

The Challenges of Interdisciplinary Research and the Value of Libraries in Nonprofit Management Education

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Abstract

Unlike many other interdisciplinary research areas, nonprofit management is itself an interdisciplinary field. This creates challenges for researchers, both expert and novice, as they strive to learn the language of the field, which is often inconsistent, as well as translate and apply the language of other fields to nonprofit problems.

Libraries and librarians can play an important role in helping nonprofit practitioners, scholars, and students to confront these challenges.

Methods

- Researchers: Librarian and NME faculty member.
- Conducted focus groups with students (undergraduate and graduate).
- Conducted interviews with 4 faculty members.
- Analyzed and compared data between focus groups and existing literature.
- Examined and compared faculty and student data.

Findings



Lack of disciplinary exploration & knowledge



Barriers – Inconsistent language, lack of literature



Importance of library/librarian relationship with NME faculty/students

Selected References

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Implications

- Developing a broader disciplinary view is crucial to research in NME.
- Librarians are well-positioned to serve as “connectors” and “translators” for NME researchers as they work between disciplines.
- Librarians can also translate between students and “expert researcher” faculty.
- The ability to leverage tools like Google is necessary to prepare NME students to be practitioners.

Recommendations

- Faculty should be willing to enlarge their knowledge of journals and disciplines rich in literature related to NME.
- Faculty should be open to feedback from the librarian.
- Librarian should accept and build on role as translator between faculty and students.
- Both fields should promote collaborative relationships between NME and libraries.

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