

A New Strategic Planning Model for Academic Libraries

Douglas G. Birdsall and Oliver D. Hensley

Models provide a framework for visualizing effective action. This paper presents the application of a strategic planning model developed by Oliver Hensley and Martin Schoppmeyer for the Society of Research Administrators. It should have applicability for those who are seeking to establish the future purposes of academic libraries. The example of library development and fund-raising activity is used to illustrate the various stages of strategic planning. The Hensley-Schoppmeyer model operates on the assumption that people with similar motivations can agree on mutual goals and form beneficial partnerships that will advance a shared interest.



Strategic planning for libraries is no longer a new concept. University libraries first recognized its potential through David Kaser's landmark work in 1972 at Cornell, and monographs on the subject now include Donald Riggs' *Strategic Planning for Library Managers*, M. E. L. Jacob's *Strategic Planning: A How-to-Do-It Manual for Librarians*, and *Strategic Planning in Higher Education: Implementing New Roles for the Academic Library*, edited by James F. Williams II.¹

The journal literature discusses such subjects as the appropriateness of strategic planning for libraries, the incorporation of organizational values into the strategic planning process, the entrepreneurial spirit, implementation and first-year appraisal, and utilization of strategic planning by new directors at ARL libraries.² There are also studies of strategic planning in public libraries, state chapters, a school of library and information science, urban libraries, rural libraries, national libraries, and international libraries.³

The Association of Research Libraries issued a SPEC Kit on strategic planning

as early as 1984, and the Association of College and Research Libraries has offered a continuing education course ("Principles of Strategic Planning in the Library Environment") and developed a strategic plan for charting the future direction of the Association.⁴

In addition to publications in the literature of librarianship, libraries have access to the rich corpus of management literature on strategic planning, and are likely to be guided and directed by the broader strategic planning done in their institutional settings. George Keller's *Academic Strategy: The Management Revolution in American Higher Education* reported on the strategic planning undertaken by colleges and universities, which have traditionally been slow to adopt modern management and planning techniques.⁵ Ten years after Keller's study, many academic libraries are important participants in the strategic planning implemented by institutions that must adjust to new economic realities.

Can the library planner in academe find help from yet another source? A monograph published in 1992 by the Society of

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Research Administrators, *Strategic Planning for University Research*, offers a model for strategic planning which may be the best fit yet for academic libraries.⁶ Strategic planning for university research is a process of establishing the future purposes of a unit by striving for a consensus for developing its research with chief partners and major constituencies. This important collaboration between partners and constituencies has been missing from most libraries' strategic planning. This may be why library strategic plans often gather dust instead of momentum. Library administrators who operate in an increasingly complex information environment should consider carefully a planning process which can help to guide and to coordinate a university's diverse research activity.

The purpose of this article is to present the planning model developed in *Strategic Planning for University Research* and to illustrate its usefulness for academic libraries. The example of library development and fund-raising activities will be used to show how the model can be adapted by library planners. Fund-raising is increasingly important to academic libraries, and the process is best understood when seen from a planning (development) context.⁷

Modeling the strategic planning process allows all who are involved to share a common frame of reference for their planning activities. It also permits planners to monitor progress toward the development of an agreed-upon series of outcomes. The Hensley-Schoppmeyer model used in *Strategic Planning for University Research* is given in figure 1.

POSITIONING THE ARCHITECTS

Positioning strategic planning architects for creation of a plan that will enhance funding at a university library is represented in figure 2.

Positioning the architects is seldom discussed by writers on strategic planning, but the thought given to choosing the best people to do planning is vital for the success of the entire process. The library administration conceives the requisite organizational planning structure and then selects the best planners

available. Authority is given to planners in a specific charge. Authority for the planning design can follow traditional hierarchical lines or functional divisions, depending on the chief administrator's propensity for managing planning activities.

The current funding crisis in higher education and alternatives to print medium and local ownership are changing the nature of collections and services in research libraries. These issues are of great concern to faculty, campus administrators, students, alumni, and to others who seek the best libraries possible for the institution. The strategic planning involved with generating new funding sources should include all stakeholders, because mutual understanding about problems and obstacles can lead to goals that address the information needs of a diverse university community. The composition of the planning team should include representatives from major impact areas.

Strategic planning operates on the assumption that people with similar motivations can agree on what their mutual purpose should be and can form beneficial partnerships that will advance a shared interest. If long-term success is to be realized, it is critical that awareness, advocacy, and acceptance of needed change involve the library's chief partners and major constituencies. Research libraries have shifted from being supply-to demand-driven operations, and this new alignment necessitates broadly based affiliations. Liaison structures involve the establishment of contacts with a wide spectrum of supporting partners. This includes the positioning of key library administrators on planning and decision-making teams of on- and off-campus organizations. Library administrators look for opportunities to convey their message and secure commitments.

SCANNING THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental scans are a standard feature of strategic planning. They identify impact areas, as well as current conditions and future factors that will likely affect the institution or unit. An outline of an environment scan for library development and fund-raising is given in figure 3.

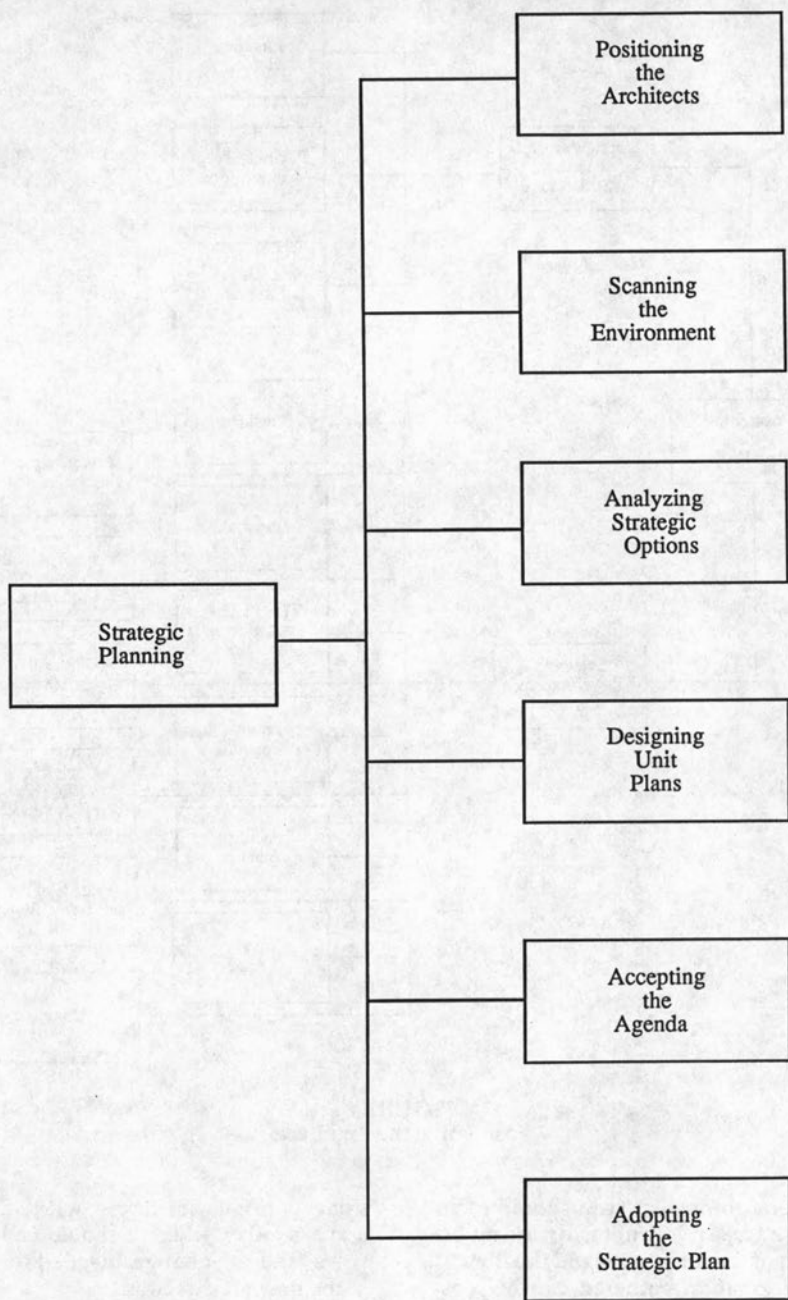


FIGURE 1
Hensley-Schoppmeyer Strategic Planning Model

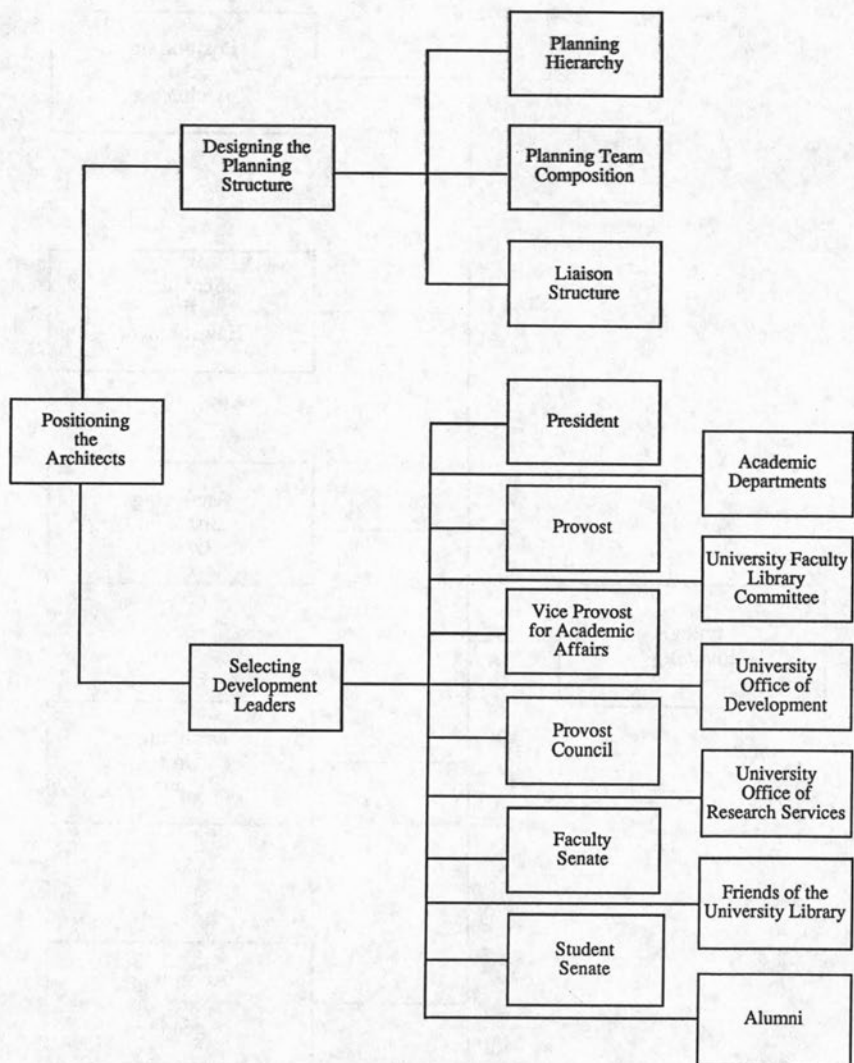


FIGURE 2
Positioning the Architects

The environmental scan should focus on those areas relevant to advancing the mission of the university and the library. The information gathered can help establish a planning framework by identifying the key players and bringing into focus their needs, issues, assumptions, and opportunities. Information is obtained from a number of sources, including librarians, campus administrators, faculty, and

students. They are asked where the library is today, where it should be in five years, and the changes needed to move in the desired direction.

ANALYZING STRATEGIC OPTIONS

In this phase of planning, the advantages and disadvantages of various decision paths are identified and compared. In fund development, scenarios can be

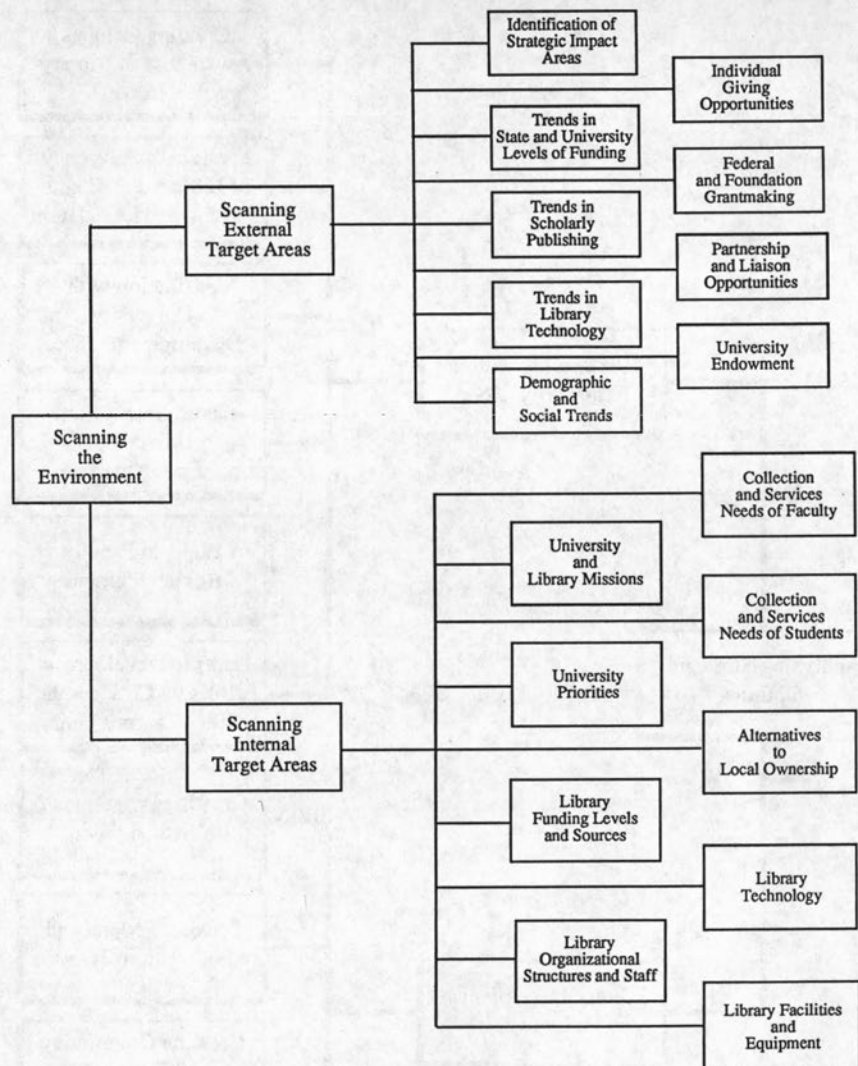


FIGURE 3
Scanning the Environment

cast in various ways. One method is to direct attention to the consequences of various budgeting levels, such as reduction goals, minimal goals, and maximum goals. Other approaches include a status quo or incremental policy, an "access over ownership" orientation, an alarmist option (e.g., buy no books and reduce all building hours), and an analysis and development perspective. Targets exter-

nal to the library, such as corporate affiliations, individual giving, and the university endowment, need to be addressed (see figure 4).

However they are presented, an analysis of strategic options should bring together the best scenarios and allow planners to recommend several courses of action at different levels. The scenarios allow all to see what has been

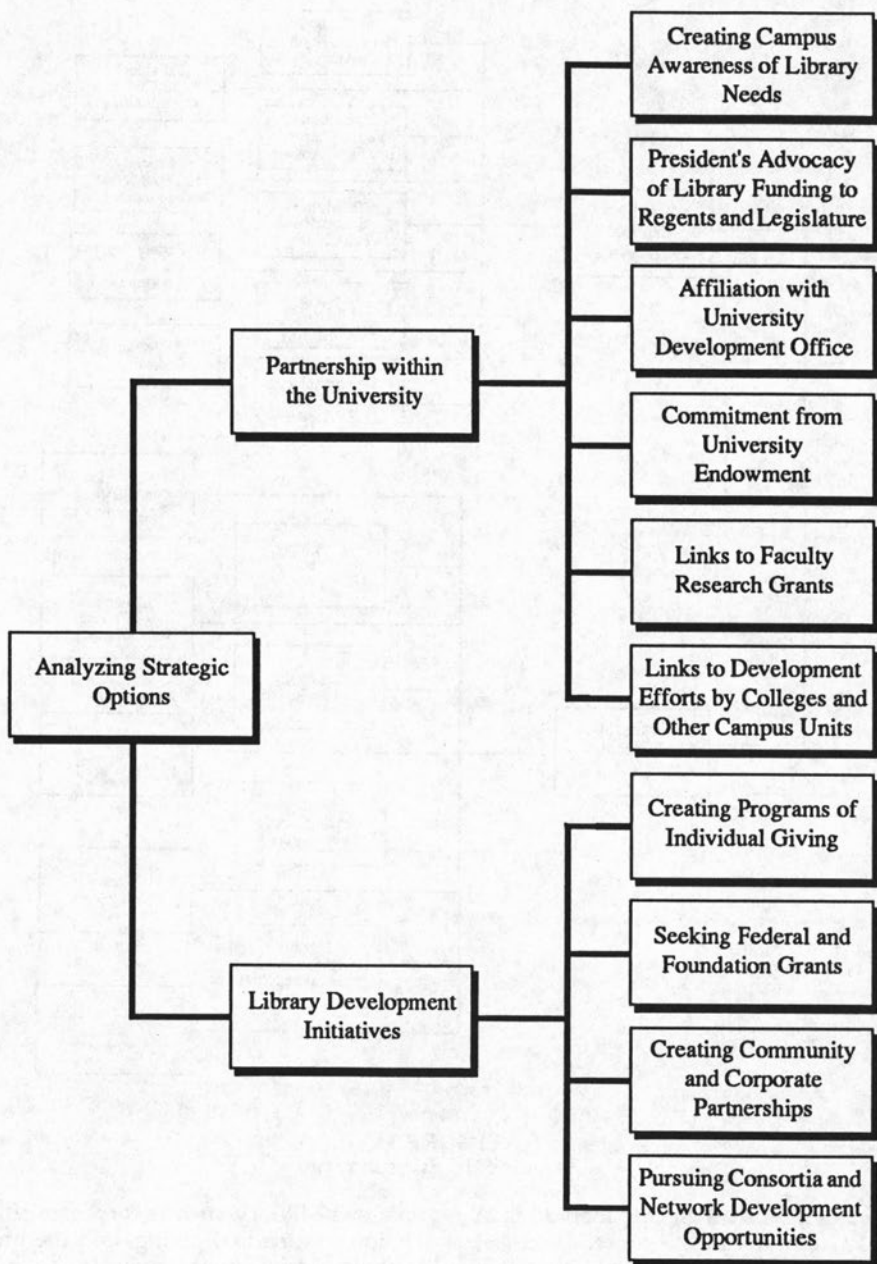


FIGURE 4
Analyzing Strategic Options

recommended from a particular set of circumstances. Library administrators can then set realistic goals that will guide the library for an extended period of time.

DESIGNING THE PLAN

At this stage, planners align the goals of the library with the goals of the library's constituencies and the mission of the university. Library administrators match the

best ideas of planning participants with the library's limited resources in order to achieve a specified outcome. They must decide on how development efforts will be funded, focused, organized, and staffed. A program for continuous planning and evaluation is created (see figure 5).

A description of design elements in the written plan is beyond the scope of this paper; however, many of the characteris-

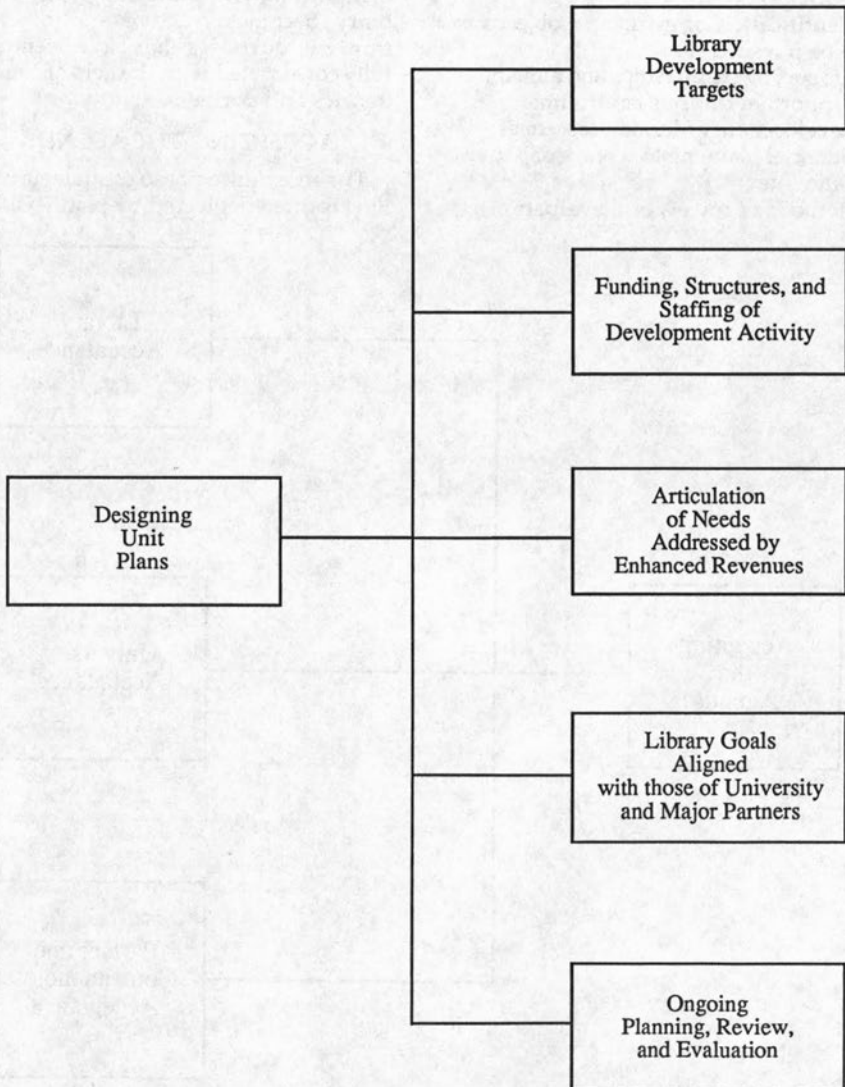


FIGURE 5
Designing Unit Plans

tics of research unit plans are appropriate for libraries. A planning document should include concise statements on the following:

- Executive summary
- Mission statement
- Analysis of needs or motivating factors
- Value of strategic planning
- Uniqueness of libraries' strengths and weaknesses
- Identification of goals and objectives to be pursued
- Supporting partnerships and affiliations
- Supportive campus environment
- Development of human resources
- Financial planning to achieve objectives
- Time-line
- Methods of review and evaluation

The strategic planning document will provide the basis for the case statement used in fund-raising activities. Of particular importance is the articulation of funding goals. Library needs must be easily understood and marketable to donors. At the same time, these programs and projects have to represent accurately the priorities of the library. If funding is achieved for areas not compatible with planning goals, the library becomes reactive and diverges from the purposes that have been carefully constructed with the help of constituencies and partners.

ACCEPTING THE AGENDA

The acceptance phase of strategic planning is often neglected by planners. The

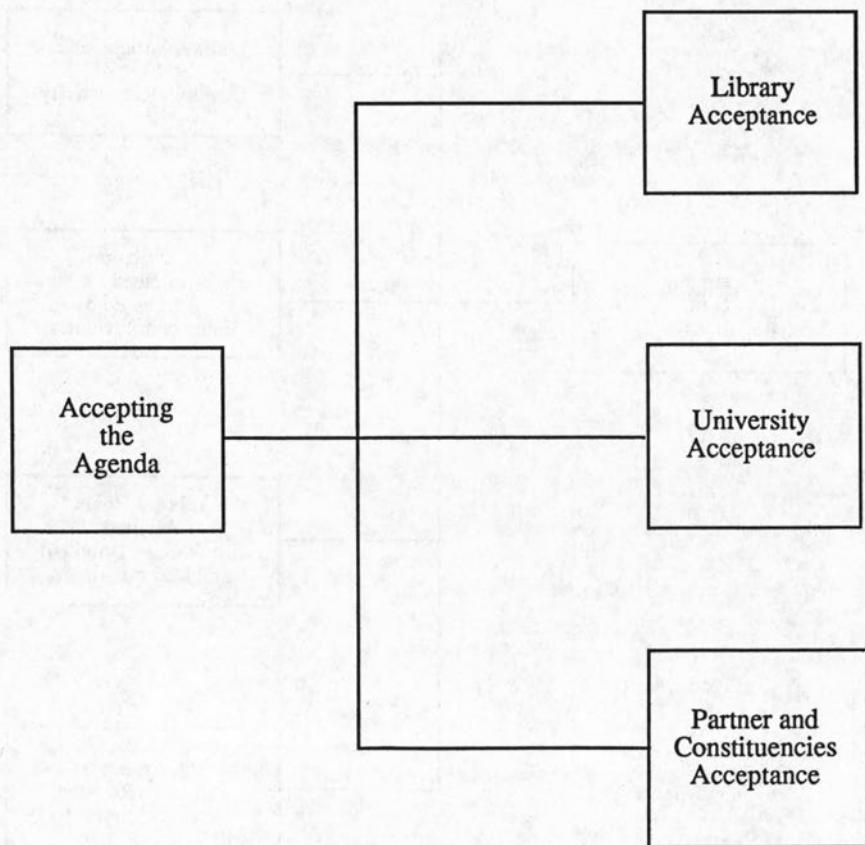


FIGURE 6
Accepting the Agenda

differences between strategic planning and other types of planning need to be understood. Operational plans are the means of achieving institutional goals according to the budget presented to the unit. Tactical plans determine the specific objectives for achieving those goals. Unless strategic planning is conducted first, both operational and tactical planning are limited to the direction set for the unit by an outside office.

The process of strategic planning reverses in the acceptance phase. Planners stop searching for information and begin to affirm goals, prioritize plans, and seek endorsements from their partners. It is a mistake to think that plan-

ning is finished after the environment has been scanned carefully, options have been analyzed, and goals have been set. A design that has only unit support may be a long-range plan for the unit, but it falls short of being strategic planning. Strategic planning requires acceptance of the agenda by partners and constituencies. Acceptance depends on informing stakeholders about what is being planned and how their own goals are advanced by it (see figure 6).

Designing a library plan, even when it involves representatives from impact areas, concerns the articulation of operating activities at one administrative level. Because collegial power is charac-

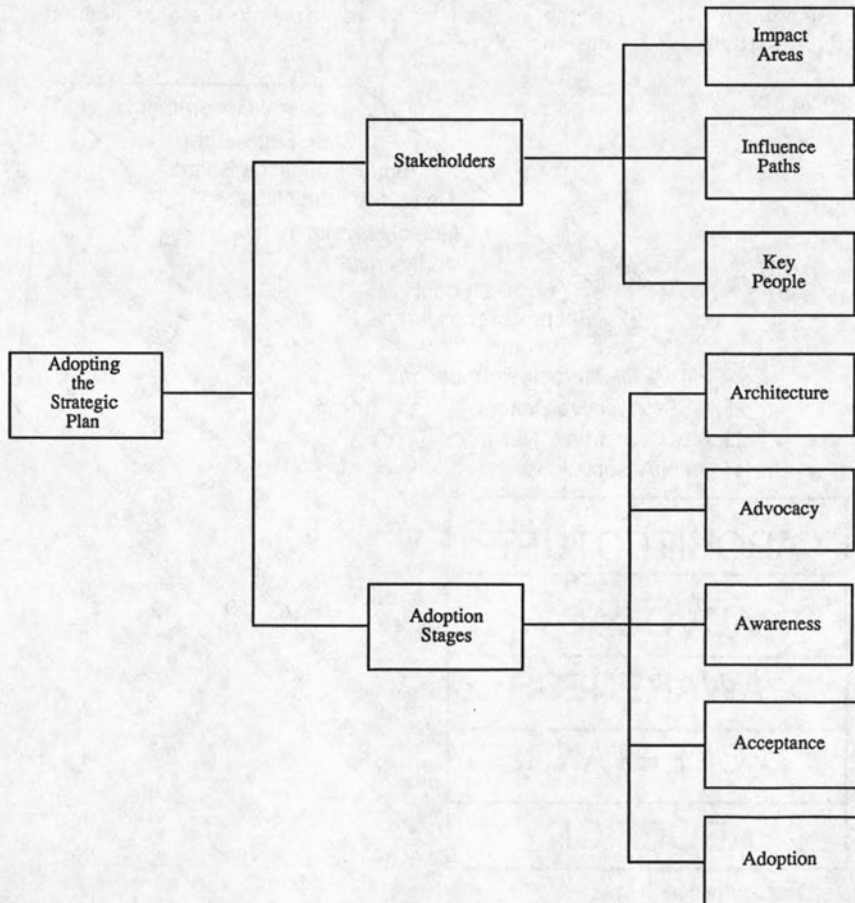


FIGURE 7
Adopting the Strategic Plan

terized by the sharing of authority and resources, the acceptance phase involves validation from others that the plan is worthwhile and can be promoted as part of the university agenda. Supporting partners, both on and off campus, will have different planning and budgeting mechanisms from those of the soliciting unit, and adjustments will have to be made in order to align the plans, schedules, and budgets of all concerned.

ADOPTING THE PLAN

Adoption of a strategic plan can be thought to have occurred when principals commit their resources to the advancement of common goals. More important than the amount of enhanced revenue is the establishment of a joint planning process which will serve the mutual needs of participants far into the future.

Adoption, shown in figure 7, occurs in the following stages:

- Architecture—Carefully chosen planners conceive the ideas for change and project that vision to the unit's many constituents.
- Advocacy—Plans are championed that will help to transform the unit's future.
- Awareness—All stakeholders know the benefits and consequences of the plan and feel that the goals are attainable.
- Acceptance—Stakeholders give approval of a schedule for implementation of the plan.
- Adoption—Principals support and adopt both the plan and the strategic planning process. They implement objectives of the plan and contribute their resources to the achievement of mutual goals.

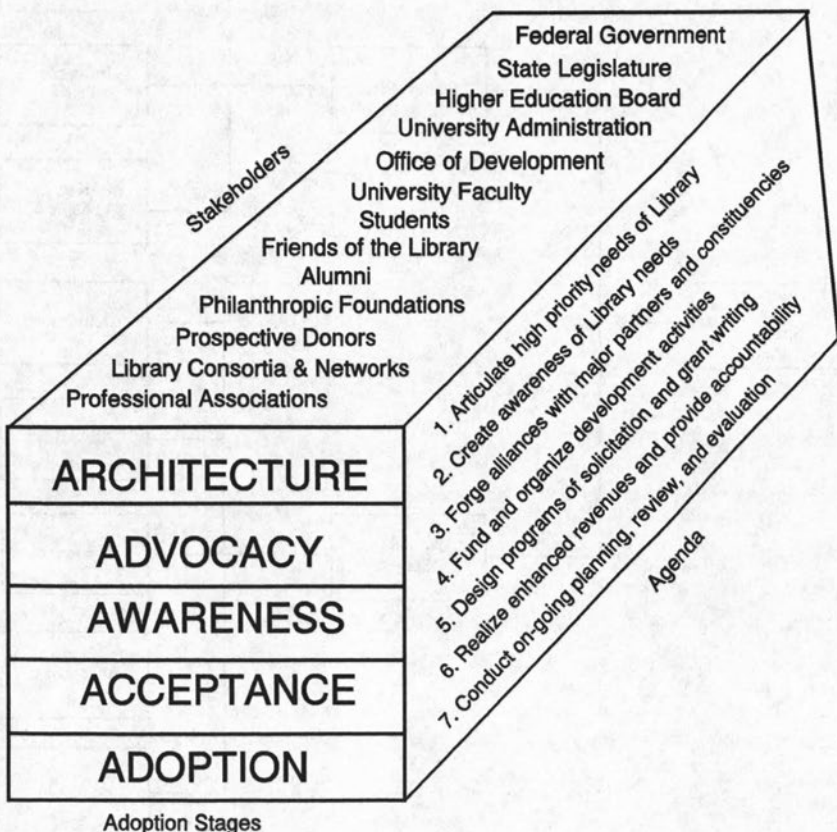


FIGURE 8
Change Cube for Library Development and Fund-raising

Using the example of library development and fund-raising, the change cube model shows the linked facets of agenda, stakeholders, and adoption stages in strategic planning, as shown in figure 8.

CONCLUSION

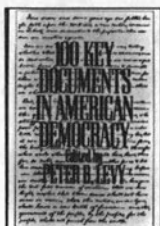
Models provide a framework for visualizing effective action. The strategic planning model developed by Hensley

and Schoppmeyer is a design for change in a setting increasingly defined by its array of partnerships. Academic libraries have had long-standing links to the research environment. Now, as they engage in establishing future purposes, librarians may be well served by the planning perspectives being adopted by university research administrators and principal investigators.

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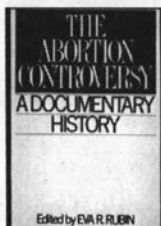
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