Use varied ways to present your lecture, to deliver your message and to engage students. For example, using images—a picture, photograph, table, graph, diagram, chart, drawing, figure, or illustration—is often more powerful an easier to understand than text.

**Do what you are good at.** Library instruction should be a team effort, using various librarians’ academic backgrounds and specialties. Most academic libraries have a subject liaison program through which the library keeps a close relationship with other departments to meet their academic heads. Librarians with training in special fields can make use of their specialties in developing topical instruction programs. For example, a librarian with an MBA may be able to provide pertinent suggestions on the design of a business information literacy instruction program.

**It can always be better.** “Learning never ends” is a goal not just for students. Teaching methods in the digital age are changing constantly and advances in technology have enabled the creation of new teaching platforms, including virtual tutorials, MOOCs, and webinars.

**The infinity of information.** Both information availability and information accessibility have improved dramatically as a result of the digital revolution. Content, user interfaces, built-in functionalities, and search features in electronic databases are changing so rapidly that an information resources survey has become a necessity when preparing any sort of library instruction.

**Openness.** An integrated information literacy component in a given course works well only when the librarian and the course professor communicate effectively. The librarian must be familiar with the course objectives, contents, and expected outcomes before designing commensurate library instruction. Learning from library colleagues on a subject matter or technical issue may help overlooking important points when preparing a lesson plan.

**Bottom-up.** Libraries are accustomed to collecting user data on a regular basis, including qualitative for general purposes and quantitative for statistical analysis. Data can also be used for assessing, revising, experimenting with, and improving library instruction programs. The data can show what the learner really wanted to learn, how helpful the current library instruction programs are, and what kinds of programs we should offer in the future.

**Aesthetics.** In library instruction, PowerPoint slides can be artistically beautiful. Information literacy instructional web pages can be pleasant to view and navigate through. We can even apply musical concepts such as rhythm, tempo, pitch, and dynamics to speech to make our lectures more attractive.

**Think different.** While we respect history, thinking outside the box creates new programs (more useful) for the learners, and new opportunities (more competitive positions and leadership) for the library.

**Top-down.** When designing a library instruction program, it is important to consider the learner’s needs. Table 2 shows how philosophies and principles from Google and Apple can be applied to library instruction

**TABLE 2 Philosophies and Principles we may borrow from Google and Apple**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHILOSOPHY OR PRINCIPLE</th>
<th>GOOGLE STYLE</th>
<th>APPLE STYLE</th>
<th>APPLYING TO LIBRARY INSTRUCTION (LI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User-Friendliness</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Using plain EnglishGuiding user intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Avoiding creating distractionsConcentrating on the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Looking for new ways of teachingThinking creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do what you Are good at</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Finding comfort zonesUtilizing your specialty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It can always Be better</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Improving teaching methodsPerfecting the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The infinity of information</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Keeping up with current trendsUpdating teaching contents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Collaborating with colleaguesLearning from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Using data to refine the programProviding what the learning wants to Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Using styles in presentationMaking an LI web page attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Different</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Thinking outside the boxMaking an ambitious plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Figuring out what the learner will wantIntroducing what the learner needs to learn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Google and Apple each follow their own philosophies and use different design principles, they also overlap and have areas of common ground. When designing a library instruction program, it is possible to use either the Google approach or the Apple approach, depending on the subject of the program, the content of the instruction, and the characteristics of the learners.

BORROWING FROM THE BEST
Although Google and Apple each follow their own philosophies and use different design principles, they also overlap and have areas of common ground. When designing a library instruction program, it is possible to use either the Google approach or the Apple approach, depending on the subject of the program, the content of the instruction, and the characteristics of the learners.

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FOOTNOTES (THESE NUMBERS DO NOT CORRESPOND TO THE NUMBERS IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT):
1For decades, whether the academic librarian has an educator’s role and in particular, faculty status, has been a popular topic for debate. William Miller’s College Librarian-ship gives the background and a history of the issue [Miller, William, and D. Stephen Rockwood, eds. (1981). College Librarian-ship. Metuchen. NJ: The Scarecrow Press].
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