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Being Strategic About Digitization Projects

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Developing Knowledge for Economic Development in Africa

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*Opinions expressed are those of the author, and does not necessarily represent the position of the United Nations

Objectives of this Presentation

- To revisit the crucial role libraries play in economic development
- To discuss the concept of “being strategic” as a manager
- To point to logical frameworks and business plans as generic strategy tools
- To discuss strategic issues related to digitization as a complex endeavour
- To advocate integrated digitization and preservation management

How Libraries Contribute to Economic Development

Effective libraries form the foundations of:

- Human and institutional capacity;
- Individual and group empowerment; and
- Sustainable management of human, financial and natural resources

– The three main determinants of development

Direct Economic Contributions of Library Services

- Libraries contribute to institutional effectiveness

through high rate of return on investment (Azubuike, 2003)

and to economic growth, by contributing to total factor productivity (Azubuike, 2007)

- African economies normally do not record sustained growth in GDP without comparatively substantial increase in total factor productivity (Fosu, 2011).

These demonstrate that developing effective libraries (tangible proxy for knowledge and TFP) advances economic development.

Digitization, Digital Libraries

“A digital library is an online collection of digital objects, of assured quality, that are created or collected and managed according to internationally accepted principles for collection development and made accessible in a coherent and sustainable manner, supported by services necessary to allow users to retrieve and exploit the resources”. (IFLA)

For simplicity, digitization and digital libraries/digital archives are used interchangeably in this presentation.

Strategic Importance of Digital Libraries

Digitization is widely regarded as a means of bridging the digital divide, which is seen as a key factor in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals
(IFLA Manifesto)

National e-strategies, recommended by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS 2003) could establish a firm basis for planning digital libraries
(WSIS: 2003, 2005)

Why Projects?

“Projects are engines of change... Flexible organizing framework for executing strategic initiatives, vehicle of collaboration ...” (Schmidt, 2009)

Project vs. Operations

Project	Operations
Unique – Innovation	Similar, repeated
Finite, with start and end date	Continuing, indefinite
Change seeking	Stability seeking
Temporary resources involved	Regular resources involved
Flexible in implementation	Routine, within existing rules
Goal-oriented	Role-oriented

Why Strategic Approach?

The importance is illustrated by Remer's Rule of 10: that it costs approximately 10 times to fix a problem originating from the immediate previous stage of a project, and 100 times if fixed at the third stage.

For example: if a problem that would cost $1000 to fix is ignored or undiscovered at the planning stage, it will cost about $10,000 to fix the problems that will emanate from it at the design stage, and $100,000 at the construction stage

(Donald S. Remer cited in Schmidt, 2009)

Managerial Disposition Quadrant

High on Imagination	**Hubristic**	**Strategic**
Low on Imagination	Lethargic	Operant
	Low on Action	High on Action

Being strategic is therefore being:

- ❑Analytical in viewing current situation and the past that shaped it, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths (SWOT)
- ❑Sharp in acting on weakness and threats
- ❑Quick to recognize and capitalize on opportunities and strengths
- ❑Strong on the use of conceptual tools and applying subject matter knowledge
- ❑Sagacious, skilful and mindful to harness and navigate emergent trends, waves, soft patches, and moods
- ❑Focused on the big picture and holistic in approach
- ❑Tenacious in seeking and taking the right path to defined objectives

Basic Planning Models

The Logical Framework (or Logframe)
- a systems thinking methodology.
In its basic form, it consists of a 4x4 data matrix

Business Planning Model
- adopts business model of investment and returns on investment, and other appropriate value creation metrics.
Important for resource mobilization

Business Planning

“Business planning ... is the process by which the business aims, products and services of a project are identified, together with how the (project) will contribute to the overall business and mission of the (sponsor) organization.”

Designed to answer such business questions as:
What is the value proposition?
Does the proposed project have a unique selling point?
Who are the target customers and what is the (scale of) the target market?
What are the key enabling technologies?
What are the risks?
Who pays?’
(adapted from Collier, 2005)

Strategic Issues for Attention

- Sustainability - continuity of operations
- Preservation
- Collaborative digital projects
- Connections and interfaces: connecting digital collections, services, and people
- Partnerships
- Copyright: consultation with rights owners
- Seizing opportunity to reach the traditionally under-served
- Interoperability and adoption of standards
- Planning at the national and sub-national levels

Integrated Digitization and Preservation Management (IDPM)

Involves multiple functions, including:

- Digitization
- Physical conservation and protection
- Risk, disaster preparedness and business continuity
- Quality management
- Metadata creation
- Information architecture
- User access systems; and
- Capacity development and learning

To prevent sub-optimal operations that invite failure

Summary

Being strategic is a way of being

– in thought and in action –

that enables us to progress towards our objectives in spite of the ever present complexity, uncertainty and scarcity in our operating environment.

Thank you!

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