

AN APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING IN A ONE-PERSON LIBRARY

Irene Mills

When a new library is established the librarian has to make many decisions about procedures to follow and systems to use. These are then revised and reassessed constantly to identify areas that are not functioning as well as would be hoped and to improve them. After three years at Vianney College establishing the library, I found it difficult to move from this fluid, reactive method of working and to look beyond the general monthly workflow to a larger view of the Library and its place in the institution.

Initially the position (half-time) allowed sufficient time for planning, but as the College has become established the time spent providing service to users has increased. There are more students; subjects are being taught at a more advanced level; and as community awareness of the resource has grown, community use has increased. While it is very satisfying to see 'my' library being used, it has meant that recently management tasks have been neglected for the day to day running of the Library.

Earlier this year it became apparent that it was time to look at how far the Library had come, and to consider what needed to be done in order to achieve the Library's (at this stage unrecorded) goals. Strategic planning was something I had always related only to large institutions, but the more I read about it, the more I was able to see it has a role in any library. In a one-person library it seems to be even more necessary than in a larger library where departments are interdependent and so need to be working towards the same end to be operating successfully. Working alone, it is necessary to set goals that look beyond the completion of individual tasks and which can provide a structure to ensure each task relates to a broader purpose and is not just an end in itself.

The more I thought about it the more I realised that written goals and objectives and a realistic attempt to timetable these would be an invaluable step for me towards maintaining a strong interest in and professional attitude towards my work. Sustaining a high level of motivation when one works alone is more than just an attitude. It is the responsibility of the person involved to plan in a way that suits their needs for job satisfaction and development. By providing an overview of the purpose and expected outcomes of tasks I hoped to be able to continue to work enthusiastically within a framework that would give both personal satisfaction and a quality result. What was needed to begin this process?

I started by distributing a questionnaire. While I had my own perceptions of areas that needed attention, input from library 'stakeholders' would serve to reinforce these perceptions or give a fresh view of what was needed. The response from those surveyed was good. 80% of questionnaires were returned. Some issues that were important to my users were a surprise to me, others confirmed my own thoughts. I asked for opinions about the collection, the service and the physical library. A copy of the questionnaire is below. The area for Comments was well used to amplify opinions expressed in response to my questions.

LIBRARY APPRAISAL SHEET

1. I am a member of staff ___
I am a student ___

[The following statements were responded to with strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree]

2. The Library's Collection

- The Library has material I need for my teaching/studies/research
- The Library has materials I want for other reading (eg. spiritual, recreational)
- I can find material easily
- I am able to find material I have identified in the catalogue easily

3. Service

- a. The Librarian is helpful
- b. The Librarian is available when I want to talk to her
- c. It is easy to communicate with the Librarian
- d. I am able to use the Library successfully on my own
- e. The catalogue is useful
- f. It is difficult to find material in the Library
- g. The Librarian provides the information I request

4. Physical Aspects

- a. The Library is a comfortable place to be
- b. Physical access to library materials is easy
- c. There are enough seats in the Library
- d. I have enough privacy to work comfortably in the Library
- e. Noise levels in the Library are acceptable

5. Comments/Suggestions/Possible Changes

(Please feel free to make any suggestions, and if you expressed dissatisfaction with some of the items above it would be useful if you could expand on what you think is the problem)

With the feedback provided from the questionnaire, lots of reading about strategic planning, and some idea of what others have included in their strategic plans I set about drawing up a set of goals for the Library to be tabled at the next Library Management Committee meeting. The goals reflect both current aims and areas needing some attention.

VIANNEY COLLEGE LIBRARY

MISSION:

The mission of Vianney College Library is to support the teaching mission of the College and to provide access to material appropriate to the current and future needs of the faculty, students and the immediate community served by the Library.

GOALS:

Collection Services:

1. To select and acquire resources that best support library users
2. To maintain and organise resources in a way that enables ready access to them and assists in their preservation
3. To provide access to materials not physically held in the Library and to give other libraries access to our resources

Information Services:

1. To communicate regularly and effectively with the Library's clientele and Management Committee
2. To educate new students and staff into efficient use of the Library
3. To provide quality reference service to users
4. To promote understanding of the Library's research capabilities and encourage full use of its resources and services

Management Services:

1. To provide space, equipment and technology which will ensure operational efficiency and respond to the changing needs of users and staff
2. To provide a program of development and support for library staff necessary to maintain and develop their ability to meet the needs of library users
3. To plan and administer the Library's budget to gain optimum use of the financial resources allocated
4. To plan and develop an efficient and effective Library system

The Management Committee has approved these goals for the Library and the formation of a working party to plan objectives and strategies to meet these goals. The working party (at the suggestion of Jocelyn "S.P." Morris) will comprise of myself, a member of the academic staff of the College and an external librarian. I am expecting that these goals will not all be addressed at once, and that this next stage - the formulation of strategies - will be ongoing for some time.

Irene Mills is librarian at Vianney College, Wagga Wagga.

#####

AUSTRALASIAN RELIGION INDEX

Published jointly with Centre for Information Studies, *ARI* indexes approximately 70 Australasian religious studies serials.

Two issues each year, second issue is a cumulation.

Subscriptions are \$65.00, \$50.00 for ANZTLA members.

Inquiries to: Centre for Information Studies,

Locked Bag 660

Charles Sturt University

Wagga Wagga NSW 2678

A unique service for anyone interested in religion and theology from a variety of perspectives

#####

10th ANZTLA Conference

MAXIMISING OUR RESOURCES

SEPTEMBER 21-24 1995

BURGMANN COLLEGE ANU CANBERRA

FEATURING:

- 7.30PM Thursday 21st - The theology of a theological library / Revd Dr Graeme Garrett
- 9.00AM Friday 22nd - New access services from the National Library / Averill Edwards
- 7.30PM Friday 22nd - Dealing with dying theological libraies / Margaret Macpherson
- 2.00PM Sunday 24th - Using modern information technology to gain access to resources or theological research / Al Hurd, ATLA

also featuring *CANBERRA DURING FLORIADE!!*