

# 12

## Management

### Introduction

In earlier chapters mention has been made of a number of management issues and management approaches. The purpose of this chapter is to consider academic library management as a whole. First, however, it is useful to provide some definitions of the terms used.

Management is concerned, first and foremost, with the organization and direction of different kinds of resources for specific purposes. Clearly it is important that these purposes are known and are explicit, otherwise the manager will not know which direction to take. At the highest level of formal statements, the organization should have a *mission statement*: this is a statement of why it exists in the first place - what is its purpose? The mission statement itself is built on two things: a vision of what the organization could be and wants to be, and an understanding of its values. For academic libraries, because they are part of larger organizations, it is vital that the vision, values and mission are tied closely to those of the parent university. For example, if the university is primarily a teaching institution, the library should reflect this. On the other hand, if the university is concerned primarily with research, and especially where the library has historic collections of great importance, the vision, values and mission will be very different. A discussion of how mission statements are developed, and examples of some university library mission statements, can be found in Brophy (1991).

Strategic aims will be derived from the mission statement. These are broad statements which set out long-term goals for the library to achieve - for example, an aim might be 'to ensure all members of the university have good information skills'. At the next level, each aim will have one or more objectives associated with it - these are shorter term goals, which will be

expressed in more precise language: an example might be 'to deliver a library induction session to 95% of new undergraduate students each year'.

It will be seen that as one becomes more precise with mission, aims and then objectives, so it becomes easier to devise clear measurements or indicators of achievement. From a knowledge of the total number of new undergraduate students enrolled in the institution and the library's own records of those attending induction sessions, it is simple to calculate whether the 95% threshold has been reached. It is less easy to know whether or not all members of the university have good information skills, since they may acquire these in many different ways and there may be differences of opinion as to what constitutes 'good' in this context. It is yet more difficult to measure achievement of the mission itself - indeed it can be argued that the mission is not 'achievable' in this sense, since it is always a target on the horizon. In the next chapter we will return to the issue of how the performance of the library as a whole may be measured.

Responsibility for achieving the mission, aims and objectives of the library will be devolved amongst the staff. To achieve this it is necessary to be explicit about management responsibilities. The university librarian or equivalent manager is responsible for ensuring that the library is pursuing a clear mission and strategy, and for ensuring that there are adequate, which is not to say generous, resources to enable that to be done. He or she is the *strategic* manager. At the next level, one or more deputy librarians, or the equivalent managers, will be responsible for the operation of the library on a day to day basis: they are the *operational* managers. Sometimes these responsibilities will be allocated on the basis of functional divisions of the library (for example, acquisitions, collection management, reader services) or they may occur on a cross-functional basis such as personnel, finance and so on. There is then a level of *tactical* management. Here the heads of units - such as the service desk or interlibrary loans - will be responsible for managing operations on a continuing basis, for example for ensuring adequate staff numbers are allocated to each duty for every minute that the library is open.

Among the most important managerial tasks at each of these levels are *leadership* and *co-ordination*. Leadership is a difficult quality to define, but in essence it consists of the ability to articulate and share a vision of how things can and should be and then to enthuse staff to achieve that vision. This is true whether we are talking of the strategic level, where the vision

may be of a world-class digital research library, or the tactical level, where the vision may be of fast turnaround of requests coupled with friendly service to each user.

Co-ordination is important because it is essential that all managers work together to achieve common aims. It is disastrous if managers are simply interested in their own particular areas and spare no thought for the effects of what they do on the rest of the organization. Faced with staff cuts, the temptation may be to try to pass workloads onto other sections but the accomplished manager will view the problem from a wider perspective and propose solutions which will minimize the effects on the library as a whole and on its users.

Finally, it is important to remember that the academic library is managed as part of a larger organization. It cannot invent all its own procedures to suit itself but will have to operate within the policies and procedures, such as those for finance and personnel, which the university lays down. More positively, its achievements can contribute to those of the institution as a whole.

## Planning

*Planning* is an activity in which all managers must engage. Strategic planning concerns the future of the library as a whole while more specific plans may be drawn up for individual services, or to guide a major development such as the selection and implementation of a new library management system. Corral (1994) has described strategic planning as 'a process in which purposes, objectives and plans are formulated, and then implemented . . . relating an organisation to its changing market opportunities'.

In essence the development of plans involves assessing both the external environment - which for an academic library means both its parent university and the broader information world - and the organization itself, and setting down directions which will be taken. Many techniques exist to help with environmental analysis - Corral (1994) suggests the use of PEST (Politics, Economics, Society, Technology) which provides a structure within which the major factors are grouped for analysis. For example, a library might analyse both local and national political factors, the impact of economic factors such as exchange rates and rates of inflation, changes in

society's expectations of libraries and the impacts of technological change. Coupled with this, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis - which focuses on the existing strengths and weaknesses of the organization, the opportunities it has to develop and the threats to its existence and prosperity - can be used to analyse the internal situation and relate it to likely trends outside. Having done this, a number of *planning assumptions* can be stated, making explicit the expectations of the planners about future trends.

A useful process is then to write down and discuss a series of *scenarios*, which are in essence descriptions of or even stories about the future as it might be if particular directions are taken. Some of these scenarios can be fairly outrageous, since the purpose is to stimulate thought about what is desirable - for example, an interesting scenario for a modern academic library to debate might be based around a future without books.

Although there are many formal planning systems available, most academic libraries will use processes which are agreed in their university, if only because the library's plans must fit with those of the parent institution. The *process* of planning must be clearly understood, and the role of all participants - which should include all library staff, since all have a contribution to make - made explicit. The university will itself develop strategic plans concerning finance, the physical estate, staffing, academic development and many other issues. The library's plans must both contribute to and draw upon these wider considerations. It is also worth noting that the library's plans can be a very effective means of communicating concerns, intentions and problems to the wider community.

The library's strategic plan will set out the general direction it is expected to take over the longer term - which because of the rate of change usually means no more than three years. There will also be plans concerned with specific aspects of service: the need for an *IT systems strategic plan* was considered in Chapter 10, but as indicated above a number of others may be needed.

The days of fixed plans which had to be adhered to come what may are long past and it is now accepted that plans must be implemented flexibly, taking account of changed circumstances, new opportunities, etc. Nevertheless, the plan provides the agreed strategy which will be adopted, and changes to it must themselves be agreed.

The implementation of a plan is itself a complex process. A first step

may be to develop a series of action plans, which set out precise targets to be achieved by a fixed deadline and state clearly who is responsible for their achievement. Where the plan concerns a particular project, project management tools, such as PRINCE2, can be used – these break the project into work packages and tasks, allocate roles, responsibilities and resources and track progress against the plan and in particular against planned ‘milestones’ i.e. points where sub-tasks should have been completed. More generally, it is useful to identify a series of *critical success factors* (CSFs) which can be measured regularly. Progress against the plan can then be charted against these factors.

### The management of change

Because, as we have already noted, change is virtually constant in higher education and in librarianship, one of the library manager’s most important tasks is to ensure that change is *managed* and does not just ‘happen’. To achieve this it is important to recognize that resistance to change is not born of a wish to be obstructive – or at least, not usually! – but because of deeply held beliefs about the values which change may destroy. It is therefore essential that there is a credible vision of the future which change is intended to bring about, and that steps are taken to gain commitment from all stakeholders both to the vision itself and to the path being pursued to achieve it. No-one would pretend that this is easy.

A useful approach which has been adopted in industry and commerce is centred round the idea of a ‘learning organization’ or ‘learning company’ (Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell, 1991). The major elements of this approach are:

- 1 *A learning approach to strategy*, so that the process of formulating policies and strategies is itself structured as a learning process.
- 2 *Participative policy-making*, which enables the views and interests of all the stakeholders to be brought into the equation and encourages participation from across the whole organization.
- 3 *‘Informating’*, which means using information throughout the organization to help members understand what is happening, and not for punishment or reward, trying to avoid the situation where only some people are ‘in the know’. Information and information

technology are thus the 'oil' which enables the organization to move forward its understanding and hence its actions.

- 4 *Formative accounting and control*, to enable people to learn from financial reports and to adjust their decision-making and actions through this learning process. Accountants and financial officers see their role as consultants offering advice rather than 'scorekeepers and bean-counters'.
- 5 *Internal exchange*, which emphasizes the need for co-operative relationships between sections of the organization.
- 6 *Reward flexibility*, which encourages openness in reward systems and involvement of staff throughout the organization in the determination of such systems, while the need for different rewards to reflect the different contributions that people make is recognized.
- 7 *Enabling structures*, for example through seeing appraisal schemes as opportunities for identifying learning and development needs rather than as a mechanism for reward or punishment. Structures and procedures are necessary, but they should be reviewed regularly.
- 8 *Boundary workers as environmental scanners*, so that all staff, but especially those with jobs at the interface between the company and the outside world, see part of their work as bringing information and intelligence back into the organization for the use of everyone.
- 9 *Inter-company learning* which could include meetings with competitors as well as with suppliers and customers, to learn and to share ideas, information and developments. Techniques such as benchmarking (see chapter 13) are used as part of this process.
- 10 *A learning climate*, in which mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, and time is set aside to examine and discuss current practice, so as to engage in continuous improvement.
- 11 *Self-development opportunities for all*, including the external stakeholders. Everyone is given opportunities, and provided with resources, to undertake self-development.

This approach is expanded in Brophy and Coulling (1996), from which the above outline has been adapted.

## Management style

Organizations differ widely in the ways in which they are managed. This is not just a matter of the effectiveness of their managers, but reflects genuine differences in style which derive from a range of sources. These include:

- 1 The history of the organization and the style which it has inherited.
- 2 The style which is 'imposed' or 'encouraged' by the parent organization. For example, some universities have a very egalitarian style in which all staff, and sometimes students, are consulted widely. Others operate a more authoritarian or hierarchical style, in which senior staff from the Vice-Chancellor downwards determine what will be done. Sometimes these styles are hidden and the reality may be opposite of what is stated - many organizations claim to welcome participation in decision-making when in fact they operate quite the opposite practice.
- 3 The personalities of the managers, and whether they are comfortable with a particular style. Some library directors like to direct!
- 4 Conceptual styles: the librarian who believes strongly in the concept of the networked library may, perhaps unconsciously, demand a 'high tech' style from his or her staff and this may colour the whole management of the library.

## Quality management

There are many approaches to management and many schools of thought about management theory and practice. It can be difficult to reconcile all these ideas and schools of thought into a coherent overall approach. To some extent this is a matter of preference, but one approach which has become popular in recent years, not only in libraries, is *quality management* (Brophy and Coulling, 1996). As the name suggests it focuses first and foremost on the quality of the product or service being offered and, as noted briefly at the start of Chapter 4, it concentrates on ensuring that services meet user needs. Quality assurance is a major issue in higher education in general, and very considerable resources are expended to ensure that the standard of research and teaching in institutions is acceptable. Taking a quality management approach to library services therefore aligns the library closely with institutional concerns.

In brief, quality management focuses first and foremost on two issues: customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. Deriving originally from Japanese and then American business management, quality management became a dominant approach in the UK during the 1990s, and evoked considerable interest among librarians. Under the terminology of *total quality management* (TQM) it brings together a series of issues in a coherent manner, addressing:

- the need for each organization to be clear about its *purpose*: what its mission, aims and objectives really are
- having a consistent *focus on customer needs* throughout all of the organization's operations
- senior managers' responsibility for providing *leadership*, including a *vision* of the organization's future
- *commitment* by all employees to the organization
- the use of *teamwork* to bring employees together to work on issues and developments, using the strengths that each member of the team can bring to the task in hand
- *involvement* of all staff in decision-making and communication - a participative style
- having *systematic processes* in place so that services are delivered consistently and users know what to expect
- good *resource management* with resources understood to encompass not just financial resources but people, buildings, materials and knowledge
- good *relationships with suppliers*, so that those on whom the organization depends for its raw materials - in library terms book suppliers, periodicals agents, data services etc. - are committed to the organization's goals and supported in their efforts to supply the right materials at the right time
- *benchmarking*, which in essence is a process of comparing yourself against the best in your field, understanding how they operate and seeking to apply that approach in a suitable way to one's own organization
- *monitoring performance*, so that the managers know how well the organization is performing and can take action both to correct problems and to pursue excellence

- *training and development* of all staff so that they are competent in all the tasks they are asked to perform, knowledgeable about the organization and all its services or products, and understand the ethos and style of the organization
- understanding of how the organization *impacts on its environment* - in library terms this could be interpreted as the broader role within the local community, or could refer to the contribution that the library makes to society as a whole, perhaps through the preservation of recorded knowledge.

The European Foundation for Quality Management awards a series of quality awards each year to companies which are judged to be offering outstanding quality as defined by its *Excellence Model* (European Foundation for Quality Management, 2004). It is an interesting exercise to examine these criteria and the achievements of award winners.

Academic libraries, even when they have not explicitly adopted a quality management approach, have often used particular techniques taken from this school of management practice. For example there has been considerable interest in *benchmarking* between academic libraries as a means of checking performance and finding useful ideas from other libraries. This is described in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

Good management is crucial to the effectiveness and efficiency of the library and to the achievement of its long-term aims. Managers provide vision and leadership, allocate resources and are involved in decision making at every level of the organization. At present, managers are particularly involved in the management of change as libraries attempt to come to terms with new technological and learning environments, and it is to be expected that this requirement will continue.

In order to manage effectively it is important that good information is available, and considerable work has taken place to identify performance indicators which can aid decision making. Concern with provision of the highest standards of service have led to considerable interest in the techniques of quality management, which can provide a framework for the effective management of the library.

## References

- Brophy, P. (1991) The Mission of the Academic Library, *British Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 6 (3), 135-47.
- Brophy, P. and Coulling, K. R. (1996) *Quality Management for Information and Library Managers*, Gower.
- Corrall, S. (1994) *Strategic Planning for Library and Information Services*, Aslib.
- European Foundation for Quality Management (2004) *Excellence Model*  
[www.efqm.org/model\\_awards/model/excellence\\_model.htm](http://www.efqm.org/model_awards/model/excellence_model.htm).
- Pedler, M., Burgoyne, J. and Boydell, T. (1991) *The Learning Company: a strategy for sustainable development*, McGraw-Hill.

## Further reading

- Pantry, S. and Griffiths, P. (2000) *Developing a Successful Service Plan*, Library Association Publishing.
- Allan, B. (2004) *Project Management: tools and techniques for today's information professional*, Facet Publishing.