The Prepared Mind: Enhancing Creativity in Academic Librarianship

VLA Annual Conference, Norfolk, VA
12 October 2017

Nancy Falciani-White, MSLS, EdD
Randolph-Macon College
NancyFalcianiWhite@mc.edu
What is creativity?
A novel product, idea, or problem solution that is of value to the individual and/or the larger social group.

(Hennessey & Amabile, 2010)

Original and meaningful
Novel and appropriate
Exercise 1
Why study creativity?
College students are changing.

Higher education is changing.

The role of libraries in higher education is changing.

Technology is changing.

Information resources are increasing.

Budgets are decreasing.
I am a creative person.

Yes

No

Kind of

Start the presentation to activate live content
If you see this message in presentation mode, install the add-in or get help at Poll Everywhere.
In what role are you creative at work?
Creativity in Psychological Literature
Divinely inspired
Limited to the artistic domain
Process
Associated with mental illness
Don’t worry. Be happy.
Correlated with intelligence
Influenced by environment
Follows mastery
Creativity in Library Literature
- Creativity is very important
- We need to be more creative!
- We need to help students be more creative
  - Makerspaces
  - Information literacy instruction
  - Design
- Lack of empirical studies
Survey of Academic Library Staff
RESPONDENT INSTITUTIONS

- Associates College: 34%
- Baccalaureate College: 23%
- Master's College/Univ.: 17%
- Doctoral University: 22%
- Special Focus Institution: 2%
- Other: 2%

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

- Public: 61%
- Private: 39%
I am a creative person

1 (strongly disagree)  2  3  4 (neutral)  5  6  7 (strongly agree)
What do you feel supports, enhances, or encourages your creativity?

- “Having the freedom to use my creativity in different ways for my work.”
- “Time to think. A quiet place to ponder. Reading and browsing what others have done to adapt their ideas.”
- “Being open to change”
- “Participating in a range of activities; interacting with different kinds of people, doodling”
- “Not being afraid to fail and being willing to try different things…”
- “wine, good leadership. also wine”
What barriers do you encounter to creative work?

- “Funding, lack of coworker and manager support, lack of time”
- “Budget, Administrative indifference, entrenched and even regressive library staff, faculty turnover, curriculum design”
- “Essentially, that it is often viewed as frivolity.”
- “Insufficient sleep, poor leadership, improper funding, and societal disrespect for education, knowledge, and learning”
- “Getting lost in the details; my own lack of seeing myself as creative.”
Enhancing Personal Creativity
Chance favors the prepared mind.

–Louis Pasteur
Cultivate self-awareness

- Find out what you like and what you hate about life
- Do more of what you love, and less of what you hate
- Know what you’re good at, and what you could develop
- Recognize when you’re stuck in a rut
- Journal, blog, or otherwise reflect
Expand your horizons

- Vary your routine
- Take a class
- Try something that pushes your boundaries
- Explore within your domain, and outside of it
- When something interests you, pursue it
- Play
Establish good habits

- Take charge of your schedule
- Wake up each day with a specific goal
- Make time for reflection and relaxation
- Get enough sleep
Grow

- Develop what you lack
- If you do anything well, it becomes enjoyable
- To keep enjoying something, increase its complexity
- Shift frequently from “openness” to “closure”
Thought Exercises

- Look for problems
- Try to intentionally increase complexity
- Question your assumptions, and avoid premature conclusions
Design a new library chair
Thought Exercises

- Look for problems
- Try to intentionally increase complexity
- Question your assumptions, and avoid premature conclusion
- Collaborate with others
- Practice divergent thinking: Producing
  - As many ideas as possible
  - As many different ideas as possible
  - Unlikely ideas
Exercise 3
Exercise 4
The Creativity of Others

- Time
- Freedom to fail
- What if...?
- Model comfort with change
- Encourage work/life balance
- Resource creativity as much as possible
Conclusion
“...No matter how gifted a person is, he or she has no chance to achieve anything creative unless the right conditions are provided by the field...: training, expectations, resources, recognition, hope, opportunity, and reward.”

(Csikszentmihalyi, Creativity, p. 330)
Resources

Questions?

Nancy Falciani-White
Randolph-Macon College
NancyFalcianiWhite@rmc.edu
(804) 752-7256

Evaluate this session: tinyurl.com/th2017vla