

5-24-2012

## Communicating Effectively in Rapidly Changing Times

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### Scholarly Commons Citation

Casey, A. M. (2012). Communicating Effectively in Rapidly Changing Times. , (). Retrieved from <https://commons.erau.edu/hunt-library-staff-works/5>

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# Communicating Effectively in Rapidly Changing Times



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# Great Recession & Higher Education



- ❧ Public support to higher ed declined in USA by 3.8%
- ❧ Private colleges & universities lost endowment funds
- ❧ Academic library budgets decreased or flat
- ❧ Forcing rapid changes
  - ❧ Elimination of positions
  - ❧ Cancellation of subscriptions
  - ❧ Inability to replace technology
  - ❧ Reduced hours of opening

# Effects of Rapid Changes



- ❧ Fear
  - ❧ Low morale
  - ❧ Decreased productivity
- ❧ Don't understand what is happening
  - ❧ Alienation
  - ❧ Believe they have no voice
- ❧ Does effective communication make a difference?



# Communication



- ❧ Exchange or sharing of information
- ❧ To achieve shared meaning or mutual understanding
- ❧ Internal: within the library organization
- ❧ External: with outside stakeholders

# Research Design & Methodology



- ❧ Multiple case study
- ❧ Three public academic libraries in California and Michigan
- ❧ Personal interviews
- ❧ Focus group interviews
- ❧ Analysis of documents

# The Three Cases



Institutions	A	B	C
Enrollment - Fall 2010	35,000	25,000	8,400
Budget - FY12	\$25 million reduction	Flat	\$12.5 million reduction
Number of libraries	1	1 central, 1 branch, 5 departmental	1

# Communication at Case A



- ❧ Open communication a high priority
  - ❧ Director informs staff and stakeholders
  - ❧ Director seeks feedback regularly
- ❧ Methods
  - ❧ Library-wide meetings
  - ❧ Department meetings
  - ❧ Email
  - ❧ Blog
- ❧ Style engenders confidence among librarians/ staff



# Communication at Case B



## Methods

- Management team meeting minutes
  - E-mail announcements
  - Library-wide meetings
  - Department meetings
- Managers communicate with each other
  - Managers communicate within departments
  - Some decisions made quickly without non-managerial input

# Communication at Case C



- ❧ People don't always perceive a message in the way it is intended
- ❧ Multiple methods of informing and seeking input
  - ❧ Posted meeting minutes
  - ❧ Department meetings
  - ❧ Semi-annual library-wide meetings
  - ❧ One-on-one formal and informal meetings
- ❧ Librarians participate in decision-making
- ❧ Staff ideas listened to and implemented

# Discussion



- ❧ Open communication appears to be important
- ❧ Where it is evident
  - ❧ Staff morale is good
  - ❧ Priorities achieved
  - ❧ Services intact
- ❧ Where there are breakdowns
  - ❧ Confusion
  - ❧ Lack of ownership in the process

# Change is Everywhere!



- ❧ Academic libraries are changing rapidly
- ❧ Effective communication may
  - ❧ Develop buy-in from librarians and staff
  - ❧ Assuage fears of job loss/change
  - ❧ Contribute to productivity and innovation
- ❧ Further research possibilities
  - ❧ Connection between open communication and success navigating rapid change

# Contact



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