



The Role of IR in Facilitating Efficiencies on Campus

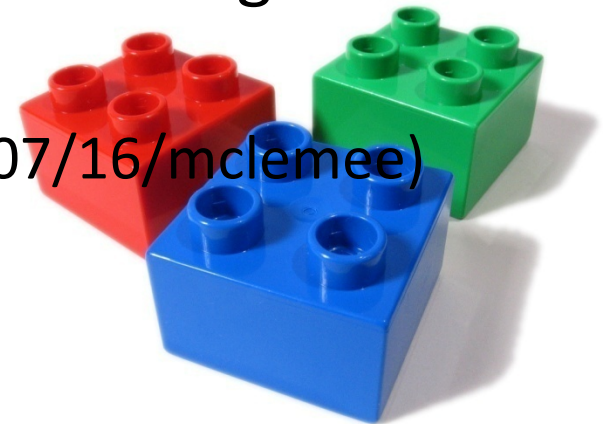
Teri Lyn Thill

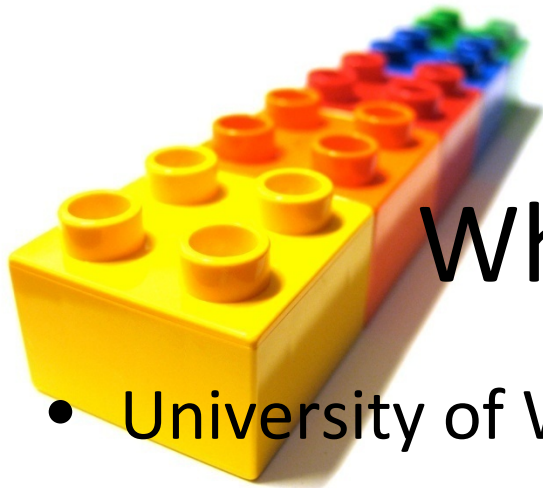
Director of Institutional Research
University of Wisconsin – La Crosse

“As a nerd, my bias is towards paper-and-ink books, and while I do indeed use information technology, asking a coherent question about how any of it works is evidently beyond me. A geek, by contrast, knows source code....has strong opinions about source code....can talk to other geeks about source code, and at some length. (One imagines them doing so via high-pitched clicking noises.)”

Scott McLemee, *It's all Geek to Me*, Inside Higher Ed
July 16, 2008

(<http://insidehighered.com/views/2008/07/16/mclemee>)



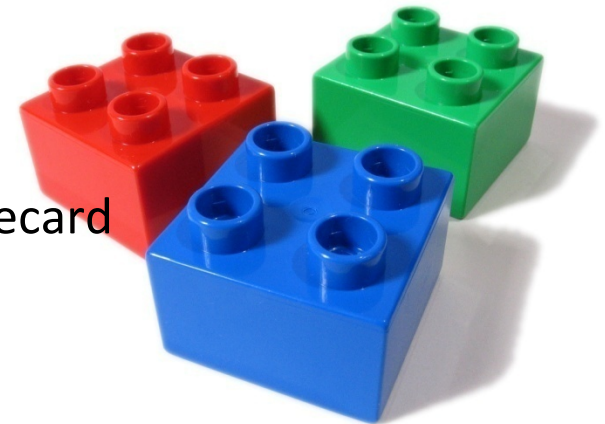


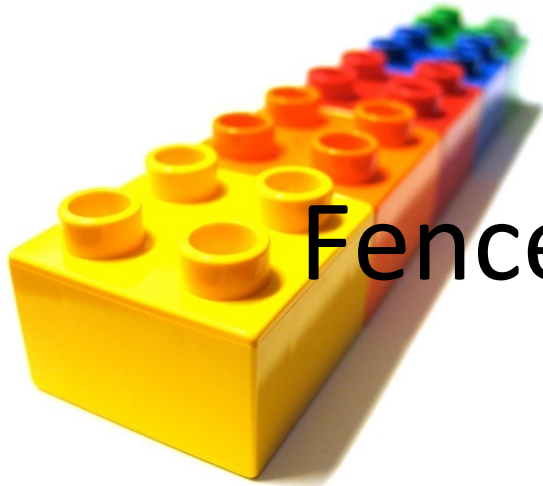
Who are you again?

- University of Wisconsin – La Crosse
 - Public comprehensive, one of 13 four-year institutions in the University of Wisconsin System
 - Approximately 10,000 headcount enrollment, including about 800 off-campus students in Teacher Professional Development Graduate programs
 - Declining state support, increasing enrollment expectations
 - Highest student to faculty ratio of ranked Public Midwestern Masters Universities in US News rankings

Right, but who are *you*?

- Director of Institutional Research since November 2004
 - “Director” in title only – single-person office (until February!)
 - Served on the Student and Family Information Task Force for AASCU & NASULGC’s Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)
 - Consultant
 - Continuing role on VSA Support Team
 - Center for Urban Education on Equity Scorecard





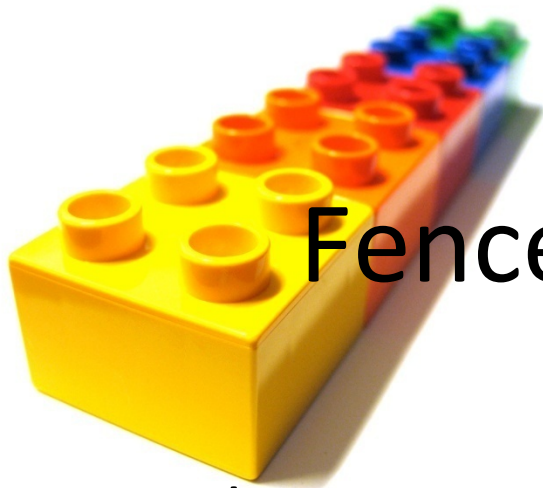
Fences, Silos and Bridges

- Redefining “fence-sitting”
 - Usually means indecision
 - Could also mean mediation – from atop the fence, one can see both (or many) sides of a given line of demarcation
 - Another perspective – translating between two groups that speak different “languages”

Fences, Silos and Bridges

- Silos in higher education – IT professionals vs. Users
 - Requests for data go to programmers or DBAs
 - IT perspective
 - What was requested?
 - What's the best way to get it out of the system?
 - User perspective
 - May not know how to ask exactly for what they need
 - Headcount vs. FTE



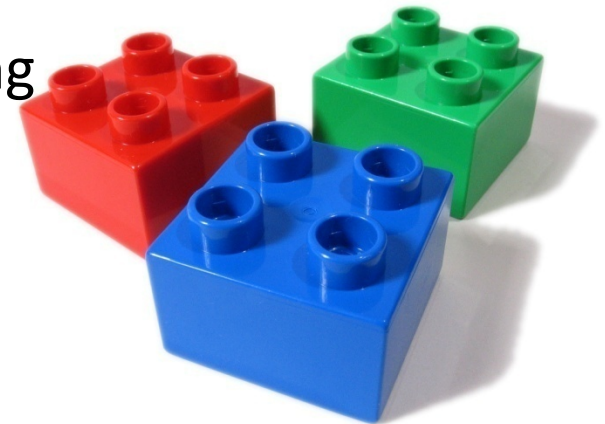


Fences, Silos and Bridges

- Bridges
 - Build bridges between IT and Users
 - Probe users for what question they're trying to answer
 - Rephrase requests to IT in more precise language, e.g., specific data fields or elements, exact definitions and limits
 - Couch data in context on return to Users
 - Data interpretation – translation of data into meaningful information

Big Bridges

- Federal and state priorities
 - How are we doing that here?
 - WI's focus on increasing the percent of baccalaureate degree holders
 - Equity Scorecard model – disaggregated data by specific target groups
 - Environmental scanning and networking



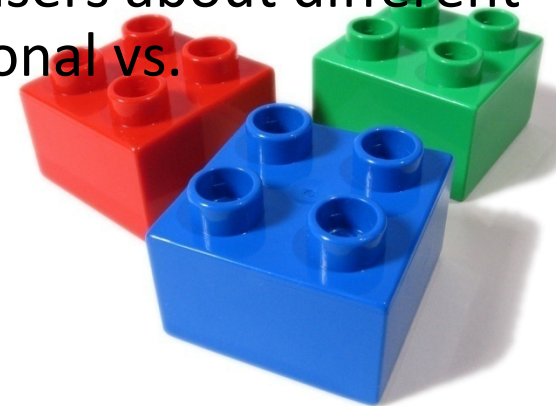


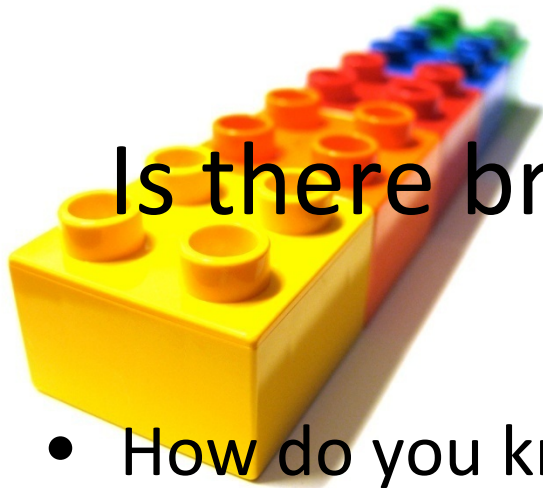
Neighborhood Fences

- Breadth, but not usually Depth
 - Far-reaching use of data creates capacity to see over institutional fences
 - Economies of scope – IR sees “enough” to be able to fit big pieces together
- Data monkeys
 - Reporting needs require combining data across functional areas
 - Familiarity with “enough” allows IR to create linkages – interpreting between data, instead of people

Hard Hat Time!

- Examine the relationship between IR and IT
 - IR by necessity is neither user nor IT professional – must find a middle ground that serves campus best
 - Access and support for IR
 - Systems integrity and workload concerns for IT
 - Are there multiple paths users can take to request data?
 - If so, do the people involved in those paths know each other enough to be able to refer things as necessary?
 - Changing campus culture can be difficult by may be necessary!
 - Be proactive in educating both IT and users about different data needs (e.g., operational/transactional vs. static/census day)





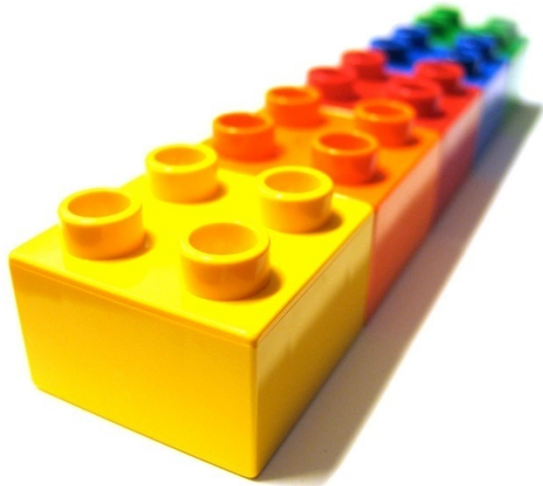
Is there broccoli between my teeth?

- How do you know you're meeting campuses needs?
 - Find your squeaky wheels and bend over backwards to meet their needs
 - Probe – “I want to be sure to get you the best data for your question the first time, so can you help me understand what you're trying to do?”
 - Be reliable and predictable – set a standard response window and stick to it!

Bean Counter..?

- Watch your language
 - Frame IR as “decision-support”
 - Instead of just providing data, provide context and interpretation as well
 - Build relationships with decision-makers and ask about what kinds of questions they’d like to be able to answer
- Claim your work
 - Add headers/footers to documents and reports with information on why to contact with questions
 - Create vehicles for distributing important information in smaller chunks to larger audiences





Let's Talk

- What did I miss?
- What's worked for you?
- How can we help each other?

Who are you again?

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