

Strategic Management in Academic Libraries with Reference to Users Perspective

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Abstract The rapid growth of digital technologies and electronic communications in academic libraries has dislocated the model of traditional library service, which was a long hold from the past century. The arrival of internet technology and the explosive growth of electronic content available on the web made the services of the academic libraries uncertain and creating challenges in rendering users services as per their requirements. This article attempts to provide a strategy for academic libraries applying principles and practices of strategic management highlighting the Ansoff matrix (model) in order to face the impediments coming in the way of providing better services to their users.

Keywords *Strategic Management; Strategic Library Planning; Environmental Scanning; Ansoff Model of Library Service*

1. Introduction

The strategic library management is one of the most important alternatives to make the future design and development of the library. The systematic planning of academic library is highly essential due to rapid advances of information technology in the current era. Most of the University and college libraries are sustaining both teaching and research in their academic periphery. Strategic planning is a cooperative endeavor with the active participation of administration, faculties, students and library staff. During strategic planning, the role of the librarian is very significant as he is an educator and leader in the process. The strategic plan developed should offer a pattern that incorporates major goals, policies and actions of the institution that constitutes the whole. It helps in the allocation of resources; capitalize on relative strengths and weakness with the environment, and allocation of resources to make a stronger

support in the hub of teaching and research. This article describes brief marketing concepts and their applications that are helpful to make academic libraries more users prone.

2. Strategic Management

Strategic management is the process through which organizations analyse and learn from their internal and external environments, establish direction, create strategies that are intended to achieve established goals, and execute those strategies, all in an effort to satisfy key organizational constituencies, which are called stakeholders. The model is not rigid, but simply represents a useful sequence to discuss the concept of strategic management. For example, while the activities may occur in the order specified in the model, especially if a firm is engaging in strategic planning program, it may also be carried out in some other order of simultaneously as per the need.

Steiner (1979) defines the strategic management as “designing a desired future and identifying ways to bring it about involves ideas and actions that are directed to the long-term future of the organization”. According to Chandler, the strategy is “the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals”.

A. Why Strategic Management in Libraries?

Strategic management empowers positive change by bringing together the diverse individuals, communities and information to advance research, education, and innovation in the academic library. It also advances the university's attainment of academic excellence by bringing the world's knowledge to faculty, students and research scholar at the professional, graduate, and undergraduate levels. Further, it strengthens all the academic community of a university or college's in positive engagement and its transformation of local, national, and international arenas.

In the academic institutions, librarians are the inventive associates of the research and advanced studies. They collect, categorize, and archive information resources of relevant research for the purpose. They are managing these resources and provide quality services in order to meet the present and future needs of academic groups. They help to bridge the link among these groups and educate the whole community in the successful utilization of information. The academic community depends on the libraries when they need information.

B. Principles of Strategic Planning

The important principles of strategic planning are as follows while developing an academic library. It is very important to inquire exact query to originate exact alternative. The distinctive questions are as follows:

- How the library need to support the students in excellency
- How the library sustain different research needs including support in collaborative research of user in on or off campus.
- How the library can keep on encouraging and archiveing information over the campus to the extent of research needs and available grants.
- How to involve effectively in information technology applications of the parent organization in order to provide campus wide teaching and research support.
- How the library can support and strengthen the academic and research activity to campus users in an organization.

Today's complex and challenging environment requires the libraries to focus on mission and objectives of the organization and its willingness to experiment. Small changes may meet the university's short-term needs but they will be inadequate to sustain excellence on the long term needs.

3. Strategic Management for Academic Libraries

The role of the libraries as an essential partner of research, teaching and scholarly communication is significant in academic institutions. They provide access to world-wide resources within and beyond their collections, in all formats, as and when the user need. The physical spaces of the libraries will promote reflection, scholarly communication and intellectual exploration. The libraries will be an inventive pioneer for the whole academic group, especially when the corresponding frameworks are changed. An expert and flexible librarian as professional will interact with faculty, staff and students will be responsive to their needs of learning, research and teaching. As the academics progress toward its key objectives, it will take note that the libraries have assumed a major role in encouraging quality in teaching and scholarship interdisciplinary and information in the service society.

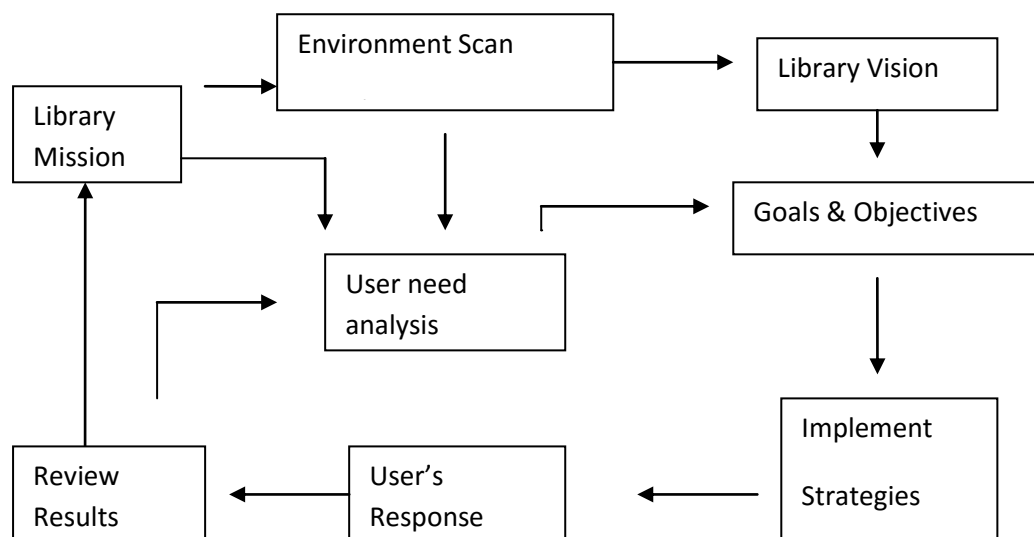


Figure 1: Cycle of Strategic Library Planning

A. Mission and Vision of Academic Library in Digital Era

The mission and vision of libraries in any academic system goes in line with the objectives of the concerned academic institutions. Academic libraries are the central point of dissemination of information services to the diverse groups of user, i.e. students, faculty and researchers to enhance their teaching, learning and research needs. Singh and Kaur (2009) stated that "preservation and access to knowledge and information is the main consent of academic libraries in addition to sustaining the mission of their parent. The academic libraries are playing supportive role to the university education give essential resources and services in the digital era". These facilitate the libraries to meet up the needs of their teaming users. Such resources range from print to non -print and electronic materials in line with what Yusuf and Iwu (2010), who emphasized that - "different patrons of academic libraries used different materials given by these libraries, i.e. reference materials, textbooks, journals, newspapers, past projects, electronic journals etc."

B. Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning is the monitoring, evaluating and disseminating of information from the external and internal environment to key people within the corporation or organization (Kazmi, 2008). It is a process of gathering, analyzing all the information related with the opportunities and threats of the academic library. Further this process involves acquiring both accurate and subjective information on the business environments in which a library is working or considering to enter. Following are three modes by which an organization scans their environments.

- **Ad-hoc scanning:** - It is a short term scanning, where rare assessment usually initiated when a crisis happens in an organization. It scan the environment as a result of its affect, the company is able to recognize the problem which exists internal or external.
- **Regular scanning:** - In this mode, assessments are being carried once in a year with regular schedule. Most of the cognizant organizations believe that regular scanning should be done in regular basis and they used to perform such scanning every year.
- **Continuous scanning:** - It is a continuous scanning process, where an organization can perform assessment continuously.

C. SWOT Analysis

Strengths Weaknesses Opportunity and Threats (SWOT) are also known as SWOT analysis, is a tool for planning the academic library helps to find the key issues and problems that arise in the library environment. SWOT analysis a problem through internal and external analysis. In internal analysis, strengths and weaknesses are considered, whereas in external analysis, opportunity and threats are considered. The factors considered during internal analysis are –

- Library culture and image
- Organization structure of the library
- Organizational operational efficiency and capacity of library
- Brand awareness of library
- Financial resources of library
- Analysis of resource activities of the library

Each of these internal factors is considered as strengths and weakness of a library. Similar to internal analysis, various factors that need to be considered in external analysis are:

- Patrons of the library
- Competitors
- Recent trends of the library
- Vendors
- Members of the consortia
- Latest technology for library & information service
- Economic situation
- Political and legal restrictions

D. PEST Analysis

PEST stands for Political, economical, social and technological analysis helps the academic library to analyze the strategies to identify the environmental factors that highly affect the organization strategy. When analyzing the various factors effecting the strategy of any organization, it is also important to

consider the changes occurring in these forces at work in the wider environment and identifying the environmental factors that are effecting an organization. However, this generates a large amount of information but of limited value, if it only lists the environmental influences. It is necessary to use quantitative approach also to identify the environmental factors. Consider as example of the library and information services in technical university. At the time of long term pressures the ability of the library to provide information service largely depends on the three crucial factors, they are –

- Increasing demand of information services for the users of certain categories
- Rapid development of information communication technology in library and information service
- Restriction imposed by the management and government on funding that leads to uncertain economic conditions under which academic libraries need to operate.

These are the key factors that influence the strategy for the library and information services of a university. Sometimes, librarians are pressed with day to day problems, library services and fail to address them, wherein the strategy facilitates short-term response rather than long-term development

E. Strategic Goals

Strategic management demonstrates its commitment to academic excellence through a strong service orientation and user focus. It serves the diversity of the community by providing access to a wide range of materials, by recruiting a skilled / well informed staff, by employing collaborative, strategic but risk-taking techniques and the environment that supports experimentation to meet strategic goals of the academic library. The following are some of the important goals of strategic management of academic libraries.

- It provides research and curates of whole library's artifact.
- Create active learning spaces that boost the academic research and learning objectives of any academic institutions.
- Dexterously and effectively connect with the academic community
- Implementation of latest methodologies and pedagogies in a variety of information services
- Expand revenue sources of the library through development and grant support

F. User Need Analysis

Understanding user needs is a vital part of information services and plays a critical role in the service industries. It is widely accepted that success of any service industries depends of the satisfaction of the user's needs and requirement. As service institutions like academic library, the term user need analysis can be defined as a formal procedure emphasizing on how a library attends to the needs of its users. This tool is not just developed for business process, but is considered most important analytical technique to provide better information service to the library user. This technique is widely used in many industries i.e., automobiles, consumer products, banking and software development. It highlights new opportunities in the current environment, find out user needs, identifies problems with existing services, and encourages new technology. The bit of knowledge from user assessment leads to apply full thought for innovation.

Principles of Need Analysis

The user need analysis begins with a systematic understanding of the needs and requirement of the users, which benefits the organization to enhanced quality of work, increasing productivity, reducing supporting as well as training costs and improve the end user satisfaction. There are few principles mentioned hereunder –

- The Idea of end users is important to bring together a different, determined design group, and their assessment should rise above the wishes of your design group.
- Assessment of user needs is very important to bind together the end users thought, and to utilize quantitative research to locate the best way for service design.
- Appeal to the most minimized shared factor in end user needs. Promoting to the least ability levels results in the biggest potential innovation service.
- Do thorough beta tests of service over a long time to permit sufficient alterations before introducing item in the last assembling stage.
- Monitoring continuously user's feedback after the introduction of new service and report defects immediately and keep an exact record to apply to future releases.
- When the service designs are finished as a result of effective needs analysis, they should be put to the verification of service heads and peers.

G. Implementation of Strategy in Academic Library

Implementation of strategy in academic library is the analysis of selected strategy into organizational actions in order to accomplish strategic goals and objectives. Additionally, strategy implementation is characterized as the way in which an academic library should expand, use, and integrate the organizational structure, control systems, and culture to pursue strategies to lead competitive advantage and a better execution. Organizational structure allots exceptional creating tasks and roles to the employees and states how these can be connected so as to maximize the productivity, quality, and end user satisfaction and also to attain the competitive advantage.

The organizational structure alone is not adequate in itself to motivate the employees, but a control system is highly necessary for any sort of organization. This control system furnishes the managers the motivational impetuses of employees as well as feedback on employees in a hierarchical execution. Organizational culture refers to the particular accumulation of qualities, states of mind, standards and beliefs shared by individuals and groups hierarchy. The followings are some important process to implement strategy in academic libraries.

- **Strategy articulation** - consensus agreement of the strategic objectives to be achieved
- **Strategy communication** - engaging employees considering human behaviour or their psychology.
- **Strategy translation** - translating strategic goals into clear short-term operating goals
- **Strategy monitoring & controlling** - monitoring the progress and control the strategic goals till accomplished
- **Strategy engagement** - Keeping librarians engaged till achieving the goals

Well-structured strategies will be disrupted, if they are not properly executed. It is an important aspect to take a note that implementation of strategy in academic library will not be possible unless there is steadiness between strategy and all elements in whole organization i.e. allocation process, structure of reward, organizational structure etc.

4. Ansoff Model for Academic Library Services

Most of the library users expect variety, quality, and reliability in their services. The outcome of the market research leads to determine the needs and design services that fulfill the need of the users. Library services should be designed to meet general as well as the specific needs of the end users. To cite an illustration, many reference questions are posed each day in academic libraries, instead of answering the same questions again and again FAQ (frequently asked questions) can be included on the library website or a user guide can be issued to new users or user orientation can be conducted to

groups of users according to their academic specifications. Such user friendly activities can be designed inside or outside of the library to make the academic library services more users centric.

As the marketing principles are applied to academic library services, it is very important to determine what services need to be best for end user of a library. The famous author BS Mathews (2009) defines the experience of the library as “a series of interactions with a range of end user. Our goals is to recognize and separate favorable times to engage end user by presenting various feature of the library”

The Ansoff (Matrix) model is a strategic planning tool that provides a framework to help business executives to devise strategies for future development of the organization. The tool and concept was developed by Igor Ansoff. He devised 4 alternative growth strategies in a table or matrix.

Table 1: Ansoff Model

	Current Service	New Service
Current Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Penetration • Advertising existing product • Service to existing user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Development • Offer new service to existing user
New Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Development • Advertising existing product • Service to existing user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification • Offer new service to existing user

- **Market Penetration:** Development can be accomplished by persuading the present users to make more utilization of existing services. This is the easiest methodology because the users are library's end users.
- **Market Development:** Development can be possible with new market segments by matching existing services including libraries, e.g. enabling online renewals, mobile applications, receiving online recommendation for books, journals and other material and obtaining feedback of newly launched or on trial information products or tools. Further the development of library websites not only displays the information about the collection, services and also flash messages.
- **Service Development:** New innovation can be adopted and targeted to existing market segments. Market research can be utilized to establish what services will help a particular market segment. For example in academic libraries applying providing remote login facility for faculty and researchers, enabling users access to resources, various applications and databases through online public access catalogues.
- **Diversification:** New innovation can be made for new markets. This will be enhanced by reaching the library to new groups as well as put in innovative services. For academic library users the current innovative practices like providing tools to discover or explore all the available resources in single search for quick and easy retrieval of information. Incorporation of web 2.0 applications in library websites facilitates the close interaction and feedback regarding the library services.

8. Conclusion

Strategic management in academic library is a very complex task. Due to the rapid growth of scholarly publications in electronic format and increasing complexities in the scholarly communications have tremendously transformed the role of the academic libraries in the present digital environment. Most of the libraries are facing great deal of uncertainty over this complexity. In the board outline, it is not difficult to envision. The challenge most of the libraries face today is complexity of scholar communication and

the long term preservation of digital information. Furthermore, the main aim of the library is to provide right information to right user. To fulfill the objective in the complex environment, it is very necessary to deploy new techniques and technology. Strategic management is the accumulation of continuous activities and procedures that a library can use to systematically arrange and adjust resources and activities to mission, vision and technique throughout an organization. This helps an academic library to transform the static arrangement into a framework that gives key strategic performance advice to decision making and empowers the arrangement to advance and develop which prerequisites different circumstances to change.

In order to develop an effective initiation of strategic planning in the academic library, the above study suggests the need of library leadership to change and rejuvenate its management model, structure and systems. Further this paper describes the main responsibility of the library is to initiative various developments in the academic culture. An academic library should develop and distribute the strategic plan, resulting in user satisfaction and accomplishment of organizational objectives.

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