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Planning and the Future of the Academic Library: An Annotated Bibliography

Gregory A. Smith, M.L.S., M.B.A.

Academic libraries are remarkably different than they were in the not-too-distant past—say, 25 years ago. They have not changed overnight, but rather through the accretion of a persistent stream of changes, both small and large. Environmental conditions, such as technological advances and economic challenges, have certainly contributed to academic libraries' evolution. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that library organizations have been passive, or simply reactive, in the face of changing conditions. Rather, to some extent, librarians and other professionals have exerted agency in determining library futures. In short, they have engaged in planning: a deliberate effort to enhance future organizational performance in response to an emerging reality.

Proactively managing an academic library's ongoing interaction with the environment is no small task. Leaders involved in library planning, whether situated within or outside the library, can benefit from studying the accumulated wisdom of others. Accordingly, this document introduces readers to nearly 20 sources—articles, chapters, reports, and more—that convey important insights into library planning. Not all of these sources focus specifically on libraries. Academic libraries are not so different from business organizations as to require completely distinctive planning disciplines. Furthermore, library planning must fit cohesively with overall institutional planning processes. Therefore, sources are covered under the following headings:

- Strategic Planning & Change in Business Organizations
- Planning & Change in Higher Education Institutions
- Data & Planning in Academic Libraries
- The Future of Academic Libraries

As the ensuing discussion explains, academic library planning does not occur in a vacuum. Increasingly, it reflects a context in which educational and other institutions are held accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. Planning presumes the existence of useful data streams—not least to support environmental scanning and strategic forecasting. Formulating a strategic plan is very different from implementing it. Successful implementation entails attention to organizational development and budget planning. Library planning processes offer opportunities to exhibit leadership and innovation. Academic libraries are evolving to focus more intentionally on enhancing learning and scholarship. As they do so, they face an interesting tension between *collaboration*, which can enhance operational efficiency, and *differentiation*, which helps to ensure that services are adapted to the local context.

Strategic Planning & Change in Business Organizations

Kotter, J. P. (2007). **Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail.** *Harvard Business Review*, 85(1): 96–103. (Original work published 1995)

Key Idea: Companies commonly make eight errors when seeking to implement major change:

- Error 1: Not Establishing a Great Enough Sense of Urgency
- Error 2: Not Creating a Powerful Enough Guiding Coalition
- Error 3: Lacking a Vision
- Error 4: Undercommunicating the Vision by a Factor of Ten
- Error 5: Not Removing Obstacles to the New Vision
- Error 6: Not Systematically Planning for, and Creating, Short-Term Wins
- Error 7: Declaring Victory Too Soon
- Error 8: Not Anchoring Changes in the Corporation's Culture

Key Quote: The most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that **the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time.** Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result.

Klatt, T., Schlaefke, M., & Moeller, K. (2011). **Integrating business analytics into strategic planning for better performance.** *Journal of Business Strategy*, 32(6): 30–39. doi:[10.1108/02756661111180113](https://doi.org/10.1108/02756661111180113)

Key Quote: As Neely (1999, p. 206) notes, **“we measure everything that walks and moves, but nothing that matters.”** Especially in strategic planning, various internal and external factors seem relevant; these intensify this challenge. To avoid bounded or inefficient decisions, business analytics must provide decision-makers with reliable information about key performance drivers to focus decisions on problems' primary aspects. (p. 31)

Planning & Change in Higher Education Institutions

Anderes, T. K. (1996). **Connecting academic plans to budgeting: Key conditions for success.** In B. P. Nedwek (Ed.), *Doing academic planning: Effective tools for decision making* (pp. 129–134). Ann Arbor, MI: Society for College and University Planning.

Key Quote: ***The ultimate test in determining whether planning and budgeting are connected is the degree to which planning outcomes are funded.*** Planning is a strong component of institutional decision making when priorities evolve through budget development and are legitimized by allocation of resources. The continuing viability of priorities must be based on their ability to achieve the success projected for them in the planning process. (pp. 133–134)

Opatz, P., & Hutchinson, K. (1999). **Building trust through strategic planning.** *Planning for Higher Education*, 27(2): 21–27.

Key Quote: Trust, like leadership, communication, and collaboration, is a necessary element of *successful* strategic planning in colleges and universities. (p. 21)

Key Quote: ***If constituencies are given an opportunity to participate in planning and, as a result, believe that their interests have been protected, they will consider the overall process to be fair, even when a particular decision is unfavorable.*** (p. 25)

Watkins, J. F. (1999). **Reflections on the value of strategic planning.** *Planning for Higher Education*, 27(4): 18–24.

Key Quote: I believe that you cannot have (1) strategic planning without the ability to close the loop through the implementation of the plan operationally on almost a daily, and most certainly, on an annual basis, or (2) effective operational planning without a visionary sense of the future and a continuous planning process supported by a strategic approach to institutional planning. (p. 23)

Hirschhorn, L., & May, L. (2000). **The campaign approach to change: Targeting the university's scarcest resources.** *Change*, 32(3): 30–37. doi:[10.1080/00091380009601733](https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380009601733)

Key Idea: Employing a campaign may be more effective than traditional planning in leveraging time and attention to effect change on a college or university campus. The campaign approach conveys imagery drawn from politics, advertising, military operations, public health, and fundraising.

Key Quote: An effective campaign has four overlapping elements:

- 1) *“Listen In” to the Institution*—to discover the emergent future.
- 2) *Develop a Strategic Theme*—to give direction to the campaign.
- 3) *Sweep People In*—to mobilize energies.
- 4) *Build the Infrastructure*—to make change possible. (p. 33)

Korschgen, A., Fuller, R., & Lambert, L. (2000). **Institutional planning that makes a difference.** *AAHE Bulletin*, 52. Retrieved from <http://www.aahea.org/articles/aprilf2.htm>

Key Idea: Interviews conducted at 27 institutions of higher education led to the following conclusions about how to engage in effective campus planning:

- What Works
 - Knowing Your Clay
 - Leading Change
 - Changing the Culture
 - Taking Planning Seriously
 - Using Data Benchmarking
 - Communicating Openly
 - Encompassing the Culture
- What Doesn't Work
 - Adopting Overly Formal Plans
 - Expecting Too Much

Rowley, D. J., & Sherman, H. (2002). **Implementing the strategic plan.** *Planning for Higher Education*, 30(4): 5–14.

Key Quote: Following are the methods that campus leaders can use to implement strategic change effectively:

- Using the budget
- Implementation through participation
- Using force to implement the strategic plan
- Establishing goals and key performance indicators
- Working with the human resource management structure
- Using the reward system
- Using faculty and staff development
- Working with or changing institutional culture
- Manipulating the role of tradition
- Developing and using change champions
- Building on successful systems (p. 43)

Petrides, L. A., McClelland, S. I., & Nodine, T. R. (2004). **Using external accountability mandates to create internal change.** *Planning for Higher Education*, 33(1): 44–50. Retrieved from http://www.scup.org/asset/50166/33-1PHE_Petrides.pdf

Key Idea: A study of a large community college system in California yielded insights concerning institutional change. The college responded to evolving regulatory standards that affected the perception of accountability for performance. **While “many people publicly voiced their commitment to improved outcomes, [. . .] many [. . .] sought to buffer themselves from the possible consequences of the emerging evaluative environment”** (p. 47). The article draws five implications for planning and management, including the necessity of interpreting and communicating external mandates in terms of internal principles and values.

Green, K. C. (2012, January 25). **(Not) using data for decisions** [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/not-using-data-decisions>

Key Quote: ***No matter how we ... try to explain why campuses don't make effective use of data for decision-making, there is no question that colleges and universities—and campus leaders—will have to do better.*** We see too many instances that document the effective use of data in the consumer and corporate economy. There are too many times when we in academe are asked why we are not using and leveraging data in ways that parallel the activities in other sectors.

Lapin, J. D. (2015, November). ***Using external environmental scanning and forecasting to improve strategic planning.*** Workshop presented at the meeting of The Mid-America Association for Institutional Research, Springfield, MO.

Key Idea: Strategic planning is systematic, ongoing, focused on the external environment. It has a horizon 3-5 years beyond the present. By contrast, operational planning is internally focused, addressing how and when the organization carries out its strategies. Its horizon lies 1-2 years out. Environmental scanning is a critical foundation for strategic planning; through it the organization identifies external trends that may constitute a threat or opportunity, thus impacting its ability to compete successfully. Trends express the direction of change; they may be observed in areas such as competition, demographics, politics, economics, labor force, education, technology, and social values and lifestyles.

Data & Planning in Academic Libraries

Wayne, R. (2011). **The academic library strategic planning puzzle: Putting the pieces together.** *College & Research Libraries News*, 72(1): 12–15. Retrieved from <http://crln.acrl.org/content/72/1/12.full.pdf>

Key Idea: The strategic planning process that has developed in the Library at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas includes the following components:

- Hierarchy: vision → goals → themes → objectives
- SharePoint intranet
- Quarterly, staff-wide meetings to discuss progress
- Flexibility in formulating objectives subordinate to goals
- End-of-cycle performance assessment

Marcum, D., & Schonfeld, R. C. (2014). **Driving with data: A roadmap for evidence-based decision making in academic libraries.** Retrieved from http://www.sr.ithaka.org/sites/default/files/files/SR_BriefingPaper_DrivingData.pdf

Key Quote: Library leaders aiming to create a more evidence-based decision-making environment can begin by ensuring that these building blocks are in place:

- **Environmental scans** are conducted at regular intervals by knowledgeable experts.
- Library has a clear statement about the **types of data** that are useful for making decisions.
- **Organizational structure and technical skills and system** are in place to assemble, manage, and analyze the data.
- **A culture of transparent decision-making** is personally modeled, to show the value of evidence and also the importance of reaching decisions in the absence of full information.
- **External data** that are necessary for decision-making are identified, gathered to the extent possible, and analyzed for integration into the library's decision-making processes.
- **Processes and purposes of data collection** [are] reviewed periodically to ensure that they are still relevant and useful. (p. 9)

The Future of Academic Libraries

McDonald, J. (2011). **New wine, new wineskins.** *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 18(2–3): 136–149. doi:[10.1080/10691316.2011.577674](https://doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2011.577674)

Abstract: Academic libraries face an uncertain future. ***Rather than attempting to develop libraries based on an unknowable future, the author argues it is preferable to address student learning needs with a set of information and learning instructional services established on teaching and learning principles and activities.*** Evolving from and replacing the present academic library, this new organization, the information and learning center, is staffed by a new academic professional, the information and learning specialist, who addresses the student's need to gather and manage information, read, and write as an integrated set of experiences directed by the curriculum and teachers' pedagogies.

Neal, J. G. (2011). **Prospects for systemic change across academic libraries.** *EDUCAUSE Review*, 46(2): 10–11. Retrieved from <http://er.educause.edu/~media/files/article-downloads/erm1129.pdf>

Key Quote: The vision for academic libraries is shifting rapidly, but the multiple personalities of our work persist. We will collectively be ***legacy***, responsible for managing centuries of societal records in all formats. We will be ***infrastructure***, an essential combination of space, technology, systems, and expertise. We will be ***repository***, ensuring the long-term availability and usability of our scholarly and cultural output. We will be ***portal***, serving as a sophisticated and intelligent gateway to expanding multimedia and interactive content and tools. We will be ***enterprise***, more focused on innovation, business planning, risk, and “collaboration as the new competition.” And we will be ***public interest***, defending and expanding access to information. (p. 11)

Holmgren, R., & Spencer, G. (2014). ***The changing landscape of library and information services: What presidents, provosts, and finance officers need to know.*** Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources. Retrieved from <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub162/pub162.pdf>

Key Idea: Rapidly evolving digital technologies and services are profoundly influencing the financial model supporting many colleges and universities. Institutions that rely solely on traditional solutions to address the growing challenges to the higher education business model are unlikely to thrive. Colleges and universities must identify and seize new opportunities in light of new financial challenges. ***Developments of the past decade—from the ubiquity of cell phones to the growth of virtual server infrastructure and the maturation of open-source software support models—have created new opportunities for LITS organizations to improve student outcomes, increase revenue, and manage costs.*** The authors discuss these opportunities and identify the core competencies that LITS organizations will need to support positive institutional change in the decade ahead.

Mathews, B. (2014). **Librarian as futurist: Changing the way libraries think about the future.** *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 14(3): 453–462. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/49667>

Abstract: Are librarians preoccupied with the future? There are countless books, articles, blog posts, webinars, and conference presentations filled with speculation about what libraries will become. This is understandable with the emergence of new roles for libraries and librarians as we determine our identity across the digital landscape. This essay offers guidance for thinking about the future. ***By adopting the cognitive tools and mindsets used by practitioners of strategic foresight, library leaders can position their organizations for greater impact and value. Knowing how to discover, design, assess, and address possible future scenarios is becoming increasingly critical, and this skill should become part of our professional fluency.***

Ward, D. (2015, April 21). **It takes a university to build a library.** *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/21/essay-calls-librarians-seek-more-involvement-their-campuses-developing-future>

Key Idea: Academic libraries are undergoing radical transformation. ***Libraries are adapting to local contexts and becoming quite diverse in the services that they provide. The transition to ongoing effective service is dependent on leadership from library directors and on engagement on the part of faculty and administrators across the disciplines.*** Library directors need to exhibit three dimensions of social intelligence: “understanding the complex and ambiguous decision-making processes of higher education”; “working with complexity”; and “approach[ing] library change with humility.”