

The Intentional Library

Intentionality (noun), the fact of being deliberate or purposive.
(Oxford Dictionaries)

How do we integrate *intentionality* into our daily practice as librarians to most effectively support the academic mission of our institution? Perhaps we practice *mindfulness* – the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something – to be reflective or embody a broader perspective on our activities – and their impact on those we serve.

Like any established body of practice – librarianship is *iterative*. But unless we assess our individual human transactions – or at the very least listen intently and respond to our patrons in the moment – how do we determine whether what we do is not effectively *insanity*: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results? Or – as another CUNY Chief Librarian once observed, *How do we know when something is a vision – and not a hallucination?*

President Cruz recently announced a **90X30** Initiative – an ambitious plan to double the number of degrees and credentials Lehman awards – 90,000 – by the year 2030. This Call to Action has energized – and admittedly overwhelmed – the College community. Pragmatically, we recognize we cannot achieve this overarching goal without sufficient and strategic investment in College infrastructure: classroom resources, hiring new faculty, technological upgrades.

Most significantly, we are taking a hard look at *student success*: how to articulate it, how it thrives, which specific learning outcomes and competencies we must engender and – essentially – *institutionalize* (or *Lehman-ize*, as we say on campus). Notably, we must examine, evaluate, and address head-on *barriers* to student success: whether they exist in the classroom, in lines at the Financial Aid Office, advisement procedures, discrepancies or misrepresentations in written material distributed to students.

When library faculty and staff first met with President Cruz after he joined us last year, he proposed establishment of a *Center for Student Success* – and queried how the Library could best support and enhance it. We engaged in a substantive discussion. These issues still inform and impact daily and long-term considerations about the nature of library services in an under-resourced public institution comprised of students with tangible needs. As library professionals, we're confident about our pivotal role in student learning, facilitating their ability to master the curriculum, undertake effective research, and critically evaluate the information universe. But this still provokes complex and sometimes troubling questions:

- *Are we indeed accomplishing what we say we intend to do – while remaining true to our mission, vision, and values?*
- *Do our policies actually support – or at times – inhibit access?*
- *Is our website user-focused as an empowering learning resource?*
- *While assessing value of our instruction and reference services – do they in fact deliver sustaining impact and reinforce lifelong learning?*
- *Ultimately – is our Library fully prepared to support 90X30?*

Needless to say, we will always be challenged and compromised by precious commodities: time, staffing, budget stringencies, competing external demands. Nevertheless, we aspire to foster the Library as a creative, collaborative learning environment where we can take risks, think outside the box, bust paradigms – and allow ourselves to fail.

Moreover, we are committed to remaining *refreshed* as library faculty, active as public scholars – with the courage and flexibility to question our core assumptions, embrace the inevitability of change, constantly rethink and revisit traditional pedagogical practices. Once again, we invite you to join us on this exciting and uncertain journey.

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