Faster Horses 2020:
the Future of Academic Research
Libraries

"If I'd asked my customers what they wanted, they'd have said a faster horse."

Henry Ford

Arnold Hirshon
Chief Strategist & Executive Consultant, LYRASIS
I bring a vision, not the vision for KSL

the final vision must be the product of a meaningful process of discovery and decision

the process requires rigorous and challenging debate over provocative ideas

“I think that intellectual life should involve taking chances.”

– Louis Menand
The Conventional Wisdom on Today’s Reality: “Woe is Us”

too much information
insufficient discovery systems
to manage change it must be slowed down
survivability / sustainability trump advancement
not enough money, people or technology
libraries are on the road to irrelevance
The Strategic Response to Break Through the Conventional Wisdom

Whining

meaningful change requires planning

exploration is about both the journey and the destination
The Path to Change: *From Old to Bold*

- Regression
- Stasis
- Incremental or Evolutionary
- Transformative
- Radical or Disruptive

Libraries: Glacial, Academic, Sound, Light
the context for change:
the small, comprehensive academic research library

the questions:

how will people learn in the future?

how will scholarly research change?

how will knowledge creation and dissemination change?
Context, Scope and Process

Context: Higher Education

Scope

- Content
- Clients
- Technology
- Presence

Process

- Envision: comprehend the future
- Execute: implement & move forward
- Engage: plan & achieve consensus

Envision:

Engage:

Execute:
“Trying to reform the contemporary university is like trying to get on the Internet with a typewriter, or like riding a horse to the mall.”

– Louis Menand
Context: Higher Education

The recession is not over in higher education

The baby boomlet is bursting

Humanities graduate education enrollment has declined

Faculty reliance upon the library is receding

Competition is increasing for universities seeking to be elite global higher education providers
Mission: preeminent and collaborative scholarship in an inclusive culture of global citizenship

Vision: the university and students are recognized internationally students in an interdependent world

Values: academic excellence, inclusive, diverse, and effective stewards

Goals:
1. Impact. Enhance research and discovery, student preparation for the 21st century, and the international character of the university
2. Diversity. Increase diversity through student recruitment and retention and rewarding faculty and staff excellence
3. Community. Expand and deepen alumni and community relationships, and with external organizations
4. Integrity & Transparency. Improve customer satisfaction and resource allocation and expand revenue sources by employing best practices
Vision

Content

People

Technology

Presence
Changes in Information Discovery

*the library was at the center & discovery was linear*
Information Discovery: 

*now it’s synaptic*

- Entertain
- Conceptualize
- Socialize
- Study
- Research
- Learn
- Write
- Produce
- Disseminate

*Where Is the Library?*
The State of Research Libraries

**Resources are directed toward:**

- operations *marginal* to institutional and national research priorities
  - processes and services *ignored* or *undervalued* by clients
- staff activities driven by *legacy* professional *concerns*, not user needs

Incremental revision will leave the library with only the vestigial values of its book-determined legacy. It will look the same, but everything will have changed.”

-- Michalko, Malpas and Arcolio.

“Research Libraries, Risk and Systemic Change.”

“The death of the academic research library has been greatly exaggerated.”
Scholarly Content: Conventional Wisdom

All information is or will be free
Good enough is the new great
Google controls all content
Apple controls all distribution tech
Amazon will be left in the dust
The library catalog is an irrelevant relic
“Sheer information is no longer a major piece of the value-added of higher education.”

Louis Menand
The Marketplace of Ideas

“The question is not whether there will be future scholars. It is how these future scholars will remember and integrate previous scholarship.”

Lisbet Rausing
“Toward a New Alexandria: Imagining the Future of Libraries”

“Scholars turn to libraries as purchasing agents but not as agents of change when it comes to scholars’ fundamentally conservative research and publication practices.”

Barbara Fister, “Academic Libraries, a View from the Administration Building”
Scholarly Content

publishing

influence the changing economic models for trade and scholarly content
collections replace the passé concept of collections with new information provision principles for the disintermediated and disaggregated world
Print legacy is the albatross around the neck of all digital reading. ... Digital learning can provide continuous assessment, remediation, advanced learning tools, integrated reference and multimedia.”

— Evan Schnittman
Scholarly Content

social networking

design new models and systems for community engagement and knowledge exchange for today and the coming post-web world
collaborative global information development

partner to cultivate contributions from global partners to create a flat world of information
create collaborative models for knowledge dissemination and develop impact factors to measure the scholarly value of locally digitized materials
People: Clients

*learning and research services*

engage in systematic research about the changing needs and behaviors of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and alumni, and explore differences among diverse disciplines
People: Clients

*Beyond information literacy*

create new collaborative and relevance-based models to advance student fluency skills for information discovery
People: Staff

new roles = new expertise and abilities

define new roles and required skills for librarians, and develop, recruit and retain through professional development, mentorship and meaningful incentives
Technology

the power of the open cloud

harness the cloud and open source software to create powerful, mobile, and cost-effective solutions
Technology

*new discovery systems*

create abandonment strategies to transition from the old to the new
Physical Presence

library spaces

launch a collaborative endeavor to reinvigorate the library as the campus destination location by creating unique and vibrant spaces that are compelling for all communities
Virtual Presence

the virtual experience

create complementary virtual and physical space experiences, while maximizing the unique advantages of each
charting the new course: the engagement process in brief

**Envision:**
comprehend the future

**Engage:**
plan & achieve consensus

**Execute:**
Implement & move forward
engagement

an inclusive strategic planning process involving the campus community to develop a collective vision and comprehensive strategic directions
## Engagement:
The University and The Library

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Execution
Exploit CWRU’s Advantages: Small, Comprehensive and Competitive

small = agile
comprehensive = breadth of talent
competitive = depth of talent

invent through necessity
tap student energy and faculty expertise
secure funding
invite the Cleveland community to participate
Strong execution is fast, action oriented, cost effective and requires wise and continuous …

experimentation

improvisation

risk-taking

stewardship
Execution: How to Advance

create a culture of invention & discipline
plan strategically
conduct gap analyses
collaborate
(OhioLINK, national, international)
communicate
Execution: How to Advance

- assign accountability
- budget strategically
- advocate for financial & other resources
- assess continuously
- achieve substantial outcomes
“Whether you think you can, or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

– Henry Ford
Questions and Comments?

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