STRATEGIC PLANNING: A VIABLE TOOL FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SURVIVAL IN A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract
Strategic planning is fast becoming a popular and growing trend within the discipline of library and information management as a viable alternative institutional management tool for resolution of issues of library expansion. Also, the library and information center have to keep up with the changing nature of society, globalisation, competition, rapidly changing technology, diminishing level of funding and rising cost of library and information services, changing and turbulent nature of parent organization, demographic issues etc. This paper examines the concept of strategic planning in the context of a university library. The issues discussed are strategic planning, its imperativeness, components, techniques, importance and challenges in a university library. The paper will improve the library’s capacity to deliver information services effectively and efficiently and may provide pertinent guidelines for university library management.

Keywords: Planning, Strategy, Strategic planning and University Library

Introduction
The tool of strategic planning has been used by public and private organizations to redirect development processes, to ensure a desired change and to enable an organization to achieve strategic competitive advantage and its long term objective. Strategic planning has been a feature of general library and information center management and is more than ever before receiving attention from information professionals as a viable institutional management tool to determine their objectives and deciding the policies, strategies and operation that will govern the
acquisition, use and disposition of resources material, human and financial needed to achieve the stated objectives. As a result a lot of planning studies are being undertaken by libraries and information centers which had resulted into strategic plans.

The evolution of strategic planning can be traced to the private sector in the industrialised parts of the world in the 1950’s. According to Martins & Macsen (1992) the concept was developed in the United States of America in the early 1960’s, as a framework for long-term decision taking in private and commercial enterprises. In the 1970’s, the concept was transferred to the management of higher education, in the context of declining student numbers, stagnant funding and increased competition amongst the numerous institutions which make up USA higher education. In the same 1970’s, the concept found its way into higher institution libraries in Europe and the United States. By 1976, there was evidence of its use in Nigeria at Kashim Ibrahim Library of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. In Africa, the Association of African Universities (AAU) commissioned a study in 1990 and 1991 on the cost effectiveness and cost efficiency of strategic planning in African Universities. The National Universities Commission (NUC) adopted the findings of the AAU and directed all universities in Nigeria to embark on strategic planning. The commission conducted a workshop on strategic planning for universities in 1995. In 2001, it also conducted a National Workshop on Strategic Planning to further sensitize university councils and managements on its philosophy, concepts and methodology. It is gratifying that many universities have embraced strategic planning with better results. As a result of the directive, the concept of strategic planning received wide attention in organizational behaviour literature on education in the country (Sofoluwe, 2002). AbduhKareem, Akinnubi and Oyeniran (2009) assert in their research on strategic planning implementation that almost all twenty four sampled universities had fully implemented strategic planning. The reason for differences in the response to the level of strategic plan implementation might be due to the newness of the management technique in the nation’s university system, as well as the commitment of the participants to strategic plan implementation in their institutions. The use of strategic planning by the Nigerian universities has become widespread due to the fact that many institutions now find themselves in circumstances where old methods of planning and management are no longer effective in guaranteeing a steady future.

Therefore, Strategic planning is known to libraries and information centres, libraries and information centres have used it to transform resources, and facilities into the dissemination of knowledge.

What is Strategic Planning?

The concept of Strategy and Planning are central to understanding the process of strategic planning. The term strategy is not new. According to Patanakul P and Shenbar (2012), its origin was apparently rooted in early days of writing about war published in famous works such as Sun Tzu’s, The Art of war (1948) and Carl Von on war (1989) Early war philosophers found it easier to define strategy, they saw it as a quest for finding the best way to ensure winning the war or the battle. In the military parlance, strategy means how we are planning to win. The same principle should apply to library and information centers. Library and information center unlike before is now operating in a competitive environment Library is facing competitions from Internet Technology and information products that may displace library.
According to Weihrich, Cannice & Koontz H (2008) at the heart of every strategic issues, a fundamental tension between apparent opposites can be identified. A fundamental tension has been identified between library and new technologies, diminishing level of funding and rising cost of library and information services, changing and turbulent environment of parent organization etc.

Strategy according to Oyeyipo (2009) is a grand plan or a comprehensive course of action detailing the specific moves or routes to be taken by a company to achieve its long term goals and a sustainable competitive advantage (SCA)

According to Ifidon (2007) strategy involves how to get where one wants to go. It defines the general direction in which the organisation chooses to move to meet its goal and realise its objectives.

From evolutionary point of view, strategy is defined by Encarta Dictionary (2010) as behaviour, structure or other adaptation that improve viability. Library needs to adapt to new technologies and put up behaviour and structure that can improve library viability. Microsoft Encarta Premium (2009) defines Strategy as art of employing all elements of the power of a nation or nations to accomplish the objectives of a nation or an alliance in peace or war; also the art of military command in combat. Guided by this definition, strategy can be defined in the context of Library as an art of maneuvering and employing all elements of the power of a library both human and financial resources to accomplish the objectives of the library. The term “planning” is a set of activities intended to achieve goals. It is a road map that leads you to set goals. According to Enikanselu S.A. (2008) planning is a process that involves setting goals and deciding how best to achieve them. The issue of how best to achieve them is where strategy comes in and becomes imperative. How to achieve goal is as important as setting them.

According to Weihrich H. (2008) planning involves selecting missions and objectives and deciding on the action to achieve them. This will demand decision making, which is choosing a course of action among all alternatives. It requires selecting the overall goals and objectives of the organization and determines ways of attaining them.

Planning is an important part of the day to day activities of managers. There is a saying ‘he who fails to plan has planned to fail’. This suggests that planning is essential for the success of any organization. According to Yalokwu (2006) evidence suggest that organizations which engage in formal planning tend to perform better than those with limited or no formal planning. Therefore planning affects the performance of an organization.

According to Kasimu (2011) planning is a process of mapping out in advance pattern of action which, when implemented could lead to the attainment of the goals of an organization. Plans are set up to achieve organizational goal but not all plan leads to the attainment of the organizational goal. What determines whether plans will achieve its goals or not is implementation. A plan that is not implemented will never achieve its goal. Therefore in any planning, the approach (strategy) to accomplish the goal is very vital.
Planning should not be seen as a mere forecast. It is a process by which a manager and his team decide in advance what is to be done, who is to do it, when it is to be done, what desired goal is and how it is to be achieved. The essence of planning is to prepare for and predict the future events.

Strategic planning in a university library is not the same thing as Planning in library and information center. What then distinguish a strategy planning in a library from planning in a library planning? Every library and information center has plan their operation, plans on how to get things done. But not all plans are strategic but all strategy is plan. For a plan to be strategic, it must be given a military or forceful approach of winning at all cost. According to Obayan, P (2010) for a plan to be strategic, it must see the forest and not the individual trees. This means that it must take a holistic view of issues. It must deal with real cause of issues not simply their surface manifestations. Such a plan often takes a long term perspective view of issues, even though it could include medium term sub-phases. Above all, a strategic plan does not address all possible challenges. Instead it limits itself with issues of strategic importance-issues that do impact on a lot of related issues. Issues are prioritised with emphasis on higher impact areas.

I shared the view of Patanakul P and Shenbar (2012), that Strategy is a higher level than a plan. Strategy is what drives the plan. Strategic planning in library involves perspectives, the guideline, the attitude, the direction and the policy which leads to the actual plan and which will promote a pattern of behaviour that is needed for winning and creating value. This differentiates it from routine plan. The "strategic" part of this planning process is the continual attention to current changes in the organization and its external environment, and how this affects the future of the organization.

Strategic planning in a library is a process through which an examination of the external and internal factors of a library results in a set of mission, purpose, objectives, policies, plans and programmes for implementation and strategies to achieve them. It involves reviewing the library’s mission and setting quantified targets in the context of the internal and external environment of the institution.

Generally, strategic planning in a library deals with at least one of three key questions

1. Library activity
2. Library patron
3. How best to render information services

In many organizations, this is viewed as a process for determining where an organization is going over the next year or more typically 3 to 5 years (long term), although some extend their vision to 20 years.

Library strategic planning may be viewed as a description of library’s mission, goals and objectives and how they intend to achieve them.

**Why is Strategic Planning important in University Library?**

The question of strategic planning is becoming more important in University Library. It is either university library plan or perishes. The followings make strategic planning in university library imperative

1. The changing nature of society which requires that libraries must regularly reposition themselves if they are to survive.
2. The shift to knowledge or information society: The shift to knowledge or information society means that libraries and librarians must be alive to the new challenges of ICT. We are in a society where the quality of life as well as prospects for social change and economic development, depend increasingly upon information and its exploitation. In such a society, living standards, patterns of work and leisure, the education system and the market place are all influenced markedly by advances in information and knowledge. The pace of change brought by new technologies has had a significant effect on the way people live, work, and play worldwide. New and emerging technologies challenge the traditional way by which library is been managed. New technologies are changing the ways information is generated, recorded, gathered, stored, preserved, analysed, disseminated and used by people and consequently the ways in which libraries are expected to provide access to information.

3. Globalisation with increased mobility of people and transnational information or knowledge transfer means that only strategic planning will make libraries part of the new information order. University library cannot afford to remain within the national boundaries to be relevant in this age. These new forms of globalization are beginning to replace more conventional types of library among the world's universities. Although traditional channels of communication will remain important, the new information and communication technologies hold great potential for broadly disseminating knowledge at low cost, and for reducing knowledge gaps within countries and between industrial and developing countries. In a broad sense, access to the right information at the right time gives people greater control over their destinies.

4. Diminishing level of funding and rising cost of library and information services call for rational utilisation of resources. During the "oil boom" era, the libraries flourished. They were busy filling their shelves with learning materials in order to sustain the main academic disciplines established by their parent universities. Today, the story is very different. University libraries have problems even in maintaining core collections which represent their universities' curricula and activities because of lack of money and high inflation. Coupled with this is the emergence of ICTs in the educational system worldwide. As revealed by Aguolu (1996) cited in Ogunsola I.A (2004) since the onset of the current recession the governments have been giving the universities grants that are not commensurate with their rapid growth in numbers, faculties, departments, staff, and students. The resultant underfunding of the libraries has become perennial and may remain so if the national economy does not improve significantly. It must be pointed out that university libraries have not been isolated from the financial problems of their parent bodies. One result of this has been the inability of the universities and their libraries to purchase computers, books and other information products and to develop their communication infrastructure owing to the constant shortage of fund. In the global context too, the cost of books, periodicals and other library materials and equipment has risen steeply. Economic conditions have effectively prevented university libraries from developing such services at the required level so far. For the past decade most libraries in Nigeria have suffered the gruesome effect of severe budget cuts as a result of downturn in the national economy. The effect of this includes poor library maintenance, inadequate obsolete collections, lack of tools and essential facilities, staff shortage at all levels and low staff morals.

4. Another reason which makes strategic planning in university library mandatory is competition. Library is facing competition from IT professionals, new technologies, information product
outside vendors from whom information service may be outsourced. These competitors may displace library.

5. Changing and turbulent environment of the parent organization is another factor for strategic planning. Most of the parent organization of the library is facing competition and state of unending restructuring. By extension this affect library.

.6. Another major problem facing university library that necessitates strategic planning is Absenteeism, bad time keeping at all levels and lax supervision at senior level. These are all manifestations of the frustration, lack of commitment, absence of direction and laziness that dominate the university labour scene, resulting in a drastic decline in the effectiveness of universities and their libraries as institutions of higher education.

Other demographic issues are decrease in the number of university library staff and increase in the size of the student population. The number of students most University libraries caters for now are far greater than the number of students that it was built for. The parent institution now admitted more than what the library can accommodate.

These environmental uncertainties and turbulence, typical of most university libraries in developing countries makes strategic planning a necessity so as to improve university library management in terms of planning, cost effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

Therefore in this era of spiraling inflation, proliferation of reading resources and increased technological opportunities, strategic planning becomes imperative. Library growth and development must be planned on a more logical empirical basis for its good health and to attain the organizational goals in an efficient and cost effective manner.

**Developing Strategic Planning in a University Library**

Typically, the strategy for developing an institutional strategic plan entails the setting up of an institution-wide or Central Strategic Planning Committee (CSPC), Faculty (School/College) Strategic Planning Committees (FSPCs) and Departmental Strategic Planning Committees (DSPCs) in addition to use of a suitable consultant for the process where the latter is considered necessary.

In developing strategic planning in a university library, the University Library Strategic Planning Committee (ULSPC) must be constituted and must include all stakeholders for it to succeed. The committee may have the following membership:

i) Chief executive (University Librarian) as Chairman

ii) All heads of Department in the Library.

iii) A Library staff as Secretary

iv) Representatives of all faculties and non-academic departments in the institution

v) A representative of the institution's alumni association

vi) A representative of the host community in which the institution is located

vii) A representative of industry or the business community

viii) A representative of the student’s body

ix) The institution's Director of Academic Planning

x) Library Committee

The membership should cut across the essential segments of the institution.
The committee must first and foremost take into consideration the mission, vision, policy and strategy of the parent organization. The library derives their mission, vision and policy from the mission, vision and policy of the parent organization. Therefore, the planning for development of university libraries must be influenced by the content in which the parent organizations operate in carrying out the functions of teaching, learning, research and providing community services. The university mission, vision and strategies serves as a guide and foundation upon which the university library drafts its own vision, mission and role.

**Strategic Planning Technique**

In adopting the tool of strategic planning librarian must assess its current state and likely future condition of its environment, identify possible state for itself and then develop organised strategies.

SWOT analysis is a very popular strategic planning technique the committee can use to understand their internal and external environments. SWOT is the acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Through such an analysis the strengths and weaknesses existing within an organization can be matched with the opportunities and threats operating in the environment so that an effective strategy can be formulated. An effective organizational strategy therefore, is one that capitalises on the opportunities through the use of strengths and neutralises the threats by minimising the impact of weaknesses, to achieve pre-determined objectives.

A simple application of the SWOT analysis technique involves these steps:

1. Setting the objectives of the organization or its unit
2. Identifying its strengths weaknesses, opportunities and threats
3. Asking four questions
   (a) How do we maximise our strength?
   (b) How do we minimise our weaknesses?
   (c) How do we capitalise on the opportunities in our external environment?
   (d) How do we protect ourselves from threats in our external environment?
4. Recommending strategies that will optimise the answers from the four questions.

The following lists are example of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities that may apply to university library and which can provide a starting point for library SWOT Analysis.

**SWOT ANALYSIS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS: (Internal)</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES: (Internal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>Perceived gaps in the collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable staff</td>
<td>Poor funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library as place</td>
<td>Wrong location of the library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library as a pivotal point in the institution</td>
<td>Poor organizational chart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet place to work</td>
<td>Librarian need to learn a new language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organized information</td>
<td>Librarian does not investigate customers’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality information</td>
<td>Awareness of the library and what we do, among the organization’s staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New technologies</td>
<td>Librarian makes assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding customer service</td>
<td>Librarian focuses on the wrong problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to customer (the organization’s staff) needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and understanding of information organization and structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-oriented staff</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Networking librarians
Efficient searching and cost effective searching.

THREATS: (External)
The Internet “has all the information for free”
The Internet is more convenient
The Internet is more fun
End-user searches
Publication costs and increases
Wrong perception of the library
The library needs an identity; needs branding
Disaster management
Library staffing levels
Administrations’ lack of understanding of the library
Administration has different priorities
Information access and decision-making
Standardization

OPPORTUNITIES: (External)
Digitization
Information orders (electronic )
Weekend/evening access
Network access; wireless
Newsletter articles; editing
Open access movement
Internet availability
Library web site
Self-service
Desktop delivery of articles
Any time, any place library
Table of contents via email
Cooperative purchasing
Market research
User education

Components of Strategic Planning
The component of strategic planning are: Mission, Vision, Goals or objectives, Strategy and Policy.

Vision: Vision has been defined in several different ways. Kotter (1990) cited in Kazimi A. (2009) defined it as a description of something (an organization, a corporate, culture …) in the future. The common denominator in the strategic management definition of vision is vision being future aspirations that leads to an inspiration to be the best in one’s field of activity. Good visions are competitive, original and unique. They foster long term thinking.

Guided by the above definition, the vision of library should be to be a world class university library with the best teaching, learning and research information resources as well as skilful human resources meeting global standards. With the evolution of information and communication technology across the world in the 20th century there arouse a variegated profile showing some university libraries doing better than others in meeting what can be referred to as world class standard.

Mission: Library mission is a statement which defines the role that library plays in the society. It refers to the particular need of the society. It is a concept that represents the purpose of existence of the library among which are provision of information for education, research, personal self-development and national development. Radar(1994) cited in Ifidon (2007) suggests that the
published mission statements acts as a proof of correctness of a particular choice since any choice can be tested against the statement which defines the aspirations, values, roles and goals of a specific community – What it means to be part of it. Mission or vision statement must be Specific, Measurable Achievable, Realistic and Time bound (SMART).

**Goals and objectives** – Library goals are what an organization hopes to accomplish in a future period of time. They represent the future outcome of effort put in now. Objectives are the ends that state specifically how the goals shall be achieved. They are concrete and specific in contrast to goals that are generalised. It is the objective that makes the goal operational. The following should be University library’s strategic goals and objectives:

- Provision of informational materials for education at undergraduate and postgraduate level research, and national development.
- Provision of materials in support of college/School/Faculty, external and collaborative researches,
- Provision of materials for personal self-development
- Cooperation with other university libraries with a view of forming a network of informational materials that are the disposal of all scholars.
- Provision of information to members of its immediate communities who are non-university members.

These goals and objectives of library is subject to modification depending on the type of library involved.

**Strategy** – Library strategy defines the general direction in which the organisation chooses to move to meet its goals and realise its objectives.

**Policy** – Library policy provides guidelines for major decisions. It defines the scope of library activities that are necessary and permissible. Once the library objectives have been formulated, it can begin to develop policies that state in what manner the objectives can be achieved. Head Example of policies are the collection, lending policies; penalties for various library offences and who should be legitimate user of library. Any serious policies developed by library heads needs the approval of higher authorities like the Library committee or Board, senate, council, etc.

**Benefits of Strategic Planning in a University Library.**

Strategic planning will help university library in achieving equilibrium between the library and its turbulent environment; helping it to absorb pressures, demonstrating competence, reducing unpredictability and establishing the basis for subsequent performance monitoring.

According to Nte (2007) Strategic planning is about developing a good match between an institution’s activities and the demands on the environment in which it operates. Strategic planning helps library to arrive at a desired destination within a short period of time based on analysis of both internal and external factors. Without a strategic framework you do not know where you are going or why you are going there. So, then, it does not really matter how you get there.

Effective strategic planning in the university library could help to reduce wastage in the use of the available resources which in turn, could help the library achieve their goals. It provides consistent guidelines for the library activities.

It helps library heads in decision making. The analysis provided by strategic planning gives Librarians more of the information they needed to make good decisions.

Strategic planning reduces the chance of mistakes because strategies and goal are analysed several times.
Strategic planning helps Librarians to anticipate future events through environmental analysis.

**Challenges of Strategic Planning in a University Library**

The challenge of Strategic Planning in a University Library includes the followings among others:

1. The revealing of institutional weaknesses for which there may be no easy remedy.
2. The investing of considerable time and energy—at high opportunity costs—with little gain if the strategic planning process is not successfully completed.
3. The short-term introduction of high levels of uncertainty and anxiety into the life of an organization; and
4. The potential loss of programs and staff whose contribution may no longer be justified within a new or re-defined institutional mission.

But there are actions an organization can take to maximize the benefits and to minimize the risks associated with strategic planning. This include

1. Meet basic prerequisites for strategic planning before starting the process;
2. Plan a carefully coordinated process of participation and inclusion, particularly of external stakeholders.
3. Collect sufficient information and allow time for processing this information.
4. Provide adequate resources to carry out the process of strategic planning.

**Why Strategic planning in a University Library fails.**

No matter how excellent strategic plans are they can fail if care is not taken. Vincent (1988) cited in Badu & Lourige (1997) identified specific variables that affect the success of strategy in libraries in a multiple case study in which she concludes that:

- Lack of resources is one reason why libraries may be reluctant to engage in strategic planning.
- The stability of the environment and sufficient control over it ensures the attainment of organisational objectives hence strategy formulation.
- Publicly funded service organisations have a relationship with the environment which is often characterised by turbulence, unpredictability and the imposition of short-term objectives and structures which, bear little relation to the dependant organisations' circumstances.
- Success of strategy in libraries is affected by weight of tradition, vested interests and corporate expectations.
- A single, agreed, clearly articulated mission is an essential prerequisite for successful strategic planning.

Ferguson (1992), writing on strategic planning for libraries in developing countries, states that strategic planning is affected by basic influences, namely: the fundamental socio-economic characteristic and purpose of the organisation, the values and philosophy of management and the organisations strengths and weaknesses in the light of the external and internal environments. He states further that strategic planning is likely to be affected by the location of the organisation because these factors vary with different cultural socio-economic and historical environments.
Couples with above assertions are failure of the library to understand and follow the plans religiously and to be guided by the library’s objectives, lack of required resources to meet the challenges of the plan, changing and turbulent nature of parent organization, lack of support from senior management of parent organization, failure to obtain staff commitment, inability to manage resistance and change arising from the plan will surely mean failure, poor communication sharing among the stakeholders among others can hinder the success of strategic planning in a university library.

**Conclusion**

In this era of changing nature of society, shift to knowledge or information society, globalization, diminishing level of funding and rising cost of library and information services which calls for rational utilisation of resources, the need for strategic planning becomes imperative. Librarians can use strategic planning to plot a viable course towards greater accomplishments in the decade to come. Strategic planning methods provides assurance that university library can turn away from the present path of institutional paralysis and decline. The decision that emanates from strategic planning is likely to have scientific basis and its flexibility can accommodate changes in management and in the environment.

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