

https://dspace.org/

Library and information services (LIS) strategic planning in a developing country: a case study

Muswazi, Paiki

2002
Harworth Press
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/3914
© 2002, Haworth Press, Binghamton, New York, Science & Technology Libraries, Library and information services (LIS) strategic planning in a developing country: a case study, Vol. 23, No. 2/3, pp 123 - 133

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Special Bibliographic Notes related to special journal issues (separates) and indexing/abstracting:

- indexing/abstracting services in this list will also cover material in any "separate" that is co-published simultaneously with Haworth's special thematic journal issue or DocuSerial. Indexing/abstracting usually covers material at the article/chapter level.
- monographic co-editions are intended for either non-subscribers or libraries which intend to purchase a second copy for their circulating collections.
- monographic co-editions are reported to all jobbers/wholesalers/approval plans. The source journal is listed as the "series" to assist the prevention of duplicate purchasing in the same manner utilized for books-in-series.
- to facilitate user/access services all indexing/abstracting services are encouraged to utilize the co-indexing entry note indicated at the bottom of the first page of each article/chapter/contribution.
- this is intended to assist a library user of any reference tool (whether print, electronic, online, or CD-ROM) to locate the monographic version if the library has purchased this version but not a subscription to the source journal.
- individual articles/chapters in any Haworth publication are also available through the Haworth Document Delivery Service (HDDS).



Library and Information Services (LIS) Strategic Planning in a Developing Country: A Case Study

Paiki Muswazi

SUMMARY. The article discusses a strategic planning initiative at the University of Swaziland Libraries. It describes the steps followed and the consultation and communication techniques used and notes the limited progress made in implementing the plan and the underlying reasons. It also critiques the reactive nature of the planning process; lack of representation of the faculty of Health Sciences and students; staff turnover; multifaceted objectives; concurrent development of management systems and the implementation process; and inadequate funding. It concludes that a feasible LIS strategic plan in a developing country should include all stakeholder interests, while being mindful of the physical and fiscal resource and systems realities. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

Paiki Muswazi, MLIS, BA (Hons), Diploma in Training Management and Diploma in Personnel Management, is Head of Special Collections, University of Swaziland Libraries, Kwaluseni, Swaziland (E-mail: paiki@uniswacc.uniswa.sz or pmuswazi@yahoo.com).

[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: "Library and Information Services (LIS) Strategic Planning in a Developing Country: A Case Study." Muswazi, Paiki. Co-published simultaneously in *Science & Technology Libraries* (The Haworth Information Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 23, No. 2/3, 2002, pp. 123-133; and: *Leadership and Management Principles in Libraries in Developing Countries* (ed: Wei Wei, Sue O'Neill Johnson, and Sylvia E. A. Piggott) The Haworth Information Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 2002, pp. 123-133. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com].

http://www.haworthpress.com/web/STL
© 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.
Digital Object Identifier: 10.1300/J122v23n02_15

KEYWORDS. University of Swaziland Libraries, strategic planning, library and information services, mission statement, information technology, management development

BACKGROUND

LIS providers have long accepted the utility of concepts such as strategic planning that have roots in business management. A search for "strategic plan" from the *Information Science Plus*, March 2002 CD-ROM yielded 111 citations, whereas a complementary search from the 1998 print issues of *Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA)* gave six citations. Most citations related to experiences in libraries in the developed world, notably North America. Only two citations, covering Ghana (Badu, 1997) and South Africa (Willemse, 1989), related to Africa. The Ghana case study focuses on external influences to strategic planning. The South African example discusses the formulation and application of concrete goals and objective performance measures to the document-delivery service at the University of South Africa. Overall, information and knowledge on African LIS strategic planning experiences seem not readily available and, by implication, lessons from there are apparently not widely shared.

OBJECTIVES

This article seeks to extend the discourse on African LIS strategic planning, using the University of Swaziland Libraries (UNISWA) Strategic Plan, 1999/2000-2004/2005 as a case study. The objectives are to:

- Describe the conditions under which the strategic planning process was conceived;
- Describe the application of strategic planning principles at UNISWA;
- Critique the process to take account of the factors internal to UNISWA; and
- Draw lessons from the UNISWA experience.

DATA COLLECTION

This article draws on correspondence, minutes, and reports of the UNISWA Libraries Strategic Planning Sub-Committee (LSPSC) and UNISWA Libraries Strategic Planning Implementation Sub-Committee (LSPISC); and on the author's experiences as:

- Secretary of the LSPSC, with responsibility for performing administrative tasks, participating in LSPSC meetings, recording LSPSC proceedings, and collating all submissions to the LSPSC; and
- Representing Special Collections interests at the LSPSC and the LSPISC meetings.

CONTEXT

The University of Swaziland is located in the Kingdom of Swaziland, Southern Africa, and comprises three campuses: Kwaluseni, main campus; Luyengo, agricultural campus; and Mbabane, health sciences campus. Largely funded by the central government, it offers degrees in Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Health Sciences, Humanities, Science and Social Sciences. In academic year 2002/2003, the total enrollment was 4,457.

Recently, HIV/AIDS and recurrent drought have strained the national fiscus, with adverse effects on the funding of university programs, including library and information services. Yet, new programs are being introduced, student enrollment continues to increase, and public expectations are high. It is against this background that the University embarked on strategic planning. The process commenced with the formation of a University Strategic Planning Committee (USPC) in 1998. The committee requested faculties and service departments to form strategic-planning subcommittees to deliberate and make submissions. The library strategic-planning process was a response to this university-wide initiative. On 6th February 1998, the USPC held a seminar for all the strategic-planning subcommittees at which core concepts and principles were discussed and agreed upon.

THE UNISWA LIBRARIES STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This article adapts the strategic-planning elements and model propounded by Birdsall and Hensley (1994) and the approach used by Jacobson and Sparks (2001) to analyze the UNISWA Libraries process. The elements include:

1. Establishment of the planning team;
2. Definition of the mission statement and objectives;
3. Environmental scanning;

4. Enabling strategies;
5. Benchmarking;
6. Budgeting;
7. Review and evaluation mechanisms;
8. Acceptance of the plan; and
9. Implementation.

Establishment of the Planning Team

A key element in strategic planning is to staff the team with those people who best represent areas of major impact. At UNISWA, a Library Strategic Planning Sub-Committee (LSPSC) of five was formed representing library core functions: library top management, technical services, special collections, readers' services, and the Agriculture library. The acting university librarian chaired the committee and the author provided secretarial services.

Definition of the Mission Statement and Objectives

A strategic plan requires a clearly defined mission statement. At a marketing seminar held in May 1996, the library defined its mission: "To support instructional, teaching, learning and research functions of the University Community through the efficient provision of information resources and services."

The LSPSC decided that this statement did not sufficiently address the "quality" and "stakeholder" components, and decided to review it. The LSPSC consulted library professional and paraprofessional staff, library top management, and the Library Senate Committee. In addition, it sought inspiration from the strategic plans of the University of Botswana Library, the Thomas Mofolo Library (National University of Lesotho), and the Copperbelt University Library (Zambia). It also examined the mission statements of various libraries that are accessible on the Internet.

These efforts resulted in a revised mission statement: "To efficiently provide services and access to quality academic information resources, irrespective of format and location, to university staff, students and associates in support of instructional, learning, research and administrative functions of the university."

Subsequently, the LSPSC requested that library staff identify strategic issues and define the objectives of the library within the framework of the revised mission statement. All submissions were consolidated to create a

list of ten strategic issues and 12 objectives. The issues included information technology, physical infrastructure, policies and procedures, collaboration, funding, management, human resources development, preservation, marketing, and information service delivery.

Environmental Scanning

An environmental scan identifies areas that advance the mission statement. Ideally, the information should be solicited from library staff, university management, faculty, and students. At UNISWA, the LSPSC consulted with only professional and para-professional library staff, resulting in the identification of six strengths, ten weaknesses, three opportunities, and two threats.

Notwithstanding the preponderance of weaknesses, the scanning exercise helped the library recognize the strengths of its qualified professionals and in its collaborative resource-sharing arrangements, and the opportunities presented by its Internet connectivity.

Enabling Strategies

Any consideration of strategic options should result in development of the most appropriate strategies for meeting the goals and objectives and dealing with the issues raised in the environmental scan. The LSPSC considered each strategic issue in the light of the relevant strategic objectives, and developed 25 enabling strategies.

Benchmarking

The design of a strategic plan requires a measurement system to gauge progress in attaining objectives. UNISWA adopted a simplified approach for identifying and linking milestones to strategic issues, objectives, and enabling strategies. This activity resulted in 65 benchmarks, with a time line spanning the period 2000 to 2005.

Financial Plan

Implementation of a strategic plan requires funding. Thus, all items required to action the benchmarks were identified and priced, resulting in a total budget of E48 169 000,00[1] spread over the 2000/2001 to 2004/2005 period.

Review and Evaluation Mechanisms

One result of the university-wide strategic-planning process was that the University Planning Center (UPC) was established to monitor and advise on implementation of the plan. The UPC in turn requested that the Faculties and Service departments appoint plan-implementation teams. To this end, the LSPSC was restructured to form a Libraries Strategic Planning Implementation Sub-Committee (LSPISC), chaired by the university librarian, and comprised of the deputy librarian and head of Readers' Services; the heads of Acquisitions, the Agriculture Library, Cataloguing, the Health Sciences Library, Serials (who also served as secretary to the committee), and Special Collections. The LSPISC is required to submit quarterly progress reports to the UPC for the information of university management.

Acceptance of the Plan

To secure support in the allocation of scarce resources, all stakeholders should accept the strategic plan. As the plan for the libraries evolved, it received input and endorsement from library staff, the Library Senate Committee, and the University Strategic Planning Committee. To this extent, it is an accepted document; indeed, the University Senate and Council officially adopted the strategic plan for implementation.

In all, it took over 16 meetings, from February 1998 to September 2000, to come up with the UNISWA Libraries Strategic Plan, 1999/2000-2004/2005 (University of Swaziland Libraries, 2000) before it was adopted for implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION

A review of progress on the 12 strategic objectives, the related 25 enabling strategies, and the 65 benchmarks shows that by the beginning of 2003, the following actions had been taken.

Information Technology

- During 2002, space was identified and cabled at the Kwaluseni Campus library to widen Internet access; however, the shortage of computer equipment has delayed the use of the facility.

- The library secured subscription funding from the Open Society Institute (OSI), enabling it to provide user access to the *EBSCO Host* full-text databases during the year 2002. Anticipating expiration of OSI's sponsorship in 2003, the UNISWA libraries hosted a workshop in October 2002 to kick-start the formation of a national consortium to facilitate the pooling of resources and enable the continuation of *EBSCO Host* subscriptions in 2003 and beyond. A steering committee chaired by the university librarian was formed to lead the establishment of the consortium.
- Following an application by the library in 2001, the Rockefeller Foundation funded subscription to the 1993-1996 CD ROM base set of *The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library* (TEEAL) database, thereby giving users access to quality bibliographic and full-text information on agriculture, beginning in 2003.
- Efforts at giving users access to freely available quality Internet resources took off with the design and provision of the *Geography, Environment and Planning Information Gateway (GEPIG)* link collection by the author (Muswazi, 2002) and the free full text journals link collection by the Serials Librarian (Anbu, 2002). The link collections were accessible from the UNISWA libraries website at <http://library.uniswa.sz>, beginning in November 2002.
- Five personal computers, five video cameras, seven videocassette recorders, and one overhead projector were purchased in 2002 to enrich the instructional, teaching, learning, research, and administrative functions of the university. However, lack of suitably qualified technical support staff hinders optimal utilization of the equipment.

Physical Infrastructure

Library facilities at the Luyengo agricultural campus were upgraded and extended in 2001.

Management

At the first meeting of the LSPISC, held on 21st May 2002, members were each asked to draft terms of reference for the formation of Library Links, Budget, Staffing, Preservation (the author was given this responsibility), and Information Service Delivery sub-committees to lead the implementation of strategies relating to these key issues.

By and large, only a limited number of the benchmarks had been realized at the beginning of 2003.

COMMENTARY

From the onset, the LSPSC realized the importance of communication in getting all staff on board. The LSPSC regularly issued memoranda inviting submissions and giving feedback. Drafts of collated input were exchanged between staff and LSPSC for comments. Some departments convened meetings to agree on inputs to the LSPSC, whereas others adopted a more laissez faire approach, with individual staff members making independent written submissions to the LSPSC. In addition, LSPSC members informally collected fringe ideas not expressed in the written input. Overall, library responses to the USPC were prompt, which helped boost morale. These communication techniques helped underpin this invaluable consultative process.

The pressure to produce a credible plan was considerable. The LSPSC recognized that paraprofessional staff working at the front end have deep insight into operational issues. Their views were deliberately solicited, and these served to validate as well as challenge ideas advanced by professional staff. This collaboration contributed substantially to the validity of the plan and to imparting a sense of legitimacy. On the other hand, the overall direction given by university top management meant that the process proceeded on a reactive basis, affecting the plan's originality. (For example, the library felt constrained to do contingency planning for some critical items, such as the acquisition of additional land for a new library at Mbabane, which it felt would be best handled at a university-wide level.)

The interests of the faculty of Health Sciences and of student users were not directly represented on the LSPSC; however, it should be noted that there were no senior personnel in the faculty of Health Sciences. While these same interests were represented indirectly at the higher levels of the Library Senate Committee, and University Senate and Council, the lack of input from Health Sciences and students to the LSPSC, where the spadework occurred, militated against the production of an all-inclusive plan.

The strategic-planning process was subject to intense intellectual debate. It took three years (February 1998 to October 2000) to agree on and adopt the plan. This is understandable in the context of the academic setting in which the process occurred. Unquestionably, the extensive sharing of ideas ensured some relative depth of coverage. At the same time, prolonged analysis threatened to cloud the ultimate ends: production, implementation, and review of the plan. It also left little room for thinking through implementation mechanisms. (For instance, the plan identifies

the criticality of management development to leading the required changes in service provision; however, concerted actions in this regard were rare.) Evidently, the strategic-planning process was a learning experience for most participants. The pressure to implement the plan–while at the same time developing strategy implementation and performance-review systems–apparently impeded the transition from planning to implementation. Thus, the implementation pace and reporting frequency expected by the UPC and by the LSPISC were not in synchrony.

Substantive progress in attaining strategic objectives is partly dependent on funding. A comparison of the strategic-plan budget estimates and actual allocations since the beginning of implementation are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that funding of the library plan is inadequate. Traditionally, library programs are funded centrally by the over-stretched university administration. Although nothing would prevent the library from independently sourcing funds, and it has indeed taken the initiative in some instances, there apparently is a perception that fundraising is a centralized university administration responsibility. The strategic planning experience did not sufficiently debunk this perception. As a consequence, neither the university administration nor the library can guarantee adequate funding for all the library strategies.

Furthermore, the planning environment was characterized by library staff turnover. During the three-year planning process, three senior members of staff resigned (two of them had been members of LSPSC) and new appointments made. New staff brought fresh perspectives to the planning process; the major drawback was that this required more time to bring them up to speed and possibly eroded the team's sense of ownership.

Ultimately, the implementation of the plan was/has been influenced by the concurrent development of management systems and the imple-

TABLE 1. Library Strategic-Plan Budget

Year	Estimate (E)	Actual allocation (E)	Shortfall (E)
2000/2001*	7 303 000,00	1 518 000,00	5 722 000,00
2001/2002	7 321 000,00	960 000,00	6 361 000,00
2002/2003	7 575 000,00	960 000,00	6 615 000,00

*Due to delays in producing the plan, the initial implementation commencement target date of 1999/2000 was postponed to 2000/2001.

mentation process, which seems to overwhelm staff as they go through the learning experience; and inadequate funding.

LESSONS

Commendable Approaches

- A combination of written and informal communication channels proved important in producing an informed and commonly shared plan.
- At both LSPSC and staff levels, everybody was given a chance to be heard. Collecting the views of paraprofessional operational staff and policy-oriented professionals resulted in a plan that is closer to reality, at least from the viewpoint of the planners, although not necessarily user groups.

What Could Have Been Done Better?

In hindsight, the planning exercise did not pay sufficient attention to the significance of user involvement, manageable objectives, management development, and management systems. A robust strategic plan should have inbuilt mechanisms to prevent any loss of momentum at implementation. Issues to consider include:

- The planning committee over relied on formal administrative structures, rather than at least partly recruiting its membership from grass roots student and faculty user groups. This should have mobilized sufficient user group interest in the plan. In turn, user groups advocacy can help keep the pressure on and push for implementation of strategies that address their own library and information needs.
- The objectives, strategies and benchmarks were unwieldy. A streamlined list is more practical than a long, detailed list. The strategic planning process should address the financial and personnel realities of implementing LIS in a developing country.
- Embarking on LIS strategic planning in a developing country should be accompanied by implementation of a management-development program, so as to further sharpen the team's planning, implementation, and review competencies.
- Corresponding/enabling management systems must be readily available to facilitate implementation processes. A conscious effort should be made to enhance the administrative instruments as an integral part of the planning process.

CONCLUSION

The academic environment in which the UNISWA Libraries' strategic plan was conceived resulted in a document that is relatively deep in content; however, insufficient representation of user interests and limited attention to implementation logistics impacted on the practicality of the plan. To a large extent, inadequate funding of the cumbersome multifaceted objectives constitutes a major challenge to staff abilities to implement the plan. In the final analysis, a feasible LIS strategic plan in a developing country should include all stakeholder interests, while being mindful of the physical and fiscal resource and systems realities.

REFERENCES

Anbu, K.J.P. *Free Online Journals*, 2002. Available: <http://library.uniswa.sz/i.htm>. [accessed: 30 Jan. 2003].

Badu, E.E. "Strategic Planning in an Uncertain Environment: the Case of Ghana's University Libraries." *Information Development*, 13, no. 4 (Dec. 1997): 173-178.

Birdsall, Douglas G. and Hensley, Oliver D. "A New Strategic Planning Model for Academic Libraries." *College & Research Libraries*, 55, no. 2 (Mar. 1994): 149-159.

Jacobson, Alvin L. and Sparks, JoAnne L. "Creating Value: Building the Strategy-Focused Library." *Information Outlook*, 5, no. 9 (Sept. 2001): 14-20.

Muswazi, Paiki. *Geography, Environment and Planning Information Gateway (GEPIG)*, 2002. Available: <http://library.uniswa.sz/gepighome.htm>. [accessed: 30 Jan. 2003].

University of Swaziland Libraries. *Strategic Plan1999/2000-2004/2005. In:* University of Swaziland. *Strategic Plan: UNISWA's Commitment to Self-Renewal, 1999/2000-2004/2005*. Kwaluseni: The University, 2000.

Willemse, John. "Library Effectiveness–the Need for Measurement." *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, 57, no. 3 (Sept. 1989): 261-266.

NOTE

1. E = Emalangeni, the Swaziland currency. US$1,00 = E9,00.