CHAPTER 25

Case Study: Grand Valley State University, Mary Idema Pew Library Learning and Information Commons

This case study was provided through an interview conducted by the author with Jennifer Torreano, Research Consultant Manager at Mary Idema Pew Library.

25.1 TYPE OF SPACE OFFERED

Knowledge Market

25.2 MAIN IMPETUS FOR PROJECT

Grand Valley State University was designing a brand-new library for our Allendale campus, and we wanted to support students in learning skills that employers look for: information literacy, writing, and verbal communication skills. The Knowledge Market was designed to offer a collaborative suite of services in an environment without barriers, where students feel comfortable asking for help. Research on peer learning indicates that students are often more comfortable sharing their academic insecurities with peers, so the Knowledge Market model helps students to build these skills in an interdisciplinary, peer-to-peer, nonevaluative context without the stress of the professor and the environment of the classroom.

25.3 BRIEF TIMELINE OF PROJECT

A history of the Mary Idema Pew Library vision and construction can be found here:

https://www.gvsu.edu/library/mary-idema-pew-library-vision-and-history-22.htm.

The library opened in 2013. The Knowledge Market was comprised of research, writing, and presentations for the first 2 years, and we added the Data Inquiry Lab to the Knowledge Market in 2015 to support the growing focus on data analysis and visualization in the university curriculum.

25.4 APPROXIMATE COST OF PROJECT

The cost of the Knowledge Market was wrapped into the cost of the new library.

25.5 CAMPUS PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLE

- University Libraries
- Speech Lab
- Writing Center
- Data Inquiry Lab

The Knowledge Market partners meet regularly and make decisions as a collective. We discuss everything from shared trainings to staff issues as a group which ensures that the services operate as a cohesive unit, despite belonging to different colleges and offices with different budgets. In addition to each service's training program for their own consultants, we provide fall and winter trainings for all Knowledge Market consultants on topics relevant to all services, such as the ethical use of information and creating an inclusive environment. Other professional development trainings throughout the year are open to all Knowledge Market consultants. Because the Knowledge Market is housed in the library, the University Libraries provides the furnishings and supplies, allocates a small budget for promotional efforts, and staffs a receptionist during Knowledge Market hours. The receptionist is always a research consultant who has been trained to ask students what they are working on, rather than which service they are seeking, so that students can be paired with consultants best able to meet their needs. This approach also creates natural collaboration among consultants from different services.

25.6 OUTSIDE PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLE

The Knowledge Market has only campus partners.

25.7 DID YOU VISIT OR RESEARCH ANY OTHER SPACES FOR IDEAS BEFORE STARTING THE PROJECT? IF SO, WHICH ONES?

During the design phase, former Dean, Lee Van Orsdel, visited libraries all over the world, so there are many libraries from which Grand Valley drew inspiration.

25.8 DID YOU CONDUCT A NEEDS ANALYSIS OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF ANALYSIS? DID IT REVEAL ANYTHING SURPRISING?

GVSU library staff noticed that students often studied alone during the day for short periods of time between classes and returned in groups to stay for long periods in the evening. The Knowledge Market was initially open from 6:00 p.m. to midnight to provide academic support during the time when students collaborate.

25.9 LESSONS LEARNED DURING RESEARCH OR BUILDING PHASE

The Knowledge Market was designed to have a low threshold for entry. There is no imposing desk, nor any doors, and students can enter the space from multiple directions. There is a receptionist visible at a small counter near the main walkway, but students are free to enter and use the space for their own study regardless of whether they choose to meet with a consultant. To read more about the design of the Knowledge Market, please read the book chapter cited at the end of this case study (Schendel, Garrison, Johnson, & Van Orsdel, 2013).

25.10 EXAMPLES OF STUDENT PROJECTS

- A graduate assistant from the Writing Center studied the Knowledge Market location on our Pew Campus and reported on recommended changes.
- A research consultant was mentored by two liaison librarians and wrote her Honors College thesis on the topic of working with librarians in classrooms.

- A writing consultant started a Knowledge Market monthly newsletter that is sent to consultants from all four services. This newsletter features events, information, and profiles of consultants working in the space.

25.11 EXAMPLES OF FACULTY COLLABORATIONS

The space is largely student-centered, but there are still some ways that the Knowledge Market is partnering with faculty. Consultants from the research, writing, and presentation services support students in classes using a variety of embedded models, sometimes alongside liaison librarians. Research consultants also collaborated with library faculty to offer a session on "fake news" during the university's teach-in event in January 2017.

25.12 USAGE STATISTICS AND METHOD OF COLLECTION

We keep consultation statistics using a program called ScheduleIt, which was built in-house by GVSU's Institutional Marketing department. ScheduleIt connects with Banner, so we can record the classes for which students are using Knowledge Market services, and GVSU's Office of Institutional Analysis can glean more specific information for assessment purposes. Program directors are able to see the session notes entered by the students and consultants in ScheduleIt, which we send to faculty at the students' requests. Session notes are comprised of the responses to two questions: "What did you work on during the session?" and "What are your plans for continuing to work on the assignment beyond the session?" Session notes review is also useful for closing the loop with liaison librarians when a question comes up repeatedly. At the end of each session, the consultant walks away while the student completes a survey, which allows students to rate their comfort, the helpfulness of the session, and their own confidence in being able to complete their work.

25.13 ANY OTHER TYPES OF ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

We try to be agile, and that includes informal collection of assessment data, both anonymous and identified, often with the goal of improving consultant learning. For example, consultants are surveyed after every training session and during the planning of the next semester's training topics. To read more about the creation of the services and

the peer tutoring system, please read the cited article in the References section at the end of this case study (O'Kelly, Garrison, Merry, & Torreano, 2015).

25.14 LESSONS LEARNED AFTER OPENING THE SPACE

One lesson that we learned was the need for consultant visibility. Because the space is so open, students need a clear signal that someone is a consultant and not a person studying. We started out with nametags on lanyards, but we have gone a step further in recent months to have consultants wear brightly colored vests that display the name of the consultants' service in big letters.

As previously noted, the Knowledge Market originally maintained hours of 6:00 p.m. to midnight Sunday through Thursday based on student study patterns. After we had been open a few months, we realized that the 11:00 p.m. to midnight hour was hardly ever used for consultations. We could also see that 6:00 p.m. was our busiest time. We moved our opening time to 4:00 p.m., and then noticed that that time was busiest. For this reason, we shifted our hours earlier each semester, and now research consultants come in at 12:00 p.m. The Speech Lab comes in at 4:00 p.m. and the Writing Center consultants come in at 6:00 p.m. because they have service at other times through their other locations. We found that some students want to come in during the day between classes, contrary to our initial expectations.

25.15 CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS SPACE

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REFERENCES

O'Kelly, M., Garrison, J., Merry, B., & Torreano, J. (2015). Building a peer-learning service for students in an academic library. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *15*(1), 163–182.
Schendel, E., Garrison, J., Johnson, P., & Van Orsdel, L. (2013). Making noise in the library: Designing a student learning environment to support a liberal education. In R. Carpenter (Ed.), *Cases on Higher Education Spaces: Innovation, Collaboration, and Technology* (290–312). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.