Engaging with Entrepreneurs in Academic and Public Libraries

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Introduction

Entrepreneurship has been an active phenomenon in recent years, both among practicing entrepreneurs and academics. Benton spoke to this as she said, "With the increase in the number of startups over the past five years, we've entered the age of democratized entrepreneurship. Just about anyone can afford to launch a business these days" (2014). This should have a positive effect on the economy; according to Wiens and Jackson from the Kauffman Foundation, "New businesses account for nearly all net new job creation and almost 20 percent of gross job creation" (Denning, 2014).

With an active entrepreneurial environment, now is a good time to review the landscape of entrepreneurship, assess its effects on the economy, and investigate how libraries are currently supporting these efforts and the impacts these efforts are having.

This article will navigate the library services provided to entrepreneurs by numerous academic and public libraries with a focus on the Texas A&M University's West Campus (Business) Library (WCL) and the Middle Country Public Library's (MCPL) Miller Business Resource Center. The article will investigate the positive impact libraries have on entrepreneurship through a comprehensive literature review, an informal survey of business librarians, and through case studies.

Literature Review

Much has been published in the literature about entrepreneurship and library support thereof. Articles can be found on the entrepreneurial environment at a national and campus level, the impact of entrepreneurship on the economy, and efforts by libraries to support entrepreneurs and resulting new ventures and partnerships.

Entrepreneurship

Research has been published on how entrepreneurship, small businesses, and startups affect the economy, including the topic of job creation. A piece from Forbes discusses research done by the Kauffman Foundation and the Institute for Competitiveness & Prosperity, where they found that "over the last twenty-five years, almost all of the private sector jobs have been created by businesses less than five years old" (Denning, 2014), showing the importance of startups to the country's economy. Sugars reported that 60-80% of all U.S. jobs are created by the 25-27 million small businesses that exist in the U.S. (2012).

Kritikos (2014) found that entrepreneurship positively impacts economic growth by introducing innovative technologies, products, and services as well as raising the productivity of firms and economies. He also reports that costs of entrepreneurial failure are sometimes borne by taxpayers, and entrepreneurship cannot flourish in an over-regulated economy.

Angela Benton (2014) discusses the future of entrepreneurship and the ease of starting a business in today's economy. She mentions some technologies that should transform the entrepreneurship landscape, including drone technologies, online access to potential customers via social media, and 3D printing.

Entrepreneurship on Campus

As the entrepreneurial landscape continues to grow in the United States, activity on university campuses does as well. Entrepreneurship has been present on university campuses since Management of New Business Ventures was taught at Harvard in 1847. With innovation on the rise, so too has the number of entrepreneurship classes risen with 253 courses in 1985 growing to 441 in 1993 and 2,200 in 2003 (Kushkowski, 2012). In addition to being present in the classroom, entrepreneurship has also blossomed as a research field. A study by Meyer *et al.* found 100 publications on the topic in the early 1990s, 1,500 in 2000, and 5,000 in 2010 (2014).

The President of the United States has recognized the importance of entrepreneurship on the university campus:

> *Obama not only acknowledged the need for universities to lay the groundwork for future innovators and entrepreneurs, but also implicitly called on the individuals who maintain the operation of these universities, library and information science scholars included, to consider their role in an increasingly entrepreneurial environment on the college campus (Restivo, 2014, p. 32).*

According to a report published by the U.S. Department of Commerce on "The Innovative and Entrepreneurial University" (2013), universities are answering the president's call. Researchers spoke with colleges and universities from around the country to "understand how they are nurturing and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship" (p. 4) and found that they are offering degrees and certificates in entrepreneurship as well as business plan contests, entrepreneurship clubs, startup internships, on-campus accelerators, entrepreneurial dorms, and student venture funds. They are also recognizing faculty entrepreneurship, integrating entrepreneurship into the tenure process, and increasing faculty connections with outside partners including startups and other businesses.

Differences Between Public and Academic Library Patrons

With this paper addressing both academic and public library support of entrepreneurs, a search was done to examine differences between the patrons at each type of library. One article by Saunders and Jordan (2013) addressed that exact topic. They surveyed librarians in both types of libraries and found there to be no considerable differences. Public library patrons are more diverse (age, languages, etc.) while academic library patrons are more interested in research and publishing. Faculty at academic institutions are associated with the library for years so there is a continuity in patron needs that might differ from public libraries. Nothing was found on how business patrons differ by library type.

Historical Look at Business Research Services

Most services provided to entrepreneurs by public and academic libraries are free of charge, but that wasn't always the case. Numerous articles were found on fee-based research services in libraries, typically those on university campuses. Ward, Fong, and Camille compared fee-based services to

corporate libraries saying that they provide "services either for companies too small to have their own library or large enough that they want to outsource some of their workload" (2002, p. 5).

Fee-based information services arrived in the 1960s when they included seven out of 57 ARL members (Ward *et al.*, 2002; Ernest, 1993). These services increased through 2000 when the ARL identified 31 fee-based services among its members but has since declined (De Castell, 2009).

How Libraries Support Entrepreneurship

With increased access to business information through the Internet and online resources, entrepreneurs no longer need to use fee-based research services, but they still have business research demands and, as the literature suggests, libraries are meeting those needs.

Five librarians at Purdue University worked to extend their engagement with embedded entrepreneurship classes in place of one-shot-instruction sessions. According to Kirkwood and Evans, "The students developed a better appreciation for acquiring quality information to assist in their problem solving throughout the course" (2012, p. 111). They also experimented with alternate venues for library instruction to entrepreneurship students by using the virtual environment Second Life.

Restivo believes "the development of library space to support innovation" is a great way for libraries to play a direct role in supporting entrepreneurs (2014, p. 31). She referenced Techpad, a collaborative environment for business development which is located across from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Restivo states that libraries can offer the same services as Techpad.

Building on Restivo's thoughts on library spaces, Moorefield-Lang discusses maker spaces, physical locations within libraries where patrons may "create, craft, solve problems, and develop new skills" (2014, p. 584). These spaces are ideal for inventors and entrepreneurs. They typically have 3D printers, which take "the next step toward meeting patron needs as well as a technology and space for engaging curiosity, creativity, and collaboration" (p. 583).

Numerous entrepreneurs noted the importance of access to free resources at the library in a series of short articles published in the popular magazine *Woman's Day*. In this collaborative project with the American Library Association (ALA), women discussed how libraries helped them start their own businesses. Resources to which they referred included the Internet, email access, office space, business publications, and books, as well as data on demographics, competitors, and industry (Donna Hrezo, 2008; Michele Onofrey, 2008; Mills, 2008; Pyne, 2008).

Library workshops are often mentioned as a valuable educational resource to those wishing to go into business. Some of the sessions that have been mentioned in the literature have included topics such as writing business plans, finding business information, marketing, and financing (Pryor, 2014; Stich, 2008). According to Ross, free library classes on business topics are also "a great way to network with other entrepreneurs" (2008, p. 30).

Academic libraries support and often network with, or create networking opportunities for, numerous business departments, centers, and programs on and off university campuses. A unique example is the support librarians provide to disabled veterans in the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) program. This program, which is affiliated with eight different universities, helps veterans achieve their dreams of starting their own businesses, and at the same time, making

connections with potential business partners. According to Hoppenfeld *et al.*, "The EBV librarians'

research expertise has played a role in Veterans' abilities to find the best information for their business

plans and make good choices in their entrepreneurial ventures" (2013, p. 306).

Impact of Libraries on Entrepreneurship

The level of impact that the library services provide to entrepreneurs cannot be overestimated.

According to Kanaujia and Siddiqui, "knowing how to conduct effective research, including topics like

trademark/copyright laws and market research…is essential to a successful business venture" (2014, p.

278).

Another project in which libraries have become involved is an "economic gardening project" in Michigan

that combines business coaching with research assistance. Leavitt *et al.* discuss an entrepreneurial

approach to economic development where the goal was to "provide up to 10 growth-oriented firms

within each of the two regions with actionable competitive intelligence" (2010, p. 211). Their research

referred to a previous example in Littleton, Colorado, which had success over an 18-year period when

employment growth increased by 71% while the population grew by 23.5% (p. 210).

Another example of impact occurred at the Brooklyn Business Library where a business plan contest

participant won seed money, a membership in the local chamber of commerce, free marketing

assistance, and tuition for business classes (Stich, 2008).

Entrepreneurs Giving Back

Grateful entrepreneurial library users such as those above have been mentioned in the literature as having given back to their libraries either financially or in service.

A name synonymous with philanthropy in libraries is Andrew Carnegie. As a messenger-boy in Pennsylvania, he would borrow a new book from a free library every Saturday. Carnegie said that "it was his own personal experience which led him to value a library beyond all other forms of beneficence" (Tweedale, 2012). His philanthropy led to the founding of 2,811 free public libraries.

Former Executive Director of ALA Elizabeth Martinez referred to Bill Gates as "becoming the 21st century's Andrew Carnegie" (San Jose, 1997). Similar to Carnegie, Gates stated, "Since I was a kid, libraries have played an important role in my life" (San Jose, 1997) and also similarly, he returned the favor in a large way. In 1997, he announced that he would donate $200 million to bring computer technology to the nation's poorest libraries.

A more recent case of a library patron-turned-entrepreneur donating to his library is that of Roland Parrish, owner of 24 McDonalds restaurants in North Dallas. According to Jim Mullins, the Dean of Purdue Libraries, Parrish was a "dedicated student who spent the time when he wasn't on the track in the library" (Holecek, 2015). He donated $2 million to Purdue's library renovation project, and the former Management and Economics Library reopened in April 2012 as the Roland G. Parrish Library of Management and Economics.

Another example is Thomas R. Drey Jr., a retired Boston public school teacher who studied the stock market at the library every day and turned a small inheritance into a fortune. He left his entire $6.8 million estate to the Kirstein Business Branch of the Boston Public Library (Goodes, 2001).

In addition to monetary donations, library patrons often become library partners. Many potential business owners have visited libraries to gain knowledge through various resources, and in doing so, have become experts themselves in some areas of business. Workshops have been held by successful library patrons on topics such as organization, financial planning, and entrepreneurship (Donna Hrezo, 2008; Michele Onofrey, 2008; Mills, 2008).

Background

The current entrepreneurial environment is quite active, and startups are moving quicker than ever to reach their paydays. Whereas the norm has been for founders to "typically hold onto their shares for at least a few years until their company has gained traction, or wait for an IPO or outright sale," (Rusli, 2014), competition among investors is allowing founders to reap great financial benefits in earlier funding rounds. This recent accelerated movement in entrepreneurship affects the types of resources provided by librarians as well as the rate at which they are needed.

According to Elenurm and Reino, "Demand for knowledge can vary during the early stages of entrepreneurial activities. For example some entrepreneurs need experience-based knowledge about practicalities of start-up activities; others need contacts for accessing new markets or personal emotional support" (2013, p. 212). These types of resources and more are provided by the libraries in this article.

Although this article discusses entrepreneur support from numerous libraries, the case study which feeds the majority of the content herein took place at Texas A&M University (TAMU) Libraries in College Station, Texas and at the Middle Country Public Library's Miller Business Resource Center in Centereach, New York.

Texas A&M University is a Land, Sea, and Space Grant institution and classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a Doctoral/Research University-Extensive. Among the 62,185 students and over 2,800 faculty members (TAMU, 2014) are 5,914 business students who are the most likely to seek library support of entrepreneurial research. The Mays Business School has both undergraduate and graduate certification programs in Entrepreneurship as well as the Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship (CNVE). Business classes taught with an entrepreneurship focus include Entrepreneurship and New Ventures, Entrepreneurial Small Business, Incubator Development, and Strategic Entrepreneurship.

The TAMU Libraries have numerous resources available at each of their five campus buildings, including 4,858,731 volumes, 1,353,263 e-books, 114,154 journals (111,508 are electronic), and 1,446 databases and aggregation sources with approximately 100 intended primarily for business research. The majority of entrepreneurship research support comes from the West Campus Library, a business subject library located adjacent to the business school. The WCL holds a small collection of business books and print journals as well as over 300 computers, including some computers specifically for business database access. The WCL is also a Patent and Trademark Resource Center (PTRC).

Texas A&M University is a part of the Bryan-College Station community, where additional entrepreneurship research assistance is needed. Most of the 177,690 residents (Geographic Research,

2014) of these cities are either enrolled in college or work for the college or services that support it (Esri, 2015b).

The Middle Country Public Library is located in the center of Long Island, NY in Suffolk County and serves more than 55,000 patrons. Made up of two counties, Nassau and Suffolk, the 2,851,884 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014) of Long Island consist of many empty nesters with dual incomes and high net worth working in finance, information technology, or management (Esri, 2015a). Ninety-three percent of its businesses are small businesses with less than 50 employees (Infogroup, 2015).

Within the two branches of the MCPL are more than 502,000 material holdings and more than 150 subscription databases. The library serves Centereach, Selden, and the surrounding communities while the Miller Business Resource Center, located in the library's Centereach branch, is a regional business center that helps businesses throughout Long Island.

With more than 4,000 square feet, the Miller Center includes reference and circulating collections of 12,000 books, media, and periodicals that cover business, finance, law, and career information. More than 30 specialized databases are available off-site and at four dedicated business computers in the library. The Miller Center also has a computer with several design programs and recently added a 3D printer that it makes available to local businesses. The physical space also includes several small conference rooms and offices for the business librarians as well as shared office space utilized by the local chamber of commerce, the Stony Brook Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and others. The Miller Center provides business reference and research service to an average of 30 individuals and small businesses each day via in-person visits, email, and phone requests.

Library Support of Entrepreneurs

With fee-based research services mostly in the past and business information readily available, librarians stand ready to assist entrepreneurs desiring the tools they need to succeed. Libraries of all types offer a variety of resources and services to entrepreneurs, a selection of which will be discussed as they occurred at Texas A&M University and at Middle Country Public Library, as well as in other locations.

Networking

Networking plays two crucial roles at the WCL and in the Miller Center. The first is the active involvement by librarians to know their patrons and make sure that potential library users are aware of the resources available to them. The other are the valuable networking opportunities made available by the libraries.

Christine Comaford-Lynch, author of *Smart Tribes*, said about networking, "Networking is marketing. Marketing yourself, marketing your uniqueness, marketing what you stand for" (Greene, 2015, p. 181). Networking with students, entrepreneurs, and businesses is a good way to promote a library's business services as well as to gain knowledge about the needs and concerns of local businesspeople. This can assist libraries in keeping their collections up-to-date and relevant to their users. Networking is also an important avenue for building and developing relationships that are mutually beneficial.

Networking with Entrepreneurs at Public Libraries

Networking among attendees is an important component of the business programs at the Miller Center. Networking can be added to almost any library program by advertising a program's start time 30 minutes before the program begins. The addition of tables to the typical chair set up can help attendees feel more comfortable networking, and librarians in the crowd can facilitate interaction by making introductions.

In addition to including networking in library programs, libraries can start their own networking groups. During the economic downturn, many libraries started "Job Clubs" which still meet regularly to discuss job searching and careers. This idea can be modified with an "Entrepreneur's Club", which can give small business owners or potential entrepreneurs a forum to facilitate meeting and the exchange of ideas and contacts (Weiss *et al.*, 2011).

In 1999, the Miller Business Resource Center started its own networking group. Miller Business Mornings is a networking group that provides a forum for local businesses to meet, exchange information, share resources, and participate in educational presentations. The program begins with a light breakfast and networking amongst the attendees. A speaker then discusses a topic relevant to small business owners, such as customer service strategies and time management techniques, as well as marketing, e-commerce, and communication skills. Networking continues after a brief Q&A session. Miller Business Mornings has been ideal for networking. Many of its attendees stay connected after the program and often become active with the Center.

Libraries can also hold their own business-to-business networking events. The Miller Business Resource Center holds two trade shows per year that encourage and promote networking. The Strictly Business Trade Show is held in partnership with the local chamber of commerce and the town's coalition of chambers and includes over 800 attendees and 100 businesses from across Long Island. The Miller Center's largest event, the annual Women's EXPO, features women entrepreneurs who are just beginning and gives them the opportunity to network with local businesswomen and organizations who can help their businesses grow. This event is a showcase and marketplace, attracting over 2,500 attendees who enjoy a wide array of products from over 80 women-owned businesses.

Libraries can also host other networking groups such as the local chamber of commerce or other business organizations. When librarians become active in these organizations, they increase their visibility in the community and also gain support from these organizations.

Outreach

The terms "outreach" and "networking" often go hand-in-hand. Both can involve the promotion of one's services, but outreach may also be envisioned as reaching beyond the library walls to support researchers and form partnerships.

The Miller Center formed a partnership with the Hauppage Industrial Association (HIA) to share resources. This partnership enabled members of the HIA access to many specialized business resources as well as the expertise of the business librarians, who answer over 500 reference requests per year from HIA members. The Miller Center used this cooperative to reach beyond its local business community and become involved in the region as a whole.

One outreach service provided by one of the Texas A&M University business librarians is supporting the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities, or EBV. The EBV is a fully-sponsored program for post-9/11 veterans who sustained some sort of disability from their military service and wish to start their own businesses or improve upon their current businesses. Two hundred participants get accepted to the program, which includes a 9-day residency at one of the eight consortium member universities for an immersive learning experience among 50 mentors.

Librarians support the EBV Program in different ways, dependent on resources, IT limitations, and staffing. A Texas A&M business librarian lends out laptops, presents on business research, provides research support during their visit as well as throughout the year, maintains a LibGuide, provides a year of library resource access through authentication credentials (Net ID), and attends the business plan pitches at the end of the residency week.

An important belief held by all EBV librarians is to not just provide a list of resources for the veterans and send them on their way, but to help them understand business research and how it will help with all their current and future ventures. According to Hoppenfeld *et al.*, "Incoming students' research skills are often limited to the Internet and 'Googling,' and the EBV librarians feel it is their jobs to improve upon these skills" (2013, p. 305).

Moving forward, Texas A&M University Libraries (with support from the other participating EBV universities) and the EBV are partnering with numerous database vendors to provide year-long access to a set of valuable business databases. This is currently a work in progress but this project should take library support of this unique group to another level.

Another venue in which business librarians are providing support are designated centers for

entrepreneurship, which are present at many universities. Support of many of the programs mentioned

throughout this article fall under the Mays Business School's Center for New Ventures and

Entrepreneurship, including the EBV, the Startup Aggieland business incubator, and a business venture

competition.

A business librarian at the University of Connecticut supports the Connecticut Center for

Entrepreneurship and Innovation by conducting virtual consultation sessions with clients from the

center and its incubator, while they are at their downtown offices (S. Sharma, personal communication,

April 24, 2014). Another way of reaching beyond the library's walls, support of distance business

students is not an uncommon practice. Two MBA programs from the Mays Business School meet in

Houston, which is close to 100 miles away from the West Campus Library.   A business librarian from

Texas A&M recently presented at that off-campus location and was available for consultations.

Librarians at UConn and Purdue found another way to impact entrepreneurship in academia, serving on

committees that are instrumental to innovation on campus (S. Sharma, personal communication,

February 22, 2015; H. Kirkwood, personal communication, April 24, 2014).

Although a large amount of academic library support for entrepreneurs goes towards business schools

and centers, there are others on campus with entrepreneurial research needs. During a series of

personal communications in late April 2014, Departments of Engineering and Biology as well as offices

of economic development and small business development centers were often mentioned as non-

business departments with these needs (N. Arguello; H. Kirkwood; P. Mckay; S. Sharma).

Although much of the entrepreneurial research support that academic libraries provide is geared toward on-campus initiatives, there are also examples of supporting those engaged in the local and extended economies. The University of Toronto Libraries (UTL) joined forces with the MaRS Discovery District, "a hub for entrepreneurial activity in Canada," (Fitzgerald *et al.*, 2010) to form a market intelligence team. They helped over 130 clients find information related to markets, industries, companies, intellectual property, and finance.

Another example is the University of Alabama Angelo Bruno Business Library's participation in the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN). The AERN works with partner organizations in "rural, economically impoverished counties in central and south Alabama" (Pike, 2010, p. 197) to provide a computer, business information resources, and specialized business planning software to help residents create or expand a small business. Arizona State University's Entrepreneurship Outreach Network is also designed to reach beyond the university campus to make entrepreneurial training and resources accessible in local communities and aid with economic development [1].

Business Incubator Support

Business incubators or accelerators are present in many communities and on many campuses. At Texas A&M, one of the authors has been immersed in the creation of a campus incubator called Startup Aggieland, which was designed by students as part of a class. The librarian has presented to the class multiple times to show library resources that they and the incubator residents may find useful for entrepreneurial research. The librarian has also created a LibGuide for the class/incubator and

purchased numerous books from the NBIA (National Business Incubation Association) that can be checked out for use at the incubator.

The following are additional examples of library support of business incubators that were discovered during a series of personal communications:

- A librarian listed as a resource on the Web site for an Ohio University accelerator (C. Boeninger, April 24, 2014)

- A library workstation being placed at a Purdue incubator (H. Kirkwood, April 24, 2014)

- An accelerator being located within the management library at UCLA (M. Oppenheim, February 23, 2015)

- The collaborative acquisition of a resource to be used by the library and incubator at UConn (S. Sharma, April 24, 2014)

The University of Toledo (UT) Libraries has partnered with a technology-based incubator and recommended resources for their library (Martin, 2010) while at the state level, the New Jersey State Library's (NJSL) Knowledge Initiative received funding to provide proprietary databases to incubators (Albanese, 2005).

Supporting Entrepreneurs' Intellectual Property Research Needs

Entrepreneurs and small business owners are innovative and are constantly generating new ideas in the form of intellectual property. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, "Intellectual property (IP) refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images" (2015). Much of the time, these ideas can be commercialized and legally protected by patents, trademarks, and copyright. A study by Paychex found that small businesses

produce 13 times more patents than larger firms (Bagley, 2012). Prior to acquiring these patents, a certain amount of research is required.

Research on IP takes place at all library types, including public, academic, state, and special libraries. This type of support can also be found outside the library in offices such as Research and Innovation. Many academic libraries also have relationships with offices of commercialization or technology transfer.

Entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship students will often go to their local libraries for assistance with their patent and trademark research, which may involve searching databases to see if their idea already exists or acquiring knowledge on the process of applying for a patent or trademark. Among these libraries is a specific set of librarians who work at a network of 84 Patent and Trademark Resource Centers (USPTO, 2015). These Resource Centers are part of a program that falls under the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO).

The network of Patent and Trademark Resource Centers is an invaluable resource for entrepreneurs looking to patent an idea, be it software, a new invention, or a process. They are also useful for entrepreneurs looking to trademark their product or service name, or perhaps a slogan or logo. These libraries have access to databases used by patent examiners (PubWEST and PubEAST), additional proprietary databases to which non-PTRCs might not subscribe, and librarians who are able to provide individual or group training on patent and trademark searching but who cannot provide legal advice.

Many PTRCs have added maker spaces and 3D printers, which were discussed earlier. Moorefield-Lang mentioned rapid prototyping in her article on this topic (2014), a concept that draws interest from

inventors. The trend of libraries adding these spaces for entrepreneurs, inventors, and students to see

and interact with their ideas should continue for years to come.

Educating Entrepreneurs at the Library

Reaching potential library users in the entrepreneurial community has already been covered, but just as

important are the day-to-day services libraries provide as well as special programming aimed at

educating entrepreneurs. According to Kanaujia and Siddiqui, "The role of information professionals in

aiding entrepreneurship education cannot be overemphasized, especially now that researchers are

continually striving to learn more about the entire entrepreneurial process" (2014, p. 279).

Most business librarians engage in library instruction to supply entrepreneurs with the knowledge they

need to succeed in their ventures. In their classes, the Miller Center and other public libraries often

focus on one particular resource for a particular need whereas academic business librarians may focus

on a collection of resources to complete a class project. A large percentage of entrepreneurship library

instruction sessions provided at Texas A&M are based in the Mays Business School's Department of

Management, however the business librarian has also worked with entrepreneurial classes in

Agricultural Economics, Architecture, and Engineering, including Rural Entrepreneurship and Innovative

Product Development, which requires from the librarian a focus on intellectual property.

Entrepreneurs from the local community, business school, or across campus typically require a similar

toolkit for their information needs. To meet this unique group's needs, instruction sessions may cover

market research, business plans, sources of capital, company and industry reports, and nonprofit data,

among many others. Table I lists some of the authors' recommended resources for entrepreneurial

research.

Table I. Suggested Resources for Entrepreneurs

Databases	
Entrepreneurship	
• ProQuest Entrepreneurship	• Entrepreneurial Studies Source
• Small Business Reference Center	
Companies	
• Business Source Complete	• Mergent Intellect
• Reference USA	• PrivCo
• Hoover's	
Industries	
• IBISWorld	• First Research
• Business Source Complete	• Plunkett Research Online
Market Research	
• Mintel Reports	• Business Analyst Online
• Business Decision	• Demographics Now
• BizMiner	• Data-Planet
• SimplyMap	
Funding	
• Foundation Directory Online	

Books
- New Strategist Publications (consumer spending)
- Entrepreneur Magazine's Startup Series
- How to Open & Operate a Financially Successful… Business Series
- Business Plans Handbook (samples)
- Nolo Press Business Legal Guides

Free Websites
- Small Business & Entrepreneurship Guide (http://brass.libguides.com/SmallBusinessCore)
- SCORE (https://www.score.org)
- Small Business Administration (SBA) (https://www.sba.gov)
- BusinessUSA.gov (http://business.usa.gov/)
- Doing Business (189 economies) – World Bank Group (http://www.doingbusiness.org/)
- Pew Research Center (http://www.pewresearch.org/)
- U.S. Census Bureau – American FactFinder (http://factfinder.census.gov)
- Statista (free information, more with subscription) (http://www.statista.com)
- United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) (http://www.uspto.gov)
- ThomasNet (B2B directory) (http://www.thomasnet.com)
- Bplans.com (http://www.bplans.com/)
- Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/)
- Entrepreneur (http://www.entrepreneur.com)
- Entrepreneurship.org (http://www.entrepreneurship.org/)
- Idea Café (http://www.businessownersideacafe.com/)
- Startup Nation (http://www.startupnation.com/)
- Local government webpages full of information for local businesses

In addition to classroom instruction, education also takes place during private consultations with individuals or groups. Individuals or small groups meet with the business librarian at Texas A&M to go over research strategies and how to use certain resources. One of the busier times for consultations comes during Mays Business School's "MBA Venture Challenge." This competition has teams of MBA students "evaluate early stage startup firms, providing a clear, unbiased, and business-oriented evaluation of the businesses' market and financial viability" (Mays Business School, 2014). Industries covered in the 2015 competition included life sciences, IT, retail, oil and gas, gaming, and child safety (Spencer, 2015). During the initial phase of the competition, business librarians at the library meet with most, if not all, MBA groups. The students look for industry overviews, competitor and market data, and financials on existing companies. Many of these consultations become geared toward intellectual property topics and the knowledge that comes with being a PTRC benefits the students.

An unexpected request surfaced after teaching one class at Texas A&M. A class group asked if the librarian would serve as their mentor for a new online business venture project, and he assisted them throughout the semester. Typically, assistance will be limited to business research, but with this group, the librarian was empowered to ask more questions and dig deeper into the business idea. They came to him not only to take advantage of his library research knowledge but also asking him to use his business expertise. Like many business librarian positions, Texas A&M's West Campus (Business) Library requires its librarians to hold a business degree and/or business experience. This enabled the librarian to provide advice on business strategies, marketing, and more.

In addition to everyday educational responsibilities, both public and academic libraries often host special programs. Programming is a great way to both educate and bring more businesses,

entrepreneurs, and students into the library.

Library patrons help guide the Miller Center in deciding the types of programming they offer. Librarians gather feedback from their patrons in order to plan the most relevant programming for their needs and to ensure successful events. Workshops throughout the year cover a range of topics including social media, Web design, and customer service. Experience has shown that creating a program series with a unifying theme helps with marketing and increases attendance. Currently the Miller Center runs the Business Bites program each month where businesspeople and entrepreneurs can learn a valuable new business skill in one hour. Past programs included Finding Potential Customers, Hiring a Web Designer, Excel Invoices, and Google Calendar, among others.

There are many programs taking place in other public libraries as well. One example, as described by Pryor (2014), is the St. Louis County Library's Small Business Lecture Series. In addition to offering workshops on business plans, marketing, and financing, they have done the same as the Miller Center by offering networking opportunities for local small businesses in attendance. Another potential benefit to small business owners is that it brings them into the library and introduces them to information resources that they, as small businesses, would not otherwise be able to afford.

Academic libraries also provide workshops that are of interest to entrepreneurs. An example is the Patent and Trademark Day which took place in February 2013 and was sponsored by Texas A&M University Libraries. With assistance from numerous staff members of the Libraries and the USPTO Patent & Trademark Resource Center Program (PTRCP) Office, the business librarian organized this two-day event. Two specialists from the PTRCP Office presented a day-long workshop covering various intellectual property topics such as why and how to perform patent and trademark searches. The

program was a success with 63 attendees from all over campus as well as attendees who traveled from as far as three hours away.

Collaborative efforts are often the key to successful programs. One example is an SBDC entrepreneurship program held at Georgia State University Library, which included topics such as setting financial goals and researching and analyzing the market (Georgia State University, 2014). Another was a series of workshops at Stanford University provided by the business and engineering libraries (Graduate School of Business Library, 2014).

Impact

The positive impact libraries in this study and beyond have had on local entrepreneurs and the economy is evident. Successful consultations, classes, and programs as well as library patrons-turned-partners have all been ways the WCL and Miller Business Resource Center have contributed toward this positive impact.

One entrepreneur's success came in part from a visit to the Miller Center. She wished to share her Peruvian cookies, alfajores, with local gourmet shops. Prior to obtaining lists of local stores, business librarians connected her with a business counselor at the SBDC, helped her source packaging, and gave her a list of commercial kitchen spaces where she could bake her cookies. As a result, she exhibited at her first trade show where she sold out in two hours. Soon after, Nelly's Alfajores appeared in shops throughout Long Island.

Similar successes have been seen at Texas A&M, a couple of which were found in programs in the Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship. One which was mentioned earlier was the annual MBA Venture Challenge where a team that received assistance from a business librarian at the WCL won the first place prize. Besides being judged on identification of their company's issues, primary market opportunities, and financial projections, research quality was also considered. The company, a clean technology startup, is currently raising $500,000 for pilot testing of their patented process before taking it to commercialization.

Further library impact found through the CNVE are successes out of the EBV program. With some level of library support at each of the eight EBV institutions, the librarians take pride in seeing that $188,255,950 in revenue has been generated by EBV graduate businesses with 65% of EBV graduates having started their own businesses, and 93% of them still in operation (Institute for Veterans, 2014). Gupta reported that nine of these are multimillion-dollar businesses with one company having revenues of more than $40 million (2013). On average, EBV graduates employ 4.52 people per company. One veteran who was assisted by the Texas A&M EBV librarian has gone from a double leg amputee to designer of an alternative prosthetic foot called Stump Armour. He has a patent pending for this technology. Another stated that "the library resources that we were introduced to during the program were really helpful…this information helped me develop a rock solid business plan" (K. Robinson, personal communication, July 2012). The library's impact has extended beyond the EBV Program as the business librarian at Texas A&M advised a librarian from a non-EBV university, and she has since implemented similar support of veteran entrepreneurs at her institution.

The West Campus Library and the national network of PTRCs have observed the impact of their work, as mentioned in the previous section, on the economy. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce,

licensing revenue generated by Texas A&M's Office of Technology Commercialization exceeded $8.5 million and the A&M System filed 65 new U.S. and foreign patent applications (2013). In the last five years, there have been 717 patents granted to residents of the Bryan-College Station area [2].

In addition to the above successes in the community and economy are the impacts felt within the library world. Successful entrepreneurs often want to give back to the people and organizations who helped them grow and typically will turn to philanthropy. They are often looking for ways to pay it forward and help the next generation of entrepreneurs. A report revealed that nine in 10 entrepreneurs donate money to charitable causes, and a respondent was quoted as saying "I want to help others as I have been helped" (Fidelity, 2010). The libraries in this case study have firsthand experience with this.

Sterling C. Evans was a banker and rancher who received his degree in Animal Husbandry from Texas A&M in 1921. The library had a positive influence on Evans while he attended the university. He became a successful businessman and donated often to his alma mater, including the library, which would eventually become the Sterling C. Evans Library [3].

Long Island philanthropist John D. Miller knows from personal experience the importance of information resources and business research assistance to small businesses and independent entrepreneurs. For that reason, the CFO and co-founder of a medical equipment manufacturer donated to the Middle Country Public Library, enabling an expansion of its collection, services and reach and changing the Center for Business and Careers to the Miller Business Resource Center. Miller believes in giving back to those who helped him and paying it forward. Libraries working with entrepreneurs can use their success to create new opportunities for future entrepreneurs.

Recommendations

Back to the Basics: Perform a Reference Interview

Prior to achieving successful results such as those mentioned in this study, certain challenges must be met when offering entrepreneurial research services in an academic or public library setting. One such challenge is providing the appropriate information to the right audience. This can be even more intimidating for the many non-business librarians who find themselves assisting entrepreneurs. As with any reference transaction, time is required for a proper reference interview to determine what information is needed and if necessary, at what stage in the venture is the patron. It is also important to determine a person's level of business knowledge and comfort with the library and its resources. Entrepreneurs may be low/high income, have no business background/come from a family business, be uneducated/have varying levels of education, or be students of different disciplines (business, engineering, sciences). Knowing some background on the patron will assist the librarian in starting at the right place and providing the right information, whether it is at a beginner, intermediate, or advanced level.

Learn About Licensed Data and Entrepreneurs

Once entrepreneurs or students know what information they need, the librarian must determine what types of use are allowed by electronic resource licenses. This challenge is especially relevant in academic libraries where most of the work being done is purely scholarly. A blurry line often exists when student entrepreneurs wish to use the library's business databases, whether it be for a class, working with an on-campus incubator, or for starting a business. It is important for there to be some

clarity in those licenses and an understanding among librarians and the vendors on how the resources will be used.

Use Your Support Network

Librarians pride themselves on finding the information needed by their patrons so there may be hesitation in referring to another resource. Although it is admirable to try one's best to single-handedly lead an entrepreneur to the information they need, if one is not the business expert of the library and/or feels he or she has not been successful at finding what the patron needs, finding another knowledgeable librarian will be appreciated. This is a good way to increase one's own knowledge of the subject as well. Today's business librarians are fortunate to have an international support network of colleagues for acquiring reference help, especially with the BUSLIB-L listserv [4]. Business librarians also often refer entrepreneurs and small business owners to industry organizations, local government, businesses, Small Business Administration (SBA), SCORE, and local small business development centers.

Networking Recommendation #1: You Can't Do It Alone

Having library administration support for networking events is key to a smoother overall process. It is also necessary to get colleagues on board to help with planning and on the days of the programs or events. External partners are another important asset as they can provide new eyes for doing things differently. They can also expand the reach of one's audience, and when launching an event for the first time, having the support of a respected partner will give one more credibility.

Networking Recommendation #2: Stick With It

The first occurrence of an event rarely runs without issues. The Miller Center went a few years of running their Strictly Business trade show before realizing that its strength was not in having the community meet local businesses but in connecting local businesses with each other. Once they solidified their mission and were able to communicate that effectively, participation in the event grew from 65 to over 100 vendors; so large that it required a wait list.

Networking Recommendation #3: Change Is Good

Even the most successful of programs should initiate change to avoid going stale. The Miller Center did this by adding a Technology Pavilion to Strictly Business. Another change that came along with the new pavilion was a sponsored high-value raffle prize (iPad, iPhone, etc.) that helped increase event attendance as well as traffic flow throughout the event floor; attendees needed to visit six vendors before having their raffle tickets signed.

Another addition to the trade show was the Café Corner, which featured food manufacturers from a food production facility at a local business incubator as well as other food retailers. This idea came from the librarians being aware of the fact that many of their new entrepreneurship patrons were starting food businesses. This is an example of the importance of knowing about the community a library serves.

Become Familiar with Intellectual Property

It is typical for a patent and trademark library specialist to be a science, engineering, or government documents librarian, but it can be beneficial for business librarians who assist entrepreneurs to have some knowledge of this topic. Numerous new ventures involve a new product or process which might benefit from the protection a patent offers. Likewise, many companies that will practice interstate commerce may benefit from trademarking their company name.

Take Advantage of Entrepreneur's Experiential Learning Preferences

According to Chung, "entrepreneurship education entails 'experiential learning' opportunities" (2010, p. 162) with business plan competitions, guest lectures, tours, and socials. Librarians can build on this by implementing active learning activities within the classroom. Examples include using web-based polling and hands-on database activities during a library instruction session or workshop. Librarians can also support business plan competitions by making themselves available for consultations and serving as judges.

Keep Aware for the Next Opportunity

There are always opportunities to reach more entrepreneurs. This may be through organizations that already exist or something that has yet to materialize. Texas A&M's West Campus Library has made excellent progress in support of entrepreneurship on campus, but there are organizations that could still use research support. The university has initiated the Startup Living Learning Community, an on-campus dormitory for student entrepreneurs. This could be another opportunity for outreach. Signage often

appears on campus on the day of the newest entrepreneurial competition of which the librarians were

unaware. When this happens, it is advisable to contact the organizer and get on their contact list and

begin preparing for next year's event. It is recommended that librarians ensure they have the time to

devote before pursuing and agreeing to any additional research support or attendance at an event.

Another way of keeping track of new opportunities to support entrepreneurship is attending

entrepreneurship education conferences. Chung suggests that in addition to professional development,

one can also share his or her information and data management experience with others in attendance

(2010). These conferences can also enhance one's interpersonal communication skills in a subject area

in which one might not have a background.

Conclusion

This article has explored the numerous ways in which libraries of different types have supported

entrepreneurs and small business owners, using Texas A&M University's West Campus Library and

Middle Country Public Library's Miller Business Resource Center as examples and investigating what

others have done. The public library in this study has focused on networking to market its services and

as a vital tool for local businesses to interact while the academic library has discovered entrepreneurship

throughout the campus, having provided support to many, including patent and trademark research

assistance. With a higher disposition for receiving patents, it is evident that small businesses are a group

that benefit from intellectual property research assistance at their local libraries. The many examples of

outreach showed how business librarians can make an impact on their local as well as national

economies.

One way to build on this research would be to expand from North American libraries to a more global view of the impact of public, academic, special, and school libraries on entrepreneurship using a formal survey. As the rate of maker spaces and presence of 3D printers continue to grow in libraries, more research opportunities on library spaces will present themselves.

The intent of this article was to provide useful information to librarians who provide support to entrepreneurs, allowing them to replicate ideas into successes of their own, further strengthening the economy and the relationship between entrepreneurs and information professionals.

Notes

1. https://entrepreneurship.asu.edu/resources/outreachnetwork

2. http://patft.uspto.gov/

3. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/tamucush/00135/tamu-00135.html

4. http://lists.nau.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=BUSLIB-L

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