

Effectively Capturing Stakeholder Views in the Mission and Vision Creation Process

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Abstract

This paper outlines a case study of a mission and vision creation process in a small, public university. It focuses on the process used to create buy-in for key stakeholders, outlines how that success was assessed, and discusses how the process can be replicated. This approach used a representative system to create feelings of being heard, built feedback into the process of writing the statements, and then assessed respondents to measure alignment between the final product and their own view of the mission and vision. That alignment was high, and the process itself can be replicated and refined to fit the needs of institutions who have struggled with staff buy-in in the past.

Introduction

Mission statements serve multiple purposes for organizations, including marketing, providing a benchmark for decision making, and internal identity.¹ Bryson, an influential author of a strategic management handbook for nonprofits and public organizations, argues that for those sectors, mission statements serve to provide purpose to their operations.² All of these conceptualizations work well for libraries, given their plethora of policies and constant interaction with the public. Vision statements, by contrast, show what an organization can become once their mission has been fully realized and implemented.³ Where missions are descriptive, visions thus are prescriptive and intended to provoke movement and motivation.

While useful in theory, in practice the mission and vision do nothing for an organization unless they are internalized by the key stakeholders.⁴ To work as designed, both need high levels of buy-in, a difficult achievement in academic libraries where multiple differing departments that

¹ Setayesh Sattari, Leyland F. Pitt, and Albert Caruana, "How Readable Are Mission Statements? An Exploratory Study," *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4 (2011): 282.

² John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018), 121.

³ Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 59.

⁴ John Cox, "Positioning the Academic Library Within the Institution: A Literature Review," *The New Review of Academic Librarianship* 24, no. 3-4 (2018), 5.

may or may not interact regularly with each other pursue a variety of small-m missions, within a larger organization similarly structured in silos.

This paper outlines a case study of a mission and vision creation process in a small, liberal arts–focused, public university. Specifically, it focuses on the process used to create buy-in for key stakeholders, outlines how that success was assessed, and discusses how the process can be replicated.

Literature Review

Library mission statements are plentiful within academic libraries, but research on the process of creating them is less plentiful; this is mainly because the mission statement is usually a single step within the strategic planning process, and much of the literature focuses on that process as a whole. Part of the problem with this area of research is that the specific purpose and utility of any given mission statement will vary from institution to institution. These purposes range from a pro-forma statement demanded by upper management, part of a copied process, an internal statement of values, or a means of promoting the library within or without an organization, to name a few. Because of this diversity of purpose, the literature becomes scattered, but there are two general pathways that emerge. The first focuses on the benefits of copying or altering existing approaches to create a full strategic plan (usually correlated with viewing these plans for primarily internal use), while the second approach aligns the library’s plan with that of the institution’s.

Strategic Planning, Mission, and Vision by the Numbers

Many libraries approach the strategic planning process (including mission and vision creation) by copying previous approaches such as those outlined in John Bryson’s book as an attempt to avoid recreating the wheel.⁵ This is an attractive tactic for organizations low on personnel and slack time, and several authors describe picking up a preset set of rules as their primary tactic.⁶ It also corrects a major difficulty for librarians tackling this task: the lack of expertise in the process of strategic planning. The main criticism of this approach, articulated by Danya Leebaw, is that uncritically adopting approaches from the business world, even ones tailored in part to libraries, can and have led to processes becoming direct imitations of business

⁵ Elizabeth Stephan, "Strategic Planning on the Fast Track," *Library Leadership & Management (Online)*, (Fall 2010): 189–190.

⁶ J. Parker Ladwig, "Assess the State of Your Strategic Plan," *Library Administration & Management* 19, no. 2 (Spring, 2005): 90; Stephan, "Strategic Planning on the Fast Track," 189.

management concepts rather than ones that take the non-profit, service-oriented nature of the library into account.⁷ That in turn can affect the buy-in from library staffers, who may be alienated by the corporate approach.

Creating a defined strategic plan, mission, and vision generally corresponds with a focus on internal strategy and development. The scholars within this school of thought view the mission as the reason why an organization takes the actions it takes.⁸ Bryson in particular argues that the function of the mission is to give workers something to identify with.⁹ Several scholars also argue that the mission, vision, and values must be internalized by employees to effectively execute strategy and have a strong organizational culture (in other words, to buy into the process on an emotional and intellectual level).¹⁰ In a slightly contrasting view, Carr looks at the mission as a vehicle for motivation and direction, noting that it defines the nature and purpose of the business and thus gives a meaning to the goals that it sets.¹¹

These viewpoints also tend to treat library employees as key stakeholders in the process (rather than members of the public) as they are the most affected by any changes to the organization.¹² Bryson argues that a major goal of strategic planning is satisfying key stakeholders in all legitimate ways.¹³ This again has implications for buy-in: if library workers are considered stakeholders, they must be convinced that the process and the effects fit with their visions of the library's future. With that said, there are many potential stakeholders outside of the library, and the question of who should be considered is not definitively answered in the literature. Cox, for example, views the outside institutional stakeholders as vital because they hold the keys to funding and broader strategy.¹⁴ Harland, Stewart, and Bruce include staff, students, community, and professional groups in this category, casting a wide net.¹⁵ Still, all of these approaches include the library staff as a key component in the process, which reinforces buy-in

⁷ Danya Leebaw, "Participatory and Ethical Strategic Planning: What Academic Libraries Can Learn from Critical Management Studies," *Library Trends* 68, no. 2 (Fall, 2019): 114.

⁸ Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 122.

⁹ Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 124.

¹⁰ Joseph R. Matthews, "Valuing Information, Information Services, and the Library: Possibilities and Realities," *Portal* (Baltimore, Md.) 13, no. 1 (2013): 108; Christopher K. Bart, "Measuring the Mission Effect in Human Intellectual Capital," *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 2, no. 3 (2001), 322.

¹¹ Stephen J. Carr, "Strategic Planning in Libraries: An Analysis of a Management Function and Its Application to Library and Information Work," *Library Management* 13, no. 5 (1992), 3.

¹² Bryson, 134.

¹³ Bryson, 75.

¹⁴ Cox, "Positioning the Academic Library Within the Institution," 221.

¹⁵ Fiona Harland, Glenn Stewart, and Christine Bruce, "Ensuring the Academic Library's Relevance to Stakeholders: The Role of the Library Director," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 43, no. 5 (September, 2017): 397.

from that staff as a key component of any strategic planning process that focuses on internal strategy and development.

Strategic Planning, Mission, and Vision as Alignment

A second general approach, outlined by Connaway and their associates, is to align the library's progress with the university's mission.¹⁶ Mission alignment shows up in theory but not in research papers, likely due to it being much less complex in execution.¹⁷ Cox points out that many libraries have taken this position as some traditional responsibilities and roles have withered thanks to new technologies and missions.¹⁸ Alignment can easily take the place of unique strategic planning within the library; the process would entail taking the university's strategic plan and finding ways in which library operations could support each task or goal. It is also an excellent process to take up when the value of the library is put to the question, as it can show administrators how the library fits into the goals of the super-organization.

While this approach can be helpful for making internal plans and directing resources, the proponents of this approach tend to look more toward external actors as the target audience for a statement of strategic alignment. Cox points to the mission and vision as a method of convincing outside stakeholders of the utility of the library's strategy, and Harland and company agree.¹⁹ Wadas questions the utility of even having a mission and vision, but notes that both can reflect policy and align with the university's statements if they must exist.²⁰ In these scholars' perspectives, the point of a mission and vision is to publicly broadcast the alignment of the library with the organization rather than to carve out distinctions in their operations. Given the external focus of this approach, it also does not necessarily include library staff as stakeholders: Boyce and company, for example, collected data from senior academics, professional services staff, university executive staff, and student representatives to divine the value of the library in the 21st century, but notably do not carve out librarians as a separate category.²¹ Ultimately, this approach

¹⁶ Lynn Silipigni Connaway et al., "Academic Library Impact: Improving Practice and Essential Areas to Research," ALA.org, American Library Association, 2017, 8.

<http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/publications/whitepapers/academiclib.pdf>

¹⁷ Connaway et al., "Academic Library Impact," 3.

¹⁸ Cox, "Positioning the Academic Library Within the Institution," 225.

¹⁹ Cox, "Positioning the Academic Library Within the Institution," 221; Harland, Stewart, and Bruce, "Ensuring the Academic Library's Relevance to Stakeholders," 404

²⁰ Linda R. Wadas, "Mission Statements in Academic Libraries: A Discourse Analysis," *Library Management* 38, no. 2 (2017), pp. 109-110, 114.

²¹ Gavin Boyce et. al, "Visions of Value: Leading the Development of a View of the University Library in the 21st Century," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 45, no. 5 (September 2019), 2.

limits the importance of buy-in, as the mission and vision function more as communication to outside groups than as internal guiding principles.

Implementation and Methodology

Articles on the processes involved in mission, vision, and strategic planning work (as opposed to the purpose and scope issues discussed above) are varied, mirroring the variety of approaches that exist in the business world. They do tend to align with the more detailed, internally focused approaches, as those are more process heavy. Depending on the prior knowledge in the organization, stakeholder assessment (determining who the stakeholders are) is a frequent initial step.²² Most include some variation on surveys or other assessment tools, discussing varying means to gather data from the stakeholders.²³ Bryson in particular points to several elements; they argue that all involved should have a sense of procedural justice, “the sense that both the procedures used to reach decisions and the decisions themselves are fair.”²⁴ Leebaw champions the process of dissensus as a means of achieving similar goals.²⁵ In both cases, an intentional process is seen as a crucial tool for engaging stakeholders with the mission and vision (and correspondingly achieving buy-in).

Taken together, the underlying message of the articles that focused on process was that each process should be customized to fit the needs of the institution undertaking it, and that stakeholder buy-in was a vital part of making the process work in the long term. The means outlined to achieve that goal varied across the literature, reflecting in turn the varied situations of the institutions that implemented them. In each case, successful efforts were marked by an intentional process where the process was customized to fit the end goals.

The Creation Process: A Case Study

Past efforts at strategic planning at this library had failed in their execution. Collective brainstorming by library staff, followed by parceling out assignments and meetings, had several key flaws. First, the more individuals actively involved in the process, the more existing interpersonal dynamics came into play, and more dominant or forceful individuals tended to have their opinions reified. Secondly, the involvement of academics in the process led to a tendency for in-person meetings to descend into debates over the placement of a semicolon. Third, the

²² Parker, “Assess the State of Your Strategic Plan,” 91–92.

²³ Boyce et. al, “Visions of Value,” 6.

²⁴ Bryson, 80.

²⁵ Danya Leebaw, “Participatory and Ethical Strategic Planning,” 120.

diversity of schedules in an academic library environment meant that setting aside time to have stakeholders meet was exceedingly difficult. Virtual meetings helped with the third issue, but did nothing to help with the first two, and progress completely stalled on the prior effort due in part to lack of staff buy-in.

The process created for this iteration was intended to fix the issues that arose in the prior attempt and was designed to address current needs. When this process was pitched to library management, it focused solely on mission and vision for two reasons. First, the prior effort at strategic planning had failed badly, and focusing solely on mission and vision made the process feel more achievable when seeking volunteers because it had a defined ending for the committee within a shorter time frame. Secondly, this was perceived as an opportunity to team build to improve morale (in line with recent mandates from upper administration), in a way that strategic planning as a whole was less well suited to accomplish. Specifically, the mission and vision were an opportunity for people to see their work reflected in the statements, to be actively reached out to as important to the library, and a way to have a voice; strategic planning, by contrast, entailed workload increases to hit objectives.

The overall goals of this process were primarily to create a mission and vision statement for the library as a precursor to strategic planning down the line, and secondarily to use the process itself as a means of team building and morale boosting by emphasizing worker's importance to the library and giving them a voice in shaping its future direction. This morale factor acted in support of the primary objective, as research showed buy-in from key stakeholders to be a crucial factor in mission and vision statements being useful to any organization.²⁶

All these factors were considered during the design phase, and the final process was as follows:

- I. A committee was created comprising one individual from each of the main active units of the library: Research instruction, IT, access services, collection management, and administration.
 - A. These individuals were selected by either the heads of those units or by consensus, apart from research instruction due to a member of that department spearheading the initiative.
 - B. The purpose of this composition was to create a point person with direct work ties in their section that could be used to create a feeling that their voices were being heard and considered, and that the point person would advocate for their interests.

²⁶ Matthews, 108; Bart, 322

The goal was for each person in the library to feel that their views were weighed and considered carefully, and that they were able to influence the process meaningfully.

- II. A Google document was created to use as an ongoing meeting notes/task tracker/information storage tool and was shared with editing privileges to all members of the committee.
- III. A timeline was created by the chair of the committee, based on directives from the library director.
 - A. This timeline was later revised due to the twin disruptors of the library being closed due to asbestos abatement, and the Covid-19 pandemic.
- IV. The committee met with the goal of working together to produce methods for information gathering. The committee settled upon a survey instrument via a Google form, which gave the option of either sending out the form for stakeholders to fill out themselves or using it as a note-taking tool for in-person interviews. The committee set the form up for general categories of respondents, with varying goals of interaction:
 - A. Library staff: The goal was to get feedback from 100% of the staff (minus the library director at their request). This served the purpose of team building through inclusion.
 - B. Non-library faculty and staff: The goal was to get feedback from heavy library users, departments with close ties to the library, and then anyone who cared enough to respond to our outreach. This served the broader purpose of making sure that the mission and vision aligned with both internal and external views of the library, as well as strengthening ties with constituents.
 - C. Students: The goal was to get feedback from student groups as a proxy measure for not having a good method to do mass student outreach.
 1. This element eventually failed, again due to stressors from the Covid-19 crisis and the timeline being pushed back into the summer.
 - D. Community members: The goal was to get feedback from members of the community who had partnered with or used the library in the past. This served the broader purpose of making sure that the mission and vision aligned with both internal and external views of the library, as well as strengthening ties with constituents.
- V. During the first meeting, the committee brainstormed survey questions for the mission, and then in a follow-up meeting created questions for the vision.

A. A crucial element of that process was keeping the separate purposes of the mission and vision at the forefront of the conversation. The group adopted the schema of “How do you see the ____ in 5 years” for the vision questions, to keep the focus on the future.

B. The final questions were:

Questions for the Mission

- Why is the library important to you?
- How does your work contribute to the library? /How does the library contribute to your work?
- What is the library’s role in the college and wider community?

Questions for the Vision

- How do you see the library in 5 years?
- How do you see its presence in the community?
- How do you see its presence on the campus?
- How do you see its presence in your life?

VI. Once the questions were established, one member of the group created the survey with a tiered design, so that the first question was “What group are you a part of/who is being interviewed?” and the answer led each member to a separate iteration of the survey.

A. The reason for this design was that a few questions were designed as mirrors of each other depending on who was being interviewed. Specifically, the question of “How does your work contribute to the library?” was flipped for all non-library stakeholders to “How does the library contribute to your work?”

VII. Finally, the survey was administered to the four groups in varying ways:

A. Library workers were individually contacted, and in-person interviews were used whenever possible. This ensured 100% completion as well as the personal touch to increase buy-in. The representative on the committee for each unit interviewed people within their unit.

B. Faculty were contacted using existing relationships with the Research Instruction liaisons. After the liaisons were interviewed, they worked together to push the survey out to deans or to the faculty at large in their various departments.

C. For students, the team originally planned to reach out to student groups as a mechanism for pushing the survey out to the student body. The twin impacts of losing the library to asbestos and then the campus shut-down due to Covid meant that the team was not able to contact any students for formal feedback.

- D. For community members, the team leveraged pre-existing relationships between librarians who already conducted outreach, and they sent the survey out to their contacts.
- VIII. Once the team had the data, they organized it into an Excel spreadsheet and read each question as a category, with the goal of finding commonalities within the responses. Individual team members were given responsibility for reviewing the answers in each category, though the team was encouraged to skim other categories to familiarize themselves with them.
- A. Each time the reviewer identified a common thread, they described that common theme within the cells below the column they were reviewing. As they continued through the process, these themes were edited and revised as new commonalities emerged, leading finally to a set of described themes that encapsulated the majority of respondents' sentiments.
 - 1. For instance, in the category of "Why is the library important to you?" responses included "A great resource when I am researching local history," "Community asset, microfilm archive," and "Provides a way to access more serious reading material than the public library system AND an incredible collection of local history material." These (along with several others) were summarized by the reviewer as "Central point of access to local history, College history, rare books, documents, maps, surveys, archives, and institutional memory."
- IX. After these themes were identified, the team met synchronously to discuss them and to further distill them down to 2–3 super-themes that incorporated all the identified themes.
- A. The distillation process worked the same way as the initial process of identifying themes, except that it was applied to those themes rather than the initial responses. Mechanically speaking, the team went through the columns of the spreadsheet and color-coded each cell that contained a similar theme. The discussion revolved around reducing those color codings down to 2–3 items for the mission and vision respectively, by combining categories.
 - B. See below for the examples. The team used the term "commonalities" as synonymous with themes for the process.

D	E	F	G
Why is the library important to you?	How does the library contribute to your work?	How does your work contribute to the library?	What is the library's role in the college and wider community?
Commonalities Team Member 1	Commonalities Team Member 2	Commonalities Team Member 2	Commonalities Team Member 3
Central point of access for students, faculty, and community to: physical and online collections, scholarly works, journals, electronic media, databases.	Supports Research & Provides Research Instruction and Help	Purchase and Maintain books, materials, resources, eresources and catalog	Central role and location, a "hub," "beating heart," and open to all
Hub of the campus and touches all aspects of the campus; interdisciplinary, cross-departmental, open (for access, to ideas, to change), evolving, maintains important partnerships across campus and SUNY.	Provides physical assets, streaming videos, e-books, scholarly works in various fields, equipment and technology in classrooms and IDS service	Instruction and help on identifying, accessing and using good resources, electronic information and special collections	A place for connections -- between campus and surrounding community, between researchers and information, among disciplines; a melting pot, a common ground; cultivates community
Central point of research and instruction assistance for students, faculty, community.	Provides collection of local history and archives	Central point for students to get assistance	Provides access to collections (including "rich," "significant" physical collections) and databases on broad subjects
Central point of access to Local History, College History, rare books, documents, maps, surveys, archives, and Institutional memory		Respond to requests, needs and concerns	Provides ample, safe space to study, think, gather & collaborate
Supports diversity and inclusivity. Safe space for students, faculty, and community.		Builds connections with faculty and students and community to information	Provides ready access to experts/expertise and instruction in specific subject areas as well as in the deeper understanding of information-seeking and what information is
Creates an environment that supports students' study habits.			Honorable mentions: to "protect historical knowledge about the campus and surrounding area," educate area high school students in college research, be a cultural center

H	I	J	K
Vision: How do you see the library in 5 years?	Vision: How do you see its presence in the community?	Vision: How do you see its presence on the campus?	Vision: How do you see its presence in your life?
Commonalities Team Member 4	Commonalities Team Member 3	Commonalities Team Member 4	Commonalities Team Member 5
Open with a physical building: (almost everyone)	MUCH more visible and promoted, greater outreach, and "increased capacity" for the wider public	Center/Hub/Heart/Crossroads/Gathering point/Focal point/Convergence of the campus: 19 variations	-Welcoming & safe place, Pleasant, enriching with informational resources, important tool, nearly indispensable
Archival collection (digital especially) and community connection: 5 variations	Having a greater role in creating and facilitating opportunities for student-community collaborations and relationship-building, including "more entrenched connections" with the public library, historical society, and high school	Physical place/space for learning, information access, services, and interdisciplinary connection: 15 variations	Partner, Valued-noted a couple of times, Life sustaining, necessary, Contributes to research Noted a couple of times
Center/Hub/Heart/Crossroads/Gathering point/Focal point/Convergence of the campus: 9 variations	As a cornerstone, focal point; central, crucial, vital; supporting academic and civic life	Access to history (local or otherwise), connection to local historians and researchers: 5 variations	Personal development, crucial, a great collegial team
Place of excellence/campus leader/premier library in state/21st century library/Center for innovation: 11 variations	As an open (to all) resource for collections, services, and technology; in-person and remote; a supplement to the public library but also offering more general interest magazines and newspapers	Central contributor to education students receive: 4 variations	Symbol of prosperity, central role to success, central presence
Sufficient collection for scholarship/bigger collection: 5	Offering enhanced programs/programming; public performance/event space	Connective point between disciplines: 3 variations	"a Resource of the Past and a pointer to the future"
Bigger online presence/more digital archives and resources: 7 variations		Active participant/Greater degrees of outreach and connection to campus: 8 variations	My other Home., Place of employment-Noted multiple times.

1. For instance, “Hub of the campus and touches all aspects of the campus;” “Central role and location;” “Hub;” “Beating heart;” and “A place for connections” were all highlighted in yellow, as they all touched on the same concepts.
 2. In very broad terms, yellow denoted location and place on campus to connect, Red denoted collaboration and outreach to campus, Green denoted resource provision and access, Orange denoted archival access and local history, Blue denoted inclusivity and a safe space, light pink denoted a future focus on leadership, innovation, and better resources, Magenta denoted research help and services, and the elements in white acted as meta categories for the vision to help classify what people saw the future physical library looking like.
- X. With the distilled themes in hand, the team worked to wordsmith the actual text of the mission and vision, approaching each separately to keep them distinct. They started by writing a long descriptive statement that encapsulated each highlighted category, wedded together with commas, and then worked to shorten and condense that statement while retaining the original scope of each clause.
- A. This resulted in the following:
 1. Mission: Milne library at Fraser Hall is the crossroads of the campus, where students, faculty, staff and community members come to learn, connect with each other across the disciplines, and share knowledge. To that end, the library focuses on providing universal access to information in multiple formats, providing expert support for scholarship.
 2. Vision: Milne library will be at the heart of the campus and the community, reaching out and building connections among people and information. Committed to fostering knowledge and discovery, Milne library will strive to ensure a culture of innovation and excellence.
- XI. After the committee reached consensus, the team submitted them to management for review. Management returned them with comments and specific edits.
- A. The library director wanted to shorten each statement to a single sentence to be more readable and impactful. They also asked the committee to heighten the distinction between the present focus of the mission and the future focus of the vision statement, removing redundancies. For instance, the crossroads of the campus portion of the mission statement was an aspiration, not a description of

current activities and services, and thus belonged in the vision section. Finally, they suggested taking out the specific name of the library, as that was currently under discussion for revision due to the renovations and change in location.

- B. The chair put together some sample statements that incorporated management's comments, and the committee read them and made suggestions prior to a meeting during which the revised wording was hashed out.

Results of the Creation Process

The process resulted in the following statements, agreed upon by library leadership and the mission and vision team:

Mission: To provide access to information, expert support for scholarship, and a diverse and inclusive environment where patrons come to study, share ideas, and learn.

Vision: The Library will be the cornerstone of the campus and the community, inspiring innovation, scholarship, and creativity, celebrating achievement, and providing award-winning service.

Methodology for Assessing Alignment with Views

Once the primary objective of creation was complete, the next step was to measure the effectiveness of the iterative creation process in capturing the personal views of mission and vision held by each participant. To that end, a survey instrument was prepared and distributed via email to all the respondents of the original mission and vision creation process. Specifically, a direct effort was made to get as many of the library staff to respond as possible via repeated outreach, although community and faculty responses were also sought.

The goals of this assessment were primarily to measure how well the process had captured the views of stakeholders. This was understood by the researchers to also act as a measure of engagement as well, in particular the qualitative question of what the process meant to people.

The survey instrument was as follows:

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The new mission statement of the Library matches with my personal views of what its mission should be."

- A. Strongly agree

- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “My current job functions and responsibilities are reflected in the new mission statement.”

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree
- F. I do not work in the Library

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “The new vision statement of the Library matches my vision of what the Library should be working towards.”

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

Describe what it meant to you to participate in the process of producing the mission and vision.

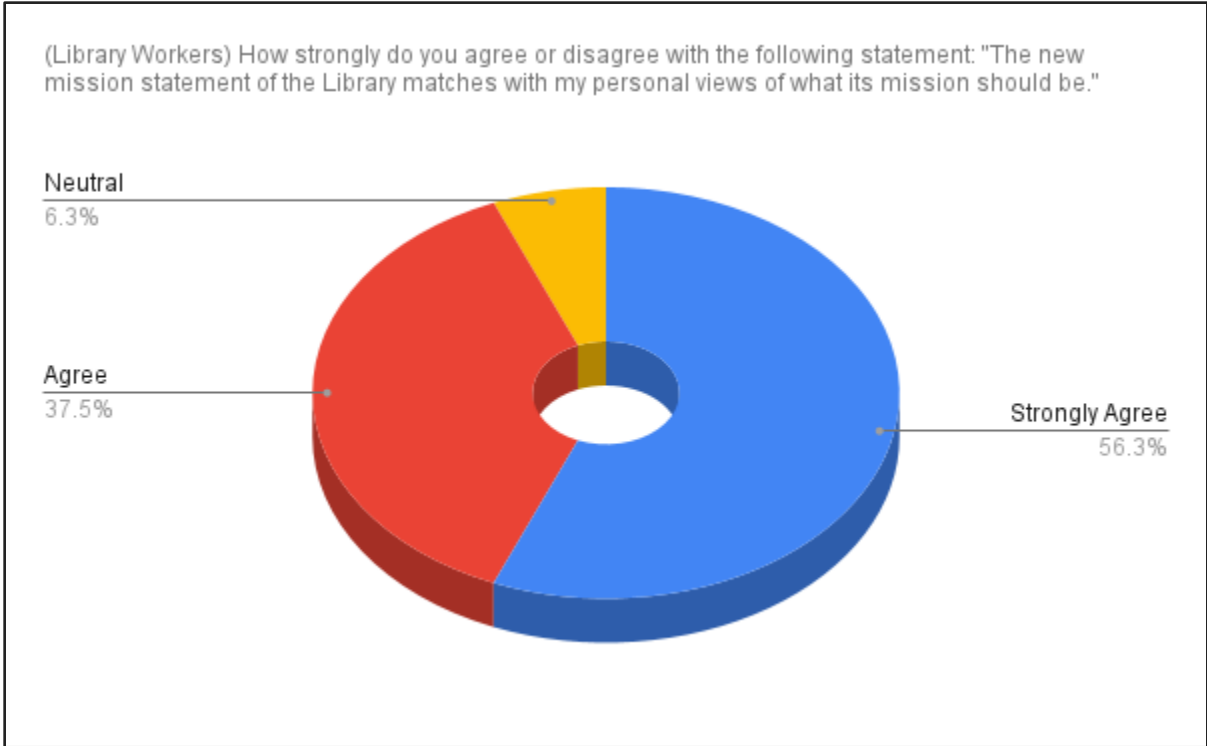
Would you be willing to participate in a similar process in the future when the library revisits its mission and vision?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Maybe

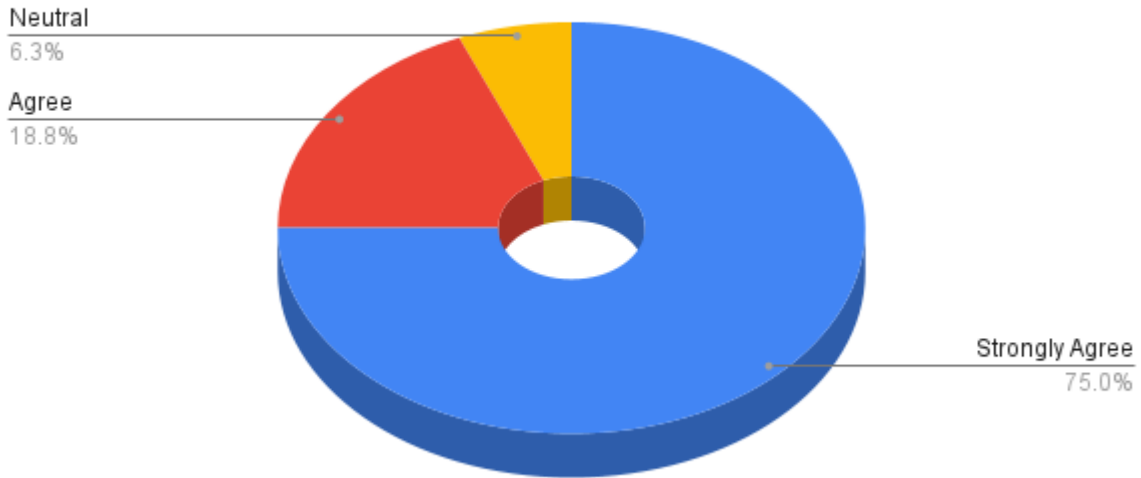
Results of Alignment Assessment

Of the 47 original participants of the mission and vision process, 22 responded to the survey for a 46.8% response rate. Of that group, 6 did not work in the library, meaning that 16 of the original 22 library participants in the original survey replied, for a 72% library response rate.

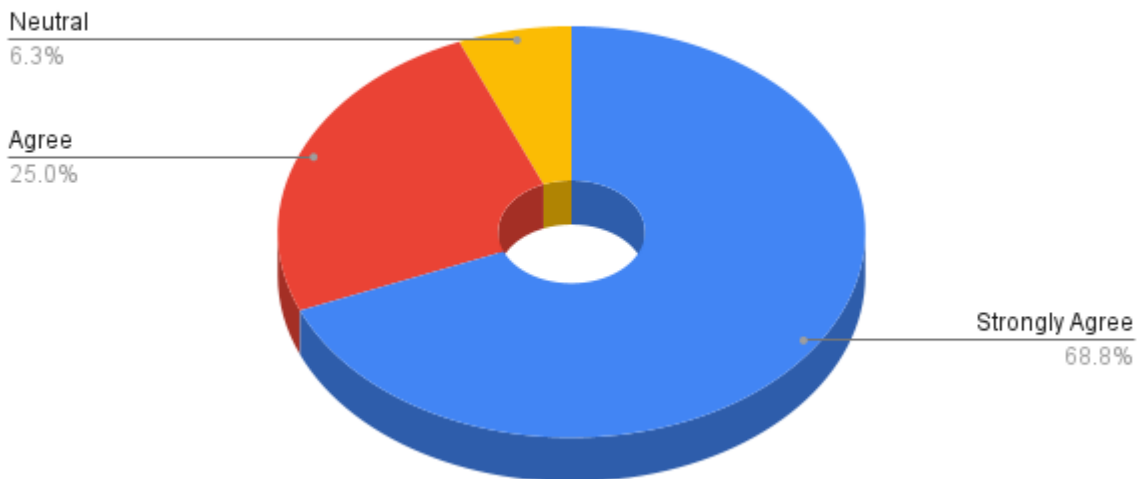
The results from the survey (as shown below) were overwhelmingly positive: 15 out of 16 Library workers picked Agree or Strongly Agree to all three of the statements with a single (different) participant picking neutral for each question. In all these categories, the Strongly Agree held more than half of that vote share.



(Library Workers) How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "My current job functions and responsibilities are reflected in the new mission statement."



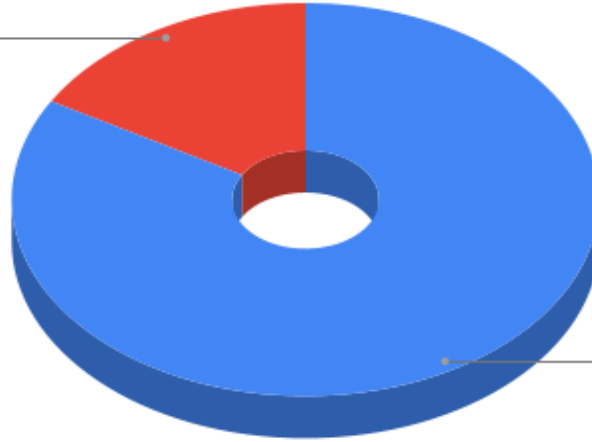
(Library Workers) How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The new vision statement of the Library matches my vision of what the Library should be working towards."



The community and faculty responses were universally positive, with an overwhelming weighting towards Strongly Agree for both questions addressed to them.

(Community and Faculty) How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The new mission statement of the Library matches with my personal views of what its mission should be."

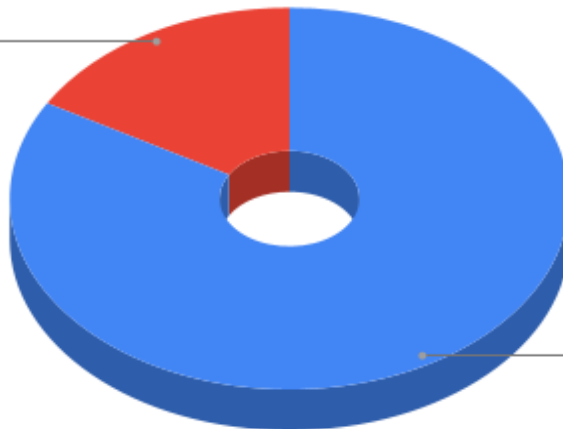
Agree
16.7%



Strongly Agree
83.3%

(Community and Faculty) How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The new vision statement of the Library matches matches my vision of what the Library should be working towards."

Agree
16.7%



Strongly Agree
83.3%

When asked what it meant to them to participate in this process, Library staff frequently cited appreciation for being included, although there was a subset who did not see themselves as contributing much to the process. One respondent, in a comment that illustrates the overall sentiment, stated that "I valued having my voice heard and being able to contribute to what I see

as the future of the library. I think it helped me to be more invested in the overall mission and vision process even though I wasn't on the committee working on it."

Multiple community members outside the college also noted their happiness "that the college is including the broader community (Village residents) in this crucial project by asking for our input," and that they were "honored to be asked to participate in the process."

Discussion

The high positivity rate in the responses across all questions speaks to the efficacy of the approach overall and to the respondents' engagement with the process. The complete lack of negative responses (Disagree or Strongly Disagree) is also indicative. The comments in the short-answer portions back this up, with participants articulating varying degrees of appreciation for being included in the process.

At an overall response rate of 46.8 % overall and 72% of library workers out of the original 22 responding, this sample is likely to be indicative of the views of the whole. Potential complicating factors include the fact that people who were apathetic or mildly annoyed at the process (presumably a "Disagree" response) could have elected not to participate as other work responsibilities took precedence; and the fact that in eliciting responses to the survey, library workers were contacted three times as often as other populations due to variable means of reaching out. The former is unlikely to be true: out of all the people who hypothetically disagreed with the results, the likelihood of at least one expressing their displeasure seems high unless that pool was so small as to not be significant. The latter drove up library response numbers over non-library stakeholders, a deliberate choice as the group was aiming to measure library views as part of an overall effort to address morale issues. This does skew the results toward library opinions, but again the overall results are one-sided enough to show the success of this approach for other stakeholders as well as the library workers.

A major objective of the process was to nurture a sense of inclusion as a counter to past efforts that had left people feeling alienated and disinterested in the process. By using a representative system, the team was able to simultaneously reduce the overall workload on the staff as a whole while giving each individual staffer a direct voice in the process through an interview and through a representative. This avoided the burnout issue that often plagues efforts like this. The main drawback to this approach is that it took a great deal of time, in terms of individually interacting with each respondent for an hour and to process the results. Specifically, it took about 7 months to produce a product. This was primarily due to said process starting in March 2020, right before all staff were sent home on lockdown and the library shifted all operations

online. In the absence of major work disruptions, this process could be completed far more quickly; one estimate is 1–2 months if survey questions are predetermined. The main advantage of this process from the managerial perspective was that it delegated the work to library staff while still allowing for the director to have input and editorial control over the process near the end. As a bonus, delegating this function to the library staff also demonstrated trust in their dedication to the library as well as trust in their judgment, a fact that was not lost on the staff and contributed to an overall boost in morale.

Conclusions and Future Research

The applicability of this exact process to other institutions will be limited by several factors. The size of the library staff is a direct cap on the progress that can be made with this comprehensive approach: interviewing a staff of around 22 in a single building would be vastly different from interviewing a staff of 100 in multiple satellite locations, although the changing norms in this pandemic would make that process simpler on a logistical level via teleconferencing. Similarly, different institutional cultures, lack of a champion amongst the staff to delegate the process to, and (most importantly) different objectives for the mission and vision itself might militate for a different process. For example, a vision tied to the financial needs of the library within an institution might be better if imposed from the top from people who knew the financial data, in which case the process of convincing stakeholders would more likely involve meetings and explanations rather than participation.

Nevertheless, there are some core principles that this process has shown to be effective. If an objective of the mission and vision is to ensure that staff feel themselves connected to or beholden to the mission, then onboarding is vital, and this process has been shown to be highly effective in both accurately incorporating staff feedback and in inculcating a feeling of inclusion in the process. This was especially welcome in this case as the history of past efforts in the process had included pervasive alienation and disconnection, leading to widespread skepticism about mission and vision planning.

Similarly, this process shows the value of delegation for leaders, both for reducing the workload and for building the morale of the staff. Loyalty must always first be demonstrated by leadership before being expected of the staff, and delegation of real responsibility and the power to positively influence one's workplace is a powerful show of loyalty from the leaders in an organization.

Another crucial takeaway is that any strategic planning effort should be customized with specific goals in mind, rather than adopted wholesale. This process started with the express

purpose of boosting morale and having widespread inclusion and buy-in, due to the twin blows of the closure of the library and the onset of Covid-19. As such, it was tailored to achieve the results outlined above, and succeeded in that aim. An out-of-the-box method with retreats and staff meetings would have failed, as those were the methods tried previously that resulted in staff alienation.

Future research in this field could hyper-focus on specific aspects of the strategic planning process as it relates to libraries. Due to the corporate, profit-driven nature of the concept, customized alternatives for libraries (as subsidiary organizations in larger non-profit entities) are lacking. That lack of library-specific information on this topic means opportunities for future researchers to break new ground.

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