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A survey of the strategic plans of academic libraries in the UK

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A SURVEY OF THE STRATEGIC PLANS OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE UK.

By

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A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Arts degree of the Loughborough University of Technology.

September 1995

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Abstract

After an initial examination of the theory of strategic planning, this study considers the results of two surveys of the strategic planning documents of academic libraries which were conducted in 1992 and 1995. It asks to what extent strategic planning techniques are being practiced in academic libraries in the UK, and finds that most have adopted the approach, although the nature and quality of the planning, judged by the documents produced, is very variable.

The planning documents are then used as source material for a discussion of the kinds of strategies that are emerging within the sector. It is argued that there is a broad consensus among academic libraries as to their mission, the key issues which they face, and also underlying principles for approaching them. But that because of the unique operating environment of individual libraries, the strategies into which they are translated can be quite divergent.

The latter point is illustrated by case studies of the strategic planning processes of the library and information services of the universities of Oxford, Birmingham, Leeds, Warwick, Aston, West of England, and De Montford.

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I would also like to thank the many academic librarians who contributed material for both the 1992 and 1995 strategic planning surveys. A particular debt is owed to the following for allowing themselves to be interviewed for this survey:

Roy Adams	Head of Library, Information & Networking Services, De Montfort University, Leicester.
Reg Carr	University Librarian, University of Leeds.
Sheila Corrall	Director of Library & Information Services, Aston University.
Mike Heery	Head of Library Services, University of the West of England, Bristol.
John Henshall	The Librarian, University Library, University of Warwick.
David Vaisey	Bodley's Librarian, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Academic libraries are faced today with what Butler and Davis have called an "unprecedented confusion of opportunities"[1] but also, perhaps, with an unprecedented confusion of threats. A range of forces originating both inside and outside their parent institutions is increasingly affecting the work of academic libraries: the forces include rapid technological change, changes to the structure, size and funding of higher education, and social, political and economic changes within society at large.

A key problem has been the struggle to keep pace with escalating user demand. Rapid government-encouraged growth in student numbers throughout the higher education sector has coincided with a period of high inflation in the cost of printed materials. But there has been no equivalent increase in the budgets made available to librarians. Thus, as Riggs observes, libraries are "being pressured by societal demands to do progressively more with progressively less".[2]

New technology has offered some solutions. Automated acquisition, cataloguing and issuing systems have brought efficiencies to library operations. New and improved services have also been introduced as technology has revolutionised the ways information is "generated, recorded, gathered, stored, preserved, transferred, analyzed and used by the individual"[3]. Yet information technology brings its own problems, including high initial costs, rapid obsolescence, and a new range of skills required of staff and users. Improvements to services also tend to fuel yet greater expectations and demand.

Library managers must also gauge the impact of an unprecedented range of other environmental changes: the emergence of new learning patterns and "non-traditional" types of student, new areas of research and teaching in their institutions (particularly in relation to Europe), changed institutional goals following the end of the binary divide, new funding arrangements for the entire HE sector, the emergence of a "market ethos", pressure for libraries to contribute to the income of the parent institutions, and the growing assertiveness of the student population[4].

What library managers have needed is a method for marshalling these diverse and perhaps contradictory elements so as to produce a coherent and obtainable way forward for their libraries. Increasingly, strategic planning is being presented in the professional literature as a useful, indeed, key element in the armory of the academic library manager. Recent works by Biddle[5], Corrall[6], Jacob[7], and

Riggs[8] have emphasised the value of strategic planning. So has the Follett Report[9], the wide-ranging study of the future of UK academic libraries conducted by the Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group in 1993.

Definition of strategic planning

So strategic planning is currently fashionable within the literature of library management. But what is strategic planning? Strategic planning is a planning process which emphasize the importance of the library manager focusing on a vision of what his or her library desires to be in the future. In the "tranquil" environment of the past it was usually acceptable for libraries to plan forward on an incremental basis - extending and adapting their existing practices to meet modest new challenges as they arose. In today's turbulent environment it is doubtful whether such an approach affords library managers the required sense of direction and at the same time the flexibility to meet new challenges with sufficiently imaginative new responses and lateral thinking. When (as now) libraries and other institutions find it necessary to introduce multiple far-reaching changes within a very short period of time, the paramount need is to ensure that libraries commit themselves to a direction and that the diverse initiatives conform to a coherent and mutually compatible overall pattern. This, perhaps, is the major contribution of strategic planning.

The essence of strategic planning is its "backwards analysis"[10]. Following an analysis of the environment in which his library operates, the planner focuses on desirable future outcomes (say five years hence). Having identified a preferred future from among the many possibilities, the planner determines the broad strategies that are required to reach that goal from the present position. The strategies are then broken down into hierarchies of ever more specific aims and objectives, and finally into the individual actions that are needed to bring them about. Thus, in theory, no decisions will be made in isolation. All decisions and all activities in the organisation, at whatever level, should be coherent with and contribute to the achieving of the overall preferred future, or "vision", that has been chosen.

Aims and objectives of this study

In most cases (although it is not compulsory) the process of strategic planning involves the production of a written strategic plan.

1. The first aim of this study is to determine the current state of strategic planning in academic libraries in the United Kingdom by an analysis of their strategic planning documents (or whatever other planning documents they have produced). A range of questions will be addressed. They include: "What proportion of academic libraries are producing strategic plans?" "For what purposes are they written?" and "To what extent do they conform to the strategic planning models proposed within the professional literature?"

2. The second aim is to discover, by an analysis of their plans, the strategies that university librarians are developing in response to the unprecedented changes. The aggregate of the strategic plans amounts to an importance source for revealing what librarians are thinking.

The literature on strategic planning in libraries

There has been no full-scale survey of the strategic plans of academic libraries in the UK until now. Most of the research that has been done has focussed on American institutions. Of these studies, the most thorough is probably Stanton S. Biddle's Planning in the University Library[11], a survey of the planning documents of the 101 member libraries of the ARL (the Association of Research Libraries) in 1982/83 and 1990/91. Kinnell and MacDougall conducted a survey of the planning documents of 167 public library authorities and 492[12] local authority leisure services in the UK in 1991/1992. The nearest equivalent for the UK academic library sector was possibly the brief content analysis of the mission statements of thirty academic libraries carried out by Brophy in late 1990 and early 1991 and described in his article, "The mission of the academic library" [13]. Another contribution in this area is the Survey of information policies/strategies at British Universities[14] conducted by Meadows and Hopkins in 1994. It focuses on the universities' integrated institution-wide information strategies whereas the focus here is essentially on their library plans. But, of course, there is considerable overlap between the two.

Methodology

In August 1992 Tom Whitehall, of the Department of Information & Library Studies at Loughborough University of Technology, sent letters to the chief librarians[15] of ninety-two universities, university colleges and polytechnics in the United Kingdom, asking whether a strategic plan existed for their library and, if so, requesting that the plan be sent for analysis as part of a survey. A content analysis was conducted on the plans that were received, and it formed a starting point for this study.

However, a range of additional information was also sought which places the plans in context.

Firstly, the letters sent in 1992 asked the librarians to list the three most vexing problems that they faced in the management of their libraries. The intention was to gage the relevance of plans in relation to these vexing problems.

Secondly, in June 1995 a questionnaire was sent to the same ninety-two libraries to gather information on the planning processes which had led to the formulation of their current plans.

Thirdly, the 1995 questionnaire asked the ninety-two libraries to provide a copy of any strategic plans that had been produced since 1992, although it was anticipated that many of the 1992 plans would still be current.

Fourthly, the university librarians were also requested to send a copy of their university's institutional (ie university-wide) strategic plan or mission statement when they returned their questionnaire. The intention being to assess the congruence between each university's declared mission and that of its library. Successful strategic planning on an institution-wide basis should involve the library sharing its parent institution's vision.

Fifthly, interviews were conducted with the following managers of university library and information services in June & July 1995 to supplement the information contained in the strategic plans:

Roy Adams	Head of Library, Information & Networking Services, De Montfort University, Leicester.
Reg Carr	University Librarian, University of Leeds.
Sheila Corrall	Director of Library & Information Services, Aston University.
Mike Heery	Head of Library Services, University of the West of England, Bristol.
John Henshall	The Librarian, University Library, University of Warwick.
David Vaisey	Bodley's Librarian, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

These six universities were considered to represent a crude cross-section of the UK university sector. Each was chosen in preference to similar universities of its type because its strategic plan revealed a distinctive approach or a fundamental problem to be faced.

The questionnaire was not sent to the six institutions whose librarians were interviewed. Their interview answers were treated as equivalent to questionnaire answers.

Structure of this study

The study is divided into three main sections. Chapter 2 examines in more detail the theory of strategic planning. It considers the benefits that academic libraries can gain from strategic planning, how strategic planning differs from earlier planning models, and how the various planning stages relate to one another. Chapters 3 then assesses their translation into practice within UK academic libraries with an analysis of the survey results. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the six strategic planning case studies listed above plus an extra one - Birmingham University - based on documentary evidence only.

Tom Whitehall designed and conducted the 1992 survey but did not proceed beyond the initial stages of analysis. The present writer was responsible for all other stages of this study.

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10. Peter Davis, quoted in Riggs, ref. 2, p.8.

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12. Kinnell, Margaret & MacDougall, Jennifer. Meeting the marketing challenge: strategies for public libraries and leisure services, 1994, p.6.

13. Brophy, Peter. The mission of the academic library. British Journal of Academic Librarianship, 1991, 6(3), 135-147.

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15. "Librarian" here means the head of the library/information function within a university whether that title is in use or some alternative, such as "Head of Learning Resources", "Director of Information Services, or "Head of Library Services". Similarly, "Library" refers to the main information-providing organ within a university whether it is known as the "library", "resource unit", "information service" or goes by another name.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

The fundamental reason for planning is that it can help us to prepare for "a better future"[1]. Short-term tactical planning of some sort, of course, happens in every organisation because no organisation can avoid taking pressing decisions. However, it is important that organisations also look further ahead. The future will occur inevitably in one form or another so it makes sense to look forwards and influence events as far possible to bring about the most congenial version of the future which is on offer.

No blueprint for action can be produced which is complete in every detail. However, effective planning may enhance an organisation's sense of direction and provide it with a broad framework for guiding day-to-day tactical decision-making. An improved awareness of present capabilities and possible future trends should also mean that when changes occur library managers are positioned to make a rapid response.

Objective, causal links between planning processes and organisational success are, of course, difficult to prove. Nevertheless, Thune and House[2] compared the performances of thirty-six firms in the drugs, chemical, machinery, oil, food, and steel industries and found that over a fifteen year period to 1965 those that planned formally achieved significantly superior results in key areas such as earnings per share. Companies which introduced formal planning during the period, moreover, fared better than previously. No reason has emerged to suggest not-for-profit organisations would not also benefit.

Differences between strategic planning and earlier planning models

Since Thune and House's research the concept of planning has undergone important changes. In the 1960s libraries which planned formally tended to adopt the long-term corporate planning techniques then favoured by commerce and industry. Emerging in a period of stability and growth, 1960s-style corporate planning tacitly assumed that these trends would continue into the future[3]. Companies established specialist corporate planning departments at their head offices which produced documents charting their way forward to quite a fine level of detail. Planning horizons tended to be long (twenty year plans were not uncommon) because of the assumption of stability and predictability. The broad approach was "incremental" in that it had as its starting point "the way things have always been done" and projected them forward, adding on annually say "10 percent for new projects and 15 percent for inflation"[4].

Modern strategic planning theory diverges from this pattern because ever since the oil crisis of the early 1970s it has been clear that all organisations operate in a fluctuating or potentially fluctuating environment. Detailed, static, long-term blueprints are no longer seen as desirable or even possible. Instead what is sought is a planning tool which facilitates the "systematic management of discontinuous change"[5]. Centralised planning teams have given way to more devolved structures in which a greater share of the planning is done by front line managers - the people who implement plans and who are closest to, and therefore probably most in tune with, environmental (particularly customer) change. Capabilities and capacity for change are emphasised more by management theorists than the prescriptive detailing of products and services[6]; and written plans are viewed as no more than guides or starting points for managers who are given greater freedom at all levels to respond quickly to events.

A static, linear model has been replaced by a dynamic iterative process whereby the rapidly-changing environment is continuously monitored, strategies rethought, and priorities reordered on the basis of the environmental changes. The assumption that current practices would probably suffice in the future (with certain modifications and changes of emphasis) has given way to a belief that operations must be fundamentally reassessed from first principles in the light of changing circumstances. Completely new methods of satisfying customer needs may be necessary", devised by lateral thinking, and conceivably involving the "addition or deletion"[7] of entire services.

Strategic planning is not an incremental process. It is more rigorous. After an initial environmental audit, the planner develops a vision of an ideal future. A choice is made. The planner then focuses on present conditions and actions needed to prepare and position the library for that future..

Relationship between marketing and strategic planning

Strategic planning may be viewed, in a sense, as the application of marketing principles to an organisation at the most fundamental level of decision-making. Marketing is about "identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer needs"[8] and, as such, should be the core business function, indistinguishable from the organisation's overall purpose. As such, its principles should infuse the strategic plan.

The difference between strategic and marketing plans is essentially one of scale and detail. Strategic planning is about defining the business of the organisation - something which requires the identifying of market segments and competitors in broad terms - and is undertaken at the corporate level. Marketing is one step removed. It is undertaken at the level of the "strategic business unit"[9]. This

means that marketing plans are product-specific or target-market-specific and include considerably more detail in relation to the four P's (the designing of products, and their pricing, positioning and promoting) of individual products. The underlying principles are the same, however. The current study is concerned solely with strategic plans.

Stages of the Planning Process

Three distinct stages may perhaps be identified within the strategic planning process although, as Corrall has pointed out, "these phases are separated conceptually more than in practice"[10]. The three phases are:

a) Environmental analysis

b) Strategic focus

c) Strategy development

a) Environmental analysis

To be effective, decision-making or planning must be based upon adequate data. Therefore the planning process should start with a structured attempt to understand the environment within which the library operates and to identify trends which may affect the library's progress. The analysis should allow one to decide which services and present activities will no longer be relevant, desirable, or sustainable at the end of the planning period and, conversely, what new opportunities or capabilities will have arisen, so that a vision and strategies for the future may be developed which genuinely meet the needs of the library's clientele.

The environmental analysis can be approached in several ways but there are four key areas to consider:

1. trends associated with society at large (the external or macro-environment).

   These may be considered under the four headings of a STEP analysis: (11)

   Society: e.g. literacy levels, career expectations, personal mobility

   Technology: e.g. networks, cost, computer literacy.

   Economics: e.g. inflation rate, exchange rates, employment rate.

   Politics: e.g. EU and health regulations, public sector funding levels, government policy on student numbers.

2. trends particularly associated with the library and information sector.

   Areas for consideration here may include: the nature and volume of scholarly communication and publishing; information technology, systems and networking; co-operation and resource sharing; customer services; human resource management: plus developments in higher education such as new patterns of learning, teaching and research(12).

3. trends within the library's parent institution (the university)

   A key factor for any university library is the parent institution which it exists to serve and which provides its funds. Its history and traditions, structure and activities, mission, goals, strengths, and weaknesses must be analysed for their likely impact on the library. "Stakeholders" or "publics" - those groups or individuals whose opinions will affect the library and whose needs it is

beholden to satisfy - must be identified. They may include academic staff and students, university administrators, funding bodies, professional associations, local community leaders and the scholarly community at large.

4. trends within the individual library (the internal environment)

The library's performance in meeting current needs should be identified along with any gaps between current capabilities and anticipated future needs. This is best done by considering each group of stakeholders in turn - an adoption of the marketing technique of market segmentation. However, it will probably be necessary to consider each functional division or service of the library too.

Pertinent questions may include: Who are our customers? Who are our potential customers? What do they want from the library and what do they get? Is the pattern of use changing? Is the library building suitable for new technologies? Is there sufficient shelf space for future acquisitions? How does the library compare with its competitors?

The testing of assumptions

Strategic planning is as much about asking the right questions - of challenging rigorously every aspect of a library's operations - as it is about finding answers. Assumptions held by library staff should be tested. Common assumptions are that "Library services should be free"[13] and that "the parent institution is the only possible source of funds". Assumptions, if unfounded, represent constraints upon action and therefore may limit the quality of service offered.

Sources of information

With imagination, a wide range of information sources may be found for the environmental analysis. Sources include external consultants, market research firms, and the professional literature; automated management information systems (MIS) which may provide useful performance measures and transactions statistics; user-surveys based on questionnaires, individual interviews or "focus groups" (sample groups of users interviewed collectively); institutional strategic plans, mission statements, annual reports, and briefing documents; and above all, discussions with interested groups such as the academic staff of each department. Faculty board meetings, staff-student committees, and library committees with broad membership, may provide the opportunity[14].

Participation

The widest possible participation by stakeholders and staff of all grades is generally recommended. Small working parties may be created, each with a particular aspect of the environment to consider[15]. Staff who work at points where the library interfaces with its clients (such as the issue desk) can be expected to be most in tune with client needs and the library's failings at an operational level. They have a particularly important contribution to make. Strategic planning has been described as a process which is both "bottom up" and "top down"[16]. At the stage of environmental scanning the aim is for an upwards flow of relevant information from all quarters to those who will formulate the organisation's vision.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis may usefully draw together the results of the environmental analysis. The findings from all four levels of analysis are listed together as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities or Threats (as appropriate). Strengths and Weaknesses refer to the library's current internal capabilities, while Opportunities and Threats are usually defined as future trends, external in origin, which the library will probably have to navigate.

Clearly, not all strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will be of equal magnitude. As Corrall points out, "many current strengths may seem less strong when judged against expected standards of the future, and conversely some weaknesses may be less important if they relate to services no longer considered to be a high priority"[17]. They must be ranked according to their potential impact on service quality, their cost, and likelihood of occurrence.

It may be necessary to look repeatedly at many trends as new data is received and new strategies are suggested. What should emerge is a set of valid planning assumptions which should form the basis for a vision of what the library will be like (or what one would prefer it to be like) five or ten years hence. The assumptions should also inform and guide the development of strategies to fulfill that overall vision.

b) Strategic focus

Strategic focus is the stage of defining and articulating the purpose and values of one's organisation. This is usually done with the help of a mission statement (perhaps also a vision statement).

Vision statement

The vision statement is a snapshot of the library as one would like it to be in the future based on the assumptions about future trends and opportunities arising from the SWOT analysis. It describes the library's desired position in the market place and in doing so sets a direction which enables policies to be formulated. The British Library, for instance, has announced a vision in which it is "The world's leading resource for scholarship, research and innovation"(1). As Jacob explains, "The vision statement should be oriented towards the future and should be almost out of reach so that the library and its staff must stretch to reach the vision"(2). It should be inspirational, aspirational, idealistic, visionary, and pithy, and should contain qualitative phrases - "quality", "innovation" and "fairness"(3), for example. It represents an attempt to look out over the parapet; to leave day-to-day operational activities behind for a while and focus on the broader picture and the destination. In short, it should be visionary!

Whitehall(4), however, has pointed out the apparant anomaly of libraries basing their plans on an ideal at a time when insufficient funds are available for its implementation. However, as he acknowledges, the anomoly is more apparant than real. Firstly, strategic planning concerns the optimum course which is possible in the light of probable future environmental conditions including financial constraints. Secondly one might argue that forward planning is even more important during times of financial stringency. In periods of affluence mistakes may be met by additional resourcing. During times of retrenchment, decisions must be correct first time and the rationalisation of services, just as much as their expansion, is better met by the "logical, mutually reinforcing responses"(5) which emanate from an ultimate vision than by hasty defensive ad hoc reactions.

Mission statement

Not all writers distinguish between vision and mission statements since they partly overlap. However, most agree that a mission statement is essential regardless of whether a vision is articulated(6). A mission statement delineates the organisation's fundamental purpose but in more concrete terms than a vision statement. In effect, it answers the basic marketing question "What business are we in?". The vision statement may speak of "satisfied" or "delighted customers" but the mission statement defines which customers and which needs.

Dubberly describes the danger facing libraries which operate without a mission statement:

> *The organization moves forward, full steam ahead, but those involved aren't really sure of where they are going. The books are ordered. The bills are paid. Buildings are even remodelled. All the daily objectives are completed. But is the organization carrying out its purpose? Are we accomplishing what really needs to be accomplished? You never will really know unless you have a mission or purpose statement for you library...It tells you why you want to accomplish the goals for which you have objectives.*(7)

It also encapsulates succinctly the distinctive style and values that will be employed in doing so. It sets the tone for the kind of organisation that one wishes to be, with the aim of inducing in employees and, hopefully, customers what Brophy calls "a common set of values and behavioural standards"(8). The IBM mission, for example, mentions "respect for the individual, dedication to service and quest for superiority in all things"(9). Clearly, alongside its planning role it has an important public relations aspect. Indeed, De Montfort University distributes its institution-wide mission statement through an External Relations Department(10). A library's mission statement is valuable for gaining the understanding and support from internal and external stakeholders. De Montfort University's mission statement comprises the necessary mixture of purposes and values:

> **To provide teaching, research and complementary services delivered through a distributed University** which is *internationally competitive, locally sensitive and everywhere excellent.*
>
> To achieve this mission the University will embrace a range of activities from sub-degree to post-doctoral levels within a context which values the personal and social development of all individuals.(11)
>
> (Purposes have been emboldened and values italicised. My bold and italics)

A mission statement embodies in a succinct phrase four or five concise concepts which can guide staff at all times, and against which the overall success or failure of the library will be judged. It should focus primarily on "ends" (the needs that are to be satisfied, the business's reason for existing, and its distinctive values and style) at a broad level rather than on the specific methods or "means" of achieving them. Levitt(12), in a classic paper published in 1960, showed that an organisation which concentrates on "means" risks defining its business too narrowly. He cited

the American railroad companies which, in the early years of this century, confused means (railways) with ends (transportation) and were thus slow to perceive the threat that road and air operators presented to their business.
Libraries must define their business widely if they are not suffer a similar fate, and to be fair most librarians prefer to speak of "the information or knowledge business" than the more restrictive "book business"[13]. A definition which focuses on the need that requires satisfying rather than the medium is preferable because sufficient latitude must always be allowed for the latter to change as the operating environment itself changes.

A broad perspective on one's business is vital but, on the other hand, it is important to avoid adopting a mission statement that is so broad and imprecise that it becomes meaningless. Mosley puts it thus:

> *It is no longer sufficient merely to say we support the curriculum. We must decide and articulate what that time-honoured phrase really means. We must be able to express...why [the library] is unique...and how that uniqueness allows us to contribute to the intellectual life [of the university]. A [good] mission statement does just this.*[14]

A mission statement which is indistinguishable from that of libraries elsewhere or from other information providers on campus, such as the book shop and computer centre, is unlikely to guide to anybody[15]. The mission statement needs to define clearly the direction in which library should be moving and yet should be sufficiently broad to allow for flexibility at the operational level in the face of changing environmental conditions.

The vision or mission statement stands as the apex of a planning process which starts from the perspective of the need which requires statisfying and the overall business aim of the organisation; only afterwards does the focus shift to generation of the strategies and actions necessary for their fulfillment. This approach offers a counterbalance to the inherent conservatism of most organisations which unduly limits their options. John D. Rockefeller III explained the problem:

> *An organization is a system, with a logic of its own, and all the weight of tradition and inertia. The deck is stacked in favor of the tried and proven way of doing things and against the taking of risks and striking out in new directions.*[16]

Strategic planning encourages the organisation to focus upon and value "ends" rather than the details of current practices. It thus opens the way for consideration of alternative - better - methods of fulfilling them and to a cycle of improvement.

Goals and objectives

When one turns from the mission statement, and its question "What is the library really trying to achieve?", to the second level of the planning hierarchy (the broad accomplishments, programmes or areas of activity which are necessary for fulfilling the mission) one is greeted by some confusion of terminology. "Goals", "aims", "objectives", "targets" and "strategies" tend to be used interchangeably [17]. Here they will here be called "goals", and it is usually advisable for there to be no more than between five and eight of them so as not to dilute the focus of the organisation.

Goals are first-level priorities. They must be capable of being converted into specific, measurable objectives and actions but that process should be reserved for later so as not to lose sight of the overall direction among a mass of detail. Numbering is essential because to plan is to prioritise. Each goal may then be broken down into more precise, measurable shorter-term objectives. From these one may then determine the individual activities that are required. Detailed action plans may then be drawn up.

But how is one to determine overall priorities and goals? One method is for small groups of staff to consider Key Result Areas (KRAs) or Critical Success factors (CSFs). Very simply, one compares the mission statement with the SWOT analysis of organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats so that statements in the form, "In order to..., the library needs to become more (or less)..."[18] may be developed. From here it is only a small step to identify the matters where success is essential if the mission is to be achieved, areas where the greatest improvement is still necessary, and the programmes which offer the best cost benefit ratio.

c) Strategy development

This still leaves the problem of how to determine strategies for meeting these goals and objectives. The favoured method is generally to break objectives down into their component parts and state them as problems. Then, by a mixture of individual analysis and group brainstorming sessions which are informed by the environmental analysis, answers are sought to each which tap the creativity and imagination of the widest possible circle. Brainstorming should be based on an assumption that even the most far-fetched ideas remain valid until the question "Why not?" is answered effectively.

A strategy which is superior in every respect seldom emerges so the pros and cons of alternatives must be weighed (speed versus accuracy, risk versus reward, and so on)[36]. Strategies will need to be compatible with one another, consistent with the organisation's mission statement (to which they should explicitly refer), feasible in relation to resources, produce a measurable benefit, be capable of being understood and owned by staff, and offer a reasonable likelihood of success. The "bottom up" approach which utilises the creative energies of all staff must be augmented by a "top down" element in which the planning team and senior managers mould the individual strategies into a coherent portfolio. A synergy between elements which multiplies their individual effects should be sought, and the strategies will have to be repeatedly rethought in the light of one another and evironmental changes[37]. Clearly this must be an iterative process.

Contingency plans and scenarios

Contingency plans may be necessary at various levels of strategy to cope with uncertainties in the operating environment. For instance, the library might wish to consider its response to a number of potential budgetary changes. Contingency plans are based on "what if"[38] scenarios - the operating conditions (scenarios) that would result from various combinations of three or four of the most likely assumed threats and opportunities. Strategies are then developed for each scenario.

The Association of Research Libraries has developed a range of scenarios for libraries to use as the starting points for discussion of their own futures. The first scenario represents the traditional library, with its emphasis on printed documents. The second scenario mixes traditional elements with the parallel provision of electronic online services and access to networks. The third scenario retains some traditional core collections in a centralised building but overall the library has evolved into a series of sophisticated discipline-oriented information services which provide user-tailored information from electronic sources maintained

regionally or nationally. The fourth scenario includes a fully electronic library with the emphasis on users designing their own information strategies and searching databases without personal assistance[39].

Since they were first presented in 1984 a fifth scenario has been developed. In this, the library has become an information gateway which is fully integrated into the teaching and research functions of the university. It supports a wide variety of information gathering behaviours: multi-use computer workstations allow users to search local and national databases, prepare texts, send messages and complete self-paced learning modules, while materials are requested from and delivered to patrons at service points and offices throughout the campus.

Of course these only represent possible starting off points for discussion. Each library must develop its own scenarios in the light of its unique operating environments. The vision or mission statement of the final plan represents the scenario which the library sees as most plausible[40].

Communication

There is no standard formula for communicating the outcomes of a strategic planning process because it may have been undertaken for a variety of possible reasons. Some plans may be for internal consumption only - in which case a report or discussion paper may suffice; others may be for external use and fulfill an important public relations function - in which case a better presented document with an inspirational title may be more appropriate[41]. The key is to orientate one's plan to the intended audience.

The key elements for inclusion will probably be:

Mission statement

Environmental/SWOT analysis

Goals

Objectives

Strategies

Additional elements to be included according to the plan's purpose might be:

Director's forward

Executive summary

Introduction (including an outline of the planning process, the reasons for undertaking it, and the personnel involved in it)

Vision statement

Supporting strategies

Statistical appendices

Performance indicators

Review of progress to date

Glossary of technical terms[42]

Operational plans

The more detailed activities into which the strategies translate (including the target results, the action steps, the budgets required, the persons responsible, and dates for completion) may be included within the main plan, perhaps as appendices. Alternatively, they may be reserved for a range of marketing and operational plans. The latter typically cover a one-year period and ideally they should coincide with the institutional planning and accounting cycles[43].

Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure that operating plans genuinely guide the daily management of the library, structures must be built into the system to ensure their implementation [44]. Performance must be monitored continually (for instance through monthly progress reports and periodic reviews), and environmental trends tracked. The monitoring process should indicate any on-going revisions that may be necessary to the plan. The results should also feed into the next planning cycle, which should be brought forward if environmental changes require. In this way the plan will act as a firm guide to daily decision-making in the library and yet remain sufficiently responsive to changes. It is axiomatic that strategic planning should facilitate action rather than constrain it[45].

Process or plan?

A view now gaining ground among some management theorist is that the process of planning is actually more important than the formal result - the written document. Tom Peters, for instance, states that a strategic plan should be succinct, emphasize the development of strategic skills and "burned the day before it is to go to the printer"[46]. Corrall explains their reasoning:

> *Because market conditions are so uncertain, the focus is shifting from detailed specification of products and services to designing company capability to cope with constant change, and developing skills and expertise that will equip an organisation to survive and thrive in a turbulent future.*[47]

Products and services may have to be altered to cope with new requirements but this can only happen where staff share a commitment to service, an awareness of professional issues, and the flexibility to master new skills. Therefore, forward-thinking organisations increasingly invest in their staff and stress the human dimension of planning. By drawing staff (and also users, managers and funders) into a wide-ranging and open debate on the role of the library, a process of strategic planning can empower them. It commits the library to listening to the views of frontline staff who are closest to customers and therefore in the best position to suggest improvements based on customer needs. Barriers are broken down, "ownership" of corporate aims increases, and with it a greater sense of personal responsibility for the achieving of results.

Certainly, any document risks being superseded by rapidly changing events but the act of producing one is a useful discipline for any organisation to undertake. It focuses attention on the planning process and the resulting document is a mechanism for educating and influencing those, both inside and outside the library, whose opinions matter. No university library can today assume that everyone on campus regards it as "a self-evident good"[48] - a point made forcefully by Munn in an article evocatively titled, "The bottomless pit, or the academic library as viewed from the administration building"[49]. In an era of retrenchment and cost-control, service departments which do not directly contribute to the income of their hard-pressed parent institution inevitably come in for particularly close scrutiny from funding officers and administrators. Libraries may be in direct competition for funds with other service providers such as the computer centre and the student welfare office, and also with academic departments.

If university libraries are to prosper, their librarians need to influence university decision-makers and forge alliances with interest groups in other departments. By linking costs to clear, specific, attainable benefits, by articulating a mission which

is well thought-out and relevant, and by providing documentary evidence of "dynamic management practice"[50], a written strategic plan may contribute greatly to this process.

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CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN UK ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: SURVEY RESULTS.

Although the concept of strategic planning originated in the commercial sector it has much to offer not-for-profit organisations such as university libraries too. In the past there has been a perception that UK academic libraries have been slow to adopt managerial tools such as strategic planning and marketing - and certainly slower than their American counterparts. The surveys of 1992 and 1995 suggest that most academic libraries in the UK do now in fact produce a written strategic plan and that the concept is firmly embedded within the sector.

The August 1992 survey

In August 1992 Tom Whitehall, Department of Information and Library Studies, Loughborough University of Technology, sent letters to the chief librarians of 92 universities, university colleges and polytechnics in the United Kingdom enquiring whether they possessed a written strategic plan and (if so) requested that a copy be sent for analysis. 63 replies were received - a response rate of 68%. 41 (65%) of the respondents claimed that their library possessed a written strategic plan. This may be taken as a broadly reliable figure because 36 of them were submitted for analysis. A further 7 libraries said they were in the process of writing a plan while only thirteen libraries were known definitely to operate without one (See Appendix 4, p. 87).

The July 1995 survey

The 1995 questionnaire (appendix 2) involved the same 92 institutions. It asked the same basic question together with additional questions such as "What is the title of the planning document?", "What is the principal purpose of the plan?" and "Who was involved in developing the plan?" Its results suggest, if anything, that there is a trend towards a greater proportion of libraries (82% of respondents) possessing a written strategic plan, although its lower response rate makes comparison difficult. A further 30 plans were submitted. (see appendix 4)

Only 18 institutions failed to reply to both of the two surveys. If the 1992 and 1995 results are combined it is clear that 86% of the responding libraries (or 70% of all the libraries) possessed a written strategic plan either in 1992, 1995, or in both.

Libraries which operated without such a plan were a small minority (13% of respondents in 1992 and 4% in 1995). They usually attributed it to the instability of the operating environment: "planning is essentially pragmatic, responding to unpredictable opportunities as they arise". Such libraries tended to reply in defensive tones: "to my shame I do not have even a draft strategic plan or similar document to hand that I can send you. The last few years have been swamped by coping with changes in an institutional context that was not particularly hospitable to a strategic plan approach."

The planning process

The results of the 1995 survey (questionnaire, interviews, and analysis of planning documents) are presented in appendices 3 to 5 . They suggest that most institutions view strategic planning as more than a fashion to be undertaken simply to keeping up appearances. Caution is necessary because the librarians were being asked to comment upon their own behaviour, but the picture that emerges is usually that of a serious long-term effort involving wide participation. There was not a single instance of a plan being written solely by the university librarian, although in most libraries he/she generally claimed to have had the greatest input. The deputy librarian and other senior librarians were invariably involved and, of the 39 libraries which reported a written plan in 1995, by far the most frequent pattern was for all professional library staff to contribute. (see appendix 4) The extent of their involvement, though, is unclear. There would often be input too from a library committee, although its role is normally only advisory. Non-professional staff were only involved in a handful of cases.

Such generalisations, however, conceal a myriad of different approaches. In some institutions, such as the Bodleian Library, ideas were drafted by a central planning team and then circulated widely for feedback. In others, a bottom-up approach predominated - with widely constituted working groups contributing ideas for the senior management team to digest and synthesize. At a handful of institutions, including Warwick University, planning was conducted by a committee or task force of which library staff formed only a part, alongside university administrators and senior academic staff. Outside consultants were rarely employed, although a few involved facilitators. Several libraries went to great efforts. Oxford Brookes University Library, attempted to physically separate the strategic planning process from operational matters by sending its entire staff on a brainstorming "Away Day". The Director and Deputy Director of Aston University's Library and Information Service broadened the range of input to their environmental analysis by attending a week-end planning workshop which also

involved publishers and university administrators from other institutions. The complexity and iterative nature of the process in most libraries is reflected in the average time taken to develop a plan being 7 1/2 months.

Most (74.5%) of the libraries were under no compulsion to produce a plan. (see appendix 4). They initiated the planning process themselves either for budgeting/planning or management purposes (34.0%), to raise the library's profile within the university (14.9%), to support a bid for resources (6.4%), or in order to responds to specific changes in circumstances (10.6%). Changes which triggered a planning process included the appointment of a new University Librarian, a critical report by outside consultants, and changed university teaching and learning policies. Although only twelve of the 1995 plans were developed in response to a request by the university administration, twice as many were submitted to various high-ranking administrative bodies for approval, and 21 were submitted to the library committee. (see appendix 4) This perhaps emphasize the importance that librarians attach to gaining the support of stakeholders and communicating their ideas. Many of the planning documents are at pains to show the extent to which the library's strategies reflect or may facilitate institution-wide strategy. Such co-ordination is helped by the fact that most university librarians sit as of right on at least one high-ranking university committee (Senate or the Academic Board). Moreover, one or two libraries, such as the library of the University of the West of England, have mirrored their university's institution-wide planning processes internally on a smaller scale.

Content analysis of plans

Strategic planning documents do not lend themselves easily to content analyses. The 66 plans received in 1992 and 1995 were highly idiosyncratic not only in their titles but also in their presentation, and the issues which they address are hard to categorise neatly. Moreover, the documents varied in length from one to 273 pages, although the vast majority (85%) were between 5 and 30 pages long. The corresponding differences in the level of their detail hampers comparison.

Mission

The one element of the plans for which comparison is relatively easy is the mission statement. A statement of mission was included in the vast majority of the 66 plans of the aggregated 1992 and 1995 surveys. (see appendix 6 & 7) The table below shows their content:

Figure 1: mission statements - content & purpose	Number
Serve students/teaching	34
Serve staff/research	33
Provide access to information from the library's own resources or from elsewhere	22
Deliver high quality library & information services	19
Support learning	19
Provide resources & collections (only four universities used the work "collections")	15
Support the university's mission or strategic plan	14
Adopt an effective & efficient manner	13
Serve users from the university	8
Collaborate with other parts of the university and with other local, regional, national and international organisations	8
Support the administrative activities of the university	6
Offer advice, assistance and training in information skills	6
Provide an appropriate study environment	6
Serve present needs	5
Serve future needs 5	
Serve the wider (national and international) scholarly community	5
Be dynamic and responsive to user needs	5
Preserve the national heritage	5
Serve media needs	4
Offer professionalism & expertise	4
Assist business, industry and the professions	3
Function at the lowest cost or within available resources	3
Promote services and access to information	3
Serve the local region	3
Serve the general public	2
Ensure learning takes place efficiently, effectively & enjoyably	2
Be the university's natural first port of call for information	2
Contribute to the standing of the university as a centre of excellence	2
Facilitate the personal development of the individual	1
Develop position as a major research library	1
Develop focused and proactive information services	1
Develop services and facilities in partnership with staff & students	1
Secure the resources to make good service possible	1

Lead and enable developments in teaching & learning	1
Generate trading income	1
Undertake research & development	1
Exploit technology	1
Link the college with the wider world of knowledge	1
Support the needs of actual & potential users	1
Distribute & deploy resources contributed by the university & the libraries' own funds	1
Be accessible to users	1

As Brophy concluded from conducting a similar exercise in 1990, the results suggest that librarians are in general agreement on the core mission of the academic library. "It is a service, directed towards the support of the learning and research of users (predominantly members of the parent institution) through the provision of information resources".(1) The subsidiary role of other functions is clear from their usually being confined to sub-clauses within the mission statement - as in the mission statement below:

> *The purpose of the Library is to provide a high quality service in support of the University's teaching, learning and research, by developing and promoting access to information resources; and also to contribute to the wider world of scholarship by co-operating with other libraries and organisations.*

Libraries from the geographic extremities of the UK, such as Aberdeen and Exeter, were keener than most to act as an information resource for their region. Major research libraries, hardly surprisingly, were more inclined than most to include the preservation of the national heritage and to emphasize their national and international role. One or two libraries were apparently keen to act almost as laboratories for research into library technology. De Montfort University's Information Centre Strategic Plan 1992-1997 stated, "We are in the business of:", and then listed eleven activities of which one was "Research and development".(2) Indeed, its Library, Information and Networking Services claims the highest research rating of any department in the University.(3) Always, however, the more unusual elements of a mission statement were supplementary to the orthodox core function of serving the information needs of members of the university.

Overall the mission statements suggest a desire on the part of academic librarians to emphasise a customer or service orientation. Mission was more often defined in terms of services, needs and users than in terms of products, such as collections or books. Only four mission statements mentioned explicitly the provision of "collections" or "books", and the preference for the term "information resources" suggests an attempt to define the business of the libraries more widely.

Brophy is correct to say that the missions of UK academic libraries are defined primarily in terms of purpose rather than values but the results of the current survey contradict his assertion that "statements about values as opposed to purposes are quite rare".(4) Most of the mission statements do include a value element, although it is often adjectival description of the purpose: "high-quality library and information services", "efficient and effective service", "professional", "creative", "responsive", "dynamic", "proactive". There seemed to be a list of such "buzz words" that many libraries felt a need to include.(5)

The following is an example of a mission statement with a typical mixture of purposes and values:

> To serve the information needs of University College Dublin by the *professionalism* of its service, the *quality* of its resources, and the *expertise* with which it exploits technology to facilitate the use of these resources. To link the members of the College with the wider world of knowledge, by facilitating access to collections and sources of information outside its boundaries, and to contribute to this commonwealth of knowledge by co-operation on both a national and international level. (the *values* are in author's italics)

One University's information Services Strategy Statement goes a step further by having a separate section titled "Values", with a list of seven underlying values - user focus, efficiency, innovation, quality, consistency, security, and staff development - with an explanation of what they mean in the context of the organisation.

Only 5 of the mission statements formally outline a vision of the future, but those that do tend to suggest two key elements: firstly, that electronic services and products will play a much more prominent role, although "a paperless library is not envisaged"; secondly, that "the University Library in the 1990's will be heavily service-oriented". The current study suggests that Brophy underestimated the importance which academic librarians, at least outwardly, attach to the values associated with a service orientation.

Issues and strategies

If there is broad consensus as to the mission of the academic library, there is also a considerable similarity in terms of the key environmental trends and issues tackled by the planning documents and in relation to the strategies adopted. Forty-three(6) librarians responded to the invitation to name their three most vexing problems in 1992, and - as they should - their answers mirrored very closely the "threats" identified within the strategic planning documents.

Figure 2: vexing problems

Vexing problems:	No. of Responses
Inadequate financial resources	26
Lack of space	21
Rapidly increasing student numbers	20
New technology	17
Rises in periodical prices	11
Ensuring adequate staff development/skills	10
Introduction of integrated learning resource centres	6
Part-time and distant students	4
Relations with lecturers/teaching changes	4
Student-centred learning	3
Multi-site campus	2
Changes to academic year and courses	2
Inadequate collection coverage	1
Poor communication with clients	1

The top five or six of the "vexing problems" tended to figure prominently in virtually every strategic plan that was examined. Moreover, each of the top five problems is to a degree a manifestations of the number one underlying problem: a lack of resources. As one librarian from a technological university remarked:

> *You have asked me what are the three most vexing problems in library management at the moment. My reply is: money, money, money, as Montecuccoli said. Even the problem of making very expensive databases available in three different formats, like SCI in hard copy, CD-ROM and via BIDS, would be feasible if I had ample resources!*

James Thompson observes that it is easy to describe the sort of library which, in theory, would satisfy an undergraduate if resources were unlimited:

> *You need a very large building, with tables and chairs and a hearing system, equipped with a cafeteria and many lavatories. You need a portering staff and a junior staff. You need long hours, preferably 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You need a huge battery of self-service photocopying machines. You need about 15,000 textbooks, covering all undergraduate courses, in multiple copies.*

A library which would meet most of the needs of research and scholarship may be pictured too:

> *If you and I could provide a library of 20 million volumes, with 50,000 periodical subscriptions, unlimited access to on-line services, and unlimited interlending and fax and photocopying services, and keep the place open and staffed all hours, we would have few problems in meeting any of the demands of research and scholarship.*(7)

About two-thirds of the planning documents which were analysed included an environmental analysis, and their central point was invariably that the overwhelming impediment to the creation of such a library was that the financial resources made available were not keeping pace with the increasing demands placed upon them. The planning documents were in complete agreement as to the factors responsible for this. They pointed particularly to the rapid government-inspired expansion in the number of undergraduates at just about every university in the UK over the last decade. Between 1988-89 and 1992-93, for instance, the number of Home and EC full-time equivalent (fte) undergraduate students rose by 57 percent from 517,000 to 811,000.(8) This growth has put pressure on libraries in three main ways; firstly by increasing demand for books and other materials which are then unavailable for other users; secondly, by requiring that more space be set aside for seating and workstations; and thirdly, by increasingly the work-load of service points such as the issue and enquiry desks.

The problem has been compounded by an "information explosion".(9) A huge expansion in the volume of published material, caused in part by the universities' new "publish or perish" ethos, has coincided with a period of hyperinflation in the cost of printed materials - especially periodicals. The average price of a UK periodical, for instance, rose from £114.56 in 1989 to £214.40 in 1994.(10) There are two aspects to the "periodicals problem": the increased number of titles to be stored has exacerbated the pressure for space within many libraries, and the price rise has meant that the real purchasing power of the libraries has declined. Libraries have found themselves under pressure to make more material available at a time when its cost is increasing and the proportion of institutional spending devoted to them has declined.(11) The strategic planning documents are generally agreed that financial pressures mean that hard decisions have to be taken.

All the strategic plans that were analysed recognised that, in the light of these trends, no library could hope to house all the material required for teaching, learning and research within its institution. To a greater or lesser degree, an

"access policy" similar to that envisaged by the Follett Report forms the basis of every strategic plan that was analysed - even the plans that were written prior to the Follett Report. The Follett Report stated that,

> *everywhere, the emphasis will shift away from the library as a place, away from the books and periodicals it holds, and towards the information to which it can provide access...Some institutions will meet the needs of their users by providing access to information most of which is physically located elsewhere [by computer network access, electronic document delivery or inter-library loan]. This can be characterised as moving from a "holdings" to an "access" strategy, with access provided in many different ways. To the user, the place where data is held will be relatively unimportant. Other institutions will be major suppliers of information which is located within the institution, and their position will be very different. Most institutions will fall between these extremes, combining internal and external sources of information to meet the particular needs of their staff and students.*(12)

This is indeed the picture that emerges from the strategic plans. The Bodleian Library's plan(13), for instance, is mostly about improving access to its own vast collections and conserving them for future use - although access to material elsewhere is given some attention. At the other extreme, the "new universities" invariably speak of developing a "core" printed collection for satisfying teaching needs but relying mainly on external electronic sources for research provision. In between there is a broad swathe of universities, including, for example, Leeds, University College London, and Bradford, for which the stated aim is to maintain a balance of one sort or another between access and holdings. A university's place on the spectrum, hardly surprisingly, is closely related to the extent of its existing collections, which in turn usually reflect the institution's age and size. Most universities see achieving the proper balance as the central issue which they must solve over the next decade.

This can be very problematical. During the transition period, many libraries are finding themselves having to provide materials in hard copy and electronic form - which puts an extra strain on their resources. However, the move to electronic means of access, although involving additional costs, is invariably seen as the route to improved service in the long term. The concept of the electronic journal, in particular, is identified by several plans as the most exciting opportunity. A number of plans emphasise that "risks"(14) will have to continue to be taken, one of which will probably be a reduction in the volume of printed material acquired equivalent to the increase in electronic access.

Closely related to the issue of access is the strategy emphasized by many libraries of tailoring their collections more closely to their current teaching and research requirements. A number of plans outlined the depth of collections that would be maintained in each subject area. One research library, for instance, distinguished between three levels of coverage: full research-level collections (permitting independent research in the published sources); selective research level collecting for less favoured subjects; and support level collections where only the broad basic coverage necessary for teaching would be maintained. Many more libraries declared an intent to develop more focused policies in the future. Others called on faculty and university administrations to give a lead in defining the areas for which research collections were essential and those for which only basic coverage was necessary. The funding councils apparent policy of distributing research funds more selectively on the basis of the research assessment exercises seemed to many libraries both to necessitate such a policy and also make it possible.

Almost every plan stated a strategy of forging closer links with academic staff and faculty committees to ensure closer cooperation in matching library resources to teaching and research needs. Plans from the new universities gave this point particular emphasis probably because, in starting from a generally lower level of library resourcing, the problem is most acute there.

Many of the planning documents stated an intention to develop service level agreements with academic departments. These would distinguish between the basic level of service which all library users could expect and special services adapted to the needs of, say, particular faculties. Within a resource centre structure, the library might charge for the latter "add-on" services.

All of these strategies reflect a universally stated desire on the part of the libraries to be more service orientated. User surveys, improved performance indicators, and better liaison with faculties were emphasised by many plans - particularly those from new universities but also many from the traditional university sector - as the route to a tightly run, focused service which matches client needs. In line with this, longer opening hours were postulated by quite a few libraries to meet the needs of a growing body of part-time students. However, only two of the strategic planning documents based their overall layout on the market segments (academic departments) to be served. In almost every plan the strategy-development section was divided according to function: information technology, collection management, buildings and environment, public relations, staffing, finance, and so on. While there is a need to view the library from this angle too, the tendency to consider the library primarily in functional terms suggests a less than total commitment to a marketing or service orientation.

As well as the traditional reactive services, such as enquiry answering and book borrowing, a number of libraries (particularly, it seemed, those of technological universities) emphasise the need to offer proactive services and to anticipate users needs. The services mentioned include computerised profiling facilities for alerting individuals or groups to information relevant to their interests, current awareness and accessions bulletins, and the provision of current contents pages from journals.

Proactive services of this sort tend to be staff intensive. Consequently, they are targeted at satisfying particular research needs. Increasingly, in the future, the strategy for serving the majority of library users - particularly undergraduates - will be to facilitate a self-service approach. The change is being led partly by technological developments which are bringing more user-friendly computer interfaces, but also by the rapid rise in student numbers which is putting the time of library staff at a premium. Because rising undergraduate numbers means that academic staff are also under pressure, there is a move towards independent student-centred learning in many universities and, as the case study of the Library of the University of the West of England shows (p.60), libraries are having to develop strategies to cope with this. Many of the planning documents envisage librarians evolving from custodians of collections and active mediators of search strategies into educators of students in the information skills required to make them into self-sufficient independent learners. The transition to independent learning is seen by many libraries as both a problem and an opportunity. It places extra demands upon the library but it also reinforces it position and underlines its importance to the university.

The greater emphasis placed upon access to information held externally, either through networking or the visiting of other libraries, is reflected in most plans stating an intention to cooperate more closely with the computing service within their institution and with other libraries. Few hinted at how better cooperation with other institutions was to be achieved. However, the 1994 Survey of information policies/strategies at British universities found that many universities (21% of respondents) have developed or are in the process developing (44%)[15] an institution-wide information strategy to facilitate better internal coordination between all the various players involved in the provision of information internally on campus. Some universities possessed an information strategy as well as a library strategic plan. Others, particularly those in which the library and computing functions had formally converged, only had an information strategy. (The latter were analysed as library plans for the sake of the current survey).

The Follett report[16] did much to promote the concept of an integrated

information strategy. Indeed, many of the Follett Report's recommendations, such as those relating to access and selective collection development policies, have been widely adopted by libraries. But the impression - judging by the plans which pre-dated the Report - is that Follett generally confirmed what most library managers were already thinking and planning for. The main benefit of the Report appears to have been the moral support which it has given them in arguing their case for a re-orientation of library services within their institutions - an impression confirmed by some of the interviews with librarians. Many post-Follett Report strategic plans used quotations from the Report for chapter or paragraph headings.

A central thrust of the Follett Report is the need for library planning to be firmly integrated within the wider planning processes of the institution. Several of the librarians who responded to the invitation to list their "most vexing problems" mentioned, in passing, the planning vacuum which existed within their universities. They spoke of a lack of coordination which resulted in them then being expected to implement changes at short notice. The problem appears to be that many universities do not know where they are going. A few of the larger established universities perhaps aspire to membership of a future "super-league" of research institutions. They can plan accordingly. At the other extreme, some of the "new universities" - particularly those which went straight from being colleges to universities - probably see themselves primarily as teaching institutions. Most universities, however, are somewhere in between and, in the words of Roy Adams of De Montfort University, are "churning". They are

> *following the money and seeking to find the strategic areas in which to operate in order to support themselves, but the game keeps changing. First there was a rush to recruit undergraduates. That source of new money has now been turned off and you can now only get money for research and postgraduates*(17)

Libraries are having to develop long-term strategies at a time when university chancellors may be pitching for year-on-year strategies and priorities can change very quickly.

Under such circumstances it is one thing for librarians to identify environmental trends and their "most vexing problems", and quite another to frame strategies for their solution. One would expect that an effective strategic plan would concentrate on devising strategies to combat the most vexing issues that their librarians identified. However, this is not always the case. The issues which the librarians identified in their letters as being "most vexing" in 1992 were each ranked in conjunction with their plan according to the following scale:

One point: no mention is made of the "vexing issue" within the library's strategic planning document.

Two points: the "vexing issue" is only mentioned within the plan as part of the environmental analysis.

Three points: the plan provided some evidence of a strategy for combating the "vexing problem".

Four points: the plan provided extensive evidence of a strategy for combating the problem.

The average score per vexing issue was only 2.54 (somewhere between no strategy and only a very limited one), which suggests that the plans were not always forthcoming with solutions or even relevant to the most important issues. Indeed, one plan asked a number of very pertinent questions and then largely ignored them, referring to them as "rhetorical questions...for which no answers can be completely satisfactory".

The other main problem with the planning documents is that their objectives are not usually prioritised. So much of an organisation's overall strategy is inevitably a matter of emphasis, and without prioritisation divergent strategies can look almost identical on paper. Moreover, while some documents such as the plan of Aston University's Library & Information Services[18] place their strategies into context by prefacing them with an extensive environmental analysis, SWOT analysis, or broader vision statement, a significant minority do not. When this is not done, the full significance of strategies for the organisation and their main, overall thrust often do not emerge. This is not to say that university librarians lack a vision of the future. In fact they usually do - as the following case studies based upon interviews show. Only that their plans often do not communicate them well.

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CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

The above account has necessarily been of a broad kind. The following case studies show in more detail the strategies and the interplay of factors which influence the planning of six particular academic libraries. No doubt to talk of "types" of university over-simplifies matters somewhat because many institutions have evolved over the years to such an extent as to conceal their origins. Nevertheless, these six libraries probably represent a crude cross-section of the UK university sector.

The University of Oxford is an ancient collegiate university served by the Bodleian Library, which is a legal deposit library and one of the world's great research libraries; Leeds University is a large civic university which supports a major research library (The Brotherton Library); the University of Warwick is a young/middle-aged greenfield university with a strong research ethos; Aston is a university which specializes in technological disciplines; The University of the West of England is one of the "new universities", having previously been Bristol Polytechnic; and De Montfort University is also "new", having previously been Leicester Polytechnic, but it is also perhaps the most dispersed of the multi-site universities, having campuses at Leicester, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Lincoln.

The case studies show that while universities face many issues in common, each must develop a vision and strategy appropriate to its own unique operating environment. Except where indicated otherwise, the case studies are based on interviews with each institution's chief librarian[1]. A seventh case study - Birmingham University - was added for the interesting issues it raises, although no interview was conducted there.

a) University of Oxford

The Bodleian Library at Oxford University bears out Lynn Brindley's assertion that "the nature and character of an academic library cannot sensibly be considered in isolation from its institutional context"(2). The University of Oxford is an ancient collegiate university whose dominant ethos has been that knowledge is important "for its own sake"(3). It emerged as a loose collection of colleges in the twelfth century and its library planning continues to reflect the unusually devolved nature of the University.

The University contains a hundred libraries, including over 40 faculty and 35 college libraries which have grown "in unplanned independence or in enthusiastic rivalry"(4). College libraries broadly serve the borrowing needs of their undergraduate students; faculty or departmental libraries are the first port of call for departmental research needs; and the Bodleian Library exists as a vast non-lending repository of additional scholarship supported by its status as a library of legal deposit since 1610. The devolved nature of the system is exemplified by there being no overall university librarian.

The Bodleian Library has recently drawn up a mission statement and list of objectives which together present a clearly-defined vision(5). A major element of the vision is that by the year 2,000 the University should have a chief librarian responsible for the entire system including the Bodleian Library. The problem currently is that the Bodleian Library swallows up 80% of the funds distributed by the Libraries Board but has no greater say at its meetings than the smallest of libraries. Each library, moreover, reports to a different body (Bodley's Librarian reports to its Curators), so that no-one has ever stated which libraries should be steady state, which shouldn't be collecting special collections, and so on, with the result that many do a bit of everything. This may give the Bodleian greater independence than most academic libraries. However, a major review, The Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Library Services at Oxford University(6), concluded in 1987 that although the many libraries were very responsive to their users, the devolved approach brought unnecessary duplication and a lack of coordination.

Bodley's Librarian hopes that such a restructuring will lead to services such as automation, conservation, and perhaps cataloguing, eventually being provided in common. This implies, perhaps, a move towards staff and collections being viewed as part of one "unified university library service"(7), as recommended by the Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Library Services at Oxford University in 1987.

The planning process of the last year was begun because Bodley's Librarian felt that there had never been a statement of what the Bodleian Library is actually for, as opposed to how it should be governed. The Library needed to set targets and priorities, and the process was entirely self-initiated. It started with the senior management team which, helped by an outside consultant, drafted a mission statement and list of first level aims. These were circulated to all departments for feedback. The replies were used to sharpen up the broad Mission Statement and aims, which were then translated into measurable objectives for the coming five years. After further feedback, they were boiled down to sixteen. The final document has been published in the University Gazette. Working parties will be set up to implement it.

The mission of the Bodleian Library is:

> *to maintain and develop collections and services in support of the present and future teaching and research needs of the University of Oxford, and of the national and international scholarly community.*(8)

Together with the sixteen objectives, the mission supports a well-articulated vision of an internationally important Library which is "a better place to work in for the reader" and which is "held in high regard by members of the University and its users"(9). Bodley's Librarian is aware that in periods when money is tight administrators may be tempted to "rein in" the library and emphasize that its primary role is to serve the university. He, however, is determined that it should remain outward looking. The Curators are, by the Statutes of the University, required to "maintain the Bodleian Library not only as a university library but also as an institution of national and international importance". Thus, the mission statement gives unusual prominence to serving the national and international scholarly community.

Although Oxford University's needs definitely come first, the Bodleian has always considered that the privilege of copyright status which makes the huge collections possible confers upon it an obligation to make them available to all. The act of doing this, in turn, brings the University prestige and makes it part of the national library provision. Two-thirds of its readers' tickets are issued to non-members of the University. Demand has increased in recent years as researchers from other universities increasingly travel to major research libraries because of their own libraries' changes from holdings to access policies. Bodley's Librarian sees the trend as manageable as long as other universities don't set up entire research programmes without any library provision of their own. The Bodleian Library's vision spreads much wider than the serving of its parent institution.

It also embraces the future. The Bodleian's archival function as a copyright library and repository of the book means that it must be mindful in its planning to a much greater extent than most university libraries that most of its readers haven't been born yet. The mission statement emphasises the serving of future as well as current needs.

Improved service and better access are two major themes which underpin the Library's strategy, although an access policy means something different here than in smaller academic libraries because of the Bodleian Library's vast collections and history of closed access storage. The importance attached to improving service is illustrated by Bodley's Librarian choice of the most important of the objectives as being "to identify more closely our users and their needs and to respond to them positively"(10). Thus priority is to be given to service level agreements, performance statistics, and staff development.

Because of its role as a legal deposit library and as a repository of vast special collections, the Bodleian in the past concentrated on accumulating and housing material. Although acquisition remains important, the emphasis now is shifting more in the direction of improving access. A major priority for the next five years is to extend electronic bibliographical records beyond the range of printed material for which they are currently available until they include all manuscript and non-book materials. More material will also be placed on open access shelving because closed access material from stack cannot currently be guaranteed to appear in under 2 1/2 hours and from store 24 hours. A full-scale change is hampered, however, by the Library being a prisoner of buildings designed for closed access in the 1930s and there being little space available elsewhere in the city centre.

The copyright libraries are currently considering a proposal to extend legal deposit to non-print electronic materials. Such provision could be completely distributed rather than confined to one or even six copyright libraries, so it obviously has some implications. Bodley's Librarian sees the Bodleian as feeding very much into a virtual library of the future. It is currently engaged in two experimental projects funded by HEFCE - one in cooperation with De Montfort University - concerning digitisation of material on the Internet.

Bodley's Librarian is confident that his strategy is consistent with the University's emerging wider Information Strategy, having been part of the group which framed it. However, as James Thompson puts it:

> ...the bodleian could be regarded as the Library of the University of Oxford, but in truth of course it is as famous in its own right as its parent institution: it figures nationally as part of the United Kingdom library scene, and internationally it stands as one of the world's great libraries.(11)

The Bodleian Library's strategies reflect its unusual status.

b) University of Birmingham

Oxford University is one of six or seven highly-rated universities known as the Russell Group which is probably seeking to become part of an exclusive inner circle of research institutions. The group also includes Birmingham University, and its librarian, James Thompson, has articulated a vision that might be appropriate to such a role. In a chapter, "Functions and objectives: large university library", written for Line's book, Academic Library Management, he argues that the "true objective" of a large university library is to support research and scholarship:

> *A large university is not, primarily, a teaching institution...What makes a great university great is certainly not the size of its student body. It is its reputation for research and scholarship. Its status relates to how many researchers and scholars it has with an international reputation. . . .*(12)

Thompson's vision is of a library "which in scale and depth and range and service provides the necessary support for the pursuit of front-line research and advanced scholarship"(13), and he proposes a very focused strategy. In his view, "servicing the needs of...students" through the provision of basic text books in multiple copies, large numbers of staff to process their loan transactions and answer their enquiries, long opening hours and open-access systems, might be important and is "the most visible of our functions, **but it is not our main purpose** ."(14)

That objective is to support "front line research and scholarship" **but only in carefully selected subject areas**(15). Because funding constraints and the enormous growth in the volume of published information make in-depth comprehensive coverage impossible to achieve, each university must, he says, identify and concentrate on those areas in which it is capable of achieving research excellence. Thompson points out that the trend for the University Grants Committee (now the four Higher Education Funding Councils) to pursue "increasingly firm rationalisation of the institutions under its care" should help. Already "not every and any university institution can now teach and research in earth sciences or archaeology or classics". The objective of the library must be "to match [the] level of resource as optimally as possible with [the] university's research and scholarly profile"(16).

Such a strategy perhaps requires a more proactive role in the framing of the institution's academic policy for the chief librarian and his senior colleagues and also perhaps "a team of subject librarians who construct strong liaisons with their academic counterparts" so that neither the university nor any of its departments

launch[es] into an ambitious programme of high-level research or scholarship without everyone being aware of what resources the library can or cannot offer.(17)

As Thompson claims,

> *to state this signals a quite specific strategy on the part of the chief librarian. He or she is then directing a library in which the considerations of selected areas of research and scholarship count more than everything else. If that is the stated management objective, it affects every decision; it puts every request for staff or funds or facilities into an automatic order of priority...Providing for selected areas of research and scholarship will account for the greater part of one's acquisitions budget...I could perhaps put it more colourfully than accurately by saying that the purchase of a special collections would take precedence over refurbishing some part of the building; that a programme of preservation would take precedence over a desired upgrading of a system of automation.*(18)

Clearly, Thompson is a librarian who is thinking strategically rather than incrementally. Whether this vision survived the great expansion in undergraduate numbers of the early 1990s and infuses library operations at Birmingham today is unclear because no interview could be arranged with him. However, its 1991/2-1994/5 strategic plan does speak of "refin[ing] the Library's new resource allocation model...in a way which accurately reflects...the results of the next research selectivity exercise"(19).

c) University of Leeds

Leeds University, like Birmingham, is a civic university which houses a major research library - the Brotherton Library. Like other civic universities, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, and Bristol, Leeds University was established around the turn of the century to meet a demand from local businessmen for better and more accessible training and research, particularly in science and technology, than was provided by Oxford and Cambridge(20).

Over the course of time, Leeds University expanded into an "exceptionally large number of disciplines"(21). However, there has been no formal statement, of the sort favoured by Thompson at Birmingham, by the governing hierarchy to the effect that only selected areas of research and scholarship should now be supported. This is perhaps because it is unclear whether it is more productive to reward star departments or to help poorly performing departments so they too may generate income from the funding councils in future. The Vice Chancellor has left decisions as they relate to the Library to its discretion. It matches resources to departments according to what it perceives to be their current levels of activity within the University rather than by a rigid formula.

In some ways the planning process is similar to that of the Bodleian Library, in that both David Vaisey and Reg Carr have a degree of freedom which is, perhaps, atypical for the manager of an academic library. Unlike Bodley's Librarian, however, Reg Carr manages all the principal library facilities in the University of Leeds. Over the last three or four years the University has restructured according to a resource centre model in an effort to reverse a period of perceived drift, and this has reinforced his control and discretion over funds. The Library has a one line budget with virement across all heads and, because it has for a long time been viewed as well-run, it is not submitted to the endless reviews and extra checks and balances on decision-making which have been the fate of some other services at Leeds.

As in many other academic libraries during the 1980s and '90s, powers which were previously held by a Library Executive Committee have been devolved to the Library itself so that there is no high level Library committee to monitor and check Library activities. The Vice Chancellor, to whom the Librarian reports, has cut the University's 250 committees to 50 over the last three or four years in an effort to reduce bureaucracy. He says it is up to services to establish their own structures for quality control and liaison with users, and the Librarian now convenes and services a University Library Committee which is more of a "talking shop" for user groups than a planning body and has "less grasp of detail than its predecessor"(22).

The 1995 Planning Statement suggests some agreement with the priorities of the Bodleian Library. It says "Leeds University Library exists primarily to provide for the information needs of its own institution", but it goes on to say that "by reason of its age, size and location, and because of its accumulation of significant collections of research materials unavailable in such variety and quantity in most other UK academic libraries (early and scarce books, manuscripts, archives, long back runs of journals) it also serves a much wider community of users, thereby forming part of the national academic research support infrastructure"(23). A smaller proportion of its users than those of the Bodleian are external, but the Planning Statement suggests a similar attitude to the wider role.

One obstacle to achieving this mission is that for several years the Library has been under-funded (and recognised as such within the University)(24). Until recently it has received no "special factor" funding for its wider role, such funding having been limited to the copyright libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. However, following the Follett Report's(25) recommendations that the funding councils should set aside annually up to £10 million of their research funding to support collections widely used by researchers across the system as a whole, Leeds has been awarded £2.39 million spread over the next five years by HEFCE. Like Oxford, the Brotherton Library has, in a sense, been recognised as being part of the national library provision. The danger of other universities gaining a competitive advantage by using the Brotherton Library's collections while Leeds picks up the bill has been avoided.

The Brotherton Library's large research collections have undoubtedly helped shape the Librarian's attitude to the concept of the "electronic library". Reg Carr does not see the virtual library model as appropriate for Leeds "even if it were ever to prove viable in smaller, newer institutions"; the reason being that it is a research library and a repository of major collections of unique or archival materials "few of which are ever likely to be economically available in digitised form for networked access". Like Follett, he believes that "there is no serious prospect of IT supplanting the printed word within the next decade or two."(26)

Nevertheless, the Library appears to be committed to developing its information technology infrastructure. The 1995 Planning Statement declares that "current developments in networking standards and software capabilities, coupled with the trend towards client-server operation, are likely to result in new service opportunities which the Library must be in a position to exploit for the benefit of its users"(27). The librarian points out that the University's large hard copy collections tend to obscure its IT-based services and that the libraries at Leeds University contain more databases and terminals per head of student population than many technological universities.

Reg Carr suspects that the task of defining strategy is more complicated for major research libraries than for their smaller equivalents because they have to juggle more balls in the air at the same time. Libraries with smaller collections have no choice but to invest heavily in IT-based access strategies. The task for major research libraries is to "find the appropriate balance of resources between traditional library services and those based on the new information technology", bearing in mind that "most developments in this area represent an additional cost rather than a real and cost-effective alternative to the use of traditional library materials"(28). This balance is the basis for his strategy.

The Librarian's overall goal is for the Library to be "seen as, and funded as, the key player in the structured delivery of information services in the University" (29). Like his counterpart at the Bodleian Library, Reg Carr has been involved in developing a university-wide information strategy covering all aspects of information acquisition, storage, distribution and use. In his view "A properly managed information strategy - pulling together all the threads - helps the entire University do better on its present resources"(30) and the Library has a key role to play in providing it. He feels that the senior management of the University recognise that information is the business of the University and that the Library is one of its competitive edges. The opposition is not so much other players in the information field, such as Computing Services, but "ignorance" elsewhere within the institution as to what can be achieved(31). Reg Carr, too, has a view of the wider picture.

d) University of Warwick

The University of Warwick is a greenfield university. So called because of their typically "out of town" campuses, greenfield universities such as Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Lancaster, Warwick, Stirling, and Ulster were established in the 1960s with the distinctive mission of widening access to higher education in response to surging demand in the post-war period by extending its regional spread and by developing innovative learning methods(32). However, Warwick's focus has altered and for many years its number one aim has been to be "a research-led university"(33).

Warwick University appears to be much more centralised than either Leeds or Oxford. In many universities, power and decision-making has been devolved down to departments or heads of services such as libraries and computing services. At Warwick this has not happened at all. For instance, just under half of the £3.1 million(34) library budget is for staffing but it is controlled by the high-powered Estimates and Grants Committee. Moreover, Warwick has moved in the opposite direction to Leeds in that its Library Committee, which was fairly representative of the academic community and the student body, has recently been replaced by a more "high powered and executive"(35) type of committee, the Library Strategy Group.

The culture at Warwick is for the Library and other services to be supervised more centrally than at Oxford and Leeds: the assumption appears to be that the library must be inefficient unless proved otherwise, although every review says what a good job it is doing; three major library reviews have been initiated by the administration in the past four years, including one by a firm of external consultants in 1993; the performance of everyone throughout the University is constantly under review; decisions are often expected to be made according to very tight schedules - almost overnight occasionally. The planning context is therefore very different from the other Libraries studied so far.

The Librarian has spent much time over the past few years conducting strategic planning processes but concedes that they have been very problematic. His first short plan, in 1990-91, was well received by the Library Committee but the university administration censored it as being too provocative and demanding of resources.

In 1992 a second attempt was made at the Library's own initiative(36). Its purpose was to clarify objectives, support the library's bids for resources, and raise the Library's profile within the institution after a long period of perceived drift, low investment, and a feeling that the Library wasn't recognised elsewhere as the progressive, innovative unit that it considered itself to be.

The fundamental issue that has had to be addressed is a "mis-match"(37) between the University's ambitions and the resources available to the Library. Warwick aims to emulate the research success of Oxford and Cambridge and in this it has been notably successful, having been one of the best performers in the last three research assessment exercises. However, the Library's ability to support this level of research in the future is threatened by a combination of rapid growth in the quantity of printed material combined with hyper-inflation particularly in the cost of periodicals (upon which research depends disproportionately).

These environmental factors affect Warwick more than Oxford or Leeds because Warwick University Library has had insufficient time to develop research collections on their scale. It is a "medium-sized facility" holding approximately 800,000 printed volumes and, although it is one of the busiest according to SCONUL statistics(38), in terms of library funding per capita "Warwick is probably about twenty-eighth in the country instead of in the top two or three"(39).

The Librarian believes that this puts the Library in a position similar to that of a new university. Indeed, alone among institutions in the top group in the research assessment exercise, Warwick University Mission Statement includes the typically "new university" element of "giving high priority"(40) to improving access to continuing and post experience education for the local community. The Librarian sees Warwick as like a new university but with research excellence tacked on the top: "Warwick aims to be a research university but we are a taught course library"(41).

Since 1992 the Librarian has argued for a very specific strategy for solving this conundrum. It is notable for its similarities and differences to the strategy proposed by Thompson at Birmingham. Like Thompson, Henshall argues for greater selectivity in the range of research for which library support should be expected. But whereas Thompson argues that supporting research should be the priority, Henshall, in the different context of Warwick, argues the opposite.

The first priority, he says, should be to support the University's teaching. Eighty-five percent(42) of active users of Warwick University Library are students on taught courses, who have limited opportunities to visit other libraries or use interlibrary loans. What these students want are textbooks in multiple copies, something which (unlike research) the Library would find it relatively easy to provide within existing resources. Moreover, with a deteriorating staff-student ratio, student-centred project work is likely to increase the importance of Library facilities to undergraduates.

The second priority should be support for most areas of research by an "access strategy", which allows "the timely and efficient procurement of materials and information as they are required" from outside the Library. A "range of sophisticated electronic information services and document delivery systems"(43) should be added to the existing facilities which include CD-ROM databases and networked access to the OPACs of other libraries. The Librarian is arguing that they will provide researchers with access to a much greater variety of information than could be achieved by a costly "holdings" strategy and should thus be the second priority and the central plank of the research provision (and increasingly useful for the taught element too).

In the light of budgetary constraints and the escalating cost of research materials, the Librarian believes that in the future conventional collection-based research support should only be provided for a very selective range of subjects. These should be chosen on the basis of existing areas of collection strength and according to a plan decided at the University level. But such provision should only be the third priority.

The reason for the Librarian's reassessment was that "it was clear at the time of publication of the [1992] strategic plan that [its] mission could only be fulfilled if substantial additional resources were made available"(44). In 1992 the acting Vice Chancellor asked the University Librarian how much it would cost to develop a research library to remedy this situation. Unfortunately, the University felt that it could not find the additional recurrent resources and, consequently, a reassessment was necessary(45)

The change of emphasis is discernable from a comparison of documents produced in 1992 and 1995. The 1992 Strategic Plan stated:

> *The Library mission is to support the development and maintenance of excellence **across the whole range of the University's research and teaching programmes** through the provision of a focused and proactive library and information service.*(46) (My bold for emphasis)

In the 1995 Report from the Working Party on the Development Strategy for the University Library the emboldened section above had been changed to read "... *across the whole range of the University's teaching programmes and **in selected areas** of research*".(47)

Unfortunately, for the University Librarian, the Working Party's new strategy was not accepted because conservative elements within the Science faculty were not prepared to tolerate the periodicals cuts which are essential in order to finance the access route. Nor has the University administration yet indicated which

subjects should receive support at the strategic level for their research. Therefore, the Librarian feels that at the moment the Library lacks a strategy and a complete re-think may be necessary.

Over all the Librarian is very frustrated. One benefit of the 1995 Working Party was its educational effect. The 1995 Working Party was a very high-level group comprising several professors, the chairmen of various University committees, pro-vice chancellors, ex-chairmen of the Library Committee, the Librarian, Deputy Librarian and two student representatives. Few had much knowledge of library operations but the regular meetings enabled the Librarian to convert several to the virtues of an access strategy. In this he was helped by detailed statistical information about the Library which was circulated to members of the group and by the Follett Report, whose influence may be gaged from its providing many of the headings within the final document.

However, the overall impression is of a library which is having to grapple with a serious mis-match between the mission of its parent institution and the resources available to service it. The Librarian appears to have a coherent vision of the future and a strategic solution based on priority for teaching needs, an access policy, and very limited core research collections. But he is having to work extremely hard to sell it to his institution.

e). Aston University

Some of the key "battles" facing Warwick University Library appear to have been resolved already at Aston, where the Library and Information Services (LIS) has for a number of years pursued a very clear access strategy. As Lynne Brindley, former LIS Director explains, a conscious decision was taken in 1985/86 to develop the library "as a proactive information service of the kind more usually associated with industrial and special libraries than with academic libraries"(48). What this means is that a relatively small core collection is held locally to meet primary needs, but is supported by "rapid and comprehensive access to external sources, identified through a range of information services and backed up by an effective document supply service"(49) which is provided for free at the point of use. In short, Aston already has in place a more focused version of the strategy that Dr Henshall proposes for Warwick.

Aston University's mission, which is to be "a leading technological university" (50), gives it a subject profile which makes it logical to mirror special libraries. Aston and nine other technological universities - Strathclyde, Bath, Bradford, Brunel, City, Loughborough, Surrey, Heriot-Watt, and Salford - were established following the Robbins Report in the 1960s "to ensure a swing to science and technology from the most able students"(51) to the benefit of the UK economy. They emphasize technology, close links with industry, "sandwich" courses which include industrial placements, and courses relevant to the world of work.

The technological focus was reinforced in 1981 when Aston University suffered a 31% cut(52) to its recurrent grant. The University responded by closing most of its social science and pure science departments (such as Physics and Chemistry) to leave an unusually focused University of just nine departments covering technological and vocational disciplines: Chemical, Civil, Electrical, and Mechanical Engineering, Computing, Pharmacy, Vision Sciences, Modern Languages, and Management. The Library and Information Services matches this focus.

In 1985 a new Director of Library and Information Services arrived with a clear brief from the Vice Chancellor to restructure library provision in line with these changes. A strategic review was initiated and already a number of reports at the national level, among them Working together within a National Framework(53), were indicating that budgetary constraints and an explosion in the volume of published material would make comprehensive collection-building an unrealistic strategy for many institutions. As a young university, Aston did not have literature-based research collections of breadth and depth, long back runs of periodicals, archives, or special collections, but the subjects that remained were in fast-moving technological areas that do not require them anyway. What

researchers in these fields need is current awareness material and rapid access to the most up-to-date information particularly from periodicals. Moreover, a "holdings" approach would have been difficult to sustain at Aston because periodicals in technological disciplines have a short shelf life and are the subject of the greatest inflation. As the National Framework document noted, special libraries in business and industry offered a solution and it was logical for the LIS to emulate them.

A key strategy has been a widescale cancellation of lesser-used journal titles (350 in 1992 alone)(54) of the sort that Dr Henshall has been unable to carry out at Warwick. Electronic document delivery services such as ADONIS, an electronic full-text database of circa 500 biomedical journals, have replaced them, allowing access electronically to a much wider range of titles. Aston University's vocationally-oriented subject profile has helped because electronic information products have developed most rapidly in business-related disciplines.

The University's commitment to innovation through IT also means that priority has been given at an institutional level to developing the kind of IT infrastructure that makes the strategy possible. Project ACCENT, a £4 million(55) UGC and DTI sponsored demonstrator project begun in 1988, created at Aston what was perhaps at the time the most advanced broadband OSI campus-wide network in Europe. It provided 2,500(56) access points for data and video in a university of only 4,500 students, which means that LIS information services are accessible from most desk-tops. Networking means that the LIS views itself less as a repository (as the Bodleian Library perhaps does due to its legal deposit status) than as a distributor of information. The LIS Strategic Plan 1991/92-1994/95 states:

> *In the context of our wired up campus, increasing importance will be attached to the delivery of information over the network, its quality, timeliness and relevance, and the way it can be integrated into the learning and research process.*(57)

The LIS strategy involves much more than just a shift in the holdings/access balance. As Sheila Corrall, the current Director explains, "a genuine commitment to access requires an open, customer-oriented environment... providing visible, tailored services to support particular user groups"(58). The 1986 and 1991/92-1994/95 plans have introduced a service or marketing ethos: a team of information specialists attached to individual faculties provided proactive services, such as mediated online searches, current awareness bulletins and support for end-user searching in accordance with faculty needs; regular meetings bring feedback and "close liaison between the LIS, academic staff and students, to ensure timely and appropriate provision of services and collections to meet their needs"(59); all

services are promoted; and a systematic process for obtaining course information and reading lists from academic staff has been introduced. All this reflects a strategy of anticipating, focusing LIS effort on, and matching, identifiable user needs.

Another key element has been the priority given to developing the information skills of LIS staff and users. A key aim of the 1991/92-1994/94 Plan is to "ensure the acquisition [by users] of the relevant transferable skills of information retrieval, processing, evaluation, and presentation, through training in information management and its integration with personal computing skills"(60). Increasingly the trend at Aston is towards self-service access to information. Accordingly, LIS professionals are now viewed at Aston less as conductors of online searches than as advisers, or facilitators for direct end-user searching.

Alongside this educational role, the LIS has worked hard to escape from the "traditional image of a dusty, constricting library"(61) and to present itself as different from other libraries. This is important because, as this study shows, the way that administrators view their library services varies considerably from one university and can affect their fortunes.

A strongly "managerial" approach has underpinned all of this(62). Total Quality Management has been introduced and the costs and usage levels of collections and services have been closely monitored in order to focus them to the maximum. The trading company model (TCM) under which the University now conducts its financial affairs has also brought a close relationship between the LIS and its prime users - the academic departments. Under the more "transparent" funding model now employed by HEFCE the earnings of academic departments through teaching and research can be identified more explicitly than previously. The University now requires each academic department to set out its income and expenditure and for central service departments to apportion their costs among them. A range of LIS performance indicators have been developed for this purpose and also a distinction between "standard" services (those that all departments may be expected to benefit from) and "tailored" services (which are designed in consultation with specific departments to cater for their individual needs)(63). Service level agreements have been introduced in relation to the latter, which has encouraged the LIS and academic departments to liaise and understand each other's needs more clearly. The net result is an even more focused service.

It is the scale and combination of changes which makes Aston distinctive. Other academic libraries have introduced many of the above elements but the shift has usually taken place piecemeal and "more at the tactical than the strategic level"(64).

At Aston the change has been so thorough that, for example, more titles are obtainable via full-text databases than in hard copy(65). At Aston, moreover, change has come in response to a stated vision.

The LIS is currently approaching the beginning of a new planning cycle. The 1986 Plan was necessarily mostly "top down" because of the swift response that was required. The 1991/92-1994/95 Plan was agreed after much wider consultation and the new cycle has begun with a LIS Planning Workshop. Although the process will be conducted mainly under her successor, the current Director doesn't envisage an abrupt change of strategy. As she says, fundamental alterations are not normally needed very frequently. Most environmental changes necessitate change more at the tactical level, effecting operational and marketing plans. The major area which she does identify for more attention is that of human resources. For an organisation with a service ethos the question of how to recruit, train and continually develop suitable staff comes to the fore and was not addressed extensively last time.

Although major changes are not envisaged, the LIS is looking forward - as befits a service whose mission is to be "a leader and innovator in university library and information services"(66) and whose strategic plan states "risks will need to continue to be taken"(67). At present, the LIS probably conforms to Option Three or Four of the ARL scenarios (See page 18). However, the LIS Workshop produced a draft statement for discussion, "Vision - "preferred future" for Aston LIS in the year 2000", which bears more resemblance to the New Option Four:

> *The library building [at Aston] has been reorganised to create a multimedia learning and research centre for individuals and groups to search for, retrieve and organise information, with information and systems specialists available to help and advise customers. Access is facilitated by easy-to-use interfaces allowing one-stop shopping for information and document delivery, covering a range of resources including bibliographic databases, specialist databanks and technology-assisted learning packages.*
>
> *Customers can also access facilities from their residences and workplaces and enjoy comparable levels of assistance through online help and advisory services, using video conferencing links. A key feature of the help services is the team approach which enables the combined expertise of information assistants, information specialists and systems specialists to be brought together as a result of the restructuring of the library and computer support services, and physical relocation within one building. Some members of the team work mainly outside the building.*(68)

The document is not policy, however. Small units such as the LIS at Aston University are likely to be the first to develop such a future because their size makes change easier for them to change than for the Bodleian.

Aston has an unusually focused Library and Information Service which reflects the character of the wider institution. With the funding councils likely in future to distribute research funds in a way that encourages the development universities as "centres of excellence" in restricted ranges of subjects, Aston already perhaps offers a glimpse of the future direction for many more library and information services.

f) University of the West of England

Another library which is consciously following a strategy which departs from the model of a traditional academic library is at the University of the West of England. UWE is one of the "new universities", a group which comprises the 33 former polytechnics in England and Wales and the 5 former Central Institutions (C.I.s) in Scotland which became universities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992[69]. It was formerly Bristol Polytechnic.

As polytechnics, the new universities had shared with the technological universities a reputation for forging close links with local commerce and industry, and for teaching mainly applied and vocational courses in science, technology and the professions. If anything, however, the former polytechnics remained more responsive to their local communities because unlike the universities they came under local authority control despite their degrees being validated by an external body, the Council for National Academic Awards. It was probably this that led to their great diversity. They had a tradition of serving non-traditional (part-time, mature, less academic, sandwich course, and short course) students, a tradition of innovative methods that often emphasized teaching rather than lecturing, frequently a lower level of research activity, and lower costs per student (because university costs usually included a substantial allowance for research).

With the ending of the binary divide some convergence is undoubtedly occuring within Higher Education. In part this was happening anyway as polytechnics became staffed by graduates who had experienced research in a university environment and who "with the example of the C.A.T.s before them, tended increasingly to force the polytechnics to drift towards a mode of operation similar to that of universities"[70]. The ex-polytechnics are starting to blur the distinction further by bidding for research grants from a source previously unavailable to them - the funding councils set up under the unified system. However, differences are likely to remain between many of them and the traditional universities because they are starting off from a lower base in terms of the infrastructure necessary to support research (not least in the depth of their library collections). Indeed, the funding councils have indicated that an increasing number of institutions will probably have a largely teaching only role.

Mike Heery, the Head of Library services at UWE, has made a conscious effort to think strategically in the light of these changes. His 1994 discussion paper, The new idea of a university library, drew attention to the fact that the Library's strategies were formulated as a polytechnic, and asked whether they were still relevant to the new university. The issue, he said, was

whether our type of library is - or should be - the same as the established model of a university library....Are we new in the sense of simply waiting to evolve into the mature forms of the old university libraries? Or are we new in the sense of being a legitimate alternative that is consciously different from the established model?(71)

The answer was the latter, and the paper outlined a vision based on a distinctive strategy which he called "supported learning". As at Aston, the starting point was a belief that "A library should devote itself to the needs of its clients" and that its own distinctive features should match university-wide developments.(72)

The environmental change which underpins most others at UWE has been a growth in student numbers from 10,000 to 17,000 in just four years. This has led to rapid growth in library use but, interestingly, to levels which greatly exceed the actual increase in student numbers(73). Enlargements to the student population have clearly had a "knock on" effect. For instance, because lecturers cannot give the time to individual students that they could previously, the trend is increasingly towards a greater degree of "independent learning" through project work conducted in the library with less guidance by lecturers and a greater degree of student choice. This in turn has "knock on" effects because "students who are learning more independently need to be equipped with a relevant set of [study and information] skills"(74). Professional bodies have also encouraged a more skills-based approach in subjects such as Law. Heery identifies the reduced class contact time and the associated growth of independent learning as the most important issue for the University as a whole and for its Library.

Growth has also meant a more diverse student population with more mature, part-time and distance learners. Mature students often need assistance with their study skills, while part-time and distance-learning students typically face additional problems arising from their lack of classroom time, greater difficulty in accessing the library, and (frequently) less time available for study.

The library strategy of "supported learning" is designed to meet these challenges. According to Heery, "the essence of supported learning is the deployment of library staff to spend time with students, and at the same time employing modern techniques of information handling, such as IT and multimedia"(75). A team of subject librarians spends much more time than is usual for an academic library in equipping students with the skills necessary for searching library collections and databases. They thereby facilitate the shift to "independent learning". The subject librarians also work unusually closely with the faculties, as is evidenced by their being housed within them. As Heery explains,

Their involvement in programme planning, faculty boards, monitoring and evaluation and in teaching and learning committees ensures that the library develops in a way that is responsive to faculty needs(76).

This close working relationship with departments helps the Library to identify teaching and learning needs, which are the main foci of the its effort, but also contributes to a better understanding of research needs in those areas where the University does have particular expertise.

As at Aston, information technology provides access to a much wider range of information than could be housed within the library. It too, therefore, facilitates the "independent learning" approach by widening the choice of project work available to students. The Follett Report(77) mentions networking, IT, and "access strategies" primarily in relation to research, but Henshall, Corrall and Heery point to the contributions they also make to undergraduate learning, particularly project work which is similar to research.

There is clearly a large area of overlap between the strategies of Aston and UWE. However, UWE's strategy does have a distinctive flavour. Aston tailors services to the needs of individual academic departments but UWE has developed its own range of services which cater for particular types of client. UWE has among the greatest numbers of part-timer students of any university in the country, and two members of staff are devoted solely to providing a "one stop" service catering for their particular needs. The Part-Time Students' Advisors operate a telephone enquiry service which saves part time students having to come to the library. They will reserve items and place inter-library loans, photocopy material, produce study guides, book session on CD-ROM machines and act as a first point of contact for advice all in response to a phone call. Similarly, a service is offered to disabled students and a flexible learning service is provided to aid academic staff develop self-study work books and other materials for student-centred learning. Equivalent services could eventually be developed for distance learners and students studying at affiliated institutions(78).

Mike Heery believes that libraries can become "vehicles" for the delivery of new academic strategies: that only by offering "creative solutions to Polytechnic [now University] problems" and being seen to be "helpful" and "innovative" can the library at UWE justify its existence and secure funds from academic departments which, in a devolved system, are free to their spend money elsewhere(79).

g) De Montfort University

De Montfort University, too, is following a distinctive information strategy which reflects its unique operating environment. De Montfort is the most dispersed university in the UK, with the possible exception of the Open University. Ten years ago, as Leicester Polytechnic, it served 8,000 student on two sites. Since then it has grown through agglomeration to 26,000 students on eight sites (soon to be nine) in an effort to fulfil its mission of becoming "one of the world's leading educational institutions"[80]. It also has twenty-five franchised colleges.

The traditional model of a university library based on a central collection serving all student needs was quickly recognised to be inappropriate for a student population located as far apart as Leicester, Bedford, Milton Keynes, and Lincoln. As at UWE, another force for change was pressure at an institutional level for a transition away from a staff-intensive teaching approach towards an independent student-centred (and therefore learning resource intensive) learning environment. In response to these changes, both of which result from the institution's rapid growth, a strategic decision has been made at De Montfort University to develop the country's first "distributed" or "electronic library". The project is still in its infancy, but the vision is for the already converged Library, Information and Networking service to support a range of experimental electronic library facilities on a number of sites linked by a common network.

The initial trigger was the University's bid to develop a campus at Milton Keynes in the early 1990s. A greenfield site was to be turned into a small university campus within nine months, financed entirely by locally generated student income. The problem was how to serve the small, isolated campus (it now houses 700 students although it could grow to 5,000)[81] in the face of resource and time constraints which made the construction of a traditional academic library (like the University's main Kimberlin Library) infeasible. An electronic library was the solution.

It comprises two elements: a small printed library and an electronic library. The latter, the experimental ELINOR project funded by the British Library Research & Development Division, started with the digitisation of all course materials (books, journal articles and lecturers' notes) for approximately 35 students on one specific degree course in business information systems studies. The user finds relevant material by key-word searching the catalogued contents pages of scanned documents, clicks on the relevant document to peruse its individual contents page and then obtains the full text of it on screen. The full text may then be printed (for a cost). A major advantage of the "electronic book" is that any number of

students may access material which is in high demand simultaneously. The initial 50 electronic books have now grown to 250 and the project has spread to other courses.

At present only the Milton Keynes campus can claim to have an electronic library but another project has just started for a similar system at Leicester. The pilot will be for 300 students immediately and a second stage will commence in February 1996. By September 1996 it will serve 15,000 students. The strategy is in its early stages but this is clearly the direction in which De Montfort University intends to go. Roy Adams, Head of Library, Information & Networking, believes that the change to a largely electronic environment is coming very soon:

> I think that it won't be a gradual process. We'll hold onto print and then suddenly it'll come in almost over night. I strongly believe that.(82)

The strategy has been to be to get into the market first; to be one of the first to develop the "electronic library" on an experimental basis. By so doing, De Montfort can get publishers (Elsevier), computer companies (IBM), and governmental agencies (the European Commission) to pay some of the costs - a strategy similar to Aston University's approach to developing its OSI network. Adam's confidence stems from his cooperation with publishers:

> ...we're privileged enough to get an insight into the strategic plans of some leading publishers. If you pick the leading publishers in Europe - because we've worked with them on research we get a rough feel of what their plans are for the next three or four years and what they think they can do in the time.(83)

De Montfort University has seven experimental electronic library-type and linked projects under way. Each method gives a different insight and the aim is to bring the research together to find out how they might fit together to build a future model. De Montfort is thinking strategically.

A recent British Library survey concluded that only two universities in the UK (De Montfort and Bath) and two elsewhere in Europe (Tilberg and Limerick) currently have the infrastructure and know-how to take this route(84). De Montfort has an official strategic alliance with Tilberg University, which has experimental projects in complementary areas. Unlike De Montfort, Tilberg University doesn't hold digitised documents in full-text. It has concentrated on developing a sophisticated inhouse electronic database of the contents pages of new journals and integrating library services into the user's desk top. This journal-contents database, the Library catalogue, CD-ROM databases, a Campus Wide Information

Service (CWIS), the OPACs of other libraries, the Internet, wordprocessing, and graphics software may all be accessed using the same menus, thus allowing easy and seamless combining of data from different sources(85). De Montfort and Tilberg have agreed to share each others' expertise.

The attitude of most other libraries to the electronic library might be characterised as "lets wait and see". Mike Heery's The new idea of the university library(86) outlines some of the objections. Firstly, there is a worry that students do not find the reading of substantial quantities of electronic material comfortable. At Tilberg the most frequent request from students is not for more computer terminals but for more books and periodicals. Secondly, copyright restrictions currently hamper the process. Publishers have agreed for De Montfort to scan a limited range of their material on an ad hoc experimental basis. However, they are unsure how to fix a price for such material. It is also currently a labour-intensive process with a book typically taking about an hour to scan. A third objection is the artificial nature of the study that will result if the range of material available electronically is so restricted that specially prepared self-study workbooks and packaged materials predominate. De Montfort's current strategic plan is confidential, but a previous plan stated that its information resources existed not only "to provide the facts and ideas to be absorbed during the course" but "to provide an environment in which the student has a good experience of the investigative learning process"(87). Under these circumstances the latter might suffer.

Roy Adams responds by arguing that publishers will increasingly digitise their material because electronic library systems, contrary to popular belief, provide them with more information on how their products are used. There is little that publishers can do to discover the usage patterns of their books as they are browsed or passed on from one person to another. However, De Montfort University has developed software that records user access to and printing of the electronic texts - at the individual page level - which will enable publishers to charge for their products accordingly. Moreover, copyright restrictions do not apply to material over seventy years old. There will also be no need to scan documents. De Montfort is now using data obtained from the publishers in digital form.

Adams is perhaps more positive than Henshall, Carr, and Heery about the scope for digitised material to benefit academic research in the humanities:

> We recently bought the Chadwick Healey Complete English Poetry. You can either go to a place [a major research library] to try to read English poetry - and that may be necessary for some purposes - or you can sit at your desk and search it. What has happened is that with Chadwick Healey.... people are finding new associations because you can't scan hundreds of thousands of poems in one go visually but you

> can electronically. What we are offering is something you cannot do using the conventional materials of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester.' (88)

The new universities, he argues, must play a different game from the traditional universities:

> Our research needn't necessarily be driven by the researcher being interested in something. We must look at it strategically and ask is it really relevant and useful to the population and is it something we can sustain at De Montfort? In other words, is it going to score high, bring in money and interest the world?(89)

The old universities play to the strengths conferred by their research collections. The new universities, he believes, must develop new ways of doing things which give them an advantage. The electronic emphasis is different but sentiment underlying it is identical to that of Heery's The new idea of a university library.(90)

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Most academic librarians appear to be familiar with the key processes of strategic planning and are attempting to implement them, judging by their planning documents and questionnaire answers. Strategic planning is about making a choice - choosing a broad direction for one's organisation for the foreseeable future - but retaining sufficient flexibility in relation to "methods" at the tactical or operating level to make it a reality in the face of changing external conditions.

Ensuring a capability for change, as much as the delineation of specific strategies, lies at the heart of the strategic planning approach, and is the concern of several of the more thoughtful planning documents. Mike Heery, for instance, while arguing in his New Idea document that the electronic library at Tilberg should not be taken as a model for the current development of the library at UWE, was concerned that his library should be appropriately positioned to develop in that direction should future developments make such an approach more attractive. He was satisfied that UWE's current strategy of "IT networks, supported learning and a high level of customer care" indeed meant that his university would be "better prepared to develop the features of the electronic library than one which is more traditional and less service-oriented in its organisational structure"(1).

Similarly, Adams sees the development of a flexible and adaptable staff of the kind he has at De Montfort as the key upon which his organisation's future depends because it supplies a capability for change. Indeed, the planning documents of a high proportion of university libraries proclaim that "our staff are our greatest asset". Strategic planning, as Heery and Adams demonstrate, is more about positioning one's organisation for likely and significant future developments than it is about tactical detail.

Liz Lines encapsulated the essence of the process when replying to the questionnaire. Nottingham Trent University, she said, is:

> *moving away from detailed planning towards a broader brush approach of setting strategic directions, 3-5 years, coupled with annual priorities/objectives.* (her emphasis)

Such an approach now seems widespread. Planning in most academic libraries appears to be an iterative process which is distinct from tactical planning and involves most professional staff at some stage, although the process at Nottingham Trent University, which Lines describes in her reply as "a very broad consultative exercise involving all LIS staff, the LIS Advisory Group & Faculty consultation" is perhaps more participatory than most.

However, the quality of the planning documents as instruments of communication appears to be very variable. A strategic planning document should guide an organisation by presenting its strategies as emerging from a clear vision of the future. The vision should be supported by the strategies in a logical, coherent way. The plan should then be capable of communicating these strategies to stakeholders, such as library staff and university administrators. Many of the plans appeared to be poor in this respect, although it should be remembered that they were written for internal consumption by an readership within the university who would know the context. Only one plan was presented to a standard which suggested it was for external consumption.

A greater sense of vision often emerged from the interviews with librarians than from their planning documents, although one or two plans were very clear. Despite many points of similarity, each of the six libraries (and also Birmingham, judging by Thompson's[2] article) has developed (or is attempting to develop) a vision and strategy appropriate to its individual operating environment: Bodley's Librarian envisages a better coordinated Oxford University library system which will maintain its international reputation by improving users' access to its vast collections. Because of its copyright status and historical role, the Bodleian Library is probably more independent of its institution and gives higher priority to serving the current and future needs of external users than the other libraries. Leeds University Library's difficult task is to strike the correct balance (for a major research library which does not have copyright status) between the new technologies and traditional book and archival collections. Warwick University's Librarian is attempting to frame a strategy which will reconcile the university's research ambitions, which are as lofty as those of Leeds and Oxford, with resource constraints and other priorities which are more like those of a "new university" library. Aston University LIS has developed into a service reminiscent of the focused information services of business and industry in order to reflect the subject profile and to match the needs of its parent institution. The University of the West of England's strategy is "supported learning", a strategy for facilitating a move to independent student learning within the university and for serving its unusually large number of non-traditional students. De Montfort University's embryonic distributed electronic library is a response to the University's unusually dispersed clientele and its view of the future of publishing. Similar underlying principles can often lead to quite different action. The Bodleian Library and Aston University LIS, for instance, both speak of developing "access" policies but, as has been shown, that pharase might mean something quite different within their contrasting contexts.

Clearly no one of the above strategies would be appropriate for all of the six institutions. Some of the libraries are perhaps trying to make a virtue out of necessity. Nevertheless, they serve to illustrate the point made by Mike Heery that, "there is no platonic ideal of a university library"[3].

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3. Heery, ref. 1, p. 6.

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APPENDIX 1: THE LETTER SENT TO LIBRARIANS, JUNE 1995.

Malcolm Polfreman
46 Arthur Street
Loughborough
Leics., LE11 3AY

19 June 1995

Dear

A survey of the strategic plans of academic libraries in the UK

I am currently undertaking a survey of the strategic plans of academic libraries in the UK and I would be pleased if you could contribute to it on behalf of your library/information service.

The aim is to identify - through a content analysis of planning documents - the issues, visions and strategies which university librarians see as key to the future of their libraries; to discern the planning processes which have led to the formulation of their plans; and to assess the proportion of libraries employing strategic planning techniques.

The survey will contribute to the dissertation which I am writing as part of the MA in Information & Library Studies at Loughborough University.

I would be most grateful if you would please:

1. fill in the attached **questionnaire** (even if you operate without a formal written plan)

2. let me have a look at any **strategic plan** that has been developed by your **library/information service**. (I am mainly interested in any mission statement and/or first level goals that it contains).

3. let me see any **university mission statement or plan** of which you are aware (just the main mission or summary)

I am starting my analysis at the end of July so I would be glad if you could reply before then. An s.a.e. is enclosed for this purpose. Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Polfreman

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO LIBRARIANS, JUNE 1995

STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS

1. To whom does the Librarian report?.....
.....

2. Is the Librarian a member of the Academic Board, Senate, or an equivalent body? (please specify).....
.....

3. Is there a Library Committee? (please tick one box) ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so - is it advisory, or executive?.....

- who sits on the Library Committee?.....
.....
.....

4. Does your library currently have either a written strategic plan or some other written statement of mission, aims & objectives? (please tick one box)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ In preparation

IF "NO", please ignore all further questions and describe how planning is carried out in you library/information service in the space over page.

IF "YES" or "IN PREPARATION", please continue with these questions:

5. What is the title of the planning document?.....
.....
.....

6. What is the period covered by the plan?
starting date..... finishing date.....

7. What is the principal purpose of the plan? (please tick one box)

☐ Required by parent institution for budget and/or planning purposes
☐ Self-initiated by library for budgeting/planning/management purposes
☐ Self-initiated to raise the library's profile within the university
☐ Self-initiated to support a bid for resources
☐ A response to a specific change in circumstances (please specify)
☐ Other (please specify).....
.....
.....

8. Who was involved in developing the plan? (tick as many boxes as necessary)

☐ The University Librarian
☐ The Deputy Librarian and/or other senior librarians
☐ Specially selected task force of librarians of various grades
☐ Most or all professional library staff
☐ The Library Committee
☐ A University administrative committee
☐ Outside consultants
☐ Others (please specify).....
.....

9. Which one of the above had the greatest input?.....
.....(continued overleaf)

10. If a committee was involved, who chaired it?.....

11. To whom was the plan submitted for approval? (tick as many boxes as necessary)

- ☐ University administration (please specify)
- ☐ Library Committee
- ☐ Internal informational document (no approval necessary)
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

.....

12. Approximately how long did it take to develop the plan from initial draft to adoption?
.....Years .....months .....weeks .....days

13. How frequently is the strategic plan reviewed?

- ☐ Each term or semester
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ At greater than annual interviews
- ☐ Other (please specify).....

14. In what ways (if any) have you changed your planning processes in the light of the Follett Report?.....
.....
.....
.....

15. Please feel free to make any comments on your planning processes below.

Please return this questionnaire with (if possible) a copy of any LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN/MISSION STATEMENT which exists and any UNIVERSITY PLAN/MISSION STATEMENT in the s.a.e. provided to:

Malcolm Polfreman, 46 Arthur Street, Loughborough, Leics., LE11 3AY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SURVEYS

(Y=Yes, category applies)

	1992	1995	1992 and/or 1995			
University contacted	Responding to vexing questions letter	Responding to questionnaire	Possessing a written plan	Plan supplied for analysis	Developing a written plan	Not possessing a written plan
TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES						
University of Aberdeen		Y	Y	Y		
Aston University	Y	Y (Interview)	Y	Y		
University of Bath		Y	Y	Y		
Queen's University of Belfast	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Birmingham	Y		Y	Y		
University of Bradford		Y	Y	Y		
University of Bristol	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Buckingham						
Brunel University	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Cambridge						Y
City Universtiy	Y		Y			
University College Dublin		Y	Y	Y		
University of Dundee	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Durham	Y					
University East Anglia			Y	Y		
University Edinburgh						
University of Essex						
University Exeter	Y		Y	Y		
University of Glasgow	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Heriot-Watt University		Y	Y			
University of Hull			Y	Y		
University of Keele		Y	Y	Y		
University of Kent at Canterbury						
University of Lancaster	Y		Y	Y		
University of Leeds	Y	Y (Interview)	Y	Y		
University of Leicester	Y		Y	Y	Y	
University of Liverpool	Y					
University of London (Senate House)	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Birkbeck College, University of London		Y	Y	Y		
British Library of Political & Economic Science, LSE.		Y	Y	Y		
Imperial College of Science, Technology & Medicine , University of London	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Institute of Education, University of London						

	1992	1995	1992 and/or 1995			
University contacted	Responding to vexing questions letter	Responding to questionnaire	Possessing a written plan	Plan supplied for analysis	Developing a written plan	Not possessing a written plan
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College, University of London						
School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London						
School of Pharmacy, University of London	Y		Y			
University College London	Y		Y	Y		
Wye College, University of London						Y
Loughborough University of Technology						
University of Manchester		Y	Y	Y		
UMIST			Y	Y		
University of Newcaste upon Tyne	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Nottingham	Y		Y			
University of Oxford (Bodleian Lirary)	Y	Y (Interview)	Y	Y		
University of Oxford Department of Educational Studies	Y					Y
Radcliffe Science Library, University of Oxford						
University of Reading	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of St Andrews		Y	Y	Y		
University of Salford						
University of Sheffield			Y	Y		
University of Southampton	Y		Y	Y		
University of Stirling	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Strathclyde			Y			
University of Surrey	Y					Y
University of Sussex		Y				
University of Ulster	Y		Y			
University College of Wales, Aberystwyth			Y	Y		
University College of North Wales, Bangor	Y				Y	
University of Wales College of Cardiff		Y	Y	Y		
University College of Swansea	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Warwick	Y	Y (Interview)	Y	Y		
University York						

	1992	1995	1992 and/or 1995			
University contacted	Responding to vexing questions letter	Responding to questionnaire	Possessing a written plan	Plan supplied for analysis	Developing a written plan	Not possessing a written plan
NEW UNIVERSITIES						
University of Brighton [ex Brighton Polytechnic]						
University of Central England [ex City of Birmingham Polytechnic]		Y				Y
University of Central Lancashire [ex Lancashire Polytechnic]			Y	Y		
Coventry University [ex Coventry Polytechnic		Y				Y
Cranfield University [ex Cranfield Institute of Technology]	Y		Y	Y		
De Montfort University [ex Leicester Polytechnic]		Y (Interview)	Y	Y		
University of East London [ex Polytechnic of East London]			Y			
University of Greenwich [ex Thames Polytechnic]						
University of Hertfordshire [ex Hatfield Polytechnic]			Y	Y		
University of Huddersfield [ex Huddersfield Polytechnic]			Y	Y		
Kingston University [ex Kingston Polytechnic]						
Leeds Metropolitan University [ex Leeds Polytechnic]	Y					Y
Liverpool John Moores University [ex Liverpool Polytechnic]	Y	Y	Y	Y		
London Guildhall University [ex City of London Polytechnic]	Y					Y
Manchester Metropolitan University [ex Manchester Polytechnic]			Y	Y		
University Middlesex University [ex Middlesex Polytechnic]	Y	Y	Y			
Napier University [ex Napier Polytechnic of Edinburgh]	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Northumbria at Newcastle [ex Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic]			Y	Y		
University of North London [ex The Polyechnic of North London]						

	1992	1995	1992 and/or 1995			
University contacted	Responding to vexing questions letter	Responding to questionnaire	Possessing a written plan	Plan supplied for analysis	Developing a written plan	Not possessing a written plan
Nottinghm Trent University [ex Nottingham Polytechnic]	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Oxford Brookes University [ex Oxford Polytechnic]		Y	Y	Y		
University of Paisley [ex Paisley College of Technology]	Y	Y	Y	Y		
University of Plymouth [ex Polytechnic South West]			Y	Y		
Rober Gordon University [ex Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology]	Y	Y				Y
Sheffield Hallam University	Y	Y	Y	Y		
South Bank University [ex South Bank Polytechnic]		Y	Y	Y		
University of Sunderland [ex Sunderland Polytechnic]	Y				Y	
University of Teesside [ex Teesside Polytechnic]						
Thames Valley University [ex polytechnic of West London]	Y		Y	Y		
University of Westminster [ex Polytechnic of Central London]						
University of the West of England [ex Bristol Polytechnic]	Y	Y (Interview)	Y	Y		

APPENDIX 4: ANSWERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE

The following tables summarise the responses to the 1992 and 1995 surveys. The question numbers refer to the 1995 questionnaire. Only questions which are referred to in the text are included.

Question 2: Is the Librarian a member of the Academic Board, Senate or an equivalent body?

Answer	Number of responses	
	1992 Survey	1995 Survey
Yes	(No data. Question	36
No	not asked)	8
Not responding		3
Total		47

Question 3: Is there a library committee?

Answer	Number of responses
Yes	36
(Executive)	(22)
(Advisory)	(27)
(No indication)	(7)
No	8
No response	3
Total	47

Question 4: Does your library have either a written strategic plan or some other written statement of mission, aims & objectives?

Item	Number	
	1992 survey	1995 survey
Institutions contacted	92	92
Institutions responding	63 (68%)	47 (51%)
Institutions reporting a written strategic plan	41 (65%)	39 (82%)
Institutions currently developing a written plan	7 (11%)	4 (9%)
Institutions reporting that they operate without a written plan	13 (21%)	4 (9%)
Respondents for which the possession of a written plan is unclear	2 (3%)	0 (0%)
Copies of plan provided	36	30

Question 6: What is the duration of plan (years)?

Duration of plan (years)	Number of responses	
	1992 Survey	1995 Survey
1	3	1
2	1	1
3	6	7
4	8	8
5	6	14
6	0	1
Total	24	36

Question 7: What is the principal purpose of the plan?

Required by the parent institution for budget and/or planning purposes	14
Self-initiated by library for budgeting/planning/ management purposes	20
Self-initiated to raise the library's profile within the institution	7
Self-initiated to support a bid for resources	3
A response to a specific change in circumstances	5
Other	3
Total	52

Question 8: Who was involved in developing the plan?

The University Librarian	35
The Deputy Librarian and/or other senior librarians	35
A specially-selected task force of librarians of various grades	10
Most or all professional library staff	26
The library committee	14
A university administrative committee	6
External consultants	2
Other library staff (all grades)	6
Others	4
No response	2
No plan	6

Question 11: To whom was the plan sent for approval?

University administration	24
Library committee	21
Internal document (no approval necessary)	3
Other	8
No response	6
No plan	4

NOTE: Some respondents answered some questions but not others so the figures in the totals columns can vary.

APPENDIX 5: COMMENTS ON THE FOLLETT REPORT

Question 14: In what ways (if any) have you changed your planning processes in the light of the Follett Report?

The answers of the fifteen libraries which answered this question are listed in full below:

"In future we will be part of an information strategy."

"Greater emphasis on: staff involvement and the wider university context - information strategy."

"More frequent liaison meetings with academic staff."

"None, but the contents of the plan were amended in the light of Follett, ie. we gave greater emphasis to the issues highlighted in the Follett Report."

"Not at all."

"University has accepted the need for an institutional information strategy which will inform its corportate planning & be the basis for the library plan."

"Set within broader institutional information services context."

"Having received nff [non-formula funding] for a range of specific subject, special & archives/manuscripts collections which have a regional/national/international role hasto a certain extent firmed up the mission of the Library in a research direction."

"Responding to Follett has slowed down internal planning processes."

"None."

"The IT strategy is a response to the Follett Report. Library features more prominently in college plans."

"University has established an Information Strategy Working Group to coordinate information strategy across the Institution. Computing, Library, Admin. etc."

"We anticipated Follett but the report has placed emphasis on the following: information strategy beyond library; research & teaching; strategic approach to teaching and learning."

"Information strategy now more important than individual library or computer strategies."

"1) Planning committees within the library are to be set up.
2) The University is investigating setting up an Information Strategy Committee."

APPENDIX 6: 1922 SURVEY: LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS RECEIVED (All are internal documents)

1. ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY Library. Report of the Library Committee for the year ended 31 July 1991. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Library, 1992.

2. ASTON UNIVERSITY. Library & Information Services strategic plan 1991/92 to 1994/95. Birmingham: Aston University Library & Information Service, 1990.

3. UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM University Library. Strategic objectives planning cycle, 1991/2-1994/5. Birmingham: University Library, University of Birmingham, 1991.

4. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE Library. [Draft] Library plan: 1992-95. Preston: University Library, University of Central Lancashire, 1992.

5. CRANFIELD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. Institute Information and Library Services. Cranfield: Cranfield Institute of Technology Information & Library Services, [1991?].

6. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN Library. Strategic plan 1992-1996. Dublin: University College Dublin Library, 1991.

7. UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA. The Library [draft] strategic plan, 1992-1995. Norwich: University Library, University of East Anglia, 1992.

8. EXETER UNIVERSITY. The Library's aims, strategies & objectives 1991-95. Exeter: Exeter University Library, 1990.

9. GLASGOW UNIVERSITY. Library Strategic plan. Glasgow: Glasgow University Library, 1989.

10. HATFIELD POLYTECHNIC. Review of Library and Media Services, 21-22 May 1992: review documentation. Hatfield: Hatfield Polytechnic Library & Media Services, 1992.

11. HUDDERSFIELD POLYTECHNIC. Huddersfield Polytechnic Library: [draft] corporate plan: 1991-1995. Huddersfield: Huddersfield Polytechnic Library, 1991.

12. UNIVERSITY OF HULL. The Brynmor Jones Library institutional plan 1990-1995. Hull: Brynmor Jones Library, 1990.

13. LANCASTER UNIVERSITY. University Library mission statement. Lancaster: Lancaster University Library, 1991.

14. UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS Library Executive Committee. The University Library: a strategy for development 1991-1995. Leeds: Leeds University Library, 1991.

15. UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER, University Library. Academic Services Budget Centre planning submission for 1992/93. Leicester: University Library, University of Leicester, 1992.

16. UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. The University of London Library, 1991-95: a strategic plan. London: University of London Library, 1991.

17. IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. Imperial College Libraries: basis for a strategic plan. London: Imperial College Library, 1992.

18. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON. University College London Library: a commitment to excellence. London: University College London Library, 1989.

19. BRITISH LIBRARY OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SCIENCE, LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS. Strategic plan 1990. London: British Library of Political & Economic Science, 1990.

20. MANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC Library. Development plan. Manchester: Manchester Polytechnic Library, 1991.

21. UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER. [Draft strategic plan for the John Rylands University Library of Manchester]. Manchester: John Rylands University Library, [1992].

22. NAPIER UNIVERSITY. Library aims and objectives. Edinburgh: Napier University Library, 1991.

23. UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE. Role, aims and objectives of the University Library. Newcaste upon Tyne: Robinson Library, [1992?].

24. UNIVERSITY OF NORTHUMBRIA AT NEWCASTLE Library. Departmental plan 1992/93. Newcastle: University of Northumbria at Newcastle Library, 1992.

25. NOTTINGHAM POLYTECHNIC. A forward strategy for Library & Information Services 1992/93 to 1995/96. Nottingham: Nottingham Polytechnic Library & Information Services, 1992.

26. UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH Library Services. Academic Services aims and objectives [extract from the University's strategic plan]. Plymouth: University of Plymouth Academic Services, [1992?]

27. QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST. Queen's Library: the Library Plan. Library News. Issue 1 Autumn 1991.

28. SHEFFIELD CITY POLYTECHNIC Library and Learning Resources. Business plan 1992/93. Sheffield: Sheffield City Polytechnic Library and learning Resources, [1991?]

29. SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY Library. Strategic plan: 1991-95. Sheffield: Sheffield University Library, 1991.

30. SOUTH BANK POLYTECHNIC. Department of Library & Learning Resources Planning 1991/1994. London: South Bank Polytechnic Department of Library & Learning Resources, [1992?].

31. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON Library. Library Planning 1992 - the current environment: a briefing document. Southampton: University of Southampton Library, 1992.

32. UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS Library. Report for 1987/88 - 1990/91. St Andrews: University of St Andrews Library, 1992.

33. UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING. [Information Services] strategic plan 1992. Stirling: University of Stirling University Library, 1992.

34. UMIST Library & Information Service. Departmental planning statement 1992. Manchester: UMIST Library & Information Service, 1992.

35. UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK Library. Strategic plan, 1992/93-1995/96. Coventry: University of Warwick, [1992?].

36. POLYTECHNIC OF WEST LONDON. Library and Information Services strategic plan 1992-7. London: Polytechnic of West London Library and Information Services. 1991.

APPENDIX 7: 1995 SURVEY: LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS RECEIVED (All are internal documents)

1. UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN. "In pursuit of excellence" - Library and Information Services Strategy 1993-1998. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Library, [1993]. [Internal document]

2. ASTON UNIVERSITY. Draft statement for discussion: Vision - "preferred future" for Aston LIS in the year 2000, LIS Planning Workshop 10 July 1995. Birmingham: Aston University Library & Information Service, 1995. [Internal document]

3. UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD. Library development strategy, 1992-1997. Bradford: J.B. Priestley Library, 1992. [Internal document]

4. UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL. Library strategic plan. Bristol: Bristol University Library, 1993. [Internal document]

5. DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY. Information Centre strategic plan 1992-1997. Leicester: De Montfort University, Kimberlin Library, 1992. [Internal document]

6. UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE. Mission statement and strategic aims. Dundee: Dundee University Library, 1995. [Internal document]

7. UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD. Plan for the University Library: 1995-1999. Huddersfield: University Library, University of Huddersfield, [1995] [Internal document]

8. KEELE UNIVERSITY. Draft information strategy, mission, & library work plan 1995/6. Keele: University of Keele Department of Information Services, 1995. [Internal document]

9. UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS. Leeds University Library planning statement, 1995. Leeds: Leeds University Library, 1995. [Internal document]

10. LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY. Learning Services' response to the strategic plan update 1994. Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University, Learning Services, 1994. [Internal document]

11. UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. University of London Library, 1994-96: a strategic plan. London: University of London Library, [1994]. [Internal document]

12. BIRKBECK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. Birkbeck College Library mission statement and strategic plan, 1995-8. London: Birkbeck College Library, 1995. [Internal document]

13. UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. University College London Library strategic plan, 1993-1998. London: University College London Library, 1993. [Internal document]

14. UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER. The John Rylands University Library Future financial strategy. Manchester: The John Rylands University Library, [1995]. [Internal document]

15. NAPIER UNIVERSITY. Library strategic plan, 1994-1998. Edinburgh: Napier University Library, [1994]. [Internal document]

16. OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY. [Library] strategic plan 1995-2000. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University Library, 1994. [Internal document]

17. UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD. Bodleian Library mission statement. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1995. [Internal document]

18. UNIVERSITY OF PAISLEY. [Library] Information technology strategy. Paisley: Library, University of Paisley, [1995?]. [Internal document]

19. QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST. Library action plan. Belfast: Library, Queen's University of Belfast, 1994. [Internal document]

20. UNIVERSITY OF READING. Library strategic plan, 1993-94 to 1997-98, summary. Reading: Reading University Library, 1993. [Internal document]

21. UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS. Library strategic plan, 1996-1999. St Andrews: St Andrews University Library, [1995?]. [Internal document]

22. UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING. Information services strategy statement, 1994. Stirling: University of Stirling Information Services, 1994. [Internal document]

23. UNIVERSITY OF WALES COLLEGE OF CARDIFF. Library and Information Service strategic plan, 1995-2000, consultation draft. Cardiff: Library, University of Wales College of Cardiff, 1995. [Internal document]

24. UNIVERSITY OF WALES SWANSEA. Library strategic plan, 1995-2000. Swansea: University College of Swansea, Main Library, 1995. [Internal document]

25. UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK. Report from the working party on the development strategy for the university library. Coventry: Warwick University Library, 1995. [Internal document]

26. UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND. UWE Library strategic plan 1995-99. Bristol: Library, University of the West of England, 1995. [Internal document]

(Plus four plans from libraries which wished to remain anonymous)