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2010

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Recommended Citation
MacDonald, K. (2010). Entrepreneurship outreach: A new role for the academic business librarian. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship, 15*(3/4), 158-160. doi: 10.1080/08963568.2010.490767

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Entrepreneurship Outreach:
A New Role for the Academic Business Librarian

The idea for this *Special Issue on Business Librarianship and Entrepreneurship Outreach* originated when I gave a short presentation on the growth of technology transfer and entrepreneurship programs on college and university campuses at the 2007 SLA Annual Conference. My presentation included a model for business librarians to participate in these programs that extends beyond the business school (Figure 1). Following the presentation, a few conversations with colleagues, like Hal Kirkwood at Purdue University, confirmed my observations. Business librarians are supporting campus entrepreneurship programs in ways that go beyond traditional bibliographic instruction and collection development responsibilities. The articles in the first half of this issue of the *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship* describe a variety of programs that should provide inspiration for even more entrepreneurship outreach in business librarianship.

The introductory article by *Hyun-Duck Chung* begins with a concise discussion of the nature of entrepreneurship education and its growing importance at North Carolina State University. She describes the strategies she used to become part of the planning team for a campus-wide entrepreneurship initiative and discusses the professional relationships that grew from that activity.

In entrepreneurship education, experiential learning is used more than traditional case analysis. Students take on semester-long consulting projects for local small businesses. Depending on business growth objectives, students may conduct market research surveys, evaluate new products, or develop marketing or information technology strategies (Banjo, 2009). It becomes a win-win-win situation. Students get the experience of interaction with the business community on real business problems. Entrepreneurs get access to expertise and resources they could probably not afford on a small business budget. Librarians, when they get involved in these activities, can emphasize the relevance of the library and the information resources. *Diane Campbell and Ronald Cook* provide unique insight into a collaborative teaching arrangement between a business librarian and entrepreneurship faculty at Rider University. The switch from teaching one library instruction session to three library instruction sessions, timed to key steps in the experiential learning project, has led to multiple benefits for students, faculty and the library.

On many campuses, there is a growing conviction that entrepreneurship programs should not be limited to the business school. Some universities offer interdisciplinary courses that combine entrepreneurship training with art, architecture, engineering, chemistry, biology and nursing. As the economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based, there becomes an increasing need for employees in every discipline who are competent users of business information. Any of these programs provide the alert business librarian with opportunities to promote business information competency to a broader audience of potential users.

Increasingly, campuses are sponsoring special programs, like business plan competitions, or training seminars that encourage entrepreneurial thinking. The Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship at Texas A&M University sponsors *The Ideas Challenge*, a campus-wide competition in which students write essays describing a new product or service. At Georgia State University, the Russell International Center for Entrepreneurship sponsors a six-week Business Plan Development Seminar series every spring. This is a non-credit seminar series that is taught on Saturday mornings, but student participation has been extraordinary. In 2010, more than 300 students from all campus programs applied to the program and over 100 were admitted. At Syracuse University, the *BOOST Initiative* provides technical and entrepreneurial training to displaced homemakers. The case study by *Susan Dischiave and*

Katherine Posner describes how a student group in the School of Information Studies developed this program that has the potential to go global.

The next three articles describe three very different approaches libraries have taken to align themselves with a key mission of the university – economic development. With the increased expectation that universities engage in local economic development (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2006), comes the unique opportunity for the library to both increase the profile of the university with local businesses and increase the return on investment in library's business collection.

University economic development programs frequently focus on the commercialization of faculty inventions and the development of university spin-offs – new venture firms formed by faculty, students or research staff. At the University of Toronto, business librarians are embedded in a program to promote technology commercialization. *Kathryn Fitzgerald, Laura Anderson and Helen Kula* describe this innovative program that provides market research and business planning resources to science and technology entrepreneurs.

In contrast, the Angelo Bruno Business Library at the University of Alabama collaborates with the Alabama Entrepreneurial Research Network (AERN) to support small business development in rural Alabama. *Lee Pike, Karen Chapman, Paul Brothers and Todd Hinds* discuss the scope of the Library's contribution to AERN and the resulting benefits to both small business development and the university.

Finally, *Laura Leavitt, Christine Hamilton-Pennell and Barbara Fails* describe the role a state-wide network of libraries played in a pilot "economic gardening" project in Michigan. The lessons learned there provide valuable insight for any library planning an entrepreneurship outreach program.

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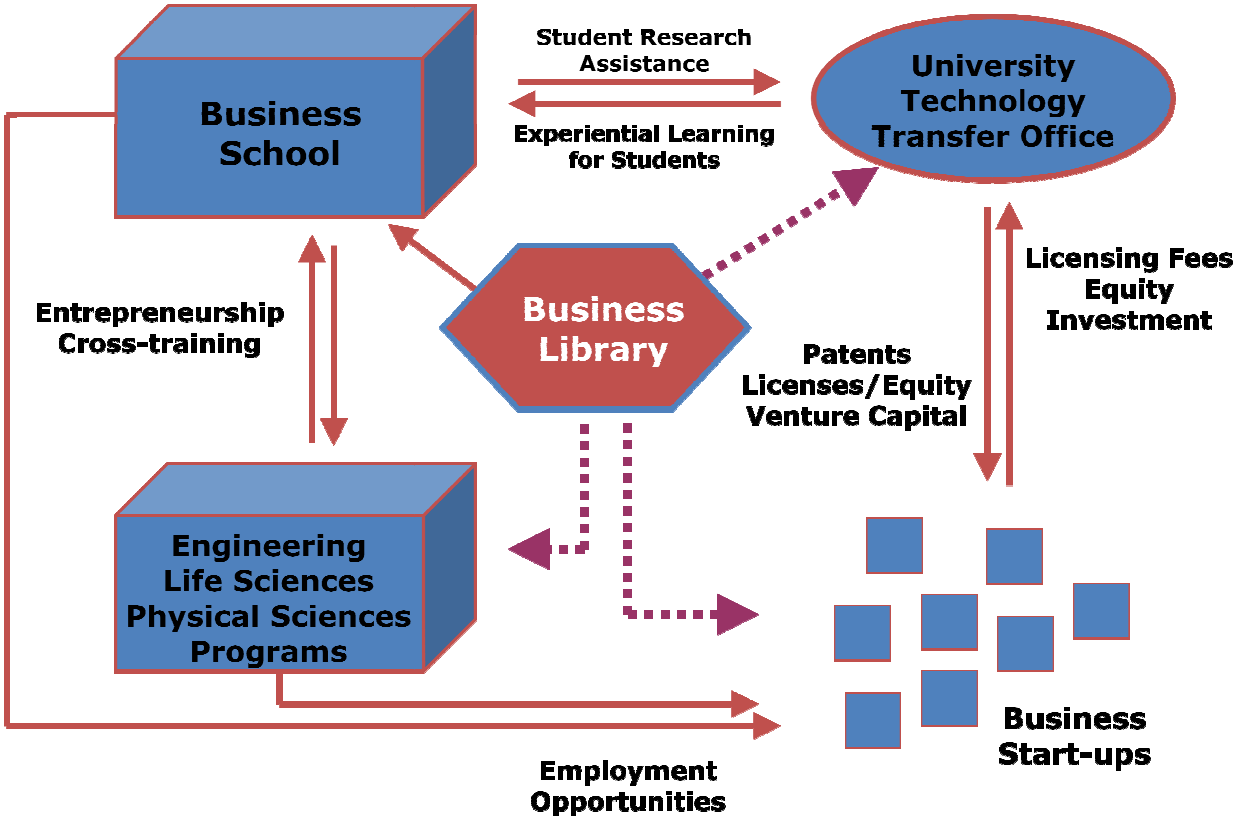
Figure 1 Entrepreneurship Outreach Opportunities