FROM PRINT JUNGLE TO A NO SHELF LIBRARY

Creating a high performing library function that adds value, drives organization change and generates success

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▪ L'organisation stratégique d'une bibliothèque et le besoin de maximiser à la fois la valeur du contenu et celle des services qu'elle fournit sont essentiels pour garantir qu'une bibliothèque spécialisée ne reste pas statique mais soit un atout de haute performance pour la société qui continue à rencontrer les besoins d'information grandissants des usagers de la bibliothèque et des cadres d'entreprise. Pendant les 18 derniers mois, la bibliothèque chez UCB a réalisé de manière stratégique et avec succès la transition d'une fonction statique et un peu archaïque à un service qui ajoute de la valeur de manière dynamique et est hautement respecté par tous les secteurs des affaires. Découvrez comment cela a été réalisé et soyez inspiré par ce succès.

▪ De strategische organisatie van een bibliotheek alsook de behoefte om zowel de inhoudelijke waarde als de geleverde diensten te maximaliseren zijn van essentieel belang om te garanderen dat een gespecialiseerde bibliotheek niet statisch wordt, maar dat deze eerder voor de onderneming een troef van hoog prestatievermogen zou zijn, rekening houdend met het feit dat deze onderneming geconfronteerd wordt met steeds hogere behoeftes aan informatie voor haar gebruikers en kader. De UCB-Bibliotheek heeft gedurende de laatste 18 maanden deze overgang gerealiseerd op strategische wijze en met succes om van een statische rol en een ietwat verouderde structuur te evolueren naar een bibliotheek met een dynamische toegevoegde waarde, gerespecteerd door alle geledingen van het bedrijf. Laat ons samen ontdekken hoe deze kentering tot stand kwam en misschien heeft dit succesverhaal een stimulerend effect om dezelfde weg op te gaan.

Strategic library planning and the need to maximize the value of both the content and the services delivered by the function is essential to ensuring that any special library doesn't remain static but is an invaluable high performing asset to the corporation that continues to meet the growing information needs of library users and corporate executives.

Challenging the organization and embracing difference, information experts that feel empowered in their responsibilities and have a strong understanding of industry trends and changing business needs is essential in developing library vision and the key to successful operations in the future.

With endless challenges facing Information professionals today, budget and staff cuts, cultural barriers in an international environment, a need to leverage costs against usage and the necessity to be compliant, the use of innovative technologies can play a critical part in the way that any special library redefines itself during challenging times, adding value to the role of the library function and supporting a knowledge transfer within the organization that can generate success.

Careful selection of providers and systems can present the library as a specialist department and high performing team, ensuring it will be recognized as an innovative department and remain strategically successful in future years.

Responsible information experts that take in trends and listen to the changing requirements of their users can challenge an organization to change. These prerequisites are important for the development of a vision for a special library and key to future success.

The library function within UCB has been redefining itself over the last 18 months and has strategically and successfully transitioned itself from being a static and somewhat archaic

library function to a dynamic value adding facility that is highly respected by all areas of the business.

How has this been achieved?

- Taking practical actions to promote the library team within the organization through library information days, 'info-action seminars' a redesigned intranet portal, library newsletter and innovative promotions such as customized tray mats in the staff canteen to raise awareness of services.

- By undertaking a detailed online user survey to better understand the needs of the library users, evaluate library services and ensure that needs are met in a way that adds value to information requirements and business work processes.

- Ensuring that the library team has become a 'must have' value adding dynamic function within the company with team members who feel empowered in the roles they play and the significant part that the library team contributes to the success of UCB.

- By being transparent in all library activities and sharing experiences with colleagues both within UCB and externally, with library professionals in other institutions and corporate environments – to make a real difference within the library sector.

Background

We all know the challenges facing libraries and information functions across all sectors including limited resources, decreasing budgets, staffing reorganizations, the need to be copyright compliant, technological overload, users who think they know what they are doing when they don't, cultural barriers in an international environment, the need to generate a good return on investment (ROI), or a library function that is perceived to be low value within the organization. As an informational professional we know that the key to success is balancing these challenges against growing user needs including an increased need for content and technological innovations to increase the knowledge transfer. The library function with a little 'creativity' and 'flexibility' needs to strategically realign itself within the organization

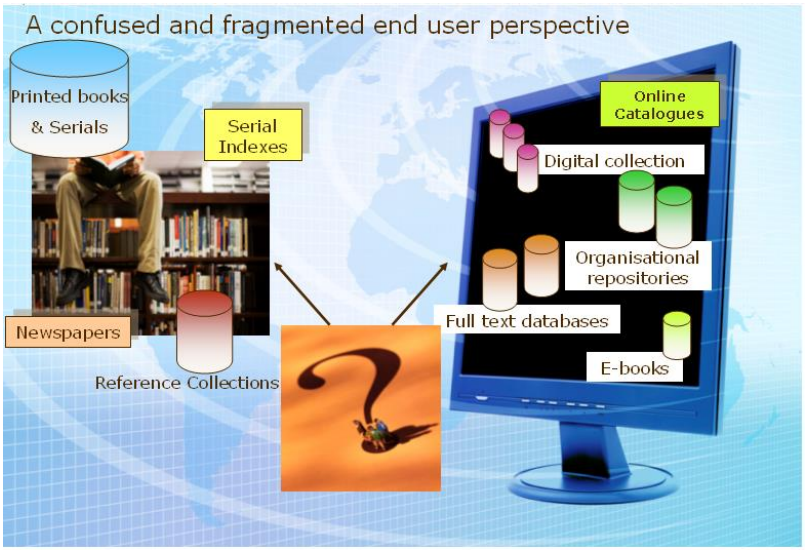

Fig. 1: A confused and fragmented end user library landscape.

The library landscape

Historically if one thinks about the library landscape it is often associated with stereotypical images of librarians that today have transformed into stereotypical action figures. From an end user perspective it can often seem confused and fragmented. On one side there might be collections of print books and serials, newspapers, small reference collections and on the other side we might have digital collections, e-books, full text databases, organizational repositories, online catalogues. With many sources of information within the library landscape, the professional challenge is to avoid possible fragmentation, silos of information and end user confusion, bringing together any disparity.

Case study UCB: the challenges

Lack of strategic direction can often lead to information chaos and this was exactly the case within UCB.

Planning long term changes needs a strategy that is oriented along a company's objectives. However, plenty of challenges abound before an information centre is settled comfortably within the organisation. On one side there are heterogeneous user groups with diverse needs that call for new processes and structures

within corporate libraries. On the other side there are managements that want to see the added value from content and services offered, a task almost impossible to meet. Any changes need to be promoted vigorously to ensure visibility of a corporate library as a high performing team. This should include a careful selection of providers and systems that can present the corporate library as a specialist function, ensuring that it will be recognised as an innovative department and remain strategically successful in future years, or it might mean a redefining of roles within the information team. Responsible information experts that take in trends and listen to the changing requirements of their users can challenge an organisation to change. These prerequisites are important for the development of a vision for a corporate library and key to future success. The library transition within UCB has been a voyage of discovery as the team has successfully transformed from a "print jungle" to a "virtual no shelf library".

The challenges facing the UCB library were not unique yet it became very apparent to the team that they needed to make some strategic changes in order to survive. The team needed to be able to justify sizeable budgets, needed to have a valued visible presence within the organisation and be seen as a function that could make a difference, add value and drive change. Some of the challenges faced by the UCB library included:

- A geographical spread of 10,500 employees in over 40 countries
- 3 physical print libraries on 3 different sites
- A multi site library team
- Budget decreases of 10%
- Increased requirement for more content and innovative technology to access content
- Increased costs for content
- Local and global copyright agreements and compliance issues
- Need to generate a good ROI to justify high budget spend
- Need to deliver added value service to the business and become strategically more visible
- Need to be seen as an innovative and a high performing team in the organisation taking a lead in business direction

The need for re-alignment: a user driven focus

With a fight for survival and a need for the UCB library team to turn itself into a value adding high performing team within the organisation, at the end of 2008, the team decided to openly connect with their key stakeholders across the business through a global online user survey. Response rate was an overwhelming 72% and collected answers on everything about the library from service levels, content provision to search and retrieval technologies. Using the findings of the survey for the first time the team was starting to position itself at the centre of the organisation, defining itself as "experts" that wanted to connect with user communities across the business, listening and responding to needs. Slowly the library function was becoming a pivotal entity within the externally published information flow throughout the company and becoming visible from all sectors. With the explosion of social media sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* and the ethos behind these being a "community" focus the library started to identify itself as mediators of social networks. By nurturing a community focused culture within the organisation the team started to break down

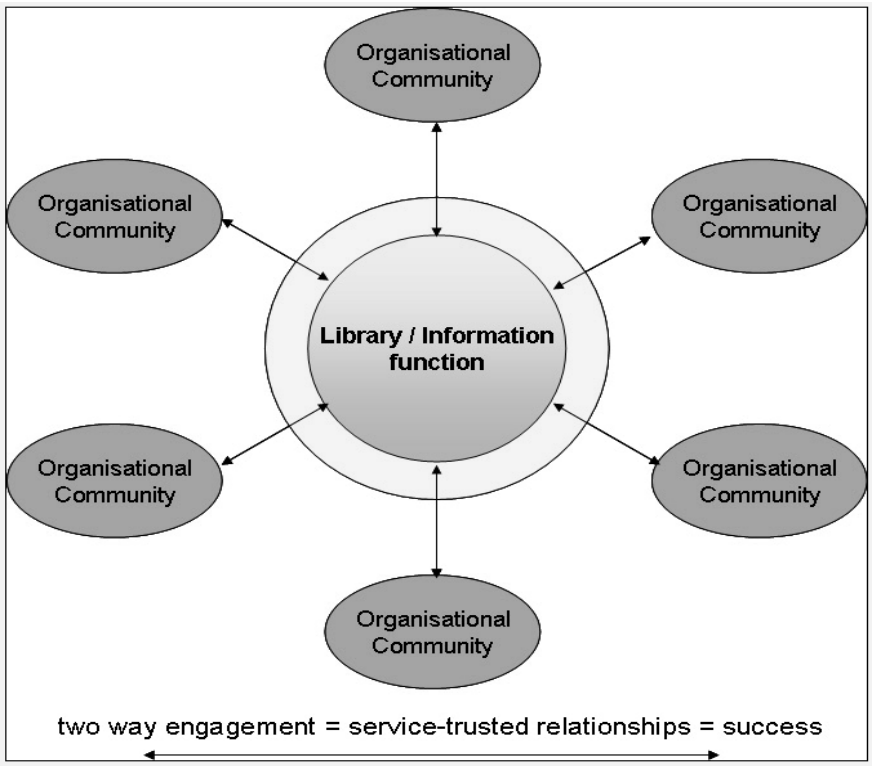

Fig. 2: The library as a pivotal function within the organisation.

barriers between all levels of the company and thus better understand user's needs (Fig. 2).

The team wanted to combine the challenges of the fragmented end user landscape with the library positioned as a pivotal function in the centre of the organisation engaged in two way relationships with user communities and this was to become the long term strategy of the team. Influenced by the results of the library survey and regular meetings with a newly formed library user group, the team identified three broad library functions that would form the basis of its strategy and that would help define the information professionals within the library team as "experts". These three functions were:

- E-lib technology and information acquisition – where the focus would be on how users get access to content ensuring that within the search and retrieval process users get access to content in a way which is quick and easy and compliant with copyright legislation. The UCB library team wanted to start to build a picture of the kind of content that was being used and how this could be accessed – whether remote accessing devices could be used to evolve library services and how you could capture users knowledge and develop this – most read content, most popular books etc.

- Information delivery and knowledge sharing - enabling the team to look strategically at ways of capturing knowledge and being able to share this with others to generate new ideas which might ultimately lead to success.

- Copyright compliance – where the focus for the library team would be to ensure complete copyright compliance across the organisation in the way that externally published information is retrieved, shared and stored.

With a strong focus in each of these areas the team looked at existing resources and technologies and through introducing a little "creativity" and "flexibility" into the process used these functional areas to deliver a long term strategy to the business. The core and motivation of this strategy centred on what the team deemed to be 3 key indicators for success and that would embrace both the organisation and new and existing library users. These indicators included:

- Service-trusted relationships between the library, user communities and wider organisation
- Library products that were used more effectively and efficiently
- Content delivered by the library team that was more targeted and cost efficient.

Because this strategy was a user driven strategy and the UCB library users and wider organisation were the main sponsors behind it this gave real credibility to the vision that the library team had. The team could openly and confidently present to management meetings its clear commitment and direction for the future, taking a lead within the organisation, driving change and meeting organisational needs whilst delivering added value and success at the same time.

The UCB success story

Key steps to building a successful strategy:

- Developing a team that focuses on collaboration and service trusted relationships
- Optimising library budgets through targeted and cost efficient content
- Capitalising on creativity – a lot can be done with very little
- Enhancing the user experience and developing functions that add real value
- Creating a team of library professionals that are empowered, accountable and passionate
- Be visible
- Affiliate the library to professional bodies – UCB is actively in the Belgian Association for Documentation, Special Libraries Association and Pharma Documentation Ring
- And most importantly have fun!

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Fig. 3: From print jungle to a no shelf library.