Business librarians' roles in supporting AACSB accreditation: A discussion about the potentials

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Introduction

Previous works of our colleagues have discussed how business librarians can tell our stories and communicate our impact with business schools (Guth & Stonebraker, 2021). This article will approach this topic from a different angle and explore two other potentials: 1) how librarians can extend our support to business schools and help them meet and exceed the standards and 2) how librarians can align our liaison efforts with business schools' missions and their vision of transforming business education for positive societal impact.

The 2020 AACSB Accreditation features 9 standards in three broad areas (AACSB, 2021a):

- Strategic Management and Innovation
    - Standard 1: Strategic Planning
    - Standard 2: Physical, Virtual, and Financial Resources
    - Standard 3: Faculty and Professional Staff Resources
- Learner Success
    - Standard 4: Curriculum
    - Standard 5: Assurance of Learning
    - Standard 6: Learner Progression
    - Standard 7: Teaching Effectiveness and Impact
- Thought Leadership, Engagement, and Societal Impact
    - Standard 8: Impact of Scholarship
    - Standard 9: Engagement and Societal Impact.

Opportunities for Library Support

After examining these standards, I have identified 8 opportunities for librarians to extend our support for AACSB accreditation.

1) Supporting Business Schools' Strategic Planning

A robust strategic plan is fundamental to AACSB accreditation. Business schools may engage in the strategic planning process differently, while it may involve efforts in identifying opportunities, target markets, partnerships, and making data-driven and evidence-based decisions. Librarians can seek opportunities to participate in strategic planning as stakeholders and/or collaborators. We can offer support or guidance for their data collection, evidence synthesis, or other research efforts. (Related to Standard 1: Strategic Planning)

2) Enhancing Business Students' Competency in Critical Thinking and Information Literacy

Acquiring the competencies that lead to successful outcomes is essential for learner success. Critical thinking is often recognized as one of the core competencies in the business curriculum. Information literacy is a practical application of critical thinking skills. We can further enhance integrated information literacy instruction through curriculum mapping and stress its close tie to

the Business Core Competencies. In addition, AACSB accreditation recognizes microlearning credentials such as certificates and badges, however, the Standard also addresses that microlearning should be reviewed for quality. So, when considering offering micro-learning credentials for library programs, assessment measures need to be put in place to assure students' learning. (Related to Standard 4: Curriculum; Standard 5: Assurance of Learning)

3) Ensuring Library Collections and Resources Support the Delivery of Current, Relevant, and Forward-looking Business Content

The AACSB Accreditation Standards emphasize that the business curriculum needs to stay current and relevant and should be innovative, impactful, and cultivate agility with current and emerging technologies such as Microsoft Excel, statistical software, and programming software (AACSB, 2021b, p. 27). Experiential learning, professional development, career development, and technological agility are discussed throughout the Standards as key components to ensure the business curriculum is current and relevant. Ensuring the library collection and resources support the delivery of current, relevant, and forward-looking business content is a primary task for business librarians. If possible and necessary, we can also help fill the gaps of the current business curriculum with flexible library workshops and programs. One example is that when I worked at the University of Maine as a business librarian, I worked on developing student engagement programs for the library. I collaborated with the Advanced Computing Group on campus and offered students workshops on Microsoft Excel, Python, R, and data visualization with Tableau, etc. It became one of the most popular library programs and helped fill the gaps in the existing curriculum on campus. (Related to Standard 2: Physical, Financial, and Virtual Resources; Standard 3: Faculty and Professional Staff Resources; Standard 4: Curriculum)

4) Extending Support to Help Identify Experiential Learning Opportunities

AACSB Accreditation Standards define that "experiential learning includes a wide variety of activities such as internships, service-learning, study abroad, consulting projects, and other high-impact pedagogical practices" (AACSB, 2021a, p.38). Oftentimes, business faculty find such experiential learning opportunities based on existing relationships with the business and industry or their personal ties. However, experiential learning opportunities can be leveraged more strategically with some research support to understand the local or regional business and industry resources. One example is that as a summer project, I worked with the West Chester University career center and management department and helped identify the Fortune 500 companies in the state of Pennsylvania and top employers in nearby counties, internship opportunities, and acquired the number of alumni working in these companies from Linkedin. This research helped open up some new opportunities for finding partners for experiential learning programs and student internships. (Related to Standard 4: Curriculum; Standard 6: Learner Progression; Standard 9: Engagement and Societal Impact)

5) Empowering Students' Career Preparation with Evidence-based Career Research

Supporting students' career development is an important aspect of AACSB Accreditation Standard No. 6 Learner Progression. Librarians and career centers can be great partners to help business schools achieve this goal. In the same collaboration with the career center I mentioned earlier, we also helped create a business student career preparation guide and included information about career path and bright outlook jobs by major, with the hope to demonstrate the power of knowledge and the power of research in finding new opportunities that pave the way for future success. This can be an extension of our current career research

support in helping student research companies and industries for their job interviews. (Related to Standard 6: Learner Progression)

6) Expanding Open Educational Resources (OER) Support to Include Resources for Professional Development and Industry Engagement

Standard No. 4 Curriculum emphasizes the importance of engagement and expects the business curriculum to facilitate and encourage frequent, productive learner-to-learner, learner-to-faculty, and learner-to-industry professional engagement. Librarians can be a good resource to help identify such learner-to-industry professional engagement opportunities. In one of the digital marketing classes I worked with, I helped the faculty identify the free [Digital Marketing Virtual Conference](#) organized by the American Marketing Association. Business database vendors such as eMarketer also frequently organize [free webinars](#) on trending marketing topics, LinkedIn Learning offers office hours with industry professionals, and Walmart shares its webcast, transcript, and presentation materials of many [conferences and events](#) related to consumer, retailing, and technologies. So, librarians can leverage our resources through database vendors and our research skills to help business faculty enrich the business curriculum and strengthen business schools' position in this area. (Related to Standard 4: Curriculum; Standard 6: Learner Progression)

7) Helping Faculty Stay on Top of their Research Area and Demonstrate their Scholarly Impact

To support business faculty's scholarship and teaching effectiveness, we can a) help raise business faculty's awareness of alert services in library databases, digital commons, and emerging scholarly impact measurements such as Altmetrics; b) help faculty navigate the publication landscape and identify publication opportunities and raise awareness of predatory journals; and c) assist in gathering evidence for faculty scholarly impact and publications. (Related to Standard 7. Teaching Effectiveness and Impact; Standard 8 Impact of Scholarship)

8) Collaborating with Business Faculty in Instruction, Research, and Scholarship

The Interpretive Guidance for Business Accreditation offered many exemplars of societal impact (AACSB, 2021b). Librarians and business faculty can find many shared interests or common goals to advance business schools' societal impact. One of the societal impacts mentioned was contributions to major world issues, such as those identified by the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals and one example given was business school provides community-wide training to improve financial literacy, adoption of technology, and access to banking and credit for low-income families. Academic business librarians can be a partner for this effort or can be a liaison that brings business schools, public libraries, and community resources together. In addition, there are great opportunities for librarians and faculty in co-applying for grant projects and co-teaching serving-learning classes and for librarians to offer insights on evidence synthesis or evidence-based decision making. (Related to Standard 4: Curriculum; Standard 6: Learner Progression; Standard 9: Engagement and Societal Impact)

These are some of the ideas that came to mind after reviewing the AACSB Accreditation Standards and its Interpretive Guidance. These ideas neither intend to be exhaustive nor require librarians to do them all. They just serve as a springboard and hopefully can inspire some librarians for their future collaboration with their business school when they see the best opportunities arise.

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References

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