



Using Appreciative Inquiry to Envision a New Future

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Overview

- Leading up to AI in the Weller Library
- Walking through the 4D cycle
- Final thoughts



Leading up to Appreciative Inquiry

- Assessment
 - External review, LibQual, duties/time/cost analysis
- Changing information environment: e-everything, digital world
- Static budgets and staffing
- Need to move forward



Why AI?

- We were going to re-organize – a huge change
- It sounded intriguing
- It is a process designed to be inclusive and promote participation
- Needed to slow myself down



The 4-D Cycle

- **Discovery:** appreciating what is; discovering what already works well
- **Dream:** imagining what might be
 - Big picture, visionary
- **Design:** determining what should be
- **Deliver:** creating how we will get there



Key Activities Performed in Each Cycle

Discovery: change agenda, Affirmative topics, Appreciative interview questions

Dream: create provocative propositions

Design: brainstorm how to implement provocative propositions

Deliver: take action, implement



Our process

Discovery

- Change agenda – UL and AUL
- Affirmative topics – small group
- Appreciative interview design – small group
- Appreciative interviews – one day retreat, all staff

Dream – one day retreat, all staff

Design – regular work day – all staff

Deliver – all staff, ongoing



Discovery – Cycle One

Step One: Change Agenda

- Why change?
- Usually starts with what do you want to change/fix/correct?



Doing

GAP

Future

- instructing
- collecting
- reporting
- assisting
- lending
- purchasing
- organizing and classifying
- Preserving
- creating

- Digitizing
 - Repositories
 - Collections
 - content
- Partnering
- E-learning
 - E-space
 - Northlink
- Producing
- Creating
 - Learning commons
 - Union catalog of North



Discovery

Weller Library Change Agenda

In AI, **focus is on the positive**, on what do you want to be?

We want to be relevant,
responsive and flexible



Discovery

Step Two: Affirmative Topics

- of strategic importance to organization
 - Limited number
- AI tenet – you become what you study; what you focus your attention, energy and learning on



Discovery

Affirmative Topic: Purposeful Work

Think about purposeful work as work that *means* something to you.

You may consider your job, aspects of your work, or the role of the library as a whole.

Think about what *matters* or is *fulfilling* to you on a personal level or as it impacts library users.



Discovery

Step Three: Appreciative Interview

Combines 3 types of questions:

- Backward – remember high points
- Inward – invitation to “make meaning” of high points
- Forward – imagine futures



Appreciative Interview Questions for Affirmative Topic “Purposeful Work”

Identify a time in your work experience in the library when you felt effective, engaged or fulfilled. (*backward*)

Describe this. How did you feel and what made this situation possible? (*inward*)

What future opportunities or possibilities would enable you to feel or be effective, engaged, and fulfilled at work? (*forward*)



DREAM – cycle two

Exploration of what might be

Uses provocative propositions

- Create an elevated sense of purpose
- Create a shared image of the future



Guidelines for Provocative Propositions

- A stretch – be provocative
- Grounded – a real possibility
- Stated boldly and in the affirmative
- Written in the present tense
- Will form the basis for the next step in the 4D cycle



Dream

Provocative Propositions — example from Weller library

It's time to **REFRESH!**

Relevant **E**xcel **F**lexible **R**esponsive
Energize **S**upportive **H**umour



Provocative Proposition — example from

Weller Library, P. Burry

We walk brightly with attitude.

Recognize each person, strength
along the way, carve new paths
with the force of togetherness.

Enjoy the journey. Change course
with eyes fixed on the bold horizon.



Design – cycle three

identify actions

- eight provocative propositions
- approximately 138 actions identified
- 138 actions sorted into 7 themes:
acq/coll, assessment, communication,
instruction, service, staffing and
training



Deliver – implement

- We changed our organizational structure, collapsing 8 departments into 2 clusters
- We are now working out the changes: using the actions that came out of the provocative propositions as a starting point



Pulling it all together

- AI does not replace everything else that you do – it is a process
- Our reorganization and changes will draw on our strategic plan, assessment information, institutional goals and priorities, and our input from AI



Resources

Hammond, S. (1998). *The thin book of appreciative inquiry*. Oregon, Thin Book Publishing.

Sullivan, M. (2004). The promise of appreciative inquiry in library organizations. *Library Trends* 53, 218-229.

Whitney, D. & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry: a practical guide to positive change*. California, Berrett-Koehler.



Questions? Comments?



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