THREE LEGS ON THE STOOL:

Service Learning Projects, Community and Library

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Illinois Wesleyan University's Action Research Center (ARC) launches many different service learning projects in the Bloomington-Normal community. Often these projects originate from the community, and employ the action research model that imbeds the participant-researcher in the organization or program that is being studied. Information literacy skills, as well as knowledge about research and trade publications that frequently exist outside the normal, are not always obvious in action-oriented projects. The Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU) library has seized on opportunities to integrate library research and critical thinking skills into service learning projects. Some are obvious - working with faculty and students in senior seminar classes to assist with research papers and presentations - while others are more subtle. Integrations that illustrate less obvious approaches include using our institutional repository to house service learning projects and publish excellent research papers and presentations; capitalizing on the University Librarian's role as a member of the local city council to facilitate access to government staff and services and teach skills in searching municipal codes and the many local government trade publications; utilizing interns for government and organizational projects to build on our institutional commitment to community service; and leveraging the ARC Director's existing grant-writing course. Using a service learning project as a case study, the authors discuss the 'three legs on a stool': how innovative approaches are building a foundation for library engagement with faculty and students involved in service learning through the Action Research Center.

Introduction

A private highly-selective 4-year liberal arts university, IWU has a well-developed and robust service learning program administered by ARC. As noted, ARC often uses the research model that invites students to be both active researchers and participants in an organization or program. As a result, ARC has successfully led and supported students in developing project ideas, nurturing them through various stages and - of special significance - providing the right environment to hand projects off to other students. Because ARC practices provide the opportunity to build on other students' work, ARC students learn first hand that ideas come to fruition in stages and over sometimes long periods of time, and that taking a project to the next stage rather than to final implementation is not failure but success. As a result, they frequently engage in projects that over time are transformational to the Bloomington-Normal community.

Over the years, ARC students have developed a cornucopia of service learning projects. A sample from the past few years includes the following: assisting the City of Bloomington in determining the efficacy of a police firing range, introducing a program for the local farmer's market that enables families to easily use their SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cards, establishing summer programs for at-risk youth, developing social media

campaigns for independent business owners to expand their market, and establishing The Tool Library. There is no dearth of creative ideas, and an active ARC blog https://blogs.iwu.edu/action/) invites continuous opportunities for students to suggest new projects and programs in the community.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the information literacy and research support programs in place in the IWU library and a detailed look at how the ARC research and engagement program works through the lens of a successful project, The Tool Library. This project provides insight into how an ARC initiative sparked a deeper understanding in the library regarding the ways in which its people and resources can support the teaching and learning programs that are at the core of service learning.

The Ames Library

The Illinois Wesleyan University Ames Library has a solid history of engagement in information literacy activities. Using a liaison model to connect librarians to departments and programs, IWU library faculty members have steadily built strong relationships with teaching faculty and have been engaged in traditional one-shot instruction sessions for many years. In 2008, the library repurposed a faculty vacancy and established the position of Information Literacy Librarian. This position provided the support needed to build on our good partnerships with campus faculty and our strong commitment to provide a robust information literacy program to our students.

Since 2008, the IWU library has been able to engage in significant and progressive opportunities to move the information literacy program forward. The ERIAL (Ethnographic Research In Academic Libraries) Project, funded by an LSTA grant in 2008, provided the opportunity for five academic libraries in Illinois to capture in-depth perspectives of how our users interact with the library and with the scholarly literature. This wide-ranging qualitative research helped us understand the concept of "the invisible librarian," and the importance of the relationships that are built between librarians and teaching faculty. The results of the IWU study made a profound impression not only on the library faculty, but also on our campus teaching faculty, providing all of us with the realization that our students do not come to IWU equipped with some of the most basic research skills. Often lacking are the ability to read a citation, to navigate the scholarly literature using appropriate search terms, and to understand what librarians do and why it matters (Asher & Duke, 2012). In a highly-selective academic institution, the assumption that our students enter IWU with a higher order of research skills had been challenged. This provided us with the opportunity to develop more deeply our collaborative approaches to critical information literacy.

In addition to opening new and important conversations across our campus, these findings led to a 3-year Mellon Foundation grant that coupled writing across the disciplines and information literacy. The grant, which spanned 2011-2014, provided us with an array of options to collaborate with our teaching faculty colleagues on assignment grants, new course development that welcomed embedded librarians, and information literacy rubrics that are department and program specific. It also gave us the support we needed to explore more fully the ways in which information literacy folds into campus initiatives, such as capstone courses

and service learning initiatives.

Often missing from the service learning experience is the role of the library and librarian in assisting with the research that expands the academic impact of the project. Because experiential learning can be so fluid and creative, it is not always clear how or when library-centric research fits into any given project. As a result, the kinds of support a librarian might provide is not obvious and in many cases, might not be seen as useful. This is compounded by the paucity of research collections in academic library that are useful for service learning projects. Research has shown that even the most research-intensive senior seminar or capstone courses - including those that may include community-based projects - do not rely on librarian support unless that work is negotiated between the faculty member and the librarian, and there is intentionality built into the projects (Miller 2013). How might the synergies between service learning, the library and community-based projects receive more recognition and fall together more readily? What can the academic library do to engage with these experiential learning projects in a more meaningful way, moving beyond working with students in navigating the scholarly literature? The experiences at IWU have helped point the way for the library to think differently about its engagement with service learning.

IWU library is a LibGuide user (http://springshare.com/libguides/), and as is common among academic libraries, our library faculty have developed strong one-shot instruction sessions. We know how to help students understand why they need to go beyond Google - not just for the grade and the faculty expectation, but for the appreciation of the peer-review process and the critical thinking that accompanies this work. Our relationships with teaching faculty enable us to explore new ways of integrating information literacy into our curricula. It is less clear, however, how we support the work of the emerging teaching and learning models, including service learning.

Building Relationships Between the Library and ARC

How does the academic library transition from mentoring students through scholarly literature and traditional courses to becoming involved in the high-impact educational practice that is serving learning? At IWU, this work began as all valued and long-lasting partnerships begin: through personal connections and relationship building. Our information literacy librarian brought his commitment to and understanding of the value of supporting field research and the individualized student projects that come through service learning projects. His willingness to "think outside the classroom" and his understanding of the importance of service learning experiences in the academy assisted us in opening the door for deeper conversations with ARC students. Senior seminar projects in one of his liaison areas, environmental studies, often were cross-fertilized with ARC-led service learning projects. The relationships that developed through more traditional capstone research led to non-traditional support of action research projects.

The University Librarian (Karen Schmidt) was able to come along side his efforts by adding in her many years of experience on the local City Council. The Council ward that Schmidt has represented since 1999 includes many of the neighborhoods that are the target of ARC student projects. Her position as an alderman has enabled a variety of opportunities to intersect with ARC students and projects. In addition to developing traditional library research

skills and providing access to scholarly literature through the university library, Schmidt can demonstrate how relationships among neighborhood leaders, city staff, and various not-for-profit and for-profit organizations might work together and inform each other's activities. These are soft skills that help students involved in service-learning understand "the power of the personal" that can profoundly influence the positive outcome of projects. As an elected official, she also has been exposed to very different kinds of research material, including trade and professional publications, blogs, and tools.

Continuing to find ways to work together and support the many highly-successful student projects coming from ARC is an evolving and satisfying journey. The institutional repository at the IWU library - the Digital Commons (http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/) - has supported ARC projects by hosting the output from completed student work. This archival support enables students to see what a full-blown and well-researched project might look like, and the accessibility of Digital Commons content helps make the work of ARC more discoverable.

Action Research & ARC

Action research is a dynamic process where the research question often comes from the community and where community members often are engaged as research partners and not as research subjects. When the people who will be impacted by the project outcome are engaged in the process, it promotes ownership of the project by the residents, the project reflects the true fabric of the community, and there are assurances of a better outcome. Too often, parties interject themselves into communities and work from the outside-in rather than the inside-out, only to discover that the results are less than satisfactory. Action research seeks to avoid that model.

In its work, ARC follows the tenets of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) which is a model developed by John Kretzman and John McKnight (Kretzman & McKnight 1993). This approach focuses on assets rather than deficits. Communities that are defined by their needs look needy; communities defined by their strengths look strong. With this mindset, a single Mom is honored for being resourceful and vacant lots look like potential gardens. When engaging residents as action research partners, they naturally become assets.

Action research and service learning are connected by the meaningful and challenging opportunities they provide for students. ARC offers many avenues for students, as well as faculty and staff, to engage with the community. Many students begin with one or both of the ARC seminars. In the fall, ARC offers a community-based research course which requires a major project. In the spring, ARC offers a grant writing course which pairs a student with a local non-profit to write real grants and raise real money. Community members are also allowed to enroll in the grant writing class (though not for academic credit). Internships and independent study contracts are approved by faculty members and require 160 hours of work in order to earn academic credit. ARC customizes internships that allow students from any major to complete community projects. Non-profits or government agencies host students and ARC provides on site visits and supervision as well as technical support. The City of Bloomington, the McLean County Planning Commission, and the Downtown Bloomington Association have all hosted ARC interns. ARC's non-profit partners include the YWCA, the American Red Cross, and the United Way of McLean County. Fellowships in action research and social entrepreneurship are

managed by ARC. These ARC fellowships are competitive and students can apply as individuals or in small groups. One fellowship allows for a slightly larger award if upperclass students recruit younger students to participate in the project in order to develop sustainability. Other traditional service learning activities such as special event volunteer projects with groups of students, alternative break programming, and tracking hours and impact of service are all ARC responsibilities. In 2014-2015, ARC recorded 42,775 hours of community engagement. Using the Independent Sector multiplier of $24.08, that equates to a value of over $1 million contributed to the local community.

West Bloomington

Universities have a responsibility and an opportunity to create partnerships with surrounding neighborhoods. While "corporate social responsibility" might be a more common phrase today, universities have been practicing "educational social responsibility" for decades. At IWU, ARC is the connection between the university and the Westside of Bloomington. The Westside is just over one mile from IWU. It was once the heart of Bloomington. All trains arrived at the depot bringing entrepreneurs, immigrants, and families to the heart of Central Illinois. The area was bustling as the center of commerce in the growing region. Generations of families have made the Westside their home. The Westside has a neighborhood memory and residents recount stories of when the barber shop used to be a vacuum store and when the neighborhood would gather in front of the one house with a console television to watch the fights on Friday nights. The housing stock is as diverse as the people who occupy them. Many have front porches and front lawns with huge oak trees and wild strawberry growing across the yard. Coal mines and then trains were the economic drivers of the area and both industries were lost over time. The center of the city shifted toward what is the current downtown with corporate office buildings and a courthouse. Like other US cities facing the same transition, the Westside began to decline and there has been tragic divestment in this neighborhood.

The Westside has many strengths - the people, the diversity, the history - and these strengths will help the neighborhood to address the challenges it faces. The story of the Westside is a matter of highs and lows. There is a high percent of renters and a low percent of home owners on the Westside compared to the rest of the city. Once grand old homes were dissected into rental apartments. This creates greater density per block and leads to problems including crowded street parking. The two public elementary schools on the Westside have the lowest test scores and the highest concentration of low income students in the district (Illinois Report Card 2013). While Bloomington overall is a highly educated city, the educational attainment for the Westside is low. Of Westside households in 2010, the high school completion rate was 44.6 percent and only 6.4 percent have finished college (West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan 2008). There are good options for alternative high schools and higher education in the community but Westside residents sometimes have trouble accessing these institutions.

The Westside has been categorized as an area of "slum and blight," indicating that a variety of unsafe, unhealthy, and unfavorable conditions exist. The buildings and the infrastructure on the Westside are over 100 years old which indicates serious structural concerns above and below ground. The city's most recent Building Conditions Report (2008)

cites that 250 of the 657 residential structures require at least one or more major/critical exterior repair (West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan and Building Conditions Report 2008). The Westside faces significant challenges to residential and commercial revitalization. Because of the "slum and blight" in the area, the Westside qualifies as an area of investment for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. Not all neighborhoods have access to this funding stream as a source for revitalization efforts and it has been a valuable resource to the Westside.

In the 2015 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bloomington, the Westside is identified as "regeneration" area and is marked as a high priority for the city. The plan states that the Westside is different from the rest of the community: There is a higher concentration of crime, a concentration of lower income households, and a food desert. The assessed values in this neighborhood are declining which makes private reinvestment challenging. The concentration of these and many other social issues not only negatively impact the lives of people living there today but will continue to do so in the future if left untouched (Bring It On Bloomington 2015.) Despite all the data about the Westside that demonstrates the critical conditions, the plan also credits the Westside with engaged citizenry, resident leadership, and operational neighborhood groups.

The West Bloomington Revitalization Project



West Bloomington Revitalization Project logo

Within the last ten years, a grassroots movement emerged to restore and revitalize the area. What started as neighbors having lunch turned into a a small task force by 2006. The community was engaged in a quality-of-life planning process from 2008-2009 that included stakeholder surveys, focus groups, and citizen summits at a local church. A vision statement was

formed during this process: "Located in the heart of the city, West Bloomington will be characterized by its high quality-of-life, empowered residents and deep sense of pride. Through partnerships and strong associations, and building on the neighborhood's history and diversity, West Bloomington will be home to new jobs, homes, and vibrant public gathering spaces in a safe and welcoming community." A community development non-profit organization was formed in 2010 as the West Bloomington Revitalization Project (WBRP). The growth has been exponential in the last five years due in great part to leadership of neighborhood residents and partnerships with the city and IWU.

The WBRP motto of Roots, Pride, Vision comes directly from the WBRP mission statement: The WBRP is a collaborative effort of neighbors and local stakeholders focused on impactful efforts that honor our historical and cultural ***roots***, build on the ***pride*** and strengths of our residents, and share a ***vision*** for a better quality of life for our neighborhood and the entire community. The WBRP has six focus areas: Housing, Economic Development, Education, Greening, Safety & Wellness, and Youth. Every year, the Board of Directors meets to review the strategic priorities of the WBRP and set goals for the future.

WBRP & ARC

There are countless creative ways to connect IWU with the Westside. The Director of ARC and the IWU University Librarian have both served on the WBRP Board since the organization was established and have facilitated over 100 projects. Some of the projects that have aligned university resources and Westside opportunities include:

- The Westside has a high concentration of Spanish-speaking families and is home to the community's largest Catholic church that offers mass in Spanish. To better serve these families, ARC brought together Hispanic Studies majors and the IWU campus radio station to broadcast the county's only Spanish media: Radio Latina. ARC also facilitated the only First Aid and CPR class in Spanish ever hosted on the Westside as well as the only blood drive.

- According to the USDA, the Westside is a food desert and residents want a neighborhood grocery store. As part of ARC's City Internship program, the chair of the IWU economics department guided students on a study of local TIF districts in hopes of bringing a grocery store to the area. As a short-term food desert project, an ARC intern in the Community Partnership Program internship started a gleaning program at the local farmers' market and distributes free produce at the WBRP office on weekends.

- Numerous non-profits are located on the Westside. ARC hosts an annual Alternative Break: Local Edition where IWU students complete a wide variety of service learning projects with these non-profits. As part of the program, students sleep at a Westside community center, eat at Westside restaurants, and host the annual Harvest Festival in the Westside community garden.

- Students across the liberal arts have all found ways to engage on the Westside. A senior seminar project in economics studied affordable housing on the Westside.

A political science senior seminar project studied crime and perception of crime in the area. A graphic design class created the WBRP logo.

The Westside is a classroom for ARC students. When students and residents work together and pool resources, the service and the learning are intertwined in challenging and meaningful ways.

Model of Community Engagement

The ARC model of community engagement has six steps: 1. Engage the Community, 2. Find Good Data, 3. Consider Best Practices, 4. Layer Partnerships, 5. Launch a Prototype, and 6. Review and Refine. All ARC projects contain these elements and the library weaves throughout the model in very important ways. Karen Schmidt, IWU University Librarian; Deborah Halperin, Director of ARC; and Matt Lalonde, an IWU student, worked together to develop the Tool Library, an important community resource. Sharing the evolution of the WBRP Tool Library is a good example of the ARC process.



ARC Model of Community Engagement

LaLonde was intrigued when he read about a tool library where patrons check out tools just like borrowing books at a real library. Because of his love of old homes and his previous work experience in a hardware store in high school, he knew that having the right tools for a job is important for safety and getting the job done right. Unfortunately, the right tools can make home repairs cost prohibitive. LaLonde had visited the Westside with ARC and noticed the old housing stock in the neighborhood. He understood that maintaining and improving old homes is

a labor of love and money and wondered if a tool library on the Westside would be a valuable asset.

All ARC projects start at Step 1, which is to engage the community. Good action researchers will listen to the community and ask the right questions. The question is not, "What is wrong and how can we fix it?" The question is "What do you hope to achieve in your community and how can we bring value?" LaLonde spent some time talking with people who live, work, and volunteer on the Westside. These were not formal surveys or focus groups. LaLonde walked around the Westside and talked to people working on their homes. He also talked to agencies that focused on affordable housing. The feedback he received was positive. People told him a tool library would be a welcome resource and suggested tools that he should carry. LaLonde started to build a wish list of tools that the community wanted including lawn mowers, chain saws, and scaffolding.

Step 2 for LaLonde was to find good data. He needed information on home ownership on the Westside, tips for managing sharing economy projects, notices of grants available to support the project, and legal advice on how to loan tools. LaLonde was assisted in his research at the library by IWU University Librarian, Schmidt, who is a wealth of knowledge not only about library resources but also community resources. Schmidt connected LaLonde with local government resources to map Westside home ownership and rentals. The assessor's office and the county planning commission were of great assistance to LaLonde and these are resources that few students would think to utilize. Schmidt was also aware of libraries that checked out materials other than books including fishing rods, cake pans, and people. Her experience in managing libraries was directly related to LaLonde's project.

The original WBRP quality-of-life plan (West Bloomington Neighborhood Plan 2008). was another excellent resource. Not all neighborhoods have plans and it was important to LaLonde's project that he was connected to it. The library also suggested resources such as a building conditions report of the area, an archive of neighborhood newsletters, and articles from the local newspaper. Understanding how to mine local resources was incredibly valuable. The librarian can be a guide to these treasures that are somewhat outside of the scholarly standards.

An action researcher is not one to reinvent the wheel. Step 3 of the model is to consider best practices. A "best" practice does not mean it is the only way to address an issue, and no "best" practice will work in every community. In community development, one size does not fit all. What works in New Orleans does not necessarily work in Bloomington. However, it is worth consideration to review successful models for projects that ARC supports. Students are asked to seek out these best practices and think critically about how and why the model might be adaptable to the local community.

LaLonde scoured the internet for tool libraries and found great examples of libraries in a wide range of inventory and budget. Some libraries had paid staff members and others had only volunteers. One library operated out of a closet in the lobby of the apartment building while others had huge warehouses. Beyond what was available on line, LaLonde decided that he wanted data directly from existing tool libraries. Halperin and Schmidt helped LaLonde to create a survey and introduced LaLonde to survey software programs that he might use to gather data.

The IWU Ames library manages these resources for the campus and can be helpful in providing technology tips, assisting with the Institutional Review Board, and making connections with faculty or students that have done similar research projects. The library is the glue that holds campus research together. Good off-campus research needs good on-campus support. The survey was executed electronically and respondents were very generous with sharing knowledge and experience.

Librarians are experts in information literacy. LaLonde was swimming in data and needed to sort out what made sense, what constituted a trend, and how to connect quantitative survey numbers with qualitative stories from other tool libraries. LaLonde pulled together Schmidt, Halperin, Westside residents, and staff from affordable housing organizations. LaLonde shared information and got feedback that helped him to shape his ideas. By engaging the community at this stage, LaLonde was demonstrating his responsiveness to community interests. If residents had ideas, suggestions, or concerns, the project would need to adapt. Inviting Westsiders to weigh in during the early stages is a smart strategy for gaining input and securing support. People support what they help to create.

In the ARC model, Step 4 is to Layer Partnerships. One of ARC's techniques is called "Good-Better-Best." A basic project idea that meets the interests and goals of the community is Good. Leveraging the strengths of an individual or organization can make a Good project Better. Finding another layer that pushes the benefit of the project even further makes it Best.

GOOD	BETTER	BEST
5K race and Kids Fun Run on the Westside to bring new people to the neighborhood	Registration bags and prize baskets feature coupons and donations from Westside small businesses and non-profits	Race is fully sponsored so that runners can designate registration fee to benefit the Westside non-profit of her or his choice
Summer theatre camp for youth at alternative school that lacks arts programming	Youth organize a poetry slam for the community to showcase their original work	Youth earn academic credit for successful completion of camp to stay on track for graduation
History students studying American life post-WWII interview local senior citizens about that era	Interviews are recorded for use with future classes and copies are made to share with family and friends	Interviews are transcribed and archived at the local history museum

These ARC Projects Illustrate the Good - Better - Best Method

Executing the Layer Partnerships step requires creativity and resourcefulness. Libraries are good "thought partners" for this step because libraries are natural partners for so many facets of a community. Libraries have evolved into community centers, small business support centers, GED classrooms, and art galleries. Libraries instinctively play good-better-best.

Partnerships often live in the layers between assets and ARC helps to create those connections. The Westside has more renters than homeowners and there are vacant lots throughout the community. One lot was turned into a community garden which is convenient for renters because they can start a plot and return to it every year even if they move to a different apartment. ARC coordinates volunteers for the garden throughout the growing season. Houses in

high-crime areas like the Westside are hard to sell and can stay on the market for a year or longer. These homes might be good candidates for a Cop-on-the-Block program where a police officer lives rent free. An ARC seminar student completed research on similar policing strategies so that it could be implemented locally. A community with artists and blank walls can create murals. The mural below was created by an ARC student with the help of students at a Westside elementary school.





Murals improved the building appearance and engaged the community

The Tool Library started to map potential partnerships by making a list of stakeholders located on and invested in the Westside. This included churches, non-profits, schools, small business owners, city council, IWU, the city's department of planning and code enforcement, homeowners, renters, and landlords. LaLonde started to think about what partnerships could grow between these layers, how these partners would make a Tool Library good-better-best, and how the Tool Library would help those partners to achieve their missions as well.

LaLonde even forged partnerships between assets that did not involve the Tool Library at all. Good action researchers are butterflies in a garden. Busy stakeholders sometimes need an outside party to alert them to connections. Even in a small community, a non-profit on the same street as a church might not know that they are both trying to open food pantries. Through extensive community asset mapping, LaLonde was able to see points of collaboration, conflict, and overlap.

LaLonde's first partnership was securing the WBRP as the fiscal agent for the Tool Library. By working with a fiscal agent, the Tool Library did not have to secure its own 501(c)3 designation. It was able to operate through the established organization of the WBRP. The Tool Library helped the WBRP achieve its goals of housing revitalization on the Westside. LaLonde's next partnership was the City of Bloomington. He was able to secure some federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the city. The city has to invest CDBG funds in community-focused projects especially in low to moderate income areas and the Tool Library was a good fit. A friend of the WBRP Board was an attorney with the University of Illinois Community Preservation Law Clinic. Her students gained "real world" experience by preparing rental agreements for checking out items from the Tool Library. This was a service learning

project within a service learning project. The very first tools for the Tool Library were donated by a neighbor named Elsie whose husband had died years earlier. As she unloaded the tools from the trunk of her car, she told stories about all the home repair projects her husband had completed with the tools. She said that donating the tools gave them another life and she thought her husband would be very happy to know that they were useful again. Having diverse partners is good for any community project.

Step 5 in the ARC model is to Launch a Prototype. The Tool Library had inventory, rental agreements, and a Facebook page. Over 100 tools were on display and each was tagged with a Tool Library identification tag. The online inventory system was created by another Tool Library and was graciously given to LaLonde. The membership forms were ready. The Tool Library was far from perfect but it was definitely functional so LaLonde decided it was time to launch. In January 2013, the Tool Library held a grand opening. Visitors got a tour of the library, browsed the inventory, and signed up as Tool Library members. People could not believe the tools that were available and all for free. There was a buzz in the room about home projects past, present, and future. People were inspired by what they saw. The first tool to be loaned was a stud finder so that a large piece of artwork could be hung on a wall. With great thanks and admiration for LaLonde's leadership, the Tool Library went from inspiration to implementation in only eight months.

Librarians are also archivists and historians and practice and value documentation. Schmidt gave LaLonde excellent advice to document everything happening as the Tool Library launched. The Tool Library has grown in size and scope since it was founded. Having a record of the Tool Library development helps to evaluate progress and means it can be resource for other new libraries in the future. The Tool Library activities were covered in the local newspaper (Pantagraph 2012), local radio (Tool Library 2012), IWU media (Kavadi 2012), and the Library Journal (Schwartz 2012).

In the first months of the launch, the hours of the library were limited but it was busy! People came to see it and new members signed up every week. More tool donations poured in and volunteers could hardly keep up with entering them into the inventory system. Specialized tools like a sawzall were checked out more often than basic tools like a hammer. Scraps of paper tacked near the computer kept track of tool requests: a 10 foot ladder, a kicker to install carpet, and wheelbarrows. While there were people who had doubts that people could be trusted to bring back the tools, the tools were returned as scheduled. The WBRP now had a new face to the community. As people came in for tools, the WBRP volunteers talked about the other programs it operates to revitalize the community such as housing, education, and economic development. Feedback from the Westside and across the community was very supportive.

The final step in the ARC model is to Review & Refine. LaLonde and his team of advisers had to take a moment to enjoy the success of the Tool Library. It was serving its purpose very efficiently but it only took a short while in operation to see where there were areas for improvement, surprises, and new opportunities. Some matters needed small revisions, such as clarifying the late return policy. Some gaps in service - such as finishing the translation of all materials into Spanish - just took additional time to implement. A few dream ideas emerged,

such as having Tool Library members take before and after photos of the projects completed with Tool Library tools. Unfortunately, no one ever wanted to share their pictures. The biggest concern was how fast the library grew. Every inch of the WBRP office had been taken over by tools. The conference room, the kitchenette, and the hallway were all crowded with tools. Volunteers could not clean and inventory the tools fast enough to get them into circulation. LaLonde carried around a long To Do list and he was always at the library monitoring its use.

To continually improve the Tool Library, LaLonde needed to start the ARC model over again. The ARC model is not linear, and there can be pinball-like ricochets between the steps. The Tool Library, now that it was in motion, used the model a little differently the second time.

As he went back to Step 1 (Engage the Community,) LaLonde was able to survey the new Tool Library members about what they liked and did not like about the library. He talked with members, sent out surveys, and set out a suggestion box at the checkout station. In Step 2 (Find Good Data,) LaLonde was able to track members, tool usage, and peak hours. LaLonde could establish baselines for metrics and start to analyze trends. Some things unfolded as expected in the planning stages and other things were not even close. Trying to plan too far ahead could be dangerous to project planning because there are too many unknown variables.

In Step 3 (Review Best Practices,) LaLonde decided to review other tool libraries in person. Every tool library is a unique place that reflects the community it serves. LaLonde could look at libraries on line, conduct a survey, and talk with library managers over the phone but it would not replace the experience of being there. Action research often requires community immersion. ARC has sent students to barber shops, laundromats, and cooling centers to sit and listen to residents. Data will only tell part of the story. LaLonde wanted to visit other tool libraries, so he went on a tour. He flew to the Pacific Northwest,where there was a concentration of tool libraries, and visited six libraries in six days. He took photos, recorded extensive notes, gathered documents, and interviewed managers, volunteers, and clients. He learned about late fees, organization of seasonal tools, delivery options, on line inventory systems, repairs, workshops, and grant possibilities. He learned that for this project, there is no survey that could be as comprehensive as a visit.

In Step 4 (Layer Partnerships,) LaLonde found important new funding partners. LaLonde applied for the State Farm Youth Advisory Board Neighborhood Assist grant. From over one thousand submissions, the Tool Library was selected as one of 200 ideas that faced the final challenge to earn enough online votes to be in the top 40. Only the top 40 received a grant of $25,000. LaLonde knew he needed a bigger space for the inventory and that the $25,000 would help the WBRP rent a larger facility. He created an elaborate social media campaign and networks of members and volunteers to get votes and landed in the top 25. As State Farm is headquartered in Bloomington, Illinois only a few miles from the Tool Library, their media team came out to present the check in person. With this infusion of money, the WBRP and the Tool Library were able to secure a larger space and moved in December of 2012.



Matt LaLonde and Breck Seitz at the State Farm Youth Advisory Board Neighborhood Assist $25,000 check presentation

The Tool Library also offers workshops and this presents new partnerships. Recently, IWU students bound for alternative spring break to build homes in Appalachia came to the Tool Library for a short class on tool use and tool safety. Women from the Labyrinth House, a transitional residence for women released from prison, visited the Tool Library for a workshop as an introduction to possible work with the building trades. In a special class aimed at new home owners, the Tool Library taught drywall repair and sent participants home with materials to complete drywall projects. The Tool Library also partners with the WBRP community garden to teach garden basics and how to use proper garden tools. At the local Community Innovation Fair, the Tool Library received a grant to build SmartScopes, which are microscopes that use a smartphone and a frame constructed of plywood, plexiglass, and bolts. These SmartScopes will be used in the science classrooms of the Regional Alternative School which currently has no lab equipment. By layering strategic partnerships, the Tool Library continues to reach far beyond its core of home repair and into new ways to bring value to the community.

Step 5 (Launching a Prototype,) can look quite different in the second wave of the ARC model. Once the foundation is set, new initiatives are launched. Like all non-profit endeavors, the Tool Library has to consider new ways to generate income in order to remain financially sustainable. Grants have been very successful but they are not always reliable sources of income. The Tool Library is considering selling items that can help members to complete home repairs. Selling painter's tape or work gloves might be a new idea to prototype in the near future. Part of the new space was dedicated as a workshop with some of the larger saws available for use in-house. A member could bring in a 2x4 and cut it at the Tool Library instead of taking home a large table saw. This workshop prototype has not been very successful but requires more research before eliminating it. Prototypes are excellent starting points and ideas evolve over time.

The Tool Library is always acting on Step 6 (Review & Refine). When LaLonde graduated from IWU and moved back to the Chicago area, there was a leadership change at the library. Two co-directors now lead the project. They have been reviewing and refining since

taking leadership because they have their own ideas on how to grow the library.

As of mid-2015, there are more than 500 members of the Tool Library and over 2000 transactions have been made. It has become a well-known and highly-valued asset on the Westside. Volunteers keep it operational and multiple volunteers are needed on busy weekend shifts. The inventory now includes snow blowers, a power washer, a carpet cleaner, and fruit pickers for reaching fruit high in tree branches. Members continue to thank the WBRP for providing such a wonderful resource. The Tool Library has a solid foundation in the community with tremendous potential and it will always be able to count on ARC and the IWU library for support as it continues to work the project development model.



Hundreds of tools are in the Tool Library inventory

LaLonde was a sophomore accounting major when he first heard of a Tool Library. He was able to develop the idea through his participation in the Community Partnership Program (CPP) internship. In CPP, State Farm Insurance hires ten IWU students as summer interns. These students work three days per week at State Farm headquarters, work two days per week with a local non-profit, and spend one evening per week with ARC discussing community development. This 3-2-1 program is a great example of service learning as it blends higher education, for-profit, and non-profit institutions and allows students to think strategically about community issues. LaLonde then enrolled in the ARC seminar course on community-based research. He was able to develop more partnerships, continue to build the infrastructure, and physically organize the space. After the Tool Library opened, a student in the ARC grant writing course partnered with LaLonde to secure the $25,000 grant. LaLonde was also awarded an action research fellowship along with two other students that served as “Tool Librarians.” LaLonde used all service learning resources available to him through ARC and the library in order to execute the Tool Library project. Schools must provide the scaffolding for students to build great ideas into products, businesses, or services. If LaLonde was asked to write a paper about innovative housing solutions, the Tool Library could have remained a two-dimensional assignment. Because he participated in action research programs, the Tool Library is a real place. Neighbors can walk into a storefront (paid for with grant money) and check out tools for free in order to complete home projects that increase the safety, energy-efficiency, and curb appeal of their homes. Few

undergraduate students can say they have created a legacy like LaLonde's.



LaLonde in front of the Tool Library at 801 W Washington



LaLonde tests one of the garden benches built at a Tool Library workshop

The Library Intersection with ARC

Working with the Action Research Center students and their projects is a consistently valuable reminder to the library community that action research IS research. There are many times when our scholarly journals and databases do not answer the questions that our students ask, but that does not mean that the library has no role, that the questions are not worthwhile, or that the critical thinking skills and discernment that are required for disciplinary research do not apply here. Once we understand that often academic journals and traditional research databases and methodology will not suffice, the next step is to develop access to the resources that can help.

We asked ourselves a central question: How is it that elected officials and government staff discover information about possible ideas and projects? This research journey uses different tools, but relies on the same mindset of discovery, assessment, selection and deselection of ideas and prototypes, and the re-weaving of information into new ideas. Government officials in all capacities work with the tools of their trade, through professional associations and publications, conferences, data sets and online blogs. For many of the service learning projects, taking a step away from the scholarly literature into the trade world provides the right entry into needed research.

For example, in the world of municipal governments, ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, "...advances professional local government worldwide. The organization's mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional management to build better communities. ICMA … provide[s] services, research, publications, data and information, peer and results-oriented assistance, and training and professional development to thousands of city, town, and county leaders and other individuals and organizations throughout the world."(http://icma.org). MuniCode provides city codes, planning documents, and legal information, some of which is freely available on the web site; richer resources are available through a subscription model (Municode 2015). CityLab, the online report that "...informs and inspires the people who are creating the cities of the future - and those who want to live there…" (CityLab 2015) provides a rich array of problem-solving ideas from around the world. These are just three examples of the kinds of information that provides the solid research basis for service-learning initiatives. The librarian's role here is the same in any research project: helping to navigate the literature, develop the correct search terms, and assist the researcher in taking a deeper dive into the problem that he or she is researching.

As with any discipline, knowing the vocabulary tricks is invaluable. For example, a student wishing to develop a plan for introducing chickens for egg production within city limits needs to know that searching city codes for "chickens" may not yield the desired results but "farm animals" may. Government staff are very often willing to assist with the nuances of these types of challenges, and to suggest sources for research, data and information. At IWU, we have developed a LibGuide for the Action Research Center that serves as a starting point to assist in launching solid research.

Conclusion

There are opportunities for strong alliances between service learning programs and information literacy. In his seminal article on service learning and information literacy, Chris Sweet makes a strong case for these intersections, noting that "...enthusiastic academic library support of service-learning can...lead to increases in social capital and civic engagement. Powerful synergies are created when information literacy and service-learning are combined" (Sweet 2013). The recently adopted ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education provides a robust platform for service learning programs. At IWU, there is strong correlation between the stepped model for ARC community engagement and the new Framework, as reflected in this Framework language:

> "Information resources reflect their creators' expertise and credibility, and are evaluated based on the information need and the context in which the information will be used. Authority is ...contextual in that the information need may help to determine the

> level of authority required… The iterative processes of researching, creating, revising, and disseminating information vary, and the resulting product reflects these differences...Information possesses several dimensions of value, including as a commodity, as a means of education, as a means to influence, and as a means of negotiating and understanding the world… Research is iterative and depends upon asking increasingly complex or new questions whose answers in turn develop additional questions or lines of inquiry in any field...Communities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations...Searching for information is often nonlinear and iterative, requiring the evaluation of a range of information sources and the mental flexibility to pursue alternate avenues as new understanding develops" (Framework 2015).

The analogy of the three-legged stool for our complementary work in ARC and the library is an apt one. A three-legged stool is always solid. Basic geometry explains why: a third leg added to the initial two legs will always contact the floor, even when its length is different. The three-legged stool allows for flexibility, with all legs working together to form a steady base. Working together, the library, ARC, our students, and our community form a strong team that is constantly evolving.

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