SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

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SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

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INTRODUCTION: SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

Janet A. Crum

Entrepreneurship and innovation are hot topics in and out of libraries but, as with many trendy terms, they are often used without clear definitions. So before we dive into the chapters that follow, let us take a moment to clarify what we mean by entrepreneurship and innovation.

When we think of entrepreneurship, many of us envision the stereotypical startup made legendary during the tech boom of the 1990s. But entrepreneurship exists beyond Silicon Valley and even beyond the business community. Eisenmann describes the definition of entrepreneurship used at Harvard Business School, originally promulgated by Howard Stevenson: "Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled" (2013, para. 2). Eisenmann then breaks this definition down and argues that entrepreneurship is, "A distinctive approach to managing rather than a specific stage in an organization's life cycle (i.e., startup), a specific role for an individual (i.e., founder), or a constellation of personality attributes (e.g., predisposition for risk-taking; preference for independence). In this view, entrepreneurs can be found in many different types of organizations, including large corporations" (2013, para. 9). Fernandes quotes 20 company founders describing entrepreneurship. Highlights from their descriptions include "blazing new trails," "imagining new ways to solve problems and create value," and balancing "strong vision with a willingness to embrace change." Entrepreneurship is "driven by an innate need to create, build and grow" and requires "a passion for learning," "a great deal of resourcefulness," and the need to "persevere," "continually test your assumptions," "see opportunity everywhere," and "take calculated risks" (2018). These characteristics can be applied to many people in many contexts. Similarly,

definitions of innovation are not strictly limited to businesspeople or engineers. Todhunter defines innovation as, "The process through which value is created and delivered to a community of users in the form of a new solution" (2009, para. 3). Berkun defines innovation more abstractly: "Innovation is significant positive change" (2013, para. 3).

Nothing in any of the aforementioned definitions excludes libraries or library staff from entrepreneurship and innovation. And while entrepreneurship and innovation are trendy topics, they are not new in the world of libraries. Libraries have, likely since their inception, supported and engaged in creativity, innovation, and the discovery of new knowledge. We pursue opportunities (definitely beyond resources controlled), solve problems, and create value — and we support other people who do those things. Many an author or artist has found ideas and inspiration in the stacks, and many a scientist has found that nugget of knowledge that solves a problem or leads to a new discovery. Libraries also foster collaborations that can lead to creation of new knowledge and skills, provide opportunities for lifelong learning, and help users become creative critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Whether by providing information or making new technologies available to their user communities, libraries have a long history of democratizing creativity, innovation, and, yes, entrepreneurship, by helping creative, innovative, entrepreneurial people access the resources they need regardless of their financial means. The chapters in this volume offer ample evidence to support these assertions.

The first two chapters introduce tools that libraries can use to support innovation and entrepreneurship for their staff and users: design thinking and space planning. Boisvenue-Fox and Meyer discuss how implementing design thinking in an academic and public library has helped the staff develop creative solutions to problems while improving staff engagement and development. Bieraugel introduces tools to help staff identify and develop spaces that support innovation and creativity.

The next several chapters provide overviews of library activities related to supporting innovation and entrepreneurship. Baker analyzes the mission statements of award-winning academic libraries for evidence of innovation, Girven analyzes published case studies to identify staffing models used in academic libraries that support entrepreneurship and innovation programs, and Michalak and Rysavy compare characteristics of makerspaces in academic research libraries. Buwule and Mutula report the results of a study on how Ugandan university libraries can support small and medium enterprises, and Crowe et al. analyze presentations given at the Conference for Entrepreneurial Librarians to give insight into how the concept of entrepreneurship in libraries has evolved since the first conference in 2009.

Two chapters provide case studies of library initiatives to support innovation. Stover, Jefferson, and Leininger report on efforts at the Oviatt Library at California State University, Northridge, including approaches used by business librarians, development of a media studio, and plans for a makerspace. Shipman describes the process by which the Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library at the University of Utah began partnering with innovators on their campus,

including lots of practical advice for staff at other libraries wishing to follow in their footsteps.

The final two chapters discuss efforts to bring entrepreneurial approaches to library education. Crumpton and Bird summarize efforts to teach entrepreneurial skills to library school students and practicing librarians, concluding with recommendations for library education and examples of successful efforts. Aquero-Avilés, Marco-Cuenca, and Siso-Calvo describe how entrepreneurship and innovation were introduced to students in the School of Documentation Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid and the innovative student projects that resulted from these efforts.

Taken together, the chapters in this volume demonstrate that support for entrepreneurship and innovation is well-established in many libraries, and the library profession is also becoming more entrepreneurial. Libraries are supporting start-ups and other small businesses and creating spaces and services to help users from all disciplines create and innovate. Library staff are learning skills and approaches to foster innovation in their own work and become more entrepreneurial in their thinking. Eisenmann concludes his article on entrepreneurship by quoting a former student's comments on Stevenson's definition: "For me, 'pursuing opportunity beyond resources controlled' sums up perfectly what I do day-to-day. You need to be inventive, creative, opportunistic, and persuasive, because you rarely have enough resources" (2013, para. 10). That sounds like what libraries do every day.

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PART 1
TOOLS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND INNOVATION

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NOT WHAT YOU EXPECTED: IMPLEMENTING DESIGN THINKING AS A LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

Michelle Boisvenue-Fox and Kristin Meyer

ABSTRACT

Changing user needs have created new opportunities for libraries, requiring evolving leadership practices that support innovation and rapid change. Design thinking can provide leaders with a concrete process to move toward action. The authors — one an executive administrator at a large, multi-branch public library, the other an academic librarian who leads a small team — share how design thinking has positively influenced their leadership practices. The benefits of implementing this flexible process have included improved user experience, more creative solutions, wise investments, staff empowerment, increased transparency and trust, and employee learning and development. Both leaders experienced these benefits even though they are in different positions on their hierarchical organization charts. The authors propose that implementing design thinking as a leadership practice has a place in the evolving role of libraries and can shift organizational cultures to become more user-centered and embrace innovation. In addition to these benefits, the chapter discusses specific project examples, challenges, and tips for library leaders to successfully implement the process. Design thinking is translatable across library types and throughout private industry. Discussing design thinking as a leadership practice can benefit the profession and

communities by giving leaders a common language to use when learning from and sharing with each other in conversations about innovation.

Technological advancement in libraries has changed the nature of user needs. These changes have subsequently created new opportunities for public and academic library spaces and services, requiring evolving leadership practices. Library administrators and managers must employ leadership practices that effectively support rapid change and integrate innovation into organizational culture. Two trends particularly relate to these emerging necessities: user experience (UX) and design thinking. Libraries are increasingly allocating resources to UX work by creating UX positions and teams. There has also been a rise in libraries implementing design thinking to solve complex problems and to create new services, spaces, and initiatives (Peet, 2016).

This chapter discusses the experiences of two library leaders implementing design thinking in their respective libraries. M. Boisvenue-Fox is the Director of Innovation and User Experience at Kent District Library − a large, multi-branch public library − and regularly leads design thinking teams. K. Meyer is the UX Librarian at Grand Valley State University Libraries and leads a small team, employing design thinking primarily as a way to improve physical spaces and services. For both authors, implementing design thinking has resulted in enhanced UX through creative solutions and tangible improvements to library spaces and services. Adopting these techniques has also had the unexpected benefits of fostering collaboration, empowering staff, and narrowing the gap between frontline staff and executive decision makers. Design thinking has improved the authors' own leadership practices, and they suggest that when library leaders adopt this approach, it can shift organizational cultures to embrace innovation.

BACKGROUND

Kent District Library

Kent District Library (KDL) is comprised of 19 branch libraries in a suburban system in Kent County, Michigan, but does not include the Cities of Cedar Spring, Grand Rapids, Sparta, and Solon Township. Branches vary in size and each community branch is unique in the user demographics it serves. KDL began to adopt the design thinking process four years ago when searching for a better way to implement changes and to support staff innovation and problem solving. Library leadership was first introduced to design thinking through Craig Wilson, a library board member and Steelcase Education Director of Market Development. Steelcase is an international office furniture manufacturer that embraced design thinking years ago. Wilson introduced this process to library leadership as a way to change the library's frame of reference when approaching problems or opportunities (Boisvenue-Fox, 2017b).