Bricks Without Straw: Using Tough Times to Teach Ourselves

Jeffrey M. Mortimore, Bennett College
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Using Tough Times to Teach Ourselves

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### The Bennett Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>All Schools (n=48)</th>
<th>Undergraduate FTE &lt;2000 (n=25)</th>
<th>HBCUs (n=9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Dollars per FTE</td>
<td>32&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Transactions per FTE</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Transactions per FTE</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session Attendees per FTE</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Weekly Reference Transactions per FTE</td>
<td>17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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Bricks Without Straw?

- Depends on what we are trying to build...

We play a significant role in shaping user expectations, which encompass needs and wants. How we do so should be in alignment with current and projected resources.

The truest test of entrepreneurship is a tight budget.
But What Do We Mean by Entrepreneurship?

According to Farrell (2011), entrepreneurship first and foremost should be about building the capital (social, financial, and otherwise) to sustain new initiatives, rather than simply creating and marketing new, “unfunded mandates” for ourselves.

“[E]ntrepreneurs are not big risk takers willing to gamble their own resources for the sake of doing good in the world. Rather, they are risk averse and engage in...”predation.” Entrepreneurs aim for the “sure thing,”... They look for unexploited, low cost/high-profit opportunities, and they find ways to use other people’s money to build capital for their own later innovation.” (152)

Cultivating Strong Faculty Relationships

- Visibility, expertise, and collegiality
- Anticipating Communication Channels
- Anticipating research needs
- Anticipating instructional needs

Drives Faculty Engagement

- Consultation
- Instruction
- Collaboration
- Promotion

Drives Student Engagement

- Increased Patron Counts
- Increased Reference Transactions
- Increased Resource Use
- Promotion
Flex Your Expertise

- Delivery of Reference & Instructional Services (Mortimore & Wall 2009)
- Instructional Design (Mortimore 2010)
- Curricular Collaborations & alternative delivery methods (Mortimore 2011)

Our shortest instruction sessions regularly generate the highest resource and reference use. Carefully developed assignments can reduce the need for class time, which is important for small staffs.
Deliver on a Dime

Library Toolkit built on Blogger.

Website via Google Sites. Discovery via Primo.

Research Guides: Tabbed browsing and tutorial embeds similar to LibGuides.
Collect or Connect?

Collect what you can, connect to the rest. Regardless of budgets, librarians should be good “access brokers.”
Cultivate Alliances

Leverage resources and technical capacity to cultivate mutually beneficial alliances.

Writing and Citing tabs on research guides designed to "start a conversation" with the writing center.
Transparency

- Be honest about—but don’t apologize for—what you can’t deliver. Secure the capital to sustain innovation first. Fear of obsolescence is not cause to develop, deploy, or sustain programs or services that later will become liabilities if funding is cut. (Farrell 2011)

- Be intentional about how you shape user expectations through the programs and services you deliver... Are we creating expectations that can be met sustainably?

- Be aware of and honest about the appeal of the new. We are suckers for what’s next, and saying “the users demand it” just as often is rationalization for “I want it.”

- As Stephen Covey would say, work within your circle of influence, because the librarian’s circle of concern is at least as large as Borges’s Library of Babel.
Thanks!
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