LIBRARY STRATEGIC
PLANNING ANALYSIS
By
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I started my career working at the Scientific Fundamental Library of Moscow State University. This University has a long tradition as the oldest-surviving, largest, and most prestigious university in Russia. Thus, I have had an early interest in academic libraries which is why I chose to look at an academic library's strategic plan. I selected Brock University in Canada after reviewing several alternatives as their plan seemed to provide a very good example of a strategic plan for a library.

BROCK UNIVERSITY

Brock University is one of Canada's top medium-size institutions in terms of quality of education, quality of teaching and most satisfied students. With 18,000 students and nearly 600 faculty, it is small enough to be intimate, big enough to be world-class and in demand among international students. It is located just north of the Niagara Falls area of New York. The University has seven different Faculties as follows:

1. Applied Health Sciences;
2. Goodman School of Business;
3. Education;
4. Humanities;
5. Mathematics and Science;
6. Social Sciences; and
7. Graduate Studies

The James A. Gibson Library supports these Faculties.

James A. Gibson Library

The University Library system comprises the James A. Gibson Library, housed on eight floors of the main tower, and a separate Map Library located in another building.

The Library's collections contain over 1.5 million physical items and a vast array of digital resources that are available both on and off-campus. These include an extensive number of databases, over 25,000 full text electronic journals, hundreds of thousands e-books, and several image and sound databases. Its total holdings amount to over 2.4 million items. Study spaces, including individual carrels and tables for group work are available for almost 1300 users. Computers are located on all library floors and laptops are available for loan from the Circulation Services Desk. The Library is open for over 95 hours each week including evenings and weekends, with extended hours during exam periods. It has a professional staff of seventeen librarians.

PLAN ANALYSIS

Brock University and the James A. Gibson Library take planning seriously. In researching their plans I found both an April 2009 Strategic Plan and then an August 2012 Strategic Plan. The 2009 Plan had an Appendix consisting of the 2008-2010 Marketing Plan. Instead of a single strategic plan, the discovery of two plans permits me to see the development and increase in sophistication that occurred in planning at the Library. I will try to show by comparing these two plans that the Gibson librarians have understood the value of detailed planning and careful analysis. Using a business planning standard as a way to increase the value and respect of the library to the Brock University community can be seen in their preparation of the second Strategic Plan.

The Marketing Plan and the two Strategic Plans were not done for the Library alone, but were initiated by the branding program and the strategic planning that were started at the university level. These plans were developed by the Library to support the planning done by the University. I think it is unusual that the University started its branding program before doing a strategic plan. The academic plan developed by the University was known as "Brock 2014: Knowledge, Engagement, Transformation" which placed an increased emphasis on research, graduate studies, interdisciplinary approaches, and community engagement. It was from this that the Library needed to develop its Strategic Plan to support the University's plan. Since the date of the first plan was April 2009 the period covered by the Library's Plan was five years.

The structure of the April 2009 plan is a basic structure as follows:

> Introduction
> Vision
> Mission
> Strengths and Opportunities
> Themes and Goals (five goals with more detailed goals)
> Marketing Plan

The structure of the August 2012 builds on the initial structure, but adds additional important details as noted:

> Introduction
> Vision
> Mission
> Values both University and Library
> Strategic Priorities
> - Strategic Objectives
> - Strategic Actions
> - Measures of Success
> - Timeline

This second Plan develops the first in important ways and moves from being a basic model to one that is issue-based. It takes the goals noted in the first plan and develops them into specific objectives with specific actions that can be measured and establishes deadlines for the accomplishments of these objectives. The Marketing Plan covered only the years from 2008-2010 and there was no Marketing Plan included with the second Plan.

VISION/MISSION ANALYSIS

I observed that both the vision and the mission statements between the two Strategic Plans changed significantly. In the first vision statement the Plan seemed to mix mission ideas with the vision for the Library. In this vision statement the second sentence could be better treated as part of the mission statement. Moran & Stueart (YEAR) state that "The mission statement is a short, succinct statement focusing on the purpose of the organization, its reason for existence, and what it hopes to accomplish" (p. 78). As part of the vision statement the Library wanted to "promote a culture of learning and innovation", "create a sense of place", "support reading and reflection, research, and exploration". Each of these statements are really a mission idea as the text notes.

Both Plans started with one important idea. The idea that the Library is the "intellectual crossroads of the University" is a visionary thought. Moran and Stueart noted that "A vision statement, as an act of foresight, outlines what the organization wants to be. It is inspirational: … it is timeless, and it provides clear decision-making criteria" (p. 75). This idea is all of these. Instead of seeing the Library as only a support organization for the teaching and research done at the University, the Library proclaims that it wants to be at the center of the University's teaching and research efforts. There is the famous saying that "all roads lead to Rome." The Library wants to be the center of the University and is not ashamed to say it.

The revised vision statement used in the August 2012 Plan is inspirational, timeless and clear. It is just one sentence:

> "At the intellectual crossroads of the University, we are a dynamic and innovative library that inspires exploration, discovery and knowledge creation."

This is not a passive statement. Instead, it is full of action, confident and positive about its central place and value to the entire University. The first Plan only stated that "the Library will be", but this revised Plan states confidently "we are".

The same positive approach is seen in the changed mission statement. In the first Plan they only wanted to "provide" or "seek". In the second the vision words are inspirational and the mission statement uses strong words that require action (decisions). It is not just a statement. The mission will require providing, empowering, ensuring and collaborating. Both the vision statement and the mission statement complement each

other and call upon the Library, the librarians and the staff to be the best by inspiring and requiring action.

In addition, the August 2012 Plan details values that can be used to provide guidelines for the Library to follow when making decisions. To acknowledge and state their support for the values that the University has adopted, the Plan states them as ones that apply to the Library, but they also add four others that are based on their role as librarians. Service excellence, stewardship of scholarly records, open access to scholarly information and collaboration with their partners are all values that will help the librarians make the correct decisions.

<div align="center">GOALS EVALUATION</div>

Since the mission statements support the vision statement, how do the goals support the mission? As noted, there are four mission statements and four goals in the August 2012 Plan that relate back to the mission statements though not necessarily one-to-one.

Mission	**Goal**
Providing access to scholarly information resources of the highest possible quality $\longrightarrow$	Improve access to scholarly information
Empowering our users to find, evaluate and use information effectively $\longrightarrow$	Enhance student learning
Ensuring learner-focused library services and facilities $\longrightarrow$	Expand the reach of Brock research
Collaborating to create and develop the digital research infrastructure $\longrightarrow$	Ensure the Library is a preferred place to work and study

Commented [d5]: Nice work here.

As an example, the goal to "Expand the reach of Brock research" supports the Library's mission by providing first, access to scholarly information, and second, giving users from a wider audience the ability to find and use information. This then supports the vision of making the Library "the intellectual crossroads" for not only the University, but for those who are outside (and perhaps inside) the University that would find Brock research of interest.

Following the principles from business, the Plan takes each one of these Goals and seeks to support each goal with specific measurable objectives. In the first Plan, no consideration for measurement was included. It was simply a list of more detailed Goals (objectives) that would support the primary Goal. Using the August 2012 Plan, let us review several examples of Objectives that support each Goal.

Commented [d6]: Not principles from business per se; rather, good planning principles.

Goal: Improve access to scholarly information

The Plan identifies two Objectives in support of this Goal. The first Objective challenges the Librarians to "Dramatically upgrade systems for finding and using scholarly

information." From this, four specific actions are identified along with eight ways to measure whether success has been achieved. To illustrate an action, the first is to "assess and enhance the library website as a discovery portal based on best practices in user experience." Here the Library starts by measuring and collecting current usage metrics by looking at the data that is collected and reported by Google Analytics. However, these metrics do not provide an understanding of the users experience in using the website. They only indicate that the website was used. An important complimentary measure was to collect and analyze user feedback. Here users would be able to tell about their experience with the website and look at such things as whether the website was easy to navigate, responsive, logical in its construction, and easy to read.

Commented [d7]: Good.

These results provide the basic information to compare the impact of changes that would be made to "upgrade systems" and "enhance the library website." After implementation, the Library repeated the tests to compare the results before and after enhancements. They again collected statistics regarding usage and analyzed the data in comparison with the first set that was collected. They also collected and analyzed user feedback after the users had some experience with the new website. A review of the data will provide the Library with the information needed to determine if their efforts to improve access was successful.

Finally, part of each objective was to identify a Timeline for completion to make sure that priorities for completion were maintained and that the Library staff did not get distracted on subsequent or secondary priority objectives.

Goal: Enhance student learning

In preparing objectives for this Goal, the Librarians demonstrated that the nature of the world of information has changed and that information access skills will be necessary for students throughout their lives. This is illustrated by the first objective to "Prepare students to succeed in an information-intensive world". They recognize that simply doing something like teaching specific skills about how to use the library by itself will be unlikely to stimulate the students to learn and to apply these valuable skills that can be used throughout life. By incorporating library research requirements into a course the students will be able to see the need for good library skills if their courses require that they access and obtain information needed to complete assignments through serious library research. The Librarians will be seeking to work with faculty to see how use of library resources and services are embedded in their courses. One way of measuring this is to gather information from the librarians about how their activities of working with faculty have been done.

After collecting information about how the faculty incorporates library resources and services within current courses, the librarians want to create additional opportunities for enhancing student learning. They seek to do this by targeting specific courses throughout the University to help build competencies. Since library information has

been changing at a rapid rate many on the faculty might not be aware of the extent of the changes and the ways that information access can enhance their own teaching.

These changes demand not only the time and willingness of the librarians to work with faculty on course design, but will also require that the library be prepared to work with students who may need to approach information in ways they have not previously considered or known. This also necessitates the support of the academic administration in ensuring that all faculty understand that higher standards for information access are being required throughout the University. The University appears to have a plan for regularly reviewing courses and redesigning those courses to meet new educational requirements. It is here that the Librarians will be able to work with the faculty to "help students build information competencies".

> *Goal: Expand the reach of Brock research*

As a medium size regional university, the Library does not have unlimited resources or a large area of influence that a prestigious internationally known university would possess. However, the Librarians have understood that in certain special areas they can be widely recognized. This understanding is based on the objective to "Establish the Brock Library as an internationally recognized destination for archival materials in unique and strategic areas" and more specifically noted that they wanted to "Expand the scope and quantity of culturally significant collections".

A historical collection is one type of collection that can be culturally unique. Though Brock University is a newer university, it is the one that recognizes its geographic position of being just north of the border with the United States. The University was named for Sir Isaac Brock who was known as the "Hero of Upper Canada". Brock was the head of British forces for Upper Canada and died fighting against the American invasion during the War of 1812. One way of respecting this part of Canadian history and the adoption of the name for the University is to focus on this area of Canadian history which they have done. Two measurable items by which they would measure their success in meeting this Objective are to obtain:

- "One or two culturally significant collections targeted and acquired", and
- "Fifty new items (e.g. letters, books, newspapers) added to the War of 1812 website".

Both measures would help to make Brock University as a center for historic research on this period of Canadian, British and American history and making items available on the website would promote the University beyond its campus. In both cases their goal was to complete them by the end of 2013.

Commented [d8]: Aggressive goal.

> *Goal: Ensure the Library is a preferred place to work and study*

If a library is to be a preferred place to work and study it requires that the library have both a physical environment that is comfortable, quiet with adequate space and also

that the information resources are readily available. The physical space Objective is clear – "Transform library spaces to meet evolving student and faculty needs." The way patrons use a library has changed significantly compared to how it was used when the University was first founded. The way courses are taught has also changed. Both place different space demands on a library. The specific Action that the Strategic Plan identified was to "Expand study space in the Learning Commons" with the establishment of "two new group study rooms and eight additional wired carrels." As it has been true with LIS 770 group projects, group study is promoted and the use of personal computers is now a necessary tool for a student and both need to be considered in the space design of a library. Since the Library was originally designed before either of these two changes, the Library needed to adjust the way it used space to meet current teaching and learning approaches. It is important to note that the Plan did not see this as the final solution, but also set Action priorities to continue to evaluate how the Library's physical space is being used by faculty and students.

PLAN REVIEW

The April 2009 Plan included section on Strengths and Opportunities which covered traditional SWOT items. It was interesting to note that this section was deleted in the August 2012 Plan. I had to seriously think about this because including a SWOT analysis would seem to be something that would help in guiding the preparation of a plan. However, after looking carefully at the plan, it would seem as though the second Plan implicitly included a SWOT analysis by identifying appropriate Goals and Objectives to either build on their strengths, address their weaknesses, take advantage of their opportunities and deal with potential threats. As an example, not having proper physical facilities is certainly a weakness that could negatively affect their success as a library and it was addressed. Likewise, having a unique collections creates an opportunity to be internationally prominent in a specialized area. Perhaps they wanted the August 2012 Plan to be the one that called for action and therefore they decided to remove this type of analysis.

Neither Plan included or discussed PEST (Political, Economic, Social, or Technological) analysis. Though not separately identified or discussed, each of these factors are evident in the Plan. As a government sponsored university political considerations are always present, but these considerations would be addressed more appropriately by the administration and leadership of the university. Economic issues are always present because every plan must consider what can be done given the financial resources available. Budgeting for a government entity is a political process and the Library was very perceptive in promoting its Vision as being "the intellectual crossroads" meaning it needed to be properly funded. There would be no purpose in creating a plan and developing objectives that could not be implemented. Such a plan would only be a "wish-list" of dreams and not something that could be used to achieve its mission and goals. The University understood that it needed to meet the social objectives of Canadian society which included attracting international students to become part of the University's campus social environment. This would make the University part of the global educational world. And finally, the impact of technology on teaching, research,

physical space requirements, and communication is evident and much of the Plan represented a way of dealing with the changes that development of technology was causing.

As I noted in the Goals Evaluation section above, the Plan included clear methods for assessment. These methods either benchmarked those assessments against current factors or identified measures of success that could be answered with either a "yes" or "no" regarding accomplishment. Since I have mentioned several of these measures above, I won't repeat them here.

MARKETING PLAN

As I said before, Library had a 2008-2010 Marketing Plan that existed before the development of the Strategic Plan. It is a mixture of strategic thoughts that needed to be identified before one can develop a marketing plan. Let me illustrate it with the two examples. The marketing plan had to do a simple SWOT analysis and had to identify the users that it wanted to address. In the section titled "Purpose of the Marketing Plan" there was the statement "the Library will strive to be recognized as a vital and integral partner in research, teaching and learning". Though not stated as vision statement it really represents their vision at the time. This is a very different vision than being the "intellectual crossroads of the university" and perhaps one of the key benefits of this marketing plan was to force the Library to consider and shift its understanding of its role. This is the key marketing benefit because before something can be marketed the product and its benefits need to be identified and understood.

It took time for this change to occur and the initial marketing Goals and Objectives identified certain steps to be taken to be better recognized though without ways of measuring success attached to each goal. At the end they did list a variety of ways of measuring success, but also noted that "marketing initiatives may be difficult to measure".

In the August 2012 Plan, marketing is not treated as a separate section. However, marketing considerations are present. As an example of an Objective within Enhance Student Learning Goal, Librarians would seek to directly work with the faculty to assist with resource identification as well as to coordinate on course redesign. Directly they were marketing to faculty through direct cooperation, but they were indirectly marketing to students by creating a demand for library usage. Another specific illustration from this Goal was to "Target promotion activities to graduate students" and Librarians would evaluate the success of this Objective by measuring the increase in graduate student contacts with liaison librarians. The Marketing Plan helped the librarians see how marketing is important as a part of strategic planning.

CONCLUSION

I feel fortunate that I was able to find three plans from a single academic library because it provided the opportunity to see how their thinking developed and became more sophisticated. The August 2012 has many positives. The Vision and Mission are clear and the Goals and Objectives support them. They did simply provide a long list of goals, but tried to make sure that everything flowed from their Vision. The Measures of Success and Timelines provided accountability for performance and also provided timely feedback on their success or failure. They had included a SWOT analysis in the April 2009 Plan and partially in the Marketing Plan and as noted, this was removed. My only suggestion would be to include a SWOT analysis and perhaps a PEST analysis as an appendix to the August 2012 Plan. In order to make additional comments about the Plan it would be necessary to have more detailed information about the Library. The Plan is something that the Library leadership can be proud of preparing.

I enjoyed reading Chapter 1 from Blue Oceans Strategy by Chan Kim & Mauborgne. (YEAR). ~~Doing that I was thinkingI~~ thought about how an academic library might fit into this analysis. The author defines red oceans as having boundaries that are defined and accepted and where the competitive rules of the game are known. "In contrast, blue oceans are defined by untapped market space, demand creation, and the opportunity for highly profitable growth" (p.4). An academic library is normally bounded by the university it serves and is competing with known rules for the attention of faculty and students as an information source. I don't think an academic library fits in the definition of a blue ocean but it does need to deal with blue ocean organizations as the source and providers of information changes. However, an academic library can be very competitive and "try to outperform their rivals to grab a greater share of existing demand" (p.4). The Goal of ensuring the Library as a preferred place to work and study reflects this red ocean approach.

Finally, the most important thing I observed and appreciated was seeing the Vision of the Library develop from trying "to be recognized as a vital and integral partner in research, teaching and learning" to being the "intellectual crossroads of the university". They changed their attitude from trying to be respected to being central for the entire university. That is a big and important change in attitude that all librarians should adopt.

References

1. Chan Kim, W., & Mauborgne, R. (2006). *Blue ocean strategy: how to create uncontested market space and make the competition irrelevant.* Harvard Business School Publishing. (Ch.1).

2. Dubicki, E. (2007). Basic Marketing and Promotion Concepts. *Serials Librarian, 53*(3), 5-15.

3. Stueart, Robert D., Moran, Barbara B., Morner, Claudia J. (2013). *Library and information center management* (8th ed.). Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited.

Nice work, Elena. Veey well crafted and well-written. I would have liked to have seen more support from the literature, however.

You have done excellent work in this class. I greatly appreciate your solid work, and the contributions you made to the class discussions.

Grade: A (24.5 points).