
The environmental scan

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Reality testing for the ACRL strategic plan.

Strategic planning has become the hallmark of the aggressive, future-oriented organization, be it an association, a business, or a not-for-profit organization such as the university or the library. The internal aspects of strategic planning from identifying mission to determining goals, objectives, and timelines receive considerable attention. Workshops are designed to acquaint planners and staff with the nuts and bolts of the process. Articles are written outlining the process. Case studies are available to lead us step by step from initiation of the process to success. All of these internal steps are based on the premise that the organization and its planning process are designed to position the organization within the larger society.

Less attention has been paid to the process of identifying trends in society that affect the positioning of the organization. The environmental scan, a product of the collection of relevant data on social, economic, technological, and other developments over an extended period of time, connects the organization with the larger world and is used to identify trends and forecast their possible impact on the organization. Information is obtained from general sources such as newspapers and weekly news magazines, specialized publications relevant to the organization conducting the scan, reviews of research proposals, recently funded research, and publications of futures organizations. A methodology for identifying sources, analyzing their contents, and preparing reports has been developed

but has only occasionally been used by those focusing on internal strategic plans. Many organizations bring together a group of individuals who are respected in their field who, through the Delphi technique, identify those elements in the larger society that they expect will impact on the organization. Although this activity may be helpful in identifying trends, it is limited by the expertise of those present and can be more easily skewed than can a broader study of demographics, a carefully determined representative sample of the media, and other sources of information that can be used to determine trends and identify important innovations.

The following statements represent an analysis and summary of environmental scans conducted by other organizations, think papers produced by groups recognized by their peers as leaders in the information world, and a variety of other sources (Appendix).

Economics

- a relatively stable dollar in the international market;
- increasing cost of information resources above the low-to-moderate rate of inflation;
- cost of telecommunications will increase and then decrease gradually;
- an increasing percentage of budgets will be spent on computing power;
- information resources will be taxed in nu-

merous ways and at all levels, e.g., Supreme Court ruling that information resources delivered by phone lines may be subject to state taxes;

- efforts by government to tax not-for-profit associations;

- there will be a change in percentages of the components of funding for information resources. Publicly funded organizations will have to obtain a greater share of their budget from the private sector (donations, fees for services, etc.) or from contracts with other public organizations. Privately funded organizations, similarly, will broaden the range of their sources of revenue.

- limited resources will continue to hamper growth;

- leveling off in number of educational institutions and amount of government support.

Politics

- continued pressure to regulate access to information and debate over public access to information;

- more special-interest lobbies; special groups such as business interests will demand specialized services and will lobby in support of their specific interests;

- questions of ownership of information will increase;

- increase in management of information systems on a national and international level;

- more transborder data regulation; information continues to be seen as power and its ownership as an economic good;

- increased government demand for research that results in information with commercial and military applications.

Society and people

- increase in international research cooperation;

- increase in interdisciplinary research;

- increase in large research projects involving several universities;

- more scholarly work will be reported;

- curriculum reform will continue to be a priority;

- more emphasis on information services;

- increased birthrate;

- continuing growth in percentage of total birthrate of minorities and students (by 2000, one-third of our nation will be non-white);

- impact of minority populations will vary depending on state and region;

- slightly increased graduate and undergraduate enrollment;

- half of the current faculty in higher education will retire between 1988 and 1992;

- new faculty will be more demanding in technological expectations for teaching and research;

- continuing moderate interest in literacy with an emphasis on new technological tools;

- libraries will continue to provide social space for inquiry and analysis;

- aging population with greater demands to meet opportunities of increased leisure;

- influx of new immigrants in the workforce;

- continuing increase of women in the workforce;

- reshaping of the workforce as a result of technology;

- elimination of many middle management and clerical jobs;

- greater reliance on part-time and temporary jobs;

- greater flexibility in work assignments and work hours;

- redefining of who we are as information professionals in our individual work roles, our professional affiliation and our public posture.

Technology

- publishing will continue to become more high tech;

- intellectual property rights will become increasingly confused by opportunities afforded by computing and telecommunications technology;

- computing will become increasingly diversified and no longer as dependent on the mainframe, which will become but one of several levels of computing access and use;

- more availability and flexibility of computing;

- more software with more user friendly access features;

- greater emphasis on graphics software and on electronic storage and access of graphic representations;

- local area networks will grow and serve as one end of a network hierarchy with the other end being international networks;

- increased use of online communication by and with faculty, students, and information specialists;

- growth of expert systems for access to information resources;

- technology will continue to drive change and to advance faster than human patterns of information exchange can accommodate;

- rising expectations by researchers of the capabilities of computing;

- demand for more access to more information faster;

- technology will result in more efficient management of organizations and resources;

- research on how to build the usable and

useful electronic library will accelerate;

- research will focus on how individuals use information and how this is related to technological opportunities for information storage, retrieval, and transmission.

Education for the information professions

- dramatic changes in education for the information professions will continue; will include greater emphasis on interdisciplinarity;

- reductions in traditional programs will continue while at the same time programs that prepare information professionals more broadly defined will grow;

- business and industry, computing, libraries, etc. will hire from the same pool of information professionals.

Libraries

- increased emphasis on collection analysis;
- cooperative collection development will accelerate;

- refinement of databases for easier access;
- faculty demand for ownership in conflict with library move to access;

- research on output measures and qualitative measures of the value of information;

- emphasis on research and implementation of findings to preservation of materials;

- development of useful and usable management information criteria;

- space will become a critical issue and will lead to various means of storing materials in alternative formats and at alternative sites;

- increased competition for resources within the institution.

Environmental scanning is a continuous process that requires regular review and updating. Some of the elements identified are of short-term significance and may drop from the list while others are long-term concerns that require monitoring. General scans need to be tailored to fit the niche which

an organization has identified in its strategic plan as its own. The viability of the strategic plan and therefore of the organization is directly related to the care with which the environmental scanning process is kept current.

Appendix

Major sources of information consulted:

Responses to letters sent to 27 universities reported to be involved in strategic planning.

Major documents consulted:

1. American Society for Information Science. "ASIS 2000 Think Group Papers." Unpublished, 1989.

2. Angiletta, Anthony M. *Access Survey of Libraries and Computers at Stanford: Questionnaire Phase Results*. Stanford, Calif.: The University, 1987. 26p.

3. Bureau of Economic and Business Research, College of Business Administration, University of Florida. *Florida Estimates of Population*. Gainesville, Fla.: The University, 1989.

4. Condren, Cline P. *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century: A Report on Higher Education in California*. Sacramento, Calif.: California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1988.

5. Jacob, M. E. L., ed. *Planning in OCLC Member Libraries*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC Online Computer Library Center, 1988.

6. Medical Library Association. "Shaping the Future: The Strategic Plan of the Medical Library Association, 1989 Revision," *MLA News*, April, 1987. Insert.

7. Senior Fellows. *Options for the Future: Senior Fellows Conference, UCLA, August 20-23, 1988*. Los Angeles, Calif.: UCLA Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1988.

8. United States Department of Education, Office of Library Programs. *Rethinking the Library in the Information Age*. Vol. II. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1987.

9. University of California, Berkeley, Library. *Library Services in a Changing Campus Environment*. Berkeley, Calif.: The Library, 1988. ■■

University library issues

"Serving Secondary Clientele: Beyond the Ivory Tower" was the theme of a spirited discussion sponsored by the University Library Section Current Topics Discussion Group at ALA Annual Conference in Dallas. For many university libraries, the demand for reference, circulation, and other services from non-campus-affiliated users cannot be satisfied without shortchanging the needs

of the university's faculty, students, and staff, i.e., the primary clientele. But most libraries, especially those at publicly supported institutions, want to maintain some restricted community access for the public relations.

In opening the discussion, Jay Poole, assistant university librarian for public services at the University of California, Irvine, addressed this very

problem. At Irvine, 50% of the clientele represent off-campus users—elementary and secondary students, a wide range of professionals from the community, students from other colleges, etc. He proposed a variety of ways to deal with this dilemma including the possibility of providing a special reference desk within the university library, staffed by librarians from the local public library, to provide service to the secondary clientele.

Helen Josephine, information manager of FIRST, a fee-based information service at Arizona State University, described how the needs of the business community can be effectively served on a cost recovery basis. Among the services provided by FIRST are online searching, data analysis, translations, and document delivery. In addition to the increased revenue, the benefits for a university library of such a service are an increased corporate donor program resulting from greater community awareness of library services and resources.

John Abbott, head of the Natural Resources Library at North Carolina State University, spoke on remote access to online catalogs and databases by secondary clientele. As the author of the ARL SPEC kit on this topic, Abbott shared some of the experiences with this ever-growing service that he discovered in the process of preparing the kit. Most

libraries he surveyed felt it was too early to know the exact impact on collections and services that will result from the ability to consult these online catalogs from a distance. The needs of these "invisible" users can be difficult to assess. He advocated a close partnership between the campus computer center and the library in servicing these users since the various configurations of hardware and software one can use to tap into these databases can create a tremendous number of technical unpredictabilities simply in the logging-on process.

The ideas posed by the three speakers resulted in a lively exchange on the philosophies, attitudes, policies and practices toward serving secondary clientele in the university libraries of those attending the discussion.

The University Library Section Current Topics Discussion Group was formed in 1986 to respond to the need for a small group environment where university librarians can discuss "hot topics" of current concern. The theme of the midwinter meeting, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, January 6, is "Walking on Thin Ice: University Libraries and the Politics of Curricular Review." More details will be available in the December issue of *C&RL News*.—Nancy L. Baker, Associate Director of Libraries, University of Washington. ■ ■

RLG completes first phase of Chinese rare book project

RLG

The Research Libraries Group, Inc. (RLG) has successfully completed the first phase of a project to create an International Union Catalog of Chinese Rare Books in RLIN (the Research Libraries Information Network), thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. When completed, the project will provide an impressive new resource for East Asian scholars by offering online accessibility to Chinese rare book information all over the world. In the first step, completed in April, RLG successfully converted and loaded into the RLIN database records from the National Central Library in Taiwan of rare books in the Chinese classics division of the traditional SSU K'U Chinese subject classification. The conversion of the records—which contain Chinese characters as well as romanizations—marks the first time that non-Roman MARC (machine-readable cataloging) records produced overseas have been made available on a national bibliographic network such as RLIN.

In the project's second phase, five librarians from Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences are assisting Princeton's Gest Oriental Library and Columbia University's C.V. Starr East

Asian Library to enter RLIN records for their Chinese rare book holdings. During this pilot phase, librarians at both RLG collections will be testing the draft cataloging guidelines established by the international advisory committee. ■ ■

Orientation materials

The ACRL Task Force on Faculty Advisory Committee Orientation Materials is seeking information and ideas from ACRL members about the use of orientation materials for faculty serving on library advisory committees. The Task Force has been charged with developing generic materials that can be used to orient faculty members to the roles and responsibilities of library faculty advisory committees. If you or your library has experience with the development or use of such materials, contact before December 1, 1989: Task Force Chair, Florence K. Doksansky, AUL for Public Services and Collection Development, Brown University, Box I, Providence, RI 09212; (401) 863-4205.

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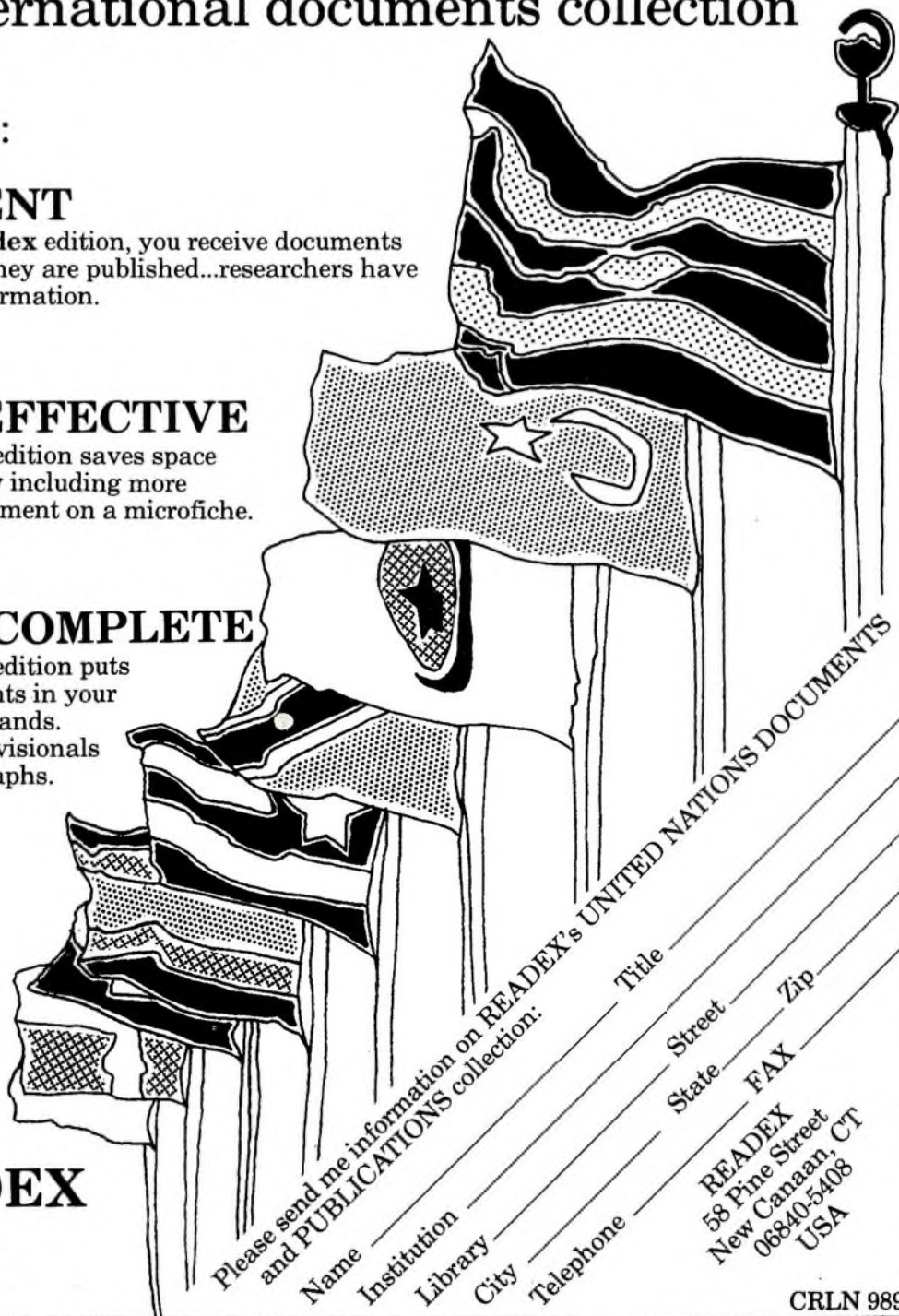
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