ACCOUNTABILITY IN LIBRARY MANAGEMENT: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE 21\textsuperscript{st} CENTURY*

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SCOPE OF PAPER

This paper is not about management per se. There are hundreds of books on management which write about planning, organising, leading and control in great detail. It is not possible for this paper to do the same. The focus of this paper however is on ‘accountability’ so only certain salient aspects of management functions that can be applied to accountability in libraries will be discussed. Issues related to planning, organising, leading and control are dealt with but the over-riding message to library managers is not to manage by trial and error but to apply strategic measures to library management.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

If libraries were to be judged on their own merit, in isolation from their parent organisations, the majority in the ASEAN countries can be said to be excellent, even in comparison with libraries in more developed countries. However it is only when libraries are judged in the context of their parent organisations that their contribution is seen to be more peripheral rather than integral. For example, most university libraries are not fully integrated into the teaching – learning process which forms the core business of universities. This is partly due to pedagogical constraints, in that teaching-learning strategies at the university do not encourage resource-based learning, causing libraries to be side-lined. It may also be due to the fact that librarians are not regarded as “academic” by the academia, “inferior” in status and ability. These are realities that exist at universities and in different other ways at other types of library environments. At the national level, it is librarians who have always assumed that libraries are critical to national development while not many outside the library community acknowledge the importance of the library’s role.

There are sufficient indicators that reflect this lack of recognition:

i) changes in nomenclature from ‘librarians’ to ‘information professionals/specialists,’ ‘librarianship’ to ‘information science’ propagated by librarians themselves, beginning in the 1970’s. It is as if prior to the 1970s, libraries had not been involved with information provision and dissemination.
ii) librarians not awarded the same recognition as other professions and this is reflected in schemes of service and salary scales despite the fact that librarians have academic and professional qualifications at entry point.

iii) the proliferation of members of other professions (engineers, computer scientists, academics, economists; etc.) taking the lead role in information provision and dissemination.

The issue therefore is, against this background, are librarians in the position to cope with the demands and challenges of the 21st century?

2.0 ARE LIBRARIES READY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?

To fight, one has to recognise the enemy – so it is with libraries. Unless libraries understand what is demanded of them by the 21st Century, it would be difficult for them to face the onslaught of the changes that the century will bring. To prepare themselves for the onslaught, they would need to not only assess their current “strengths” and “weaknesses” but to also recognise the “opportunities” or “threats” presented by the 21st century. A SWOT analysis of libraries is important because it provides libraries with a more ‘clinical’ approach to library development, minimising trial and error in the process.

The SWOT analysis below is not based on research data but based on the perception and certain assumptions on the part of the authors, resulting from their reading of the relevant information literature as well as their experiences as Chief Librarians. The SWOT analysis below is used merely to illustrate the need for librarians to be introspective and understand their capabilities as well as to be aware of developments taking place in their surrounding environment.

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2.1 DEFINING THE LIBRARY’S ENVIRONMENT

2.1.1 INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Any assessment of the library’s strengths and weaknesses must be based on user feedback in the form of complaints or user studies or benchmarking.

In the absence of such feedback however and purely for the purpose of this paper, the authors have drawn on their own experiences as Chief Librarian and Consultant Librarian to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the library.

2.1.1.1 STRENGTHS

Three areas can be identified as the library’s strength, notably:

(1) Collections
(2) Reputation
(3) User Education

(1) Collections

Collections are the library’s greatest strength because without collections, there can be no library. The strength of the collections however depends on its size and uniqueness. In the 1950’s & 1960’s, the size of the collection is the measure of the library’s worth. As such weeding exercises were seldom undertaken for fear that large libraries (by virtue of their collections) will lose their competitive edge. Today, the issue of size is not the main criteria to assess the library’s stature because with the advent of digital libraries, the world’s collections are easily accessible. The uniqueness of collections however has became a more important criteria for assessing the library’s strength because of their heritage value and their potential as a national asset. In the case of Malaysia, the various Malaysiana collections at the National Library of Malaysia, at the 17 public university libraries (in the form of theses and research collections), at government research agencies in the form of research collections, at the State Public Libraries in the form of the state collections, are examples of unique collections that are found in the country. Collectively, the collections found in all types of libraries in any country can be deemed to be the country’s national asset. The fact that they are professionally organised for easy retrieval makes library collections indispensable for national development.

However, while the monetary value of these collections may be easy to quantify by totalling the annual budgets of each library, their academic and cultural value
are priceless. But the main issue in question is: Are the collections used? However priceless the collections, their value will come to naught unless used.

(2) Reputation

Libraries exist today because people believe in the traditional concept of the libraries as being at the heart of learning. Since the education system provides the nation’s manpower and serves as the catalyst for national development and advancement, libraries are accorded the same value. They believe that a literate population is the country’s foremost asset and critical for national advancement. This belief has prevailed till today but it is a perception that has not been substantiated by library usage. It is obvious that while libraries are still regarded as an important tool for education and a mechanism for development of manpower for the country, reputation alone is not sufficient. The perception that libraries are important must be replaced by a more realistic view of the library’s worth.

(3) User Education

Teaching users how to retrieve materials via the library systems, whether manual or electronic, has long been undertaken by libraries. However, user education programmes have become more urgent in recent years when library systems became ICT-based. The underlying premise of all user education programmes is that however excellent the library’s collections and systems are, if not used they serve no purpose (see Fig. 1)
User education programmes are now offered by most libraries, both formally or informally. It is the best way to promote libraries and library use because not only do these programmes enable librarians to come into direct contact with the clients, demonstrate to the clients the proficiency of librarians in both the academic aspect of library work (information retrieval) as well as the technical aspect (ICT)), it also provides libraries with the opportunity to

(a) be integrated into the teaching and learning process in the case of university libraries or
(b) develop literacy skills among members of society in the case of public libraries.

2.1.1.2 WEAKNESSES

Unfortunately, there are more weaknesses than strengths in our analysis of the internal environment. They are:

(1) Collections

Generally, notwithstanding the size of their collections, libraries have in their collections, materials that contain data more archival than current. They are excellent for scholars and researchers from the academia but users of the 21st century are weaned on ICT and expect information at a press of the button. Library collections are mainly passive collections, sitting on library shelves for years, unused. Consisting mainly of printed secondary and tertiary sources, they stand the risk of being replaced by e-books, e-journals and internet. It has become very common for libraries to have e-books, e-journals and internet services provided by commercial vendors at a very high cost. It would not be a surprise however that later in the 21st century, access to Internet and electronic databases will themselves become passé and by the end of the 21st century, materials would be more readily available in palmtops and accessible while showering in the bathroom or driving in cars. Will libraries have the funds to update and upgrade their collections will be the main issue facing libraries in the 21st century. Unless libraries have collections that are relevant and can meet the demands of the 21st century, library collections comprising of secondary and tertiary data, will be rendered obsolete.

The main weakness of library collections however lies in the fact that they are not used to the optimum, giving rise to management debates on whether or not it is cost-beneficial to maintain libraries when alternatives are available on-line.
(2) Staff

In order for libraries to be dynamic, library staff must have the right qualifications and competencies for the job in hand, as well as the right attitude towards service. In the current situation, the majority of library staff can be said to be generally passive and not proactive. This is where library education plays a part. Librarians of the 21st century must be multi-skilled, have sound subject knowledge and good leadership. Library schools would have to be more responsive to these needs and take into account that librarians of the future will not be sitting at a desk in a library but will work in a virtual environment with PC(s) as colleagues. Multi-skilled, she will need to communicate well, preferably in several languages, be knowledgeable in specialised subject areas, innovative in the use of ICT, personable and independent.

(3) Funds

Lack of funds is a perennial problem faced by all libraries. Notwithstanding the fact there are libraries that are well-endowed (in Malaysia, the National Library and university libraries) funds are never adequate to fulfill all objectives. This has resulted in libraries undertaking resource-sharing of collections and services to reduce expenditure and optimise usage. In some countries, libraries have embraced the concept of ‘corporatisation’ through which libraries have imposed membership fees and service charges. Other libraries depend on sponsors and donors for funds. The issue is: will libraries in the 21st century have to be self-funding?

(4) Usage

The most important issue in library usage is the need to provide evidence of usage. Much of the professional literature has alluded to the fact that despite their importance, libraries are not used to the optimum. Also, with the establishment of digital libraries, which makes remote access easy, library visits will soon be more for pleasure (for the peace, quiet and air-conditioning comfort) than for information gathering. In a recent survey1 of undergraduates at the University of Malaya Library only a small percentage visit the library every day (17.2%), with the majority (54 %) visiting a few times a week. The survey also shows that the majority of students do not use the electronic databases (eg. e-books: undergraduates 6.4%, postgraduates 16.41%) preferring the printed books instead (undergraduates 84.6%, postgraduates 87.5%). There is a need to market library services to increase usage, whether on-site or remote. At the OUM2 Library, statistics obtained from log-ins of e-books and e-journals show that:

2. SHARIPAH Hanon Bidin’s monthly statistical reports for online use of the OUM Digital Collections for the year 2003
(i) remote access is greater than on-site access and  
(ii) usage of e-books higher than e-journals

(5) Peripheral role of libraries

Is the role of library passive or proactive?  
There is no real evidence to show that libraries are integrated into the core business of their institutions, especially academic libraries and special libraries. In the case of University libraries, while there is no evidence of a correlation between usage of library resources and academic achievement evidence of Faculty-library integration can be discerned by asking the following questions:

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<th>Learning</th>
<th>Research</th>
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| Is there resource-based teaching?  
Are library resources integrated into teaching activities? | Is there resource based learning?  
Are library resources integrated into learning activities? | Is there evidence that the more specialised the research, the less need there is for library resources? |

With regard to the library’s role in learning, in a survey undertaken at the University of Malaya, to determine whether the user education programme (Information Skills GXEX1401) is useful for their learning, the majority of students surveyed replied in the affirmative

2.1.2 EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

To be prepared for the 21st century, libraries would have to be aware not only of developments taking place in the world outside library walls but to interpret these developments into “opportunities” or “threats” for libraries. Those that can be considered as “opportunities” must be taken advantage of while taking steps to be prepared for those that are considered as “threats”. These “opportunities” and “threats” found beyond library walls must however be seen in the right perspective, against the background of the library’s capabilities or its “strengths” and “weaknesses”.

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3 The information was obtained from CHAN Sai Noi, Head of the Research & Academic Services Division, University of Malaya Library, in March 2004. This Division is responsible for the management of the compulsory one-unit Information Skills Course GXEX1401 conducted for all 6,000 first year students every year since 1995.
2.1.2.1 OPPORTUNITIES

What can be interpreted as ‘opportunities’ can be subjective, depending on how the librarians perceive them to be. For the purpose of this paper, the authors have identified five (5) areas:

(2) Innovative Technology
(3) Globalisation
(4) Lifelong Learning
(5) Knowledge Management
(6) National Policies & Objectives

(1) Innovative Technology

The phrase “innovative technology” is deliberately used here to denote the innovative aspects of technology because not since the wheel has there been a development so global that it has not touched every aspect of life and every level of society – e.g. e-learning, e-government, e-business. From the Parliament to shopping, technology has become part of life. Reaching the moon, artificial intelligence, cloning of genes have become mundane news – innovative technology has made them possible.

The advantages provided by innovative technology can be summarised as:
(a) More efficient work processes, with less mistakes and greater output
(b) Provides global access to information
(c) Encourages independent learning

But the issue that confronts libraries in the 21st century is: To what level should librarians be trained in technology?

In the case of libraries, innovative technology has been identified to facilitate:

(a) Day-to-day tasks such as acquisitions, cataloguing, loans etc.

(b) Interaction with users via the use of portals.

The development of information gateways or portals has made it possible for library and information professionals to upgrade their services. Information portal can offer users one stop work stations where they can search across a multitude of resources and retrieve electronic and book resources in one station. Information portals can provide integration of sources for searching and for location and delivery of materials – in whatever format they exist. Portal brings the opportunity to develop e-library services – to meet the growing expectations of the student population.
Enables user education programmes to be conducted in large groups with hands-on sessions. Undertaking user education programmes provides libraries with the opportunity to optimise usage because users are taught lifelong learning skills such as information retrieval skill and ICT skills.

“Implementing a portal can change the environment in which users discover information and get better access to the wealth of contents” (Murray. 2003)

(2) Globalisation

The term “globalisation” is associated mainly with business – giving rise to concepts such as ‘global economy’, ‘global markets’, ‘global competition’ or hyper competition’, etc. As described by Hitt, “a global economy is one in which goods, services, people, skills and ideas move freely across geographic borders. Relatively unfettered by artificial constraints, such as tariffs, the global economy significantly expands and complicates a firm’s competitive environment”.5

Is globalisation relevant for libraries? The authors are of the opinion that since ‘information delivery’ is a business and globalisation is basically a business concept than globalization will have an impact on libraries.

Innovative technology has made it possible for business to be conducted in a global environment but how does globalisation affect librarians?

i) Self Efficiency vs. Outsourcing

Concept of self-sufficiency has given way to global outsourcing by cutting out the role of the middle man, including the librarian. This has implications for the library in matters relating to human resource and organisation structure.

Examples:

a. Acquisitions: librarians do not need to go through local agents. There are many more companies on Internet who can acquire anything for libraries, ranging from equipment to books.

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b. Cataloging: OCLC is a case in point although it does not contain records for non-English items.

c. Information Services: It is a matter of time before information services are conducted on a global basis replacing libraries and librarians except for the provision of local information which however may be taken over by local companies with enough entrepreneurial acumen to take over the information market.

ii) Demand for wide-ranging information

Imagine providing information services for the whole world, when most libraries cannot even satisfy the information needs of their own clientele. Theoretically, however, this is what globalisation could generate. Do librarians have the potential for it? In reality, no. Working on the premise that no one person can provide all information on everything, it will be a massive task but if libraries do not do it other more enterprising professionals would. It is worth a thought.

For example, libraries in Malaysia need not confine themselves to providing information merely about Malaysia but through databases subscribed and information networks established via the universities and ministries, librarians can play a role. This will have implications for the library in terms of collections, human resource (must be proficient in English and other languages, have working knowledge of subject areas, etc.) and job expertise and skills (indexing, desktop publishing, web-design, etc.).

The question that begs to be asked at this juncture is: Do we still need libraries and librarians in the face of globalisation?

(3) Lifelong Learning

The move towards a more democratic form of education in the 1960’s and 1970’s resulted in a shift in the concept of education from one that was authoritarian and elitist to one that advocated ‘equal opportunity in education’. ‘Equal opportunity in education’ was seen as the democratic right of all individuals ---- irrespective of race, status, age or ability but at the same time ‘equal opportunity’ does not mean the same treatment for everyone.

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6 A more comprehensive account is given in Zaiton Osman and Sharipah Hanon Bidin “Providing Equal Opportunity in Learning: The Role of the Oum Digital Library in Distance Learning"
For equal opportunity to be meaningful, however, education must be extended on a continuous lifelong basis with opportunities for success provided at every stage of the continuum. Any attempt at early elimination would render the democratisation process ineffective and make a mockery of the principle of ‘equal opportunity’

Conceptualising education as a lifelong process was an effort at translating democratic principles into educational practice. Democratising education on the principles of equal opportunity meant a re-appraisal of traditional aims and methods. Unlike the traditional concept, the modern concept of education believes that education should produce a learning society, not a learning minority. In simple language, higher education should be catering to the masses.

The change in emphasis in educational aims and objectives has made it necessary for teaching and learning methods to be reviewed, giving rise to a productive learning environment with the focus on learning and the learner rather than teaching and the teachers, in greater emphasis given to differentiation in needs, abilities and personalities in the development of independent and active learning.

The democratisation of higher education has given the concept ‘equal opportunity’ a new meaning, encompassing a wider scope of educational aims and objectives. It has given modern education certain characteristics, as summarized below:

(1) Greater and more flexible access to higher education
Greater access does not mean mainly increasing the number of people enrolled in mainstream university programmes but also to provide opportunities for those previously “excluded” for various reasons.

Propagating lifelong education would ensure that any one who wishes to acquire qualifications at any stage of his life would be able to do so because there are alternative means by which the opportunity is provided.

(2) Learner-centred approach to learning

The importance given to the learner in the modern approach to education ensures that learner needs are given priority. In lifelong learning, the focus is on teaching the learner how to learn, not what to learn. In modern terms, it would mean “empowering” the learner such that he can be independent and resourceful throughout his lifetime of learning experiences. This also means that the learner is given the opportunity to learn at his own pace and according to his own style. He can undertake his learning anywhere, anytime, anyhow. Learning therefore becomes
flexible, at a pace dictated by the learner and in accordance with negotiated objectives.

(3) Variety of teaching strategies

With the learner’s interest at the heart of the teaching-learning process, the method and strategy of instruction need to adapt. Instruction has now to be skills-based, not subject-based, consistent with the need to prepare learners for lifelong learning, so as to teach them how to learn rather than what to learn. Instruction is individualised to cater to individual differences of the learners making it necessary for small-group teaching rather than the whole-class approach which assumes that learners learn at the same pace. A greater variety of teaching strategies have been devised in recent years to cope with the learner-centric pedagogy such as interdisciplinary team-teaching, project work, problem-based teaching and with greater ICT capability, web-based teaching, e-teaching, etc.

What implications does lifelong learning have for libraries?. Bearing in mind that lifelong ‘students’ are now not confined to the 5-14 age cohort but more likely 5-65 years age cohort as the learning population moves from primary schools to universities, libraries will have to reassess its collections, services and delivery systems to accommodate this learning continuum. There will be traditional as well as non-traditional universities. In the case of the non-traditional universities offering open and distance learning programmes, libraries will need to focus more on digital collections, services to be more flexible providing for remote access and delivery systems need to be efficient.

The issue is: When libraries move from providing library-centred to user-centred services, the library can no longer be a building but a system.

(4) Knowledge Management

The concept of Knowledge Management is basically one that advocates sharing of knowledge within a company or agency such that with the sharing of knowledge it will help the company or agency to combat competition and provide it with the competitive edge. It is a process that involves:

 i) Knowledge creation – recording information from top management downwards and vice versa. It includes documenting unwritten knowledge or in other words, documenting experiences of people relevant to the company operations.
This is not an easy task because the information may not be current and people are not forthcoming, preferring to be secretive.

ii) Knowledge organisation - documenting and using retrieval systems to store and make accessible the necessary information.

What to document, how detailed and for whom are issues related to KM. In certain agencies, there will be a committee or jury of specialists to decide which information to document and store.

iii) Knowledge dissemination/sharing

KM was introduced to reduce barriers in information/knowledge sharing in companies to facilitate decision-making and prevent unnecessary duplication of effort. Knowing what others are doing in other department will help departmental heads to make more informed decisions. Knowledge sharing is more effective if it involves all levels of staff – from top management downwards and vice versa. The logic of sharing strategic and operational knowledge is to make processes more efficient and intra-departmental communication more effective. As for its role in ensuring the company’s monetary gains it has been reported in the professional literature to be ‘successful’. KM has also been described as “organisational learning” because in sharing the information or knowledge the whole organisation goes through a learning process. The success of KM is difficult to quantify because it is difficult to measure the success of knowledge-sharing or to ascertain to what extent organisational learning takes place.

But what does KM mean to libraries?

i) The library can become the Centre for Knowledge Management in the institution by being involved in documenting, organising & disseminating the information or knowledge gathered from within the organisation This is particularly viable for all libraries eg. In the case of university libraries information about teaching, learning & research activities can not only be documented via published reports but also by interviewing the VC, Deputy VC’s, Deans, lecturers, students, Ministry of Education officials, etc. In special libraries at government agencies or private companies, there may be problems with access to confidential information like pricing of commodities, marketing policies, marketing research results, etc. In Malaysia, these are a few successful agencies undertaking KM. From their experience, it can be said that the success of KM depends on the support of the management of the organization.
while the main problem is that colleagues are not cooperative and not forthcoming with information, especially tacit information.

ii) The library can create primary “live” information, instead of dealing with “passive information” which is often secondhand, outdated, irrelevant and insignificant.

iii) Staff must be trained or retrained in certain areas in order to function effectively. The ability to interview effectively, the ability to relate to people without either intimidating them or being intimidated by them, knowledgeable in relevant subject areas, proficient at handling ICT information delivery systems, etc.

iv) Allows library to be creative because there is neither universal approach to KM, nor one or best way of implementing it.

v) Recognition that information is an important commodity but like any other product needs good marketing strategies. If the library wants to function as an information centre it has to convince its own market and society at large of the importance of its role as information provider.

(5) National Policies and Objectives

All countries have long-term strategic plans. In Malaysia, it is a 25-year plan (the Vision 2020) which forms the basis for national development till 2020. Briefly, the V2020’s aim is to make Malaysia an industrialised nation by the year 2020. In order to achieve this aim, nine thrust areas were identified to drive the V2020. One of the thrust areas is to make the Malaysian society a knowledge-based society.

In this case of Malaysia, not only is the public sector committed to achieving the strategic objectives of V2020 but the private sector as well. Knowing where the nation is heading towards and the role played by each sector of society is important to the library and although the role of libraries is more indirect than direct, (serving the Ministry of Education and the university, etc.) libraries do have in their custody the nation’s intellectual wealth which should be optimized in the development of the knowledge society. Considering the wealth of information resources located at libraries throughout Malaysia, if they had been read and used, Malaysia does not need to wait till the year 2020 to have an information-rich society.
2.1.2.2 THREATS

(1) Proliferation of Information Providers

A potential threat is the proliferation of non-library information providing companies and agencies that provide information via Internet. They may impose charges for the information but the information is usually current. How can libraries compete when the collections available at libraries are mainly secondary information found in print and electronic media?

There are three (3) areas that the new breed of information providers has found foothold:
   (a) delivery systems
   (b) content development
   (c) content management

At the recent International Conferences of Asian Digital Libraries, held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2003, it was remarkable to listen to ICT specialists who have devised systems for information delivery. The focus was systems rather than content but it gave a good indication of what is imminent in the near future. Much as librarians were awed by the current developments, it also gave the impression that unless libraries take on a more pro-active approach, libraries will be by-passed as information centres.

So the issue is: Can libraries compete?

(2) Globalisation

There are two aspects in globalisation – the positive and the negative, depending on how one views it. Pages 9 and 10, had given positive insights into what can happen with globalisation. There are two potentials:

i. Ability to outsource certain aspects of library functions such as acquisitions, cataloguing and information sources.

ii. Provide information services beyond home shores. It will be a daunting task as there will be a need to upgrade staff expertise but notwithstanding this, we need to explore the possibility.

From the negative point of view, it will spell the end of library services as we know it now, specifically with regard to information delivery. The library will remain the centre for loans and reference, using print and electronic resources. These materials can be accessed on-site or from the home or office. But the critical issue is currency and variety of information that cannot be supplied by libraries. Globalisation will then take away from the library its information delivery
function because in speed and variety libraries will not be able to compete with information centres worldwide despite the cost.

3.0 ACCOUNTABILITY IN LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Are libraries ready for the 21st century?

Having defined the environment (internal and external) it is obvious that while in the internal environment there are more weaknesses than strengths, in the external environment there are more opportunities than threats. How then can libraries take advantage of the opportunities that the 21st century has to offer when library resources are inadequate and their role more peripheral than integral?

The answer is to strategise – through well-designed strategic plans, efficient organisation, capable leadership and effective control measures.

It is only when these management tools and strategies are in place can libraries ensure the achievement of their goals and objectives. The onus therefore lies with the libraries to maximise their opportunities and be accountable for the success of their performance. Seen in this light, accountability therefore is the key factor to whether or not they can meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century

1) STRATEGIC PLAN

A well-designed plan would provide direction, minimise uncertainty and impact of changes, reduce waste and establish standards for goal achievements. The planning process incorporates the following steps:

1. Setting of goals and objectives
2. Formulating strategies
3. Developing action plans
4. Coordinating activities
5. Monitoring accomplishment of goals
6. Review/ revise plan

For the libraries, it is crucial that they understand what their core business is, which is SERVICES. Their core business must be integrated into the core business of their organisations. In designing the strategies, the library has to first determine a strategic focus which will be incorporated in its (i) vision (ii) mission and (iii) objectives statements

Example of: Vision

To be the leader and innovator in open learning
Example of: Mission

- To be the leading contributor in democratizing education
- To develop quality education through multimode learning technologies
- To develop and enhance learning experiences towards the development of knowledge–based society

Example of: Goals

- To be the forefront of knowledge
- To produce graduates of high quality
- To develop a permanent pool of excellent scholars
- To contribute to nation-building and the well being of the people
- To promote universal human values
- To develop an efficient, innovative and committed management

Example of: Objectives

Goal: To be in the forefront of knowledge

Objective:
1. to increase Science & Technology courses to 60% in all faculties
2. 40% of General studies courses to be reduced and combined with science course
3. to increase the research vote by 20% by the year 2004

Example of: Strategic plan

Strategic Goals
University
- Upgrade academic achievement of weak students
- Upgrade opportunities & facilities for research for academic staff

Library
> Implement collection development policies for teaching and learning
> Library as first stop research centre
> Improve user education programmes
> Develop IT
Where does the issue of accountability arise in the formulation of the strategic plan? It is in the quantitative methods used to measure the accomplishment of goals and objectives, in the time frames given to accomplish each activity and in the quality measures used in the performance such as monitoring, setting standards (ISO) and benchmarking. But however brilliant the plan, unless implemented, it is useless.

(2) ORGANISING

The organisation structure should facilitate the achievement of goals so it is important that the organisation structure is designed to facilitate work flow (whether via function, specialisation or process), define the chain of command (whether hierarchical, flat, etc.), define the span of control (the wider the less effective) and clarify issue such as centralisation vs. decentralisation.

The library management would have to structure the organization in such a way as to ensure that the organisation structure facilitates rather than hinder the achievement of goals. The library management is therefore accountable in this aspect.

Example of a simple one-site organisation structure
(3) LEADING

Leading is influencing others to carry out tasks towards the achievements of goals. There are different types of leaderships (autocratic, democratic, transformational, etc.) but there are certain traits or characteristics that reflect good leadership:

(a) Develop corp of excellent staff
   - Staff development plan
   - Motivation
   - Competency training
   - Leadership training
   - Performance measurement

(b) Monitor activities

(c) Monitor achievement of goals

(d) Flexible and adaptable leadership

(e) Establish value culture – leadership by example
Leadership is not confined to being the Chief Librarian or the Library Director but leadership is found at all levels. Leaders may be managers but not all managers are leaders. The quality of human resource in any organisation depends on the quality of leadership. In this way, the library manager should be held accountable if staff cannot perform and goals cannot be achieved.

(4) CONTROL

Control measures must be in place to monitor activities and ensure that goals are achieved. The effectiveness of any control system depends on how effectively it can facilitate the achievement of goals.

Why is a control system important?

i) It is a means of measuring whether goals are met and if not why. You can have well-formulated strategic plans, well-designed organisation structure, highly motivated staff but without control there is no measure of goals achievement.

ii) It is a management tool that can be used to monitor and measure activities (financial, performance, etc.) with greater objectivity.

How to measure?

There are basically 3 types of control measures that libraries can use:
(a) Monitoring
(b) ISO
(c) Benchmarking

An efficient and effective control system shows accountability.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The demands and challenges of the 21st century should serve as a catalyst for reviewing the library’s relevance to its organisation but unless it is held accountable for its performance vis-à-vis the organisation, it will remain ineffective and peripheral.
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