Future and value

The Library as Strategic Partner

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About this Lively Session

♢ Background research: a brief overview
  ♢ Economic macrotrends: post-growth, saturation, stagnation theories
  ♢ Pressures on higher education: cost and access
  ♢ Library pressures: stagnant support & budgets post-recession

♢ Interactive exercises, un-conference-style
  ♢ Live poll & discussion

♢ Takeaways for you and your home libraries:
  ♢ Live poll compilations emailed to session participants,
  ♢ Conference paper: https://works.bepress.com/antjemays
Part 1

✧ Background:
  ✧ Broader economic trends
  ✧ Higher education pressures
  ✧ Library pressures
  ✧ Professional impact & value
Winter is coming: economic macrotrends

◊ Post-growth, no growth, stagnation theories
◊ Technological saturation
◊ Evolution toward “medieval economy”:
  ◯ high-end niche markets
  ◯ low-tech service sector
◊ Pressures on higher education:
  ◯ cost, debt, access, value, returns
◊ Library pressures: budgets, value judgments
Economic winter: snowing on libraries

- Higher education access, cost, debt, value judgments
- Post-recession stagnation for library support & budgets
- Stakeholders’ outdated library perceptions
- Value & ROI: mismatched & incomplete measures
- Negative prognoses
- Negative value judgments
- Impact on the profession: fear, uncertainty, dissatisfaction
Professions and value judgments

- **Financial industry** – negative global impact of poor judgment
  - Exotic investment instruments: securitized debt of shaky underlying value
  - Cascade of financial collapses → widespread economic harm

- Sentiment in the profession:
  - self-correct → instill values
  - emphasize ethics in business education

*Bierman (2010); Sigurjónsson et al (2015).*
Professions and value judgments, ctd.

◊ **Library profession** – positive impact of trustworthy information services
  ◇ Highly ranked among most trusted professions
  ◇ Effective services provider → known for delivering what users need
  ◇ Natural ally in widely-needed skill development

◊ **Sentiment in the profession:**
  ◇ Negative self-image
  ◇ Timid in recognizing own value

*Horrigan (2016; 2015); Lockwood & Ritter (2016); OECD (2012).*
Trust and viable information

- 90% agree that it is important to educate people on how to find trustworthy information.
- 84% agree that they trust information more when it is given by a professional.
- 66% agree that it is harder than ever to find trustworthy information.

Most likely sources of trustworthy information

Most trusted professions

- Librarians second only to nurses

1. Nurses: 81%
2. Librarians: 78%
3. Pharmacists: 74%
4. Medical Doctors: 68%
5. High school teachers: 59%
6. Police officers: 59%
7. Clergy: 44%
8. Funeral directors: 44%
9. Accountants: 43%

Source: Lockwood & Ritter (2016). Maine State Library Trusted Professions Survey. (n=400)
A few positive strategies

- Soft-advocacy -- beyond fundraising -- through expertise
- Partner across obvious lines (campus, community)
- Community engagement → leverage expertise
- Engage with local business community
  - Skill development
  - Economic development
- Engage with professionals in other industries
- Look to other industries for creative solutions
Part 2

- Interactives:
  - Mentimeter live polls
  - Discussions
Interactive Reflections

Live polls – 9 questions:

- **Basics**: organizations, roles – Q. 1-2
- **Library environments**: integration vs. isolation – Q.3-4
- **Information professions**: challenges & opportunities – Q.5-8
- **Closing thoughts**: open-ended – Q.9
Interactive poll results:

- The next 9 slides show session participants’ responses from the interactive Mentimeter live polls.
1. What type of organization are you with?

- Academic library: research
- Corporate library
- Government office
- University - other office
- Vendor
- Other

- Academic library: 2-4 year college: 1
- 5
- Other: 1
2. What is your role?

- Librarian: 2
- Library administrator: 4
- University administrator: 0
- Professor/teacher: 0
- Researcher: 0
- Vendor: 0
- Other: 1

Total respondents: 7
3. How integrated is your library in your broader organization and community?

- My library is consulted early in developing new programs.
  - 2.6

- On my campus, my librarians are respected as equal professionals among the faculty.
  - 2.1

- My library and parent administrators share effective and open communication.
  - 3

- My library is valued and supported by administrators and stakeholders.
  - 2.9

- Yes, very much so
4. How isolated is your library from the organization and broader community?

- Connecting with faculty and students is difficult. 2.3
- The value of my library’s collections is misunderstood / not appreciated. 2.7
- The value of my library’s information services is not appreciated. 2.3

[Image]
5. What key challenges do you see for library/information professionals?

- Funding
- Open access
- Budget is key
- Finding new funding sources. Communicating value.
- DRM
- Open access
- Shifts in higher ed more broadly
- Sustainability of scholarly communication
- Faculty who don’t require quality research = students who don’t use the library. Resources are costing more and library budgets are shrinking.
6. What great opportunities do you see for library / information professionals?

- Moving into non-traditional areas and services
- Potential for greater integration with research and scholarly communications lifecycles.
- Credible source of reliable information in light of all the fake news
- Data visualization services / moving into other service areas.
- Better integration to community
- Preserving social media networks for the historical record – beyond web archiving, preserving nodes and pathways.
7. Society’s unassigned problems: What needs are library professionals strongly suited to address?

Credible information sources

Assistance to the broader campus community, including alumni and community members

Combat dumbing down

Providing research support for non-profits and local governments.
8. Soft advocacy: What can library professionals do to be effective ambassadors for the profession?

- Stop thinking of/communicating about libraries using technical jargon
- Be open to hiring non-MLS employees to work in our libraries
- Be service oriented. Help navigate our users through the complicated info-space
- Take opportunities to always talk to non-librarians
- Show how our skill set can help most situations
- Establish partnerships with academic depts where possible

Show value by releasing statistics on services rendered and value added to programs and degrees. Collaboration with students on projects.

Don't inflate what we do to non-traditional library users. Talk about libraries in a way that makes sense to the audience.
9. Your closing thoughts: free-form & open-ended

- academic freedom
- leadership
- digital services
- technology services
- neoliberalism
- users where they are
- observe other industries
- be responsive
- advocacy for new funding
- collaborate with others
- corporate university
- greater marketing
- not bound by legacy
- adaptive services
- demonstrate value
- adaptable
- be flexible
- analyze
- value-added
- publishing
- be helpful
- disability outreach
- service outside
- meet patrons
- think creatively
- crises
Part 3

More background research:
Selected readings
Additional Readings


Additional Readings, ctd.


Additional Readings, ctd.


Additional Readings, ctd.


Additional Readings, ctd.


Questions?

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