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## Successful Libraries Survey

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# Successful Libraries Survey



**TCL Editorial Team**

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In the fall of 2016, the editorial team of *The Christian Librarian* (TCL) did a survey asking Association of Christian Librarian (ACL) members about successful programs or projects they have recently done. The purpose behind this was twofold: first, to see if there were any common elements behind differing projects that played a role in making them successful, and secondly to see if any wisdom could be garnered and shared with the membership.

There was a wide range of successful projects and programs shared, ranging from offering snacks in the library during dead week to library mergers. However, in all of these programs there were three common themes, specifically: listening, collaboration, and enthusiasm.

There is value in simply listening. This can involve listening to the needs of others in your community: students, other departments, administration, or faculty. However, a critical component to listening is the reception of critique. One contributor specifically noted that it is critical to listen for opportunity when individuals offer suggestions (which can be looked at as critiques), rather than hearing them as complaints.

The comments from the survey suggest that in order for listening to reap successful projects, one must envision it as part of a broader tool: communication. In other words, listening cannot be seen as simply a passive reception of facts and information. One contributor summarized this well by expressing that God has taught them to listen and act upon what they learned from the listening to bring about solutions.

The second theme observed was collaboration. Collaboration has always been an ingredient to success. However, it is becoming a key element not just to success in programs and projects, but even to the point where programs (and perhaps even libraries) are unable to thrive when a collaborative spirit is lacking. It is critical, in order for libraries (and their subsequent programs and projects) to succeed, that librarians build relationships across campus in order to find ways to innovate, accomplishing the mission of their respective institution together.

A second element of collaboration involves stepping back and looking at the big picture (e.g. the mission and vision of the institution). One contributor commented that gaining a big picture perspective, specifically, institutional objectives and goals, makes it easier to decide whether what you are giving up is worth what you are

gaining in a compromise. The individual went on to state that is always better to err on the side that results in serving others rather than building up your own little empire.

A third element that made programs successful was enthusiasm. This involves helping those involved in the project to see the future benefits. Staff enthusiasm can often carry a tedious and draining project. Another manifestation of enthusiasm can be celebrating milestones along the way. This enables individuals to see the progress one step at a time.

While it is critical for those involved with the program or project to have enthusiasm, it is important that this enthusiasm be spread. When programs or projects lack enthusiasm, the value of the program or project tends to be questioned, making success for it much more difficult to attain.

As an editorial team, we feel that it is critical that we look at the aspects that make a program or project successful through a biblical/theological lens. While the elements of listening, collaboration, and enthusiasm are important elements in and of themselves, all three of these bear significant weight when seen as manifestations of Christian faith rather than simply practices needed to complete a successful program or project.

For example, practicing the art of listening is a manifestation of love and concern for another individual or group. As believers in Christ, we are called to do this, particularly for brothers and sisters in the faith.

Collaboration is similar. Philippians 2:3-4 states, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” This passage provides an excellent framework for collaboration.

As believers in Christ, we should be excited about our faith. While excitement is manifested through a variety of different venues, that excitement should impact our advocacy for our respective institutions and the roles that libraries play in these. Projects that will enhance the services the library offers to an institution should excite us because they are aiding the development of the mission of our respective institution, which in many cases aligns with our Christian faith.

The editorial team of *TCL* hopes this provides the membership with some ideas and insight regarding what it takes to make a program or project successful. †

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