

Looking Beyond the Pandemic: What's Next for Academic Business Librarians?

DIANE ZABEL

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park
dxz2@psu.edu

The papers included in this conference issue are based on presentations delivered at the virtual spring 2021 Academic Business Library Directors (ABLD) Annual Meeting. The theme of the conference, "The Secret Lives of Pets," alluded to the time that many ABLD members spent working remotely with furry co-workers (myself included). While some papers in this issue examine the impact of the pandemic on academic business libraries and business education, other papers highlight innovation at ABLD member institutions.

Greg Fleming analyzed annual reports submitted by ABLD members to identify trends. Members were asked to report on new and ongoing initiatives, collections, organizational changes, changes in library spaces, and the impact of COVID-19. His summary, "The Secret Lives of Pets," revealed numerous themes. Business librarians successfully supported online learning through expanded online services, controlled digital lending, and the creation of innovative services for faculty teaching online (such as Cornell's Virtual Air Traffic Control service and Northwestern's foundational online practicum). Many ABLD members reported initiatives relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Several members commented on progress relating to Open Access, sometimes linked to Transformative or Read and Publish agreements. Most ABLD members responded that funding for collections was flat or reduced. Several renovation projects were put on hold in business libraries because of the pandemic. Many members reported leadership changes within library organizations and business schools. Business schools also made DEI a priority this past year. Despite the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, many business schools moved ahead with building projects and new programs.

Some of these new programs align with trends reported by Caryn L. Beck-Dudley, President and Chief Executive Officer of AACSB International. In her insightful article based on her keynote address, "Impacts of the Pandemic on Business Education: A New Era of Learning," Ms. Beck-Dudley emphasizes the need for engaging and flexible learning options for business students and business leaders. She believes that it is increasingly important for business schools to address the needs of lifelong learners. Business instruction will be delivered face-to-face, virtually, and just-in-time (using tools such as credentials and badges). She is optimistic that business schools are up to the challenge of reimagining business education.

Business librarians can help peers support learning by sharing expertise. Annette Buckley and Kara Van Abel introduce readers to BLeXIM, a very practical program for sharing instructional materials. Their article, "Business Librarians Exchanging Instructional Materials (BLeXIM)" provides an overview of this registry. Harvard librarians are working to remedy injustices to marginalized and underrepresented groups. In their thought-provoking article, "Language Matters," authors Christine Riggle and Mary Samouelian describe best practice guidelines for inclusive archival description, including guidance on removing outdated and offensive language. Finally, Kevin A Thomas and Marcella E. Barnhart describe how the Lippincott Library at the University of Pennsylvania has come up with a solution to supporting

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large-scale literature review requests. In their article, "Research Support through Programming," the authors describe this customized software-based approach. This novel and well documented case study will undoubtedly prompt other business librarians to explore the development of new research support services.