

A POSITIVE APPROACH TO CHANGE: THE ROLE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ORGANISATIONS

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Library and information management (LIM) organisations are on an almost continual path of change driven by changes in technology, service models, staffing structures, and financial allocations. The way in which LIM organisations approach change varies, as does the success rate of change management procedures undertaken. One particular approach to change management is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI has been gaining in popularity since its inception over two decades ago. This technique seeks to identify what works with individuals, teams, or whole organisations and then build on those elements, a digression from the common approach of looking for a problem that needs to be fixed. This paper explores the AI technique and its potential for application by LIM organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

Pick up a popular magazine these days and you are bound to come across a pop quiz asking “How stressed are you?”, in which the quiz invariably links the rate of change to rising stress levels. As the rate and extent of change increases, so too, apparently, can our stress level. This is obviously a very broad and sweeping statement and cannot be applied to everyone or every change situation, but it is true that some library and information management (LIM) professionals see change as stressful and as anything but a positive adventure. Yet change is a constant for LIM professionals whether it is to do with the technology we use, the technology we assist our clients to use, with aspects of the physical library, or with the evolving nature of the professional role itself. But instead

of being viewed as a cause of stress, what if change could inspire, excite, and enthral? Perhaps that might be expecting a bit too much. But it does prompt the question: is there is a way that LIM organisations can take a positive approach to change management, reducing its potential to cause adverse levels of stress?

Change management is not a new issue and there is a considerable amount of literature devoted to the theme. However, at first glance there appears to be more articles written about the changes libraries and librarians are facing rather than how to actually manage those changes. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a specific technique for change management and is based on finding the best within an organisation and building on those positive experiences. It has been defined more formally by Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2003, p. xiii): "AI is a form of transformational inquiry that selectively seeks to locate, highlight, and illuminate the 'life-giving' forces of an organization's existence." This paper will discuss AI as a potential positive change management tool for use in library and information organisations.

POSITIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT

As already noted, change is a necessity for LIM organisations and their clients in order to take full advantage of the ever-evolving digital environment and the opportunities for expanded roles and partnerships offered within this environment (Warnken 2004, 323). Reorganisation, downsizing, rightsizing, restructuring, reengineering, and cost reduction are all terms that have appeared regularly in the management literature since the 1980s. Change management is often seen as synonymous with these terms and, as such, has gained a considerable negative connotation. Today, change management is more encompassing and looks at the organisation's overall health to continue to exist in an environment of continuous change. If we are to follow Bender's (2000, 5) view that "change is the lifeblood of progress, the catalyst for innovation, and the enzyme that breeds new thinking", we need to look at developing the organisation in a positive way. We need to make it robust, but at the same time flexible enough to navigate through changes. Change management is not just about cost, but is also about people and an organisation's culture.

With a basis in positive psychology, positive change management engenders a view that change is an opportunity for transformation, not a crisis (Hillenbrand 2005). Sheldon and King (2001, 216) claim it is an approach that "revisits 'the average person' with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving." Positive change management is looking for opportunities for growth instead of focusing on the negative. This requires a shift in thinking for many people. For example, instead of thinking "how will this change affect me?", turn that phrase into a positive one such as "What changes can I make to produce effective results?" (Bull 2002, p. 11).

Lubans (2003, 196) refers to this approach as being in the 'learning zone': "An organization's well-being and growth develops in the learning zone – the organization stagnates in the comfort zone....The more time spent in the learning zone, the greater your capacity for challenge." Learning from positive aspects

of performance may seem at odds with the traditional management techniques of problem-solving (Tombaugh 2005, p. 15) but the emphasis has moved from identifying and then fixing "problems" to an approach that accentuates the positives (Oswick et al 2005, p. 386). One technique for taking this positive change management approach is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This is a technique that, unlike problem-centred approaches, looks at what is working well within an organisation and seeks to amplify and replicate it (Oswick et al 2005, p. 386). The next section of this paper will explore this technique in more detail.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY DEFINED

Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: VALUING, PRIZING, ESTEEMING, and HONORING.

In-quire' (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: DISCOVERY, SEARCH, and SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION, STUDY.

(Cooperrider and Whitney 1999, p. 2)

AI has developed from the field of organisational development and has been getting increasing attention for its successful application in facilitating organisation change (Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas 2003, 5). AI revolves around qualitative, narrative analysis, focusing on stories and their generative potential (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003, p. 166). Interviews and subsequent data analysis are important elements in the "mean-making" or "sense-making" activity in the Discovery phase of the AI process. Interviews are designed to be informative, enlightening and inspiring and are used as a means to encourage people to remember the best times and what made them the best time, to recognise that they share similar dreams for their organisation and to be inspired to create the best organisation possible (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003, p. 140-141).

AI takes a significantly different approach to organisational issues, challenges, and concerns by focusing first on what is working particularly well in the organisation instead of focusing on problems as in the deficit thinking approach more often taken by organisations during the change management process. Instead of hunting down possible causes and solutions to problems, effort is invested in imagining what it would be like if the "best of what is" occurred more frequently and what resources would be required for this to happen. Based on this, changes are implemented to bring about the desired future. Watkins and Cooperrider (2000) describe the AI approach as "a continuous learning paradigm that seeks the most creative and generative realities." In this way, AI exchanges deficit thinking with affirmative processes for change management assuming the best of people, organisations and relationships (Whitney 1998, p. 315). Avital (2005, p. 126) provides a contrast of the main features of AI with those of deficit thinking (see Table 1.)

Table 1: Distinct features of Appreciative Inquiry (Avital 2005, p. 126)

	Appreciative Inquiry	Deficit Thinking
Method Archetype	Generative inquiry	Problem solving
Drive	Boundary spanning	Gap closing
Focus	What is best	What is wrong
Tactical Objective	Enable success	Prevent failure, fix problems
Actors	Whole systems	Varied, usually isolated entities
Guiding Paradigm	Voluntaristic	Mainly deterministic

As Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas (2003, 6) state:

The power of Appreciative Inquiry is the way in which participants become engaged and inspired by focusing on their own positive experiences. Usually in a workshop setting, participants remember and relate personal experiences of success, identify the common elements of these experiences, and devise statements and action plans for making those experiences occur more often in the organization.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Over the past two decades, AI has evolved from a theory to a practical process for positive change management in organisations. The origins of AI stem from organisational development and arose from the work of David Cooperrider, a doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University in the US in 1980. Cooperrider and his supervisor Suresh Srivastva changed an organisational analysis looking at what was going wrong with an organisation into an inquiry focusing on the positive life-giving factors of the organisation. This was the start of the AI revolution, providing a constructive approach to managing organisational change.

The applications of AI are many and varied. Whitney (1998, p. 318-319) highlights some of the applications of AI such as global organising, organisational culture change, team building, leadership development, and performance management.

AI can be applied in many different environments and organisations. More examples of the application of AI can be discovered at the Appreciative Inquiry Commons (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>). An Australian portal – the Australian Appreciative Inquiry Network (<http://www.appreciativeinquiry.net.au>) has also been launched providing links to papers, presentations, and tools for sharing amongst AI practitioners or those simply interested in finding about more information about this technique.

PRINCIPLES OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

AI is a framework with “particular principles and assumptions and a structured set of core processes and practices for engaging people in identifying and co-

creating an organization's future" (Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas 2003, p. 6). There are eight principles – essential beliefs or values – underpinning the practice of Appreciative Inquiry. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, p. 54-55) provide a very useful summary outlining the eight principles and their definition (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

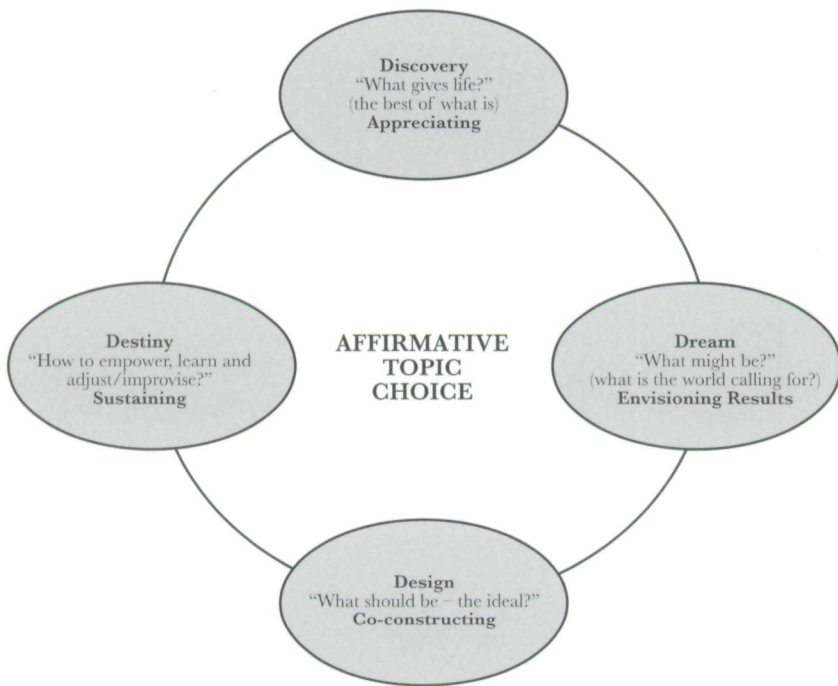
Principle	Definition
1. The Constructionist Principle	<i>Words Create Worlds</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state. • It is socially created, through language and conversations.
2. The Simultaneity Principle	<i>Inquiry Creates Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry is intervention. • The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change.
3. The Poetic Principle	<i>We Can Choose What We Study</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. • What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.
4. The Anticipatory Principle	<i>Image Inspires Action</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. • The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.
5. The Positive Principle	<i>Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum for large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. • This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.
6. The Wholeness Principle	<i>Wholeness Brings Out the Best</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholeness brings out the best in people and organizations. • Bringing all stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.
7. The Enactment Principle	<i>Acting "As If" is Self-Fulfilling</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To really make a change, we must "be the change we want to see." • Positive change occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future.
8. The Free Choice Principle	<i>Free Choice Liberates Power</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People perform better and are more committed when they have freedom to choose how and what they contribute. • Free choice stimulates organizational excellence and positive change.

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, 78) believe these eight principles point to one simple message – "Appreciative Inquiry is about conversations that matter." Change management should involve 'conversations that matter' between all those with an interest in the change being implemented.

THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROCESS

The AI process commences with context and topic (Mellish 1999) – this is the selection of an affirmative topic or topics. These topics must be stated in the affirmative and should be something that the organisation wants to learn about and enhance (Whitney 1998, p. 317). Affirmative topics can be determined by a small focus group or by all the organisation members and will form the basis for the Appreciative Inquiry four “D” cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The 4-D Model of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999)



Discovery – Appreciating what gives life. The purpose of the Discovery phase is to recognise and evoke the positive potential of the team or organisation through inquiry (Van Vuuren and Crous 2005, p. 6). Interview questions are formed around the affirmative topic, and an interview guide is created that explores the participants’ beginnings with the organisation, what they value most about themselves, their work and the organisation, their appreciative stories related to the affirmative topic and their hopes and dreams for the organisation (Whitney 1998, p. 317). Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2003, p. 23) provide a set of generic questions that can be used as a starting point to “elicit the creative and life-giving events experienced in the workplace”:

1. Looking at your entire experience with the organisation, remember a time when you felt most alive, most fulfilled, or most excited about your involvement in the organisation.
 - a. What made it exciting?
 - a. Who else was involved?
 - a. Describe how you felt about it.
2. Talk for a moment about some things you value deeply; specifically, the things you value about yourself, about the nature of your work, and about this organisation.
 - a. Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself as a person and as a member of this organisation?
 - a. When you are feeling best about your work, what about the task itself do you value?
 - a. What do you value about the organisation?
 - a. What is the most important thing this organisation has contributed to your life? To the world?
3. What do you experience as the core factors that give life to this organisation? Give some examples of how you experience those factors.
4. What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality and health of this organisation?

These questions can be modified to suit the chosen affirmative topic – for example, if the affirmative topic is getting the best from library team meetings, the questions would change their focus from the organisation to the team. The interviews are usually conducted in pairs, ideally with all members of the organisation participating. Although pair interviews are recommended by Hammond (1998, p. 35) as the most effective tool for exploration, organisations with geographically distributed staff may have a small team of staff trained in AI who then travel around to do all the interviews with the distributed staff. Mellish (1999) outlines the options with regard to the collation and sharing of the data that emerges from this Discovery phase – “A small group may be requested to develop a new vision relative to the topic of the enquiry or the entire group may (with facilitator support) extract themes and topics that are used to inform the second of the 4-D phases, “Dream” and the development of provocative propositions.”

Dream – Envisioning what might be. As mentioned, the Dream phase builds on information gathered in the interviews undertaken within the Discovery phase. Key themes that have emerged are explored further and transformed into statements of strategic and social intent (i.e. positive propositions) that aim to excite, stretch and guide participants towards a preferred future (Mellish 1999). Hammond (1998, p. 42) explains how this happens:

1. Find examples of the best (from the interviews).
2. Determine what circumstances made the best possible (in detail).
3. Take the stories and envisage what might be. Write an affirmative statement

(a provocative proposition) that describes the idealised future as if it were already happening. To write the proposition, apply “what if” to all the common themes. Then write affirmative present-tense statements incorporating the common themes.

Hammond (1998, p. 43) then provides a number of example propositions based on the affirmative topic of extraordinary customer service:

- Our customers have a pleasant experience when they talk to us
- We anticipate their needs and have the information available when they call
- The information we need to answer their question is available to us with a touch of the finger
- We devote time to learning more so we keep our expertise current
- We feel the support of our other organisational members and are confident we all know extraordinary service is how we help people
- Our business provides an important service to our customers
- We are proud to be a part of this organization.

A sample provocative proposition for information and knowledge management is provided by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, p. 213):

Up to the minute information is one of the vehicles through which we serve our customers and maintain our professional capacities. Everyone has access to the information needed to excel at their job. Our state of the art knowledge management system allows each of us to create a personalized portfolio of information and to share best practices, to host online dialogues, and to keep ahead of the competition.

Participants visualise a desirable future, envisioning themselves and their organisation functioning at their best (Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas 2003, p. 10). Whitney (1998, p. 317) describes this as

a time for groups of people to engage in thinking big, thinking out of the box, and thinking out of the boundaries of what has been in the past. It is a time for people to describe their wishes and dreams for their work, their working relationships and their organization.

Design – Co-constructing what should be. It is important to focus on developing achievable plans and steps to make the vision from the Dream phase a reality (Akdere 2005, p. 26). The Design phase is focused on articulating what has to be put into place to support the vision. The outcome of this phase may be strategies, processes and systems required to make the vision happen. Mellish (2001, p. 54) reports on the Design phase of an AI case study with an Australian university. In that example, the participants compiled a list of key operational impact issues for the provocative propositions and then developed a project plan covering scheduled tasks, accountabilities, resource implications and a timeline. These details were then mapped into a broader transitional plan enabling the change to occur in a positive, inclusive manner.

Destiny – Sustaining: to empower, learn and adjust/improvise. The fourth stage of the AI model is the Destiny cycle in which all the previous discussions are linked together. Participants discuss what will be and how to liberate, learn, actualise and implement what has been planned (Akdere 2005, p. 26). Key decisions are made, action plans developed and strategic performance indicators identified (Mellish 2001, p. 55). Akdere (2005, p. 26) refers to this as the “sustaining stage” where co-creating a sustainable preferred future is the focal point. As the model illustrated in Figure 1 indicates, this phase is ongoing as participants implement changes, monitor their progress and engage in new discussions and appreciative inquiries (Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas 2003, p. 11).

It is important to note that there is very little about AI that is linear – it is a broad framework, not a rigid path to follow (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003, p. 219). AI is meant to be flexible to apply to different organisations and situations. The participants can be focus groups, teams, whole organisations. This flexibility adds to the attraction of AI to organisations seeking to make change a positive experience

IS THERE ANYTHING NEGATIVE ABOUT APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY?

AI has been criticised for accentuating the positive too much and implying an unwillingness to examine problems, weakness and things that are going wrong (Patton 2003, p. 91). In their study on AI and action research, Egan and Lancaster (2005, p. 42) interviewed AI practitioners who identified three challenges associated with the AI approach:

- “Difficult interpersonal situations may be overlooked and remain unidentified as challenges to the success of the group or organization
- Feelings of anger or frustration may not be voiced and may become barriers for some employees
- Dissatisfied organization members may retreat and withdraw from the process because they are unable to feel included by the AI approach.”

Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas (2003, p. 6) defend AI stating that it does indeed address issues and problems, but taking a somewhat different perspective by looking at problems in the light of strengths and successes. This view is supported by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, p. 18) who argue that AI does not dismiss accounts of conflict, problems or stress, it simply does not use them as the basis of analysis or action. When they do arise, accounts of conflict, problems or stress are validated as lived experience, and then reframed as a positive inquiry. They provide examples of this as follows:

- “The problem of high employee turnover becomes an inquiry into magnetic work environments or a question of retention
- The problem of low management credibility becomes an inquiry into moments of management credibility or inspired leadership
- The problem of sexual harassment at work becomes a question of positive cross-gender working relationships.”

This reframing brings about a shift in the thinking of AI participants. Instead of thinking “the library is always undervalued,” change the thinking to an inquiry into the best ways to demonstrate the value library services to stakeholders and use this as an opportunity to improve services. AI is not about ignoring or overlooking problems, but focuses on looking for new ways of seeing the difficulties and identifying what is required in the future (Royal and Hammond 2001, p. 177). Banaga (2001, p. 263) comments: “Appreciative Inquiry does not turn a blind eye on ‘negative’ situations or ‘deficit-oriented’ realities in organizations; it does not substitute a ‘rosy’ and ‘romantic’ picture for an ‘objective’ and ‘realistic’ one. It accepts these realities for what they are – areas in need of conversion and transformation...”

Appreciative Inquiry is not a crisis management tool (Elliott 1999, p. 53). Although it can help to provide a new view of the issues behind a crisis, AI takes time to conduct properly, which is time a crisis situation often can't afford. The better approach would be to harness AI before a situation becomes a crisis. As Barrett (1995, p. 37) noted, appreciation is about looking beyond obstacles, problems, and limitations, to harness the potential and strengths available. Focusing on the positive and grounded in personal experience, AI is an alternative approach to change management that holds considerable promise for LIM organisations (Sullivan 2004).

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AS A POSITIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE FOR LIM ORGANISATIONS

According to Sorensen, Yaeger and Nicoll (2000) AI, in both popularity and application, has spread dramatically. There is strong evidence that a strengths-based organisational culture and appropriate change management practices such as appreciative inquiry can help organisations to meet their business goals (Tombaugh 2005, p. 17). Given the need to demonstrate value to stakeholders, this is as applicable to LIM organisations as it is to consumer product companies.

Mellish (1999) believes that the 4-D model of AI is “infinitely transferable to any context” and offers the following examples where AI could be applied:

- Individuals reflecting on their career directions.
- A group needing to frame up and agree their team approach.
- Different groups needing to establish co-operative arrangements.
- An organisation considering strategic shifts.
- An organisation need to align service strategy to client demand.
- An organisation attempting to manage a merger.
- Community consultations.

Each one of these examples could be applicable in LIM organisations. A list of situations where AI has the most potential to contribute to evaluation practice is provided by Coghlan, Preskill and Catsambas (2003, p. 19). The entire list is not

replicated below but the following selection from the list is included here in order to demonstrate the relevance to LIM organisations:

- Within hostile or volatile environments.
- When change needs to be accelerated.
- When relationships among individuals and groups have deteriorated and there is a sense of hopelessness.
- When there is a desire to build a community of practice.

Maureen Sullivan (2004, p. 227) put out a call for LIM organisations to explore AI and more specifically, to “begin a planned change or problem-solving effort with reflective exploration of the ‘best of what is’...focus on strengths, values, sources of pride and best experiences”. At the time of writing this article, a search of the literature yielded only a small number of articles detailing experiences by LIM organisations in utilising this technique (Pan and Howard 2010; Robb and Zipperer 2009; Morrison and Nussbaumer 2007; Washington State University Libraries 2006). It would appear that LIM organisations have been slow to adopt AI as a change management technique despite its popularity in other areas. Perhaps this outcome is not surprising. As Sullivan (2004, p. 223) has noted, given the long history of taking a problem-solving approach, most libraries would find applying AI effectively would require a considerable shift in the organisation’s values and beliefs in introducing change. Despite this, Sullivan (2004) considers that that AI could have major benefits and calls for LIM organisations to consider applying AI. The potential for LIM organisations to harness the positive power of AI is an area that warranted further exploration.

RESEARCH PROJECT UTILISING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Investigating the potential for the application of AI within a LIM organisation became the focus of a research study undertaken as part of a Doctor of Information Management program the author is currently undertaking at Charles Sturt University. This research project engaged participants from the library and records teams from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation Information Management and Technology (CSIRO IM&T) business unit distributed across Australia. There were two key stages of this research project:

Stage 1: Application of the Appreciative Inquiry Discovery phase only:

The first stage of the research project consisted of a Pilot study and the application of the Discovery phase only of the AI technique in response to Sullivan’s (2004, 227) suggestion to “Begin a planned change or problem-solving effort with reflective exploration of the ‘best of what is’”. This was essentially referring to the application of the Discovery phase of AI. Stage 1 of the research project involved the following steps:

- Examine Appreciative Inquiry surveys and develop a questionnaire for the Discovery phase to find out “what gives life” in exceptional change-ready teams. This was explicitly linked to the formation of CSIRO

IM&T resulting in the merger of the library, records and IT teams in 2006.

- Apply questions in pilot study.
- Modify Discovery questionnaire as required.
- Apply modified Discovery questionnaire at workshops conducted in February 2007 with CSIRO Library Network and Records staff members.
- Transcribe questionnaire responses.
- Analyse questionnaire responses for the emergence of common themes.
- Report the findings.

Stage 2: Application of the full Appreciative Inquiry cycle – Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny:

Following the success of the first stage, the second stage of this research project expanded the application of AI to fully utilise the four phases of the AI technique. Stage 2 of the research project was undertaken in 2009 and involved the following steps:

- Identify potential affirmative topic from analysis of Stage 1 outcomes and from a review of topical issues facing the CSIRO Library Services team after further restructures late in 2008.
- Incorporate lessons learnt from Stage 1 into the application of the full AI cycle in the development of a Professional Development strategy to assist in creating a change-ready team for CSIRO Library Services.
- Develop a questionnaire for the Discovery interview.
- Apply questions in one-on-one Discovery interviews with sample group conducted via MeetingPlace (an online collaborative software tool).
- Transcribe Discovery interview responses.
- Analyse Discovery transcriptions for the emergence of common themes.
- Report the findings from the Discovery interviews.
- Undertake the Dream and Design phases of the AI cycle.
- Complete the AI cycle with the application of the Destiny phase, using a survey to gather feedback and evaluate the process.

The findings from this completed research project will form the content of a follow up paper to this article with a desired outcome of exposing other LIM organisations to Appreciative Inquiry and to encourage further application of this positive change management technique

CONCLUSION

Library and information management organisations are complex entities encompassing people, systems, places, services and information resources, with

changes impacting on virtually every aspect of the organisation. Libraries are under considerable pressure to continuously adapt services and demonstrate value to their stakeholders. The way in which LIM organisations approach change varies as does the success rate of change management procedures initiated. One particular approach to change management is Appreciative Inquiry which has been gaining in popularity with organisation development practitioners since its inception over two decades ago. By seeking to identify what works with individuals, teams or whole organisations and then build on those elements, AI represents a digression from the common change management approach of looking for a problem that needs to be fixed. According to the 'creator' of AI, the value of this positive change management technique to any organisation planning or undertaking change is evident: "Organizations are centers of human relatedness, first and foremost, and relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye – when people see the best in one another, when they can share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new worlds but better worlds" (Cooperrider 1996, p. 1).

Encouraged by the successful application of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within a large variety of organisations, the potential utilisation of AI by LIM organisations is clear. Despite this, the uptake of AI by LIM organisations both in Australia and internationally appears to be quite limited. The aim of this paper has been to provide an overview of AI as a potential means for LIM organisations to take a positive approach to change management and to lay the ground for a further report of its effectiveness in a particular case study.

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