

Advances in Library Administration and Organization
Volume 31

Advances in Library Administration and Organization

Delmus E. Williams
Janine Golden

Editors



ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND
ORGANIZATION VOLUME 31

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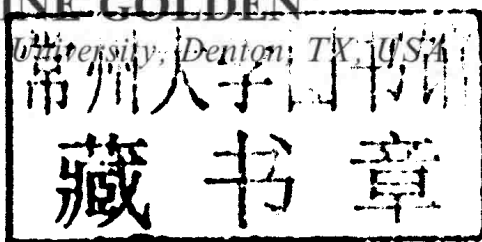
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Emerald Group Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2012

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78190-313-1

ISSN: 0732-0671 (Series)



Certificate Number 1985
ISO 9001
ISO 14001

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ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

One of the nicest things about editing an annual like this one is that each year you get to spend time reviewing new research in library leadership and reflect upon what you know about running an organization both from your experience and from the literature. Choosing what we publish is in part design, but more often, it is a function of what we find in the way of serious research studies about how we manage libraries and how we as library leaders cope with the changing environment in which we find ourselves. Some of what we publish is truly new, but a good portion of it is based on researchers' efforts to apply classic theory to the administration of libraries.

I am particularly pleased with this year's crop of essays in that they take me back to the beginning of my work as a library administrator. I was attracted to this field in 1973 (yes, I am that old!) because the idea of spending my life in a genteel atmosphere among books serving people who were interested in scholarship and the free exchange of ideas had great appeal. Then I went to work and immediately began to automate very traditional libraries, most often within cooperatives. Building coalitions within the libraries in which I worked and among libraries has been the norm throughout my career, and the results have been transformational. In the course of my work in four libraries, through a doctoral program, and over the course of a career that included efforts to understand how to make traditional organizations adapt, I have spent a lot of time thinking about change management. It is good to see that librarians are again (or perhaps still) thinking in that vein as library services expand to include services we might not have always considered part of our portfolio that extend beyond the building to a client base that is becoming increasingly comfortable with technology. The articles that follow attest to this commitment to understand the process of change.

The first piece offered is Cameron K. Tuai's effort to better understand how best to build a successful partnership between librarians and information technologists within the context of an information commons. In addressing this issue, he used structural contingency theory and chose to test its premise that an organization will achieve higher levels of performance when there is a positive relationship between the degree of workflow interdependence and the complexity of coordinative structures necessary to

integrate these workflows. After identifying a sample of information commons operating within libraries, he offers a quantitative analysis that confirmed that both a positive relationship existed between coordination and interdependence and that there is a positive relationship between perceptions of performance and degree of congruency between interdependence and coordination. This suggests that managers can improve IC performance by matching coordination structures to the degree of interdependence among elements coexisting within them. Tuai also offers instruments that library leaders can use to measure and report unit interdependence and coordination in a valid and reliable way.

Valerie Hill next examines factors that might play a part in the adoption of avatars and the virtual worlds of Second Life for use in library instruction. She administered a survey based on Everett Rogers' classic diffusion theory of change to librarians who had been using avatars for at least two years, asking them to explain which of Rogers' five attributes of diffusion applied to their efforts and how those attributes affected their work. This study takes a theory that has been around for many years in the education and management literature and applies it to a new problem and behavior associated with accepting cutting edge technologies that have only recently become important in instruction. I will leave questions about the long-term importance of Second Life to others, but as someone interested in managing organization, I suggest that Hill offers an interesting insight into the efforts of early adaptors, offering guidance for use by those who lead libraries to build a climate that can encourage experimentation and change.

Susan E. Parker then offers a very different approach to studying change. She uses a case study of disaster recovery at Colorado State University as a backdrop against which to assess the efforts there to reestablish services and to reinvent the library at the point that much of what had been comfortable within that organization had been washed away by a flood. The library was inundated in 1997, and this follow-up study pulls together earlier work, published piecemeal, to test the memories of people who lived through the disaster and who were required to learn new routines on the fly and foster innovation outside of the normal rules of operation. Analysis of the data demonstrates how the library employees' feelings of trust before and following a workplace disaster shifted their mental models, empowering them to act independently and assert their own ideas rather than simply reacting to changes that were forced upon them. Employees' lived experiences and feelings influenced what they learned, how quickly they learned it, and how that learning contributed to innovative thinking after the disaster. The library's supervisory and administrative leaders encouraged

staff members to try out new ideas, reinvigorating staff members' feelings of trust and motivating them to "bring their heads to work." Feeling free to experiment, they tapped their creativity and provided adaptations and innovations. No one would wish a flood or other catastrophic event, but this case presents an example of the benefits, both short and long term, that organizations where there is trust between those who lead and those being led can enjoy. Even 15 years later, the feeling of solidarity built in the library remains, offering a sled for change that includes a commitment to address whatever comes and the kind of trust required to encourage organizational learning and further adaptation.

Larry Nash White offers a different kind of study that also has implications for change within libraries. Larry surveyed North Carolina library administrators working in public and academic libraries to determine how competitive they perceived themselves to be. White's premise is that, to compete for resources in a rapidly changing world, the leadership must be willing and even anxious to compete with other librarians and with other administrators working within the environment in which they live. He concluded that the librarians surveyed do perceive themselves to be very competitive in developing their own careers and in comparing the performance of their organizations and their needs to those of competing agencies. They also suggested that the competitive spirit of other library administrators in their acquaintance is almost, though not quite, on a par with their own. The important point made is that librarians have come to understand that they cannot expect that resources will simply appear in their world, and that, as we identify and develop leaders for libraries, we must find people who are prepared to extend themselves to understand what their neighbors are doing, realistically compare programs in other libraries to their own, and then stretch beyond their comfort zone to learn what they need to know to build service programs to meet the needs and expectations of their clientele.

Finally, Michael Lorenzen offers a discussion of academic library development officers, where they sit within their organizations, and the special challenges they face as they help build the resource base required to support modern libraries. Academic libraries in the United States have been involved in fund raising for centuries, but, in recent years, philanthropy has become more important. Lorenzen investigates the special challenges that face academic library development officers as they work with library directors and others in the university to solicit money from a modest base of potential donors in order to help library leaders and supporters understand what is required if the library is to increase the amount of private support the

library gets from its constituents. Clearly, it is important that libraries understand how to make and sustain change in their environments, but it is also important that they have the means to implement change when appropriate and to incubate those changes in a way to encourage commitment in the external community surrounding the library and to identify and tap into the financial support needed to succeed.

As in all of the previous volumes, Janine and I would like to thank you the reader for taking the time to consider the ideas offered here for use in your library. Ours is a collaborative enterprise that bases its results on intangibles that are sometimes hard to understand, but we are convinced that the lessons learned by the authors presented here can help you as a leader, manager, and administrator understand and appreciate what is going on around you and build the kind of different future required to meet emerging challenges on a past that has been thoroughly vetted and is understood, if only imperfectly. In this way, busy people can find lessons of value in the work of others and identify intellectual areas that demand further study. And, of course, if you have anything that you would like to publish here, either Janine or I will be happy to talk with you.

Delmus E. Williams
Editor

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A STRUCTURAL CONTINGENCY THEORY MODEL OF LIBRARY AND TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY INFORMATION COMMONS

Cameron K. Tuai

Purpose – The integration of librarians and technologists to deliver information services represents a new and costly organizational challenge for many library administrators. To understand how to control the costs of integration, this study uses structural contingency theory to study the coordination of librarians and technologists within the information commons.

Design/methodology/approach – This study tests the structural contingency theory expectation that an organization will achieve higher levels of performance when there is a positive relationship between the degree of workflow interdependence and the complexity of coordinative structures necessary to integrate these workflows. This expectation was tested by (a) identifying and collecting a sample of information common; (b) developing and validating survey instruments to test the proposition; and (c) quantitatively analyzing the data to test the proposed contingency theory relationship.

Advances in Library Administration and Organization, Volume 31, 1–87

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ISSN: 0732-0671/doi:10.1108/S0732-0671(2012)0000031004

Findings – The contingency theory expectations were confirmed by finding both a positive relationship between coordination and interdependence and a positive relationship between perceptions of performance and degree of congruency between interdependence and coordination.

Limitations – The findings of this study are limited to both the context of an information common and the structures tested. Future research should seek to both broaden the context in which these findings are applicable, and test additional structural relationships as proposed by contingency theory

Practical implications – This study contributes to the library profession in a number of ways. First, it suggests that managers can improve IC performance by matching coordination structures to the degree of interdependence. For instance, when librarians and technologists are strictly co-located, managers should coordinate workflows using less resource-intensive policies rather than meetings. Second, the instruments developed in this study will improve the library manager's ability to measure and report unit interdependence and coordination in a valid and reliable manner. Lastly, it also contributes to the study of structural contingency theory by presenting one of the first empirical confirmations of a positive relationship between interdependence and coordination.

Originality/value – This study represents one of the first empirical confirmations of the structural contingency theory expectations of both a positive relationship between workflow interdependence and coordination, and a positive relationship between performance and coordination's fit to workflow interdependence. These findings are of value to both organizational theorists and to administrators of information commons.

Keywords: Information commons; structural contingency theory; integration; cooperation; coordination; workflow

The integration of librarians and technologists to deliver information services represents a new and costly organizational challenge for many library administrators. To understand how to control the costs of integration, this chapter will use structural contingency theory to study the coordination of librarians and technologists within the information commons (ICs). Contingency theory seeks to optimize organizational performance by proposing a positive relationship between the degree of workflow interdependence and the complexity of coordinative structures

necessary to integrate these workflows. To test this theory, the chapter identified a sample IC population, developed survey instruments, and quantitatively analyzed the resulting data. The chapter confirmed contingency theory expectations by finding both a positive relationship between coordination and interdependence, and a positive relationship between perceptions of performance and degree of congruency between interdependence and coordination. Note that these findings are limited to the context of an IC. Future research opportunities include extending the context, or examining additional variables, such as technology. This chapter contributes to the library profession in two ways. First, it suggests that managers can improve IC performance by matching coordination structures to the degree of interdependence. For instance, when librarians and technologists are strictly co-located, managers should use policies, not meetings to coordinate workflows. Second, it improves the library manager's ability to validly and reliably measure and report unit interdependence and coordination. This chapter also contributes to organizational theory and structural contingency theory by presenting one of the first empirical confirmations of a positive relationship between interdependence and coordination.

The growing use of partnerships between librarians and technologists to deliver information services represents a new organizational challenge for many library administrators. Integrating these two culturally different partners is a complex undertaking, which likely falls outside the collective knowledge of many library administrators. In this context, much can be learned from examining the integration of librarians and technologists.

Since the widespread introduction of personal computing into the academy, librarians have discussed the potential for improving information services by combining library and computing services. A sampling of voices from the 1980s finds librarians pondering, "With the changes that have taken place during the past fifteen years in the library and in the computer center ... does one dare ask about the next fifteen years to 2000 AD?" (Neff, 1986, p. 19). Others worrying, "A multiplicity of issues must be considered as we take the best from ... libraries and computing – and move toward the integrated information support system of the future" (Molholt, 1985, p. 288). And yet others, prognosticating "For the sake of scholarship and research, the two [libraries and computing centers] must devise an integrated approach to delivering the common commodity" (Jones, 1984a, p. 32). Some 25 years later, although librarians still ponder, worry, and prognosticate on how information technology (IT) will affect library services, what has changed is that the integration of public access to library and computing services has largely come to pass within public service units

such as the ICs. Unfortunately, a review of the literature shows that many of the issues that concerned librarians in the past have yet to be resolved. More specifically, although an extensive body of literature exists on the topic, the majority of it is merely “surveys of practice, speculation about practice, and recommendations regarding suitable organizational and management strategies” (Lynch, 1990, p. 218). This literature may be ideal for identifying and describing administrative issues, but the absence of methodological rigor limits its generalizability and value in the design and operation of an integrated IC. Kirk (2008) neatly summarizes the approach this researcher has taken to resolve these issues regarding the integration of libraries and computer centers:

I believe it is more important to talk about the relationship between technology-based units and library services and to conceive of them as “collaborating organizations” that may take on a number of structures. A specific structure is not the destination. The critical issue in thinking about a merged organization is not to find a model to apply in a particular institution but rather to understand the dynamics of coordination and collaboration and how structures are suited to support those dynamics. (p. 3)

The proposed research takes Kirk’s challenge by using theoretical and empirical methods drawn from the field of organizational research, in particular the ideas from structural contingency theory. This theory is ideally suited to the proposed research area because its primary focus is on understanding the relationship between organizational context and structure.

Five steps will support this effort to understand the dynamics of coordination and integration:

1. Review the theoretical literature in order to define a conceptual framework for the research.
2. Situate the conceptual frameworks into the empirical literature in order to define and propose the relationships that form the research questions.
3. Analyze the theoretical and empirical literature’s methodological approaches to the research questions in order to create a research instrument.
4. Gather a sample of ICs and develop measures.
5. Analyze and report the applicability of structural contingency theory expectations with respect to the ICs.

The work aims to develop, test, and examine the mechanics of coordination and integration within the IC. The findings should allow IC managers to reduce the costs of collaboration and give information science

researchers the tools to address questions concerning library and computing center integration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review describes the boundaries that define the areas of concern included and excluded from the research area. Drawing from structural contingency theory literature, the empirical literature, and the library literature, the conceptual framework will describe the concepts and variables concerned with the integration of collaborative workflows within an IC. In particular, the conceptual framework will focus on the variables and relationships of workflow interdependence, coordination, behavioral differentiation, and performance.

Structural contingency theory, or contingency theory for short, defines organizations as “collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting relatively highly formalized social structures” (Scott, 1992, p. 23). Within this definition, contingency theorists describe organizations in terms of four structural features: centralization, formalization, division of labor, and coordination. These organizational structures are dependent upon three contexts or contingencies: size, technology, and interdependence. Given the relationships among the independent contingencies and the dependent structures, researchers generally use contingency theory within an intraorganizational unit of analysis. This includes both the structures internal to a particular unit and the structures external to it. Contingency theory normally does not examine the individual in isolation, nor an organization’s interaction with its environment or other organizations. Therefore, researchers will generally not apply contingency theory to study the social or psychological levels of the organization’s effects on individuals, nor will they apply it to investigate the ecological level of organizations or classes of organizations interacting with their environments (Scott, 1992).

The underlying premise of contingency theory is that no one best way exists to organize, but not all ways of organizing are equally effective (Galbraith, 1973). Given this supposition, contingency theorists endeavor to identify the optimal organizational structure for a given organizational contingency or context. Within a collaborative information service context, numerous contingencies exist; the area of concern for the proposed research is the integration of librarians and technologists within an IC. Contingency theory defines integration as “the process of achieving unity of effort among

the various subsystems in the accomplishment of the organization's task" (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967a, p. 4). Donaldson (2001) refines this definition by stating that integration is the product of the relationship between interdependence and coordination. Combining these two definitions allows one to describe the conceptual framework for this research in terms of the coordination of the interdependent service workflows of librarians and technologists within the information service unit of the ICs.

Contingency theory is a widely accepted organizational theory in the field of management. Within library and information science management, it is similarly accepted both in textbooks (Jones, 1984b; Stueart & Moran, 2007) and the journal literature (Kirk, 2004; Moran, 1978; Weiner, 2003). A study of particular relevance from the library literature is Weng's (1997b) dissertation, which is the only study to apply contingency theory empirically to a library setting. Weng uses a divisional unit of analysis and focuses largely upon the relationship between technology and organizational-level structures. Although her research examines intra-unit levels of interdependence, she does not measure coordination in terms of service workflows. Further, she calculates unit-level interdependence by summing individual surveys rather than taking the mean of the individuals within the particular unit. This approach is similar to other studies that have similarly calculated unit scores and then compared these scores as representing the characteristics of the unit as a whole (Perrow, 1967). This work builds upon Weng's research by focusing specifically on the coordination of workflow interdependence at an intra-unit level of analysis, but unit level means to represent the department as the "unit of analysis" rather than individual employees (Scott, 1992).

The following literature review examines the three variables of interest: interdependence, coordination, and behavioral differentiation. It then introduces how these variables relate in terms of a fit expectation and how the fit or non-fit expectations affect performance. Lastly, this review presents critiques of contingency theory and its broader ontological assumptions.

Interdependence

Interdependence is the contingency that describes the connection between activities within a particular work process. In his book *Organizations in Action*, Thompson (1967) describes three widely cited degrees of increasing interdependence: pooled, sequential, and reciprocal. Pooled interdependence occurs when an organization's various operations contribute to the