Planning

Planning is the activity that determines where a library and information services organization is going over a period of time, how it plans to arrive there, and how it can determine if it got there or not. The focus is on the entire organization. There is no choice but to anticipate the future and to mold organizational objectives and strategies to accomplish goals. More and more factors determine the success of libraries and other information services organizations. Thinking strategically and taking action to revise and revitalize in order to meet new challenges is the focus of the process. With the future no longer predictable, a recommitment to core values and a vision of the services is embedded in the planning process. Of course, marketing is a vital component in that success. All of these factors must be developed with a keen awareness of outside forces that may facilitate or frustrate the planning process.

An effort to anticipate the future requires choosing from among possible alternatives and with full knowledge and use of techniques and tools available for such action. Thinking and acting strategically enables the organization to continue to move from where it is now to where it wants to be. Planning the services and then marketing the outputs can ensure success in the efforts. Involving stakeholders—users and financial supporters—in the process empowers the organization to move forward in a systematic, more rapid fashion. In order to garner that kind of support for such plans, library and information centers are beholden to the development of marketing strategies for success.

Because planning sustains the viability of an information services organization, discussion of how to facilitate such a process, the trends and techniques, is the focus of this section.

Planning Information Services and Systems

i Overview

Jean Smith is excited to have been the appointed director of libraries in this most prestigious university. In fact, she is the first female appointed to such an august position in this Ivy League institution with a long history and tradition behind it. In the first general information meetings she schedules with her senior staff, the issue of future directions is high on the agenda. Wanting to ease into discussion of planning for the future, she asks each unit chief to describe his or her area of responsibility and to imagine some future directions for the unit. The first old-timer to speak tenaciously presents his unit's responsibilities with a caveat of "Thank you very much; we are doing what we are supposed to do!" By way of gently prodding the discussions, she asks why something is done the way it is. Comes his serious, but defensive, reply, "Because we have always done it that way." Is the response an excuse or a reason?

Planning is one important way of anticipating the future. In the process of futuring, an organization must determine where it is before it can decide where it wants to be and how it will get there. Planning services and systems in libraries and information centers is an all-encompassing concept from recognizing the need to plan and then developing a vision and a mission, through setting goals, motivating individuals, appraising performance of both personnel and systems, evaluating results, developing a financial base to accomplish all of that, and finally adjusting directions to account for the outcome of those activities. Along the way, decisions must be made and policies developed.

This chapter provides an introduction to the organizational planning process. It gives an overview of various planning models and the factors involved in the planning process. Finally it presents some techniques and tools that are useful in the planning process. This is done in preparation for the next chapter on strategic planning.

TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

A dynamic organization has no choice but to anticipate the future, to attempt to mold future directions, and to balance short-range and long-range goals. Preparing for the future is the core of management activities, with its effectiveness—or in some cases ineffectiveness—being reflected in every segment of an organization's developmental process. As an analytical process, it involves assessing the future, determining a desired direction for the organization in that future, identifying objectives in the context of that future, developing programs of action for such objectives, selecting an appropriate agenda from among those alternatives that are priorities, and pursuing a detailed course of action.

ENVIRONMENT FOR PLANNING

Planning is committing library or information center resources—physical, personnel, and material—based upon the best possible knowledge of the future. It requires systematically organizing the effort needed to use these resources and requires measuring the results of planning decisions through systematic feedback so that needed changes can be effected. In libraries and other information service organizations, the planning process may be resisted by individuals and groups who fear that change—in goals and objectives as well as in responsibilities and organizational structure—will threaten their positions in the organization. In its extreme, this planning climate can create a competitive relationship with other departments in the larger organization—whether they are academic units of an educational institution, departments of a governmental entity, part of a school district, or divisions of a business or foundation—of which the library is a part. This competition places greater responsibility on the librarian to sell programs and exert pressures for their successful execution.

Strategy is the focus of all planning processes, and it usually incorporates purpose, policies, program, action, decision, and resource allocation that serve to define an organization.

Some Definitions

Planning: An effort to develop decisions and actions in order to guide what an organization does and why it does it.

Policy making: Development of plans, positions, and guidelines that influence decisions and provide direction for the organization.

> **Decision making:** The process of selection of a course of action from among potential alternatives.

PLANNING MODELS

Various change dimensions and predictive management approaches are used in the planning process and are extensively discussed in the literature. Crisis management, contingency planning, and conditional thinking are terms found in the literature to describe the art of predicting and planning. Most new techniques capitalize on opportunities to change, rather than on the threats that unplanned change can bring. They are techniques for minimizing some of the risk and uncertainty in an organization's future, minimizing or replacing uncertainty with some measure of control over the direction and outcome of the future, and placing the organization on a deliberate, successful course through the planning jungle. Planning gives direction, redresses impact of change, minimizes waste and redundancy, and sets standards used in controlling.

A few of those models have some application for library and information services planning. They are presented as a prelude to the strategic planning technique that has most relevance for information services and that is discussed in the next chapter.

Those models include:

- **Issue-based (or goal-based) strategic planning** is a simplified form of strategic planning that is applicable to information services in smaller organizations but has most of the components of the strategic planning exercise.

- **Self-organizing planning** purports to deny the notion that strategic planning is linear or mechanical. Thus, it requires continual attention to common values. It has been likened to the development of an organism; that is, an organic, self-organizing process. This requires an intensive examination of the current organization and clarifying the organization's values and then articulating a vision. It also requires routinely revisiting the process in order to envision what must be done at that point. In that sense, the planning process is never completed; a learning process is continuous, and therefore examination of values is necessary in order to update the process.

- **Alignment modeling and organic modeling** is used to ensure that what the organization does is aligned with its mission. It is useful as a fine-tuning strategy or to explore why strategies, already in existence, are not working. Some of those techniques use computer software in developing the model. The purpose of the model is to ensure strong alignment between the organization's mission and its resources to effectively operate the organization. This model is also undertaken by organizations that are trying to fine-tune strategies or discover why their current strategies are not working. An organization might choose this model if it is experiencing a large number of issues around

internal efficiencies. The approach allows not only identifying what is not working well but also what adjustments should be made.

- **Scenario planning** is a particular planning technique that basically requires a group process that promotes creative thinking through a "What if?" attitude. A scenario is formed by developing and describing a desirable future situation and identifying the course of events that enables one to progress from the original situation to that future situation. It encourages participants to discover new ways to solve problems, to develop services, and to institute plans by sharing knowledge and sharing a vision for becoming a more effective and efficient learning organization. Scenario planning has been developed using Peter Senge's five disciplines approach.[1] It maintains that multiple possible futures exist and discusses the process necessary for an organization to create its own future by exploring all possible alternatives to the present structure. This approach is useable in conjunction with other models to aid planners in undertaking strategic thinking. The model is useful, particularly in identifying strategic issues and goals. Often times this technique requires the organization to discuss and develop three different future scenarios: best-case, reasonable-case, and worst-case scenarios that might be foreseen as a result of change. This exercise can encourage motivation for change of the status quo. In addition, each scenario offers potential strategies to cope with change. Of course, the objective is to select the most realistic scenario while identifying the best strategies the information services organization must undertake to respond to change.

The intent of this approach is to develop more than one vision, allowing flexibility in creating views of the future as part of the planning process. The strategies can be addressed in at least three possible scenarios:

1. Probable: Key trends and constraints of current situations are explored and implications for continuation; increase or decline of what is current are explored.
2. Possible: What might change? What would one envision if the organization had better and more? Imagination and speculation are tools for deciding.
3. Preferable: Develop a vision of what is a preferred, idealized condition.

By choosing the most likely to succeed, actions can be converted into an agenda through the planning process. The technique can be potentially useful for libraries and information centers as they try to envision the unknown future.

Each of those mentioned models has certain strengths and weaknesses. Descriptions and application of each can be found in the extensive business and management literature. It is important to note that, although some of the mechanical planning models can be helpful in some situations, the most desirable approach for information services relies upon creativity and innovation.

Despite the obvious need to plan, a systematic planning process remains one of the most elusive and easily avoided activities in information services organizations. This phenomenon continues to exist despite the fact that planning is *the* most basic function—all other functions must reflect it, and the growth or decline of an organization depends in no small measure upon the soundness of its planning process.

Several recently imposed change factors have come together and are now making it imperative to develop planning decisions focused on more detailed, systematic processes than was necessary in a more leisurely past. The multidimensional interrelationship between external and internal forces and between levels of staff in information services organization now demands a systematic approach to developing and marketing the services and their benefits. Changing environments and anticipated future environments—including declining or stabilized budgets, inflation, technological developments, the explosion of information in many formats, staffs' growing sophistication coupled with their own needs and expectations, patterns of use, user interests and satisfaction, and nonuser resistance and reasons thereof—all make planning for information services more vital and more alive today than it has ever been.

✦ What Would You Do?

The new director is insistent upon approaching management in a new way. Participation is the name and decision is the game You, as the group leader for the upcoming retreat on change, have been asked to come up with an agenda for discussion and action that includes identification of the five most important change factors that are or might soon impact good library and information services. How do you begin to identify those factors that make it more necessary than ever to systematically plan and develop library and information services? In thinking about the assignment, and before even reading articles and treatises on change, what are your initial reactions? Present a persuasive argument to the group as you break out into discussions on this theme.

Such a dynamic environment provides new challenges and opportunities to revitalize and redefine organizations as well as reinvent information sources and services for both growth and survival, with the primarily goal of meeting a growing need in society for access to information. An added benefit is that staff at various levels in information services organizations, as they become more actively engaged in the planning process, are more likely to become committed to an agreed upon vision of the organization and to dedicate their efforts to pursuing the goals and objectives that are the outcomes of that planning. As this happens, all members of the organization are becoming spokespersons and advocates in explaining, enhancing, and enveloping the identified needs and directions not only to other staff members but also to governing agencies and the customer/client/patron/user base.

Although numerous reasons can be given for why many libraries and other information centers have neglected planning, the main reason given is that if it is to be done successfully it is extremely difficult and time-consuming and can be a confusing, sometimes threatening, process. That is further complicated by the macroenvironment, including economic uncertainty, technological innovations that are necessary, shifting demographics, changing societal priorities, and shrinking financial support from primary sources. In addition, changes occur in reporting relationships in organizations of which libraries and information centers are a part—university presidential and corporate officials' tenures are shorter; sometimes another administrative layer is inserted in the chain of command; boards of trustees change, as do school committees; corporate boards and mayors or other chief management officers change. Such changes may force libraries and information centers to make decisions that will affect operations in the foreseeable future and, in some cases, to project needs beyond that immediate future. Added to the complications and resistance is the fact that many managers and other staff members simply avoid proper planning, whereas others naively do not understand how to plan. Some library and information center professionals in decision-making positions tend to emphasize current operations at the expense of planning for the future. Resistance to systematic and comprehensive planning often is couched in such phrases as "Planning is just crystal ball gazing in these days of technological change," or "There is no time to devote to planning because we are too busy with our work." Some managers in libraries and information centers continue to look to past success as a guide for projecting future trends, whereas others rely on intuition as a decision-making device. Former successful operations that were the result of an overabundance of funds are sometimes attributed to the manager's own imagination and intuition. Lack of success, on the other hand, is blamed on "circumstances beyond the library's or the information center's control" instead of on a lack of planning.

Planning styles and approaches, if they can be identified, are sometimes more retrospective in nature, drawing upon past experiences with the hope of projecting those past successes into the future. When the organizational climate, internal and external, was more stable than in current turbulent times, such experience was acceptable as a basis for decision making. This is no longer a realistic approach. Although experience still is one legitimate factor in the overall analysis of a plan, it is no longer the only and certainly not the primary factor. Experience, intuition, and snap judgments made by one person are no longer effective methods with so many new variables now likely to determine eventual outcomes. As libraries and other information centers have matured organizationally, and in order to avoid continual crisis, information professionals have taken it upon themselves or, in some cases, have been mandated by parent institutions to think more strategically and to act more strategically by developing future-oriented plans in an attempt to anticipate the processes, programs, and priorities that will be desirable and sustainable in the future. That future is not what it used to be. The outcome of such planning, then, becomes the basis for financial considerations leading to operational plans covering staff utilization, materials acquisition, technological development, and physical plant maintenance, each of those cost factors being a part of the total service matrix. Many libraries and information centers have

introduced a self-evaluation planning process in order to identify strengths and weaknesses that support or hinder priorities identified in the process. Some are surprised that those identified priorities may be completely different from what was previously perceived to be the primary focus of activities.

✷ What Do You Think?

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.

Do you agree with this statement that was made by Benjamin Franklin? Is it really necessary to plan, particularly because there is some indication that the future is already here?

A changing information services environment now demands greater attention to effective planning for information services. This requires an attitude of anticipation, with planning being deliberate, conscious, and consensual. In such an atmosphere, there is greater likelihood of successfully incorporating change as the dynamic force. Because planning is an effort to anticipate future change, it can and should be accomplished by choosing from among several possible alternatives.

Planning in the past was most often accomplished in the performance of managers only, in a direct supervisory relationship. Now many large libraries and information centers have developed cadres of people whose primary function is planning. Those officers in planning staff positions augment and support team-based planning efforts, sometimes acting as information sources, sometimes as catalysts, sometimes as advisers, and sometimes as devil's advocates. Those individuals might, for example, provide factual data and propose new services, but their primary role is to coordinate the entire planning program. Some libraries and information centers have instituted planning committees or groups, whereas others, mainly large public and academic library systems, have created planning offices within the staff structure of the library. Information centers in for-profit organizations are more likely to relate a portion of their activities to a planning division and, with knowledge management becoming such an important component of their responsibilities, are likely to be represented at a high level in the organization because knowledge management plays an important role in those initiatives. These groups are responsible for developing or guiding the development of certain plans, particularly those that are long-range or more strategic in nature. Such groups, with clearly defined responsibilities, are usually able to perform more intensive investigations and to analyze and coordinate plans more thoroughly.

One good example of a centralized planning effort with designated staff is that of the University of California's System Wide Planning Unit within the Office of the President. That group is charged with providing "strategic leadership and support for strategic planning for the long-term sustainable growth of the University of California's library collections and services, consistent with the 'One University, One Library' concept of shared resources, programs, services, and planning."[2]

Now, more than ever before, a new, more formalized approach to planning, based upon forecasting and examination of environmental factors, is the key to success in library and information services. However, this simply stated feat is not easily accomplished. Librarians and information specialists new to the planning process should be cautioned that some formal planning methods and models can be quite complicated and may not apply to current library and information service needs of their own organization. Some of these sophisticated models do not lend themselves to smaller information service operations and, therefore, may not be cost-effective; others are so complex that they may be of no use in a particular library or information center setting. It also must be stated that, because of rapid environmental changes, many plans may become dated or obsolete before they even can be implemented. Therefore, it should be a process that never ends, is continuously revisited and revised as opportunities and circumstances dictate. A balance between efforts expended and outcome is desirable. It should be recognized, however, that there is a downside to an extensive planning process.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

A successful planning approach must build an understanding of the library's or information center's reason for existence and capabilities as an essential first step to identifying future directions. To create a planning attitude, the concept must involve all levels of the organization, beginning at the top and filtering down throughout the various levels to be accepted and implemented through policies, procedures, projects, and programs that are developed as a result. The outcome, a planning document, becomes today's design for tomorrow's action, an outline of the steps to be taken starting now and continuing into the future. The process leading to the development of a written document involves all segments concerned with and affected by the process, both inside the immediate library and information center and outside through customers with programmatic interests and individuals and organizations with vested financial interests. This planning process forces action on the part of the whole of the institution. Although the idea of involving every single person in the process is an idealistic approach, it is so only because it is not feasible for everyone to participate in every single aspect of the stages of a planning process.

Because planning is a delicate, complicated, time-consuming process, it cannot be forced on an organization that is not prepared for self-analysis and the change that will result from the process. A bifurcation exists, in which scientific evidence and rational thinking must be balanced by a planning attitude and the interpersonal skills that facilitate the process. Discretion must be exercised so that overinvolvement in the planning process, by individuals and by groups, does not interfere with fulfillment of the basic mission of the organization, while at the same time they must be assured that they are an important component in the success of the process. Occasionally, services can suffer if resources are diverted to the planning process and staff become so engrossed in planning that current basic library and information services tasks are ignored. On the other hand, the success of the effort requires commitment that must be earned. One cautionary note relates to the fact that when large amounts of energy and resources are committed, expectations are

likely to be high, foreseeing miraculous results and significant instant change. Such expectations must be quickly brought into a realistic perspective.

The degree of extensive staff involvement in planning depends on cost, time, the importance of the particular plan, and the perceived knowledge and interest of participants. It is imperative that each person involved knows clearly the purpose of the planning, the expected outcomes, and his or her role as well as that of every other individual throughout the process. Keeping the whole organization informed about the plans that are taking shape is also an important component. If this type of communication and involvement takes place, a greater commitment is likely to be achieved. Even previous to the start of the process, the right organizational climate must be established to encourage the success of the planning process. If the staff, the customers, and the funding authorities are in agreement at this initial stage and buy into the process, then it is realistic to expect that members of the library or other information service organizations will consistently use the written plan as a guide.

After the plan is accepted as a document for future directions, progress toward achieving the intent of the plan should proceed in a timely manner, addressing activities and developing procedures to achieve the objectives identified in the plan. The planning process never should be considered as just an activity that management uses occasionally, when they think there is time for it. Without daily planning as follow-up, decisions revert to becoming ad hoc choices, activities become random, and confusion and chaos can prevail.

✷❓ What Do You Think?

Abraham Lincoln once said, "If I had six hours to chop down a tree, I would spend the first four hours sharpening the ax." How does this comment have relevance for planning information services, and what does it entail?

FACTORS IN PLANNING

Impetus for planning is now necessary in all organizations, whether for-profit or nonprofit. This is true because technology is changing, doing business is more expensive, and organizations must be sure of their value and therefore justified in expending the required resources. A plan is basically a blueprint for action, a to-do list for the information services organization. It can be simple, short-term, and basic or more detailed, long-range, and strategic. It helps set priorities or goals and helps establish guidelines for implementing the various tasks identified in the plan. Factors, for purposes of discussion here, are arbitrarily divided into five elements:

Time Frame

There are two basic categories of plans with respect to time: (1) strategic or long-range plans and (2) short-term, annual, or operational plans. This categorization refers primarily to the span of time over which the plan is effective,

starting with the time when the plan is initiated and ending with the time when the objectives of the plan are actually measured for achievement.

A variety of terms, including *long-range, normative, strategic,* and *master planning* have been used to describe what is now conceived as the strategic planning process. It is the type of planning that has become most widely used and accepted. There are nuances of differences in each of those approaches, but, for purposes of this text, the focus will be on thinking and planning strategically. Strategic planning has become the most central outcome of many organizations' strategic thinking. Exacerbating, or one should say encouraging, this approach are technological developments and applications combined with circumstances and external forces that are mostly beyond the library or information center's immediate environment and control. Those forces dictate an organized, extended view to planning library and information services operations. The strategic planning concept has more or less absorbed what was previously viewed as the intermediate long-range view. Long-range, strategic, and master planning each necessitate looking at library and information center operations in a critical and comprehensive way in order to develop a planning network and time frame that combines the subplans of departments, divisions, project units, or program coordinators of the library or information center into one master plan that charts the course of the whole organization for a foreseeable future.

On the other hand, short-term, operational, or tactical plans encompass the day-to-day planning that takes place in any organization, a type of planning that is more task oriented. It involves a shorter time frame and the resolution of specific problems, usually of an internal nature. Such plans often coincide with the accounting or bookkeeping year and are deadline driven. Short-term plans provide the guidelines for day-to-day operations and the procedures by which they are accomplished. These plans are much more detail intensive and immediate than strategic plans, and their objectives are much more short term and specific. They encompass more known factors and, therefore, are more quantitative. Short-term plans bring the general guidelines developed in long-range plans to the operational level. One might view the two approaches as complementing each other—strategic plans providing the overview and operational plans providing the specific budgetary factors for a specified period of time. Because short-term plans are specific and immediate, they do not carry the uncertainty that strategic plans do. Both types of plans can be considered action oriented, however, and, therefore, measurable and attainable.

Collecting and Analyzing Data

The more pertinent the information on which a plan is based, the better the planning process will be. Therefore, the second element in planning is collecting and analyzing data. This step includes systematic collection of data concerning the library or information center, its activities, operations, staff, use, and users over a given period of time, as well as the external environment, which affects what the organization wants to do and the way it can do it. In other words, it is an analytical study of the whole organization and its operation. One must resist the urge to allow data collection to dominate or to bog down the planning

process, but viewing this step as a means to an end—the collection of data relating to past activities with the view of making decisions about future ones. Needs assessment and data collection cannot be stressed to the exclusion of translating the needs into goals and objectives, developing programs to address those needs, and evaluating the effectiveness of new and ongoing library operations and programs. Evaluation as an element of the planning process, and techniques for collecting data are discussed in later chapters of this textbook.

LEVELS OF PLANNING

All supervisors, coordinators, or team leaders, whatever their level of responsibility within the organizational structure, should be engaged in planning at least on two levels. They should be responsible for planning in their individual units or groups, and they should work with others in the organization to develop the overall plan. In addition, involvement of lower-echelon personnel in planning has the advantage of both incorporating the practical point of view of those closest to the scene of operations while enticing them to recognize the need for planning and to support the direction the plan takes. Traditionally, long-range planning has been carried out primarily by the upper echelons, whereas short-term planning usually is conducted by supervisors or coordinators at the point of impact of services. In libraries and information centers that have planning committees or officers, and in smaller organizations, this hierarchical approach is abandoned in favor of input from all levels and segments of the organization. Strategic planning involves many staff at all levels in the process. Therefore, it is obvious that there are consequences of failing to coordinate long-range and strategic planning with short-term plans because the whole concept of planning is to create a network of mutually dependent components ranging from overall, mission-oriented plans to detailed, technical plans for specific operations.

Flexibility

Flexibility, or adaptability in meeting changing needs, is the essence of good planning. Any planning that is too rigid to accommodate change as it occurs is an exercise in futility. That is why it is important to review plans on a regular basis with the intent of revising priorities that might change over the short term as well as identifying objectives that have been accomplished. In this respect, a planning process is never completed; it is continuously revisited, reviewed, revised, and renewed. At the same time, it is important that the library's or the information center's plans remain compatible with those of the larger organization of which the information unit is a part and that they reflect the changing environment in which the library or information center exists.

Accountability

Accountability is key to future success. Accountability requires commitment to the obligations and taking the initiative to carry out established plans.

For managers, this means delegating authority and assigning responsibility to individuals or teams to achieve the plan's objectives once they have been established. Ultimately, however, the director or manager is accountable for the action—or inaction—in achieving the goals. This incorporates control firmly into the planning process. A plan can be no better than the control mechanisms established to monitor, evaluate, and adjust efficiency and effectiveness toward the ultimate success of the endeavor.[3]

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Political, economic, social, and technological (PEST) trends all significantly influence success in achieving the mission of a library or information center in today's volatile climate.[4] For instance, commerce and technology are globalizing, international resource needs are increasing, and the world political climate is changing daily as governments and organizations react to changes. Also, economic factors, including publisher price increases, foreign exchange rates, varying tax revenues from funding authorities, increasing costs of electronic resources, inflation, and global intellectual property issues affect buying power. In the social arena, an increasingly urban population, disenfranchised from mainstream society and economically disadvantaged, requires the library and information center to aggressively promote itself to its public, stressing its benefits to society. The technological environment, including the Internet, World Wide Web, and electronic bibliographic and full-text resources that are now ubiquitous, requires customer assistance, both informational and technical, for effective use.

Developing Standards and Guidelines

One concise definition of standards is being able to designate any measure by which one judges a thing as authentic, good, or adequate. Standards are measurable, enforceable, and can be directly related to goals. They should provide guidance for actions in the present climate while being flexible enough to allow for future development. General, industry-wide, or profession-wide standards or guidelines established by various professional groups provide a basis for planning. For example, standards developed by the American Library Association and its various divisions include perspectives on services, resources, access, personnel, evaluation, and ethics.[5] Those serve as guidelines and are based on actual, or known, demands for library services. But these standards are not plans; they are a means of defining acceptable service. Each individual library must develop its own plans based on the demands of its clientele, using those industry standards as guidelines. Both human and technical factors must be considered in developing sound standards.

Forecasting

The term *forecasting* elicits visions of crystal ball gazing but more appropriately designates a process of projection or prediction. Predictions are, basically,

opinions about facts. Projections, on the other hand, are based on some type of systematic review, whether that review employs quantitative data analysis or qualitative judgment. Forecasts are predictions based on assumptions about the future. Forecasting helps reduce uncertainty because it anticipates the results of a decision about a course of action described in the forecast. Forecasting is a useful planning technique. It attempts to find the most probable course of events or range of possibilities.

A problem very basic to libraries is estimating future trends, influences, developments, and events that will affect the library but are beyond the control of the library.[6] Forecasts account for some of this uncertainty, offering some foundation upon which to plan. Forecasting requires good information on trends and developments in society and the economy as well as in the profession and its system of user interaction.

Various techniques are being used to predict the future. From opinion polling to informal gathering of information, qualitative approaches are used. Futurology has become particularly popular among managers of business enterprises. Some forecasting techniques used in industry have been adapted for library and information services. These include the survey approach, which is used in technological forecasting. One of the most popular types of technological forecasting is the Delphi technique. Delphi attempts to build a consensus of opinion or view and is most useful when judgment is required, when several responses to an issue might be viable, or when it is politically expedient to have strong support for the alternative that eventually will be chosen. Other forecasting techniques that have been used quite effectively in libraries and other information centers include trend projection and environmental scanning. Through environmental scanning, for instance, the information gathered, including the events, trends, and relationships that are external to an organization, is provided to key managers within the organization and is used to guide management in future plans.[7] In its more formal approach, trend projection graphically plots future trends based on past experience and current hard data. Environmental scanning is carried out to anticipate and to interpret change and sometimes to provide a competitive edge. Many information services organizations are now in the competitive intelligence area of environmental scanning. Seeking basic information about competitors and global scanning are examples of techniques necessary to assimilate the knowledge.

Another technique that has come out of forecasting efforts is that of benchmarking, a process that searches for the best practice, assuming that an organization can be improved by analyzing and copying other successful organizations. Therefore, data are collected and analyzed to determine the performance gaps between that particular organization and others that are more successful. From that analysis, an action plan is developed. These techniques and others will be discussed further in the chapter on coordinating and reporting.

They are mentioned here only as examples of the forecasting techniques that can be used in libraries and information centers. With the availability of computers for modeling and the development of software for that purpose, forecasting techniques are becoming more attractive to and manageable for library and information services planners. The primary attempt is to collect and analyze the most relevant information and introduce that information into a flexible framework to serve as a guide for library and information services development.

> **Try This!**
>
> H. G. Wells, more than a century ago, argued that if the long-term course of events is principally determined by society's collective response to economic and technological circumstances, we can, in fact, make meaningful projections of what the future is likely to bring through the continued use of analytical tools, including forecasting.
>
> Using a forecasting technique project 10 years from now, what information services will entail?
>
> _____
>
> David P. Snyder and Gregg Edwards, *Future Forces* (Washington, DC: Foundation of the American Society of Association Executives, 1984), 1.

THEORY APPLICATIONS

Two examples of techniques that have been used in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, including libraries and information centers, are Management by Objectives (MBO) and Total Quality Management (TQM), although neither is as popular as it was a few years ago, perhaps because many of their components have been absorbed into other techniques, some of them into strategic planning.

Management by Objectives (MBO)

One technique that has been used to supplement the planning process relates specifically to merging organizational goals and objectives with the personal ones of individuals working in the organization in order to achieve greater success. MBO has been informally applied in libraries to combine individual and institutional goal setting with the decision-making process. Much has been written on the technique of MBO, a process that has been in and out of favor with industry and commerce for some time. Recently it has lost favor with business enterprises. Some now seem to believe that its time has passed and prefer to focus upon project management, whereas others feel it is now reemerging. It is discussed here because it is a style of thinking that remains widespread and pervasive in both private and public organizations.

Because some of its concepts (relationships between units are closely linked through common technologies, customers, values, goals, and objectives) are so closely aligned with those of strategic management, and its focus for the future is on providing a framework for the management process, some discussion is warranted. A guide, called the SMART method, was introduced to help maintain the validity of objectives. SMART stands for *s*pecific, *m*easurable, *a*chievable, *r*ealistic, and *t*ime-related. The belief is that these parameters are predictors of effective goals. For instance, if the goal is not specific or measurable, it is less likely to guide behavior. It has been used successfully as a long-range planning instrument and has undergone change over the years by

integrating individual needs with organizational objectives, and the concept has morphed into other management practices.

One caution about MBO is that although it allows one to direct oneself and one's work, it also can mean domination of one person by another. "Objectives are the basis of 'control' in the first sense; but they must never become the basis of 'control' in the second, for this would defeat their purpose. Indeed, one of the major contributions of Management by Objectives is that it enables us to substitute management by self-control for management by domination."[8] Therefore, it is necessary that supervisor and employee jointly identify the commonly agreed upon objectives, define areas of responsibility in terms of expected outcomes, and use those as guides for assessment of performance. In this process, at the start of appraisal periods, supervisor and subordinates agree upon specific results to be obtained during this period; they establish what is to be done, how long it will take, and who is to do it. This approach makes the person accountable for results. Therefore, objectives are developed and measured as a team, with the two important factors being those of goal setting and performance appraisal. Open communication and follow-up, without fear of retaliation, is the result.

In that regard, MOB remains one of the most evident examples of participative management because it involves supervisors and employees in the management process. It can clarify responsibilities, strengthen planning and control, and establish better relationships between supervisors and other staff members. The process rests upon several premises that are guided by the SMART guidelines and includes:

1. Clearly stated objectives. If they are not clear, they should be clarified.
2. A succession of specific objectives. Benchmarks must be established to measure progress.
3. Delegation of specific objectives. Certain people should be responsible for accomplishing specific objectives.
4. Freedom to act. Subordinates should be given objectives and authority and then be charged with accomplishment of those objectives.
5. Verifiable objectives. To achieve objectives, it is best to quantify them. If they are nonquantifiable objectives, they may relate to quantifiable ones. For example, if one wants to reduce absenteeism by 50 percent, the reasons for absenteeism must be considered. If the reasons relate to morale, then morale must be improved.
6. Clear communication. This exists only when objectives are specific, are agreed upon by all parties, are budgeted, and are known by all individuals who have a reason for knowing.
7. Shared responsibility. Team effort is the key to management by objectives.
8. Personal accountability. Each person must be accountable for the achievement of his or her assigned objectives.
9. Improving management ability. Management is able to plan more objectively when these premises are accepted.

MOB occurs in phases: finding the objectives, setting the objectives, validating the objectives, implementing the objectives, and controlling and reporting

the status of the objectives. George Odiorne, a major proponent of MBO back in its formative years, reasoned that it helps solve management problems by:

1. Providing a means of measuring the true contributions of managerial and professional personnel.
2. Defining the common goals of people and organizations and measuring individual contributions to them. It enhances the possibility of obtaining coordinated efforts and teamwork without eliminating personal risk taking.
3. Providing solutions to the key problem of defining the major areas of responsibility for each person in the organization, including joint or shared responsibilities.
4. Gearing processes to achieving the results desired, both for the organization as a whole and for the individual contributors.
5. Eliminating the need for people to change their personalities as well as for appraising people on the basis of their personality traits.
6. Providing a means of determining each manager's span of control.
7. Offering an answer to the key question of salary administration, "How should we allocate pay increases from available funds if we want to pay for results?"
8. Aiding in identifying potential for advancement and in finding promotable people.[9]

Over the years, some libraries and information centers have adapted this technique's potential for their operations. In practicing MBO, one must guard against making the individual's objectives too easy, making them too difficult, setting objectives that conflict with policy, or setting objectives that hold an individual accountable for something beyond his or her control.

Total Quality Management (TQM)

Like MBO, some argue that TQM has proved to be an effective process for improving organizational functioning.[10] Others say that TQM no longer has the success it experienced several years ago. Proponents of TQM argue that setbacks are temporary and that TQM eventually will produce results. Those against TQM say that it does not work, not because its focus on quality is misguided, but because the TQM operations often become so cumbersome that they overshadow the mission of the organization.[11] It is true that TQM can result in the formation of more bureaucracy to implement quality, particularly when it is first being implemented, because it tends to add to the workload of everyone. If TQM is perceived as a quick fix, forgetting that quality is a never-ending journey, or if the managers only pay lip service to the technique, it will not succeed.

TQM has found success in some large library and information services organizations, however, as those organizations have implemented planning processes, by strategic planning, focus groups, or task forces. Some libraries and information centers, like other organizations as they seek to pay more attention to quality, have turned to TQM as a system that allows them to do

so. All libraries and information agencies have certain routine processes that can be greatly improved by TQM methods. In addition, the TQM emphasis on improving quality in service can help libraries and other service organizations maintain the support of their customer base in an era of increasing competition. Even though TQM has not been widely accepted by not-for-profit organizations, its emphases on quality and customer service can be examined as a model for managers and staff in these organizations. TQM possesses "two key concepts. The first is the need to focus on the customer in the development of products and the delivery of services. The second is the need to be constantly aware of process both in development and delivery, and vigilant for opportunities for improvement."[12]

It is often easy to dismiss this and some other techniques as just management fads, but those fads often have something valuable to teach us. They provide ways to make libraries and information centers more interested in quality, customers, teamwork, and getting things done right the first time. For instance, reengineering basically calls for complete change. What has happened is that there has been a continuum of planning strategies that has brought libraries from looking first at incremental change to the more dramatic comprehensive change. Some of the best of those techniques have been incorporated in current strategic thinking and planning exercises as libraries and information centers look to the future.

POLICY MAKING

It is important to distinguish between objectives and policy. Objectives emphasize aims and are stated as expectations while policies emphasize rules and are stated as instructions intended to facilitate decision making.

In many discourses, policy making and decision making are used as synonymous terms. In practice, however, policy making is only one part of decision making, in that policies emanate from the original decisions and become general statements or understandings that channel and guide thinking toward future decision making and serve as guidelines for the actions, particularly those of a repetitive nature, in order to create some sense of uniformity in the conduct of an organization. In other words, policies are contingency plans because they are based on decisions that set the action course for the plan. Policies, even though they are sometimes expressed in positive terms, are essentially limiting because they dictate a specific course of action and are aimed at preventing deviations from a set norm. They attempt to guard against and eliminate differences that sometimes result from personality conflicts or irrational forces. Policies become the effective tools for transferring decision making through various levels in the organization. This is true because, within the broad policy outline, individuals at all levels may be charged with making operational decisions. A good working definition of policy making might be "a verbal, written, or implied overall guide setting up boundaries that supply the general limits and direction in which managerial action will take place."[13]

Both policies and objectives are guides to thinking and action, but there are differences between them. Objectives, as already discussed, are

developed at one point in the planning process, whereas policies, taken as a higher level, channel decisions along the way toward meeting those established objectives. Another difference is that a policy is usually effective or operational the day it is formulated and continues to be in effect until it is revised or deleted. As mentioned before, policies can give guidance to all levels of the organization. For example, by adopting an equal employment opportunity policy, an institution ensures that all qualified individuals are seriously and equally considered by all hiring units within the organization for any position vacancy. The policy does not dictate the choice of a particular individual but does eliminate the factor of discrimination as an element in a final decision.

Policy making is not just reserved for top management because they include both major policies involving all segments of the organization as well as minor policies applicable only to a small segment of the organization. Many policies in libraries and information centers provide basic direction toward the achievement of stated goals, including policies relating to materials purchasing, personnel employment, equipment use, and monetary allocation. Examples of library and information center policies might be:

1. All new staff will be rotated through all departments during their first year of employment (a staff-development policy).
2. Library materials should present all sides of controversial issues (a materials selection policy).

Policy manuals should enumerate an organization's policies in relation to its goals and objectives. Therefore, a policy manual is an important record and is invaluable as a decision-making guide and as a way of communicating within the organization. It is also a basic tool for indoctrinating new staff members and assuring some degree of uniformity in approaches or responses to issues. Of course, it also serves as a historical record of decisions made.

All libraries have policies, whether they are written or unwritten, sound or unsound, followed or not followed, understood or not understood, complete or incomplete. It is almost impossible to delegate authority and clarify relationships without policies because one has difficulty carrying out decisions without some kind of guideline. It is important to remember that policies can provide freedom as well as restrict it and that there are as many cases of frustration within organizations about the lack of rules, regulations, procedures, and policies as there are about arbitrarily established ones. In the absence of policy, each case is resolved on its own merit and at one particular time, so consistency is lacking.

Lack of policy means that the same question may be considered time after time, by a number of different individuals, in several units of the organization, with the result that energy is wasted, redundancy is established, conflicting decisions are made, and confusion develops. Policies ensure some degree of consistency in the operation. They may be stated in the form of guiding principles (these being broad, comprehensive, and basic) or may be specific or operational and deal with day-to-day activities.

Try This!

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "A policy is a temporary creed liable to be changed, but while it holds good it has got to be pursued with apostolic zeal."

Identify two policies relating to information services that are general, have national appeal, are valid, current, and have stood the test of time.

Sources of Policy

Policies can be categorized according to their source:

1. **Originated policy.** This type of policy is developed to guide the general operations of the library or information center. Originated policies flow mainly from the objectives and are the main source of policy making within the organization. An example of an originated policy is the previously mentioned policy to adhere to the concept of equal employment opportunity.

2. **Appealed policy.** Certain decisions may be needed by managers in their assigned areas of responsibility, and the staff is required to take it through the chain of command, in which a common law is established. This type of policy can cause tension because it forces a decision or policy that, consequently, often does not have the thorough consideration that is required. To draw an extreme example, it may be the appealed policy of the processing department to make no more than two subject headings for each monograph entered into the online system. That policy, derived from practice in the paper-based cataloging process, has a great effect on the information services department's ability to work with patrons. Oftentimes, appealed policies are made by snap decisions.

3. **Implied policy.** This type of policy is developed from actions that people see about them and believe to constitute policy. Usually, this type of policy is unwritten. For instance, repetitive actions, such as promotion from within, may be interpreted as policy. This may or may not be the case. Particularly in areas relating to personnel, staff must be informed so that misunderstandings do not arise. When implied policies are recognized, policies should be developed or other statements used to clarify the issue.

4. **Externally imposed policy.** These policies, which come through several channels, dictate the working of an institution even though they may be beyond its control. For example, local, state, and federal laws have a direct bearing on the policies that libraries may formulate. These laws may be general, such as those relating to destruction of public property (Malicious Damage Act of 1861), or specific, such as those relating to copyright (Copyright Act of 1976, last

amended 2004). When policies are being formulated, they must be checked for compliance with law before they can be finalized.

No matter what policies are set for libraries and information centers, the policies are subject to government regulation, national and sometimes international. In the case of public libraries, objectives must adhere to government policy on the local, state, provincial, and/or national levels. If, for instance, a local authority decides, for local economic reasons, to reduce drastically the library service hours to the point that the library no longer meets that state's standards for allocating funds to that library, such an action could be in conflict with its obligation and thus be illegal. Or, if a library redesignates its service points and closes a branch library, people living nearby may petition their representatives or other local officials, who may decide that such a policy does not secure an improvement and may prevent the library from carrying out its decision on policy.

Laws governing information services often relate to finances. Standards for capital investment, percentage of budget spent on physical and electronic materials, qualifications of staff, and so on are developed by library officials. Because this is an external control upon all public library spending, it necessarily affects the planning and administration of public libraries. The example given is in relation to U.S. regulations, although those same types of laws of principle affect other countries as well.

Effective Policy Development

Policies fall into two basic groups: those that deal with the managerial functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling and those that deal with the functions of the enterprise, such as selection and development of technology, resources, finance, personnel, and public relations. Both types of policies relate to the characteristic behavior of the information services organization to achieve its objectives.

Several basic rules should be considered when policies are being formulated. Some of these may seem simplistic, mundane, and even redundant, but it is surprising how many organizations ignore these basics steps when they are formulating policy. To be most effective, policies should be reflective of the objectives and plans of the organization. These should complement one another and build on that common strength. For this reason, any specific policy being formulated should receive detailed consideration before being proposed and certainly before implementation. Characteristics of good policies would include them being:

1. **Consistent.** This maintains efficiency, and the existence of contradicting policies dissipates the desired effects.
2. **Flexible.** Policies should be reviewed and changed as new needs arise. Unfortunately, many organizations ignore this fact and therefore adhere to out-of-date policies. At the same time, a laissez-faire approach to policy formulation and revision can lead to

disillusionment on the part of those who are charged with carrying out the policies. Some degree of balance and stability must be maintained. Policies should be regularly revisited and controlled through a careful review process and someone should be in charge of that process. Although the application of policies requires judgment, violation of policies, sometimes under the guise of flexibility, should be avoided.

3. **Distinguished from rules and procedures.** Rules and procedures are firm, whereas policies, as already indicated, are guides that allow some discretion and latitude.
4. **Written.** A clear, well-written policy helps facilitate information dissemination. Because many policies affect individuals who have not been involved in their formulation, the policies should be discussed and widely distributed through letters, memoranda, announcements, and policy manuals.

Stated policies have several advantages:

1. They are available to all in the same form.
2. They can be referred to, so that anyone who wishes can check the policy.
3. They prevent misunderstanding through use of a particular set of words.
4. They indicate a basic honesty and integrity of the organization's intentions.
5. They can be readily disseminated to all who are affected by them.
6. They can be taught to new employees easily.
7. They force managers to think more sharply about the policy as it is being written, thus helping achieve further clarity.
8. They generate confidence of all persons in management and in the fact that everyone will be treated substantially the same under given conditions.[14]

Implementing Policy

Policies are carried out or enforced by procedures, rules, and regulations. Procedures are guides to action and therefore are subordinate to policies. They establish a method of handling repetitive tasks or problems and may be thought of as means by which work is performed. Basically, procedures prescribe standardized methods of performing tasks to ensure uniformity, consistency, and adherence to policies. Greater efficiency in routine jobs can be achieved through procedures that identify the best way of getting the job done. Procedures tend to be chronological lists of what is to be done. Examples of procedures include a timetable for budget preparation, a sequence of steps to be followed in searching and ordering library materials, and interlibrary loan procedures. Procedures are helpful in routine decisions because they break down the process into steps.

The relationship between procedures and policies can be best indicated by an example. Library policy may grant employees a month's annual vacation. The procedures specify how vacations are to be scheduled to avoid disruption of service, maintain records to assure each employee is allocated the right length of vacation days, and elucidate procedure for applying for additional entitled time off.

Rules and regulations, constituting the simplest type of a plan, spell out a required course of action or conduct that must be followed. A rule prescribes a specific action for a given situation and creates uniformity of action. Rules may place positive limits (should), negative limits (should not), or value constraints (good or bad) on the behavior of individuals working in the institution or on individuals using the institution as a service. Rules ensure stable, consistent, and uniform behavior by individuals in accomplishing tasks, addressing personnel issues, and relating to both the internal and external environment. Like procedures, rules and regulations guide action, but they specify no time sequence. Similar to decisions, rules are guides, but they allow no discretion or initiative in their application. Examples of rules might be the prohibition of smoking in the library or information center or the fact that materials in the reference collection do not circulate. Regulations also establish a course of action that is authoritative, with failure to adhere to regulations eliciting discipline.

DECISION MAKING

Organizational decision making is an important part of management, one of the very basic planning principles. Selection from among alternatives, that is, the decision making process, is at the core of planning. In simple language, a decision is a judgment and therefore a choice between alternatives. "It is at best a choice between 'almost right' and 'probably wrong'—but much more often a choice between two courses of action neither of which is probably more nearly right than the other."[15] Decision making complements planning because it involves choosing the best alternative for the future, and those decisions with organization-wide implications are related specifically to the planning process. A decision is made with a course of action in mind. Of course, such a choice implies an awareness of alternatives and the important factors that need to be considered. A good decision is by choice, not accident, and is the result of intelligent direction and is the best choice among alternatives.

The organizational decision-making process is a much slower process than some can imagine. The stereotype of finger snapping and button pushing fades with the realization that decisions, affecting important future outcomes, require systematic research and analysis. The decision-making process involves a blend of thinking, deciding, and acting; information is key to the process. Deliberation, evaluation, and thought are all brought into play. Although many decisions are mundane, important organizational ones are of unmeasured consequence and could change the information center's course of action. An example of the latter is the decision to open a new branch library or to purchase a totally integrated online system for the library's or the information center's operation. Such decisions can be made only after long, thoughtful review, analysis, discussion, and deliberation. The manager who

has the ultimate responsibility must make a decision that will have a great impact on the operation of the library and on many people, staff, customers, and other stakeholders.

Attention paid to the final act—the decision itself—often obscures the fact that a number of steps and minor decisions are made along the way, and the announcement of the decision is only the final step in the process. Decision making at a formal level involves a series of scientific steps: defining the problem, analyzing it, establishing criteria by which it can be evaluated, identifying alternate solutions, selecting the best one, implementing it, and evaluating the results.
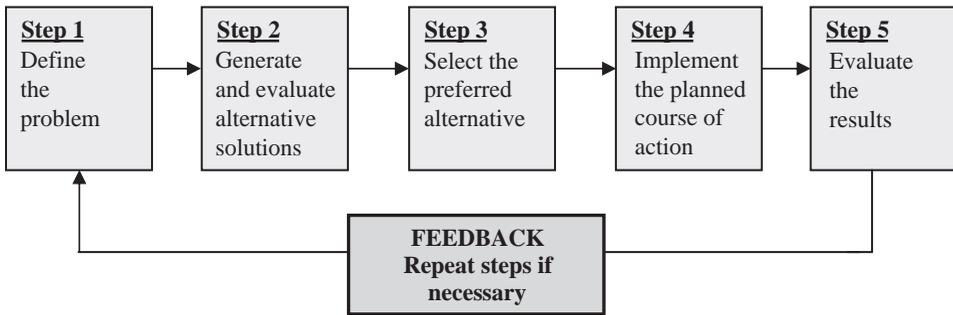
Rational decision making views the process happening in a series of steps in which problems are clearly defined and decision makers are able to know all alternatives, can clearly define the problems, and then can make an optimizing decision.

Steps in Making Decisions

If the organization's goals are clear, the important step in decision making is developing alternatives for solutions to identified problems or issues. This step is possible in almost all situations. Effective planning involves a search for these alternatives. If there is only one solution, management is powerless to devise alternatives, and no decision is required, although some adjustments may be necessary. In most cases, however, several alternatives exist. Final selection of a course of action is a matter of weighing expected results against enterprise objectives.

The first step in the decision-making process, then, is the recognition that a problem exists. Having done that, one can then begin to explore possible causes with the intent of seeking a solution. The environment inside and outside the organization provides information upon which a decision can be made. This requires considering all of the information—where does the issue or problem come from, does it represent several points of view, how accurate has information been gathered, and is it based on fact or opinion? Based upon the evidence gathered, one must consider the alternatives. Weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. What are the costs, benefits, and consequences? Are there obstacles, and, if so, how can they be overcome? What are the choices available? This process focuses on the articulation of a desired outcome. It builds in a review or assessment phase to measure success of the effort. The process culminates in a selection of the solution that best serves organizational goals and the initiation of action to implement it. Of course, it always requires follow-through on the decision by monitoring the results of implementing the plan. These phases, of course, do not have clear-cut boundaries or strict sequence.

When adopted, the decision is then expressed as policy for the functioning of the organization. The outcome of the selection process involves a great deal of risk taking as well as uncertainty because it is only after the decision has been implemented that one can determine whether it was appropriate. The final step of implementation brings the decision into the control and evaluation aspect of the decision.

Figure 4.1—Steps in the Decision-Making Process

| Step 1 Define the problem | → | Step 2 Generate and evaluate alternative solutions | → | Step 3 Select the preferred alternative | → | Step 4 Implement the planned course of action | → | Step 5 Evaluate the results |

**FEEDBACK
Repeat steps if necessary**

Although this discussion is primarily about the steps in the major decision-making process, it is important to remember that everyone makes decisions every day and that most of these decisions are, to some degree, reached by the same process discussed here. Some organizational decision making, which was once reserved for the executive, is now being delegated to and assumed by others in the organization. The way in which decision making is handled is as important as the decision reached. Decision making can no longer be confined to the very small group at the top. In one way or another, almost every knowledge worker in an organization either will have to become a decision maker himself or herself or will at least have to be able to play an active, an intelligent, and an autonomous part in the decision-making process. What in the past was a highly specialized function, discharged by a small and usually clearly defined unit within the organization, is rapidly becoming a normal if not an everyday task of every single unit in the open system of a large-scale, knowledge-based organization. The ability to make effective decisions increasingly determines the ability of every knowledge worker to be effective. This requires distinguishing between problems for which existing procedures are appropriate and those for which new ground must be broken, because it is inefficient to deal with routine problems as though there are exceptional.

It is also important to remember that decisions involve factual, verifiable elements along with judgment and qualitative evaluation and that the evaluation of the decision should lead to a positive feeling about the results on the part of those affected.

Group Decision Making

The approach to decision making by groups is somewhat different from individual decision making, primarily because of group dynamics. However, group decision making should follow the same process if it is to be constructive. There are, in some cases, several advantages to group decision making, including:

1. **Group judgment.** The old adage "two heads are better than one" applies here. Group deliberation is important in identifying alternative solutions to a problem.

2. **Group authority.** There is a great fear of allowing one person to have too much authority. Group decisions prevent this problem to an extent; however, it must be remembered that one person must ultimately answer for decisions that have been made. Thus, the role of leadership in the organization is not diminished but altered.

3. **Communication.** It is much easier to inform and receive input from all parts of the organization through a group. Also, if various interest groups have been represented during the process of making major decisions, there is less resistance to the decisions. Communication permits a wider participation in decision making and therefore can have some influence on employee motivation.

There are also distinct disadvantages to the group approach. As a cynic once wrote, a committee is a group of "unfits appointed by the incompetent to do the unnecessary." More realistically, disadvantages potentially include:

1. **Cost.** Group decision making requires a great deal of time, energy, and, therefore, money.

2. **Compromise.** Group decisions can be diluted to the least common denominator. Pressures of uniformity force compliance. There are two ways to view this. The major drawback may be that majority rules. The desirability of a consensus should not take precedence over critical evaluation in such a situation. On the other hand, a group can prevent an individual from going off the track by forcing him or her into line with the thinking of the rest of the group.

3. **Indecision.** There are delays in reaching a final decision because of the lengthy deliberations required. Groups often are accused of engaging in too much irrelevant talk and not enough concrete action.

4. **Power.** One individual usually emerges as a leader. This person should be in a position of influence in the organization. The authoritarian personality of an administrator can be used as a tactical weapon so that the group process simply becomes one of minimizing opposition to an action that already has been decided on by the administrator. The cohesiveness of the group and the attitudes of one person toward another are important factors in the group process.

5. **Authority.** Groups are frequently used to make decisions that are beyond their authority. This can cause great delay and only enhances a feeling of frustration on the part of members, particularly if the group decision is rejected by management. The responsibility and authority of the group should be clearly set out at the beginning.

The democratic approach of group decision making improves morale, stresses the team approach, keeps individuals aware, and provides a forum for free discussion of ideas and thoughts. Traditionally, librarians and information managers have not demanded a greater voice in decision-making affairs because they have had an employee rather than a professional orientation. In the past, the higher a person was on the administrative scale, the less aware he or she was of the inadequate opportunities available for staff participation. This is an area of great discussion and disagreement in all types of organizations and one that is rapidly changing as team-based organizations proliferate.

Try This!

The truth is that many people set rules to keep from making decisions.

—*Mike Krzyzewski*

Discuss the realities behind this statement and actions that must be in place to refute that attitude. In the process, consider if there any significant differences in the effectiveness of group versus individual decision making.

Factors in Making Decisions

Several factors influence decision making for libraries and other information centers. The PEST analysis, to be detailed later, suggests a community analysis should be conducted before certain major decisions can be made on services to be offered by the library. Selection from among alternatives is made on the basis of:

1. **Experience.** In relying on one's experience, mistakes as well as accomplishments should act as guides. If experience is carefully analyzed and not blindly followed, it can be useful and appropriate.
2. **Experimentation.** This approach toward making major decisions from among alternatives, although legitimate in many situations, is expensive where capital expenditures and personnel are concerned.
3. **Research and analysis.** Although this is the most general and effective technique used, it also may be somewhat expensive. The approach is probably more beneficial and cheaper in the long run, however, particularly for large academic, public, school system, and special libraries. This topic is discussed in the chapter on controlling.

Another important factor, mentioned previously, in the decision-making process is the perceived level of importance of a particular decision. There are two basic types of decisions: major ones affecting the total organization and lesser and routine ones, which have less effect on the overall organization but are nonetheless important. Those routine decisions constitute as much as 90 percent of decisions made in an organization. Most decisions of lesser importance do not require the thorough analysis described.

There are frequently two dimensions to the potential effectiveness of a decision. The first is the objective or impersonal quality of the decision, and the other is the actual acceptance of the decision, the way people react to it. Politics is paramount in decision making, as is consideration of the human factor. Acceptance of change is essential to the success of a decision. Therefore, it is desirable that those who will be affected also be involved in the decision from

the beginning. Traditionally, emphasis has been placed on the quality of a decision, that is, on getting the facts, weighing them, considering them, and then deciding. Although this position is technically sound, it may not involve other people. The optimal decision should include high acceptance as well as high quality.

The following suggestions may facilitate involvement in the decision-making process:

1. Distinguish big from little problems to avoid getting caught in a situation that is rapid-fire and not effective.
2. Rely on policy to settle routine problems, and subject the big problems to thorough analysis.
3. Delegate as many decisions as possible to the level of authority most qualified and most interested in handling the problem.
4. Avoid crisis decisions by planning ahead.
5. Do not expect to be right all the time; no one ever is.

Decision making is at the heart of any organization. The approach that the librarian and the information specialist take to decision making and to the involvement of others will determine the direction the library or information center will take in the future.

CONCLUSION

Preparing for the planning process is an important aspect of sustaining an organization's viability. It requires examining the factors in the process, setting a proper environment within the organization, and making decisions based upon sound guidelines. Once the process is in place, an organization can view the big picture and begin to address the questions of "Why are we here?" and "Where do we want to be?" organizationally. There are several techniques to help an organization do that. Perhaps the most widely used one is strategic planning, which is discussed in the next chapter.

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