

Democratizing Entrepreneurship: Academic Librarians in Pursuit of Inclusionary Entrepreneurship

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Background

- Guerrero, Urbano, Cunningham, and Organ (2014) discussed the emergence of the “entrepreneurial university” and described it as, “a natural incubator that tries to provide a supportive environment in which the university community can explore, evaluate, and exploit ideas that could be transformed into social and economic entrepreneurial initiatives.”
- Baker and Powell (2019) argued that entrepreneurship could be integrated into the undergraduate curriculum where it could serve as a, “fundamental bridge--or even a synthesis--between liberal arts and vocational skills.”
- Entrepreneurship is appearing throughout the university curriculum:
 - Ohland, M.W., Frillman, S.A., Zhang, G., Brawner, C.E., & Miller, T.K., III. (2004) - Engineering Entrepreneurs Program at NC State
 - Essig (2009) - Performing Arts Business Incubator
 - Martin, Mazzeo, and Lemon (2016) - Public Health & Entrepreneurship
 - Gray (2017) - Music Entrepreneurship

Case Study: San Diego State University

- The Zahn Innovation Platform (ZIP) Launchpad is SDSU's incubator and a hub for the campus' entrepreneurship community
 - Business ideas are admitted every semester, and all students, staff, and faculty can apply
 - Business ideas in the incubator are offered courses, mentorship, access to resources, and financial support, and the amount and nature of resources offered changes as they matriculate through towards launch
- Library Support for the ZIP Launchpad
 - The Business Librarian is one of the judges that reviews the applications and selects the teams for the incubator
 - The Business Librarian provides 1 to 1.5 hour workshops on Market Research for each new cohort
 - The Business Librarian provides individualized appointments on Marketing Research and Market Research topics, such as Sales Lead Generation, for all businesses in the incubator
- The business librarian also teaches a Market Research course in the Fast Trac course series, which was created by the Kauffman Foundation for the Logan Heights Development Corporation, an organization focused on supporting an historically Latinx neighborhood in San Diego.

Why Academic Libraries & Entrepreneurship?

- Well-positioned to serve as advocates and support the diverse student populations on our campuses, ensuring they have access to the tools, resources, and support necessary to be successful academically and as entrepreneurs
 - Many students/faculty are pursuing entrepreneurship without ever having studied/practiced business, and libraries can support entrepreneurs regardless of their experience or background
 - Librarians can meet aspiring entrepreneurs *where they are* in terms of their entrepreneurship experience
- Promoting economic development in our local communities:
 - Community Development Corporations are nonprofits that provide a variety of services to traditionally underserved communities, and these organizations typically offer workshops, courses, and services for small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. Academic librarians are partnering with these organizations to teach workshops on market research and other entrepreneurial topics.
- Academic librarians can serve as mentors, provide research assistance, promote information literacy, and develop collections that are responsive to the needs of academic entrepreneurs

Case Study: San Francisco State University

- Innovation & Entrepreneurship (I&E) Fellows
 - Intentionally aims for participation from students in all of the six colleges on campus
 - Program kicks off in September and students go through the process of developing business ideas, conducting research, developing prototypes, and ultimately participating in a business pitch competition in the spring
- Library support for the I&E program:
 - Business librarian attends initial I&E program kickoff session to hear business ideas, joins cohort Slack Channel to provide ongoing research assistance
 - The cohort regularly meets in the Library's makerspace to hear from entrepreneurship mentors and to have access to tools and resources necessary for their projects
 - Business librarian develops instruction that is tailored to the business ideas being pursued by the cohort
 - Individual teams meet with the business librarian to discuss their projects (e.g., nutrition program, music and learning app development, etc.) and identify appropriate information sources

Challenges

- It can be hard to identify where entrepreneurial activity is happening on campus
- Many budding entrepreneurs are coming from disciplines/departments outside of the business school and may not have the background or expertise in developing a business idea or researching market potential
- Once entrepreneurship groups/initiatives have been identified, it may be challenging to demonstrate your value to those groups
- Collection needs may be highly specialized (e.g., Gartner Research, BCC Research) and expensive
- Licensing issues with resources--navigating “non-commercial use” clauses (Aagard & Arguello, 2015)
- Due to the interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship, a team-based approach might be more successful
 - At the University of Minnesota, a team consisting of public policy, health science, and business librarians teamed up to support academic entrepreneurs (Sayre, Lilyard, Schoenborn, 2017)
 - Teams could potentially include groups/offices/individuals outside of the library (e.g., information technology, design, legal expertise, etc.)

Discussion

- Many barriers exist that might prevent members of the campus community from engaging in entrepreneurship, including a lack of access to or awareness of resources
- The interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship combined with the diverse populations on our campuses and in our communities put our libraries in an excellent position to serve as advocates for inclusive entrepreneurship
- Academic librarians should be prepared to work with aspiring entrepreneurs from a variety of backgrounds and experience levels
- Strategies to support students interested in entrepreneurship include:
 - Micro-credentialing, such as the market research digital badge program aimed at first year students at the University of New Hampshire (Pothier, 2019).
 - Library-hosted awards for social entrepreneurship competitions (Cramer, 2020)
- Academic libraries can serve as a central hub that connects aspiring entrepreneurs to relevant resources, people, offices, etc.

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