

## A Position of Strength: The Value of Evidence and Change Management in Master Plan Development

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### Introduction

Libraries are experiencing significant change in how space is being used as well as increasing pressure from their funding and governance bodies to demonstrate the continued need for library physical space. As resources are accessed increasingly online, libraries filled with static shelves housing print materials no longer meet clients' needs. There is a growing demand for library spaces that reflect different ways of accessing and using information, support learning and building community, and encourage creativity and the creation of new knowledge. Libraries need to respond in ways that meet, and even anticipate, client needs. To assist them in determining how to move forward, many libraries are developing master plans – multi-year high-level plans providing direction and vision but allowing flexibility to accommodate unanticipated needs – for their physical spaces and service delivery models (e.g. [University of New England](#), [University of Adelaide](#), [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#), [Queen's University](#), [State Library of New South Wales](#), [New York Public Library](#)). The challenge for libraries is to ensure that their master plans reflect the dynamic world in which they are situated and are supported by clients and other library stakeholders.

The University of Saskatchewan Library recently completed a master space plan for its seven libraries using a three-phase approach that combined evidence based practice and change management. The decision to combine these two methodologies was intentional. Evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP) is a structured process bringing together research evidence, user needs and preferences, and professional expertise. Using evidence to shape a master space plan gives it credibility and adds strength to the decisions encompassed within it. Change management focuses on helping the people affected by the change – staff, clients, funders – move through change in a positive way. Building change management into the master planning process increases the probability that library stakeholders will support the plan. It is essential that stakeholders understand why the change is occurring and feel involved throughout the process. Developing a master space plan that uses a structured approach incorporating EBLIP and change management results in a plan that reflects

the library's dynamic environment and has the support of its stakeholders, allowing the library to move into plan implementation from a position of strength.

## Literature Review

According to Halling and Carrigan (2012, 72) this is “a time of great transition in libraries.” Scholarly literature, blog posts, websites, and reports abound with discussions about changing library environments (e.g. Wells 2007; Houston 2015; Michalak 2012; Sorensen and Sarjeant-Jenkins 2016; American Library Association n.d.; Shaw 2013; University of Manchester 2017). Triggers for change include fiscal and space challenges, differing pedagogical approaches, the ubiquity of access to online information, institutional priorities, and the client expectations that these foster. University administration starts to question how library space is used and begins pressuring libraries to reconsider their use of space (Thibodeau 2010; Michalak 2012).

In response, many libraries – and the institutions of which they are a part – have chosen to develop a master space plan for their physical spaces. One of the key considerations in developing contemporary master plans is flexibility as institutions attempt to manage evolving demands and environments (Cort, Cort, and Williams 2017; Coulson, Roberts, and Taylor 2015). A common approach is the revitalizing master plan – one that focuses on current buildings and ways to update, renovate, and reuse them with the goal of achieving vibrant and effective spaces (Coulson, Roberts, and Taylor 2015). “When carefully conceived and deftly applied, revitalising master plans can...[provide] a forward-looking strategy for meeting long-term functional requirements whilst creating the type of welcoming aesthetically pleasing spatial experiences that attracts students” (Coulson, Roberts, and Taylor 2015, 120).

A number of authors (e.g. Robinson 2009; Thibodeau 2010; Dewey 2014) highlight the importance of having a cohesive master space plan to respond to external pressures. Dewey (2014) speaks of the growing thrust towards partnerships between units on campus providing student-centred services. As institutions look to existing buildings to meet space needs rather than facing the cost of buying land and new construction, it is increasingly necessary for libraries to be proactive in planning new uses for space, seeking out partners, and initiating discussions about space with administration (Robinson 2009). Robinson (2009, 7) encourages libraries to “build a strong case using metrics, provide real-life examples and seek the support of the library's stakeholders. Seek out partnerships where it makes sense, demonstrate the library's desire to move in new directions and integrate more closely into the overall academic enterprise. Develop a plan!”

Evidence-based library and information practice (EBLIP) provides a framework for 'building the case' for library space. EBLIP is a five-stage sequential, structured process combining the best available evidence with "a pragmatic perspective developed from working in the field, critical thinking skills, and an awareness of different research designs, which is further modulated by knowledge of the affected user population's values or preferences" (Eldredge 2012, 139).

The question of what constitutes evidence within the EBLIP framework has been discussed by a number of authors (e.g. Wilson 2017; Booth 2010). According to Koufogiannakis (2011, 1-2), the "data that comes from a local context is in fact often the most important evidence source that a LIS professional can consult because it gives us information that is directly applicable to, and about our users." She expands on what can be considered local evidence, including experiences, observations, program and project assessment and evaluation, and user feedback (Koufogiannakis 2011). Matthews and Walton (2014) and Booth, Schofield, and Tiffen (2012) highlight the importance of local evidence to support and inform library space planning, including user feedback and broader discussions, and the value that this can have in building buy-in for change. Wilson (2017) brings published research and local evidence together with professional expertise stating: "The idea is not to discount a librarian's knowledge but to enhance it by ensuring that library users or stakeholders and the published research are consulted.... EBLIP...is all about not reinventing the wheel. It's about being thorough and inclusive in order to make the best possible professional decision" (Wilson 2017, 185).

EBLIP's five stages – the first three focusing on shaping the question, finding evidence, and evaluating that evidence and the fourth and fifth on implementing and then evaluating and disseminating the change (Booth 2006) – bring rigour and credibility to the master space planning process. What is not explicit in the EBLIP framework is the parallel work that must occur to help people move through the change process. While the question is being shaped, and evidence gathered and evaluated, it is critical to develop an understanding among employees and other library stakeholders of the impetus for the change and how it will impact them – with the goal of building support and buy-in.

Change management acknowledges that organizational change requires that the people within the organization change how they do their work (Prosci n.d.b). Every change in technology, operational process, or organizational structure affects the people that work in the organization or use its services (Curzon 2006).

“Organizations are more about people – their work habits, attitudes, and relationships – than about anything else. An effective manager perceives an organization not as an entity, but as a network of people whose abilities, talents, and feelings combine to bring about library service.... [T]he successful integration of change in a library rests on the manager’s ability to manage people during change. In fact, the reason most change fails is that managers do not take people into account.” (Curzon 2006, 57)

Lawrence (2015) particularly focuses on reflection, dialogue, and listening as key to successfully managing change. Being open to the alternate views and perspectives of people within the organization is critical. “[O]ur first approach is often to implement an approach that has worked elsewhere and, if it doesn’t work, apportion blame to the individual, team or community perceived as resisting change.... Yet how hard is it to put aside one’s own assumptions, based on years of experience, and open one’s mind to the idea that our world isn’t the same as everyone else’s world” (Lawrence 2015, 42)?

Regardless of whether they used the term ‘change management’, a number of libraries have incorporated change management principles into their projects. Wells (2007) speaks about the adoption of the “principle of inclusiveness” in the restructuring that took place at the University of New South Wales library. Loughborough University library understood the benefits of involving a wide range of people in developing their strategy, as the library would then “benefit from a wider pool of ideas, there will be more buy-in from the people who have to deliver the strategy, and there will be wider discussion and debate” (Matthews and Walton 2014, 243). This is echoed by Thibodeau (2010, 27) in her article on the loss of space for the Duke University Medical Center Library and Archives: “...have as much brainstorming and participation as possible when preparing plans, because each new perspective and suggestion strengthen[s] the final outcome and the team.” Michalak (2012) focuses on the importance of employees in successful change at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, recognizing the importance of staff development and empowerment, the important role early adopters play in inspiring others, and the impact of change fatigue on employees and on the possibility of successful change.

### **The University of Saskatchewan Library Approach**

Recognizing the value of EBLIP in integrating research evidence, user needs and preferences, and professional expertise, and the critical importance of considering and fully involving the people impacted by the change, the University of Saskatchewan Library chose to combine EBLIP and change management methodologies in developing its master space plan.

The library's master space plan sets the stage for actual physical library changes, so throughout the master planning process the library's change management focused on building awareness, desire, and knowledge – the first three elements of Hiatt's (2006) ADKAR model.

The master space plan development process can be broken into three phases:

- Phase 1: shaping the library vision, gathering external evidence, and building awareness of the need for change
- Phase 2: gathering and evaluating local evidence and developing a desire for change
- Phase 3: finalizing the plan, sharing and assessing it, and developing knowledge of how to change

### *Phase 1*

Phase 1 focused on establishing a vision for library spaces, starting to gather and evaluate evidence from external sources, and building the case for library transformation.

Building awareness of the need for change has been something that the University of Saskatchewan Library has been doing for years. Since the early 2000s, there has been clear messaging that libraries are changing in response to changing scholarship, access to resources, and pedagogy. The Dean, in particular, ensured that the university administration was aware of the transformation occurring in academic libraries in North America and across the world. Prior to the development of the master space plan, renovations had taken place in the largest library on campus to reflect new ways of learning and accessing information. These physical changes helped to keep the library in the minds of the campus community.

A university-level steering committee chaired by the Provost and comprised of senior university administrators, library representatives, faculty members from a number of colleges, student representatives, and employees from the university's planning and facilities unit was established at the beginning of 2015. This high-level committee had oversight responsibility for the library's transformation. The steering committee recognized the value of learning from others. Much of the evidence for this phase was garnered from library websites (e.g. <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/huntlibrary>, <https://library.concordia.ca/webster-transformation/>, <https://www.gvsu.edu/library/mary-idema-pew-library-21.htm>, <https://lib.asu.edu/hayden2020>, <http://www.lib.washington.edu/ougl/renovation>) and the Designing Libraries conferences hosted at the North Carolina State University and the University of Calgary. This evidence supported the direction that the library and university were hoping to go and provided examples of what other libraries had already done.

Creating a unifying vision for the University Library was a critical step in developing the master space plan. Following a workshop highlighting international trends and space types in academic libraries, a representative group of faculty, staff, and students came together to develop the vision in the fall of 2015. Following endorsement by the steering committee, the draft vision was shared with the wider campus community. Deans and executive directors of all colleges and schools were asked to distribute the vision document to their faculty and the library's associate deans presented the vision to college and school faculty councils and key student groups to gather their feedback and gauge the level of support for the vision.

Sharing the draft vision served three purposes. It helped the library build awareness of the need for changes in library spaces by highlighting the changing teaching, learning, and research environment. Because the high-level vision for library spaces was in its draft form, it provided an opportunity for the campus community to contribute to shaping the vision. The presentations also generated questions, ideas, and comments, demonstrating what people valued from and about the library, so served as a very early round of consultations. The draft vision got the campus talking and thinking about the library and its spaces in a way that was exciting and engaging.

## *Phase 2*

Phase 2 continued the process of gathering evidence, with a focus on the local context, and evaluating the quality and relevance of that evidence. There was a shift in intensity from creating an awareness of the need for change to building desire among stakeholders for change.

In April 2016, the university hired an architectural firm to produce the library master space plan. The firm had an understanding of the library and the campus due to earlier consultant work they had undertaken. In addition, they had significant recent experience designing public spaces that required extensive stakeholder consultation. Combining the firm's professional expertise with library employees' knowledge of the university community, a process for gathering local evidence through broad consultation with the campus community was developed:

- a stakeholder group to serve as a sounding board as the master space plan progressed
- focused consultation sessions with key groups
- pop-up consultation sessions
- a randomized survey

- a website with a feedback form and email

Endorsed by the steering committee, the aim of the process was to increase the likelihood of participation by providing multiple avenues for stakeholder engagement.

Some consultation occurred as part of the presentations on the draft library vision. However, as the master space planning process moved into phase 2, the consultation on library space became the primary focus. All colleges and schools were offered the opportunity to schedule a consultation session, resulting in ten of the fifteen disciplinary colleges and schools having at least one session. Sessions were also held with three university-level committees as well as the undergraduate student council and the graduate student council. In order to get the varied perspective of students, the library reached out to discipline-based student groups. In this way, the library gathered the perspectives of students in the health sciences, agriculture, arts and science, engineering, and education. Focused consultation sessions were held with international students and Indigenous students, and feedback was gathered from students who are also parents. A total of twenty-nine sessions took place.

In addition, three workshop sessions were held with library employees; one session with librarian faculty and two open to all employees. These sessions were key for gathering the insight and experience of library employees who work directly with students and faculty and work in the library space. Thirty percent of employees participated in the formal sessions; however, employees also contributed feedback through email, the survey, participation on working committees, and informal discussion. Seeing their input reflected in draft plans and hearing about the positive response from students to the master plan consultations increased employee desire for change in library spaces.

To gather spontaneous feedback, data gathering included pop-up consultation booths at key points across campus. Over the course of three days, pop-up consultations occurred in six locations deliberately located outside of library spaces. These booths used images of other libraries and contemporary furniture to attract passersby and gathered input through sticky notes and direct conversation.

Early in the period of consultation, a stakeholder group comprised of representatives from colleges, student groups, the library, and university facilities was established to serve as a sounding board for the master space plan development. The stakeholder group met three times throughout the planning process, helping to confirm guiding principles for the plan, floor plans for the library spaces, and the different programming spaces. The representative nature of the group led to chance conversations about other initiatives on campus; a catalyst for meetings

between the library and other campus units and, ultimately, the incorporation of shared programming space in the final master space plan.

As another method of gathering input on library spaces, an online survey was sent out to a random sample of students, faculty, and staff. Six thousand four hundred and fifty (6450) students received the survey – a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students and comprising approximately 30% of the population. The resulting 2044 completed surveys meant a response rate of 31.5%. Of the 2407 surveys distributed to faculty and staff (approximately 40% of the population), 522 surveys were completed – a 21.5% response rate. Due to the positive response to the survey, there is a 99% confidence level in both the student and faculty/staff results with a margin of error of +/- 5%. The survey asked questions about five categories of library spaces:

- Core library spaces
- Spaces for study
- Technology enhanced spaces
- Creative spaces
- Additional spaces

The survey also included whether or not respondents would use these spaces if available at one or more of the libraries. Respondents then provided a ranking of the three most important library spaces within each category to include in future library space. Finally, respondents were asked to rank the five most important new library spaces listed in the last three categories

As a means of direct communication with the entire campus community and as an additional mechanism for client input, the library established a library planning website – <https://library.usask.ca/libraryplanning/>. Along with providing information and updates about the master space planning process, the website included a feedback form that allowed people to comment anonymously if desired. To keep the whole master planning process as open and transparent as possible, summaries of each consultation session and of the survey were available on the library planning website. The intent was not just to gather information but also share that information so that the community could be fully engaged with the planning process.

The second change management element focuses on building a desire for change. Desire is about helping individuals make a “personal decision to support and participate in the change” (Prosci n.d.a). There are a number of motivators for building desire for change; when thinking of new library spaces the key motivators are the possibility of personal gain and wanting to be part of something or belonging (Prosci n.d.a). The process of gathering local evidence built on both of these motivators. Consultation sessions meant that members of the

campus community were helping to shape the plan's development (belonging), but could also influence the plan so that it might incorporate components that would meet a need or a want (gain). Seeing new furniture and images of possible spaces at the pop-up booths built desire for new, re-envisioned library spaces. Ensuring that the library planning website contained summaries of consultation sessions, updates on what was taking place across the library, and a way to communicate with the library, also supported individuals' sense of being a part of something (belonging).

### *Phase 3*

Phase 3 pulled all the evidence together into the master space plan, serving as EBLIP's implementation stage. The plan was then shared with library stakeholders to assess its applicability and accuracy, and to get a sense of how it 'sits' with others. Sharing the plan also helped to build knowledge of how to move forward in transforming the library.

Using evidence from the experience of other libraries, professional knowledge and expertise of the architectural consultants and the library employees, and extensive user input gathered through surveys, consultations, and online, the master space plan for all seven University of Saskatchewan Library branches was developed in late 2016 and presented to the steering committee. Library employees also had a chance to respond to the plan at this time. Once the plan was approved by the steering committee in February 2017, it was shared with the colleges, schools, and student groups who had provided their input during the consultation process.

Sharing the master plan back with the campus community incorporated two elements of change management methodology. By closing the information loop with library stakeholders involved in consultations, the library continued to build desire for the change. Showing the components of the plan, discussing how the plan might roll out, and talking about the relationship of the master space plan with other campus initiatives also developed knowledge of how to change.

Master plans need to be flexible (Coulson, Roberts, and Taylor 2015; Cort, Cort, and Williams 2017) in order to respond to the dynamic environment in which libraries reside. The presentations of the master space plan reflected that approach. The plan is not set in stone; points raised by users highlighted some potential issues within the plan that need to be considered. However, the master space plan provides a path forward for the library and ensures that when funding opportunities arise or when the library experiences space pressure from other campus units, there is a plan to refer to that has credibility and support.

## Discussion

The University of Saskatchewan Library's experience in the development of its master space plan demonstrates the value of incorporating both EBLIP and change management in master planning projects.

Using EBLIP ensured that there was a systematic process for moving through the master space plan development. The five EBLIP stages are clearly present in the three phase approach used by the University of Saskatchewan Library.

- Shaping the question: phase one focused on developing a vision for library spaces, essentially shaping the question or the purpose of the work.
- Gathering evidence: phase one and phase two both involved gathering evidence. In phase one the focus was on evidence external to the University of Saskatchewan, in phase two the focus turned internally to all library stakeholders.
- Evaluating evidence: evaluation tended to occur as evidence was received so is found in both phases one and two, however, more intensive evaluation was done of the local evidence gathered in phase two.
- Implementing the change: this occurred in phase three when the master space plan was developed based on the best available evidence, professional knowledge and expertise, and user preference.
- Disseminating and evaluating the change: this also took place in phase three as the master space plan was shared with stakeholders.

The EBLIP methodology provided the evidence for the master space plan design: some evidence was data driven, such as the survey; some was through consultations, which were more individual but representative. Professional knowledge – of library employees and of the architects – helped to mitigate concerns and lessen the chance for mistakes. Attendance at conferences and learning from other libraries that had already implemented changes provided guidance.

The first element of the ADKAR change management methodology – awareness – can be seen throughout all three phases and is particularly evident in the area of communication. Repeated messaging about the dynamic environment in which libraries find themselves and the potential of new spaces to meet client needs were key in building awareness for the need to change. However, as Lawrence (2015, 11) states: “the clear articulation of the change message is necessary, but...isn't sufficient. The focus on broadcasting...hides the significance of effective

listening...” Listening to stakeholder needs, concerns, and ideas, and trying to reflect and respond to them in the master space plan fits Lawrence’s (2015) reflective dialogue concept.

Building desire for the change involves individuals making a personal decision to support the change (Prosci n.d.a). By bringing library stakeholders along in the planning process, keeping them involved, and getting them excited about possibilities, the master space planning process focused on two motivators of desire: the possibility of personal gain and developing a sense of belonging. Desire for the change was strengthened through the transparent planning process and the use of reflective dialogue. This is apparent in all the phases, but particularly evident in phases two and three.

Finally, developing knowledge of how to change is found in the third phase. Sharing the master space plan with faculty councils, student groups, and the broader campus community helped to develop the knowledge among library stakeholders of how to change. The master space plan serves as the roadmap for moving the library forward.

Combining EBLIP and change management in developing the master space plan benefitted the planning process in a number of ways. Regular and consistent messaging meant people were aware of why the change was taking place. The multiple avenues used for gathering local evidence - survey, spontaneous consultations at pop-up booths, targeted presentations, website – provided credibility for the resulting master space plan. External evidence backed up the local evidence, showing that the library was not alone in its vision. Involving library stakeholders throughout the planning process, from developing the vision to responding to the plan, helped to build buy-in for library transformation. With the master space plan presented to the campus and made available on the website, the campus community now has the knowledge of how to realize the change.

A master space plan developed using a structured, evidence-based approach imbued with change management is a solid foundation from which a library can implement its plan. Using evidence to shape a master space plan gives it credibility and adds strength to the decisions encompassed within it. Building change management into the master planning process increases the probability that library stakeholders will understand the need for change and support the plan. The University of Saskatchewan Library is just at the beginning stages of realizing the vision of its master space plan. There are sure to be issues that arise along the way. However, with a strong master space plan developed in three phases that incorporate EBLIP and change management, the library is starting from a position of strength and campus-wide support.

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