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Libraries and Arts Entrepreneurship Education

Joel Roberts

University of Memphis

As a librarian who started out as a musician, my path to librarianship was by no means direct. I am almost reluctant to add that there was a point in my life where the thought of being a librarian would have been laughable. My degrees—and the dates they were earned—illustrate the winding path I took to arrive where I am today. Initially earning a bachelor's degree with a concentration in music performance, I ceased my studies with no desire at the time to earn an advanced degree. In fact, my first master's degree came almost fifteen years after my bachelor's degree. Five years after obtaining that Master of Music degree, with a newfound love of musicology and having taken a job at a music library as a place to work while finishing my Ph.D., I earned a second master's degree—this time in information science because I had come to realize that I really enjoyed working in music libraries. The point of this bit of personal history is that it paints a picture of what I have found common of library professionals: they come from a variety of backgrounds, and they are rarely the stereotype of an older woman telling patrons to hush. Many hold advanced degrees in other disciplines besides library or information science. Therefore, library personnel are a greater asset than might be generally thought. Keep in mind that academic librarians are often subject experts, and many colleges and universities employ an array of subject-specific librarians related to the arts—dance librarians, fine arts librarians, music librarians, etc. This diversity in specialization makes academic librarians ideal campus allies with regard to arts entrepreneurship.

Since librarianship is not directly tied to the field of arts entrepreneurship, this essay is not about what an educator should know and understand about a specific area of entrepreneurship and what topics warrant further research down the road; rather, it addresses what libraries and library professionals potentially offer to both formal arts entrepreneurship programs and artists themselves. What I advocate for is that, as research and new developments evolve within this field, libraries are considered as more than access points for information and places for conducting research. While libraries are excellent resources for these types of things, they can also serve as partners in arts entrepreneurship education.

Granted, libraries are not usually thought of in conjunction with entrepreneurship—much less arts entrepreneurship—but they are able to serve an important role within the field. Obviously, libraries are warehouses of information. But they have undergone a reinvention in recent years, and in a sense, my opinions about the role of libraries in the field of arts entrepreneurship stem from this recent reinvention. At risk of becoming

increasingly obsolete in the internet age, librarians found new ways to bring patrons through their doors. Many libraries reinvented themselves by focusing on developing spaces where patrons could create. There are libraries that have facilities for recording music, building robots, taking photographs, as well as almost anything creative. If you can think of a creative activity, there is probably a library somewhere with an area devoted to that very thing, including hosting events. At the music library I manage, for example, we hosted several songwriting workshops and open mic nights, and we are always brainstorming possibilities for other instructional and creative events. Most recently, we held a film festival that showcased short films that were the product of collaborations between student filmmakers and student composers.

Arts entrepreneurship's status as a relatively new field coincides temporally with libraries' efforts to transform themselves, so there is an opportunity for these two seemingly disparate fields to grow together. Librarians do not have to merely exist within this context to provide occasional assistance with research in the area of arts entrepreneurship. Subject specialists such as music and dance librarians have an opportunity to work with faculty who support this emerging field. At its most basic level, this entails ensuring that educators are aware of traditional resources such as books and journals relating to arts entrepreneurship that libraries possess; but conversely, arts entrepreneurship educators must not be shy about requesting library resources. The absence of resources in libraries is usually due to budgetary constraints. However, if a librarian knows that a faculty member would like a specific resource, it usually moves to the top of the acquisitions list.

Library support of arts entrepreneurship education might also involve planning events that aid both arts students and community-based entrepreneurs. The contextual nature of arts entrepreneurship allows for a great deal of flexibility when it comes to this sort of collaboration, and similar to the measures libraries have taken to stay relevant, the limit to potential library-led activities is only one's imagination. For example, while arts entrepreneurship is a field of study, there are artists of all types who are unfamiliar with its formal concepts. Like many artists before them, much of what they have learned has come in the form of real-world lessons. Libraries can be a location of interest for these individuals as venues to both learn and teach. Not only might a library be a place for artists to inform themselves about entrepreneurship, but with planning, they can also serve as event spaces where street-educated artists can share the trials and errors encountered over the course of their careers.

Looking past a library's physical space, interdisciplinary collaborations continue to evolve in the face of events none could have imagined months ago. Recent world developments stress the importance of libraries, and with that in mind, perhaps libraries are more instrumental than ever in their role for arts entrepreneurship education. In quarantine, the library is less important as a space, but it is important for what it is able to offer. From a personal standpoint, I have found patrons more thankful than ever when I have been able to provide them with scans of resources such as a passage of music to analyze for a paper or a few pages of a text. The once seemingly insignificant ability to provide a journal article to a patron virtually has become one of the essential functions of libraries in supporting the process of education under our current limitations. More imp-

ortantly, as educators plan to move courses online—many doing so for the first time—librarians can assist with finding licensed digital resources for asynchronous portions of instruction.

It is ironic that, after years of trying to bring people through their doors by any means necessary, librarians are now trying to think of better ways to assist patrons remotely. Pandemic restrictions and limitations now dictate a scenario that many were collectively desiring—the ability to access anything from anywhere. Nevertheless, the need for personal assistance has not gone away. In this current state of digital librarianship, resources physically present in libraries remain relevant and in demand; I get requests daily for assistance with accessing physical resources in the library I manage. Taking away people's ability to move freely about the community has simultaneously made them desire interaction with others more than before. Current events aside, at some point the way we conduct business in academia will return to a variation of normal. Once all phases of quarantine are over, I anticipate an increase in library traffic, which becomes an opportunity to partner with libraries for use of their physical spaces for the benefit of arts entrepreneurship as a discipline at the local level.

Thus, arts entrepreneurship educators should become aware of what libraries have to offer the field. And to that end, they need to impart this knowledge to their students. It is easy for those of us who remember a pre-internet world to be ignorant of our students' lack of familiarity with library resources, but often, students are unaware that libraries house information either not freely available or available at all. As an example, the journal in which this article is published is currently housed on an open access platform hosted by the University of Memphis Libraries. The most important thing for arts entrepreneurship educators to keep in mind is that libraries are a resource—both as physical space and for the assistance they are able to provide.

Good working relationships between faculty members and their library counterparts can only serve to benefit instructors and their students. Budgetary issues plague all institutions, and libraries are often the first hit in any budgetary crisis. I will go on the record from personal experience that when I have been faced with financial decisions about which library materials to purchase, I have often sided with purchasing things for faculty with whom I have a good working relationship. On the other side of the coin, I have occasionally encountered faculty who were unaware that I would have purchased resources to assist their courses if they had only communicated their needs; in all of these cases, these were faculty who had not responded to my emails offering assistance. Another benefit of fostering a working relationship with a librarian concerns creator spaces, which house equipment useful for arts entrepreneurs. For one, 3D printers are becoming commonplace. Even if their use only results in a musician making custom guitar picks for a band, it has assisted in an entrepreneurial effort. The University of Memphis Libraries recently added equipment for cutting and etching glass, leather and wood. In addition, sewing machines are becoming commonplace in both academic and public libraries. These tools in creator spaces are beneficial for student entrepreneurs, so consider that being on good terms with your librarian may facilitate the purchase of additional tools that directly assist entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, by becoming a research partner, libraries can impact arts entre-

preneurship research beyond books, databases, journals, etc. As an example, I have yet to encounter a library that does not compile statistics. Whether they simply record foot traffic or research assistance interactions, libraries collect statistical data. Therefore, librarians can provide raw data about the numbers of students or members of the community who have sought information about entrepreneurship related to the arts. Arts-related events held in libraries could also generate quantitative data beneficial to arts entrepreneurship research.

Collaborative opportunities between libraries, arts entrepreneurship educators and students are limited only by our creativity. Additionally, there exists potential for libraries to become integral to the development of arts entrepreneurship pedagogy. Music libraries can certainly benefit a facet of arts entrepreneurship research, but libraries in general can serve the needs of the entire field. In short, libraries are both contextual and noncontextual; they serve as common ground amid the contextuality of arts entrepreneurship.