

Strategic Thinking

Lessons for Leadership from the Literature

Ken Haycock, Anne Cheadle and Karla Spence Bluestone

Abstract

Strategic thinking can be used in any organization seeking to gain a competitive edge. With a focus on improvement, often through creativity and innovation, strategic thinking builds a vision for an organization's future prior to the linear process of developing a strategic plan. The literature on strategy is divided into two camps: one focuses on an organization's strategic planning process; the other on a more holistic endeavor within the organization. In the face of the competition and change that exists in today's market, libraries and their leadership can take advantage of strategic thinking in order to move the library forward toward a new and more successful future.

Introduction

Strategy is a concept with military roots. The words *strategía* or *strategiké*, meaning the art or skills of the general, are found in Greek antiquities dating from at least the second century CE.¹ Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*², dates from 500 BCE, although not well known in the western world until the twentieth century, and Carl von Clausewitz's 1832 book, *On War*³, are both considered foundation writings on strategy. Within these books, the concept of strategy often separates into the dual concepts of 1) strategic vision – the thinking behind the strategy and 2) strategic execution – the strategic plan.

Similarly, modern business literature separates strategy into two concepts: the first, *strategic thinking* – thinking in an innovative, creative, and right-brained process that encourages an open exchange of ideas and solutions to meet the dynamic, often unpredictable challenges faced in today's economy; the second, *strategic planning*, is the systematic and logical application of strategies. It covers a broad range of management approaches including development and implementation of an organizational strategic plan. Evident in both approaches is a clear link between leadership and strategic management. Positional leaders are responsible for creating the environment and culture where open-ended creative ideas can flourish. Becoming a learning organization that builds strategic thinking and the discipline of learning into the

fabric of an organization makes it more agile, more responsive to external pressure, and helps achieve extraordinary results with ordinary people.^{4,5}

This paper examines what strategic thinking is, its relationship to strategic planning, and use of strategic thinking to create a competitive advantage when faced with dynamic environmental change brought about by external forces – a reality faced by libraries today.

A Vision of Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

A discussion of strategic thinking and strategic planning can be confusing and seem pedantic. Heracleous described the differences between strategic planning and strategic thinking: "... strategic thinking and strategic planning involve distinct thought processes, where strategic planning is analytical and convergent, whereas strategic thinking is synthetic and divergent."⁶ Graetz further refined Heracleous's concept and the relationships between strategic thinking, management, and planning as shown below in Figure 1.⁷ Referencing this visual foundation makes further discussion on the concepts more tangible and easier to grasp.

Figure 1
Strategic thinking and planning

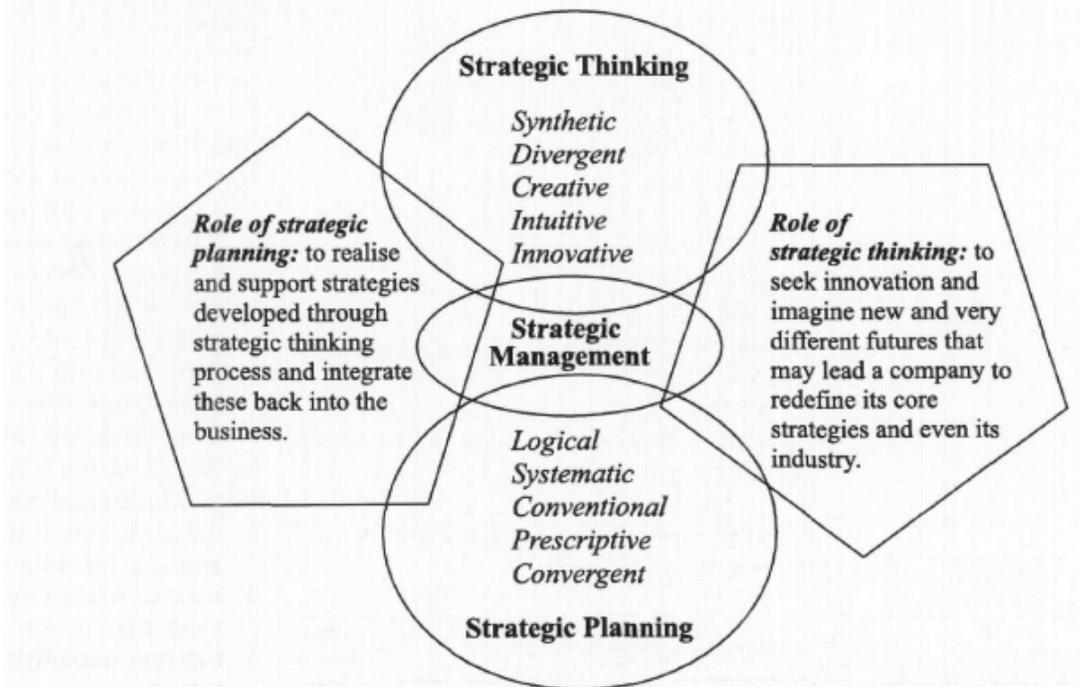


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What is Strategic Thinking?

Mintzberg describes strategic thinking as a distinct way of thinking that utilizes intuition and creativity with the outcome being “an integrated perspective of the enterprise.”⁸ Goldman et al. apply Mintzberg’s definition to a business context, suggesting that effective strategic thinking leads to competitive advantage:

Strategic thinking is an individual thinking activity that benefits organizations. Its purpose is to discover competitive strategies to position the organization significantly differently from the present. Thinking strategically is not the same as preparing a strategic plan, which details tactics to be taken to achieve goals and objectives. Strategic thinking is thinking that contributes to broad, general, overarching concepts that focus the future direction of an organization based on anticipated environmental conditions.⁹

In distinguishing strategic thinking from strategic planning, Mintzberg suggests that each requires different types of thinking: strategic planning requires linear, analytical processes, and strategic thinking necessitates more intuitive and open-ended cognition.¹⁰ Ohmae also describes strategic thinking as the “ultimate nonlinear thinking tool,” in contrast to conventional, systems-based approaches of thinking.¹¹ Maxwell cites one dictionary definition of strategy as “the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, specifically (as distinguished from tactics) of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy”;¹² applied in business, strategy becomes a maneuver for competitive success. Game theorists define strategic thinking as the art of outdoing an adversary, knowing that the adversary is trying to do the same to you;¹³ others such as Moore suggest this approach is too simplistic in our complex and interconnected environment.¹⁴

Heracleous¹⁵ and Liedtka¹⁶ each view strategic thinking as a highly creative, innovative, and unconventional method of thinking. Strategic thinking should be viewed as “central to creating and sustaining competitive advantage”¹⁷ and is the tool to get done what most leadership competencies seek to do – move an organization forward, innovate, streamline, and evoke greater productivity. Strategic thinking is commonly deployed in areas of problem solving and decision-making and with thought to envisioning the organization’s future. Heracleous describes the purpose of strategic thinking as “to discover novel, imaginative strategies which can rewrite the rules of the competitive game, and to envision potential futures significantly different from the present.”¹⁸ Rouse suggests that initiating new innovations and solutions is the “most difficult task faced by executives and senior managers ... [but] if done well, it challenges assumptions and creates new mental models of markets, offerings, and organizations.”¹⁹

Kaufman et al. view strategic thinking as “practical dreaming” in the way in which people in an organization assess, view, and create the future for themselves and their associates by defining and envisioning results that add value.²⁰ Strategists Mintzberg, Liedtka, Linkow, and Graetz, among others, have contributed to the view of strategic

thinking as a synthesizing activity that can be developed in individuals across all levels of an organization, so that their creativity and innovation may become integrated into the formal organizational strategic planning process. Senge describes the importance of learning across an organization:

...work must become 'learningful.' It is no longer sufficient to have one person learning for the organization, a Ford or a Sloan or a Watson or a Gates. It's just not possible any longer to figure it out from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the 'grand strategist.' The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.²¹

The Center for Applied Research similarly sees strategic thinking as "focused on finding and developing unique opportunities to create value by enabling a provocative and creative dialogue among people who can affect a company's vision."²² As part of strategic thinking Mintzberg sees pattern as the sense of a stream of actions taken by members of an organization to evoke a new outcome.²³

What is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning concerns analysis – establishing and formalizing systems and procedures. Since the 1960s, theorists have emphasized successful development and implementation of a strategic plan – a deliberate, formal guide of the organization's goals and objectives, as the critical means by which an organization achieved advantage. The traditional planning methodology assumes that the challenge of setting strategic direction is primarily analytic.²⁴ Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (the SWOT analysis), is a key activity conducted at both the environmental and organizational levels and helps underpin the plan development. Strategic planning is often a linear or systematic discipline that may include innovative elements but the primary focus is to break down a goal into steps, identifying the possible consequences of each step, and determining how the steps should be implemented. The finished strategic plan typically includes mission and vision statements, a declaration of organizational values, and a presentation of goals and objectives.

Strategic Thinking vs. Strategic Planning?

While planning is an embedded function of overall decision-making in the organization, strategic thinking requires greater synthesis of creative and innovative plays when forming a vision that is different than the one currently being lived. Activities that spark strategic thinking are open-ended, free-formed with focus on emerging propositions, different perspectives and suspended convergence²⁵. Amatibh and Sahay suggest that strategic thinking complements strategic planning and strategic management, but allows

for more rapid and creative response to change because strategic planning is based on rational, linear thinking used to facilitate progress only within an accepted strategic position.²⁶ To the rational thinker this type of mental engagement may seem fruitless or a waste of time because it does not presuppose a measurable outcome during the strategic thinking process.

Strategic thinking positions strategy formulation and implementation as interactive processes rather than as sequential and systematic activities evident in traditional organizational planning processes. Liedtka sees differences between the thinking and planning in the areas of future vision, strategic formulation and implementation, and in the managerial functions of strategy creation and localized control of desired processes and outcomes.²⁷ While strategic thinking is focused to a generalized vision of the future, the strategic plan sees a future that is predictable and measurable in prescribed detail. Hamel and Prahalad note “creative strategies seldom emerge from the annual planning ritual. The starting point for next year’s strategy is almost always this year’s strategy. Improvements are incremental. The company sticks to the segments and territories it knows, even though the real opportunities may be elsewhere.”²⁸

Modeling Strategic Thinking

Analysis of strategic thinking reveals common themes about the interconnectedness of ideas and a regard to new possibilities. To suspend critical judgment in an effort to think more creatively, Liedtka proposes a strategic thinking model of interrelated attributes:

1. Systems Perspective: strategic thinking reflects a systems or holistic view that recognizes how the different parts of the organization influence each other;
2. Intent-focused: strategic thinking conveys a sense of direction and is driven by the continuous shaping and re-shaping of intent;
3. Thinking in Time: strategic thinking is not solely driven by the future, but by the gap between the current reality and the intent for the future;
4. Hypothesis Driven: hypothesis generation and testing is central to strategic thinking activities. It asks the creative question “What if?” followed by the critical question “If ... then?”;
5. Intelligent Opportunism: strategic thinking invokes the capacity to be intelligently opportunistic, or open to new experience, allowing one to take advantage of alternative strategies that may emerge in a rapidly changing environment.²⁹

These attributes enable organizational constituents to be open to transition and identify emerging opportunities in relation to both a pre-defined intention and to questioning the ongoing relevance of a particular practice.

Linkow advocates strategic thinking at all organizational levels, suggesting that unrelenting environmental forces demand widespread strategic competency.³⁰ He names strategic thinking competencies as reframing, scanning, abstracting, multivariate thinking, envisioning, inducting and valuating. Reframing challenges and restates the underlying beliefs and assumptions upon which relations and actions are based. Scanning is the constant search for information that influences current assumptions about the organization, while abstracting enables people to grasp the essential theme or synergy in disparate bits of information and turn these into action. Multivariate thinking requires one to balance many dynamic variables simultaneously and discern the relationships among them. Envisioning is the ability to see future states as vivid images, and while this has creative and intuitive elements, such ideas are usually based on an enormous amount of data derived from scanning. The importance of this link between creativity and rationality appears also in other writings, including those of Ohmae,³¹ O'Shannassy³² and Hussey.³³ Inducting is identified as the ability to form beliefs, assumptions, and generalizations quickly from concrete, often sparse observations. Valuating is described as being skilled at learning and understanding the underlying values, beliefs and attitudes held by current and potential stakeholders.

Guns links strategic thinking skills to an organization's intellectual capital, describing the advantages of being "foresight-focused," able to create unique mental models, being non-hierarchical, and nimble.³⁴ Hamel and Prahalad state "Where strategy formulation is an elitist activity, it is also difficult to produce truly creative strategies. For one thing, there are not enough heads and points of view in divisional or corporate planning departments to challenge conventional wisdom."³⁵ The Center for Applied Research notes that in the context of strategic thinking, competencies and skills, environment, industry and markets, and all stakeholders – the workforce, customers, competitors, and suppliers – must be considered when devising overarching direction and plays.³⁶ For Liedtka, organizations that succeed at embedding a capability for strategic thinking throughout all levels of their operations will have created a new source of advantage with the following tangibles:

- Whole [holistic] system perspective enabling the organization to redesign its processes for greater efficiency and effectiveness;
- Intent-focus making the organization more determined and less distracted than rivals, with enhanced ability to improve the quality of decision-making and speed of implementation;
- Capacity for hypothesis generation and testing incorporates both creative and critical thinking into their processes; and
- Intelligent opportunism so the organization is more responsive to local opportunities.³⁷

The combined effect of these outcomes is a capacity for strategic thinking that meets what Day advocates as the three fundamental tests for a strategically valuable action that 1) creates superior value for customers, 2) is difficult for competitors to imitate, and 3) makes the organization more adaptable to change.³⁸

Strategic Thinking and Leadership

Strategic thinking is traditionally held in the domain of organizational leaders who have the primary responsibility for developing and implementing the strategic plan. Abraham states that strategic thinking is a significant aspect of every leader's job:

“A company would not need a strategy if it did not have to compete - it could make do simply with a plan. But strategy implies competing and outwitting competitors. It follows that strategic thinking is the process of finding alternative ways of competing and providing customer value. So we can define strategic thinking as identifying alternative viable strategies or business models that deliver customer value.”³⁹

While differing perspectives on strategic thinking may continue to be debated in the literature, the importance of effective strategy development and implementation to leadership is inarguable. Chemers claims the “ultimate test of leadership is how well the group and organization perform on the tasks related to the organizational mission.”⁴⁰ The connections between strategic thinking and leadership practices for Kouzes & Posner are evident in the areas of overarching direction and goal formation.⁴¹

The Strategic Thinking Institute highlights strategic thinking as “the #1 ranked most important leadership competency.”⁴² Leaders must set the tone for learning and development among all constituents and embed strategic competence into the organizational infrastructure or risk falling behind its competitors.⁴³ For Guns, strategic competencies are distinguished as the “new” lever of intellectual capital in an organization that rises among the “old” levers of land, capital and labor.⁴⁴ A leader must be able to negotiate the intellectual capital lever effectively to increase valuation of its more ‘traditional’ perspective of its assets. When considering strategic thinking within a definition of intuitive and creative contribution, emphasis is naturally shifted to encouraging this type of thinking throughout all levels of the organization. Liedtka argues for expanded development of strategic thinking skills and responsibilities at lower levels of management in organizations.⁴⁵ De Pree refers to the invaluable contribution of “amateurs” – those passionate and engaged members of an organization who offer the “beneficial surprise” or unusual point of view that may produce a “stunningly elegant” solution.⁴⁶

Four critical areas for libraries are explored further: problem-solving, adaptability, scenario construction, alignment.

Problem Solving

Strategic thinking, in part, is about solving problems. But which problems?

Sophisticated tools of forecasting and ... elegant strategic plans ... are all designed to handle the sort of complexity in which there are many variables: detail complexity. But there is a second type of complexity. The second type is dynamic complexity, situations where cause and effect are subtle, and where the effects over time of interventions are not obvious. ... Following a complex set of instructions to assemble a machine involves detail complexity, as does inventory.... The real leverage in most management situations lies in understanding dynamic complexity, not detail complexity. Balancing market growth and capacity expansion is a dynamic problem. Developing a profitable mix of price, product (or service) quality, design, and availability that make a strong market position is a dynamic problem. Improving quality, lowering total costs, and satisfying customers in a sustainable manner is a dynamic problem.⁴⁷

To address change the organization seeks to gather as many scenarios, ideas, and possibilities from an array of perspectives that align with the tenets of strategic thinking. At its core, strategic thinking is about exploring possibilities in a space where analytical judgment and critical thinking have been temporarily suspended. In this arena, creativity is engaged to identify and to define alternatives and options before launching into the problem-solving process. Leaders who give only cursory notice to the critical step of defining the vision, may design an elegant answer but to the wrong questions.⁴⁸ For long-term goal setting, organizations must correctly define the vision and then engage strategic thinking methods that reveal appropriate or best scenario solutions that achieve organizational advantage and sustainability.

Adaptability

Adaptability is being equipped to adjust or modify a plan to meet challenges brought by a shifting market environment. A skilled strategic thinker recognizes that a successful strategy today may not work well tomorrow, thus these individuals are continuously scanning the environment for signs that indicate adjustment may be required. But, “paradoxically, a firm’s history and its current strategy, structure, people, and culture often combine to dampen innovation and adaptive change”⁴⁹ and “...processes that are key to the success of established companies are the very processes that reject disruptive technologies...”⁵⁰

Adaptability is critical when “crossing the chasm” and introducing a discontinuous innovation into the market.

...we are trying to pick a target market segment that we have not yet penetrated to any great extent, by definition we also lack experience in that arena. Moreover, since we are introducing a discontinuous innovation into

the market, no one has any direct experience with which to predict what will happen. The market we will enter, by definition, will not have experienced our type of product before. And the people who have experienced our product before, the visionaries, are so different in psychographic profile from our new target customers – the pragmatists – that we must be very careful about extrapolating our results to date. We are, in other words, in a high-risk, low-data state.⁵¹

Such a state can have a paralyzing effect due to fear of change and the unknown, yet through adaptability, one can cultivate a tolerance for uncertainty and unpredictability.

Scenario Construction

Schoemaker notes that: “scenarios are one way to develop sound conceptual frameworks, so that organizations and individuals will be more likely to study the right questions.”⁵² By identifying trends and uncertainties in an organization’s macro environment, scenario construction stimulates thinking about alternatives, which otherwise might be ignored. It can be difficult under conditions of disruptive technologies and change because of limited data to think through alternatives. “[Scenarios] permit a semi-rationality in which intuition and analysis combine to manage highly complex tasks,” and encourage a look at each of the m^n possibilities from m projected outcomes associated with n uncertainties.⁵³ They do this by providing a sense of general direction, without being a precision compass. To aid in scenario creation, Dalton suggests imagining the toughest business scenario and the indicators that predicated it, and then visualize the options and the consequences of enacting one solution over another.⁵⁴

Alignment

Strategy alignment involves both formulation of a vision and implementation of a structure and capability in order to realize that vision. Organizational structures and processes need to reflect planning and policy initiatives. At the same time, while celebrating core values and community commitment, libraries need to develop cultures based on continuous improvement.

“Innovation streams run counter to forces for organizational inertia. Given these contrasting forces for change and stability, managers need to create ambidextrous organizations – organizations that celebrate stability and incremental change as well as experimentation and discontinuous change simultaneously.”⁵⁵

Such alignment may take the form of business structure,⁵⁶ leveraging of information technology,⁵⁷ and/or strategic human resources management.^{58, 59} Strategic human resources management is one approach to developing staff in accordance with the organization's future direction. In this model, all organizational constituents, not solely its executives, are considered a strategic resource for achieving competitive advantage.⁶⁰ Strategic human resource management strives to ensure that recruitment, appraisal, reward, and development are tailored to advance the values and goals of the organization.

Developing Strategic Thinking

There is general consensus in the literature that strategic thinking is a learnable skill benefitting from diverse experiences and open dialog, requiring persistent practice to develop, and demanding cyclic iteration to improve. Christensen believes thinking strategically can become an ingrained skill by its continuous application and repetition over time that "actively cultivates a deep competence in strategic [thinking]."⁶¹ Sloan views five personal attributes as critical in order to think strategically: 1) having an imagination, 2) a broad perspective, 3) the ability to juggle, 4) the ability to deal with things over which you have no control, and 5) an adamant desire to win.⁶² Sloan sees these five attributes as ones that can be developed, putting strategic thinking within reach of any with the inclination to achieve it. Research by Goldman et al also found that strategic thinking is not the product of innate ability and serendipity; rather, it arises from specific experiences (personal, interpersonal, organizational and external) that occur over 10 or more years.⁶³

Planning for Learning

Sloan views strategic learning as a three-stage cyclic process: 1) Preparation, with an affective element (a reason and the emotional readiness to proceed with learning) and a cognitive element (information gathering to see new possibilities, verify, test); 2) Experience, current situation (view point), prior successful life experience (the dress rehearsal), application of previous experience to new situations (seeing patterns), and reflecting (transforming experience into learning); and 3) Reevaluation (critical and evaluative) in order to begin the process again.⁶⁴

Bennis & Goldsmith offers six sequential steps to aid the strategic thinking learning process:

- 1) Know where you are beginning and where you want to end up;
- 2) Explore various routes;
- 3) Determine the best route;
- 4) Plan the resources and means you will need;
- 5) Examine your map objectively; and

6) Harness your passion and commitment and set out on your path.⁶⁵

Staying Open-minded

Strategic thinking skill development requires examination of one's own internal beliefs and assumptions about how the world operates. One of the greatest impediments to adopting the open-minded thinking and questioning style necessary for strategic thinking is the tendency to reject what isn't tangible or isn't already known. Senge describes mental models as "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action."⁶⁶ Identifying and understanding personal mental models starts with "turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny."⁶⁷ Sloan explains this open-minded thinking as 'And Thinking'– being receptive to this and that without dismissive opinion.⁶⁸

Goleman et al. describe key competencies of successful leaders such as sensitivity and genuine interest in understanding others' interests, excellent listening skills, resonance, and leading with emotional intelligence, as reinforcing concepts essential to developing successful strategy.⁶⁹

Starting to Practice

Linkow considers several strategic thinking competencies learnable, including techniques of brainstorming and scenario planning as tools for envisioning new futures: he suggests small-scale, low-risk experiments as a way to generate a range of observations, noting such experiments have been an important element of the quality movement.⁷⁰

Sloan provides the following suggestions to individuals interested in developing strategic thinking⁷¹:

- Instead of saying no, ask a question.
- Ask questions that dive deep.
- Record thoughts, feelings, and new questions in a journal or log.
- Take time to write down the feelings attached to your thinking.
- Reflect about things that provoke questions or strong feelings.
- Draw or design your strategy ideas instead of writing them.
- Diversify and upgrade the kinds of verbal engagement you use.
- Write or tell parables and analogies that illustrate your assumptions and beliefs about strategy issues.

Repeating the Cycle

Sloan includes reevaluation as part of the cycle in her model of strategic thinking⁷². Wells identifies strategic thinking as a process of input, transform and output, involving perceiving, understanding and reasoning.⁷³ He suggests that strategic thinking essentially aims to answer three questions: What seems to be happening? What possibilities do we face? What are we going to do about it?⁷⁴ He points out that although this appears to be a sequential process, it is more a cyclical function that supports open dialogue for development of strategic direction.⁷⁵

Strategic Thinking for Libraries

Libraries are faced with mounting pressures from reduced budgets and game-changing access to information via the Internet. Other organizations that might be characterized as competitors also face dramatic change, such that community and senior centers now offer Internet access and training and bookstores offer storytelling programs and book clubs, traditional library services. While libraries certainly need defending, “[D]efenders are organizations that focus on a well-defined and narrow market in which they attempt to remain competitive by constantly improving their efficiency and productivity.”⁷⁶ Time and speed of information access are driving selection choices. Customers are no longer satisfied with a brick and mortar library experience. Where buying cycles were once discrete sequential steps, they are now virtually instantaneous between identification of a need and consumption through instant downloads, remote services, or overnight delivery.⁷⁷

The need for strategic thinking in libraries has never been greater. Deiss drives this point home in her article on user-centered libraries:

It is evident from current environmental indicators that organizations need to utilize two tools skillfully in order to create customer value: innovation and strategy. While strategy can exist without innovation, it is unlikely that effective innovation can occur without the use of strategy. For organization leaders the challenge is threefold: develop the ability to create value-added innovative services on a continuous basis; utilize strategy to make decisions about innovations’ and deliver innovative services to the customer.⁷⁸

Deiss also notes “innovative services can have the power to keep existing customers and attract new customers. For innovation to occur libraries must tap the creative potential of their staffs, vendors, and customers.”⁷⁹

Strategic work done at the University of Hong Kong provides a good model for libraries. Faced with an environment viewed as complacent, traditional, non-responsive, inwardly focused and bureaucratic, the University of Hong Kong Libraries began work in 2000 to make itself more relevant:

“we wanted to reconnect with our users to more fully understand and meet their needs; we wanted to be able to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we were as relevant today as we ever were; and we wanted to ensure that as an organization we are not only responsive to current needs but that we were readily adaptable for the future. We wanted to be, and to be seen to be, innovative, friendly and highly relevant.”⁸⁰

This library followed a cyclical process of informal learning based on preparation and experience/reflection. The strategic thinking and strategic planning done by this library has delivered on their strategic objective with innovative services delivered in a user-friendly manner that are highly relevant to their students. As they note it is now time for reevaluation:

We need to take action to improve ourselves. We need to provide a rich environment for all of our users in terms of, not only the scholarly resources but, the physical environment and indeed the virtual environment where so many of our users now regularly inhabit. We need to remain vigilant to any creeping complacency and never believe that we do not need to prove ourselves to our stakeholders. We must remain relevant in an information world that is evolving at an increasingly faster pace that makes many of our staff feel uncomfortable. We need to continually refocus in order to put our user’s needs ahead of our own. Only then can we demonstrate our true value.⁸¹

As well as the Hong Kong example, useful resources in developing strategic thinking efforts include *Learning to Think Strategically* (New Frontiers in Learning) by Julia Sloan (Butterworth-Heinemann) and ACRL’s *Strategic Thinking Guide for Academic Librarians in the New Economy*.⁸²

Conclusion

Organizations – whether for-profit or not – are competing in an unpredictable and volatile marketplace that demands a greater capacity for innovative and diverse strategic thinking in order to create and sustain advantage. Libraries face competition for the time and attention of the customer or the user. They also face a somewhat unknown future given the changes in resources and technologies and a crowded information marketplace.

If developed and applied effectively, strategic thinking can reveal new, alternate and creative visions of the future. The term strategy has evolved into two distinct lines in the literature that either 1) describe systematic activity commonly deployed by organizational leadership to create and articulate a strategic plan; or 2) as strategic thinking: a holistic, dynamic exercise encouraging all constituents to question the status quo, consider unconventional ideas and formulate ideas around a common shared purpose. Strategic thinking is distinguishable from strategic planning by an informal process of synthesis

and idea-generation that is not predicated on the implementation of a formal system or step. Libraries can ensure strategic thinking among employee groups and other constituents through developmental programs that are not strictly limited to the formal leadership, and by encouraging strategic thinking activities such as brainstorming, scenario visualization, repertoire building and dialogue. These newer models of strategic thinking are recommended as critical means by which organizations can respond most effectively to rapid change and to achieve sustainable success.

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Ken Haycock, EdD, (ken@kenhaycock.com) is research professor of management and organization in the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, and senior partner with Ken Haycock & Associates Inc.; **Anne Cheadle**, MLIS, (achead718@gmail.com) is director at the Latah County Library District in Moscow, Idaho; **Karla Spence Bluestone**, MLIS, (karlabluestone247@hotmail.com) is a library commissioner for the city of Pasadena, CA and a freelance information professional.

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