The Librarian Entrepreneur?
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Christensen suggests, never being in a state of doing nothing. If you think of good ones please share them.

- **Listen/Observe**: Sounds simple but so often we fail to pay attention to the simplest things. What are patrons complaining about? What mistakes do you see them make on your Website? What student trends are emerging on your campus? Entrepreneurs discover problems and create solutions. It begins by having the antennae positioned to pick up the right signals.

- **Accept Hard Work**: Multiple presenters demonstrated that nothing comes easy for entrepreneurs. Coming up with ideas means implementing them and that requires dealing with budgets, deadlines, more staff and all manner of hurdles. Librarians often fear success more than failure, as success means having to do the real work to make an idea come to fruition.

- **Break a Few Rules**: The entrepreneur’s motto is “It is better to ask for forgiveness than permission.” If not rules, then at least avoid allowing policies to hamper staff creativity and innovation. Too often our new-to-the-profession colleagues are excited by their LIS education and are eager to try new ideas, only to have senior colleagues construct barriers out of rules and policies. Let’s not let policies and procedures and the fear of setting precedents get in the way of our budding entrepreneurs.

- **Balance Risk and Evolution**: Risk-taking is almost synonymous with entrepreneurship. But not all entrepreneurial endeavors need be risky if it’s evolutionary. For example, starting a text reference service may involve a degree of risk, but as an evolution of past digital reference services there is risk mitigation. The library has experience with this type of technology, and if text reference fails there are existing fallback options. So for your next entrepreneurial venture think evolution.

- **Develop Sticky Ideas**: The practicing entrepreneur, Jon Obermeyer, who delivered the luncheon keynote at the Entrepreneurial Librarians Conference discussed the “elevator pitch.” All entrepreneurs have to effectively communicate their idea in a compelling, convincing way in just 30 seconds; that may be all the time a potential financier will give. Read the book Made to Stick to learn how to construct sticky messages that are simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional, stories — in other words: SUCCESSful. If you can do this you’ll gain the support of your colleagues for your next entrepreneurial idea.

- **Use the Zoom Out Lens**: In times of crisis, according to Jim Collins, author of Good to Great and other leadership books, most workers tend to zoom in on the crisis of the moment. We need to deal with immediate concerns, but real entrepreneurs use their “zoom out” lens to stay focused on two or three years out and contemplate where the organization should head and what it will take to move in that direction. By zooming out we engage our inner entrepreneur as we spot new ideas and technologies on the horizon.

- **Be a Problem Finder**: Designers think of themselves as “problem finders” not problem solvers. That means you need to first immerse yourself in the users’ experience and figure out what’s broken in your library. All entrepreneurial triumphs begin with problem identification. This is a lousy mousetrap, can’t someone make a better one! If library improvement begins with hunting down solutions to attach to unspecified problems then there’s a real problem — a dysfunctional process. Our practicing entrepreneur spoke of a six-step process he and all other entrepreneurs use. Guess what the first step was. Yep. Identify the problem.

**Change the World One Idea at a Time**

I began my research by asking colleagues to name a librarian entrepreneur. If someone asked me that same question I could answer in a flash. Librarian entrepreneur may not be the phrase I would have used to describe these colleagues, but now I realize it fits the opportunistic, creative, innovative and potentially risky projects that continue to define their careers. In fact, I captured video interviews of each one giving their advice on how to build and promote an entrepreneurial culture in the library organization. You can seek out that video on the conference Website, but let it suffice to say that each spoke to the importance of all those characteristics and tips given above. Perhaps one summed it up best by encouraging the conference attendees to go back to their libraries with their new ideas for products, services or resources and to set out to change the world one step at a time. Sounds like good advice for us all. 🦉