

Demonstrating Relevance in Critical Times: Library Concierge Services


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The Set-Up (2019-2021)

- **Strategic Plan – more cuts to academic programs**
 - **Rumors – significant cuts to library staff**
 - **Renovation – significant loss of physical space**
 - **Advocates – few**
 - **Morale – poor**
 - **COVID**
 - **May 2020 – a timely resignation!**
-but is the danger over?**



The Crisis

- Lack of administrative support.
- Significant loss of space.
- Declining use.
- Like everyone—lack of budget.



Guiding Philosophies

- Increasing reliance on technology leaves a void that human outreach can fill. High tech, high touch.
- Serving online students is hard but is critically needed.
- See beyond the deficits and serve the student you have.



What is a concierge?

Personalized service

Anticipates needs

Available as a luxury

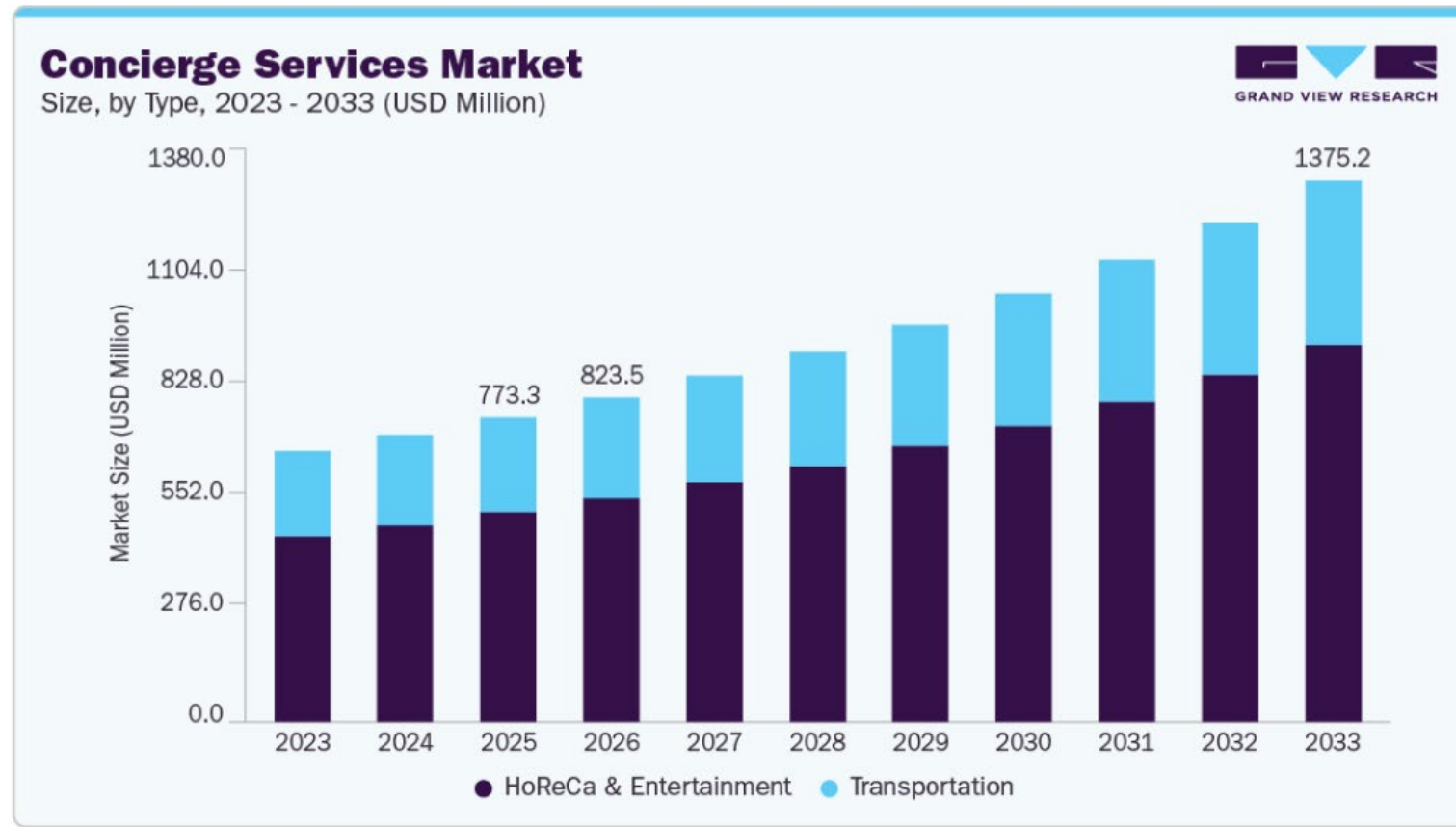
Knowledgeable, with connections



Concierge services beyond libraries




Concierge Industry Growth





What are concierge library services?

- 
- Personalized services designed to build a relationship, not just a transaction.
 - Anticipates patron's needs.
 - Scaffolded support that is easy and convenient to access.
 - Proactive.

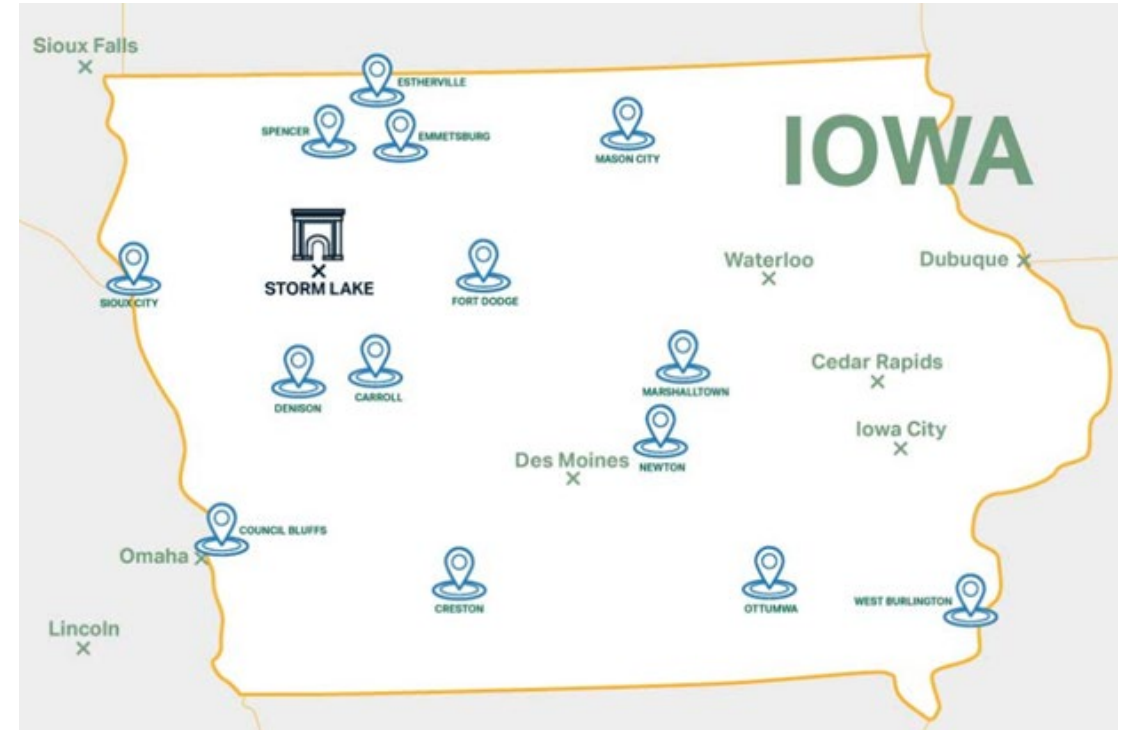


Why offer these services?

1. Build advocates and good public relations
2. Not much to lose! New president = "continued improvement" mindset.
3. Prove relevance—to myself, too.
4. Connecting people with needed information is a passion.
5. Positions the library on the ground floor to shape curriculum for new and updated classes and programs.

What Makes BVU Unique?

- Long history of remote education. First site opened in 1975, by 2005, we had 17 sites most at Community Colleges.
- Most of our students are online, not on campus.
- Entrepreneurial spirit.





Faculty facing services—Textbook searches

OER promotion --->



Textbook searches





Research Consultations





Online course consulting

Working with Course Content Experts



Personalization vs. technology

Magi & Mardeusz article

- Clarifies assignment and topic
- Model research skills
 - Search terms
 - Suggesting resources
 - How to read, save, and use what is found.
- Introduce library resources
 - Librarians are also a resource!
- Changes attitudes about research

Reiter & Huffman article

- Can the staff handle the load?
 - Benefits of F2F outweigh workload
 - Workload is predictable, based on when assignment is due, so plan for it.

Concierge or Boutique Library Services at other institutions



- Ozark Technical Community College – Open Admission, Springfield, MO
- Philosophy: Our students are vulnerable and need support to complete a degree and escape poverty. We'll do research for them.



Research Data Concierge Service/Kent State

- Need to streamline data service offices on a large campus—UL, CIO, IT, VP-Research—established a "cross-unit" group.





Wayfinding Mobile Concierge – Oregon State

Reduce anxiety

Temporary



Texas A & M Policy Studies & Economics Library

- The "Liaison" model on steroids
- Remote from main campus. Full services for nearby faculty.
- Fill in for professors at professional conferences.
- Provide cited reference searches for tenure & promotion.



California State Library Digital Concierge Program

- Help other state agencies identify and preserve important state history collections.





Strategies for Personalization/Relationship Building

Welcome and follow-up email.

Be first online.

Be aware of nonverbals—yours and theirs.

Ask questions.

Personalize the library orientation.

Gauge anxiety level.

Vary hours to accommodate working adults.



Challenges we've faced

- Partner turn-over.
- Keeping the plates spinning.
- Time-sensitize needs.
- Over-reliance on librarian.





Interested in starting your own concierge service?



If possible, align with your institutions strategic plan.

- Honestly consider the demands.
- Define the population.
- Talk to the stakeholders and find their pain points.
- Offer individual sessions that are easy to access and schedule.
- Keep coworkers in the loop.
- Market/advertise, then do it some more.
- Evaluate, get feedback from your stakeholders, revise for next time around.

We continue to evolve...



- Assess services
- More proactive outreach to CCE's
- Get more graduate programs involved in consultations/orientations
- Add embedded librarian to online courses (or on campus)
- Continue to market services
- Look at ways to meet increased demand.

Concluding Thoughts

“Concierge Service is not a term I use publicly.

It does allow me to "re-cast" our patrons differently, thinking more about long-term relationships and research skill growth.

Concierge services work WITH other types of library services.

One-on-one nature of concierge interactions helps us address misinformation, defuse anxiety, and serve each student equitably at their point of need and understanding.

Each of us is one administrative hire away from doom.





Questions?

Thanks for attending!

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