

Where does creativity come from?



One of the reasons I love being a librarian, is because it is the most creative job on the face of the earth. No one could have convinced me of this as a young, know-it-all university student; but in 30+ years of honing this craft, I continue to be amazed at how creative it is. It includes everything from testing new programs and services to restructuring organizations; from developing business plans to looking for alternate revenue sources. At every turn, there is opportunity to create something new and dynamic.

One of my favorite authors, Maya Angelou, perhaps best defined creativity when she wrote many years ago, “You cannot use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.” In its barest form, creativity is the ability to bring into existence something new and valuable; it is a way of imagining familiar things in a new and dynamic form; it’s pulling a rabbit out of a hat!

On a regular basis, I am asked, “So, exactly where does creativity come from?”

- I truly believe creativity is like a well. If you want new ideas, you have to constantly feed the well with innovative thoughts. For me, it’s a wide array of magazines, books, music, art and especially people. I consciously look outside the library profession to see how others are tackling an issue. I read business magazines, pay attention to healthcare and information technology research; and, perhaps because my husband is a glass blower, I am always looking at the art community and their take on creativity.
- Creativity has three distinct steps, all of which are equally important and necessary to launch a creative idea:
 - Analyze: where you ask the why question
 - Create: where you invent, discover and test
 - Apply: implement and evaluate your analytical and creative efforts
- Creative people are often defined as being:
 - Very energetic and “driven”
 - Smart, but more importantly, inquisitive
 - Passionate about their work

This sounds like the perfect definition of a librarian!!

The next time you need a new idea, remember to feed the creative well, analyze, create, and apply. You will be amazed at the results!!