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Strategic vision
Navigating change

The inauguration of a new university president in 2007 ushered in a period of constant change for librarians of the George Washington University's (GW) Gelman Library. During the next six years there was dramatic turnover in library administration as the university librarian retired and members of that team moved on to other institutions. Physical change began in 2012 as the planned renovation of the library's entrance floor shifted to the construction phase. The new spaces and technology were designed to foster student access to digital writing, data management, and multimedia tools. These new programs and collaborations demanded that librarians retool and learn new skills. Also in 2012, GW published a new strategic plan, "Vision 2021,"[1] establishing revised priorities and curricular emphases.

GW Libraries is not unique. Changes in technology coupled with higher expectations of student and faculty have driven academic libraries worldwide to revisit their missions and services. Change is stressful. It leaves individuals with feelings of loss coupled with concern for the future. A sense of control during the change process is essential to morale, productivity, and personal investment.

This article is about a group effort to manage change by proactively publishing a strategic plan based on shared vision. The resulting document also articulated group values and acted as a psychological contract with the broader library organiza-

tion. It is an easily replicated process that is inclusive and research based.

Literature

Organizational change is the subject of a large body of literature. The small sample here merely represents a small range of perspectives. Carin B. Erikksen examined the emotional toll organizational change has on individuals, including an inertia borne of weariness with change, loss of identity, and new demands for training.[2] He asserted "in an organization individual emotional states could converge into group emotions as people who spend time together tend to have the same beliefs which are likely to lead to similar emotional states." Thus, group emotions or team culture is vulnerable during times of dramatic organizational change.

Quy Nguyen Huy Insead claimed that individuals go through a two stage "appraisal process" when confronted with change.[3] First, of course, is an assessment of the effect in terms of their personal agenda. This is often expressed as, "What does this mean for me?" The important stage for this article, though, is the second stage wherein individuals determine what resources they can depend on. Resources include colleagues and their group's col-

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lective strength. If members determine that the group has the resources and capacity to cope with the change, then the collective response will be positive and proactive.

An article revisiting the change management model proposed by John P. Kotter in 1996, examined the effects of organizational change wrought by advancements in technology. It determined that people confronted with a changing environment will be empowered to navigate that change if they respond as a group. Furthermore, if a group creates a vision and a strategy clearly anchored in the mission of the organization, they are better equipped to deal with uncertainty and are positioned for long-term success.[4]

Literature about psychological contracts is particularly relevant to working groups undergoing change and dealing with the associated stress. Psychological contracts describe the emotional relationship that an employee enters with an employer. Some contractual expectations are spelled out in a hiring letter, but critical, undocumented suppositions, including feelings such as loyalty or trust, are not. Working groups form psychological contracts both internal to the group and external to the broader organization. Hence, trust within a group will contribute to successfully navigating change in the larger organization.

Denise M. Rousseau has examined psychological contracts extensively and noted that entering into a psychological contract is voluntary and based on an expectation that there is mutual agreement between parties.[5] There is also an understanding that a psychological contract is a work in progress, and she observed that employees "shape their own psychological contracts." Strategic planning can serve as a formalized process for establishing a psychological contract between a working group and the broader organization.

Collaborative process: Articulating values

What does a strategic plan operating as a psychological contract look like in an academic library undergoing change?

Eleven professional librarians make up the GW Education and Instruction Group (EIG). Members of this group are charged with integrating instruction of information literacy skills into courses requiring research. To accomplish this, they collaborate with faculty partners and university organizations from across campus. During the 2012–13 academic year, GW librarians delivered more than 700 instruction sessions. This demands energy and a sense of urgency, leaving no room for low morale or change-driven confusion.

EIG members determined to manage the institutional change occurring around them by deliberately designing the future for their group. This design process was inclusive, thoughtful, and based on mutual trust. The strategic vision identified directions for the group to continue forward momentum during a time of organizational shifts. It also provided direction for individuals in the group to manage workloads and foster their career goals. In other words, because every member participated in the process, it met both group and individual needs for a sense of control.

To begin planning for the future direction of the group, members of EIG responded to an anonymous survey that included the following questions:

1. How manageable is your teaching load?

2. What is important for you to continue doing? What can you let go of?

3. What do you want EIG to look like six months to one year from now?

4. What communities do you want the group to reach?

5. What services are important to provide?

6. What will success look like for EIG?

7. What will success look like for you?

8. What do you want to learn this year?

Once responses were collected and collated by the group leader, a report was

sent to members that included answers to questions one through six. Answers to numbers seven and eight were deemed more personal but were collected to inform professional development planning.

Group members were asked to review the reported responses and consider goals and objectives that were related to the collected answers. Members then attended an open forum where they discussed trends and opportunities the group had identified in the survey responses. During this discussion each participant was asked to keep his or her own set of minutes to capture what was said. Following the discussion, all sets of minutes were collected and collated to further capture group sentiment.

This was a critical addition to the process. It recognized that each member of the group brought his or her own context and experience to the process and by collecting everyone's notes, personal perspectives were incorporated into the process. They also held individualized understandings of the psychological contract between group members as well as the

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Education and Instruction Group - GW Libraries
Strategic Vision 2013–18

A. Preamble

The purpose of this document is to establish goals for the Education and Instruction Group that align with the University's strategic plan. EIG, one of the Public Services that are central to the mission of the GW Libraries, has been on the forefront of critical pedagogy and educational technology for the past decade. It is incumbent on our group to respond to the changes in the University and organization and revise our vision for the next five years.

B. Goals

1. Expand partnership with the Writing in the Disciplines Program.

Rationale: Based on a survey of more than 2,500 university students, a *Library Journal*[6] report states, "students require richer engagement with librarians beyond the first year, to be developed through increased collaboration, outreach, and social media interactivity, and quality service present at the library."

2. Productively partner with the University Writing Center.

Rationale: Increased collaboration will help identify opportunities to engage with students writing in all formats.

3. Engage with faculty to foster undergraduate research.

Rationale: The provost has identified undergraduate research as a high priority.

4. Partner with departments and programs to cultivate digital humanities and digital writing.

Rationale: This parallels the impact technology has had on the delivery of resources and other forms of scholarly communication.

5. Strengthen partnerships with campus affinity groups (for example, international students, athletes, and students enrolled with disability support services).

Rationale: The diverse needs of students require different approaches, support, and tools.

6. Revise statistics database to capture initiatives beyond face-to-face teaching.

Rationale: In order to increase our impact on campus without an increase in staffing, other instructional methods should be employed. These are not currently captured in the EIG statistics database.

7. Offer workshops for members of other GW Libraries' departments.

Rationale: EIG members have expertise and skills that would benefit other departments.

group's psychological contract with the broader library organization. Furthermore, this step in the process assured that the final document would address latent concerns as well as unvoiced personal perceptions. The group leader drafted a document of blended minutes that was then returned to members for correction or feedback. At no point was this process rushed. The group maintained a flexible deadline to assure that all concerns would be addressed and there was time for careful consideration of the developing goals.

The resultant strategic vision emerged from the survey, group discussion, and blended minutes document. EIG members have a history of collaboration and shared vision. It was not surprising how quickly the goals were agreed upon. Details regarding objectives and strategies were, likewise, established. Group members all contributed to the editing and reprioritizing as the final document took shape.

In many ways the opportunity to imagine a future of their own design also provided members with a chance to address frustrations with legacy processes and patterns. Individuals identified practices that they felt the group had outgrown or technological advances rendered unnecessary. By developing new directions or reframing existing roles, EIG members shaped the future of the group.

Careful attention was paid to linking objectives to specific goals of the new university strategic plan to assure acceptance by the new library administration.

EIG's strategic vision also served as a document that introduced the work of the group to the incoming university librarian. As she began her tenure, she had a blueprint for how this working group contributes to the work of GW and the libraries. Referring back to the literature review, the EIG librarians set forth the terms of a psychological contract as a way to establish the beginning of the relationship with the new university librarian

This endeavor met all objectives: empowerment, change management, and maintaining a healthy team organizational culture. It is a transferrable and easily replicated process that has been developed and tested with the EIG librarians at GW.

Notes

1. George Washington University, Vision 2021 (Washington: The George Washington University, 2013).

2. Carin B. Eriksson, "The Effects of Change Programs on Employee's Emotions," *Personnel Review* 33 (2004) 110–26.

3. Quy Nguyen Huy Insead, "Emotional Capability, Emotional Intelligence, and Radical Change," *Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 2 (1999): 325–45.

4. Stephen H. Appelbaum, Sally Habashy, Jean-Lu Malo, and Hisham Safiq, "Back to the Future: Revisiting Kotter's 1996 Change Model," *Journal of Management Development* 31 (2012): 764–82.

5. Denise M. Rousseau, "Research Edge: Psychological Contracts in the Workplace: Understanding the Ties that Motivate," *The Academy of Management Executive* 18, no. 1 (2004).

6. Matt Enis, "New LJ Report Closely Examines What Makes Academic Library Patrons Tick," http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2012/11 /academic-libraries/new-lj-report-closely -examines-what-makes-academic-library -patrons-tick (accessed January 5, 2013).