

Advances in Library Administration and Organization
Volume 33

Advances in Library Administration and Organization

Delmus E. Williams
Janine Golden
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Editors

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND
ORGANIZATION VOLUME 33

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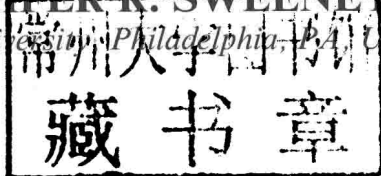
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ADVANCES IN LIBRARY
ADMINISTRATION AND
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ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

It is hard to believe that we are now at Volume 33 of *Advances in Library Administration and Organization*. My first encounter with it came with the first volume when I received a letter from Jerry McCabe asking if I wanted to consider this as a place to publish. I responded that I would, and told him about the work I was doing towards my dissertation, work that he eventually published in Volume 2 (as is my custom, I was late in getting my submission done). I followed the series for a number of years, publishing one further article there, and, then, following Volume 12, Ed Garten and I took over editorial control of the series.

Now, two decades have passed, and, in conjunction with, first Ed, and most recently with Janine Golden and Jennifer Sweeney, I have had the opportunity to work with good researchers and published a number of pieces that we as editors and they as authors have right to be proud of. We have been able to showcase a lot of good research about library leadership/management/administration featuring the work of people from all kinds of libraries in the United States and in perhaps a dozen other countries. The articles published reflected the tastes of the editors, but they also reflected some of the best of the library research produced and published over the last 25 years.

This volume follows in the vein of what has come before. The first chapter offered comes from the West Indies and reflects Jennine Knight's interest in incorporating human resources development (HRD) into the strategic planning. Knight focuses on the idea that, particularly in a time of change, the most important asset that libraries have and the one that is most important in transforming their operations are the people who staff our programs. When striving to meet changing needs of those we serve, our people must constantly upgrade and update their skill sets and be prepared to assume new roles as expectations change. As a result, she suggests that a critical part of our planning efforts should focus on insuring that librarians and support staff are continually offered the opportunity to grow professionally and develop the skill sets required to keep themselves up to date and make their libraries better.

Jon E. Cawthorne follows this with a piece on the use of scenarios to help those who work in research libraries envision new organizational

models to support library services. Like Knight, Cawthorne argues that it is essential for library leaders to consider critically what they need to do to keep libraries relevant and then how they might do it, ensuring that they understand their environment and their place within that context. He also argues that it is critical for the library to consider new ways to look at their operations to see how best to meet the challenges confronting them. He suggests that the use of scenarios can encourage a richer discussion of alternative futures for these libraries with campus leaders and with those who work within them. In his view, they offer an opportunity to consider ideas for a future library that are, at once, abstract enough to encourage wide exploration and pragmatic enough to be sufficiently rooted in the present to help transition programs from where they are to where they need to be. Cawthorne argues that these kinds of scenarios can be a valuable tool as leaders and those they lead cope with an uncertain future.

Denise Kwan and Libi Shen follow with a case study designed to help identify skills that have been identified within libraries as contributing to successful leadership within our profession, based on the perceptions of leaders in our profession who have emerged from minority communities. Several themes emerged from their work, suggesting that while technical skills form a foundation for leadership, success at a higher level requires interpersonal skills including those relating to persuasion and a capacity to forge collaborations within the library. Kwan and Shen then suggest that there is a need to use more deliberate succession planning to improve leadership performance, enhance the effectiveness of leaders and their programs, retain librarians and thereby ease staff shortages, particularly at intermediate leadership levels, and increase diversity within the ranks of library leadership.

David J. Patterson follows with a different kind of piece, one that talks about efforts to link a library information course to a learning community within a community college that is focused on teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) students. In order to help ESL students find needed resources to complete their work, the students, their ESL instructor and the subject librarian assigned to support them worked together to integrate curricula from both the library and ESL courses. As a result, the community discovered new language forms, new texts, new ideas, and new research by developing relationships among people coming from different places but working towards common goals. This is not a new idea, but it is too easy on a college campus to think in silos, and Patterson produces a reminder that delivering instruction works better when librarians are able to work with faculty to convince them of the potential contribution they can make and instructors choose to rely on the capacity of the librarian to enhance student learning.

Finally, Peter Gisolfi offers his view on what public library buildings should be like in the new century. Gisolfi is an architect who has had experience designing buildings, and he has concluded that, while our buildings have always been designed around housing and making available collections, that is becoming less useful as libraries transition to community information centers, designed to be centers of their communities and information resources that draw on both what the library owns and what the people working there and their clients can find in the larger environment. The chapter serves as a reminder that both library programs and the fundamentals underlying their development are changing radically. Gisolfi limits his argument to public libraries, because that is what he knows best, but the insights provided could contribute to the thinking of any library leader as they consider the space in which they and their users work.

As we close this volume, we the editors are also ending our time as editors for *Advances*. Janine Golden is moving into a new phase of her career, and I am moving further into retirement. Jennifer Sweeney has been critical in the development of this volume and contributed two stellar articles to the series in past years. Her contribution was much appreciated, but she too will not have an editorial role in the immediate future of the series. I speak for myself in saying that I have enjoyed my long tenure working with various editors to bring *Advances* to you. My life has always been about relationships, and work of the sort Janine and Jennifer have done this past year to keep me focused and build excitement for the work has kept me going. I also appreciate the help of staff from our three publishers (JAI, then Elsevier, now Emerald) for their patience and encouragement over the years. Finally, our thanks go out to our authors, people who saw the unique opportunity publishing in ALAO has provided and taken advantage of it to produce really good work.

Samantha Hines of the University of Montana will assume the editorship of ALAO beginning with the next volume, and she is working with an editorial board to continue the series in coming years. It will change, but change is inevitable, and fresh eyes can keep the work fresh. I wish her luck, and hope you will contact her if you think you have something to contribute to the effort. In closing, Janine, Jennifer, and I want to thank you all for your help in making ALAO what it has been and hope you will continue to help it become whatever it becomes. We look forward to see what comes next, both for *Advances* and for ourselves.

Delmus E. Williams
Editor

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INVESTING IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR SUCCESS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Jennine Knight

ABSTRACT

The dynamic environment in which the academic library operates requires explicit links between business strategy and a new management priority including the development of people; this is the focus of human resource development (HRD). It serves the needs of an organization by ensuring that employees' expertise is state-of-the-art, something that is critical in a period of rapid technological development coinciding with ever-expanding societal needs. HRD can be relied upon to support and shape a wide range of academic library initiatives requiring a competent and engaged workforce by recognizing people as the organization's most critical asset, one that drives competitive advantage and helps it outperform the market. Emphasis is placed on developing an organizational context that will attract and develop talented individuals and leaders and keep them engaged. Furthermore, HRD activities must respond to job changes and integrate staff skills sets with the long-term plans and strategies of the organization thus ensuring the efficient and effective use of

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resources. This chapter explores HRD as a strategic concern of the organization and how it can best serve the organization in the long term. In so doing, it considers how HRD can help the academic library focus resources in those areas where there are strong likelihoods that they can produce substantial improvements in future capacity and performance. This kind of strategic planning helps the organization configure resources within a dynamic competitive environment, thus serving market needs and satisfying stakeholder expectations, helping meet its business purpose and maintain its strategic direction. The case study developed here highlights the need for the effective linkage of HRD and strategic planning for the advancement of the academic library. It suggests the need for developing and implementing both a strategic plan and an HRD plan and developing a culture of strategic human resource development (SHRD) in academic libraries.

Keywords: Strategic planning; academic libraries; human resource development; successful libraries

INTRODUCTION

Academic librarianship is in a state of flux continually being influenced by the unending revisions to the social, economic, political, and technological landscapes of which it is a part. The academic library must repeatedly adjust to, among other things, the advancements in publishing and pedagogy, new and emerging technologies, changing user needs and ever-expanding user expectations, and the increased costs of books, electronic resources, and serials with correspondingly tight purchase budgets. These events have an impact on the services offered, the use of the services and its perceived value. Libraries have also contributed to this disregard for their value as they "tended to take for granted that their importance would continue to be acknowledged without any questioning" (Nawe, 2003, p. 417). However, demanding business environments are making it necessary for organizations to constantly reinvent themselves to adapt to global competitive and societal influences. The paradigm in which they have operated, defined as "a set of beliefs or 'taken for granted' assumptions we make about our world, which in time become unchallenged and unchallengeable" (Walton, 1999, p. 3), is shifting ever more quickly, because the environments in which the academic library operates is changing and will likely continue to do so, academic librarianship must find explicit links between

its business strategy and a new management priority that includes the development of employees if the organizations served are to be competitive and sustainable. Employee expertise has to be developed as a core resource for operational success through effective programs and work processes. Torraco and Swanson (1995) define expertise as "the optimal level at which a person is able and/or expected to perform within a specialized realm of human activity" (p. 11). In essence, the development of organizational expertise through human resource development (HRD) contributes significantly to optimal business performance in academic libraries since it increases the possibilities that objectives will be met. HRD has the strategic function of assuring the competence of employees to serve the institution's current performance demands. Simply put, HRD has the strategic intent of ensuring that required expertise is available and effectively utilized in order to capitalize on any opportunities presented to the institution. Strategic intent plays a primary role in shaping an organization's future direction and is linked to the organization's competitiveness. As cited by Hamel and Prahalad (2005), strategic intent captures the essence of winning. Thus, the development of employees must form the basis of the strategic intent of our profession and must be incorporated in the organization's strategic planning efforts. As the intent of HRD is the development of people, the new academic library paradigm must foster an interrelationship between HRD and strategic planning, tying an inventory of skills relating key positions to emerging organizational needs, and developing plans to insure that staff have those skills and that they are constantly updated (Torraco & Swanson, 1995).

Libraries no longer occupy the secure position they previously held (McNicol, 2005), and in these circumstances, their contribution to the business strategies of the larger organizations of which they are a part must be considered. A business strategy describes the direction an organization takes to serve its customers and the functions it performs for these customers. Critical to the academic library's success is the ability to actively demonstrate how it is aligned with the strategy of the larger institution and how it creates strategic value for its key stakeholders. Bryson (1988) defines a stakeholder as "any person, group or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output" (p. 74).

While an organization may have several stakeholders, only a subset of them is key to realizing core business objectives. The academic library's key stakeholders include faculty, students, and staff, and demonstrating value for these groups is a core feature of academic librarianship. McCreadie

(2013) states that the concept of library value can be manifested in several ways: "value for users in the level of support and services provided; value for the parent institution in contribution to institutional mission and goals; or economic value for the return on investment" (p. 328). Increasingly, the competitive business environment has encouraged organizations to use innovative approaches to document their contribution to the organization's bottom line. While such exercises may be new to libraries, the reality of librarianship is that it must regularly and rapidly respond to changes in its social, economic, political, and technological environments to ensure sustainability. Since libraries are often the first casualties during periods of budget cuts, they are becoming familiar with finding new ways to serve user needs. However, White (1998) insists that librarians most often do less with less when confronted with the need for change, thus compromising their professional uniqueness.

Notwithstanding that, the economic volatility in which we live and work has reinforced the need for academic libraries to demonstrate value for investments in their programs and to regularly report to university leadership on achievements and outcomes, especially in terms of wider societal benefits. An integral part of strategy for any organization has become the need to address societal needs and challenges while at the same time creating economic value for itself. The solution lies in the principle of shared value, defined "as policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates" (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 66). For academic libraries, embracing this will help them to identify new services to offer and new customers to serve. This all requires library staff members to acquire and update skills not previously required of them.

The academic library must be concerned with how to compete successfully in a particular market in order to ensure that stakeholder needs are served. It needs to put in place a competitive business strategy. Such a strategy relates to the need to acquire a competitive advantage in its market. In order to successfully achieve a competitive business strategy, HRD must be integrated with the main business processes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some academic libraries have already embarked upon a path toward the realization of such a strategy though approaches may vary.

In order to progress toward a competitive business strategy, the library has to take into account the likely forces influencing its current position and foreseeable future. In addition, it must obtain relevant information about its competitors and key stakeholders, and configure its key resources

in order to remain viable and sustainable as an information source for constituents of parent organizations. The decision to chart a course toward an idealized future destination for an organization involves strategic planning. Nevertheless, the new paradigm for academic libraries requires an investment in stimulating an institutional context that will attract, train, develop, and retain core knowledge workers who are academic librarians. Furthermore, there must be a conscious effort with clearly defined methods to keep these core knowledge workers engaged throughout their stay in the institution (Knight, 2013). Fundamentally, HRD activities place emphasis on this kind of employee engagement and the training and development of the workforce.

The current information era recognizes knowledge workers as a key source of intellectual capital. Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich (2001) define intellectual capital as “the skills and knowledge of the workforce” (p. 6) whereas Boxall and Purcell (2011) observe it as “the knowledge or brainpower of employees” (p. 111). Therefore, the significance of intellectual capital lies in the fact that “as the knowledge economy advances, more organizations will need to invest in knowledge creating activities, in which the production of new knowledge is a vital differentiator” (Bratton & Gold, 2007, p. 210). Hence, in this knowledge economy, HRD assumes greater significance. Drucker (1992) states that knowledge workers are not only the means of production in the organization, they are a critical product of the work. Because librarians provide the critical industry-specific skills necessary to attain competitive advantage, they are core knowledge workers, providing competitive advantage in the form of an ability to outperform competitors by acquiring distinctive skills and competencies. Walton (1999) quite adequately sums up the notion of core staff being essential to achieving competitive advantage:

Any organization can quickly access the elements of new technology, reverse-engineer products; what is scarcer are the distinctive skills or competencies which individuals bring to, and acquire during their stay with, a given enterprise. (p. 3)

Nevertheless, it is imperative that academic libraries gravitate toward sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) rather than merely attempting to achieve competitive advantage toward a viable position.

An organization achieves SCA when it acquires attributes that allow it to outperform its competitors in the same industry and sustain that position. SCA can only be achieved through an organization's human resources (HR) program and processes. The HR function contributes to SCA as it recognizes the capacity of the organization's people to serve “as an effective

barrier preventing would-be rivals from expanding their markets into territory that the organization holds" (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2008, p. 16). But to do this, the library's HR program must be linked with the business strategy. Work processes and programs must be designed to support greater contributions from employees, especially its core knowledge workers, to the strategic planning efforts.

This is a departure from traditional academic library practices in many places. McCreadie (2013, p. 340) argues that "The majority of developing world libraries measure the value they provide to their teaching and research faculty via their resource collection" (p. 340). Arguably, they often fail to underscore the critical roles played by staff in general and librarians in particular, those who make the information contained in their collections accessible to their users.

Achieving SCA allows academic libraries to successfully compete for limited government and agency funding in the present economic landscape and a volatile labor market. According to McCreadie (2013), new investments have been partly motivated by the recognition that academic research is a principal source of the information and knowledge needed for the social, economic, and political welfare of countries. The volatility of the labor market has also contributed to a redefined nature of the work and employment relationships. According to Walton (1999), organizations no longer guarantee lifelong employment; therefore, individuals must assume far greater responsibility than in the past for their individual careers and employability. Nonetheless, in a competitive business environment where highly skilled and motivated knowledge workers are a necessity, employers cannot afford to neglect their role in developing worker skills which make people more employable. Moreover, these knowledge workers need assurance that the skills they acquire are both important to their work future and marketability outside of the library in which they work. Hence, the new challenge for the employer is "to generate a commitment for the duration of the individual's stay by offering the opportunity to acquire transferable skills" (p. 2), something Walton refers to as the new dependent variable of HRD.

Ehrlich (1997) proposes seven principles in creating value through HRD, the first of which is that HRD strategy must be anchored in the business strategy. For this to happen, HRD must understand the strategies in place as well as the social, economic, political, and technological realities of the business it supports. According to Gilley and Maycunich (2000), HRD must "be regarded as an essential contributor to the business mission" (p. 11). Gilley and Maycunich further underscore the need for HRD

professionals, who speak the language of the business and whose activities reflect business priorities, providing support for and shaping the strategic goals of the organization. This means having knowledge of the organization's strategic plan, which serves to provide "the data and argument in support of a particular strategy for the whole organization, over a substantial period of time" (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008, p. 581). They also need to be on the lookout for strategies that emerge, given the fact that not all strategies used are deliberate. The reality is that the direction or mission of the organization may be the result of a deliberate planning process or it may emerge as a result of a set of incremental decisions. Thus, there must be full appreciation for both the strategic planning process and efforts to consistently monitor the implementation of the plan.

PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

This section offers background information about strategic planning and HRD and key results derived from a single case study to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What role does HRD play in the strategic planning process of the academic library?
2. What are the derived benefits of incorporating HRD at the strategic planning stage?
3. How does staff interpret the role of HRD in the academic library?
4. What are the challenges of integrating HRD in the strategic planning efforts?

The author collected detailed information, over the period of one month, from a major academic library in Barbados in order to explore the depth of the relationships between HRD and strategic planning.

Since there are significant differences in the way in which the various libraries in Barbados are funded and since this impacts how they invest resources and respond to the rapid changes pervading librarianship, a major academic library was selected from a university that actively engages in strategic planning and contributes significantly to the development of its human resources.

The study used a qualitative methodology, specifically, a single case study design, that allowed the researcher to systematically gather pertinent in depth information about this library in order to develop an