

Innovation and entrepreneurship

By: Michael A. Crumpton

[Michael A. Crumpton](#), (2012), "Innovation and entrepreneurship", The Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances, Vol. 25 Iss: 3 pp. 98 - 101

Made available courtesy of Emerald Publishing:

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?issn=0888-045x&volume=25&issue=3&articleid=17062883&show=abstract>

*****Reprinted with permission. No further reproduction is authorized without written permission from Emerald Publishing. This version of the document is not the version of record. Figures and/or pictures may be missing from this format of the document. *****

Abstract:

Purpose – This article aims to discuss the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in today's economic environment and why such activities should be part of leadership.

Design/methodology/approach – The article references journals and conference activity that have demonstrated successful innovation activities.

Findings – References and additional reading provide case studies and examples of successful innovative ideas. It is noted that more innovation and resulting entrepreneurial activities will be needed as libraries redefine themselves.

Practical implications – Innovation can work but needs the culture in which to operate.

Social implications – Collaboration with the broader community is not only beneficial but necessary in a global society.

Originality/value – The article references both an active journal and conference cycle for persons interested in more information.

Keywords: innovation | entrepreneurship | creativity | leadership | creative thinking | librarianship | library finances

Article:

This column over the last couple of years has been with regard to techniques and ideas that impact financial decision making within our libraries. And also in recent years, many aspects of librarianship have changed and this includes financial and economic considerations in the operations of our facilities and the managing of our budgets. This has led a drive to look for more innovative methods and techniques to offset budget woes, as well as infusing some people with an entrepreneurial spirit to create, promote and utilize products, processes and services in different ways. It is therefore appropriate to discuss innovation and entrepreneurship as it relates to leading results.

So what exactly is innovation or the concept of being innovative? Innovation is defined as creating better or more effective or more efficient processes and services or generating the ideas or culture that will breed this creativity. This is coupled with the willingness to implement changes to existing methods or techniques in order to gain the benefits of greater efficiency. Libraries have begun to view the value that an innovative supportive culture can bring as it relates to ideas that move traditional approaches for service and resources to new and riskier ways of functioning. Yes, being innovative can be risky, but only in the sense of overcoming the fear of doing something different.

Examples of successful innovation can be read in Rush Miller's "Damn the Recession, Full Speed Ahead" (Miller, 2012) and Ronald C. Jantz's "Innovation in Academic Libraries: An Analysis of University Librarian's Perspectives", (Jantz, 2012) both of which have full citations listed at the end of this article. Both of these articles stress the importance of leadership in establishing the vision, promoting the culture and supporting the efforts made on behalf of innovative initiatives. This is true to the very foundations of innovation as defined by the robotics engineer Joseph F. Engelberger who put innovation into the simplistic definition of; recognizing a need, creating a solution with competent people and appropriate technology and finally, the financial support needed to implement. Leadership must be present at all stages.

Eric von Hippel in his classic book, *Sources of Innovation* identifies "end-user innovation" as the driving force for ideas and solutions that can make a change to processes, products and services. For libraries, serving the needs of the end-user is indicative of every library's mission statement so it stands to reason that changes to patron needs should be reflected in needed changes to library services and resource allocations. Sheryl Knab, Editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Library Innovation* (www.libraryinnovation.org), in her opening comments for the journal said, "True library innovation has the potential to make a difference to our end users' library experience and perhaps improve their quality of life to some degree". In today's economic environment innovation will be sorely needed to meet the changes imposed by reduced budgets, technological enhancements and social expectations of libraries that are evolving.

Innovation can take different directions as it impacts products and processes. This includes changing the method that a process takes in how it is delivered to the end-user, changing what services are offered and this might include discontinuing outdated services or support, changes that are conceptual as to how end-users perceive of use the library as it relates to the larger organization of community and changes to the specific mission that the library is focused on from the inside, how do you and your staff see who you are and what you are doing. You see these types of innovations in businesses as they change to meet customer demands, with your vendors as they change to modify product offerings or methods that improve their efficiency and with your community partners, who might be faced with similar challenges in which they seek innovative solutions.

Innovation is about making changes but it must be considered as more than just making changes in order to be perceived differently. Innovation requires definition and research and has a greater impact on the end-user by adding value to existing products and services and is considered lasting and sustainable. Libraries should approach innovation strategically in order to make permanent gains to organizational culture and end-user buy-in to new concepts and ideas. Jennifer Rowley in her article, "Should your library have an innovation strategy?" (Rowley, 2011) discusses the importance of a strategic approach. She writes about characteristics of successful innovation and discusses potential barriers involving political structure, external environmental factors as well as the internal organizational culture and structure. Success is creating that effective link between innovative outcomes and how it's accepted and utilized at any given point in time, like everything else, timing can be critical and should be part of the strategic consideration.

Developing innovation and creativity

Creativity experts cite age as a possible factor in creative output specifically as it relates to how an individual's question the status quo. According to Bob Kelleher, from EmployeeEngagement.com, creative thinking will be the way we define leadership in the future as questioning the status quo of existing services and ideas. In his presentation at the 2012 Annual Conference for the Society of Human Resources Management, Kelleher showed research on the amount of questions asked by children, teenagers, and then adults, which demonstrated a decline in how we question things as we age. Future research revealed a relationship to the rules and regulations that are imposed upon us as we move into adulthood. The creative leader will find ways to encourage organizations and people of all ages, to ask the questions that will lead to innovative ideas and concepts.

Part of a human resource perspective on how organizations develop a culture of innovation is to allow that creativity that will foster ideas for change. This includes considerations for how creativity is presented in job descriptions and/or evaluation tools, how new and creative ideas are

rewarded and how professional development opportunities are open ended so as to allow creative thinkers to get “outside the box”. Rowley views collaborating with others; departments, organizations, other institutions, etc, as a strength that librarians have and can be exploited into leading libraries into a culture of creativity that fosters innovative ideas with the resulting changes.

Innovation versus entrepreneurship

According to R. David Lankes' Atlas of New Librarianship, innovation is further defined by entrepreneurial activities. In the text his example centers around the capital or resources needed by an entrepreneur to successfully implement an innovative idea. Thus entrepreneurship demonstrates the innovation by putting the idea or concept into practical use with the infusion of resources, be it capital or support of institutional leadership. This is a capitalistic approach that libraries have seen, once again, with vendors and businesses first, but are now embracing as their own to drive innovation in their institutions and professional field. In fact the Kauffman Foundation has influenced innovative thinking and entrepreneurial proposals in their effort to engage citizens to mobilize society toward building and maintaining a sustainable existence. Viewing entrepreneurship as an exercise in social responsibility complements the missions of libraries and was the inspiration for the first conference for librarians on the subject of entrepreneurialism in 2009 (Kauffman, 2011).

This idea of a conference for librarians to celebrate their entrepreneurial attributes was repeated in 2011 and spawned a webinar and an edited book (listed in the references) that celebrated innovative and entrepreneurial contributions and accomplishments of each chapter's author(s). The third “Conference for Entrepreneurial Librarians” will take place on the campus of the University of North Carolina-Greensboro on May 16-17, 2013. The conference focus will be on social entrepreneurship in libraries, more information is available at:
<http://cloud.lib.wfu.edu/blog/entrelib/>

Conclusions

Leading results in today's libraries will require some innovative spirit to carry organizations through the changes that will need to be made to secure a sustainable future. And demonstrating those innovations with tangible products and services that impact and change processes as we know it, will become the librarian entrepreneurs of this future. Innovation takes leaders who are willing to invest in an open and creative culture that will foster new ideas and break standard or conventional thinking in carrying out professional responsibilities. And these leaders will have to incorporate innovation strategies into the strategic planning process in order to make innovation real and sustainable.

There are already examples in the field of how innovative and creative ideas have made an impact on the end-user and the success of journals and conferences that celebrate innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship is encouraging for a new vision of the future of librarianship.

References:

Jantz, R.C. (2012), "Innovation in academic libraries: an analysis of university librarian' perspectives", *Library & Information Science Research*, Vol. 34 pp.3-12.

Kauffman: *The Foundation of Entrepreneurship* (2011), "Entrepreneurship in American higher education: a report from the Kauffman panel on entrepreneurship curriculum in higher education", 2006, *Collaborative Librarianship* Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 16-27, available at: www.kauffman.org/entrepreneurship/entrepreneurship-curriculum-in-higher-education.aspx.

Miller, R. (2012), "Damn the recession, full speed ahead", *Journal of Library Administration*, Vol. 52 No.1, pp.3-17.

Rowley, J. (2011), "Should your library have an innovation strategy?", *Library Management*, Vol. 32 No.4/5, pp.251-65.

Krautter, M., Lock, M.B., Scanlon, M. (2012), *The Entrepreneurial Librarian*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson, NC, .

Scanlon, M.G., Crumpton, M.A. (2011), "Re-conceiving entrepreneurship for libraries: collaboration and the anatomy of a conference", *Collaborative Librarianship*, Vol. 3 No.1, pp.16-27.