Successful partnerships for academic libraries

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Abstract: Working relationships between academic libraries and external organizations, such as academic departments, businesses, local institutions, and government agencies, are growing in popularity and becoming more necessary in a climate where libraries are seeing decreasing budgets and perception of relevance to the university community. These partnerships, if carried out well, create mutually beneficial situations where both organizations can have a greater impact by pooling their resources and expertise with others' resources and expertise. The keys to a successful partnership include defining the partnership, establishing criteria, and evaluating the partnership. While there is sufficient literature on partnerships in general, there is little published research on partnerships between academic libraries and external organizations. This paper offers examples and suggestions, some from academic libraries themselves and others from alternative organizations, for libraries wanting to create and sustain productive partnerships.

Introduction

The drive for collaboration between organizations is not a recent trend, although in the field of library science, the literature on this subject has only grown significantly since the beginning of this century. Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) trace the study of collaboration to the mid-to-late 1970s, when "pressure from funders" prompted organizations to pool their resources to stretch grant dollars (p. 3). Today, however, the need to collaborate is greater than ever, not just for non-profit organizations but for libraries as well. University budgets, similarly to many other publicly funded institutions, have been tightening significantly since the 2008 recession, and libraries must figure out how to stretch their budgets farther than ever, at least within the recent past.

Another issue academic libraries face is the cultural movement in academia to demonstrate value to the academic community and beyond. Performance based assessment has become an increasingly necessary activity for libraries for a couple of major reasons. The first is financial, as mentioned earlier. Especially since the last recession, federal, state, and local budgets have tightened, and funding opportunities have dried up as well (Guarria & Wang, 2011; Lorenzen, 2010; Trail, 2013). At the same time, the cost of materials, especially online journals and databases, has risen exponentially in the last decade (Gantz, 2013; Pickett, 2011). Academic libraries are seeing

their budgets flattening at best or declining at worst, yet they are being asked to provide more materials and services today than ever before. Second, in the digital age, our *raison d'etre* is not what it was in centuries past. Although libraries still function as repositories for print materials, that purpose has arguably taken a backseat to information instruction and public services. Even for academic libraries, outreach and programming is taking on a greater role in our mission. Therefore, collaborating with other campus departments and programs or external organizations is becoming increasingly common and can help libraries provide stronger programming and services for their patrons. And as stated, academic libraries are often expected to demonstrate value to their communities, and building partnerships can help accomplish this goal.

One of the rarely addressed questions in library science literature is: Why would university departments or external organizations want to partner with the library in the first place? While much has been written about how partnerships can benefit libraries, an equally important question to address is: What can libraries help external organizations achieve that they could not on their own? One major barrier that libraries need to acknowledge when seeking alliances is the cultural perception that they are not an essential component of campus life. For students, the library might just be a place to drop in and use a computer between classes or grab a cup of coffee. Libraries are also up against the common misconception that everything students need for research is online (Lorenzen, 2010). Some faculty as well, especially in the sciences, do not always realize that they use the library. When they search Google Scholar from their offices, they're actually accessing electronic materials purchased by the library, but they do not always

make that connection (Nolen, D., personal interview, February 18, 2016). A survey of 80 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions also yielded some insightful feedback regarding negative opinions of academic libraries. For example, some participants noted that institutions often overlook libraries in fundraising efforts because they are perceived not to have a direct impact on students' education, as academic departments do. Some librarians reported lukewarm attitudes from their development officers, while others noted the difficulty in explaining to laypeople what librarians actually do besides organize and check out books (Lorenzen, 2010).

While quantifying and qualifying the value of academic libraries is a recent priority for libraries and their stakeholders, little has been written about how assessing the library's value impacts current and potential partnerships. Megan Oakleaf (2011) published and discussed a report from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in the 2009-10 academic year entitled "What's the value of an academic library?" Some of the report's suggestions for demonstrating library value could also allow libraries to sell themselves more effectively. They include: "Determine what libraries enable students, faculty, student affairs professionals, administrators, and staff to do;" "Define outcomes;" "Demonstrate and develop library impact on student learning outcomes;" "Demonstrate and improve library support of faculty teaching;" and "Record library contributions to overall institutional reputation and prestige," (pp. 7-10) to name just a few. Not only is showing the library's value imperative in terms of making the case for a reasonable operating budget from the university and gaining support from individuals within the university community; it is also critical to the library's success in partnering

with institutions within and outside the university. People and organizations want to jump on board movements that are successful. A history of fruitful collaboration demonstrates the library's value. It also makes the library a more attractive partner to future collaborators. But where to start? That is one of the key questions this study aims to answer.

This study of collaborative work focuses on the relationships between academic libraries and external organizations, such as other departments and programs on campus, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. It does not include collaborations between the library and individuals, inter-library collaborations, library consortia, or relationships with vendors. These are different enough, in their purpose and/or administration, from the library-organization relationships discussed in this study that they were excluded. Also, while the concepts presented here could be adapted to fit the needs of public, school, and special libraries, they are not within the scope of this study either. The partnerships examined here may either be short-term and project-specific, or they may be longer-term relationships. The duration of the collaboration depends on the goals and parameters defined by the library and its partners.

Along with describing and providing examples of the various types of partnerships that academic libraries should build with external organizations, this study will also provide suggestions for evaluating the effectiveness of those collaborations. Through the definitions, examples, and methods of assessment described in this paper, libraries should be able to create a customized strategic plan for entering into a new partnership, as well as strategies for evaluating current partnerships in order to make them stronger.

Defining Partnerships

       "Partnership" and "collaboration" are rather nebulous terms that can define just about any relationship imaginable. However, for the purpose of this study, these terms are used in specific ways that pertain to the library and the organization(s) with which it is working. The following definitions of these terms as worded by the Wilder Research Center will be used:

> ***Collaboration** is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards* (Mattessich, Murray-Close, and Monsey, 2001, p. 4).

The terms "partners" and "members" will be used to refer to the individuals who represent collaborating organizations, as defined by the Wilder Research Center (p. 5). Joan Giesecke (2012) adds that partners should have "shared visions, shared power, and consensus decision-making" (p. 37). And Michael Schrage adds, "The true medium of collaboration is other people" (Giesecke, 2012, p. 39). Although this study looks at partnerships in terms of organizations, it is important not to forget that people, with their talents and skills and egos and flaws, are at the heart of these collaborations. They turn the wheels in the collaboration machine, but they might also make the machine dysfunctional or even cause it to break down. Therefore, the collaboration of the organizations is only as strong as the people involved – not only the leaders but also the staff, who often take care of logistics. Clearly, not all so-called collaborations and

partnerships meet the criteria of these terms. However, the definitions will at least provide a set of standards by which to describe and evaluate the organizations in this study that partner with libraries to achieve a common goal for mutual benefit.

Rathi, Given, & Forcier (2014) provide some useful limitations with which nonprofit organizations (NPOs) can define the terms of their partnerships. Their discussion is not limited to academic libraries; however, the authors' definitions certainly apply to the various types of collaborations in which they engage. The authors delineate the scope of various partnerships using attributes of directionality and formality. "Directionality" refers to the ways in which knowledge and resources are shared between the organizations. Communication can be uni-directional (one organization communicates), bi-directional (two organizations communicate), or multi-directional (all organizations communicate). Most partnerships will use a combination of these communication styles. "Formality" is an attribute referring to the complexity of organization involved in the partnership. It may be loosely organized, or it may need greater formality and structure, for instance, if money or legal agreements are involved. The level of formality required for success depends on the partners and their goals. Before entering into a partnership, both parties should agree on how knowledge and resources will be shared and communicated, and they should also agree on the level of formality under which the partnership will operate for its duration. To provide further guidance, the authors define specific types of partnerships that non-profit organizations, including academic libraries, may form:

- **Business partnerships** – The NPO shares knowledge and resources, and the for-profit business makes a donation to the NPO, motivated by positive press. These may be more formal relationships when money is involved.

- **Sector partnerships** – Two NPOs that either serve the same population or have similar goals form partnerships to combine their resources and knowledge. They range from formal to informal.

- **Government partnerships** – The NPO collaborates with a government institution, office, or representative. If these partnerships involve grant funding, they may be more formal in nature.

- **Network partnerships** – These partnerships are a variation of the three concepts above. The NPO collaborates with multiple business, government, or network organizations, and they tend to be multi-directional and mostly informal since they are so large.

- **Endorsement partnerships** – The NPO endorses another organization or is endorsed by the organization. They share their reputations for mutual benefit. This is one of the most informal types of partnership.

- **Charter partnerships** – The NPO exchanges intellectual property with another organization; for instance, an organization shares its logo with a company that produces merchandise. Since intellectual property and money are exchanged, this is a formal type of partnership.

As an NPO, a library might enter into one or many of these types of partnerships. Librarians should be aware of these possibilities so they are prepared to seek out and

confidently approach individuals in the nonprofit, business, or government sectors when an opportunity to work together arises.

Joan Giesecke (2012) defines partnerships not so much by the types of organizations involved but by the shared goals of the organizations. One type of activity Giesecke identifies is coordination, "one of the simplest forms of joint activities" in which partners "may exchange ideas, alternate activities, or provide access to services and products" (p. 37). This type of relationship might be as simple as working together to generate publicity for an event or service or a conference call to generate ideas to solve a problem that affects all organizations involved. A more involved partnership is cooperation, where a deeper level of trust is required and where members "develop norms for working together to achieve a joint of common purpose" and "come together to share resources such as space, funds, or time" (p. 37). These collaborations tend to be more long-term and formal in nature. The author adds criteria from a study by Smith and Wohlstetter (2006), who state that partnerships can be defined by the origin of the members' relationship, resources that are exchanged, framework or structure, or depth of the relationship (Giesecke, 2012, p. 41). These attributes relate to the author's concepts by elaborating on the depth of the relationship and level of commitment needed to achieve the organizations' mutual goals.

A significant challenge in creating parameters for these partnerships is defining "community," which is an important consideration in establishing a partnership and determining its purpose. A key question for partners to ask themselves is: Who are we trying to serve through this partnership? Rathi, Given, and Forcier (2014) suggest that

community may be as broad as the general public, it may be geographically specific, or it may be subject/interest specific. The authors also include community "influencers" such as local or state representatives, reporters, or celebrities, who can use their influence in certain social circles and/or social media to gain support for the organizations. Another issue to consider is that, when working with businesses and government organizations, libraries should be careful to publicize that partnership using a neutral, non-partisan voice. It is always possible, and quite likely, that a small number of individuals within the target community will be offended by something benign; however, the organizations should carefully consider the people in their target community and attempt not to alienate them. Also, the library should be cautious in approaching or agreeing to work with partners and consider how its community will react to that partnership. Although libraries are traditionally safe havens of free speech and free thought for their patrons, the library itself should avoid collaborating with special interest groups with agendas that do not align with the library's or university's mission. These are muddy waters to navigate, but the library's mission and vision statements are the best guides for entering collaborations that will serve its community in the best possibly way.

Not all literature agrees on what constitutes a "partnership" between a library and another institution. For instance, Rathi, Given, and Forcier (2014) include corporate sponsorships in their list of partnerships with NPOS, but Holt (2006) argues that the partnerships between NPOs and businesses are not true partnerships. His argument may be taken as simply semantic, but he makes the point that in a sponsorship situation, the library generally receives a donation and in turn provides a service that benefits the

community in which the corporation operates. Therefore, the library is solely responsible for carrying out the planning and groundwork to meet the goal of both organizations. Holt provides examples of what he calls "corporate sponsorships" (which other might define as "partnerships"). For example, in 1991, Anheuser-Busch gave St. Louis Public Library (SLPL) $50,000 to plan, advertise, and facilitate a year-long program series on African-American history and culture. And when SLPL teamed up with the Cardinals to bolster its summer reading program, the Cardinals Baseball Club provided in-kind donations (tickets, bats, and balls to participating children, and free advertising to SLPL) to encourage readership and build a young fan base (Holt, 2006). This program is possibly more of an equitable partnership in terms of library and corporate collaboration than the Anheuser-Busch agreement, but this author favors Rathi, Given, & Forcier's (2014) definition of business partnerships and argues that sponsorships are legitimate means of collaboration. Partnerships certainly need parameters, but, going back to the Wilder Research Center's broad definition of partnerships, what is "equitable" and "mutually beneficial" is open to interpretation by the partnering organizations.

Holt also suggests that libraries should create policies for corporate sponsorships, which echoes Rathi, Given, and Forcier's (2014) statement that these types of partnerships are often formal and involve legal agreements. Holt provides language from the Canadian Library Association (CLA), whose guidelines were established to guarantee in writing that "partnerships enhance the library's image and add value to library services" (p. 38). Some of the main issues in the CLA's guidelines include protection of intellectual freedom,

patron privacy, and equal access to library services. The guidelines also guard against

political influence and against the corporation driving the agenda of the receiving library.

Criteria for Partnerships

Once the two organizations define the nature of their partnership, it is important

to establish criteria that will help them enter and maintain a fruitful collaboration. The

Wilder Center research team outlines an extensive list of "Factors Influencing the Success

of Collaboration" (Mattessich et al., 2001), which fall into the following categories:

environment, membership characteristics, process and structure, communication,

purpose, and resources. The 20-item list of factors is based on studies researched and

analyzed by the Wilder Center staff; these factors are the ones that show up most

frequently in studies on successful collaboration. Mattessich et al. (2001) elaborate on

these elements and explain how to use them to evaluate a partnership:

- Partners should ideally have a history of collaboration, be seen as legitimate
  leaders, and operate under a positive political and social climate.

- Partners should understand, trust, and respect each other, appoint
  appropriate representatives, and be able to compromise for the greater
  good.

- Partners should have a stake in the process and results, develop clear roles
  and guidelines, create a reasonable plan and timeline, and be flexible.

- Partners should communicate openly and often and formally and
  informally.

- Partners should establish clear and attainable goals, share a vision, and serve a unique purpose in their community.

- Partners should ensure sufficient funding, resources, and time and be able to provide the skills and leadership to meet their shared goals. (pp. 8-10)

This last point is especially important for academic librarians because they often have many simultaneous projects and commitments in their daily jobs. If a partnership does not help them better fulfill their present duties, or if they feel that they are not able to commit time and resources to the partnership, then they should reconsider, even if the collaboration sounds like a worthy endeavor. Librarians generally enter the profession because they enjoy helping others, and it is easy to overcommit oneself.

Before beginning a partnership, members from all organizations should discuss the factors listed above and determine whether they believe the collaboration will be both successful and valuable for all organizations. If the potential partnership falls short of any of the criteria, they might discuss whether those weaknesses can be strengthened, and how. If too many of the criteria are weak or absent, then perhaps the members should decide not to enter the partnership, at least until they can improve the conditions. Giesecke (2012) states, "When an activity involves uncertainty and requires frequent investments of time or money that cannot be easily transferred to other functions, it may be best to leave the activity within the organization" (p. 38). Some partnerships do not recognize this mistake until they are too deeply invested in the end goal to turn back, so it is wise to honestly evaluate the factors before proceeding.

Lea Susan Engle (2011) approaches criteria for partnerships from her experience as an academic librarian at Texas A&M University. In her article "Hitching Your Wagon to the Right Star: A Case Study in Collaboration," Engle and her colleagues partnered with the freshman orientation program to introduce college freshmen to the library. This article is important for organizations that do not have a history of collaboration. From the library's initial approach to, and eventual long-term partnership with, the orientation program, Engle took away the following lessons and criteria for new partners:

- Collaborations should be approached with a clear statement of purpose.

- Collaborations should have a clearly defined audience/population in mind.

- Partners should consider their options, given what resources they have to work with.

- Members of the initiating organization should research and learn about their potential partners and their goals/missions before approaching them.

- The initiating organization should carefully consider their message and tone before contacting potential partners and be willing to listen to them and understand their needs.

- The initiating organization must deliver what it promises to the best of its ability.

- All partners should assess the collaboration, either formally or informally.

- It is important to say "thank you" to everyone who helped create the partnership.

Engle's experience brings criteria to the table that other authors do not consider, especially in their acknowledgement of the human factor in collaborations. Academic libraries, and libraries of all kinds for that matter, exist to serve people, and it is important to acknowledge and appreciate the individuals who help make these collaborations possible, especially when the partnership is new.

John F. Marszalek, executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library (USGPL) and Ulysses S. Grant Association (USGA) at Mississippi State University, can attest that new partnerships require the greatest amount of effort. First, he acknowledged in a personal interview (February 16, 2016), that networking is an important part of establishing working relationships. In 2011, he met an administrator from the Vicksburg National Military Park, which is located in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The two were asked to contribute to a state-run Civil War website project that never took off due to lack of organization and commitment from project administrators. However, in conversation, the staff member from Vicksburg mentioned to Marszalek that the park received a grant to host a week-long summer institute for history teachers, and he asked Marszalek if USGA would like to help plan and facilitate the event. The successful program ran for two summers, until federal funding ran out. However, establishing that relationship opened doors for USGA. Marszalek said, "We've developed the kind of reputation where people see the work we do and want to work with us." Since 2012, the library has partnered with Vicksburg again, as well as other National Park Service (NPS) parks, to organize public educational programs. In recent years, other organizations, such as the Mississippi Museum of Art and the Mississippi State University History department, have asked the

USGA staff to collaborate with them specifically on workshops for history teachers. "The toughest one is the first one – not only to organize but also to set up a situation of trust between the groups, that they know if you say something, you're going to following through with it," Marszalek said.

Marszalek attests to the human factor in whether partnerships succeed or fail. One challenge, he said, is making everyone feel a part of the team, even when they do not contribute much. "If it's your idea, you provide the framework," he said. "Still, you have to make people feel like they're included and their ideas are respected." Finding the right mix of collaborators, including everyone, and providing strong leadership is a delicate balance. He added that some representatives are sensitive about their organizations being represented sufficiently, so it's important to publicly recognize everyone's contributions. This statement echoes Engle's (2011) thoughts about the importance of saying "thank you." Also, Marszalek calls attention to the importance of the people who are not leaders but do the "groundwork." He stated, "We [USGA] have been successful because we have people who have talent to organize the details."

The criteria of a prosperous working partnership may seem complicated and, at times, difficult to achieve. So many factors have to align to result in a rewarding outcome for the community the library and its partner(s) serve. However, the end product comes down to a few basic factors: shared goals and purpose; clear objectives and plan; dedication; good communication; resources; and adaptability. These may be basic in theory, but in practice, they require a lot of work.

Prosperous Partnerships

Various types of general partnerships have been outlined in the preceding sections of this paper. This section provides some real world examples of partnerships between academic libraries and external organizations in order to illustrate how diverse these partnerships can be. What all of these collaborations have in common is that they serve to fulfill academic libraries' mission of supporting learning in an academic community.

The liaison program is one of the most traditional and long-standing partnerships between an academic library and the university community. These partnerships substantiate both collection development activity and library-departmental relations. Faculty support is critical for the library's reputation, and strong liaison programs can create partnerships resulting in mutual benefit for librarians and faculty (Carpan, 2015, p.?). Generally, liaisons communicate with faculty, become familiar with departmental curriculum, use faculty input for collection development, and attend faculty meetings and departmental events. In today's learning environment, Carpan argues that library liaisons need to go beyond assisting in collection development and being on-call for research assistance. They should also serve as teaching partners, "engaging more with faculty and students in the research, teaching, and learning process" (p. 105). Carpan admits that the liaison collaboration has its challenges, especially when librarians try to apply her suggestions for creating more "robust" (p. 109) relationships with their assigned departments.

In a personal interview (February 18, 2016), Mississippi State University librarian David Nolen, who serves as liaison to the foreign language department at MSU, concurred with some of Carpan's thoughts on strong library-departmental relationships as well as her concerns about delivering on these proposals. Describing MSU's program, Nolen stated that librarians are assigned to departments based on their academic background, if possible. In his role, he communicates with the foreign language faculty, department head, and appointed library representative. He also receives faculty requests for materials and attends department events, which allows him to network with faculty and listen to their ideas and concerns. According to Nolen, the program's main strength, its flexibility, can, on the other hand, become a weakness. On one hand, the role lends itself to creativity and developing different ways of communicating with the department depending on its needs. However, this flexibility would make it easy for liaisons to shirk their responsibilities. In addition, some liaisons struggle with departments that do not generally support the library because faculty find it irrelevant to their research. Some are assigned to departments that do not align with the librarian's background, making it difficult to find common ground with faculty. Nolen noted that librarians whose jobs do not include public service or an outreach component struggle to find time for liaison work. He stated, "We could benefit from a mentoring program for new liaisons whose roles aren't built into their jobs."

In addition to traditional partnerships such as liaison programs, some academic libraries are developing unconventional partnerships in order to serve their patrons better and demonstrate the library's relevance to its community. Fox, Carpenter, and Doshi

(2011) discuss "cool collaborations" between the Georgia Tech library and some nontraditional partners on campus, with the goal of strengthening the library's role in the undergraduate experience and, thus, improving the library's reputation on campus. One partnership that the authors review is the "virtual aquarium" designed by Georgia Tech's Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) and set up in the centrally located library. This project allowed the blind to experience an aquarium through large monitors showing fish swimming and technology assigning a sound to each fish. This collaboration allowed CATEA to showcase one of its projects, and it gave the library another opportunity for students to visit and learn. A partnership between the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the library resulted in a Virtual Poster Session project, where academic poster presentations ran on monitors in a heavily used study area. When the library collaborated with the university's radio station, the result was the "Lost in the Stacks" rock n' roll radio show, a weekly program consisting of interviews with students, faculty, and library staff. And a fitting relationship between the Architecture Library and College of Architecture resulted in architecture students designing an exhibit structure in the Architecture Library. The partnerships that Fox et al. (2011) discuss exemplify the many ways in which the library can become a more meaningful space for students when librarians think and collaborate creatively.

Academic writing is one of the most important skills an undergraduate will learn. About a decade ago, two Toronto universities, the University of Guelph and Humber College, merged to form The University of Guelph-Humber in order to provide students the best of both institutions: academic and vocational training. (Palomino & Gouveia,

2011). The downside to the merge is that the U of GH building does not have a library. The two institutions' libraries worked together to provide U of GH students research and writing skills, launching a pilot program in 2009. Humber College's writing center set up a location in U of GH's Learning Commons (LC) to assist students with the research and writing process. A reference librarian was also sent to the LC to provide research consultations. This partnership resulted in librarians being more visible and greater student appreciation for library services.

One of the more unusual but successful partnerships is described in Lannon and Harrison's (2015) article "Take a Paws: Fostering Student Wellness with a Therapy Dog Program at Your University Library." In 2012 and 2013, the McGill University (Montreal) began a 24-hour de-stress program during exam week, offering services such as massage therapy, coffee and cookies, and therapy dogs. After researching the effectiveness of interaction with animals on lowering stress levels, the library reached out to Therapeutic Paws of Canada (TPOC) to arrange visits to the library from volunteer therapy dogs (with their owners), who were trained to interact well with people. The program was so well received that the library continued its patron-pooch partnership in the spring of 2014, though this time they reached out to another program, Blue Ribbon Therapy Dogs, because TPOC's insurance policy changed and would not provide medical coverage. While the primary partnership was between the library and the therapy dog organizations, the library also needed support from the library staff and campus community. It relied on the university's student association and campus mental health advocacy group to help them promote the therapy dog visits.

In addition to directly serving their patrons, academic libraries can form partnerships to achieve economic development in their communities. Academic libraries often do not think outside of the university boundaries since their patrons are primarily students and faculty. Rusk and Cummings (2011), however, argue that academic libraries can help communities become more livable and sustainable by creating partnerships with the greater community in addition to the university community. They recommend asserting a library presence "wherever the institution extends its services" (p. 57), including outreach that brings university classes to the community, hospitals and medical areas, for example. The authors also recommend the library use its website to serve the community at large, but they argue that there is no better substitute for library presence than "making regular visits to learning spaces outside of the library and often in the surrounding community" (p. 58). Other recommendations include attending city council meetings, joining local organizations, contacting community members to offer training, hosting an open house, working with businesses and professors to host lectures, and giving tutorials to legislators and other local/state officials on library resources (p. 58). These suggestions may be carried out more often in public libraries than in academic libraries, but as the authors argue, and as Oakleaf (2010) indicates in her report on the value of academic libraries, the more visible libraries are, the greater perceived value the library will have in its community.

These are just a few examples of what academic libraries are doing to reach beyond the bookshelves and cloistered study areas to make an impact on their university and local communities. Partnerships require a no-risk, no-reward attitude. They demand

librarians think less like librarians and more like entrepreneurs. The educational climate is changing dramatically in the twenty-first century, and libraries have to adapt to meet their patrons' needs. Achieving this goal requires constant evaluation of how libraries are carrying out their mission to educate the community, and it also necessitates working with others to achieve that mission.

Evaluation of Partnerships

Although there are plentiful articles illustrating fruitful partnerships between libraries and external organizations (Fox, Carpenter, & Doshi, 2011; Palomino & Gouveia, 2011), there is not much published material in library science literature discussing how to evaluate those partnerships. Because there is a significant cost, in terms of time, money, and other resources, to establish and maintain partnerships, libraries should determine whether the payoff in the partnership is worth the investment. In an age when libraries are gathering data to evaluate other aspects of their business, such as services and programs (McDermott, 2005), library systems (Clough & Sanderson, 2013), and library instruction (Gratz & Olson, 2014), libraries should likewise evaluate the effectiveness of their partnerships and collaborations.

Mattesich, Murray-Close, and Monsey (2001) from the Wilder Research Center suggest a series of steps for evaluating partnerships. Based on their "Twenty Success Factors" model for successful collaborations, the Wilder Research Center staff developed the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory. The authors include a complete guide to using the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory in their book *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. The inventory consists of 40 opinion statements based on the success

factors and ratings on a Likert scale of 1-5: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral/No Opinion, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The individuals who participate in the partnership or collaboration complete the inventory and follow the authors' directions for calculating and interpreting the inventory scores. The authors note that the inventory can be used at any point in the collaboration process, and they suggest using it before beginning the collaboration to gauge the likelihood of its success and during the collaborative process at group meetings to evaluate and discuss the partnership's strengths and weaknesses. The authors also incorporate case studies in their book to illustrate how the Wilder Inventory can be used to evaluate various collaborations.

The inventory has not been used extensively to evaluate library collaborations with external organizations or departments. The most notable study involving a library is Carol A. Brown's (2004) article "Characteristics of successful partnerships between libraries, schools, and community agencies," which examines the effectiveness of the inventory for evaluating partnerships between libraries and external organization. The libraries in this study were not academic, but the methods could easily be applied there. As a grant requirement for North Carolina's "Powerful Partners" program, the North Carolina State Library needed to demonstrate its ability to collaborate successfully with organizations to fulfill the mission of serving community children through the use of technology. The study evaluated 18 of the "Power Partnership" libraries using the Wilder Inventory over a two-year period. Each library and its partnering organization distributed the inventory to all participants in the collaboration, and the North Carolina State Library scored and interpreted the results. The feedback from this study was found to have positive results

for all partners because they were able to improve in the areas which were generally weak, such as "formal and informal communication" and adequate human resources."

The Wilder Inventory has been used by a number of non-library organizations (Hill et al., 2008; Schmaltz, 2010; and Townsend & Shelley, 2008) to evaluate partnerships and collaborations in areas such as public health, community organizations, and social networking. Libraries collaborate just as much as other nonprofit organizations, and it would behoove them to use the inventory to gauge whether they are effective partners and identify areas for improvement.

Other studies ignore the Wilder Inventory altogether. Farrell's (2015) study of partnerships between the Draughon Library and seven other departments at Auburn University noted the success of interviews to evaluate the collaboration's success. According to Farrell, the reason for choosing interviews as the sole assessment tool was that they "allowed for more opportunities to engage in dialog with each individual partner while also allowing each representative to share issues and concerns unique to their organization, something that might be lost in a focus group . . . or not included in a comment section of a survey" (p. 256). Unlike the Wilder Inventory, the interviews conducted in this study solicited detailed feedback from partners about the partner's own organization, such as their services, target audience, locations on campus, and how they were already evaluating their services individually (p. 257) in addition to feedback about the partnership. Also, unlike those in in the Wilder Inventory, the questions in the interviews were open-ended and tailored to the partners on campus who were collaborating with the university library. The interviews included questions such as: "How

would you like the library to communicate your services to users?" and "What would you change about your space in the library if you could?" (p. 261). While the Wilder Inventory has the advantage of soliciting responses from a larger number of participants and more easily comparing answers, the interview approach yields responses that are more nuanced and potentially more relevant to the partnership and its unique members.

Some organizations choose to blend the Wilder Inventory with interviews. The University of Arizona-Sonora Border used the inventory along with interviews and annual evaluations to assess its collaboration with community partners to address chronic disease prevention and management in Douglas, Arizona (Hill et al., 2008). By including the inventory in a more comprehensive evaluation process, the partners were able to assess their success in more than one way, perhaps yielding more insightful results. An inventive use of the Wilder Inventory is examined in a doctoral dissertation on the partnership between the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia, the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia, and the Partners for Leadership in Education staff (Schmaltz, 2010). Personal interviews were created using the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory and evaluated using the Wilder method. While this approach would not be feasible for assessing a large number of individuals, the responses yielded more in-depth than those given for the written inventory and, in Schmaltz's words, allowed her to see the "big picture" (p. 37) of the partnership. Academic libraries could adapt these blended models to evaluate their partnerships with greater depth than using the Wilder Inventory alone, and this method would work well for small collaborative groups.

Evaluation is an essential activity for nurturing successful partnerships. However, what do organizations do with the results? The Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory does yield important feedback that can help libraries and their partners identify weak areas in their collaborations, but the authors provide no suggestions for how to apply the feedback. In fact, addressing weak areas of partnerships is a weak area of study in the field of librarianship. Charles D. Markert (2011) offers suggestions in his article "Partnering: What Must Be Done to Avoid Failure." Although this article was published in a civil engineering journal, libraries can adopt some of the author's ideas to address areas of weakness in their partnerships. Markert lists factors for success that are similar to the Wilder Center's and also pinpoints a "Dozen Devastating Diseases" that harm partnerships. His medical analogy leads to the following actions: either self-educate and establish a course for healing the partnership, or hire a consultant to assist with the process. He also advocates that the partners schedule organized conversations, asking the following questions about each "disease" they wish to eradicate using the FEMA method:

What are the Facts surrounding this issue? What are some of the Emotions, or 'gut' reactions (good or bad) caused by this issue? What is the Meaning of this issue to us? to our success? and What Action(s) must we take to gain the desired result? (p. 160).

The method Markert lays out here could easily be used with the factors in the Wilder Inventory. This discussion-based solution does not guarantee that the partners will solve all of their problems – that requires mindfulness, hard work, and dedication – but if all members are committed to strengthening the partnership, it can be a place to start.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Collaboration between academic libraries and external organizations on campus and in the community, however "community" is defined, has increased in popularity in recent years and is likely here to stay if libraries want to remain relevant and useful to their patrons. A good place to start is to examine the library's mission and vision statements and perhaps the goals from its strategic plan as well. From there, the library can define the kinds of partnerships it wishes to create. Library staff and administrators should identify, research, and reach out to these potential partners in the community. When they find individuals who are willing to represent their organizations, all parties should discuss potential collaborations, establish parameters and criteria, and evaluate the partnerships before, during, and after the project or goal is complete. Libraries may also recruit expertise or assistance from other campus departments or off-campus organizations for projects that are already being planned or may even be ongoing. Staff and administrators should use their networks on and off campus when they see opportunities to collaborate. Adopting the Wilder Research Center's Collaboration Factors Inventory is a simple and comprehensive way to evaluate these partnerships, although more thorough evaluation through interviews or focus groups might reveal more nuanced feedback.

Studies of academic library partnership success stories are ubiquitous in library science publications. There are numerous articles that discuss how one library or another has created a stand-out collaboration to benefit students and/or the community at large, and those articles can guide other libraries that wish to develop fruitful partnerships, too.

However, little research touches on the challenges that naturally arise when departments or institutions work together. To be fair, most people do not want to write about a losing collaboration. However, there would be value in reading about breakdowns as well as successes because librarians would be more aware of the problems that exist. Also, more studies of academic libraries evaluating their partnerships would certainly be beneficial to the body of literature in librarianship. Currently, there is not much published literature on this topic. However, the literature that assesses partnerships between other organizations can still provide some guidance for libraries in evaluation theirs. Growing this body of literature would help guide librarians and their partners to evaluate and improve their partnerships for years to come.

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