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Biz of Acq -- Learning @ Your Library [Conference]: Kolb's Experimental Learning Model and the Institutional Learning Process

Adam Murray

Murray State University, adamurray12@gmail.com

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responsibilities of licensee libraries under the license. These responsibilities usually include education of the user group about the terms of the license and online notification of what is permitted. Libraries are not required to take extraordinary measures to prevent users from infringing. So, only a user who is flagrantly violating the terms of the license or who asks a librarian if something violates the license is the library likely to be liable.

QUESTION: *Who should pay the royalties for materials placed on electronic reserves or incorporated into course management software such as Blackboard®?*

ANSWER: For copyright purposes, who pays royalties is not the issue as long as royalties that are due are paid by someone. The first thing a library should do is determine whether it has already licensed the materials for use in e-reserves or in course management software. If yes, no royalties are due. Assume that the answer is no and that the use exceeds fair use.

Very few institutions place the burden for paying royalties on the individual faculty

member for putting materials on e-reserves. Nor would most libraries directly charge students for the material. Most libraries bear the costs themselves or have sought assistance from the college or university to cover the cost of royalties for e-reserves. (In tuition-driven institutions, students certainly indirectly pay for royalties). The same is true for royalties for materials posted for students in course management software. Faculty members are not likely to be asked to pay the royalties nor would they be willing to do so. Students who have paid tuition and fees will assume that these charges cover the cost of any materials, so some colleges and universities may decide to include an amount in the fees to cover royalties. Some institutions simply set aside funds to cover these costs or see that academic departments do so. There is no "one size fits all" for dealing with royalties for reproducing and distributing copyrighted works via e-reserves and course management software. Each institution should design a system for paying royalties that works for it.

QUESTION: *A library has a large collection of both historical and recent photographs. In the past, patrons requested reproductions of photographs from the collection which the library produced at cost. Today, users often*

ask the library to digitize the photograph and to provide the user with a digital copy.

ANSWER: When a library provided copies of copyrighted photographs to users upon request, most institutions required the user to certify that he or she would obtain permission to include the photograph in a publication or make other uses of it that would not be considered fair use. While it is understandable that a user might request a digital copy, there are some problems when a library digitizes a copyrighted photograph for a user. On the other hand, a reproduction is a reproduction.

However, a user has greater ability to upload and distribute digital copies of photographs than was possible with a single photo-reproduction. Certainly, a library that decides it will provide digital copies of photos should redesign the form on which the user will certify that he or she will seek permission for publication, posting or other distribution of the photograph. Even with this certification, a library could be found to be enabling the infringement by providing a digital copy of an analog photograph and should work with legal counsel to determine the wisdom of this action. 🌳

Biz of Acq — Learning @ Your Library [Conference]: Kolb's Experiential Learning Model and the Institutional Learning Process

by **Adam Murray** (Head of Acquisitions, Murray State University, 224 Waterfield Library, Murray, KY 42071; Phone: 270-809-3510; Fax: 270-809-3736) <adam.murray@murraystate.edu>

Column Editor: **Audrey Fenner** (Head, Acquisitions, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20540-7481; Phone: 202-707-6213; Fax: 202-707-7021) <afenner@crs.loc.gov>

Abstract

Library conferences offer the chance for individuals from different institutions to share information. This paper explores how an institution can itself undergo the same learning process as its constituent individuals through the actions taken before, during and after a conference. **Kolb's Experiential Learning Model** provides an analytic framework for this exploration.

How much do we learn at library conferences? To quote a phrase much beloved by librarians everywhere (and particularly by a certain professor from library school): well, it depends. As information professionals, we operate under an ideology that information should be shared. Conferences offer the opportunity for individuals from different institutions to share information on such topics as best practices, future trends, and methods of handling specific problems. Such an environment fosters learning at an individual level.

By examining only the possibility for the individual to learn from library conferences,

however, we ignore the opportunity for learning to take place within an institution itself. Actions taken by individuals within an institution before, during, and after a library conference provide support for this paper's perspective — that institutions undergo the learning process through the actions of their constituent individuals. **Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (ELM)** serves as an analytic framework for this exploration of the institutional learning process. This model was chosen because it is both process- and individual-oriented, making it easily adaptable to the paper's focus.

It is important to acknowledge that the institution is comprised of individuals, and that individual learning drives institutional learning. However, this paper outlines how the process of individual learning is mirrored by the institution itself, through the actions of information dissemination among an institution's constituents. While it is possible to explore this process in theory alone, this paper takes the form (if not methodology) of a qualitative case study of the author's institution. This in-

troduces the potential for biased observation; however, it is necessary to frame the analysis as a case study rather than simply as a theoretical exploration in order to provide valuable context for any reader wishing to apply this model to his or her own institution.

Background

In order to establish context for the utilization of **Kolb's ELM** it is necessary to provide some background information on the conference attendee (the author) and the needs of both the attendee and the institution. The steps taken before and after the conference to address these needs will be explored under the appropriate stage of the experiential learning model.

The attendee is a recent library school graduate working in his first professional library position as Head of Acquisitions. In this position, the attendee supervises a staff working in a number of different areas: monographs, gifts, binding, print and electronic journals, and databases. For seven years prior to his

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hire, the position of Head of Acquisitions was vacant, resulting in a substantial gap in modern policies and procedures, especially regarding electronic resources and collection assessment. Preliminary steps towards acquiring an **Electronic Resource Management System (ERM)** had been undertaken, including product demonstrations and the formation of a planning committee.

Policy gaps had a direct impact on both the needs of the institution and of the attendee. Staff members were aware of these shortcomings, but required a supervisor to suggest possible solutions; however, the attendee — being a recent library school graduate — needed confirmation from professional colleagues as to the viability of any solutions he suggested. The attendee also had the added need of an introduction to the world of library acquisitions in order to identify concerns of the position that had not occurred to either himself or his staff. The author had been on the job for three months when he attended his first professional library conference.

This background information provides context to the application of **Kolb's ELM**, particularly with respect to the concrete experience stage of the learning process.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model

The **Experiential Learning Model** developed by Kolb (1984) is used as an analytic framework for this exploration. There are a number of experiential learning models, such as those developed by **Lewis**, **Dewey**, and **Piaget**. Each of these models is based on the **Hegelian** notion that learning takes place through conflict between diametrically opposed forces. **Kolb's** model posits two conflicts as the driving force of learning: concrete experience vs. abstract conceptualism, and reflective observation vs. active experimentation. The component factors of these two dialectics are also the stages in the process of learning. They are outlined in sequential order below:

- Concrete experience: focuses on dealing with immediate situations and has a concern with "the uniqueness and complexity of present reality as opposed to theories and generalizations" (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 68).
- Reflective observation: focuses on "understanding the meaning of ideas and situations by carefully observing and impartially describing them" (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 68).
- Abstract conceptualization: emphasizes the creation of general theories rather

against the grain people profile

Adam Murray

Head of Acquisitions, Murray State University
224 Waterfield Library, Murray, KY 42071
Phone: (270) 809-3510 Fax: (270) 809-3736
<adam.murray@murraystate.edu>

BORN: August 12, 1980.

EDUCATION: M.L.I.S. — 2006 — **University of North Carolina at Greensboro**.
B.A. — 2001 — **University of North Carolina at Wilmington**.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read, of all things!

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Since graduating from library school...getting a first job! 🐘

than being concerned with understanding the meaning of one specific area

- Active experimentation: practical applications rather than observation

Individuals tend to emphasize different parts of this learning process to different extents, resulting in individual learning styles based largely on Jungian personality types. **Kolb** states that "each of these four dimensions becomes more highly integrated at higher stages of [individual] development" (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 140).

Rather than focusing on individual learning styles and their integration (there is some evidence of poor correlations between **Kolb's** learning styles and the Jungian personality types upon which **Kolb** based his model), this paper emphasizes the process by which learning takes place (**Garner**, 2000). In **Kolb's** model, concrete experience and abstract conceptualization are diametrically opposed, as are reflective observation and active experimentation, yet these pairs of opposites are linked by the actions **Kolb** calls grasping and transformation, respectively. **Kolb** states:

The simple perception of experience is not sufficient for learning; something must be done with it. Similarly, transformation alone cannot represent learning, for there must be something to be transformed, some state or experience that is being acted upon (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 42).

From this perspective, **Kolb** posits the following working definition of learning: learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 38).

For the purposes of this exploration, **Kolb's ELM** was chosen not for its emphasis on the different individual learning styles, but for its presentation of the learning process as the result of two dialectics. This process-oriented perspective lends itself to an exploration of learning at the institution level, where individual learning styles are not taken into account.

Analysis

While this exploration takes the form of a case study, the methodology utilized does not warrant calling this a true case study. Despite this, an attempt was made to record impartial observations of the actions taken by the institution (not its constituent individuals) in order to provide a context for readers wishing to apply this model to their own institution. These observations are presented below under the appropriate stage of the learning process.

Concrete experience

The first stage of the learning process in **Kolb's ELM** is concrete experience. Concrete experience forgoes general theories to focus on the present reality of any given situation and forms the basis for observation and reflection (**Loo**, 2004, p. 99). This stage highly emphasizes direct sensing and feeling and values feedback from peers (**Kolb**, 1984, p. 201).

In the context of this exploration, concrete experience takes place prior to the conference. The conference was viewed by both attendee and non-attendees as a method of obtaining information applicable to the issues and problems faced by the institution. Recognition of these needs was based on the staff's 20+ years of experience as well as the attendee's efforts to grasp the details of each area of responsibility. Attending product demonstrations and implementing a planning committee for a future **ERM** is an example of concrete experience. How the conference could address these institutional needs was included in an active planning process prior to the conference. This entailed a meeting to review the conference schedule and proceeding abstracts in order to determine what best suited the needs of the institution.

At this level, concrete experience is highly individualized, as each person in the institution has different areas of responsibility and levels of expertise. Despite this, each individual's concrete experience lends to the institutional

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learning process a clear understanding of the issues and problems that require action. This can best be seen in the active planning process undertaken prior to the conference. This process drew focus to the institution's most pressing needs and suggested conference sessions that could address those needs.

Reflective observation

The second stage of the learning process is reflective observation. At this stage, attention is given to the details of a single topic, with the goal of understanding the meaning of that topic. Impartial observation characterizes this stage, which also involves a high degree of interaction between the individual and the environment. Lectures and question/answer sessions are highly utilized and incredibly helpful (Kolb, 1984, p. 201).

Actions indicative of reflective observation are evident both at the conference and after. While at the conference the author attended sessions and roundtables, including an ERM pre-conference, where information could be gathered in a lecture and question/answer session format. Because relevant sessions were identified prior to the conference based on existing concrete experience, the author was able to attend sessions that might best suit the institution's needs. Questioning the people met outside of the information sessions also provided the attendee an opportunity for impartial observation of other institutional practices.

Institutional-level reflective observation took place after the conference, when members of faculty and staff engaged in impartial questioning to obtain information related strictly to their areas of responsibility. The notes taken at the conference in the various sessions were solicited, questioned, and discussed with the conference attendee. Questions commonly began with "what did you learn about..." This was done on a basis of each staff member's interests and areas of responsibility, without involving general theories or broader applications beyond their own duties.

Abstract conceptualization

Following reflective observation in Kolb's ELM is the abstract conceptualization stage. Kolb describes abstract conceptualization as making use of "logic, ideas, and concepts" and being concerned with "building general theories as opposed to intuitively understanding unique, specific areas" (Kolb, 1984, p. 69). Abstract conceptualization differs from reflective observation in that the latter is concerned only with specific areas.

A number of actions offer evidence of abstract conceptualization at the institutional level. Meetings were held to review the notes taken in the various sessions; during these meetings, connections were made between topics as they applied on a higher level than the individual. Through this process, the conference notes were compiled in order to match the information gathered on the previously identified issues, regardless of the session where those notes were taken. For instance,

information on ERM systems was gathered in a number of different sessions and conversations. These notes were collocated and distributed to the ERM planning committee. This helped staff and the conference attendee connect their observations dealing with their area of particular interest to a larger picture of institutional needs.

Active experimentation

The final stage of Kolb's ELM is active experimentation. This stage is categorized by doing rather than observing. As the opposite of reflective observation, active experimentation is concerned with practical applications, and is the immediate precursor to concrete experience (thus beginning the learning process over again). Performing intentional acts towards short-range goals is characteristic of this stage.

In the context of this exploration, active experimentation is evident in the actions taken after the conference notes were reviewed, compiled, and put into an institutional (rather than individual) framework. Brainstorming sessions were held to determine the best way to utilize the information gathered at the conference. Out of these brainstorming sessions came mandates for new committees and suggestions for new policies and procedures. Actually putting these committees together and implementing new policies and procedures are the most obvious examples of active experimentation. Modifying the ERM planning committee's focus resulted from this stage. How well these adopted actions address the institution's

needs should lead in turn to the development of concrete experience.

Conclusion

How do we learn at library conferences? The ways that individuals learn are as varied as the individuals themselves. Kolb's **Experiential Learning Model** explains different learning styles and how individuals go through the learning process. However, this model can be expanded beyond the individual to look at the learning process undergone at the level of an institution. Understanding how the learning process applies to the institution can help those individuals who make up the institution to prepare for and facilitate the process. How much we learn at library conferences therefore depends on the commitment — both of an institution's representatives at the conference as well as those who did not attend — to review, analyze, and possibly incorporate the information gathered into institutional activities.

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And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — 26th Annual Charleston Conference

Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition, "Unintended Consequences," Francis Marion Hotel and Embassy Suites Historic District, Charleston, SC, November 8-11, 2006

Column Editor: **Toni Nix** (Assistant to the Editor, *Against the Grain*;
Phone: 843-835-8604; Fax: 843-835-5892)
<justwrite@lowcountry.com>

From your Editor: The 2006 Charleston Conference was fabulous! Many thanks to Ramune Kubilius and all her ATG reporters who submitted reports. The entire 2006 Charleston Conference Proceedings will be published by Libraries Unlimited/Greenwood Publishing Group later this year; watch for details in an upcoming ATG issue. — KS

Preconference — Wednesday, November 8, 2006 — *Creating Capacity for Change: Transforming Library Workflows and Organizations* — Presented by Rick Lugg (R2 Consulting), Ruth Fischer (R2 Consulting)

Report by **Ramune Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library)
<r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

Those who signed up for this preconference knew that the "dynamic duo" of **Rick Lugg** and **Ruth Fischer** wouldn't disappoint. The presenters have considerable consulting

experience, most currently in the area of change and workflow redesign issues, in libraries, with library vendors, publishers, and service
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