

Reach, Balance, Achieve: Doing Better What We Have Always Done Well

Michelynn McKnight, PhD, AHIP

mmck@lsu.edu

Health Sciences Libraries of Illinois

Starved Rock Lodge & Convention Center

Keynote October 14, 2011

Brief outline with citations

- I. Introduction
 - a. Reach, Balance – opposite forces necessary to achieve
 - i. Yoga
 - ii. Trees
 - b. Economic seasons, subscription seasons, etc.
 - i. Live oaks are green all year, but they are not evergreens, they are serially deciduous, embodying all seasons at once
 - ii. Those that fall in storms may look healthy before, but usually they have stopped growing inside
- II. FALL
 - a. Harvest and appreciation of jobs well done – fruits of labor – have always done well ... but
 - b. Also have anxiety for the future
 - i. Anxiety different from fear
 - 1. Fear a clear present danger
 - 2. Anxiety is telling ourselves ghost stories about all the bad things that might happen in the future
 - c. “Just in case” collection building / “Just in time” service delivery
 - 1. Storing up for the future
 - 2. Providing for the present

- d. Reach/Balance -- Try/Trust
 - e. “Customer Service and the Rule of 1965”, Karen Hyman, *American Libraries* 30:55-58. 1999.
 - 1. Rule of 1985
 - 2. Rule of 1995
 - 3. Rule of 2005
- III. Winter
- a. Apparent scarcity, appearance of death ... but not really dead
 - b. Beware of economic seasonal affective disorder
 - c. The money runs out and it gets dark earlier ... but there is still creating to be done – creativity never dies
 - d. “We can’t afford it” is a euphemism for “We value something else more”
 - e. Reach/Balance – Work/Rest
 - f. Learned Optimism: *How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Martin E. P. Seligman. New York: Pocket 1990
 - i. Optimistic and pessimistic responses to adversity
 - ii. Optimistic and pessimistic responses to good fortune
 - g. “We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope. Only in this way shall we live without the fatigue of bitterness and the drain of resentment”. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *Strength to Love*, reprinted Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, p. 93
 - h. “Problem finding before problem solving” R. Keith Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- IV. Spring
- a. A time of taking risks, of acting on plans made during the winter... not everything will work... but without risk there is no achieve
 - b. Examples from librarian history of those who took risks and those who were risk averse
 - c. Reach/Balance --- Contrast/Repetition
 - d. “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust the dots

will somehow connect in your future.” -- Brandon Griggs, CNN, October 5, 2011, “Steve Jobs, Apple Founder Dies” ... quoting 2006 address at Stanford graduation

- e. “The instruction we find in books is like fire. We fetch it from our neighbors, kindle it at home, communicate it to others, and it becomes the property of all”. Voltaire, as quoted in October 3, 2011 advertisement for Amazon’s new Kindle Fire

V. Summer

- a. Green and growing ... working hard and playing hard
- b. Can you do it all? Of course not ... but to achieve you not only have to reach but to balance
- c. Matchmaking – the joys and mission you know you have with what the world really needs (Richard Bolles, *What Color is Your Parachute?*, Ten-Speed Press, Annual)
- d. Creative Librarian is not an oxymoron
- e. Learning and creativity flourish with brief daily work sessions alternating with a good night’s sleep – practice without binging
- f. Life is both an art and a craft, it requires both crowd time and solitude, rest and activity
- g. Never completely secure/rarely completely in danger
- h. Reach/Balance – the antidote for both “overwhelm” and “underwhelm”
- i. When in doubt, do something
- j. Nothing you have done in the past was wasted
- k. Reach/Balance --- Doing better what we have always done well
- l. Staying green and growing

VI. The Four Seasons

- a. If you know how it is always all four seasons ...
- b. The only time we live is NOW
- c. Like the live oaks, we are serially deciduous – we drop off dead leaves and grow new ones all the time
- d. We always have harvest along with the fading light and anxiety of fall

[Type text]

- e. We always have spaces that may seem dead but are not – they are times for reflection and planning. There are always tight budgets
 - f. We always have the time to take risks
 - g. We can always be green and growing
 - h. We're doing better what we've always done well
-