Evolution Through Collaboration: Exploring Participatory Change in a Library Publishing Program

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Hello and good morning! I'm Matt Ruen, Scholarly Communications Outreach Coordinator at Grand Valley State University,
[Jackie introduction]

"The library is a growing organism," S.R. Ranganathan's 5th law of library science is as constant today as it was in 1931, as demonstrated here at the 5th annual library publishing forum. But while growth may be inevitable, constant, and universal. . . it can also very easily be challenging and painful.

> # "The only thing worse than the status quo . . . is change"
> ___
>
> ### Change is:
> - Inevitable
> - Necessary
> - Hard
>
> ### Transformational change is:
> - Emergent
> - Cultural & Mental
> - High Uncertainty

About a month ago, I was speaking with a colleague about campus advocacy, and he joked that the only thing academics hate more than the status quo is . . . change. There's a lot of truth in that joke, especially with what change management literature calls *transformational* change. Rather than simply tweaking and improving an existing process, or building towards a predetermined goal, large-scale transformational change moves towards an outcome only determined during the process of change, and involves changing mindsets and organizational culture as well as reporting lines or employee practices. These factors combine to create higher uncertainty, higher stress, and often higher resistance to change.

But by enlisting the people affected by a change to help shape that change, an organization can reduce uncertainty, ease transitions, and draw on participants' shared values.

(http://changeleadersnetwork.com/free-resources/what-is-transformation-and-why-is-it-so-hard-to-manage)

Growth & Evolution at GVSU

- Rethinking our digital content work - publishing, archives, digital scholarship, technology
- Complex, interconnected, yet distinct activities
- Collaborate or combine?

At GVSU, Jackie and I have experienced this sort of participatory transformative change as we and several of our colleagues rethink the ways that we work with distinctive digital content.

Previously-separate teams spanning our special collections, technical services, and scholarly communications units are moving to a shared organizational structure, one that emphasizes our similar activities managing metadata, interacting with online publishing platforms, and building relationships with campus partners. For ten years, our related-but-distinct programs have grown separately, but with increasing collaboration, and now we're moving beyond ad-hoc teamwork to a formal structure.

Our evolution drew from a range of meeting facilitation and participatory change techniques, but was based on one called appreciative inquiry.

Appreciative Inquiry

"Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success."

When our new Dean started in June of 2017, she came to us with experience in using a technique called Appreciative Inquiry.

So what is Appreciative Inquiry or AI. Please note that when I say AI, I'll be referring to this technique, not artificial intelligence.

A lot of the information I know about AI comes from a training I did, but also this (show book) Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry. This is a helpful tool to explain the basics of AI because it is a quick, short summary.

The book summarizes: "AI suggest that we look for what works in an organization; that we appreciate it. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been."

"*Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.*"

AI is usually done in a workshop format so the group can recall motivating moments of success in past experiences, which creates a new excitement that is positive and collaborative. It is this energy that distinguishes the AI process from other approaches to change.

The book also states that when you ask questions in an appreciative way, an organization can take the information it needs, but everyone has the confirmed knowledge, confidence, and inspiration that they did well and will continue to do well in the future.

When an AI facilitation is completed, the group can feel a sense of commitment, confidence and affirmation that they have been successful.

Ways to Implement

"Change management says that those who have a say in creating change are more likely to implement it"

When getting started with AI, it is important to remember who to include in these conversations, basically, everyone who might have even a small role in the topic you're trying to work on.

The book states "Change management says that those who have a say in creating change are more likely to implement it. By including everyone you honor the three human universal needs. There are several variations on these principals, but a pioneer in AI, David Cooperrider states them as:

Every human being has a need to...
1. Have a voice and be heard,
2. Be seen as essential to the group,
3. Be seen as unique and exceptional.

That is why it is imperative to be deliberate with who is present at each stage since the first steps are crucial in the success of the facilitation.

The book states that "if you leave key stakeholders out at the beginning, you undermine the spirit of AI and it will have consequences."
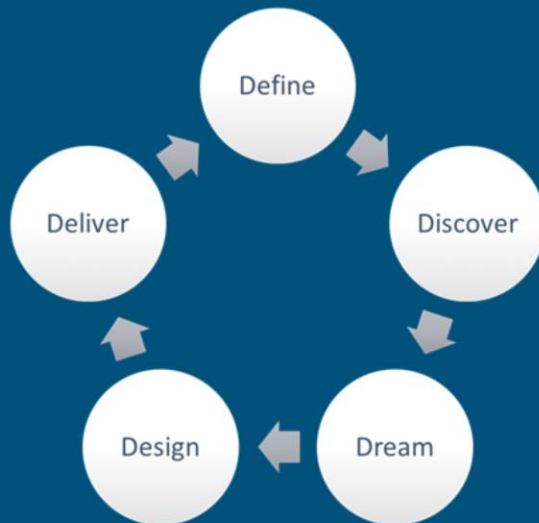
Getting started, there is this basic principle of the 5 - D cycle. It should be a cycle so it's something that can be continuous.

The 5 D Cycle starts out with Define. This is where you're going to essentially "choose topic" and what area you want to focus on, the question you want to answer and how you want to explore the topic.

The second D is Discover: What works well regarding the topic you chose? This is the time you'll be looking at the organization with an appreciative perspective.

The third D is Dream: what might the collective future look like? What would an "ideal state" be for the group?

Next is Design: This is the decision making phase where you write directions to achieve the future ideal state, you start making an action plan.

Finally, the last D is Deliver or sometimes called Destiny: This final state is where you actually do the things you mapped out to do and start implementing.

It's a dynamic process where the cycle can be repeated to keep learning and continuing success, at multiple levels in the organization.

In essence, this cycle is what we did at GVSU for those of us who work with digital

objects.

Considerations for Participatory Change

(transition: something about participatory change)

We're going to close our talk by outlining a few ideas that are worth considering if you're considering using participatory methods for a change in your organization. Many of these are based on our own experiences--some were successful and rewarding, while some of them are things that we look forward to trying in the future...

Preparation to Reduce Uncertainty

- Training
- Tools
- Communicating

Several groups within the library have started to use this process from departments to committees in order to help have a shared understanding of ideal states and future goals. Some facilitations have even started using their team members strengths to help distribute new and existing tasks to a job description.

I have now been part of two different facilitation as well as attended an AI training session.

The library had an outside facilitator, Dr. Jacqueline Stavros, come in and do a 4 day training on how to be a facilitation leader that about 20 library faculty and staff participated in. This really helped a lot of us have a better understanding of what AI is and why it can be helpful.

Several of us are now "AI Leaders", but that isn't necessarily something that you'd need to get started.

I'd recommend start by reading more on AI, such as "The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry" but there are several other books on the subject as well.

Create a workflow document including breakdowns of activities, rough timelines so the group knows when you're moving on, and finally who is involved in this process.

Share that document with others in the organization, but especially with people going through the experience. From my perspective, understanding what we're going to do and why, really helps alleviate the uncertainty of trying something new.

Planning the Process

- Get Outside the Box
- Balance Flexibility and Structure
- Keeping the Process in Perspective

Balance the flexibility of defining with more specifics afterwards

Emphasize the planning and perspective aspects-

Clarity and direction for the post-Define parts of the process. Timeline, goals, sense of urgency or not, help participants understand the timeline and scale of the project (relatedly, value of acknowledging that certain tasks are more complex or difficult, that slow progress or confusion can be natural or expected.

e.g. , functional analysis is REALLY HARD. If it seems difficult or confusing, that's okay--recognize, but also benchmark. It's not that you, person, are slow, or that our team is failing to make progress. It's that we're climbing a hill that's steeper than it seems from the outside.

Roll in "outside perspective" -- esp for running meetings

Understanding People

- Recognize areas of strength, comfort, discomfort
- Everyone involved from the beginning

transition: differing areas of strengths, comfort/discomfort; valuable to think about this and work that into approach

getting everyone on the same page early -- define stage very important

Having clear timelines and pre-set meetings timeline of implementation

Have everyone involved from the beginning. I mentioned earlier that including as many people as possible will generate the best ideas and the most buy-in and excitement about the future since you have a say from the beginning.

Meeting people where they are

- Understanding areas of strength, comfort, discomfort; working with them
- Recognize that thinking is hard work

- Everyone involved from the beginning
- Feedback

CELEBRATE!

- Recognizing milestones reduces uncertainty

- Acknowledging progress maintains momentum

- Celebrating effort reaffirms goals & shared values

Participatory Change is hard, often unfamiliar work. Uncertainty, learning, even excitement can be tiring.

Recognition and celebration
Recognizing --hard work, often *different* kind of effort; celebrate, relax, congratulate. Recognize/Celebrate the work.
Milestones! -- clear timeline and identifying milestones helps with this, helps carry momentum onwards and reduce uncertainty