Building Our 21st Century Roadmap for York County Libraries

Friday September 14, 2012

Facilitator: Garry Golden, Forward Elements Inc

Agenda – 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.   Foresight 101

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. Scenario One: Apple buys Disney: The Experience Economy

10:50 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Break

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Scenario Two: American Algorithm / Libraries and the Learner

12:15 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.   Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.   Scenario Three: Back to Basics: *Gone Glocal*

2:20 p.m. – 2:45 pm   Moving Forward – Next Steps

Scenario 1: Apple buys Disney: America's Experience Design Economy   2021

Looking back most pundits will say the failed iPhone 10 release in 2019 was the beginning of the end. The age of gadgets is waning. Nobody cares about your smart phone, tablet or ebook anymore. Screen time is losing its grip on public attention. The public is bored and returning to new forms of sensory engagement, expression and learning.

There is other news capturing our imagination. America's manufacturing sector has reinvented itself – and is leading the world in next generation materials, product design and experience integration. *Main Street* America is becoming a design obsessed landscape with businesses selling– everything from nano-enhanced to natural materials for the growing Maker culture.   Martha Stewart is selling butterfly wing paint kits with bio-compatible nanoparticles that make interior walls come alive. Instead of kids sitting in their rooms playing video games, they are designing 3D objects and building their own devices. All consumer products are linked to a more extensive, personalized experience.   There is now an official job title category on the US Census for Experience Designers.

As gadget growth declined Apple's stock dropped below 2008 levels. It was CEO Ashton Kutcher's turn to do something *game-changing* that could capture the public's imagination again.   It has been two years since Apple bought Disney – a moment that pundits now declare as the most significant merger of this young 21st century.   The Digital Economy has morphed into the Experience Design economy. America is determined to lead the way.

The combined company has reinvented the retail landscape by opening experience centers filled with kiosks and rooms devoted to the exploration of sound, light, touch, materials and movement. Developers have shifted from building screen-based apps to immersive learning experiences on every imaginable topic.   Apple-Disney has inspired a new generation of designers and makers through the perfect blend of *Jobsian* obsession on the user experience and Walt Disney's fascination with imagination. The cultural expectation for experiences within learning environments is now higher than ever before.

Soccer fields and senior citizen recreation centers are now abandoned as people flock to Apple-Disney stores to create and experience new ways of interacting with the world.   Abandoned strip malls have been swallowed up by commercial real estate companies eager to sell high square footage to new competitors in the experience environment industry.

Apple-Disney's is not alone. Just as Starbucks paved the way for new market demand that supported smaller local coffee houses, new experience centers are being started by entrepreneurs and other big brands. Best Buy has rebranded itself as a local retreat for corporate teams to explore and collaborate. Whole Foods has hired experience designers to elevate aspects of in-store health and food experiences. Most supermarkets now have doctors and homeopathic practitioners onsite for consultation.

Time™ magazine recently named *The Designer Mind* as Person of the Year and US exports of new materials, products and user experience templates are flooding the world.   Economists are now scrambling to measure the impact of the Experience Design Economy. Educators and corporate Learning & Development departments are trying to figure out the right combination of skill sets and mindsets for this new world. There are growing concerns of a new gap being created within society as traditional service workers fall behind.
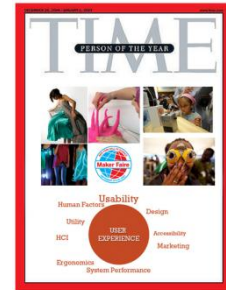
Civic and cultural institutions around the country have been slower to react— some do nothing in protest of the *corporatization of culture and creativity.*   Museums are finding a way to leverage their talent around exhibit design—but have lost brand value. They now seek out partnerships with celebrity designers to headline new exhibits.

Libraries have had experience in early versions of Maker spaces but struggle to provide compelling experiences given the wide range of people that use their programs and services. Most patrons seem fine to drop-in, check-out or use materials and move on with their day. It is still an institution associated with products and service.   Libraries navigated the ebook transition but now struggle to find their way in a world of *surround computing* where entire rooms, buildings and communities serve as the backdrop for experiences. The easy part is distributing the ebook files, the hard part is building the relationship and feedback loop needed to deliver compelling experiences.

If there has been one clear loser in this Experience Economy it is formal education. School leaders around the country are debating an exit from arts and creativity instruction entirely.   Some teachers believe the impact of experience design will spread beyond arts into core subjects like math, history and literature. The History Channel is already piloting centers in Southern California.

Schools have no talent strategy to deal with the dramatic shift in cultural expectations for learning environments.   In an interview with Time magazine, the head of the teachers union reflected on old political battles of *buying laptops or tablets for each child in the classroom*.   'That was an easy fight compared to the confusion of today's experience economy. It is abstract and we are not entirely sure what skill sets will be needed. It is hard to compete against a maturing *edutainment* industry.'

Scenario – General Questions

- What assumptions does this story ask us to surrender/challenge? New assumptions to embrace?
- What other trends and/or possible events might support the future described in this scenario?   Are there trends or events that might refute this scenario – or make it make it less plausible?
- What are the internal implications for our libraries? How might our communities demand new services/programs/experiences from *us* so that they can thrive in this future?
- Describe the opportunities for strategic advantages (and possible threats) in this scenario. How might we think differently about metrics and analytics in this scenario?

- Where might the story go from here? Write a few extensions of this future.
- What are signals and milestones of trends and emerging issues that we can monitor?

Scenario Specific Questions
- What is our talent strategy for meeting expectations of a more complete user experience in physical and virtual settings?
- How do we leverage institutional brand and trust to design new experiences around learning, creativity and collaboration?
- What role do we play across these new learning / experience design companies?

Scenario 2:   American Algorithms   Year 2021

The Age of American Augmentation is upon us. American optimism and civic pride has returned around job growth and prosperity associated with a new wave of algorithm-driven software and physical technologies to improve workforce productivity and lifelong learning.

Rosie the Riveter has been pushed aside by IBM Watson™ as the new symbol of the American *can do* spirit. Historians now look back at Watson's Jeopardy victory of 2011 as the beginning of a new era for humanity.

Workers now **learn on-demand** and there is no task assigned which is not appropriate to each person's quest at improving their craft. Augmented workflows are more transparent and accountable with personal software assistants monitoring most conversations and interactions--- but factory floors and office environments are still filled with people as they bring human judgment, intuition and observation to the workplace. The upside has been the average worker spends less time in front of a computer screens and more time focusing on direct human interactions during their work day.

Companies now release daily sentiment feeds on the Dow Jones Happiness Indicator as investors look for new signals of productivity. Republicans and Democrats are shifting their platforms to own the Techno-optimism sweeping the nation – but not everyone is *buying* the new American Dream. There is trouble ahead.

The world of education is at the center of this social transition. School leaders are slowly embracing the algorithmic automation of learning systems. The upside is an ability to scale personalized instruction and to automate compliance associated with new flows of government dollars. No students slip under the cracks – as early detection, real-time feedback loops and constant algorithmic monitoring ensures improved outcomes. The kids love the focus on mastery of skills. The downside has been lack of buy in from teachers who feel they are now further beyond. Most teachers now recall the challenging days of Facebook, Wikipedia and cell phone texting with nostalgia.

This is a wave of consumer-grade learning systems that traditional teachers and schools cannot handle. For students, peer reputation is no longer a question of *how many friends do you have*, but what *level are you rated* and *how many badges do you have?*. The notion of grade levels has no meaning among today's students. High stakes test scores are no longer mentioned. The SAT and GRE are now as strange as concepts to young people as LP and CD-ROM. Students have embraced the expectations that in this new world you demonstrate your learning every step of the way.

New digital divides are emerging. Some parents now pay up to $200/month for **Google's Cog (cognitive) Engine** that uses conversation to engage their kids. Other students just lack a natural

innate ability to thrive in this world. They did not grow up with parents who taught them how to be self-aware and self-directed.

Geographic divides are also emerging. A struggling suburban county in New Jersey has set aside $50 million to provide all residents a basic level access to IBM Watson as a recruiting tool for talented families seeking an edge.   America's social fabric has splintered around families who oppose many of the technology-driven approaches. The market for home schooling is growing at alarming rates—with many families setting up collaboration spaces in local libraries that have granted them access to *algo-free* zones.

Many students have embraced the role of software mediated learning but revolt against the idea that they should be locked up in a school all day. A series of recent protests has led to some radical legislation in California, Pennsylvania and New York that left schools funded for only half-day responsibilities. The national government has signaled an end to life stage and institutionally bound learning. Re-allocation of funding will continue to reflect this policy transition to lifelong learning.

The Federal government's *Common Core* standard is now called *Many Paths* ™ and requires most institutions and businesses to provide learning opportunities to interested students. Companies receive tax breaks in exchange for providing real world work experience to learners. But schools and workplaces are not the only effected institutions.

In Pennsylvania a radical legislative act called *The Great Compromise* has led to schools shedding services to libraries and museums that are now an integral part of the lifelong learning landscape. While schools continue to handle traditional core subjects, local libraries are now responsible for ensuring continuity of civic engagement, digital literacy and the expanding list of 21st century life and work skills.   The division of responsibilities is not clear to all those involved—and tensions are rising across the nation between schools who are losing momentum and brand value – and local libraries who see an opportunity to elevate their role within communities.

In Pennsylvania, the state library system is now responsible for coordinating all non-school based work experiences and establishing the learning pathways for 21st century skills. All students are tracked by location-based navigation systems to ensure they are in the right place at the right time. But it is learning activity streams that are most challenging to integrate. Most libraries in the state now average three to five hours a day of formal instruction time – and manage the learning of thousands of young adults and their families. Their relationships with patrons extend far out into the real world.

Libraries are managing relationships with local and global businesses that connect with learners via telepresence rooms connected to high bandwidth pipes. The hardware is the easy part. What library leaders complain about is the ambiguity associated with their task of defining 21st Century Skills beyond creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. Staff wonder – *how do you prepare young and older people to work with Watson™? How do we teach learners how to*

extract lessons from real world work experiences? There are no easy answers and many long for the days when managing Facebook and Twitter feeds was their greatest technological challenge.

Libraries are the new testing ground for this software-mediate world. They are now expected to crack the code on improving outcomes and reshape cultural expectations for how learners will navigate the transition to this more distributed learning ecosystem that bridges traditional and new settings. For now, libraries keep their heads turned forward and try to navigate their position on the educational system value chain in the Age of the American Algorithm.

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Scenario Specific Questions
- What are the skill sets and mindsets associated with this software-mediated future? (e.g. transparency, accountability, voice-based interactions, data literacy, sourcing literacy, et al) How do libraries cultivate these qualities within the community?
- What if libraries shifted focus on managing material collections to managing learning pathways of community members? How might we rethink membership structures around mastery of skills?
- How might libraries manage their relationships with schools in a future shaped by technology and culture of an empowered lifelong learner?
- What does it mean to be disenfranchised in this future scenario? What are the gaps in skills, experiences, and outlook that might be different from today's *digital divide*?

Scenario 3:   Back to Basics – Gone Glocal   2021

The ripple effects of *The Great Recession* lasted for more than a decade – but we are finally seeing a new attitude emerge in America. The political polarization of the early 2010s is in decline—and a new spirit of the Middle Way is emerging around President Bloomberg's second term. America is returning to a nostalgic sense of civic culture but there is a new divide between urban corridors and smaller town / rural communities.

We are now five years into a major restructuring of government services around a new culture of transparency, accountability and cooperation. The *new kid on the block* is the empowered *Cityscape*. The notion of *local-state-federal* agencies is now blurred by the power vacuum of *Cityscapes* which stretch across boundaries and find a huge upside to harmonizing their laws to streamline costs and improve services. Pundits are now talking about the emerging *Twelve States of America* from Northeast Corridor, Gulf Coast to Cascadia. Urbanized corridors continue to absorb all the political power and resources.

For the rest of the country there are new coalitions being formed. Leaders from non-Cityscape communities have realized the bitter truth --- they need to diversify their global economic connections to stay relevant and attract the flow of outside dollars – but the way forward is in strengthening local infrastructure and community driven innovations. *Gone Glocal* is the new mantra!

Local institutions are reinventing themselves to shift cultural expectations for what is possible at the community level in the 21st century. The institutions that pull out ahead – are able to build the right knowledge base on local systems and engage the right partners.   Some libraries have cracked the code on how to assess need, engage businesses and create (and sustain) local demand.

As local governments remain stuck in constraint-based thinking, some libraries have positioned themselves as a place of expertise on the empowerment of local communities and economies based on a rethinking of infrastructure for food, health, manufacturing, workforce training and education.

In the past, community came to the library to check out a book on starting up a local business, now the library connects them to peer-to-peer and localized marketplaces. Libraries hold key aggregated data on personal lifestyles to help businesses identify the right micro-markets.

There are bigger policy changes happening from library initiatives. In Iowa, a library created the political will to invest $1B in local high speed video telepresence systems that allow the local workforce to reach global markets in healthcare monitoring, tutoring and customer service.

Of course, not everyone is happy. Some critics feel that libraries have become more *business-like* in their development and coordination of micro markets. For the first time in decades trust ratings declined for non-urban libraries as some residents show concern for their institutions becoming more *government-like*.

Library leaders are responding with a major rebranding effort. It is the ALA-PLA's first Superbowl media buy. Libraries are like a garden and the staff members - humble gardeners merely planting seeds, cultivating the right conditions to strengthen local economies and infrastructure for residents. They are providing a bountiful harvest for improving the quality of life based on stronger community ties and interactions.

Library leaders believed that focusing on building glocal infrastructure was an essential survival strategy against the forces of globalization.   They flooded the media wires with success stories of homeless residents who once slept in library stacks and are now coordinating local business-customer relationships.

Surrogate advocates from local businesses cheered the effectiveness of libraries in building awareness and elevating expectations for local support. There was an upside to peer-to-peer business models and the localization of everything from food markets to manufacturing. Business leaders believed that without these strong institutional ties, all the momentum would be pulled towards more powerful urban corridor Cityscapes.

The most dramatic changes are found in libraries that have linked membership benefits to local activity. The more you spent locally, the more services were provided.   Other libraries have set up lobby kiosks allowing patrons to order local food or medical supplies from small businesses who could deliver the products that same day.

Despite all early successes the voices of dissent continue to grow—and there is concern that public funding for libraries may be revoked in some communities. The dissenters argue that if libraries are so valuable in generating local wealth – why not fund themselves?

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Scenario Specific Questions
- What traditional roles have libraries played in the past – that might be an analog to the challenges of local communities in this new century?
- How do you respond to a world where more is expected of your institution – but pulls you into new political and economic roles that lead to more controversy?
- How might you re-write the Vision and Mission of York County libraries in this scenario?