

The Public Library And Business Services

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Abstract

This paper reviews the literature about public libraries providing services to businesses and it provides an illustrative rather than an exhaustive account of present day activity of service to businesses by public libraries.

To get a better understanding of the present-day services specific libraries are providing to businesses and some history about how they got started providing these services, the author contacted eleven libraries in six states and the District of Columbia. One library had suspended its service to business due to renovations of its central library and two libraries cited heavy workloads and short staff and declined to participate in the study. Profiles of the eight libraries that agreed to participate are provided, however, one library elected to remain anonymous; it is referred to by a geographic designation.

The author discusses the need for a library to look internally to make sure it has the necessary commitment and the ability to obtain resources to meet the needs of the communities it serves before it seeks external acceptance as a provider of necessary information to the business and economic development communities. The challenge of measuring the value of the services provided is also discussed.

The author concludes that it is worthwhile for public libraries to provide services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Anecdotal evidence supports the claim that public libraries have a positive impact on a community's economic development by providing services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. The positive impact to economic development is realized more efficiently when libraries collaborate with partner organizations.

The Public Library and Business Services

1.0 Introduction

Many public libraries have a long tradition of providing services to businesses and others have recently began to offer services as a result of available grant funding and/or as a result of their strategic planning in which they assess the needs of their communities and their resources then choose 3-4 service areas on which to focus.

Intrigued by the differences in the service models used to provide business services, I wanted to know the history of the public library's provision of service to businesses and the present day activities of public libraries which provide service to businesses. I read the library literature and I contacted several library systems in several states to obtain information about their services to businesses and the history of their provision of this service.

This paper reviews the literature about public libraries providing services to businesses and it provides an illustrative rather than an exhaustive account of present day activity of service to businesses by public libraries.

2.0 Literature Review

The public library pioneer in gathering information useful to the business man was librarian, John Cotton Dana. He established a special business branch of the Newark Public Library in the downtown commercial/financial district of the city in 1904. (Manley 1942, note; Riechel 1994, p. xii; Sheehy 1996, p.2; Welch 2005, p.282)

A. Why public libraries provide service to businesses

In the foreword for Rosemarie Riechel's book, Public Library Services to Business, Susan S. DiMattia, Business Information Consultant and editor of Library Hotline and Corporate Library Update, asks and answers the question "Why should public libraries be concerned about developing working relationships with the corporations and businesses in their town or city?" She says, "The most immediate response is that businesses can be called on to supply monetary and in-kind resources when a library needs them. Although this may have been true in the past, businesses are being hit from all sides by increasing numbers of good causes that need support. If the public library has established a reputation for serving business needs, that support will be more readily forthcoming." I think a more compelling reason offered by DiMattia is that "strong local health is a positive benefit for public libraries that rely on taxes for funding. The public library can make a significant contribution to local economic development. Small businesses have few places other than the public library to turn to for information on how to manage a business in a profitable way. Profitable small businesses enhance the economic stability of any region." (Riechel, 1994. p.vii)

The reasoning presented by DiMattia does not really differ from the reasoning expressed in 1942 by Marion Manley, business librarian at the Newark Public Library. She says,

"With service to business the library shows its consciousness of the economic problems of the community. It takes its place as an agency through whose use these problems may be more swiftly solved. It serves all equally by maintaining a public collection of information only available privately at great cost." (Manley, 1942. p. 49.)

B. How communities conduct economic development

Newington, CT public library director, Maxine Bleiweis, writes that communities are changing the way they conduct economic development and she indicates what this change could mean for libraries. "Communities used to do what was commonly termed 'smokestack chasing' (pursuing manufacturing businesses interested in relocation)... Now the emphasis is, and needs to be, placed on retaining existing businesses and equipping those businesses to compete in a global economy." (Bleiweis 1997, p.1). Tony Miele and Nancy Welch cite the same change in the conduct of economic development in their article "Libraries as Information Centers for Economic Development. (Miele and Welch 1995, p. 18)

An article, by Sharon and David Barrios, in the Public Administration Quarterly supports the comments made by Bleiweis, Miele and Welch. They say the traditional approach to economic development (smokestack chasing) "is now widely questioned on a number of bases. First, business recruitment is highly competitive with a very large number of communities vying for a small number of firms willing to relocate. Second, in those cases in which a community does manage to attract and retain a major external business, the projected economic benefits of doing so very often fail to materialize. The incentives offered in the process of outbidding competing communities---incentives which may include land, tax breaks, infrastructure and regulatory power---are often so costly that there is simply no chance of these communities ever recouping their expenses. [And] third, communities that fail to recognize the significance of small local businesses are putting their economy in jeopardy..." To support this statement, the authors cite David Birch (1987) "Approximately 80% of jobs created each year in the U.S. come from startup or expansion of local businesses and not from the relocation of businesses from other areas." (Barrios and Barrios 2004, p.74-75).

The new approach to community economic development is termed *economic gardening*. This approach, "moves away from offering financial incentives directly to a small number of firms," says Sharon and David Barrios. "It attempts to foster economic growth by establishing well-articulated public policies... Working through a coordinating agency, and in conjunction with existing community agencies, programs, and other interested individuals, economic gardeners locate local entrepreneurs (who typically possess deep roots in the area), then provide them with the technical information, financial planning, or networking assistance they need to stay and grow before they get into financial difficulties or plan to relocate. The net result is a more comprehensive, broad-based but locally focused development program that fosters economic growth and a higher quality of life in the community." (Barrios and Barrios 2004, p. 85-86)

Mark Henricks says "Economic gardening is more sophisticated [than the old ways of trying to lure companies to relocate to communities]. It includes publicly funded services

that train entrepreneurs to start, run and grow businesses, as well as provide advice on applying for SBA-backed loans, financial management and marketing.” (Henricks 2005, p.16).

Libraries fall under the definition of *existing community agency* in the scenario painted by Sharon and David Barrios. Libraries can also be considered a source of public funded services mentioned by Henricks. Hence, libraries need to be alert to efforts within their communities to practice economic gardening to make sure they are included at the planning table.

C. How public libraries help with economic development

The economy of a community is fueled by the development of its tax base and jobs. Businesses, especially small businesses, create jobs and pay taxes. Entrepreneurs and businesspeople need information to start and grow businesses. Public libraries have information. Although entrepreneurs and businesspeople are generally unaware of the information they can obtain from their public library, librarians have recognized for many years that they can assist businesspeople by providing information. In 1942, Marion Manley, Newark Public Library business librarian, writes “Recognition [by public libraries] of the need for business service is increasing throughout the country... Because the value of such service is not limited to local interests but is also a factor in...the support of those who wish to draw business to the community...” (Manley 1942, p. 46)

Maxine Bleiweis, library director for the public library in Newington, CT writes, “Throughout the country, municipalities have recognized the value to their residents of a strong business base. Government support for business generally takes the form of tax incentives, zoning adjustments and job training programs. Yet the public library can add a vigorous and vital dimension to these traditional approaches. What gives libraries the edge in becoming such an important economic asset? Information. Business today is driven by it. And providing timely, accurate, relevant information---a commodity essential to business growth---is the function of the public library. People making sound business decisions fuel the economy by enabling the growth of prosperous communities and individuals... There is also a practical aspect to the involvement of public libraries in economic development. Libraries are dependent upon a tax base supported in large part by business and should therefore have a vested interest in the support of that tax base.” (Bleiweis 1997, introduction)

“Public libraries in many areas perform information gathering services for local government agencies, aiding in bringing new businesses into the area, among other things,” says Susan DiMattia in the foreword of Public Library Service to Business. (Riechel, 1994. p. vii) However, aiding local government in encouraging firms to relocate is the traditional approach to economic development; this approach may be giving way to cultivating and growing existing businesses within the community.

St. Louis Public Library director, Glen Holt agrees “Business development is a solid theme around which to organize local library business services. As large corporations, planning agencies and legal firms have gone online to seek the information they need,

start-up entrepreneurs and the owners of expanding small firms need far more information than they can afford to purchase. Small business entrepreneurs need information to develop. Public libraries with the right collections and staff can assist small business entrepreneurs in growing their businesses.” (Holt 2001, p. 30). While Holt indicates assisting the startup entrepreneur is a service libraries should provide, in an earlier article providing the results of a cost-benefit analysis for the St. Louis Public Library, he implies a method to measure the value of providing service to this user group has eluded researchers. (Holt and Elliott 1998, p. 43)

D. Business services provided by public libraries

Historically and up to the present day providing an up-to-date collection (print and electronic) is the most pervasive service the public library provides to businesses. The collection which is, and has always been, expensive would not be available to entrepreneurs and small businesspeople if it were not for the public library.

In 1942, Marion Manley, business librarian, said, "Again and again we have testimony from the young men and from those in the smaller establishments that they are grateful for the accessibility of these business aids here, as they could not afford to buy them themselves. As they become executives in larger firms they have learned the value of these publications and wish to have them still more readily available in their own offices. Hence we are an advertising medium for publishers and almost all publishers are wise enough to see this." (Manley, 1942. p. 8-9) Today, publishers use colleges and universities as an “advertising medium” by supplying college and university libraries with discounted subscriptions to electronic databases so that students will come to expect the use of these databases in the firms that will employ them.

Rosemarie Riechel’s 1994 survey sample of 124 public libraries in 45 states provides a good snapshot of business services being offered by public libraries. 50% or more libraries in the sample offer: *Ready-reference service (including photocopy); Telephone reference; Retrieval of hard-to-find or obscure information; Mediated online database searching (librarian searches) and Telefacsimile service to business clients.* Today, instead of a mediated search, the search of online databases would be a collaborative effort in which the librarian would be instructing the client during the online search, as they both obtained the needed information.

Services offered by less than 50% of libraries in the sample are: *Training programs on business resources; collection/end-user searching; Bibliographies of new items in the field; SDI (selective dissemination of information), e.g. updates on specific topics; Patron searches of CD-ROM databases; Editing of downloaded searches prior to delivery; Business reference card and Books and audio-visual material by mail.* (Riechel, 1994, p.13-14) Today, the electronic services provided would be access to subscription online databases and well-designed web pages that offer links to specific resources and path finders rather than CD-ROMs.

Riechel concludes that the reason only 41% of responding libraries offer training programs on business resources is “the primary need of business clients continues to be

traditional 'information in a hurry.' Many of them [businesspersons] do not have the time or the inclination to learn retrieval skills, but [another reason may be] there might be insufficient [library] staff to plan for and implement such programs." (Riechel, 1994, p. 13).

A smaller, but more recent, survey to ascertain the present status of public library services to the business and entrepreneurial communities was conducted in 2004 by Jeanie M. Welch, professor and reference librarian at the University of North Carolina. She surveyed nine public libraries of varying sizes in eight states and one in Canada.

Her findings were: "In terms of business collections, public libraries offered resources that small- and medium-sized businesses may not be able to afford on their own. The most widely held print-resources were books on writing business plans, business directories, 'how to' guides, stock and bond guides, resume writing guides, business magazines, state and local codes, patent and trademark information and construction codes. Electronic business resources reflected the most popular print resources. The most widely held electronic resources were business directories, databases for access to business journals and magazines, business planning software (not available at all libraries surveyed) and online stock and bond resources, job sites, state and local codes, patent and trademark information and 'how to' guides." (Welch 2004, p. 282)

Additionally, Welch found, "In terms of specific services provided, all responding libraries provided ready reference services ('walk-in' or telephone service). In-depth or extensive assistance (more than a fifteen minute consultation) usually required a prior appointment. Other services were assistance with using online databases, hosting business-related seminars or workshops and printed or Web-based resource guides. Service limitations were reported by a majority of libraries (n=7) and included time limits on library computers and charges for printing." (Welch 2004, p. 282)

E. Libraries collaborate with partners to provide services to businesses

A phenomenon of the 1990's seems to be libraries collaborating with partners to provide services to businesses. The phenomenon coincides with the shift in economic development from *smokestack chasing* to *economic gardening* and the realization that small businesses are the economic engine of the community.

Riechel notes, "Since the majority of businesses in the country are small ones, public libraries can greatly enhance service by creating cooperative links with non-library organizations that exist to provide assistance to small businesses. The U.S. Small Business Association offers such programs as advocacy, financial assistance, procurement (government contracts) assistance, minority small business development, counseling and training by SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) volunteers, while Chambers of Commerce provide demographic and community economic information, advocacy, training and more. These organizations often serve as library advocates and referral agencies. Also, librarians can attract more small business personnel, entrepreneurs and job seekers by arranging for programs, sponsored by these agencies, to be conveniently held in the local library." (Riechel, 1994, p. 6)

Potential partners for libraries that have statewide reach suggested by Maxine Bleiweis are: “Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)...mandated by Congress these centers represent a partnership between the Small Business Administration, state universities and the private sector; State Departments of Economic Development; Community Colleges; Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE).” Local potential partners are: “Utilities that supply water, electricity, sewer services, fuel, cable television and telephone service may have gathered important demographic information that can help local businesses... Community professionals, such as: bankers, property developers, real estate agents, attorneys, accountants, municipal/county staff from economic development officers to building inspectors and zoning officers.” (Bleiweis 1997, p. 88-89).

Rosemarie Riechel also points out that networking is essential to deliver services and supplement the business collection. She says, “Membership in networks is essential for resource sharing and efficient document delivery for all member libraries...[OCLC is the most prevalent network]. (Riechel, 1994, p. 28) “The business collection is most frequently supplemented through the use of interlibrary loan to obtain non-current periodicals, resources in other related subject fields and obscure or scholarly periodicals...the number of public libraries that use corporate libraries to fill interlibrary loan requests is not significant. It is possible to assume that corporate personnel have a greater need for public library resources than the general business community has for materials owned by large corporations...” (Riechel 1994, p. 29-30)

F. What makes up the business collection?

The core collection for the earliest business collections of public libraries and the core collections for business collections today are similar in the type of information needed to support business decisions. But the formats and means of access to the information are different.

Marion Manley describes the early business collection as “Business material falls chiefly into certain types of information sources---directories, [investment] services, periodicals, maps---that lend themselves to simple arrangements for use.” (Manley, 1942, p.5) Riechel says, “[The] special business branch [of the Newark Public Library, established by John Cotton Dana in 1904, had a] modest collection of general works and city directories [which] expanded to include business periodicals, government documents, books on commerce, banking, manufacturing, law, insurance, real estate, retail business, and more...” (Riechel 1994, p. xii) And, Sheehy adds, “Given the dearth and quality of business books, Dana was an early advocate of acquiring ephemeral materials for business collections.” (Sheehy 1996, p.2)

The differences in today’s collection from that in the early 1900’s are in the format the material takes and the abundance of materials from which to select.

In their chapter, entitled *Collection Development*, Doralyn Edwards and Joan Fiscella say, “One way to analyze business literature focuses on three structures of information

which support business practice and business research: bibliographic/textual, data/statistical and directory resources... Bibliographic and narrative textual information includes books, journal or magazine articles and reports which are available in many formats... Data and statistical information are important components of a business collection. Quantitative information supports personal investments and career development, the work of small businesses and large corporations and the research of scholars. The U.S. government is a major source of business data and statistics... The general term 'directories' covers a wide range of sources which are essentially lists with additional information... Directories of companies are one important example; these sources include basic phone book information, but may also provide financial information, summaries of company histories and corporate organization. Specialized directories are available for industries, for regions of the world, for private companies and so on. Access to print directories depends on the quality of their organization and indexes; electronic forms allow for searching with a combination of access points." (Sheehy 1996, p.76-77)

An example of a directory in electronic form is ReferenceUSA. The public libraries, whose business librarians I interviewed, all subscribed to this online directory.

G. Evaluating library services to the business community

Libraries have traditionally collected output measures and anecdotal stories as a means of evaluating the services they provide to their patrons. In her 1994 survey of libraries providing services to businesses, Riechel notes "Collecting a variety of quantitative data is important to 72% of the 124 responding libraries. No category of data collected is the single most important criterion for service evaluation, but collection development policy assessment and the sources used to answer individual questions seem to be the most frequent queries. A few other output counts were: circulation counts, in-house usage of resources, etc." (Riechel, 1994, p.31-32).

In the mid-1990's libraries have begun to experiment with economist's tools, such as economic modeling, and cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the library's value to the community. Glen Holt, Executive Director of the St. Louis Public Library and Donald Elliott, economist used cost-benefit analysis to examine the value of the services provided by the St. Louis Public Library (SLPL). They surveyed three groups: general users, business users and teachers/caregivers. While the use of cost-benefit analysis was successful in measuring the value the SLPL cardholders derive from the library (\$4 in benefits for every \$1 spent in annual public support for the library), Holt and Elliott said, "SLPL's cost-benefit analysis researchers believe that estimating business-use benefits is one of the study's most difficult exercises. SLPL's efforts produced a much lower dollar estimate than we anticipated given the amount of funds we spend on business services and materials." (Holt and Elliott 1998, p. 44)

The methodology for the cost-benefit analysis examines the relationship of benefits (outcomes) of a service to the cost of providing the service. The study authors acknowledge that the business usage has changed over the past decade. The collection and services are no longer used steadily and heavily by the patent researchers from large

scientific companies, attorneys from principal law firms and policy analysts from the region's planning agencies. The new business user, say Holt and Elliot "increasingly is a small business, often an entrepreneur just getting started, a not-for-profit volunteer officer or paid staff member... The business use of this patron increasingly appears to be an intensive single use or a concentrated set of uses over a relatively brief period. During these episodes, such individuals draw on certain collections, staff expertise, and quite often, SLPL's computer networks and databases not available in their homes, home offices or company offices."(Holt and Elliott 1998, p. 44)

In discussing the challenges public libraries face in measuring the economic impact their services have on the community, Kern B. Ellis cites a book, If You Want to Evaluate Your Library, written by Frederick Lancaster who says, "A cost-benefits study attempts to show that the benefits derived from a service outweigh the cost of providing it... True cost-benefit studies are virtually unattainable in library service because the benefits of services such as providing information are intangible and not easily expressed in units of cost." (Ellis 1994, p. 53)

Notwithstanding Lancaster's opinion about cost-benefit analysis, Ellis describes an attempt to measure the economic impact of the Business Research Division of the High Point Public Library by focusing on selected methods of cost-benefit analysis. In a questionnaire format, which focused on impact of information to reduce uncertainty and to improve decision-making, they attempted to have users describe tangible benefits they received. A 10% response rate was achieved and the second largest group of respondents was local entrepreneurs. Ellis says, "Their responses showed that business information obtained at the library had a positive economic impact on their businesses. Examples of benefits included new customers, prospects, and clients and the opportunity to bring new business into the company. Local entrepreneurs mentioned numerous types of information from the library they had used to increase profits, including the development of new marketing strategies, incorporation of new management techniques and the application of federal and state regulations." (Ellis 1994, p. 54-55).

Some states have also used surveys to gauge perceived library value. Surveys conducted by the State Library and Archives of Florida and the University of South Carolina provide findings of the value placed on library services from survey recipients, who include businesses. In Florida, "Public libraries provide a direct economic benefit of \$6 billion per year to Florida's communities and population, based on an average benefit of \$97 per 62 million uses by businesses, educators, students and the general public" (Story 2005, p. 13). In South Carolina 161 businesses were among the users surveyed. Findings specific to the responses about businesses are: "About half the businesses surveyed use the library as a primary resource for business and research information; three quarters of them said that the library contributed to the success of their businesses and that not having access to a public library would have a negative impact on their operations. Business owners reported saving up to \$5,000 by getting information (economic data, government regulations, legal and technical information, as well as information on management, marketing and sales) from the library." (Story 2005, p. 14)

While these surveys report what businesspeople have said they perceive to be the value of the library to their businesses, to date no quantitative measurements on the impact the libraries' services have had on economic development of a community have been written about in the literature.

H. *Strategies libraries should use to get started providing services to business*

Writing a concept paper in 1997, Stan Skrzyszewski and Maureen Cubberly discuss the role of the library in economic development, particularly at the local level. They saw providing services to business as necessary to become involved in economic development and they said libraries must recognize that they have competition with regards to involvement in economic development. They cite a 1993 article by Howard F. McGinn which offers strategies that libraries should consider if they are to be recognized as local economic development agencies (Skrzyszewski and Cubberly 1997, p. 324-326). The strategies are: 1) Pursue the business community as a joint venture between the different libraries in the community; 2) Libraries should assist economic development in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Business Association, Economic Development Office, etc.; 3) Invest in technology, develop partnerships with telephone, cable and automation companies; 4) Staff should be given business and entrepreneurial training and staff with economic and marketing backgrounds should be recruited; 5) Library boards should have business and entrepreneurial education and board structure should ensure business is represented (seven action items are listed for the board); 6) Change perceptions of the library (five action items are listed); 7) Product and service development (seven action items are listed); 8) Sponsor seminars and conferences on economic development issues; 9) Nurture community entrepreneurship; 10) Set up a service to serve home-based businesses; 11) Initiate the preliminary stages of community economic development by starting a community assessment and providing some analysis; and 12) Re-define multicultural library services so that they become a support service for a global, multicultural economy, rather than just serving cultural minorities. (McGinn 1993, p. 34-39.)

Also writing in 1997, Maxine Bleiweis offers advice on getting started from the experience her library has had in providing services to business. Her book, Helping Business: The Library's Role in Community Economic Development is a how-to-do-it manual covering topics such as: 1) Getting ready to serve the business community; 2) Becoming aware of the business community's needs; 3) Assessing resources; 4) Training library staff to work with the business community; 5) Getting your foot in the door; 6) Answering the question---What specific services can my library provide?; 7) Marketing and 8) Results. (Bleiweis 1997).

I. *Barriers to providing business reference service*

Historically and up to the present day, libraries face the challenge of getting the business community to recognize the value of resources they have at hand to assist them in making business decisions. The business community and economic development professionals are either unaware of the library's resources or they lack faith in the library's ability to deliver what they need. In 1942, Marion Manley writes, "Continuous effort must be made to awaken business men to the resources at their command."(Manley, 1942. p. 49.)

Rosemaire Riechel cites “Library use studies consistently find that businesspeople generally are not aware of public libraries and their collections. Since they tend to rely on their fellow employees, friends, trade associations, salespersons, or journals they see in the office or personally subscribe to, a vigorous campaign for local library use by businesspersons must be pursued.” (Riechel, 1994. p.xvi)

In explaining the Arizona Strategic Planning for Economic Development (ASPED) project, Miele and Welch said, “During interviews with economic development professionals, it became apparent that they view attempting to access information from many sources, including libraries as problematic. Problems mentioned most often included: information not being in usable form; limitations of information (e.g. statistics not being disaggregated to the local level); needed information, particularly labor market information, not being available; information not being specific; and information not being accessible.” (Miele and Welch 1995, p. 19) One of the recommendations that resulted from the ASPED project was the creation of Economic Development Information Centers (EDICs) in public and academic libraries across the state.

In Rosemaire Riechel’s survey of librarians in 1994, “68% of respondents recognize the importance of actively marketing business information and reference service and [the majority] primarily use the most inexpensive promotional formats---bookmarks, flyers and posters. These are effective media. But combining them with more energetic marketing strategies may better demonstrate the value of the public library to businesspeople... methods cited by 50% or more: subject bibliographies, library newsletter, newspaper ads/articles and exhibits at business/industry fairs and conventions. [other methods cited by less than 50% are: radio/television, lists of new acquisitions, direct mail, library tours, talks at off-site locations, in-house seminars/programs, chamber commerce/government, etc. presentations, librarians serving in business organizations, monthly business breakfasts, columns published regularly, weekly program series/talks at local business organizations and business department program listed in local newspaper.]” (Riechel, 1994, p.17-18.)

Maxine Bleiweis cites a couple of stumbling blocks that librarians have to overcome before they can provide services to businesses. One is *fear of failure* and another is *a hesitation to take risks*. She says, “The foray into serving the business community for the first time definitely entails risks---as well as retraining, rethinking and planning. Convincing people who range from staff to library board members to government officials to the business people themselves that you have a vital role in the economic development of your community and then proving it requires the willingness to take a risk.” (Bleiweis 1997, p. 6-7)

Some librarians are concerned that they do not have enough staff to handle more users than they currently serve so they purposely do not promote their services. Rosemaire Riechel says, “librarians have sometimes feared that publicity might cause a flood of queries that cannot be managed by the existing staff. On the other hand, advertising such attractive services as cooperative networks, telephone reference, rapid information

delivery, online information retrieval, customized reference and research, increases awareness of a library's value and may lead to more adequate funding." (Riechel, 1994, p. xvi)

J. Fees for service

In providing service to businesses, librarians have always been concerned about giving businesses more service than the normal tax-payer. Early in the twentieth century and today, some libraries seem to solve this dilemma by imposing fees for service or by putting restrictions on service.

In Managing Business Collections in Libraries, Carolyn Sheehy, editor quotes a 1920 article from *Special Libraries*' recounting a library board meeting, "Dana [John Cotton] outlined to the trustees of the Newark Free Public Library in 1920 a plan for payment by Newark industries of the cost of all services rendered by the library over and above normal services. The trustees authorized the plan to be printed as a pamphlet and distributed to Newark's business community. They also empowered the library to make a charge of one dollar per hour for all research work over and above that which it may properly give without charge to any resident or tax-payer of the city." (Sheehy 1996, p.5-6)

While it appears that John Cotton Dana did not have any qualms about fees, there are public librarians that interpret the tradition of "free and open access" to mean fees should not be imposed for any services. In discussing how libraries tried to manage the cost of providing online database searching, Rosemarie Riechel writes, "limitations are placed on searching---number of citations, abstracts, or full text records printed, time spent per search and number of searches per patron are common... Many public librarians stick to their ethical and professional convictions on the subject of fee-based service, insisting that a tax-supported public library must be open to all to be served equally. Without automated information retrieval systems, public library users will be served equally poorly." (Riechel, 1994, p. xvii)

The findings from Riechel's survey revealed "There is no pattern of service restrictions that is based on the size or location of the individual libraries, but the variety is staggering and a disappointing trend... 78% of the respondents listed a variety of common service restrictions mostly applicable to telephoning patrons, evidence of the negative perception that telephoning patrons are less important than those visiting the library..."(Riechel 1994, p.15-17) An examination of restrictions listed showed most restrictions involve time limits or number of question limits.

Riechel predicted "The fee versus free debate, particularly in public libraries, will probably continue until the costs of such expensive services as online database searching, electronic document delivery and telefascimile are reduced to a level at which it is possible to offer them to all searchers free of charge, or until library budgets increase to a point where fees for services are no longer necessary, thus effectively killing the debate. Neither of these solutions seems likely in the foreseeable future." (Riechel, 1994, p.3)

Obviously, it is difficult to predict the future. In 1994, Riechel did not foresee the proliferation of the Internet and the wide availability of electronic databases that are being provided to public libraries by state libraries, mainly using LSTA (Library Services Technology Act) funds. Nor did she foresee the establishment of purchasing cooperatives and consortia which negotiate discounts on database subscriptions for their member libraries thus providing some libraries the ability to include these resources in their budgets.

K. Twentieth century examples of public libraries providing services to businesses

From an historical viewpoint, Marian C. Manley, a librarian at the Newark Public Library, indicates that in 1930 public libraries in 109 large cities were providing services to business. She and others at the Newark public library undertook a survey in 1942 to update the 1930 data. She documents the responses received from 113 libraries, by name, in her book, Public Library Service to Business. (Manley, 1942, introductory note).

The most recent large survey to gauge to what extent public libraries were providing business information and reference services was conducted in 1994 by Rosemarie Riechel. It yielded responses from 124 public libraries in 45 states (names of libraries and survey responses were not given). Geographically they were dispersed in the following manner: North East, 42 libraries in 10 states; North West, 5 libraries in 4 states; Midwest, 22 libraries in 7 states; South East, 21 libraries in 9 states; West, 12 libraries in 3 states; South West, 7 libraries in 5 states; Pacific (Hawaii) 1 library in 1 state; Central, 1 library in 1 state; North Central, 12 libraries in 4 states and East Central, 1 library in 1 state.

A view of a state initiative in which libraries were included in statewide economic development is presented by Tony Miele and Nancy Welch. They give an overview of Arizona's Strategic Planning for Economic Development (ASPED) project. "Making use of the input of thousands of Arizonians, including library professionals, the project identified what it called 'clusters,' networks of buyers and suppliers in the same type of business or industry (such as aerospace or tourism or health), and what it termed as 'foundations,' institutions such as libraries that support the clusters by providing information and guidance and are vital to their competitiveness... One of the recommendations of ASPED was the creation of economic development information centers (EDICs) in 28 public and academic libraries across the state." Miele and Welch's account of the initiative revealed that the economic development officials and businesses initially viewed accessing information as problematic. Vignettes of successes at the Chandler Public Library, the Flagstaff City-Coconino County Public Library, the Sierra Vista Public Library, the Tucson-Pima Library and several community college libraries are provided in the article. (Miele and Welch 1995, p. 21-22).

"In 1990 the **Iowa City Public library** decided to examine the use of its standard business collection and services to determine how to improve them to meet the growing information needs of local businesses, entrepreneurs, nonprofit, and government organizations... The research method selected was the focus group... The issues under consideration were the participants' perceptions of the library, barriers to its use, the level

of use of the business collection, alternative information sources available, and methods of improving, expanding and promoting library services and resources to the business community...Major conclusions are:

- The library collection is not well used mainly because the business community is not knowledgeable about the available resources
- Promotion of business resources needs to be more energetic and continuous
- Due to time constraints, some businesspeople do not want to travel to the library, preferring to buy the needed resources or tap other informal sources of information
- The availability of remote access to services and resources, such as telephone reference, telefacsimile, online access to the library's catalog and rapid book and document delivery services was thought to be desirable even if charges would be involved
- Specialized fee-based manual and online information retrieval service for in depth research tailored to individual requirements was suggested. (Riechel, 1994, p.71-72)

[The depressed economy of the late 1980's in Newington, CT led the **Lucy Robbins Welles Library** to reassess its service to the predominantly small businesses located in Newington.] "In 1991 the library, with the cooperation of the local Chamber of Commerce, selected businesses and their managers from the four major industries [in the city to participate in one of four focus groups]... Analysis of the outcomes of the focus group discussions led to conclusions similar to those of previously discussed studies [businesspeople unaware of library resources; they don't have time to visit library; they get information informally from colleagues, friends, trade groups, etc.]... A business reference pilot program was conducted during March and April 1992... [In the pilot project]Three businesses were paired with three librarians and an information service agreement between the library and the businesses was signed, stating that the companies would request information from the library during the designated two month period... [The pilot results were evaluated and reported.] The library's commitment to the business community has been reinforced in a variety of ways, as follow:

- In cooperation with the Connecticut Small Business Development Center, the library presented two business programs that included information on library resources, as well as a tour of the business reference area.
- Connecticut Small Business Development Center counselors were introduced to the concept of the library as a valuable source of information, and to the business resources available during a meeting held at the library. Many of the attendees referred their clients to the library.
- A counselor gives free business advice and direction at the library once a week.
- A SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) representative counsels small business personnel at the library once a month.
- **The library director serves as library liaison on the executive board of the local Chamber of Commerce.**
- A series of four professional development seminars held at the library were planned with the Greater Hartford Community College. Included was

information on the resources available in the library that were relevant to the course content.

- **The town government, now more than ever before, recognizes the significance of the library to the community as a whole.**
- **Local businesses donated funds for the purchase of newspaper advertisements for the children's summer reading program** as a way of showing their appreciation of what the library has done for them.
- The library publishes a newsletter entitled *Friends of Business*, which provides information on library-business activities, other library programs, services and special resources, such as the *Newington Business Directory*.

The Lucy Robbins Welles Library **has succeeded in convincing businesspeople that it serves as a valuable source of information necessary for economic success.**" (Riechel, 1994. p.72-78)

"Since its founding in 1961, [The City of Commerce Public Library's (Commerce, CA)] central library and two branches have been providing library service to the large 'business resident' population (80%), as well as a general resident population (20%)... Abundant government revenue resources have allowed this library to acquire business resources not normally available in a small public library... [Traditional business magazines and newspapers, directories, financial services, resource books, career information and government documents for 1994 were cited. Online searching is outsourced.] The reference staff devotes liberal time periods to individual clients... A part-time (twelve hours per week) business liaison librarian [is on the staff. She is tasked with outreach to new industries in the city.] The City of Commerce Public Library actively spreads the word about the value of the library---its staff, collection, and services---with well designed brochures. It also has a cooperative relationship with the Los Angeles Society for Coatings Technology, whereby the society donates titles to the collection. In return, the library prepares an annual bibliography of holdings significant to the society's membership. The library is also promoted via a monthly column written by the city public information officer and published in *Strictly Business*, an official publication of the Industrial Council-Chamber of Commerce, which sometimes features information on the library's services and resources. The City of Commerce Public Library **has succeeded in convincing many businesspeople of its value as a source of information to their growth and vitality.**" (Riechel, 1994, p.78-81)

"The Cleveland Research Center, a fee-based information service agency of the **Cleveland Public Library** was started in 1987. It serves the business community locally, within the state, and out of state, and is most frequently used by corporate personnel. Personnel of small and medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurs, researchers and technicians use the service moderately, while corporate and public library staff, job seekers, and college and university students are not very significant client groups... [A full range of materials is available in the collection, including online databases and experts within industry, government and nationwide information centers via networks.] The resources most frequently requested by members of the business community are journal articles, corporate data, research findings for a particular industry or corporation, and online databases. Government documents and reports are requested with somewhat

less frequency, while medical, legal and technical research data and the opinions of experts in various fields are in moderate demand. Books and monographs are the least requested materials... The Cleveland Research Center is actively marketed to the business community, using media as radio, print ads, presentations and direct mail. In addition, the library's Business, Economics and Labor Department prepares bibliographies of holdings that are of current significance. For example, *Women & Entrepreneurship*, *Direct Marketing*, *Information and Resources* and *Small Business Resources* are evidence that this established urban library analyzes patron needs and collection adequacy continuously to keep up with the changing information needs of the business community..." (Riechel, 1994, p.81-83)

[The] Science/Business/Social Science Department [of the **Memphis/Shelby Public Library and Information Center** (founded in 1893)] has two recently organized collections: The First Tennessee Small Business Center [opened February 1992] and the Job and Career Center [opened September 1991], due to an increasing demand from the public for information about starting a business or searching for a job... The Small Business Center was created with \$20,000 in start-up money targeted to cover the cost of equipment, the collection, promotion and printing. During the ordering process, it became evident that the maintenance of a useful collection would require more funding from an outside source. The library found the corporate sponsorship it sought, and formed a unique partnership with the First Tennessee Bank to provide a valuable resource, referral and distribution center... [The collection includes materials aimed at small business needs: projections and outlook sources; referral agencies and resources/networking; market information for business plans; demographics; sources of supply and customers; state and local restrictions; patent and trademark information; financial sources; how-to-books on a variety of business topics and how-to-books on specific types of businesses.]... Databases are available for in-house use only... The Small Business Center is used as a clearinghouse of information from area non-profit agencies that offer services to small businesses and entrepreneurs and referrals are readily made to sources of assistance in the Memphis area via a small business agency referral network [The Science/Business department compiled a two-page description of each agency in a booklet entitled, "Where to Go for Small Business Information."].... Science/Business staff regularly attends meetings of the Memphis Chamber of Commerce Small Business Council... The Small Business Center's services are promoted via a variety of brochures and handouts, such as a listing of sources of information by subject, an informational sheet on *Business Disc*, an informational/bibliographic flyer on materials located in the Small Business Center designed to help a client consider, start and run a small business, an annotated bibliography of demographic resources and a two-page informational handout on steps to starting a small business from the Shelby County Clerk's Office Business Taxation Division... **The Memphis/Shelby County Public Library is a key player in the effort to link the business/jobless community to information vital to growth and success---thereby significantly influencing the economic future of the area.**" (Riechel 1994, p.83-86)

L. Twenty-first century examples of public libraries providing services to businesses

Acknowledging that small businesses in California account for approximately half the state's gross domestic product while employing half the state's workers and that new small businesses and owners of small businesses often find it difficult to locate the information they need to secure bank loans, prepare marketing plans, and survey their competition, In 2004, the California State Library (CSL) used Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to seed projects in public libraries to create or enhance services to businesses.¹

Libraries across the state were invited to apply for one-year grants which ran from October 2004 to October 2005. Forty libraries received between \$7,000 and \$10,000 in grants to implement "business in a box" programs and five larger libraries received between \$40,000 and \$75,000 to implement larger projects. Libraries participating in the CSL's small-business-reference program have access to two subscription business databases, which contain information about marketing, taxes, financial assistance, and the steps needed to start a small business. Participating libraries also could offer small businesses 24/7 online reference service, host seminars for small business owners and employees, publicize the service and enhance their business collections.

One of the large libraries collaborated with two smaller library systems, and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at a local community college in the county to provide one-on-one consultations to small business owners countywide via webcam network technology. Many of the forty small libraries reported sponsoring programs and seminars featuring speakers from partnering organizations; upgrading the collection; enhancing websites; development of startup guides, in a variety of formats, with local information; establishing computer training centers and more.

All libraries in the project reported that they increased awareness of the library's services to business and that they had forged strong partnerships over the grant year with organizations that support the business community. In addition, the post project survey showed that there was an increase in the numbers of small businesses who said they had benefited from the library's services.

One of the California libraries that participated in the program is profiled in Section 3.0, Mini Case Studies of Libraries.

3.0 Mini Case Studies of Libraries Providing Services to Business in the Twenty-first Century

To get a better understanding of the present-day services specific libraries are providing to businesses and some history about how they got started providing these services, I contacted eleven libraries in six states and the District of Columbia. One library had suspended its service to business due to renovations of its central library and two libraries cited heavy workloads and short staff and declined to participate in the study. Of the eight libraries that agreed to participate, one elected to remain anonymous; it will be referred to by a geographic designation.

A. California Public Library

This California Public Library, founded in _____ serves a population of 180,000+ people, mostly Hispanic (66% as of 2000 census). 20% white. In addition, it serves many people outside of the city (usually from adjacent cities). The business community is engaged primarily in biotechnology, health insurance, telephone services and equipment, mortgage lending, education, and duplicating and packaging videocassettes.²

The library provides services to business from its main branch; it has three branches. Currently, the designated business services area is one long index table that contains the small business book collection. A 20 PC computer lab for the public is used for business computer classes. Additionally, in this lab there is a Business PC, designated specifically for business databases. In the past, a large cubicle was designated for consulting (SBDC now does consulting off-site). The library's on-site services are supported by a dynamic website which provides access to databases; a link to a Business Portal (a.k.a. the SirsiDynix Business Room); a link to the Small Business Network, links to recommended websites; links to local resources, e.g. licensing and code information; answers to frequently asked business questions; information about upcoming events and workshops.

Library service to business is not a strategic directive for this library. The small business collection and subsequent delivery of services to business arose because the library received a large grant from the California State Library in 2004. The one year grant ended in October 2005. It is now an on-going challenge to continue supporting the services that were started.

The Business services provided by this library are a business collection, both circulating books and reference books (statistical abstracts, *Small Business Sourcebook*, books for the layperson on specific industries); databases (*Proquest*, *RDS Business Suite*, *ReferenceUSA*, which is a directory, and periodical databases); business reference services (geared to point/steer people to the right resources; when time permits the librarian will help clients "drill down" to the right data in resources like the census, etc.); business information classes and tours for organizations; and research assistance with assistance from a nearby large city public library. In the past, this library provided business clients on-site consulting conducted by a contractor paid by a one-year grant (consulting has been discontinued due to lack of funding). Another service no longer being provided is classes on how to use business databases (discontinued due to low demand). This library is considering offering Business Information Classes for entrepreneurs and small business owners in the future.

Partners are essential to assist the library in providing services to businesses. This library used the grant application process to recruit partners to assist in providing services to businesses. The business librarian explained the grant opportunity to three organizations: the Economic Development Office, the city's Chamber of Commerce and a Women's Entrepreneurial Group. These organizations wrote letters to the State Library in support of this library's application for the grant. After the grant was received, two of these organizations became active partners. These initial contacts led the business librarian to other organizations that became partners in the effort. They are the Downtown

Management District, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the city's Licensing Department.

The roles performed by the library and its partners are as follows:

- A **Women's Entrepreneurial Group** provides groups for the library's business resource tours. The tours are provided in English and Spanish, but in the case of the Spanish tours, the organization provides a translator.
- The city's **Licensing Department** has provided an individual from that department to teach a workshop for the public on how to get a business license within the city. The department provides information on who is being licensed within the city each month. The library has not made use of this information as of yet.
- The **SBDC** provided consulting services; conducted at the library. 80 individuals were helped during the grant year. Consulting has been discontinued due to lack of funding.
- The **Downtown Management District** advertises the library's services.
- The **Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** advertises the library's services.

Measuring the impact this library may be having on the community's economic development by providing services to business is hard for this library, and any library, to do. There is such a long lag between a client using library services and starting or growing a business and there are so many agencies and factors contributing to success. This library, like many others, can cite output measures rather than outcome measures. Statistics were not kept during the grant year nor was a follow-up study conducted. However, they do have the following anecdotal information: Database usage increased; 80 individuals took advantage of the consulting service. The business librarian has assisted approximately ten individuals one-on-one. They conducted two business information tours in English, with approximately 15 people each tour, and two business information tours in Spanish, with approximately 5 people each tour, for the Women's Entrepreneurial Group.

B. Cecil County Public Library (Maryland)

The Cecil County Public Library, founded in 1937 is located in the rural northeastern corner of Maryland. It serves a population of approximately 85, 200 residents. It has a diverse business community of over 1,500 businesses of all types and sizes. Together they employ 20,100 workers; an estimated 34 of these businesses have 100 or more workers. Key employers include a host of world-class companies such as Air Products, ATK Elkton, Basell, DuPont, General Electric, W.L. Gore & Associates, IKEA, and Terumo Medical.³

The Cecil County Public Library (CCPL) has a central library and six branches. The library provides business services through a Small Business Information Center (SBIC), which is located at the library's central library in the downtown business district. Due to space limitations, the SBIC facility consists of a desk, with a computer, for the small business librarian in the Genealogy room, which provides for some privacy when conducting consultations. The business collection shares space allocated for the general reference collection and clients needing access to computers use the public computers.

Programs and training are conducted in the library meeting rooms and the Gates computer labs.

The SBIC is supported by a dynamic website (<http://www.ebranch.cecil.lib.md.us/sbic/>) which provides access to databases; access to model business plans by type of business; links to recommended websites; links to local resources, e.g. licensing and code information; answers to frequently asked business questions; an e-mail reference service for business questions, "Ask Ms. Biz"; information about upcoming events and workshops; and success stories of businesses who have been assisted.

Library service to business is an outgrowth of a grant project, *Building A Bridge to Small Business*. The grant period was June 23, 2003 to August 31, 2004.

Several patron requests for help in gathering information for a business plan to start a new business and a tremendous turnout (31 people) on a frigid January night for the free library workshop, "Growing A Business," provided the impetus for the library to apply for a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to provide services to small businesses. The federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Library Development and Services (DLDS) was for \$47,088. There was a local-in-kind contribution by the library of \$13,314 for a total project budget of \$60,402 for one year. Funds to continue the operation of the SBIC have since been built into the library's operating budget approved by the county commissioners.

The Small Business Information Center (SBIC) is an information resource for local businesses. It is staffed by a full-time MLS business librarian, who has an MBA degree, a MLS librarian who provides supervision on a part-time basis and a part time MLS librarian who provides project management support. SBIC describes itself as not just a collection of books in a room in a particular building. Its focus is on getting to know its business owners, understanding their particular interests and needs and helping them access accurate and pertinent business information to pursue their plans and make good decisions. The focus is on forming and sustaining on-going relationships with business clients. SBIC relies on books (circulating and reference), databases (*ReferenceUSA*, *Business and Company Resource Center (Gale)*, *Business Source Elite (EBSCO)*), the education and expertise of its small business librarian, and the Cecil Business Resource Partners to help its clients.

SBIC emphasizes consultation appointments of at least one hour with the small business librarian. The librarian researches information for clients. Showing clients how to use the resources is a by-product of the consultation. Clients are referred to Business Resource Partners for business advice. The small business librarian plans and executes educational programs for entrepreneurs and small business owners in conjunction with the Business Resource Partners.

Partners are essential to assist the library in providing services to businesses. CCPL used the grant application process to recruit partners to assist in providing services to

businesses. The manager of the branch libraries contacted the chair of an existing umbrella association, the Cecil Business Resource Partners (CBRP), with a mission to support business to request a letter of support for the library's grant application. In its letter to support the grant application, the CBRP acknowledged that the library was already providing some resources to businesses and it was extending an invitation to the library to join the CBRP. The library is now a leading partner. The library helped attract other partners to the organization, e.g. SCORE and BEPAC, an organization with the public schools charged with the preparation of students for post-graduate employment.

The organizations that make up the Cecil Business Resource Partners (CBRP) are: Cecil Community College, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce, the Office of Economic Development, the Small Business Development Center and the Susquehanna Workforce Network. The CBRP partners and local banks rely on the library's SBIC to be the starting place for entrepreneurs who have an idea for a business before they seek financing. The partners also refer struggling small business owners to the library's SBIC for consultation to obtain information for more effective marketing, e.g. development of target market plans and mailing lists, etc.

While CCPL may not be able to produce quantitative measurements for the impact it is having on the community's economic development by providing services to business, it does have some output and outcome measurements from their grant year, along with anecdotal evidence that they are making a difference. Their website (<http://www.ebranch.cecil.lib.md.us/Success%20Stories.htm>) lists the success stories of seven businesses they have helped. Selected output accomplishments from their grant final report are: the small business librarian met with 131 clients in individual consultations; 566 accessed two business databases; 2,290 accessed the SBIC website, with 1,205 of them in lengthy visitor sessions; twenty-three referrals were made to business partners. CCPL presented evidence that the following outcomes were accomplished: (1) Prospective and established small business owners will increase their awareness of library and community resources and services, which will prepare them to start, manage and expand businesses; (2) Prospective and established small business owners will demonstrate skill in locating business information; (3) Prospective and established small business owners will increase their knowledge of business techniques and training opportunities.

C. Chandler Public Library (Arizona)

The Chandler Public Library, founded in 1954 serves a population of 208,631. Chandler's high-technology manufacturing sector is one of the fastest growing in the western United States, earning Chandler the nickname, "Silicon Desert." The manufacturing sector in Chandler accounts for 19% of all employment, with most employment in this sector in high-tech industries. Education, health and social services are the next largest sector, accounting for 16% of employment in the city. The agricultural industry, with alfalfa and dairy as commodities, is still present in Chandler, although now it is a much smaller part of the economic base than it was historically.⁴

The Chandler Public Library (CPL) has a central library and three branches. Since 1992, the Chandler Public Library and 26 other Arizona libraries have made investments in Economic Development Information Centers (EDIC) to help provide assistance for local businesses and economic development practitioners. The investment has included materials for small business, print (circulating books and non-circulating reference sources) and electronic databases (*Business & Company Resource Center, EBSCO Masterfile Premier, EBSCO Newspaper Source* and *ReferenceUSA*); staff to help make them useable; and access to a network of business information specialists throughout the state.

The library viewed its EDIC participation as a passive role in the city's economic development circles. In 2003 the library sought a more active status. The library initiated a meeting with the local organizations most likely to be seen in the community as economic developers; the City's Economic Development Department and the Chandler Chamber of Commerce. The library stressed its desire to increase the potential impact of its collection and electronic resources in support of efforts by those who are already in economic development. The message was collaboration and co-sponsorship not competition. The response to this message was immediately favorable, resulting in the three organizations becoming co-sponsors in the initiative which was subsequently named Local Engines of Economic Development (LEED). The co-sponsors identified multiple organizations whose daily mission and operations establish, cultivate, develop, nurture and maintain Arizona's small business community. Individuals from these organizations were recruited and brought together as a focus group of "key advisors" to determine how the library could support their efforts by providing entrepreneurs and the small business community access to information. This exercise, called a "gap analysis," revealed the importance of establishing a "one-stop environment where small business operators and entrepreneurs could begin to understand the scope of available resources and compare them to their individual needs. As a result, the *Chandler Small Business Information Summit* was to become an annual forum where resource providers would provide their perspectives on issues important to the small business community via panel presentations and where small business operators could identify the resource provider most likely to assist them. Building on its competency of information access and referral, the library developed a mini-directory of information and service providers, **Chandler Small Business Information Passport**. The Passport includes both local contact information, as well as statewide resource contacts. The Passport was introduced at the first summit in September 2003.

The September summit (planned to be an annual event) also served as the platform to sign up twenty small business operators for a series of library business mentoring classes designed to teach them how to use the resources from the library and the key advisor organizations. The classes are taught once a month for six months. Key advisors and local experts teach the classes. The concept for the business mentoring classes was developed around the promotional theme of **My Business Acceleration Plan (MBA Plan)**. The classes for the first series were: Session 1: Small Business Services & Business Assessment – Where to Start; Session 2: Planning for Business Gold Using Library Resources; Session 3: Practical Marketing; Session 4: Business Plans & Access

to Capital-Understanding the Relationship; Session 5: Taxes & Small Business-Q &A with a Tax Attorney and Session 6: How to Create Your Own Business Development Plan. The Chandler Minority Small Business Workshop held annually in March is the second platform used to sign up business operators for the second series of six library business mentoring classes.

The MBA Plan of the LEED project takes libraries beyond their role as information access suppliers and places them top of mind in the local community as supplier of business and economic development services. The library was exhilarated, after many years of not being at the table, to be seen as a full partner by providing access to information that enables business and economic development.

The partners in the LEED project are the co-sponsors: The Chandler Public Library, the City Economic Development Office and the Chamber of Commerce, along with the Key Advisor organizations: Department of Commerce (Small Business Services); Department of Commerce (Office of Innovation & Technology); SCORE; Western International University; Maricopa Community College – Small Business Development Center (SBDC); Small Business Administration (SBA); State Procurement Office; Small Business Services & Minority/Women Owned Business Services; Wells Fargo Bank; Chandler/Sun Lakes Independent Newspapers; Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; and a local attorney’s office. LEED is a collaboration that creates nothing new; rather it leverages the core competencies of existing organizations. It creates a collaborative cross-promotion channel for existing services.

LEED project design, coordination for the summit and curriculum design and coordination of the business mentoring classes (MBA Plan) was provided by a consultant engaged by the library. Funding for the LEED project was provided by an LSTA grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by the Arizona Department of Library, Archives and Public Records.

Asked how the Chandler Public Library measures the impact the library may be having on the community’s economic development by providing services to business, Lynne Paulson, Downtown Reference Supervisor, said, “The library, Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Economic Development in Chandler have developed a partnership that allows the library to do what it does best---offer information. All of our business events, materials, workshops, and individual counseling focus on research by business owners. The ‘look before you leap’ philosophy. We don’t have any actual data to prove that people may have made better decisions because they took the time for due diligence, but we know many aspiring entrepreneurs may not take this step on their own. Far too many small businesses fail in the first five years to say that any particular strategy is always successful.”

D. Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (North Carolina)

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, founded in 1903 serves a population of _____ with a large business community. Charlotte serves as the subsidiary headquarters for many major national and international companies. It is first

and foremost a banking city. It is the second largest financial center in the nation, behind only New York. Charlotte is also a major manufacturing force. Every major manufacturing sector is represented including industrial machinery and metal working industries along with computer and electronic products and biomedical facilities.⁵

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg (PLCMC) has a central library and twenty-three branches. The library provides business services through a Small Business Information Center (SBIC) housed on the second floor of the main library, along with general reference, serials, government documents and a career center.

The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg (PLCMC) has a long tradition of providing services to business. It is one of 113 libraries that responded to a 1942 survey about its services to business conducted by Marion C. Manley at the Newark Public Library (Manley 1942). In the early 1990's its print collection was developed to support International Business. A virtual business resource for businesses, BizLink (<http://www.bizlink.org/>) was launched in Spring 1998. When plans were announced shortly after 9/11/2001 that the SBA's Business Resource center (located across the street from the library) needed to relocate, the library initiated negotiations to develop a partnership with the SBA, the City of Charlotte and the County of Mecklenburg to allow the business resource center's collection to be transferred to the library. In Spring 2002, PLCMC opened the Small Business Information Center (SBIC).

The funding for SBIC was provided by the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, the Small Business Administration (SBA) and an in-kind contribution from the library of space, materials, and overhead. Two non-librarians (with backgrounds in business and education) experienced with small businesses, were hired by the library as contractors to provide one-on-one consultations with clients (Since March 2006, a single contractor provides consulting at the BizHub Network site located at the community college).

Business librarians work with SBIC clients to use the print collection (circulating and non-circulating reference books, which include sample business plans by business type published by Entrepreneur magazine), library online databases (*Business and Company Resource Center, Business Source Premier, Financial Times-London, New York Times, Newsbank: North Carolina Plus, Newspaper Source, ReferenceUSA, Regional Business News, South Carolina Industrial Directory and Wall Street Journal*) and additional online databases provided by the state, *NCLive*. The business librarians also maintain the BizLink website which provides links to eleven topics (*Business Forms, Career Corner, Company Research, Economic Conditions, Industry Research, International Business, Investment & Personal Finance, Marketing & Demographics, Patent & Trademark, Starting a Business, and Taxes*); the online databases, announcements for business programs and featured books and ebooks.

Partners are essential to assist the library in providing services to businesses. The opening of the SBIC at the library was a result of a partnership among, the library, the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and the SBA. The support for small businesses in the area has evolved into a regional initiative called the BizHub Network

(<http://www.bizhub.org/>). It is a virtual community with the stated mission: *to help small businesses in the Charlotte region grow and be more successful by providing easy access to a network of needed services*. Its website has links to resources, links to highlighted “hot topics,” links to business articles and a link to “ask the experts.” The BizHub Network has four distinct target groups: clients, network members, service providers and underwriters. The library is one of the network members. A few other members are the Central Piedmont Community College (physical location of BizHub Network), SCORE, Mecklenburg County’s Minority Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program, Latin-American Chamber of Commerce (LACC), the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and other non-profit and government agencies. The senior library manager at the main library is an officer of the board of directors for the BizHub Network.

The library’s traditional role of providing access to information to businesspeople to help them in their decision-making was expanded to include access to business counseling when the SBIC was launched. Entrepreneurs and small business owners were referred to the library for these services by the Chamber of Commerce, the SBA and the City’s Office of Economic Development. With the launch of the BizHub Network, the library has transitioned the business counseling to the physical site for the BizHub network. However, clients are still referred to the library and its website (<http://www.bizlink.org>) as a starting point to get information needed to start or grow a business.

Evidence of the library’s impact on the community’s economic development by providing services to business is an output measure. The contractors hired by the library to provide counseling at the SBIC and the business librarians who assisted with information seeking saw over 4,000 clients a year (2002-2005).

E. Frederick County Public Library (Maryland)

The Frederick County Public Library, founded in _____ serves a population of approximately 220,000 with a business community engaged primarily in _____ (major industries in county)⁶

The Frederick County Public Library (FCPL) has a central library and six branches. The library provides business services through the Business Resource Center (BRC) located on the second floor of the central library. The BRC was established in 2002 as part of the renovation of the central library. It consists of two rooms, one for the collection (circulating and non-circulating reference books; magazine displays), tables with six computers and the librarian’s desk and the second room is a fully appointed small conference room, which can be reserved for meetings.

The BRC’s website <http://www.fcpl.org/information/brc/index.htm> contains a roadmap of information needed by the small business community. Links to the following categories of information: *Companies & Products, Frederick & Maryland, Industry, Legal, Non-Profit, Statistics, Employment & Careers, Government, Investment, Magazines & Newspapers, Small Businesses, and Taxes* take you to electronic and print resources in those categories.

The Business Resource Center's collection and services focus on three major audiences: 1) Small Business Entrepreneurs and Owners. Information available for this audience include: *How to Start a Business in Maryland*, *How to Form a Limited Liability Corporation*; *Industry Norms and Key Business Ratios*, *RMA Annual Statement Studies*, *Direct Marketing List Studies (SRDS)*, and *Entrepreneur Magazine sample business plans*. Electronic databases available both in the BRC and from home or office include: *Business and Company Resource Center*, *EBSCO Business Source Elite*, *National Newspaper V* and *ReferenceUSA*. 2) Patrons seeking career exploration; and 3) Personal Investors and Others needing company performance data. The business librarian is also available to give one-on-one customized orientations of the resources for individuals with complex information needs. This service is available usually by appointment.

The librarians in the BRC also coordinate the delivery of business education programs on topics of interest to entrepreneurs, job seekers and people needing information for financial planning. The business librarian is also available for off-site speaking engagements at company or organization meetings to present business resources and research strategies of particular interest.

Partners are essential to assist the library in providing services to businesses. The Business Resource Center has five primary business partners that it interacts with to provide services to businesses 1) The Small Business Development Center (SBDC); 2) S.C.O.R.E.; 3) Downtown Frederick Partnership; 4) Office of Economic Development; and 5) Frederick County Chamber of Commerce. Other partners include: The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The African American Chamber of Commerce and a couple of Women's business groups.

The library performs the traditional role of providing access to information. It helps its entrepreneur and small business clients with research needed to develop their business plans. Business advice is provided by SBDC and SCORE. The counselor at the SBDC reviews the business plans that clients create and the representatives from SCORE give accounting advice. Other partners provide referrals to the library and sometimes provide speakers for library programs.

Traditional library metrics are tracked, such as the number of questions answered, number of programs and attendance at programs. However, like other libraries, the BRC does not have a way of gauging its impact on the community's economic development efforts.

F. Harford County Public Library (Maryland)

The Harford County Public Library, founded in 1946 serves a population of approximately 225,000. Harford County is part of the Greater Baltimore Region. It is strategically located on I-95 in the heart of the East Coast and Mid-Atlantic United States markets--- the "sweet spot of the Mid-Atlantic." Aberdeen Proving Ground, in the government sector, and Upper Chesapeake Health System, in the private sector, are the major employers in the county⁷

The Harford County Public Library (HCPL) has 9 branches (plus one in construction and one in design phase) and an administration and support services building. The library provides business services through a virtual Small Business Center accessed via the library's website <http://www.hcplonline.info/smallbusiness/businesscenter.html> and through its business specialist located at the library's Belair Branch.

Started in 2002, the Small Business Center was initially funded from a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) administered by the Maryland Department of Education, Division of Library and Development Services (DLDS). The grant enabled the library to purchase the print and electronic services and pay the salary of a non-librarian business specialist. Funds to continue the operation of the Small Business Center have since been built into the library's operating budget.

The Small Business Center relies on books (circulating and reference), databases (*Gale Business and Company Resource Center, Business Reference Suite, Ready Reference Shelf, ReferenceUSA, General Reference Center Gold and Regional Business News*), the expertise of its small business specialist (who is a former small business owner), and the assistance of its partners to help its clients. The business specialist is available by appointment to help clients create a business plan for a new venture or help expand an existing business by developing a direct mail strategy. One of the business databases, *ReferenceUSA* allows you to generate mailing lists based on ZIP Code, street, SIC Code, sales volume, industry classification. These lists can be saved and downloaded. The business specialist can also show clients how to use other databases to conduct online searches for: *company profiles, industry rankings and trends, products and brands, company performance ratings, market share and market size analysis, investment reports, industry statistics, trends, and forecasts and business plan market information.*

In addition to one-on-one consultations, the business specialist coordinates programs and classes on topics of interest to the small business community. Topics have included: Selling on Ebay (beginners and advanced); Small business financing; How to write a business plan; Small business marketing tips; Using database to generate mailing lists, etc.

Partners are essential to assist the library in providing services to businesses. The Small Business Development Center works with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Office of Economic Development and local financial institutions. The library's Small Business Center is the starting point for a client to obtain information for the business plan and help in developing the plan. The SBDC reviews the client's business plan and helps the client "shop it" to the financial institutions for funding. If a client starts at either SBDC or a financial institution with an incomplete business plan, the client will be referred to the library's business specialist for assistance.

The library has no hard statistics to quantify the impact it may be having on the community's economic development by providing services to business. However, business specialist, Laura Perrault, says "small business is the backbone of the economy

and whenever we can make it easier for entrepreneurs to start businesses and possibly create jobs, we are having an impact on the economy.”

G. Johnson County Library (Kansas)

The Johnson County Library, founded in 1952 serves a population of approximately 394,000 with a business community engaged primarily in Information Services, Health Care and Retail.⁸

The Johnson County (JoCo) Library has a Central Resource Library and twelve branches. The library provides business services through the Business Services section of the central library. The Business Section sits apart from the general collection and it is branded. The library’s public meeting rooms and computer lab are used to provide training and programs on topics of interest to the business community. Providing services to businesses is a strategic initiative resulting from the library’s strategic planning process which looks at the needs of the community. The entrepreneur interested in domestic and international business, people interested in personal finance, and mid-career changers are the focus of the Business Section’s collection.

The Business Section is supported by a dynamic website <http://www.jocobusiness.net> which provides access to online databases (*ABI/Inform, Business & Company Resource Center, Business Source Premier, Merchant Online, ReferenceUSA, and Standard & Poor’s NetAdvantage*). The website also lists business databases available for use only at the central library (*Sorkins Online, which has company profiles, prospect lists, names and business lists from public and private companies throughout Kansas, Missouri and Illinois, and D&B Million Dollar Database Premier*). It has featured links (*SIC codes, NAICS codes, and Business magazines and newspapers*); featured new business books and business classes and training; reference information classified by research topic: *Career resources, Starting a business, International business and Investment resources*; and links to community resources for businesses (*County Economic Research Institute, Area Chambers of Commerce, Kansas City U.S. Export Assistance Center, KCSOURCELINK, and others*).

The business librarian assists clients who need to obtain information regarding county and local demographics, information on international markets that could help small companies import or export, sample business plans and the data necessary to develop a business plan, etc. The business librarian also coordinates business programs, conducts tours of the business collection and training on use of the library’s resources.

The library has an informal partnership with various organizations throughout the county whose mission involves support of entrepreneurs and the small business community. The library disseminates information about the organizations, provides easy access to the organizations via links from the library website and it helps clients referred from the organizations with their information needs. Some of the organizations the library partners with are: Chambers of Commerce within the county, the Kaufman Foundation, Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at the Johnson County Community College, the U.S. Department of Commerce- International Trade Specialists, and others.

The Business Section of Johnson County Library, like many libraries, can cite output metrics such as the number of business questions answered, how much of the collection is being used, which databases are being used and it can provide anecdotal stories of helping various clients but there is no good measure of the impact the library may be having on the community's economic development by providing services to business.

Phoenix Public Library (Arizona)

The Phoenix Public Library, founded in 1898 serves a population of 1.5 million with a business community engaged primarily in _____ (major industries in county)⁹

The Phoenix Public Library (PPL) has a central library and fourteen branches. The library has a Business/Economics Section and Business Info Desk on the 2nd floor of the central library. The Business Reference area is 6,100 sq. ft. The ready reference collection is 16 shelves of material primarily for small businesses. There are five public access computers and a wireless hub in the area. This Business Info Desk is open 7 days a week, 66 hours a week and it is staffed by twelve librarians who rotate on this desk.

The Business Info Desk is supported by a dedicated business page guide <http://www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/business.jsp> which provides access to online databases (*Associations Unlimited, Morningstar, Business and Company Resource Center, LexisNexis Statistical, Mergent Online, and Reference USA*); links to library resource guides and information on popular topics, links to pathfinders to specific resources (*companies, industries, market research, small business startup, trade names and trademarks, etc.*), booklists, local news feed, and business events at library. Databases that can only be accessed in the library, such as *Standard and Poor's Net Advantage*, are also listed.

The Phoenix Public Library (PPL) has a long standing tradition of providing service to business. It has made service to business a strategic initiative in its previous and current strategic plans. Business librarians work with clients to use the reference collection, which includes 16 shelves of ready reference (how to start business guides, sample business plans, demographic and market segment studies, local economic & development newsletters, business law, etc.) and business databases. Business librarians provide reference via e-mail and telephone and it offers a Facts-to-Go fee-based service. PPL also has a large circulating collection on all aspects of business. The library hosts business programs, outreach tours and events, has a monthly article in the local business newspaper and provides access to SCORE counselors on-site.

In addition to its own initiatives of partnering with the Chamber of Commerce, SBA, SCORE and city agencies that served the business community, PPL became one of the state's Economic Information Development Centers (EDIC). The state's goal in establishing EDIC's in 1992 was to expand access to current business information resources available to small business owners and community and economic development

professionals, especially in smaller communities throughout Arizona. Public and community college libraries were included in the initiative as key participants in state and local economic development because of their information resources and expertise. Funding was made available to EDIC libraries to orient and train staff and community economic development professionals, to purchase the recommended core collection and to execute a public relations program developed with the help of a consultant. While PPL already had the resources recommended for the core business collection, it did partake in the orientation, training and public relations opportunities.

The Phoenix Public Library interacts with many partners in support of economic development in the community: The Chamber of Commerce, The Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the Arizona Small Business Association (ASBA), Service Core of Retired Executives (SCORE), the city Community & Economic Development Division, and the Metro Phoenix Service Providers. The library has provided space for one-on-one counseling of business clients and meeting room space for many programs on topics of interest to the small business community and the partner organizations have provided counselors and program speakers. The library and its partners have promoted these services to the business community. Librarians have also attended partner meetings to promote its resources and to demonstrate use of its databases in relation to marketing existing businesses and assistance to startups.

Small businesses and entrepreneurs in Phoenix have an active network of service providers to turn to for assistance. Hence, it would be difficult to get feedback from small businesses regarding the impact the library has had on their businesses and the economic development of the community. Peggy Pedigo, the business librarian says, "I think any survey of small businesses would not distinguish among the various business providers. [Besides] in order to be accurate, it [a survey] would have to come later, after the business was operating." Phoenix Public Library, like most libraries, measures awareness of the resources and how actively their services are used. "We see many business people each week and refer back and forth with other agencies and [national] surveys list Phoenix as near the top in the U.S. in new business startups," says Peggy Pedigo.

4.0 Discussion

While some public libraries have decided to provide services to businesses as a result of their strategic planning initiatives, some public libraries provide services to business because of a long standing tradition. Some, in the tradition of Newark Public Library's John Cotton Dana, have been providing this service since the early 1900's. Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Minneapolis and New York, all mentioned in Manley's 1942 publication, are in this category.

An examination of the literature provides examples of the collections, resources and services of the public libraries which pioneered services to the business community. However, the latest large-scale attempt to gauge how public libraries are providing business services was conducted by Rosemaire Riechel in 1994; before the proliferation

of the Internet and the wide availability of online databases. Since then, only individual library systems or statewide initiatives have been written about.

It is pretty clear in reading the literature and in talking to business librarians in eight different libraries that the nature of the business user has changed. Today, those libraries that offer services to business are focusing on the entrepreneur and the small business operator. In so doing, libraries are playing a role in the economic development of their communities and they are being granted a seat at the leadership table of their communities.

A. Getting to the Table

From the readings and the interviews, it appears that, in general, those libraries in the smaller and/or rural communities have made the most progress in getting involved with the economic development efforts in their communities. Smaller and rural communities tend to recognize that they must practice *economic gardening* to make their communities strong and healthy. And, they tend to be willing to recognize that the library provides resources to help entrepreneurs with startups and to help small businesses grow. In smaller and rural communities, it may be easier for the library leadership to network with the leaders of organizations like the Chamber of Commerce to inform their leaders of the contributions the library can make toward economic development.

Larger communities tend to have more resources to lure companies willing to relocate and their economic development alliances and efforts may be geared to *smokestack chasing*. In larger communities, alliances of organizations involved with economic development may already be established and it may be more difficult to convince the leadership of these organizations that the library can make substantial contributions to economic development. In fact, the library efforts may be viewed as competitive instead of collaborative by one or more of the organizations. It would be incumbent on the library leadership to dispel any perception of competitiveness.

In any event, before a library can seek external acceptance as a provider of necessary information to the business and economic development communities, it must look internally to make sure it has the necessary commitment and the ability to obtain resources to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

1. Leadership commitment

The first step is having a leadership team (director and library board) with vision and a desire for the library to take an active role as the information access partner in local economic development. The leadership team must be ready to make a commitment for the long haul, as results which may indicate the impact the library's services are having on economic development may not materialize for several years. And even then the outcomes will tend to be more anecdotal than quantitative.

The director and board must be ready to commit their personal time to developing relationships with leaders of economic development organizations and civic leaders. Involvement with these organizations may evolve into assuming leadership positions for

either the director or the business librarian. The expectations of director and staff time for community involvement should be clearly spelled out in the library's annual work plan.

The library leadership must also set the philosophy of providing service to business. Will the service be traditional reference service in which the librarian points the client to the appropriate resource to answer questions or will the service be a consultative service in which the librarian spends time with a client to obtain and interpret information and even arrange for advice and counseling by partner organizations? Whatever the service philosophy, the staffing budget must recognize the increased time commitments required to serve business clients and it must allow paid time for the business librarian(s) to be involved in economic development organizations.

2. Resources

The library must be sure it has the ability to obtain the collection, print and electronic, and the staff to meet the needs of the business community. In many of the examples in the literature and the interviews, a grant provided the initial seed money to upgrade the collection and to train and pay staff for a year. But to sustain the program, the library must be ready to justify folding the expenses for the business services into the library's operating budget. This means the library should have a clear understanding of the needs of the business community; the partnering organizations; the elected and appointed officials, who fund the library; and any other stakeholders.

3. Community needs

In many of the examples in the literature and in some of the communities of the librarians I interviewed, the community's economy had suffered a downturn. A municipal/county economic development agency and/or the state economic development agency convened strategic planning sessions to seek solutions to revive the economy. In some examples, individuals who loss jobs as a result of corporate downsizing or company relocations or closures, decided to start their own businesses and sought information and assistance from the library and various agencies.

Municipal/county elected/appointed officials have a need to see the economy grow. An increase in the number of people employed and the number of businesses in the community increases the tax base. Studies have shown that small businesses create jobs therefore elected/appointed officials have a stake in seeing small businesses start and grow. Economic development offices and Chambers of Commerce have a stake in helping small businesses start and grow; to assist, the organizations need access to information to help the business community. Individuals desiring to start businesses and small business owners need information to make business decisions that benefit their businesses. Libraries have the ability to provide economic development agencies, entrepreneurs and small business owners the information they need.

B. Measuring Success

All libraries face the challenge of measuring the value of the services they provide. Increasingly, taxpayers and funding bodies want some quantifiable way of justifying the

money they spend on library services. If providing library service to business is not a long standing tradition, business librarians may be under tremendous pressure to show “results” in order to sustain their program. But many say, “You can’t put a dollar value on the intangible benefits that libraries provide their users.” For this reason, libraries must consider tracking the following data:

1. Anecdotal Stories

Business librarians should form relationships with their clients. While confidentiality is paramount, especially during the development of the business plan, the librarian should be around to help the business owner celebrate when the business is launched. And, at some time the business owner should be willing to give a testimonial about the support received from the library. For example, Wendy Wedding Planner might say, “We spent six to nine months, three days a week, at the library, working on the business plan. Even, now that my business has \$X,XXX.00 in annual revenues, I keep the business librarian’s number on my speed dial.”

Don’t forget about the business growth stories. If a small business you have helped gets a major new contract because of information they researched for their proposal, the librarian should know. When a small business grows and has to add staff, the librarian should know.

Let everybody know these stories. The press release that announces the business launch or the new contract or business expansion should have at least a sentence about the library’s involvement. Post the success stories on your website; highlight testimonials in your brochures.

2. Outputs

Continue to keep and report the traditional library statistics. Number of clients seen, number of questions answered, number of attendees at programs. Number and type of meetings attended, number of programs coordinated, and the number of training sessions conducted. Number of business services brochures distributed, number of items circulated. Number of online searches conducted, number of database hits, number of website hits, etc.

Keep track of the increases by quarter or year and report these numbers as evidence of how heavily your services are used. Increasing and heavy use implies that your clients value your services.

3. Outcomes

Outcomes answer the question, “What difference does it make?” Outcomes are descriptions of the changes that will occur after participating in program activities; they can describe the tangible benefits that accrue to persons, populations or organizations.

Typically, libraries that have applied for grants to start or expand their business service programs probably had to list several outcomes they would expect to see as a result of implementing their grant proposal. For example, “prospective and established small

business owners will increase their awareness of library and community resources and services which will prepare them to start, manage and expand businesses. Librarians can show that evidence of accomplishing this outcome in a number of ways. One could be a pre-survey of awareness of library resources; then after a period of program activity, a post-survey of awareness of library resources. Anecdotal stories and output measures regarding the number of presentations made to various business audiences could also be used as evidence of accomplishing this outcome objective.

You don't have to be applying for a grant to establish outcomes. During the course of yearly planning of activities, you could establish expected outcomes for each of your goals. But most important you should determine ahead of time what evidence you would expect to see to know that you had accomplished the outcome.

Let everybody know your results. Give reports internally to staff, the director and the library board. Find ways to report your results externally at partner organization meetings or in their communications vehicles, etc.

4. Measures of satisfaction and value

Many libraries are very familiar with surveying their library users to find out how satisfied they are with the services they receive. Some libraries even survey their entire communities, which include non-library users to determine their satisfaction with library services. Most libraries get high marks from both users and non-users; "everybody loves their library." While satisfaction survey results are great to tout, some stakeholders want to see measures of effectiveness.

Increasingly, state library agencies and some library systems are experimenting with econometric models to quantify the "value" of library service to users. Business librarians should pay close attention to these efforts and if possible try to model their approaches to survey business users.

From time to time, business librarians may want to survey their clients to ask a few questions, such as: "How has the business information from the library affected your business decisions positively or negatively?" How much was the information you obtained worth to you?" Put another way, "If you had to pay for the information you received, how much would you have been willing to pay? Answers to these types of questions may yield some clues to the value clients place on the services provided by the library. However, they will not answer the question, "What impact does the library have on economic development of the community by providing services to business?"

5.0 Conclusion

It is worthwhile for public libraries to provide services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Anecdotal evidence supports the claim that public libraries have a positive impact on a community's economic development by providing services to entrepreneurs and small businesses. The positive impact to economic development is realized more efficiently when libraries collaborate with partner organizations.

The model that seems to be the most effective is a collaborative model in which all partners agree that the library should be the starting point for those entrepreneurs and business owners that must develop business plans, which then can be reviewed by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and then shopped to the appropriate financial institutions. In this model, the librarian understands business parlance; knows what information is needed for a business plan, marketing strategies, industry analysis and other business functions; and the librarian acts as a consultant to help the client obtain and interpret information from print and electronic sources. In addition, the librarian arranges for the client to receive advice and counseling from partner organizations and the librarian engages in a reciprocal referral process with other key partners to assure the client takes advantage of the appropriate services. An annual event that brings the partner organizations together to provide information on topics of interest to the business community would also be an effective component in this model. It would serve to strengthen the collaborative bonds among all the organizations and it would provide entrepreneurs and small businesspeople easy access to all the organizations.

6.0 Limitations of the Study

Unlike the 1942 survey of public libraries by Marion Manley and the 1994 survey by Rosemarie Riechel, this study does not give a comprehensive view of the present day activities of public libraries providing service to business. Instead it is an illustrative view of a few libraries which may or may not be representative of public libraries in general.

7.0 Further Study

A replication of Rosemarie Riechel's 1994 study with emphasis on determining how services and the type of business customer may have changed due to the proliferation of the Internet could add to the literature. In addition, studies using econometric models to ascertain the economic development impact library service to business is having would be useful.

Notes

¹ Information on the state of California program was generously provided by Barbara Will, project consultant at the State library. Information was also obtained from the project website <http://smallbiz2.infopeople.org/> and the State library website <http://www.library.ca.gov/newsletter/2005/0405/smbizhelp2.htm>

² Information on this California Public Library was generously provided by the Business Librarian

³ Information on the Cecil County Public Library was generously provided by Denise Davis, Director, Carole Starzmann, Branch Manager Library & Small Business Services and Lera Chitwood, Small Business Librarian. Information about the business community was obtained from the Cecil County Office of Economic Development website <http://www.cecilbusiness.org/business.cfm>. Last accessed July 14, 2006

⁴ Information on the Chandler Public Library and the Local Engines of Economic Development (LEED) project was generously provided by Lynne Paulson, Downtown Reference Supervisor. Information about library history was obtained from the Chandler Public Library Website http://www.chandlerlibrary.org/cpl_history.htm. Last accessed July 17, 2006. Information about the population of Chandler obtained from the Chamber of Commerce website <http://www.chandlerchamber.com/demographics.htm>. Last accessed July 17, 2006. Information about the industry profile obtained from the Chandler Office of Economic Development website <http://www.gpec.org/eresponse/chandler.htm>. Last accessed July 17, 2006.

⁵ Information on the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County was generously provided by Susan Herzog, Senior Library Manager, Main Library. Information about the BizHub Network was obtained from its website <http://www.bizhub.org/> Last accessed on July 14, 2006. Information about the community was obtained from the Chamber of Commerce website http://www.charlottechamber.org/content.cfm?category_level_id=133&content_id=179 Last accessed July 14, 2006.

⁶ Information on the Frederick County Public Library was generously provided by Susan Gray, Business Librarian and from the library's website <http://www.fcpl.org/information/brc/index.htm> Last accessed July 17, 2006.

⁷ Information on the Harford County Public Library was generously provided by Laura Perrault, Business Specialist. Information about the county's location and the major employers was obtained from the Office of Economic Development website <http://www.harfordbusiness.org/demographics.cfm#MajorEmployers> Last accessed July 17, 2006.

⁸ Information on the Johnson County Library was generously provided by David Hanson, Business & Reference Services Coordinator. Information was also obtained from the business website <http://www.jocobusiness.net> Last accessed July 17, 2006.

⁹ Information on the Phoenix Public Library was generously provided by Peggy Pedigo, Business Librarian. Information was also obtained from the business website <http://www.phoenixpubliclibrary.org/business.jsp> Last accessed July 20, 2006.

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