

Final version of paper presented at *Networking and the Future of Libraries 2, Managing the Intellectual Record: An International Conference held at the University of Bath, 19-21 April 1995*, produced as A Festschrift for Philip Bryant, edited by Lorcan Dempsey, Derek Law and Ian Mowat. London: Library Association Publishing, in association with the UK Office for Library and Information Networking, University of Bath (pp. 45-61).

## **AN EVOLVING SERVICE**

MANAGING CHANGE

*SHEILA CORRALL*

### **The changing environment**

The pace of change in our sphere of operation has been well documented over the last two years by an impressive array of reports from bodies such as the British Library, the British Academy, the Royal Society and the Higher Education Funding Councils, endorsing the view that electronic communication will transform research, scholarship, teaching and learning in the next century, across all subject disciplines (British Library, 1993; Royal Society, 1993; Joint Funding Councils Libraries Review Group, 1993; Vickers, 1994). These reports and others concerned with facilitating the processes of wealth creation, innovation and technology transfer in the competitive world of the 1990s have highlighted the importance of addressing the human element when determining the kinds of social and organizational environments necessary to ensure the development of new and improved ways of working (West, 1994; Institute of Personnel and Development, 1995). While technology trends and developments tend to dominate the debate on the future shape of library and information services, they are inextricably linked with political, economic, and socio-demographic factors: accountability, quality and value for money are the managerial imperatives in a climate of continuing financial constraint, a diversified customer base and empowerment of the individual – exemplified by the concept of consumer choice.

Local area networks linked to national and international networks offer opportunities for end-users with sophisticated and powerful workstations on their desks to search and retrieve documents via commercial services without going through a library or information professional. Within the higher education environment, there are assumptions that computer- or technology-assisted learning, increasingly multimedia and interactive, will be a major growth area, allowing students to work from their rooms on campus, at home or their places of employment, providing improved opportunities for part-time education, continuing professional development and life-long learning. The development of mass markets for electronic information services – evidenced, for example, by the growth in consumer CD-ROM products, and widespread interest in and use of the Internet – is raising awareness and expectations among a broader customer base of the capabilities of information systems and services.

The volume, versatility and variety of electronic information resources pose problems on an altogether different scale and scope to those associated with print-on-paper, and the volatility of electronic sources and systems present particular challenges in relation to archiving, identifying definitive versions of texts and securing both short- and long-term access. The economics of information provision have become more complex with changes in internal funding arrangements, differences in licences and contracts for standalone, networked and remotely accessed sources, difficulties over intellectual property and copyright, and general uncertainty over the cost-effectiveness of new modes of delivery. Strategic management of information systems and services requires planned investment in both the information technology infrastructure and the people to maintain and develop it, as well as commitment from the top to a coherent (and realistic) policy on the distribution and availability of information throughout the organization.

Effective partnerships between library/information and computing/networking specialists and communication channels with both top management and internal and external customers and suppliers are essential. People and political networks – strategic alliances – are the key to organizational information flows, and these relationships are also the key to successful marketing of library and information services. While the library as a document storehouse, and even as a document delivery service, has a questionable future, the demand for information continues unabated; our role and status in the future is critically dependent on where and how we position ourselves now.

### **An evolving service**

The range of information products and services potentially available from the networked library differs significantly, both qualitatively and quantitatively, from those offered in the past. Technological developments have given library managers a wider set of options from which they can select the best mix to meet the needs of their customers. Previously, the quality of a library tended to be judged on the size of its collections of books, journals and other materials. Today, the emphasis has shifted from collections to services, to the delivery of documents and other items of information to the customer irrespective of their origin; the notion of the electronic library offering direct access to users from remote locations has become a reality. The more widespread application of general management concepts and techniques to library and information service provision has also influenced service development as the principles of strategic management, marketing and management accounting have gradually been accepted as both relevant and beneficial in the library environment; acknowledgement of the importance of customer care, and adoption of quality management tools and techniques have reinforced the service ethos which libraries have traditionally espoused but not always achieved in practice.

A characteristic feature of the typical library service portfolio today is that it retains all or most of the traditional elements in addition to the newer offerings. Most libraries still maintain collections of print material for reference and borrowing, provide photocopying and interlibrary loan facilities, and offer help and enquiry services to on-site and remote users. Alongside these established activities, customers can now expect access to an Online Public Access Catalogue, electronic information systems – including both bibliographic and full-text services – and microcomputing facilities, as well as more comprehensive and sophisticated information services provided by subject specialists, such as current awareness, in-depth enquiry and research services, and information skills

programmes. Budget pressures, rising literature costs and the growth of electronic services have encouraged a general change from the old holdings/ownership model to an access/demand model, often described as a shift from 'just-in-case' to 'just-in-time' provision. The latter, with its more selective investment in materials for central holding or permanent retention, requires a much better understanding of user needs, and implies closer liaison with customers and a more proactive approach to identifying the precise requirements of both groups and individuals.

The widespread introduction of stand-alone and networked electronic services intended for self-service access has tended to reduce demand for mediated online search services, but even where there has been a significant move toward end-user searching, users will often still turn to information professionals for difficult and complex searches. In addition, library staff are increasingly providing training/advisory/consultancy services to such users in relation to network access, database selection, search strategies and integration of the use of online or CD-ROM information systems with bibliographic management software. Experience has shown that the access model, far from reducing the burden on library staff, tends to be more labour-intensive, because of the extensive support required to enable users to exploit systems effectively and the upsurge in demand associated with increased availability and awareness of resources. In the networked library environment, service effort is shifting significantly to information skills programmes and specialist technical support to ensure that users have the competence and confidence to benefit from facilities available. Ideally, this will include an ongoing awareness and training programme (with refresher sessions as well as initial instruction) and also immediate assistance with problems arising in day-to-day use, ranging from technical system faults to difficulties in formulating and conducting searches.

The report of the British Library Working Party on Electronic Publishing noted that both technical/computing and information/library expertise are needed to provide full support for self-service access to electronic information systems, including both planned and *ad hoc* sessions for groups and individuals, ideally with trained staff available throughout service hours (Vickers and Martyn, 1994). The Working Party suggests that, depending on the standard of service offered, some or all of the following will be necessary:

- introductory 'show and tell' sessions to raise awareness and demonstrate the range of facilities available in the library and/or over the network;
- instruction, including 'hands on' practice in securing network connections and navigating through the systems;
- advice on database selection in relation to particular subject areas and topics of interest;
- guidance and advice on matters relating to copyright and other legal issues (to include warnings against plagiarism in the academic environment);
- training in the use of specific electronic information systems, covering search strategies and techniques such as truncation and the use of Boolean operators;
- training in 'post processing' and wider aspects of information management, e.g.
  - downloading, storing and manipulating data,
  - translation of search results into requests for document delivery,

- integration of citations into word-processed documents using bibliographic management software;
- comprehensive and regularly updated documentation to support the above activities;
- on-screen help, instruction or tutorial facilities as a substitute for or supplement to the above;
- technical ‘troubleshooting’ to solve problems with network connections, printer jams, etc. (available throughout the hours when facilities are offered to users, e.g. via a help desk);
- information-related point-of-need assistance to help users experiencing difficulties in retrieving relevant items (available throughout library opening hours).

In order to address the above issues, many libraries are rethinking both their user education and instructional programmes and the reference/enquiry desk services. The emphasis of the former needs to extend beyond traditional library orientation to the development of transferable information handling skills, thus encouraging self-sufficiency among users and equipping them with skills for use in their future careers. Some libraries (e.g. the State University of New York, the University of the West of England and the University of Northumbria at Newcastle) have experimented with workbooks as substitutes or supplements to traditional talks and tours; others (e.g. the Southwest Missouri State University and the State libraries of South Australia and Victoria) have explored the scope for using computer-assisted instruction, combining information provision with IT skills development (Feinberg and King, 1992; Carpmael *et al.*, 1992; Walton and Nettleton, 1992; Mackey *et al.*, 1992; Awcock *et al.*, 1992; LaScala, 1992). In the United States, many academic libraries (e.g. Brandeis University and Arizona State University West) have restructured reference services to distinguish between basic information/quick reference enquiries and research support services, using para-professionals and/or student assistant for the former, and introducing a clinic or appointments system for the latter (Massey-Burzio, 1992; Hammond, 1992; Rinderknecht, 1992). A few university libraries in the British Isles have adopted the Brandeis model, and Aston University has recently replaced its professionally staffed ground-floor information point with a new reception point staffed by library/information assistants on the service counter and supported by additional self-help leaflets to assist general reference enquiries.

Many university libraries are extending their sphere of influence by assuming an active role in promotion, coordinating and supporting the use of bibliographic management software within their communities, recognizing the potential for linking this directly with provision of tailored current awareness and document delivery services, and thus making a visible contribution to improving the productivity of research staff (Cox and Hanson, 1992; Hanson, 1992). Both libraries and end-users are now experimenting with alternatives to traditional sources of document supply, sampling the new commercial services (for example, CARL Uncover, Faxon Finder/Faxon Express) which typically offer online ordering facilities, rapid transmission of requested items and more flexible payment methods, such as the use of deposit accounts and credit cards. Aston University has recently been awarded funding from the British Library Research and Development Department to investigate and evaluate on behalf of the wider community the multiplicity

of options now available under the general heading of CASIAS – Current Awareness Services/Individual Article Supply – services to cover the whole spectrum of offerings including established services such as the British library Document Supply Centre, those offered by subscription agents and other commercial suppliers, and also full-text databases like ADONIS and Business Periodicals Online.

Customer orientation has emerged as a significant issue for all types of library and information service, inspired to some extent by customer care programmes in the commercial world, with additional impetus provided by the UK government's charter initiative and more general interest in quality management matters. Customer service skills were identified as a key area for improvement in academic libraries by the consultants reporting on human resource management for the Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group (John Fielden Consultancy, 1993). The report acknowledges that some libraries have made good progress in developing services that are more responsive to customer needs, but argues that in others services are 'unnecessarily restricted', notably in the poor facilities available for part-time students. Interpersonal skills training is an important aspect of creating a more customer-oriented environment, but in order to have a lasting impact customer focus must be pursued at the strategic level as part of the overall service strategy; improvements at the front line will not be sustained unless a total organizational approach is adopted with visible commitment and demonstration of appropriate behavior from top management (Pluse, 1991; Arthur, 1994). The successful provision of tailored 'customized' services in the networked library depends critically on establishing effective communication, liaison and teamwork at all levels within and outside the organization. As we move forward to the twenty-first century our services will continue to evolve from standard to tailored, with the 'just-in-time' concept being extended to 'just-for-you'.

## **Management matters**

### **Strategy and marketing**

Strategic management and the development of clearly articulated strategic, marketing and business plans are essential for survival in the electronic environment, both to provide a framework for the rapid decisions required in turbulent times and to facilitate communication with stakeholders (including funding bodies, service partners, customers, and library staff). Flexibility is the key to strategic management and an effective planning process will stimulate rather than stifle initiative, involving everyone in the continuous development of objectives and strategies through a decentralized, participative process. The shift from standard 'one-size-fits-all' to tailored or customized services demands freedom for information professionals to take decisions and allocate resources to meet customer needs without having to refer constantly to senior management for authorization (Lewis, 1994). New financial resource models are needed to enable cost/benefit analysis of different options for service delivery, and the full costs of serving particular client groups to be properly identified. Aston University has developed a cost centre/service budget matrix allowing expenditure to be tracked on both traditional functional lines and in relation to customers or market segments (Corrall, 1993). This allows us to pursue economies of scale by negotiating discounts with suppliers through coordination of acquisitions and bibliographic records purchases at the same time as

monitoring spend directed at specific teaching and research programmes by our information specialists.

Aston has also used the mechanism of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to market and target our services more effectively at our client departments. SLAs have been introduced in the context of an institutional Total Quality Management programme and the implementation of devolved financial management and budgetary control via a trading company model which requires the apportionment of all support service costs to academic departments as the strategic business units of the university. This initiative has helped us to improve liaison with our customers through regular planning meetings and to raise awareness and understanding of the resource implications of changing the mix of service provision, including altering the balance between print and electronic information sources, on-site and remote access to materials, or redeployment of staff from direct information provision to promotion of information skills among the end-user community. SLAs also provide a useful vehicle for better integration of the LIS planning process with departmental academic plans and the institutional planning cycle, as well as offering a more meaningful context for performance indicators. In addition to defining our responsibilities to clients, we have also used this as an opportunity to remind departments of their obligations towards us – for example, to consult us before introducing new teaching programmes and to cooperate over provision of reading lists (Abbott, 1994).

Although aiming for comprehensive agreements covering the totality of service provision, in order to simplify negotiations we have adopted a pragmatic approach by dividing our services into ‘standard’ ones, which are offered to all customers on the assumption of equal opportunities for access and do not vary from department to department, and ‘tailored’ ones, which are designed to meet specific needs identified in relation to particular teaching and research programmes. The former can be negotiated jointly with representatives of academic departments as a group, enabling discussions at departmental level to focus on areas where needs and priorities are significantly different. The first category includes facilities such as counter services, general reference materials, photocopying, public information points, and study places, while the latter embraces collection/information resource development, current awareness, in-depth enquiries and research services, information skills programmes and interlibrary loans.

Each SLA contains a general preamble setting out the aims and anticipated benefits; planning assumptions; the LIS strategic perspective, including environmental factors; the scope of the document; responsibilities of the service provider and of the client; duration of the agreement; and negotiating and liaison mechanisms. The main body of the document consists of a specific statement in a common format for each of the standard and tailored services under the following headings: service name; definition and scope; objective; customer entitlement; costing method, and cost elements; quality standards; performance indicators; departmental responsibility; feedback to client departments; and costs for the current year.

### Roles and competencies

There has been a great deal of discussion in recent years on the role of librarian in the electronic information era, and commentators have advanced an astonishing range of titles in attempts to define the information professional of the future. Examples range from the rather pedestrian ‘information coordinator’, ‘information consultant’ and

‘information manager’ to the more fanciful ‘access engineer’, ‘cybrarian’, ‘information linking agent’ and ‘knowledge navigator’. Pundits seem unsure whether the networked environment will require us to fulfill our traditional functions as well as venturing into new realms, or to move away from gathering and collating information to concentrate on empowering the end-user in an educating, facilitating and mentoring role (Ojala, 1993a; Mendelsohn, 1994; Heseltine, 1994). The answer surely must depend on the context in which the information professional works, for even in the world of the Information Superhighway we can envisage situations where an intermediary or information broker offers a more cost-effective and efficient alternative to the highly-paid executive spending costly time searching, sifting and synthesising information from a multiplicity of sources. Even if new and improved resource discovery systems are developed, it is hardly realistic to assume that everyone will wish to forego the option of employing a specialist to assist with information retrieval. However, in the academic – as opposed to the corporate – environment, a significant shift of roles is entirely plausible, and indeed is already quite far advanced.

The distinctive contributions most often identified for information specialists are in the design and development of access/indexing systems, the evaluation and selection of sources, and the promotion and transfer of information handling skills to their customers. Some doubt the continuing requirement for the former in the longer term, and others point out that our success in imparting lasting generic information skills is as yet unproven (e.g. Heseltine, 1994). Irrespective of the precise role adopted, it is fairly certain that a wider set of skills will be necessary, and that traditional subject knowledge and professional/technical competence will have to be supplemented by stronger communication and interpersonal skills and a broader base of general managerial abilities and ‘organizational’ competencies. The latter include an understanding of the organizational environment, culture and alliances; the ability to operate effectively in the political arena, both locally and nationally; and expertise in the dynamics of teams/small groups in an online environment – as well as the ability to market and sell information products and services (including negotiating with vendors); and to develop, design and deliver instructional programmes, and empower customers to exploit information effectively. In short, our people will need to emulate our systems and move from stand-alone to networking mode. They will need to become more integrated into the organization, with a better understanding of what the company or institution is about and how it works to relate effectively to customers and other stakeholders (Woodsworth, 1991; Ojala, 1993b).

There are considerable implications here for initial education, in-service training and continuing professional development, and the burden will arguably be heaviest over the next decade, given the shortcomings identified in the recent Follett and Fielden reports. The various national initiatives proposed in the context of the Follett review may help to improve the situation, but there is an urgent need for library managers to accept more responsibility for developing themselves and others. Information professionals as individuals must also acknowledge personal responsibility for updating and extending their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Many libraries have already recognized the extensive training needs arising from the rapid introduction of a wide range of new electronic information systems, and several (such as Aston) have responded by copying the practice of shops and other retail outlets and opening their doors to

customers later in the morning in order to hold a regular ‘training hour’, to provide at least one hour per week off-the-job training for all staff. However, some of the problems noted require more fundamental change at the level of organizational development to enable on-the-job learning to take place as a continuous process; in many institutions both cultural and structural change is needed in order to create a climate in which people can perform effectively.

### Structures and styles

Traditional hierarchies have been widely criticized as power structures which inhibit and distort communication, slow down decision-making, stifle creativity and individuality, encourage compartmentalization, and generally make it difficult to involve everyone properly in the planning, management and delivery of services to customers. Current trends show organizations continuing to move towards decentralization and devolved responsibility, slimmer and flatter structures, more flexible workforces, project-based and cross-functional teamworking, and empowerment and self-management for groups and individuals. Management styles are shifting from command-and-control to facilitating, coordinating roles, requiring better interpersonal, leadership and motivational skills, and emphasizing communication, openness and partnership relationships (Institute of Personnel and Development, 1995). Libraries are not immune from such influences and arguably in more urgent need of structural reform, given the rapid pace of change associated with technological developments. The desire to focus more effectively on customers and become more responsive to their needs is another driving force, as is the relentless pressure on budgets, prompting continual scrutiny of staff deployment and the scope for more delegation.

Many libraries have actually built in some of these management features by introducing matrix arrangements and using cross-functional mixed-grade teams as *ad hoc* task forces or project groups. Public libraries have generally gone farther and faster towards full team structures than academic libraries, although the University of Northumbria Library offers an interesting example of a team system introduced in 1988 (within the context of participative management) and more recently rearranged and extended to include Computer Unit staff (Bluck, 1994). Others, for example the University of East Anglia (Baker, 1990), have acknowledged the need to improve communication and decision-making, and to increase delegation and participation, but have chosen different solutions. Restructuring at the University of Stirling actually introduced a more hierarchical structure in the library, but at the same time encouraged cross-disciplinary teamwork among library and computing staff by integrating library, computing, networking and media services in a single organization (Royan, 1990). The Fielden Report explicitly calls for greater emphasis on team working and less on ‘traditional hierarchical forms of working found in some of the larger “old” universities’, and also cites the use of the term ‘professional’ as divisive and obstructive to teamwork (John Fielden Consultancy, 1993).

Further examples of restructuring along these lines include Samford University, Alabama, where TQM tools and techniques were used to analyse library processes, evaluate functions and design a new structure. This resulted in a flat organization with traditional management lines and spans of control replaced by a set of organizational units depicted in a circle to show the importance of working together and the equal

significance of all units, each with a coordinator, whose job is not to supervise, monitor and report, but to ‘focus instead on facilitating work, maintaining communication channels, and obtaining and coordinating resources’ for their units (Fitch, Thamson and Wells, 1993). At the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign, restructuring was prompted by perceived inefficiencies, overlaps and gaps in existing arrangements, including poor communication and mutual distrust between Public Services and technical Services. The initial restructuring of 1977-81 concentrated on rationalizing and streamlining management arrangements to improve productivity and communication; a second stage from 1983 onwards abolished the traditional public/technical services split, and regrouped staff around subjects, decentralizing cataloguing to bring it together with selection, reference and bibliographic instruction, while retaining centralization of automation-based activities such as circulation. The new structure reversed the trend towards fragmentation of largely interdependent professional skills, producing better informed and more effective subject specialists, as well as addressing the problem of profound ignorance and indifference to colleagues’ expertise (Gorman, 1983).

Structures are only part of the story, for it is quite possible to flatten the structure but not achieve the anticipated benefits, if people are not committed to working in a more participative, non-hierarchical manner. Similarly, the perceived constraints of elaborate grading systems often found in the public sector can be overcome where people are not status-conscious or over-concerned with grades, titles, etc. (Line, 1991).

#### *Transforming Aston University Library and Information Services*

At Aston, we have been firmly committed to a team approach and a participative style of management for some time, although on paper our organizational structure appeared to be very hierarchical, especially on the library services side, the division responsible for all our ‘production-line’ activities – the technical processing operations of acquisitions, cataloguing, document supply and shelving. For a long time we had used cross-divisional non-hierarchical project groups to bring staff on various grades from different parts of LIS together to review operations and develop plans and ideas leading to changes in our policy and services, thus introducing an element of delayering in a matrix arrangement. Sometimes these limited-life groups were reconstituted as permanent process teams after the project phase is complete if we saw a need for an ongoing cross-divisional focus on particular services or activities (such as our Reading Lists team, involving staff from both Information Services and Acquisitions) and we also had a permanent team of senior and support staff responsible for the day-to-day operation of our library housekeeping system, managed for that part of their work by the Head of Systems.

Our commitment to TQM generated many more *ad hoc* and continuing groupings, including several quality improvement teams and quality circles. Eventually we recognized the need to reflect this in our organization chart, so we produced a new diagram displaying these different relationships, and relabelled our existing one as our ‘line management’ structure – which was all it was. We also formulated some principles of decision-making – based on a list developed by Cleveland State University Library (Rader, 1991) – in an effort to capture on paper the essence of participative management and explain how it differed from majority rule.

In summer 1994, we decided to implement a complete reorganization, creating three new faculty teams to replace our existing mix of functional and subject-based teams, and

thus aligning our structure and style more closely with our service strategy. The impetus for this change was a substantial budget cut, requiring the loss of almost a quarter of our staff establishment, which in effect made our previous structure unworkable. However, although the circumstances were unfortunate, we soon realized that there were significant advantages and opportunities in our proposed new arrangements, which we might not have recognized without this timely financial imperative. The new structure enables us to focus more effectively on the needs of particular client groups; it allows more direct involvement of senior managers in academic liaison; it liberates middle managers from supervisory and administrative duties; creates new opportunities for library/information assistants to take more responsibility for organising their own work, as well as requiring them to develop new skills in handling basic enquiries and supporting electronic information services; and gives all staff (apart from the small systems team) a specific customer allegiance, but in a multiskilled capacity.

Restructuring has also caused us to rethink our whole approach to technical processing activities (such as acquisitions, cataloguing and interlibrary loans) and draw much clearer distinctions between policy and operational roles. In addition, we have been able to strengthen our systems support by creating an additional IT specialist post, to assign new strategic/corporate responsibilities for information/study skills and public relations, and to redefine senior management roles in relation to financial, human and physical resource management. Finally, we have formulated some principles of team-working for the new structure, which give a firm commitment to the concept of self-managing teams, and have produced another document setting out the difference between the coordinator role envisaged for senior library/information assistants and that of personal coach to be fulfilled by our information specialists and senior managers. While our new structure is very much in line with general trends and developments in human resource management, as promoted by the Institute of Personnel and Development (1995), it was also partly inspired by the innovative practices adopted by the Brazilian 'maverick' Ricardo Semler (1989; 1993; 1994).

### **Managing change**

The process of managing and implementing change deserves special attention as it is easy to underestimate the time and effort required to manage change effectively. There is a growing volume of literature on the subject of change management, including a substantial amount devoted to change in libraries, much of it based on lessons learned from practical experience. The key messages emerging from published comment emphasize the need to take a strategic view, acknowledging the difference between incremental and discontinuous change; the significance of cultural or 'soft' issues, in particular the impact on both library staff and customers; and the importance of effective communication throughout the process (Underwood, 1990; Spiegelman, 1993; Odi, 1990). Commentators stress that resistance to change is inevitable and managers have to allow for this, and appreciate that staff must not only understand the reasons for change but also feel the need themselves, so that they can become committed to it and contribute to planning the details. Reluctance to consider new ways of working is especially common among long-serving staff, who may feel threatened by proposed changes in their responsibilities and roles, but often simply resist change because of a generalized fear of the unknown (Baker, 1989; Line, 1993; Stuart, 1984).

Libraries which have already established a strategic framework for development, based on a strong corporate culture with shared values, a vision of the future underpinned by clear purpose and objectives, a management style based on consultation and involvement, and a climate which encourages creativity and risk-taking will be better equipped to deal with turbulence and uncertainty (Burrows, 1993; Crook, 1990; Baker, 1989). A strategic approach to human resource development is the essential component which is often neglected; staff development must include educating staff to assume greater responsibilities and grow into more demanding roles – rather than simply concentrating on enabling them to perform their current duties at a competent level – so that strategically planned development of the capacity for flexible responses replaces traditional long-range planning efforts geared to specific service developments (Stueart, 1984; Lee, 1993). With technology and economics emerging as driving forces of change, technological awareness must be developed in all parts of the organization, and not confined to the ‘systems’ specialists; likewise, the sensitivity of the overall strategic direction to budget fluctuations must be part of everyone’s thinking (Crook, 1990). Multiskilling at the operational level must thus be complemented and enhanced by a broader understanding of the pressures in the wider organizational environment which will influence and impact on day-to-day activities.

At the more practical (Tactical) level, communication is generally acknowledged as the most critical aspect of the change process. The timing, method and frequency of messages are as significant as their content. Various authors offer useful pointers and practical checklists to help ensure the important issues are addressed, and they stress that honesty is both the best policy and the most effective motivator, even when the message amounts to what is likely to be received as ‘bad’ news. The key questions are: why is change necessary? what will happen? who will be affected? how will it be accomplished? and when will it start? As is often the case, the challenge lies in striking the right balance between providing full and frank explanations and overwhelming people by giving them too much to absorb at once.

Experience suggests that following the guidelines below will improve the chance of success:

- state the benefits expected, but don’t exaggerate them;
- admit the risks, and show what is being done to minimize these;
- anticipate concerns and provide reassurance, for example about training and support through the learning curve, and acceptance of reduced output during the transition;
- involve staff and invite their participation in planning the details of implementation;
- give people time to absorb information and reflect on its implications;
- listen to questions, suggestions and views, and be seen to act upon them;
- enlist the support of managers, supervisors and opinion formers to obtain feedback, especially on timing, to gauge whether things are moving too quickly – or too slowly; repeat messages as often as required, using different modes of communication;
- treat people as individuals, recognizing both group and personal concerns;

- relate the changes to continuing organizational/service values, to show constancy of purpose remains – even when chaos prevails.

Outside help can provide valuable support for both managers and others at various stages in the process. Libraries commonly employ a consultant to initiate change by first conducting some sort of audit, and then identifying areas for improvement and making recommendations to management, but this approach often fails as the conclusions and recommended actions may not be accepted and ‘owned’ by those responsible for implementation; an alternative is for the consultant to act more as a facilitator, supporting staff while they conduct the audit and identify changes required, perhaps working with library one or two days per month, fulfilling counselling and/or coaching roles, and maybe also offering training in problem-solving techniques (Line, 1993). At a simpler level, individuals can be brought in to meet specific training or counselling needs, for example to run skills-based courses or to support staff faced with the prospect of redundancy. Similarly, temporary staff can be recruited to ease the transition and provide extra cover for basic services to allow time for permanent staff to receive extensive training in new activities, but the risks of upsetting group dynamics by bringing in outsiders at a difficult time must not be overlooked.

<p>TRADITIONAL – MECHANISTIC <i>Managing change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• incremental</li> <li>• evolutionary</li> <li>• linear</li> </ul> <p>SYSTEMATIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• logical</li> <li>• orderly</li> <li>• end-point</li> </ul> <p>HR development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current duties</li> <li>• skills for services</li> </ul> <p>Change agent role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expert</li> <li>• auditor</li> <li>• telling/selling</li> <li>• recommended solutions</li> </ul>	<p>Radical – Dynamic <i>Creating change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• transformational</li> <li>• revolutionary</li> <li>• circular/spiral</li> </ul> <p>CHAOTIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• iterative</li> <li>• interactive</li> <li>• never-ending</li> </ul> <p>HR development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• potential roles</li> <li>• capacity for change</li> </ul> <p>Change agent role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitator</li> <li>• supporter</li> <li>• counselling/coaching</li> <li>• problem-solving techniques</li> </ul>
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#### *Managing change – models and methods*

The literature of change management offers various models to help managers prepare for change by adopting a coherent approach throughout the process, culminating in a thorough assessment to identify adjustments required to ensure continuing success (Curzon, 1989). While a systematic approach has much to commend it, there are dangers

in viewing change as a logical stream and failing to recognize its cyclical nature, and the importance of treating it as an iterative and interactive process. Current thinking, informed by chaos theory, prefers a 'radical/dynamic' view, as opposed to the 'mechanistic' model previously espoused. This interpretation rejects the notion of *managing* change as an incremental, evolutionary, linear and orderly process, and instead sees the process as one of *creating* change, viewing it as inherently transformational, revolutionary, circular/spiral, and essentially chaotic – but ultimately productive and beneficial. Moreover, it implies that the process is never-ending and attempts to map the future beyond the initial direction will be futile, if not counter-productive (Durcan, Kirkbride and Obeng, 1994).

However, although instability and unpredictability are obviously recognizable features of the current library landscape, managers simply cannot afford to abandon attempts to plan and shape the future of their organizations; successful leadership of libraries in the 1990s requires commitment, imagination and energy, but above all the capacity to embrace change as a positive stimulus to organizational learning and development. Other critical success factors include a clear strategic framework, underpinned by a common vision, purpose and objectives; a strong corporate culture, reflecting shared values, mutual support and involvement; a change-positive climate, encouraging innovation, creativity and risk-taking; frequent and carefully-targeted communication, which is honest, open and responsive; and continuous development of staff skills, knowledge and insights.

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