Strategic Planning on the Fast Track

Elizabeth Stephan

Some strategic planning processes can take up to two years and produce a plan that covers a five- year period. At Western Washington University (WWU), Western Libraries developed a three-year plan in less than one year. Western Libraries put their strategic planning process on the fast track for two main reasons: to manage organizational change and to create an interim accreditation report. The process began as a way for a new dean of libraries to introduce organizational change and growth and to address assessment concerns raised by a recent university's accreditation report. The process became very relevant, very fast when, the state of Washington—and the entire country—was hit by a serious economic downturn. Faced with a budget crisis, all organizations at WWU had to take a hard look at who they were, what their mission was, and what they valued. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) chose to follow John Bryson's strategic planning model, but altered it to fit the libraries' needs. This article discusses the strategic planning process at Western Libraries and why they chose to focus on a three-year plan.

WWU is a master's comprehensive university with a student body of around 14,500. Primarily an undergraduate university, it is separated into seven colleges (College of Business and Economics, Science and Technology, Woodring College of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Huxley College of the Environmental, Fairhaven College, and the Graduate School). Western Libraries consists of a main library and a music library. There are seventeen library faculty and forty-three library staff. The year 2008 was a year of change for both the university and the library. A new university president was hired, a search for a new provost was started and completed, and a new dean of libraries joined WWU. The new dean started the library on a strategic planning process shortly after his arrival.

Strategic planning is often used as a way to introduce a period of change, assessment, and self-identification. Western Libraries, like many libraries, needed to reassess its mission and values in order for its services to be relevant to its users. WWU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) every ten years. WWU passed their July 2008 accreditation and were commended on their "understanding of, and deep commitment to, the University's core mission of undergraduate education and the pride the have in the success of their students."[1] However, a few areas were noted for improvement, including Western Libraries. The library lacked "a fundamental and thorough planning effort, informed by assessment, to consistently support the University's academic mission."[2] While the NWCCU asks a university to submit an interim reports five years after accreditation, the Commission requested WWU prepare a report and host a Commission representative in the fall of 2010 to note the progress made on the committees recommendation—and this included the library.

The SPC was to create a strategic plan that helped the library focus on becoming an integral part of WWU's mission and to address the concerns of the NWCCU.[3] The dean charged the SPC with developing a three-year plan that aligned the libraries with the university's strategic initiatives. The planning process needed to be inclusive, collaborative, data-driven, transparent, forward and outward directed, and action oriented. Because the plan needed to be completed, in place, and in the implementation process before the NWCCU visit in 2010, the process had to be completed by the 2009 spring quarter (see Appendix I for the full SPC Charge).

Creating a plan that was collaborative and transparent in less than one academic year would be difficult; although the strategic planning process was intended to help the library plan for the future, it quickly became a document and process that had immediate relevance. During a university-wide budget review, Western Libraries needed to take a hard look at itself and its mission in order to establish its value to itself, its users, and the university community. The hope was that the planning process would help library staff and administration focus on what was most important to the organization.

The dean asked the library to create a three-year plan as opposed to the more common five-year plan. There were issues that needed to be addresses immediately, like the NWCCU recommendations, and the plan needed to address some organizational "housekeeping." Strategic planning is an ongoing process and there would be a second planning process at the end of the three-year period that would, hopefully, focus more on external issues.

The SPC was composed of three library faculty, three library staff, and the head of Administrative Services. The dean of the College of Business and Economics served as an outside adviser. It was decided early on that John M. Bryson's model, *Strategic Planning for Public and*

Elizabeth Stephan (Elizabeth.Stephan@wwu.edu) is Librarian for the College of Business and Economics at Western Washington University in Bellingham.

Nonprofit Organizations was the best fit and would be used as the plan model. Geared toward both nonprofit organizations and organizations that have to work under external mandates as well as external and internal politics, Bryson was the best fit. Additionally, it was the model the dean of libraries and SPC were most familiar with. Due to the tight deadline, no other plans were considered. Bryson's model was helpful to get the SPC started, but at a certain point, the committee relied on our own intuition and began to develop a timeline and method that addressed the needs of Western Libraries.

Literature Review

Strategic planning in academic libraries is not new and has been covered extensively in library literature, and numerous articles have been written on the history and role of strategic planning in academic libraries. Strategic planning dates back to 1940s when it was used by the U.S. military and by the 1950s American corporations were it to ensure their organizations could withstand change and achieve top performance in their given market. As early as 1981, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) included strategic planning as part of its own mission, and a 1984 survey of Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) libraries indicated thirty libraries were using a strategic plan. By the 1990s, many libraries had ten-year strategic plans. A 1995 survey indicated forty-seven libraries had created a strategic plan between 1989 and 1994.[4] Strategic planning has long been associated with corporations. A corporate model often has five phases: (1) creation of vision and mission, (2) setting strategic objectives and targets, (3) creation of a business strategy, (4) implementation, and (5) continuous evaluation of performance of the organization. Strategic planning process in a library will often differ, but the end results will be similar.[5]

Strategic planning has had positive and negative effects on libraries; however, according to Brown and Gonzalez, there isn't enough empirical evidence available to determine if planning is contributing to the management of libraries. Despite this lack of empirical evidence, the evolution of the planning process, such as including fundraising in the process, acknowledging internal and external politics, and the completion of an organization's strengths and weaknesses, means strategic planning is still useful to academic libraries in a rapidly changing environment.[6] If libraries and other organizations create realistic plans in a realistic amount of time, plans can be very relevant.

The Hensley Schoppmeyer model involves getting all stakeholders involved. Hensley and Birdsall say that because "strategic planning operates on the assumption that people with similar motivations can agree on what their mutual purpose should be and can form beneficial partnerships that will advance a shared interest."[7] Transparency in the process is important because libraries and universities are complex organizations, and in order for a long-term plan to be successful, external stakeholders must be aware of and accept the need for change, because "awareness, advocacy, and acceptance of needed change involve the library's chief partners and major constituencies."[8] While involving outside stakeholders is important, it can slow down the process. If a planning process is not timely the document is out of date before it is distributed.

In some cases, the process may never be completed because it is time consuming and not cost effective; sometimes a formal strategic planning process is not the best option. Libraries should strongly consider whether they need to devote the time and resources to create a formal strategic plan.[9] Linn contends that a "prudent manager finds the proper balance between the twin evils of having no strategy because no time was spent on creating one and wasting too many hours of too many people creating a strategic plan."[10] It does take a lot of time and devotion to complete a formal planning process, and an organization must find a balance between being timely and creating a strategy to help a library reach short- and long-term goals; however, there is something to be said in favor of the formal process. The phrase "the process is just as important as the plan," has been used so often to describe the planning process that has become cliché, but many, including Western Libraries' SPC, found it to be true.

John Bryson's "Strategy Change Cycle" is a popular model for academic libraries because it acknowledges the political environment libraries face. Through their strategic plan, ARL shows a commitment to Bryson's model.[11] Georgia Institute of Technology used a modified version of the Bryson model in their strategic plan.[12] Indiana University at Bloomington used the "Strategy Change Cycle," and McClamroch, Jacqueline, and Sowell review their use of Bryson's model. They combined several of Bryson's steps and broke the process into stages that spanned a two-year period.[13] While the Bryson process was useful, the authors felt the "desire to achieve consensus dramatically expanded the time frame of the project." And while there may have been a more "timely and cost-effective manner, [they] believed that the results would not have been as well accepted if [the] value of inclusive participation had not been accepted."[14] Despite the lengthy process, what was learned about the organization during the process was worth the time and cost.[15] McClamroch, Jacqueline, and Sowell's article proved to be one of the most useful articles to the SPC at WWU. It was used to introduce the process to both the SPC and the entire organization.

During the 1990s it was not uncommon to see ten-year plans. WWU created a ten-year plan in 1997. ARL's SPEC Kit 210 highlights the plans of ten different libraries and all of the plans range from five to ten years. The current trend in strategic plans leans toward the five-year plan. Of the plans reviewed by Western Libraries' SPC, all but a few were five-year plans. Strategic planning in the 1990s was a way to face the financial and cultural changes faced by libraries,

while libraries are facing the same issues now, creating a ten-year plan would be pointless due to rapid changes within the profession; yet at the rate of change libraries are currently facing, five years is almost too long. If either the process or the plan itself is too long, it may become outdated before implementation and certainly before completion.

Western Libraries Strategic Planning Committee

Strategic planning is not new to Western Libraries. The library went through a strategic planning process in the mid-1990s, but the plan was never implemented. This created healthy skepticism about the planning process and made creating a collaborative and transparent plan that much more important. The initial committee was made up of three staff (representing cataloging, interlibrary loan, and circulation) and three faculty (representing instruction and research services and systems). The head of administrative services was appointed to be an ex-officio member and the liaison between the committee and dean of libraries. During the first meeting, the dean introduced the process, the charge, the role of the committee, and two cochairs were appointed.

The make-up of the committee was essential. Members needed to commit to the process. The membership of the SPC changed in the first few weeks: one cochair stepped down due to time commitments and one member resigned from the committee due to lack of enthusiasm. The former cochair remained on the committee and was replaced by another member. These changes happened early in the process and didn't upset the balance of the committee—if it had happened later it could have harmed the process and possibly the outcome. Overall, the committee was a balanced representation of faculty, staff, new, and longer-term employees.

Two things can often derail a planning process: lack of administrative support and lack of buy-in from the organization. The dean was involved with the process and met with the committee as needed, but his role was limited. He wanted the library to take full ownership of the strategic plan. He was new to the organization. If he got too involved, he was concerned staff would see him as controlling the outcome of the final plan. Not only was this his first big initiative at WWU, it was his introduction to the library and university committee. By remaining a step away from the process, the dean felt the library would take more ownership of the process and the final plan.

Early in the planning process, an organization must decide whether or not to use an outside consultant. There are many reasons why an organization would or would not use a consultant—there is no right answer.[16] The SPC and the dean of libraries asked the dean of WWU's College of Business and Economics (CBE) to serve as an outside adviser to the committee. The dean of the CBE was asked to serve because he had experience with strategic planning in an academic setting and had served as an adviser to other university departments going through a similar process. He introduced the concept of strategic planning to the library, met with the committee as needed, and facilitated library-wide meetings. As an outside adviser, when the SPC hit a roadblock in the process, the CBE dean would help the committee focus. He met with the committee often during the early part of the process, but as the SPC established its role and became more confident, his role diminished. During the discussion of the library's mission and values, the SPC felt it was time for the library to take ownership of the process and the plan. Having the CBE dean involved in the early stages was key to the success of the SPC because he provided support and advice when the SPC needed it the most.

In addition to serving as an outside consultant, the dean of the CBE introduced and defined several terms and phrases to library staff. The most important one was the term "consensus." In the past the library had worked under the idea that consensus meant that support for one concept was unanimous. He explained to both the SPC and the library why this would not work. The strategic plan needed to address the needs of both the organization and the people who made up the organization. The dean of the CBE explained that everyone's voice would be heard, but consensus meant everyone agreed to support a final mission statement even if it had been their second choice; trying to develop a document that was perfect to everyone often lead to a hung process.[17]

Bryson Model

Bryson's "Strategic Change Cycle" has been used by numerous academic libraries and the documented use of the Bryson's model is one reason it was selected. The Bryson Model is based on the Strategy Change Cycle:

- Initiate and agree on a strategic process.
- Identify organizational mandates.
- Clarify organizational mission and values.
- Assess the external and internal environments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Identify the strategic issues facing the organization.
- Formulate strategies to manage these issues.
- Review and adopt the strategies and strategic plan.
- Establish an effective organizational vision.
- Develop an effective implementation process.
- Reassess the strategies and the strategic planning process.[18]

Bryson's process outlined in the "Strategy Change Cycle" is similar to other models save for two things: the establishment of a vision at the end and the recognition of politics and mandates as an influence in the planning process. The SPC liked that Bryson acknowledged the existence and influence of internal politics, and it was a process the

dean of libraries and some members of the committee were familiar with. *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan*, the workbook that accompanies the Bryson text included a glossary that helped the SPC establish an understood vocabulary for both the committee and the library. At several points during the process the SPC turned to the glossary to help clarify a process or term. This confusion held up the process on several occasions.

When looking at the entire process, members of the SPC felt overwhelmed by the amount of work to be done in a short amount of time. They were also concerned about developing a timeline that was too rigid. The SPC broke down Bryson's Strategy Change Cycle into four phases:

Phase One: Planning/Gathering

- Timeline
- Mission and values
- Identifying stakeholders/mandates
- Compile data
- SWOT analysis

Phase Two: Data Analysis

- Identify volunteers and form planning groups
- Distribute data
- Report findings to library for discussion
- Write report

Phase Three: Presentation

- Present rough draft to stakeholders
- Feedback
- Revisions

Phase Four: Implementation

- Form committee to implement plan
- Review of process

The SPC assigned a set amount of time to each phase (i.e., planning and gathering would be completed by the beginning of winter quarter, and so on). As the process progressed from one phase to the next, a more specific timeline was established for each phase. Creating timelines as needed allowed the SPC to concentrate on what needed to be done at that moment without worrying about the next step. It also allowed the committee to establish a more accurate schedule and helped them stay on task. Establishing a flexible and general time frame meant the SPC could to give its stakeholders an idea of how long the process would take without tying itself to a strict timeline for a process that had not yet begun.

Phase One: Planning/Gathering

The planning process began with phase one. The SPC estimated it would take three months to complete this phase, but it took closer to six months. Looking at Bryson's process, the need for a plan had already been decided, a committee was formed, and a process chosen. The first step SPC needed to do was introduce the planning process and timeline to the rest of the library. The committee was aware that how strategic planning is introduced can set the mood for the entire process, and the dean of libraries wanted the process to be as transparent and inclusive as possible. The SPC held a library staff meeting to discuss the strategic planning process and answer any questions. All staff were asked to read McClamroch's article reviewing the Bryson model as it applied to Indiana University (IU). Library staff were concerned about time frame. The process at IU spanned over two years. Staff were worried that if Western's process took that long, it would die a slow death. This meeting helped the SPC learn what needed to be addressed when the planning process was officially kicked off during the library's annual Development Day.

Phase one included gathering the information to develop the mission and values statements and the SWOT analysis, although much of the information needed had already been gathered through some library assessment initiatives. While the libraries did not have an established assessment program, some assessment had been done, including a LibQual+ survey and a blog titled "14 Days to Have Your Say" where students were asked to submit suggestions, questions, and complaints about the library. When the dean of libraries arrived at WWU in the summer of 2008, he met with every member of the library and asked them to name the libraries' strengths and weaknesses. Library-wide exercises were used to establish what library personnel would like to see happen in the library if budget, time, and scope were not an issue. The exercise lead by the dean of the CBE during Development Day helped establish the themes used for the mission and values. There was some information from faculty in LibQual+ data, but not enough. A simple survey was sent to faculty asking them name the library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Several external documents were used to help give the SPC some context. Western Libraries are part of the Orbis-Cascade Alliance and the most recent planning document of the alliance was one of the most influential external documents used. Because the library is part of a larger organization, the WWU Strategic Plan was referenced. The SPC looked at ALA and ACRL documents outlining the current and future concerns for academic libraries. Lastly, the SPC looked at the plans of ACRL award-winning libraries as examples. The SPC wanted to know what their current and past plans looked like. While one library's planning document cannot apply to another library, it was beneficial to see the plans other libraries had produced.

The SPC needed to identify the library's stakeholders. Because the Bryson model is geared toward organizations working in a more political environment, the workbook that accompanies the text includes worksheets to identify all stakeholders—both direct and indirect. The worksheets were fairly complex. The dean of the CBE suggested the SPC identify main four or five main stakeholders because going beyond that would slow down the process. The

committee chose to follow his advice. The library's primary stakeholders were established as: students, faculty, library staff and personnel, and campus partners and administrators. While secondary stakeholders were an influence, the focus of this plan needed to be on the internal organization of the library. This was the first major break the SPC had with the Bryson process. While the SPC continued to turn to Bryson for clarity on terms, by the end of phase one the committee had developed the confidence and knowledge to make decisions based on the needs of the organization.

Mission and Values

The library's annual Development Day meeting was the official kick-off for the strategic planning process. The SPC had been working for close to a month before the process was introduced to the library. The SPC presented the four-phase process, timeline, and overall plan. The dean of the CBE played a key role in the introduction of the process. He helped define the process of strategic planning and helped the library get started in establishing a mission and set of values statements.

The dean of the CBE explained that a mission statement not only describes what business you are in, it needed to describe what was special about our vocation and be memorable, inspiring, and motivating. It must be understandable to those outside of the library, be free of jargon, and be brief. Because of these criteria, a mission statement can be used to market an organization. Values, on the other hand, are the beliefs that the library prized above all else. These are ideas and concepts that are held onto through the most difficult of times and help drive the actions of the library staff. In order to create a stronger set of values, the library needs to limit the number of values to no more than ten; too many statements would be like having none at all. The focus of the SPC and the organization needed to be on the library's most important values.[19]

The dean of the CBE lead two exercises to help library staff pinpoint the concepts they felt needed to be reflected in the mission and values statements. In each one he asked a series of questions:

Mission: Questions

- What inspires you about being involved with WWU and the library?
- How do you see the purpose of the library changing in the future?
- What gets you excited about being involved with the library?
- What do you see as the basic elements of what the library does or should do?[20]

Values: Questions

- Which historical or current leaders do you admire most or provide role models for you? Why?
- What values did they hold that you most admire? How do these values show up in your own actions?
- What do you stand for? What do you think the library should stand for as an organization?[21]

The key concepts to come out of the mission and values exercises were: library is the physical, intellectual, and virtual center of the campus; access; excellence; information; education; service; connectivity; support; openness; preservation; and research. The SPC developed a mission statement based on the information from Development Day and lists from other staff meetings:

- The Library Connects—people to place, people to people, people to learning.
- Place—both the physical and virtual presence of our library. We encourage learning, collaboration, and community through our environment.
- People—the Western community and everyone we serve.
- Learning—the promotion of critical thinking and information literacy. The library provides access to the information and resources necessary to the learning process.

The mission statement was simple and direct. It could be used to both explain and brand the library. The qualifying statements defined what each term meant and how it fit into the library's mission.

The mission and values statements were introduced to the library at a staff meeting facilitated by the dean of the CBE. Overall, library personnel felt the mission and values reflected the concepts expressed at Development Day. However, there were some concerns: some felt education and critical thinking were not emphasized; diversity was not mentioned; intellectual property was not mentioned; our values must acknowledge the history and meaning of an academic library. The SPC felt these concerns related more to the library's values because these were the ideas and concepts that the organization held above all other things. Overall, the consensus was that this was a good first draft. The mission statement went through two more drafts before a final version, listed above, was finalized.

While the values were presented at the same time as the mission statement, discussion of them was held off until a consensus was reached about the mission. The values were presented and discussed at another staff meeting—this time facilitated by a member of the SPC. While the staff felt the SPC was were going in the right direction, it took several more drafts to develop a list of values that people truly reflected who and what we were as an organization.

The Values of Western Libraries

We reach for excellence in performance and relationships. We strive for integrity, trust, and respect for each other and those we serve.

We embrace the challenges of the evolving landscape as opportunities for the future, and we honor the traditional roles of academic libraries.

We protect intellectual freedom and provide non-judgmental service.

We promote diversity and provide equal and open access.

We are integral to the teaching and learning process.

(See Appendix II for the Western Libraries' full mission, values, and vision statement.)

This was a productive process and there was positive feedback from personnel about involving dean of the CBE for the initial meeting. The second meeting, facilitated by a member of the SPC, was important to both the planning process and the library. Both the library staff and the SPC had begun to take ownership of the mission and values and at the same time had taken ownership of the process.

SWOT Analysis

After the mission and value statements, the SWOT became the focus of the SPC. The longer the committee worked, the more it became apparent that the SWOT would be the outline to our strategic plan. That wasn't obvious when the process began.

The SPC considered several different approaches to creating a SWOT:

Put together several small groups related to the data going into the SWOT.

Create small groups organized around the value statements and have them analyze data related to the value. These groups would report back to the SPC.

The SPC would put together a SWOT based on existing data and then present it to the library and ask for feedback.

Scenario number three was chosen. It was the best choice because it would promote continuity and prevent duplication. The SPC was overwhelmed by the amount of data it needed to examine to develop a SWOT and the committee was worried about getting it within the timeline that had been set. The SPC held what became known as the SWOT Bootcamp.

The SPC spent an entire day sequestered in WWU's Viking Union analyzing the data gathered for the process. The committee focused on the external data to establish the opportunities and threats because the strengths and weaknesses had already been established by the dean of libraries' interviews with library personnel. The morning of SWOT Bootcamp was devoted to going over all the data and applying what related to Western Libraries to the opportunities and threats. During the afternoon, the SPC created a rough draft of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the library. The SWOT came at the right time as the WWU president asked all colleges to compile a SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats) for the university budgeting process.

The SWOT Bootcamp was the turning point for the SPC. It was both a bonding experience and a very productive meeting. After the strategic plan was finished, one committee member said he thought the committee would still be sitting in the conference room trying to figure out what to do with all this data if we hadn't had the SWOT Bootcamp. Another member said the SWOT Bootcamp was when she stopped feeling so overwhelmed by the process. It was when she knew the process was going to work.

Phase one took longer than expected because the committee had underestimated how long it would take to do some of the initial planning and organizing. The SPC had planned on getting the rest of the library involved with analyzing the data, but they realized that would not work for two main reasons: learning the process took much longer than expected, and it would be disruptive to the process and the timeline. After being surrounded by data, the SPC felt they were fully aware of the issues and had a good understanding of what needed to be addressed. Bringing others up to speed would be time consuming.

Phase Two: Data Analysis

Under the original plan, phase one is when planning groups would be formed to analyze the data related to an assigned topic and write a final report. These final reports would be reviewed and discussed by library staff and then edited together by the SPC to form the final strategic plan. However, by the time the SWOT was finished, the SPC felt it had an understanding of the materials, the process, and the issues that needed to be addressed. The decision was made to have each planning group, led by members of the SPC, develop an outline relating to a topic that needed to be addressed by the SPC. The SPC had originally slated four months for this phase. Because much of the groundwork was done in phase one, this phase took six weeks. Because of this, the SPC was able to stick to the original timeline.

Planning groups were formed around the main subjects addressed by the SWOT: place (physical), place (virtual), organization development, marketing and outreach, instruction, collections, and digitization. Groups were made up of both faculty and staff, and in some cases students and teaching faculty. The SPC wanted to involve some of the key stakeholders. The library affects more than those who work in the library and the SPC felt their input would be useful.

Each planning group was charged with creating goals, objectives, and strategic initiatives related to the opportunities and threats from the SWOT. Bryson's definition of goal, objective, and strategic initiatives were used to establish a universal vocabulary:

Goal: A long-term organizational target or direction

of development. It states what the organization wants to accomplish or become over the next several years. Goals provide a basis for decisions about the nature, scope, and relative priorities of all projects and activities. Everything the organization does should help it move toward attainment of one or more goals.

Objective: A measurable target that must be met on the way to attaining a goal.

Strategic Initiative: The means by which an organization intends to accomplish a goal or objective, it summarizes a pattern across policy, programs, projects, decision and resource allocations.[22]

Groups could develop as many goals as needed but in the end, each group came up with one goal supported by several objectives and strategic initiatives.

Members of the planning groups were chosen based on knowledge and personality. The SPC wanted the committees to be productive and chose people who could work together. Each group was facilitated by a member of the SPC. Their role was to keep the group on task and to compile the final document. Three groups included teaching faculty: place, collections, and instruction. These were two areas where teaching faculty had an immediate interest. Six weeks were scheduled for each group to discuss the topic, read any materials provided by the SPC, and come up with a list of areas that needed to be addressed by the strategic plan and suggestions on how to address them.

Each group worked differently, but most started with one or two brainstorming sessions. The SPC wanted the planning groups to develop goals and objectives organically and didn't want them to feel constrained by what they thought the SPC wanted. Six weeks were scheduled for each group but it was too long for most groups because they were able to develop a solid list of goals, objectives, and strategic initiatives in two to three weeks. The SPC met regularly through the process to discuss some of the issues that arose and to decide the format of planning group documents.

Involving teaching faculty was a way to reach out to the community and involve users; however, for some groups it wasn't as productive as originally thought. While many strategic planning processes, like the Hensley-Schoppmeyer and Bryson plans, encourage outside involvement, the SPC found the involvement of some outside stakeholders to be counter-productive. The committee and the planning groups were already deeply involved in the issues and process, bringing in people from the outside was somewhat disruptive.

While this specific plan was intended to focus on internal issues, future planning processes may benefit from having more external involvement. While Birdsall and Hensly advocate for the involvement "chief partners and major constituencies," like teaching faculty, the SPC found that many faculty do not understand the changing role of the academic library and only see the part of the library that affects them.[23] While having external involvement can be beneficial, if the individuals involved do not understand or support the need for change, their involvement could prove detrimental to the overall process.

Several meetings were devoted to discussing, reorganizing, and editing the final document into one cohesive plan based on the planning group reports. The final goals mirrored the planning groups, but several of the objectives were moved between goals. Goals were organized to follow the order of the values. One member of the SPC copy edited the plan to avoid the quagmire of group editing and wordsmithing. The group did set aside one meeting to assess the overall plan before it was presented to the library for review in March 2009.

Phase Three: Presentation

When presenting the first draft of the strategic plan to the library it was noted that more than forty library faculty and staff were involved with the creation of the plan. Overall, the reaction to the plan was positive. Comments and questions revolved around the organization and implementation. The organization of the plan was based on the order of our values, yet some found it confusing. Others felt there was too much overlap between the categories. There were concerns that the SPC made the data fit a set of pre-conceived categories. Many questions were about the hows and whys of implementation and if some of the goals and strategic initiatives were too ambitious and unrealistic for us to achieve. The SPC did its best to address these concerns. Comments were used by the SPC to tighten up the plan before it was presented to the university community in May 2009.

The entire planning process was bottom-up. The SPC and the planning groups were very cognizant of not being constrained by preconception. The way the plan was organized came from the content itself, not vice versa. The SPC did not come up with specific categories or goals and then massage the data to fit. The library is a complex organization; every department in the library overlaps with another department and every value intersects with another value. The SPC tried to clarify the goals, objectives, and initiatives as much as possible but there will always be some overlap. In some goals, such as place (virtual) and digitization, there were subtle differences. Virtual place focuses on the delivery of digital information where the digitization group concentrated long-term preservation of digital data.

The dean of libraries outlined how the plan would be implemented and pointed out that many of the goals were already being addressed by departments, committees, and task forces in the library. Some of the goals were ambitious. It was a three-year plan and some goals could not be achieved in three years, or their completion was dependent on funding from the university (such as a major library renovation). Strategic planning is ongoing and those items that weren't completed would be assessed during the next planning process. Some items, like the renovation of the library, were included it in the plan to make others aware of

its importance to the libraries and the organization's commitment to its completion.

The plan was distributed to the university community for comment at the end of May 2009. It was posted on the Western Libraries' website. An e-mail was sent to faculty and a thread was started in Viking Village, an online community used by both faculty and students. Only one faculty member responded to the post in the Viking Village. He was concerned that the plan put too much emphasis on the concept of library as place and not enough on scholarship and the acquisition of books and other materials. The SPC explained that the library needs to balance the needs of all of its users and the role of the library within the university. The comment was not dismissed nor was it disregarded. It made the SPC and the library aware of whom it needed to reach out to.

The plan was finalized and posted in June 2009. During the final review process, several staff members posted comments on the library intranet about the plan and the process. The posts recognized the hard work the SPC did and the work the library put into the planning process, and thanked the committee for involving them in the process and for creating a mission and values statement and strategic plan that would help the organization become what it needed to be.

Phase Four: Implementation

The original intention was to implement the plan slowly over three years, and some goals were in process before the plan was finalized. During the summer of 2009, the dean of libraries assigned specific goals to department heads and library leaders and asked them to work with their departments or groups to put them in place. The department heads and leaders continue to present the dean with periodic updates of their progress.

Part of the library's 2009 Development Day was spent discussing the progress of the plan. Organizational development and space were the two goals cited the most for lack of progress. These two areas are more difficult to implement and measure progress because they affect the entire organization as opposed to specific departments or area. A committee was formed to look into the organizational development of the libraries. The task of the committee is to assess and make recommendations for some of the most prominent organizational issues such as communication and training.

In the year following the formation of the plan, the library at WWU has achieved a lot, but it hasn't been as organized as the plan suggested. Much of what has happened has been organic, because a library is a living, breathing organization that responds to both internal and external influence. An example was to the initiative to create a learning commons that incorporated Instruction & Research Services, the Student Technology Center (STC), and the Writing Center. The SPC saw this as a long-term goal but it happened much faster and much different than expected. The STC needed to relocate due to construction and the Writing Center is being incorporated into the library due to budget issues.

Reviewing the Process

The SPC met one final time to review the process. It was close to ten months after the committee had been charged to develop a plan. When the process began, none of the members knew what would be involved or just how much work was involved, and none of the members knew how rewarding the process could be. The committee felt that both the plan and process were successful. The SPC listed some of the key points that helped the process:

- Much of the data had already been gathered. The SPC only had to decide what to use. Without this, the process would have taken much longer. The library had been gathering data for some time, but much of it had not been used in any formal assessment.
- Having the dean of the CBE as a consultant. He met with the SPC when it needed guidance and was able to serve as an unbiased opinion when meeting with library staff. Many people in the library commented that they liked having him involved for that very reason. The SPC valued the dean's advice and guidance.
- SWOT Bootcamp. When the SPC met to review the process, the committee member who commented that the SPC would still be reviewing data for the SWOT if it hadn't been for the Bootcamp was only half joking. Almost as important, the SPC was able to bond on both a personal and professional level.
- Involving staff at critical points in the planning process. The dean of libraries allowed the SPC to use staff meetings to discuss the plan with the library, allowing everyone in the organization to take part in the process. At the end of the process, roughly two-thirds of organization had served on one of the planning committees.
- Cohesiveness of the group. The make-up of the committee was crucial. Members of the committee didn't use the committee to promote any personal agendas and were able to keep internal politics out of the final plan.

There were some things the SPC thought didn't work or that could have been done differently. Initially, the head of Administrative Services was an ex-officio member and liaison to the dean of libraries, but as the process progressed, he became a full member of the committee. The cochairs felt there should have been more dialogue between the committee and the dean of libraries. The dean was available to the SPC and the cochairs when asked, but regular meetings would have been useful.

Parts of the plan were written in a way that was too structured or specific—this hasn't allowed for flexibility. The

digitization goal outlined a plan that included creating a committee that would create an environmental scan of what materials needed to be digitized at the library and university level. This hasn't been done for two main reasons: parts of the goal were put into process before a committee could be formed and lack of time. The provost took an interest in several aspects of the digitization goal and offered the Libraries several opportunities related to the goal, including upgrading software and external training. The goal isn't being ignored, but it is happening in a more organic fashion. Issues like this will be evaluated later when a second task force and the dean assess the status of the strategic plan.

Conclusion

The SPC didn't have any framework or plan when the process started. The committee read other articles for guidance, but nothing could or would relate directly to Western Libraries. In addition to creating a strategic plan, the SPC provided a future for the planning process by building the foundation of the planning process at Western Libraries. When the next committee comes together to create another strategic plan, they can follow the framework established by the SPC. Hopefully, this will lead to a shorter planning time. As noted by the strategic planning committee at Indiana University, "[f]or results to be strategic, the planning should be accomplished within a few months."[24] Strategic planning is ongoing. Each plan builds on the plan that came before it. Because of the groundwork laid by the SPC in 2009, future planning committees will be able create more relevant plans.

The full strategic plan is available as a PDF file on the Western Libraries' website; www.library.wwu.edu/info/strategic_plan_final.pdf.

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Appendix I

Strategic Planning Committee

Charge: To oversee a strategic planning process that is inclusive, collaborative, data-driven, transparent, forward and outward directed, action oriented resulting in a three-year Western Libraries plan appropriately aligned with the university's strategic initiatives.

Specifically, to:

In consult with the dean of libraries, determine the appropriate strategic planning process or method.

Facilitate the process, assuring that all library faculty and staff, as well as university students, faculty and staff have a say in the content of the plan.

Determine a timeline for the process.

Facilitate a process that has the following outcomes:

The composition of a mission, vision, and values statement.

The determination of not more than seven overarching goals appropriate for a three-year planning cycle, in alignment with university strategic plan and other state initiatives.

Conducting an environmental scan of those factors, internal and external, that will affect the libraries in the shorter and longer term.

The determination of various strategies by which each of these goal may be achieved.

The determination of measurable outcomes by which the accomplishment of said goals may be verified.

Transcribe a draft of the plan resulting from this process, to be presented to the library faculty and staff for comment and the dean of libraries for final approval.

Coordinate the marketing and communication of the plan.

Develop a strategy for assessing the plan, reporting progress both to the library faculty and staff but also the university community, and coordinating revision of the plan as necessary.

Membership: Six members, three faculty and three staff, representing a cross section of the organization, with the head of Administrative Services serving as an ex officio member.

Appendix II

Mission

Western Libraries connects—people to place, people to people, people to learning.

Place—both the physical and virtual presence of our library. We encourage learning, collaboration, and community through our environment.

People—the Western community and everyone we serve.

Learning—the promotion of critical thinking and information literacy. The library provides access to the information and resources necessary to the learning process.

Values

We reach for excellence in performance and relationships. We strive for integrity, trust, and respect for each other and those we serve.

We embrace the challenges of the evolving landscape as opportunities for the future, and we honor the traditional roles of academic libraries.

We protect intellectual freedom and provide non-judgmental service.

We promote diversity and provide equal and open access.

We are integral to the teaching and learning process.

We respond to the needs of our users.

Vision

Western Libraries are integral to student success at Western Washington University. A destination university deserves a destination library, and in that role we seek to become Western's first source for quality information. We will develop unique resources and mechanisms to share University intellectual content with the world. We will become the intellectual center of campus, an interactive gathering place for students to interact with information and with each other. We will be innovative in the way we approach the fulfillment of user needs and nimble in the structure of our organization. We strive to be recognized as the premiere comprehensive university library in the Northwest.