Application of Strategic Management in Library and Information Science Profession: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

The changing environment of higher education and its future survival in India and around the world require universities to plan for the future and identify strategies to achieve their desired outcomes. The challenges and opportunities facing higher education are growing every year. There is a constant need to secure greater value from available resources to ensure long term sustainability. Growth of participation in higher education, decrease in government funding, rapid growth in the Indian higher education export market, increased competition, pressure to generate new sources of income, globalization, stake holder demand for quality education, student diversity and changing patterns of participation, changing government policies, an ageing workforce and changes in world economy are some of the many challenges facing universities. These challenges require universities to have effective management information system to help track performance against their strategic plan. The world in which libraries have operated has changed dramatically in the last several decades. However, the advent of the World Wide Web and the shift of information resources to electronic format have resulted in a revolution in the ways that libraries are operated and how patrons are taught about library resources. Strategic Planning in Libraries is absolutely necessary in view of the present day rapid advances in technology. Most libraries are in the area of education and research, in a college or University supporting both searching and research. Strategic planning should be a cooperative effort with inputs from administration, the computer center personnel. faculty, students and the library staff. Role of librarian is increasingly important during the strategic planning, as educator and leader within the process, whether the process happens within the library or in the Institution. The strategic plan developed should offer a pattern that integrates major goals, policies and actions of the institution into a cohesive whole. It should help allocate resources, capitalize on relative strengths and militate against weaknesses etc. This paper details well defined strategic plans for the library to set a clear direction, allow looking at the strengths and weaknesses with the environment, and devoting resources to strengthen support in the core areas of teaching and research.

Introduction

The 21st century can be described as the era of innovative technology. With the ongoing process of globalization, growing competition and spurt in knowledge activities, the demand for information is growing in all spheres of economy. The knowledge based work environment demands problem solving information at greater speed and as per user convenience Strategic Planning in Libraries is absolutely necessary in view of the present day rapid advances in technology. Most libraries are in the area of education and in a college or University supporting both teaching and research. Through research, in a strategic planning which provides speedy information access and ample learning opportunities for everyone and integrate information with the work process and everyday working life of information users, the university libraries can develop into institutions which facilitate learning and real time access to the desired global information resources Strategic planning should be a cooperative effort with inputs from administration, the computer center personnel, faculty, students and the library staff. Role of librarian increasingly important during the strategic planning, as educator and leader within the process, whether the process happens within the library or in the Institution. The strategic plan developed should offer a pattern that integrates major goals, policies and actions of the institution into a cohesive whole. It should help allocate resources, capitalize on relative strengths and militate against weaknesses etc.

These libraries will even help to establish person-to-person contacts and link information with information in the interest of creation of new knowledge. Today's complex and challenging environment requires the libraries to focus on core mission and willingness to experiment. Small changes may meet the universities short term needs but they will be inadequate to sustain excellence on the long term needs. Universities libraries are affected by many changes in education and research that had impact on the university as a whole. Some of these changes present opportunities and some threaten higher education and academic libraries as they operate. So, Strategic planning is absolutely necessary in view of the present day rapid advances in technology.

Strategic planning in Libraries

Strategic planning is a management tool to help the libraries to do better. It is used to determine mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities, timeliness etc. This is a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what the library is, what it does and why it does it, with a focus on the future. Strategic planning is only useful if it supports strategic thinking and leads to strategic management. This is the basis for an effective organization. In other words we can say that:

"The essence of formal strategic planning is the systematic identification of opportunities and threats that lie in the future which, in combination with other relevant data, provide a basis for a company's making better current decisions to exploit the opportunities and to avoid the threats"

Importance

Librarians cannot live in the past, even though some have been guilty of this, but must look to the future and anticipate what another decade may bring. Modern libraries have to be managed according to modem practices, considering market forces and the current economic climate. Libraries are still regarded as library heritage centers by many people outside the library profession and it is important for libraries to justify their existence in modern society. If librarians take the future of their services

seriously then they will plan for it, allowing for current trends and predicting future trends that will affect library services. Libraries have similar problems to other businesses, and library managers, like managers in industry, have often failed to realize the importance of strategic planning until a crisis situation strikes. Often library managers in a crisis situation act in hasty way that eventually proves detrimental to the library. Library services are affected by financial considerations, staffing problems and union matters. Libraries do not exist unchanging and independent from the rest of the world; the library environment does change and it is better to deal with something planned for, rather than having some something suddenly thrust upon the library. A library manager should plan for automation, for example, and be prepared for it, rather than have the staffs walked through the door one morning to find a new computer which none of them know how to operate. The biggest obstacle to thinking about, developing and implementing new strategies is the need to run today's business. The day-to-day events drive out most strategic good intentions. Strategic planning is essential to guarantee a future library service for clients. Carried out correctly, it will provide a set of realistic measurable objectives and it should motivate staff into helping the service to achieve these objectives. Good planning should result in a satisfactory library service for those who use it and for those who provide it.

What is Strategic Management?: Strategic management is that set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the long-run performance of a corporation. It includes environment scanning (both internal and external) strategy formulation, strategy implementation and evaluation and control. The study of strategic management therefore emphasizes the monitoring and evaluating of external opportunities and threats in light of a strengths and weaknesses. In other words we can say that "strategic management is the art, science and craft of formulating. implementing and evaluating cross-functional decisions that will enable an organization to achieve its long-term objectives". It is the process of specifying the organization's mission, vision and objectives, and

then allocating resources to implement the policies and plans, projects and programs, Strategic management seeks to coordinate and integrate the activities of the various functional areas of the libraries to achieve long-term organizational objectives. Strategic management is oriented toward long-range institutional goals and objectives. A distinction is made between such long-range, externally focused management and that which is internally focused, which will be characterized as either "tactical management" or "operational management".

- **Strategic Management**
- **Tactical Management**
- **Operational Management**

➢ **Tactical management :** TM is oriented toward implementation of the for meeting goals and objectives, either as defined on strategic bases or as may be needed to meet immediate needs. It must assure that the necessary resources are located consistent both with the goals and with what in fact are at hand or can be obtained. The time frame of concern is likely to be quite immediate-on the order of months to at most a year.

➢ **Operational management :** OM is oriented toward the most immediate needs in maintaining an effective operation. It is concerned with using the resources at hand in the most effective and efficient manner to meet those immediate needs. The time frame of concern is usually days to weeks.

Strategic Management in Libraries: This is the application of strategic thinking the jobs of leading the library. This has them following three elements:

- ❖ Formulation of the library's future mission in the light of changing external factors such as regulation, competition, technology and the users.
- ❖ Development of a competitive strategy to achieve the mission.
- ❖ Creation of the library structure which will deploy resources to successfully carry out its competitive strategy.

Need of Strategic Management: Academic Libraries are affected by many changes in education and research that had impact on the organization as a whole. Some of these changes

present opportunities and some threaten higher education and academic libraries as they operate. In addition there are other factors in the environment that are of specific importance to libraries as they plan for the future. Some of the important factors include:

Changes in Academic Libraries: Academic Libraries are on the path to change in India slowly. Collaborations and partnerships require new skills for staff, such as knowledge of licensing and negotiations technical infrastructure management. Traditional models of academic library services are insufficient to meet current requirements and the librarians need to engage in devising new models.

Changes in Technology: The increasing online environment is resulting in users who are more technology savvy and are demanding and expecting more from the libraries. It is necessary to create new modes to deliver services to the users desktops even outside the campuses. As more resources are created via the web, issues arise related to licensing, archiving, security and access. Librarians are challenged to develop new technical skills and abilities to validate the quality of information resources over the web.

Changes in Publishing: The challenges are traditional scholarly communication converting the traditional publishing to the digital environment; new intellectual property rights issues, alternatives to journals and dramatic increase in all forms of information content etc. These challenges along with Enabling technologies have created major issues around copyright, ownership and management of digital resources.

Changes in Education: Innovations in the design and delivery of education to reach to the people are on the increase. But effectiveness of such innovations and the impact on the faculty productivity is still not clear. The new modes of learning need different approach and new support system for both students and the faculty

Changes in Research Environment: Research funding, which was with government support is now available from public and private sources. While these new partnerships are important to the research, they also raise issues about the priorities, type of resources and support and the

faculty interest, addressing the legal issues etc. only established research libraries remain unaffected by these challenges in research funding.

Functions of Strategic Management

Strategic Management is more than planning just at it is more than traditional tactical management. Strategic management implies more than the ability to envision the future. It also includes the ability to implement that vision. In the words of lan H. Wilson: "It is a continuous process, truly a line management functions that is fundamental to the running of a business- not just planning for it- because it integrates strategy and operation, long term and short-term and all functions of the business" If the functions of tactical management are planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling then the functions of strategic management are envisioning, planning, communicating and implementing. While strategic management includes the ability to mobilize on a tactical and operational basis, it also requires the ability to get the external support both politically and financially that is needed to move an institution forward.

Envisioning: Establishing a vision is not the same thing as market analysis. It is also not the same thing as fantasizing. It is a process both rational and intuitive that is based on a careful assessment of the social, economic, political and technological directions of the broader community. Out of this appreciation for the texture of the future and the role of the library a vision is born that transcends the here and now. A visionary sees opportunity where others may only see problems. He or she is skilled at capturing the essence of what is and can be. In libraries a visionary sees beyond financial constraints and technological challenges. A visionary understand that the goal of the library is to provide information and knowledge. A visionary does not get stuck with lamenting the passing of the way things were and instead embraces the excitement of the way things can be.

Planning: As important as vision is, it takes more than vision to reach a goal. It also takes planning and the ability to implement the plan. Moving from a vision to a plan grounds the project in reality and makes it concrete. In many ways planning takes a vision one step farther. A plan set out a goal, a direction and interim stops along the way. A plan tests our understanding of both the institution and the culture in which it exists. Strategic planning as a subset of strategic management, it is continuing and iterative process

Communicating: The higher up in an organization one rises, the more important communication becomes as a separate, identifiable skill. All the vision in the world won't get you closer to a goal if you are unable to enlist the aid to staff, boards, community leaders, founder's business leaders, the press, the public, friends and advisors. An effective communicator begins where the interest of the institution and the people who need to support the institution intersect. Style of delivery is important in other ways as well. A good communicator expresses thoughts cleanly, clearly, often in simple declarative sentences.

Implementing: The often repeated saying "the devil is in the details" is true. A vision without follow through is nothing more than a daydream. It is in the area of an implementation that we see more of the tactical and operations functions: organizing, staffing, directing and controlling, still, there is different. Warren Bennis has observed that "managers catch and ride the waves: leaders create the waves."

Strategic Planning Principles

In developing a strategy it is important to ask right questions to formulate night choices The typical rights Questions for the academic libraries to answer are:

> ➢ What do libraries need to do to support excellence in the students
> ➢ How the library can support a divergent research needs, on and off campus including support in Collaborative research.
> ➢ How the library can continue to facilitate and preserve developments in knowledge across the campus and in the wider scope of research and scholarship.
> ➢ How to participate actively in campus-wide solutions to information

technology applications to support teaching and research.

- How the library can contribute and strengthen the life on campus in the institution.

The Strategic Planning process: Bryson identifies seven stages in the process of strategic planning

- Initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process.
- Identifying organizational mandates
- Clarifying organizational mission and values
- Assessing the external environment: opportunities and threats
- Assessing the internal environment: strengths and weaknesses.
- Identifying strategic issues.
- Formulating strategies to manage these issues.
  - Set Mission, Objectives, and Strategies
  - Analyze the Environment
  - Identify Opportunities And Threats
  - Analyze Resources
  - Identify Strengths and Weaknesses
  - Reassess Mission And objectives
  - Formulate Strategies
  - Implement Strategies
  - Evaluate Results

Initiating Strategic Planning: The decision to introduce a planning process into the library has to be agreed with staff and key decision makers outside the library system in order to ensure that there is no ground for complaint when the scheme is under way. Once a consensus has been reached on introducing strategic planning, a planning committee can be set up and a process agreed. The planning committee should include not only library staff but also other interested parties. In public libraries, these could include members of user groups and local councilors. In business libraries, senior executives could be invited to join the committee.

Identifying Organizational Mandates: A key starting point is identifying the objectives of the parent organization or the local authority of which the library forms a part. The issues which need to be identified in corporate planning are normally much larger than those found in the library consent Planning within the organization may be a combination of Management by Objectives (MBO), strategic planning, financial planning and intuition. When the institution has identified issues and how these are to be met, it will draw up a document that states its objectives- a corporate mission statement. The objectives or legal requirements of the business, academic institution or local authority will influence the goals and objectives of the library.

The Organizational Mission: The mission of the service must first be considered: what is the principal reason for the library's existence? This can be summed up in a "mission statement. Le a paragraph summarizing the key values of the library service. Drawing up, such a statement will help to clarify the library's position in the environment and encourage the planning committee to think of possible strategies to achieve these values. The following are examples of mission statements:

- It is the mission of the library to provide a high quality library and information service for all its actual and potential users, regardless of race, sex or disability.
- The library aims to provide an integrated library, information and learning service to support the college's objectives. Services should be responsive, foster quality, creativity and effectiveness, and incorporate good professional practice while recognizing local need.
- Our purpose is to provide an information and library service to the people of Cambridge shire that enhances their quality of life and provides opportunities for personal, community and economic development
- To provide, promote and maintain access to books and related information for the general community, and for any special needs of the community, by the most appropriate means.

Mission statements obviously vary, depending upon the needs of the client group. An academic library's mission will be to provide and develop an adequate learning resource and research centre

. A public library's mission is to cater for all the leisure and business needs of its community. A mission statement for an industrial library will be based on the need to provide users with up-to-date, relevant information.

Goals and Objectives

Goals indicate long-term commitments and priorities. The goals of the service and the narrower, measurable objectives needed to achieve these goals should be set down and a list of goals and objectives can be issued to everybody who needs to know. Goals can be divided into three types-service goals, resource management goals and administrative directional goals. The objectives will indicate how successfully the goals are being reached. These objectives must be relevant to the goals to which they relate and they must be measurable, so that it is easily seen by glancing at comparable figures whether or not the goal is being achieved. These objectives will be used in performance measurement assessments and reviews. The following is an example of a goal and related objectives:

Goal: To make library collections more relevant to the needs of users

Objective: To increase to 15 per cent the proportion of the total budget spent on materials.

Objective: To increase turnover rate of materials to average three circulations per item per year by 1984.

Objective: To spend 20 per cent of the annual materials budget for subscriptions.

Objective: To increase non-print holdings to 10 per cent of the total collection by the end of a five year period.

Objective: To maintain an annual weeding rate of at least 5 per cent.

Objective: To increase the proportion of total new acquisitions devoted to popular in demand serials.

Swot Analysis
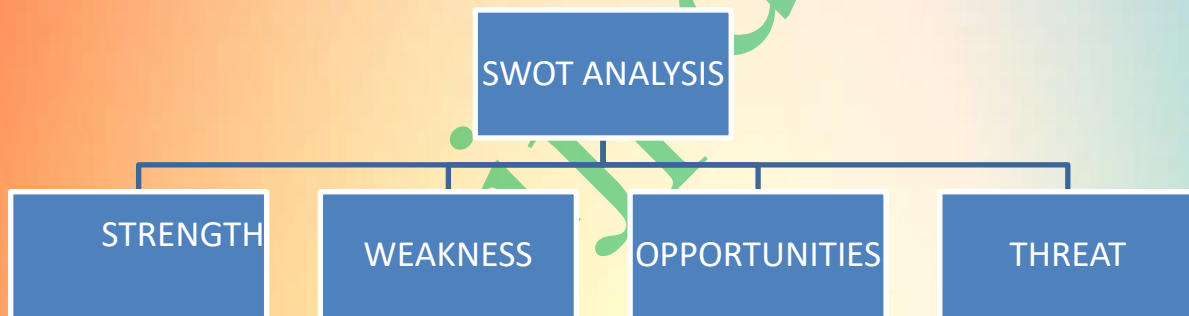
Before any plans can be made it is important to identify what the service needs provide for in the future and how the service is best able to make this provision SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis allows the identification of needs, potential problems and issues and plays an important part in strategic planning The strengths and weaknesses are within the service--for example, the stock, the library building of the staff. Opportunities and threats come from outside the service-for example, funding or changes the client groups. Before any progress can be made, information about the opportunities and threats facing the service from outside most be discovered. This information can be obtained by checking economic, political or social trends. The library's strategy must be prepared meet changes in trends which musy affect the service. Surveys allow the collection of information about the service, though they may not always be popular with users. The information given in user surveys can be a reliable measurement of the users' perceptions of the service. This gives the service a starting point from which to proceed. Surveys may reveal a change in client groups which should be catered for. Alternatively, they may reveal a shift in attitude Client needs are very important in a service industry. Sometimes identification of external influences is best done independently and objectively by somebody who is also outside the service. All the available information about the service must be presented to the planning committee. Threats should not be

over-emphasized at the expense of the opportunities which can arise from the situation. Statistics that are presented to the planning committee may be used for performance measurement later on in the process. Every service has physical and financial constraints, which may be construed as weaknesses. Weaknesses are always easier to identify than strengths. Weak points may include the size of the building, the size or scope of the collection, the accessibility of the stock and poor staffing levels. Strengths can be shown by the positive use of statistics reveal how many clients actually borrow material, and how many make use of special facilities such as online searching. The library may house the largest periodical collection in the country or the greatest specialist stock on a particular subject. This would be a great asset, but a great asset must be developed further so that it is always better than those of competitors. The time to build up strengths is when the service is already strong, rather than leaving a service saying, "We are best and waking up one morning to find that somebody else is better.

Formulating Strategies

Strategies are the bulldozers of managers in that they convert what the library wants to do into an accomplishment. The planning committees have already identified the mission, goals and objectives of the service and they have studied all the information that was made available during the SWOT analysis. The committee must now decide upon effective strategies based on the strategic issues that were identified, assumptions about the future, and backward analysis from their "ideal" library to the current situation in which they find themselves. Different types of strategy, concerning different strategic issues, have to be examined and discussed, focusing upon where they link with each other and the library.

Strategy formulation will proceed more smoothly if some mistakes can be avoided. Mistakes which are commonly made include: confusing strategies with goals and objectives, making an incomplete description of strategy components, only stating the manner in which a strategy will change the future: failing to see interrelationships involved at the conceptual and operational levels; failing to distinguish different types of strategies forgetting to consider past actions in strategy formulation, and looking only for explicit strategy statements.

Strategy Implementation: "Brilliant strategic thinking and magnificently prepared pieces of paper called strategic plans' have little value unless implementation follows".

The Committee Must now Decide upon Effective Strategies: The nature of the implementation is part of how power is used within the organization and current political system. Strategies can be implemented by making coherent decisions about policies which may already exist or may need drawing up. A key starting point is a financial policy or a recognizable budgeting system which can be developed into a financial strategy. This should be followed by recognized staffing, stock and technology policies which the staff know about and are kept informed about.

Performance Measurement: It is not sufficient simply to introduce a strategic planning policy; a review of the strategies is needed to ensure that the strategies are still running according to the timescale set by the committee and are still relevant. It is futile to continue with a strategy that is obviously either not working or irrelevant or both. Performance measures are based on the quantifiable objectives and goals drawn up in the strategy formulation process. Taken on its own, a performance measure only gives the quantitative indication of the service, it does not provide any indication of performance. Once performance measurement has been agreed on, performance measures must be considered. These can be divided as follows

- ❖ Service input measures: amount of resources applied to services; amount of funding applied to services; relevant attributes applied to services.
- ❖ Service output measures: quantities of output; qualities of output, timeliness of output; availability of service; accessibility of service.
- ❖ Service effectiveness measures amount of use; user perceptions of attributes user-expressed satisfaction; user-indicated importance, purpose of use, consequence of use.

❖ Service domain measures: total population size; total population attributes, user population size, user population attributes; size of geographic area, geographic area attributes; information needs.

The use of performance measures is invaluable in evaluating library services in an economically-oriented society. Performance measures also evaluate strategies to ensure that they are still relevant and are achieving the goals set by the planning committee.

Conclusions

Like other organizations, libraries engage in strategic planning in order to learn about environmental challenges and to set goals for overcoming them. One fact is certain for libraries. The changes that librarians are living through now are only the beginning. We are still at the start of this information revolution and it may take a century (or more) for society to be able to fully deal with all the consequences that this new information environment has created. More change is coming. As such, librarians need to plan for it. Strategic planning is a route that many in business and education have used as a method to plan for the future. This paper will look at the strategic planning process and show examples of how strategic planning can be used in academic library instructional planning. Strategic planning can be used to great effect within a library or information service. It has a potential that is not fully appreciated by all those currently working in the information profession. This is a time of great excitement and challenges for librarians, information professionals and researchers. The possibilities are enormous but the libraries need to develop Strategic planning to streamline the processes keeping in view of the present and the future requirements.

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